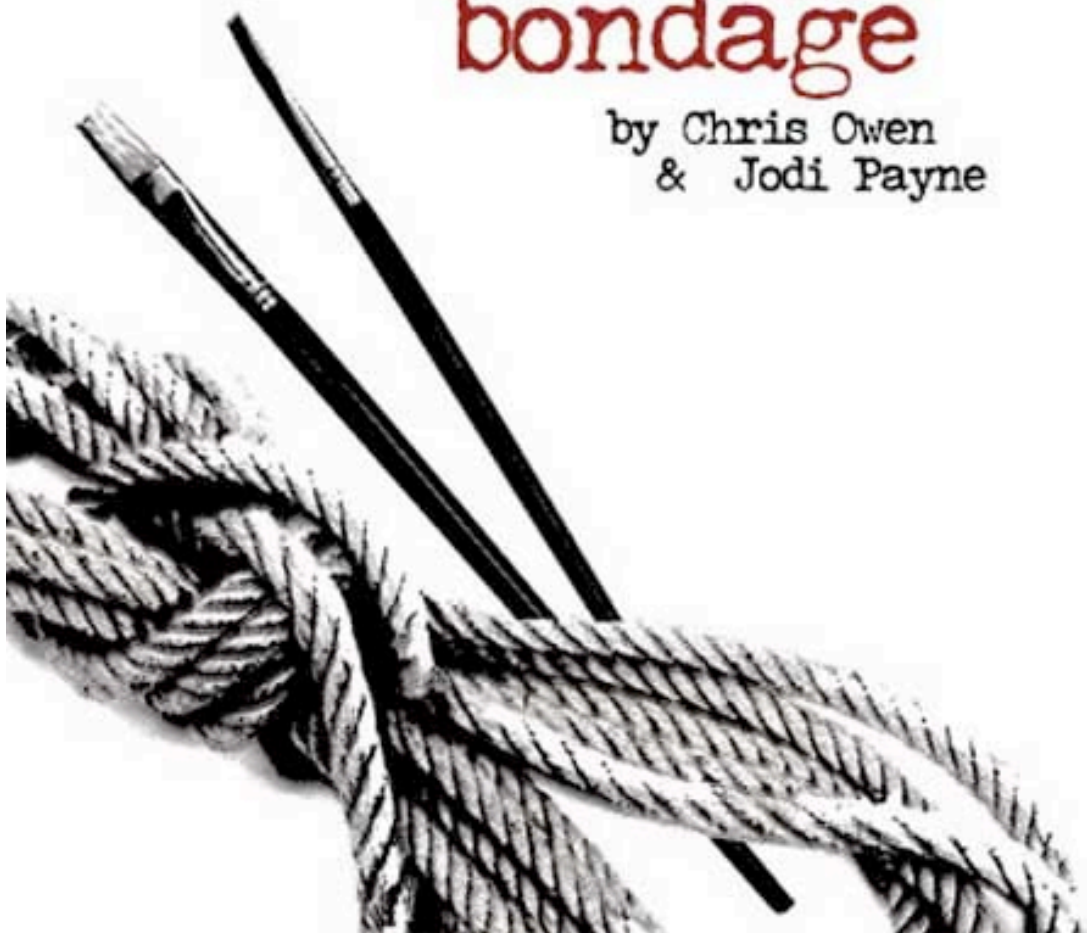




deviations:  
**bondage**

by Chris Owen  
& Jodi Payne



*Deviations: Bondage*

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*Deviations: Bondage*

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We count ourselves blessed.

Thank you, Nomi.

With love,

Chris and Jodi

## Chapter 1

Noah didn't have much in the way of souvenirs from his vacation in Paris. He didn't have a tan to show off, or a tattoo. He didn't have a shelf full of knickknacks or a stack of postcards. But he did have a pair of worn-in chaps, a couple of very nice welts from his Master's whip on his back, and some great stories. Even his pictures, the few he had taken, had come out fairly well.

Dinner was spaghetti. It was a simple meal; after eating out every night for a week he was ready for simple again. He hoped Phan would bring his usual bottle of Coke, of course. Beyond that, he'd made no plans for the evening, thinking that Phan might have something to unload if things were shaky with Bradford, Phan's provisional Dom. When the doorbell rang, Noah found himself hurrying to answer it.

Phantom grinned and bounced at him as soon as he'd opened the door, the bag with the Coke thumping solidly against Noah's back as Phan hugged him. "Oops, sorry! Hey, missed you! God, it smells great in here," Phan babbled at him, all smiles. He was dressed in loose jeans, which was a change for him, and a fuzzy sweatshirt that smelled like incense. "Have a good trip?"

They were still in the hall, for God's sake.

Phan had a way of making Noah smile despite himself. Sure, all this happy cheerful energy could be covering something, but for now it was fun and Noah went with it. "Oh, my God, Phan. I've never had a vacation like that. Paris is beautiful, and one of the kinkiest towns I have ever been in." He took Phan's bag and headed for the kitchen. "Come in, come in!"

"Paris? Really? Ah, you've never been to Rio." Phan was hard on his heels, one hand skimming Noah's back. "So? Pictures? Shopping? Did you go to the Louvre? The Eiffel Tower? Tell me everything! Well, not everything, just the highlights, but tell me everything. And feed me."

"I've never been *anywhere* until now. Sit!" Noah laughed and went to the stove. "Pictures are right there on the table. The Eiffel Tower was my favorite touristy thing, I think; the view and the evening air, it was romantic and beautiful and I felt like such a kid in love. The Mona Lisa was cool, too, I guess. But, Jesus, we had to wait in this long-ass line."

"The lady still draws a crowd," Phan said absently and Noah looked over to see him rifling through the photos. "God, it's beautiful," Phan said, flipping to the next one. "Some of these are really nice, Noah."

"Thank you." Noah put a pile of pasta in the center of Phan's plate and then one on his own. "Did you check out the one I got the other American tourists to take of us? That's my only picture of Tobias and me together; it came out pretty good, huh?"

"Uh-huh. You both look insanely happy," Phan said with a grin. "And he should always smile. Well, unless he's whipping your ass; it wouldn't work so well then, but you know what I mean." Phan looked through a couple more photos and finally set them aside. "He looks good," he said simply. "So do you."

"Thanks." Noah smiled at Phan, who looked a little thin to Noah, but he couldn't be sure, so he decided not to say anything about it. "It was such an amazing week. I have a couple of other things to show off, but eat first." Noah handed Phan a serving pitcher of sauce. "That's homemade, but quickly. I didn't stew it all day like I should have. Hope it's okay."

"If it's got garlic, it'll be good. You worry too much." Phan grinned again and dug into his plate with flattering speed. "So, what's this other stuff you wanna show off? Sir buy you presents?" He winked outrageously and took another mouthful. "Mm. Good."

"One or two notable ones, yeah." Noah had planned to wait until they were done eating, but he was too proud of his marks not to show them off. "Look." He stood up, turned his back to Phan, and tugged his sweater up to his shoulders. "Bullwhip. In public, in this club that was so strict I wasn't allowed to speak at all."

There was dead silence behind him and then he heard Phan's chair scrape back. "Shit," Phan breathed, and warm fingers traced around the mark on his right shoulder. "That's... wow. Not at all? God, did you make it?"

"I don't remember breaking the rule, but Sir says that sometime after the whipping, when he finally let me get off, that I was begging. Honestly? All I remember is that I needed the fucking cock ring off, and then just feeling a lot better and waking up from dozing in his lap. Can you believe that?" He didn't turn around, letting Phan explore the marks. "It was tough. I didn't really like the rule. I mean, I get not speaking to other people, but not being able to speak even to *him*, or to respond to his crop or the whip, I didn't like that at all."

"Yeah, it's always better to yell," Phan agreed. He was tracing the other mark, his fingers gentle and soft. "Christ." A moment later he cleared his throat and stepped back. "Did you get punished for losing it at the end?" he asked, going back to his plate, a little slower than he had been moving before.

"Oh, yes. But not for a day or so; my ass was way out of commission for about twenty-four hours." Noah smiled as he remembered taking Tobias in the hot tub, but as much as he'd like to brag about it, that moment had been so intimate, physically and emotionally, that he couldn't bring himself to say a word about it. It was private, and better kept just between Tobias and him. He lowered his sweater and sat down again, then picked up the bottle of Coke and poured himself a glass. "It was just... an incredible trip."

"Sounds like," Phan said with a grin and a nod. "Shame to come home from something like that, sometimes. Oh, did you sign? Bradford wouldn't tell me anything." He set down his fork and reached for his own glass as Noah passed him the bottle.

"Yes, we have a new, open-ended contract." Noah leaned across the table a little. "We're buying a place downtown, and we're going to move in together."

Phan's eyes widened and he dropped the bottle. "Oh, shit!" He grabbed it and swore again before standing up. "I'm sorry. God, what a mess--" Before Noah could do anything, Phan had grabbed a cloth from the counter and was wiping up the Coke. His hands were shaking, and he apologized again. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to -- well, obviously I didn't mean to, but damn. Sorry."

"It's okay, Phan," Noah dove for another towel and got it damp to help get the sticky soda off the floor. "It's fine. It's just Coke." He knelt with Phan on the floor and took one of Phan's hands in his. "You're shaking."

"Am I?" Phan looked at their hands for a moment and shrugged. "I skipped lunch. I'll be fine in a minute," he said, pulling away.

Noah let him go but kept an eye on him while they finished cleaning up the spill. Skipping meals might explain why Phan looked thinner, but it wouldn't cause him to lose his cool like that. Not just all of a sudden, which probably meant that he was more than just stunned by Noah's announcement that he and Tobias were moving in together. As he got back to his feet he looked at Phan. "Well, if you skipped lunch, you're not skipping a bite of dinner. Sit and eat. If I let you go hungry, Sir will never forgive me." He moved to the sink and tossed the towels in it.

"Yes, sir," Phan said and Noah looked back to see the cocky grin in place once more. "I'll eat every bite. You sit your ass down and tell me all about this new place you're going to get. Is he going to let you help pick it out?"

Noah studied Phan carefully before answering. "Sir says he's going to look, but I can't imagine him buying anything without showing it to me first. He was insistent that I give him requests for what I wanted in the house."

"Cool," Phan looked impressed. "Knowing him, he wants something big and airy, lots of room to play." He wound spaghetti onto his fork and grinned. "Make sure you get a fireplace; this one rocks, and it would suck to lose it."

"Oh, good point, I'll tell him. I told him I wanted a garage so I could get a bike." Noah snickered and winked at Phan. "I don't know for sure, but I think he liked that idea."

"Leather," Phan said with a nod and what Noah assumed was supposed to be a wise look. "So, what else? Open-ended? That rocks. You're all married and shit now. And I didn't even get you a present yet."

"You know, I made a joke about bringing him to my precinct functions as my spouse and he actually said he would go. I guess we're that committed, yeah, but for some reason it doesn't feel at all scary to me. It just feels good. Really good." It did feel good. Like his tailored leather chaps good -- comfortable, right, and secure. "Your support is a great gift, Phan."

Phan shook his head. "You're perfect for each other. I've never seen him so happy, so... balanced. I'm thrilled for you both, and that's the honest truth." He looked sincere, his eyes serious as they met Noah's. "You've both done a hell of a lot for me -- but more for each other. You work."

Noah felt himself melt a little inside. Phan was sweet, and he really did seem sincere in his happiness for them. He wasn't sure why he still couldn't let that little nagging voice go, the one that said Phan might threaten things between him and Tobias. It didn't seem possible, really, and he was seriously going to have to work on losing it. "Thanks, Phan. That means a lot to me." He took a bite of his dinner. The sauce really wasn't half bad.

"I mean it," Phan insisted, gathering more spaghetti. "And this is really, really good." He did seem to be eating well -- better than Noah had seen him eat before. "So, movie and cuddle later? I missed a week, you know -- I've been pining."

"That sounds awesome." He wanted to know how things were with Bradford, too, but he didn't want to ruin Phan's appetite when he was eating so well. He'd ask more casually when they were cuddling and Phan felt safer. "We both missed you. You came up several times."

Phan's fork faltered for a second, but he continued winding the last of his noodles and asked, "Did I?" Noah didn't think he'd ever heard such a carefully casual tone outside of a police interview.

"Of course," Noah said, still studying him. "We talked about how much you would have liked the clubs, and the hotel... I don't know, you were just on our minds a lot. We missed you." He watched Phan carefully as he spoke.

"Oh." Phan smiled at him, just a little, and said, "Well, where there's kink, my name comes up. Were they good clubs? I mean, aside from not being able to talk to Sir."

"They were good." Noah tried to read past the words, but Phan was pretty good at hiding things. "There was the one really kinky one, and then there was this super classy upscale place that was a lot like Bradford's place, except black tie only. Really nice, and I could talk to him at that one."

"Oh, suits! I bet you both looked stunning. Did you get to play with an audience again?" Phan pushed his empty plate away and pointed to it. "I'm a good boy; praise me."

"You are a good boy," Noah chuckled. "I'll make sure I tell Sir as much. Want more?"

Phan shook his head. "Thanks, but no. Got my figure to watch, you know. Just want that cuddle. Eat, man!"

"I'm done. I think I got fat on vacation. Come on." Noah stood up, smiling. "I want a cuddle, too." He took Phan by the hand and tugged him toward the living room.

"You're not fat," Phan assured him. "Trust me, you're just fine." They got to the couch and Phan looked at it and then Noah. "Um. However you want. I'm not sleepy this time."

"Cool." Noah sat and tucked himself into the corner and held his arms out. "Grab the remote and get comfy."

Phan snuggled into him, his head on Noah's chest and his legs splayed out on the couch. "Ah, nice," he sighed, passing over the remote without even turning on the TV. "You're warm."

Now it was time. Casually, like he hadn't been planning it all evening, he asked, "So what did you do while we were gone? How are things going with you and Bradford?"

It was impossible to miss the tension that invaded Phan's body. "Oh, you know. Okay. I do what I'm supposed to, he does what he's supposed to... the bathrooms freaking shine."

Okay, so subtle wasn't the way to go. He'd try blunt. "What's the knot in your shoulders all about, then?"

Phantom shrugged and shifted a bit. "Just... I don't know. It's not... I serve, you know? I do what I'm told to, I have the structure. The rewards are pretty much a lack of punishment. We don't have sex, and we don't want to. He can't flog me, can't do anything more than pile more work on me or spank me... it's hard, is all."

It did sound hard, Noah had to concede. Phan's therapist had prohibited pain as discipline, mostly so Phan could learn to live without needing extreme pain in his life, but this seemed like he needed something else altogether. "Maybe you should start looking for a new Dom? One that might be a better fit? Or don't you feel ready for that?"

Phan shrugged again. "Don't want a new Dom," he said softly. He shook his head. "Let's talk about those clubs again."

Noah felt his own shoulders getting stiff this time. "Why don't you find us a movie?" He didn't much feel much like talking anymore.

He shouldn't have asked. It was his own fault. If he didn't want to know the answer then he shouldn't have asked Phan the question. But he did ask, and now he had to live with Phan's honesty, didn't he? Phan wanted Tobias back. Noah suspected that he'd always wanted Tobias back, which begged the question, was Phan really sincere when he said he was happy for them? How was Noah going to trust anything Phan told him anymore?

Did Tobias know?

"Okay," Phan said quietly. He got up and went to the shelf by the TV, his finger tracing over the spines of the movies. "You know what, I should go," he said, and Noah regretted that he'd been less than discreet in his reaction to Phan's words. "Talking about me is never a good idea." He turned to face Noah and smiled sadly. "Sorry. Tell Sir I said hello and congratulations, okay? I couldn't be happier that he's got you." His eyes were earnest again, clear and steady, and Noah couldn't find anything but truth there.

It didn't make sense.

"Phan..." Noah wasn't sure what he wanted to say but he knew that letting Phan leave right now wasn't the answer. Frankly, he felt more confused than ever about the whole damn situation, and he was back to wondering how wise it was to have offered his support in the first place when there was such a clear conflict of interest. "Look, this is... don't go yet, okay?" Noah stood up and went to him. "You should probably know that Bradford asked Tobias to come for dinner tomorrow night. He said he wanted to talk about you. So whatever is going on is going to be out in the open soon enough."

Phan gave him that half-smile again. "That'll be fun. Bradford will tell him I'm doing what I'm supposed to but I'm not happy. Tobias will worry and talk to me and we'll leave it at that. There's really nothing can be done, Noah; I'm just sucking everyone into my problems. It's gotta stop."

"Stop?" Noah didn't like the sound of that.

"Well, yeah." Phan walked a few steps away and turned, starting to pace. "I mean, I can't keep sucking the life out of everyone, can I? You, Tobias... Bradford's done so much, I can't even really think about it. No one is happy, so aside from meeting with Dr. Brewer, I have to find another way, don't I? I can't just keep taking from everyone." He turned again and walked a few more steps, one hand pushing through his hair.

Maybe the idea that he needed to get up on his own feet was a good one. Whether or not he was actually ready to, the desire to do it couldn't be a bad thing. "Have you discussed this with Dr. Brewer?"

Phan made a face. "At the moment, we're going over some of the more colorful aspects of an addictive personality. It's a good thing she's in the scene -- she understands a lot of things that would be hell on wheels to explain. We're still dealing with my need to be punished for happiness, too."

Noah took Phan securely by the hand and tugged him back toward the couch. "Well, that's good, right? Dealing with the real issues. Maybe that's what's really got you feeling like this? It's a damn important sounding distinction."

Phan let himself be led, though he didn't immediately wrap himself around Noah like usual. "I don't want to hurt everyone," Phan said softly. "And I know I will if things keep going like this. God, do you have any idea how much pain I've already caused Tobias? And you -- I can see the ache in your eyes sometimes. You're torn, and I know it, and I don't want you to be. It's all very simple, if a few things are just taken as fact."

Noah nodded. He was torn, there wasn't any point in lying about it. "Which things, Phan?"



"The important ones, of course. You're Sir's submissive. You're Sir's lover and partner, and that's all that matters. He's happy, you're happy, and it's the way it should be." Phan met his eyes and grinned. "I can't tell you how cute you two are -- it's fabulous to see you both so happy."

"Seems like that makes things more complicated for you, though, not simpler." Noah said softly.

"Not really," Phan insisted. "I want him happy. He is. Noah, we weren't good together --we didn't have balance, you know? Doesn't mean I didn't love him; I just couldn't be what he needed any more than he could be what I needed. What it comes down to, for me, is that he has you. I can... move on, yeah? Stop doing this to everyone."

Noah shook his head. Tobias would never allow Phan to just "move on" without his guidance; Phan was too given to self-destruction when he wasn't thinking clearly. Tobias was protective by nature, and Noah knew that Phan, as a very close friend if nothing else, would be questioned until he was clear about his own motives and plans. "That's easy to say, but how are you going to move on, Phan? Are you even ready to do that?"

"I don't really have much choice, do I?" Phan said with a shrug. "I can't stay with Bradford much longer; he's got Nikki. I gave up my apartment the weekend I got locked in that room, when Bradford decided that enough was enough. I don't have anywhere to go, so I might as well just keep going, maybe go to New York or something." He smiled without humor. "Could always dip into Daddy's money, I suppose. Give them a thrill."

God, not his parents' money. Noah felt way out of his league now. "Have you discussed moving with Bradford?"

"Nope." Phan leaned back on the couch and closed his eyes. "You're going to start making phone calls the minute the door closes on me, aren't you?"

Or possibly sooner, Noah told himself, a disconcerting feeling of déjà vu coming on. Instead he just nodded. "Sir wants me to call him, yeah. It's not a game, though, Phan, we're not tag-teaming you. He worries about you, and he wants to be prepared for whatever Bradford is going to tell him tomorrow."

Phan snorted, his eyes still closed. "You ever think it's a little scary, the way that man needs to know everything before he's supposed to? Control freak of the finest sort."

"I wouldn't say that. If he was a true control freak then he wouldn't have a submissive, he'd have a slave. He likes to be prepared. You know that he doesn't like surprises. He gets very thrown when he's not expecting something." Noah thought about the discussion about money that he and Tobias had had in Paris, when they were negotiating their contract. Tobias had been completely flustered by the conversation, like it hadn't even crossed his mind that Noah might feel the need to contribute to the household. Tobias tended to balk when his point of view was shifted without warning.

"Yeah, well, sometimes it's good to rattle his cage," Phan said. He opened his eyes and looked over at Noah, his face so blank it had to be on purpose. "Do you hate me?" he asked calmly.

"No." Noah answered just as calmly, but if Phan wanted more information than that he was going to have to ask the right questions.

"I think I would." Phan looked thoughtful for a moment. "You're wary, though. Like you weren't before, or at least more obvious about it. Do you want me to go?"

Was it Phan that Noah was really wary of, or Tobias' unfaltering sense of obligation? Because Noah honestly believed that if it ever came down to which one of them needed taking care of more, the answer was so obvious that it tied Noah's stomach in knots.

Noah had no doubt that Tobias would put obligation before desire.

"If I seem more uptight about it, it's only because you basically told me tonight that what you really want is to have Tobias back. I don't think you'll take steps to pursue it, but if he wasn't so happy with me... well, it's just a lot to digest, Phan."

Phan shook his head and stood up. "I don't want him back. It wouldn't work. Aside from the fact that I really like you, I don't think I could live with myself. I won't mess up what you have. What I want is so huge that it scares me to think about it, so I don't." Phan stretched and shoved his hands in his pockets. "Right. Take care of him, okay? I'll see you later." He turned and headed to the door, all the usual slink gone from his stride.

Noah fought the urge to chase after him. He'd opened his big mouth and made things worse when he was supposed to be helping. It was no wonder Phan wanted to leave. He was so upset with himself he didn't even reply. This time, he let Phan go.

Once the door had closed behind Phan, Noah picked up the remote and hurled it at the wall. He growled as the battery cover popped off and the idiotic little AAA batteries went rolling everywhere, realizing with yet more guilt that that was quite possibly the last time Phan would walk through his door.

"Fuck," he spat as he headed for the shower. He ought to call Tobias, but what was he going to say? Apart from "I'm an asshole and I totally blew it"?

His shower was hot. Really hot. He steamed up the tiny bathroom so thoroughly that when he got out he had to open the door to get air. Maybe he should have made Phan stay, pushed him further, and asked Phan what he wanted that was so huge, but by that point Noah felt like it was none of his goddamn business anymore.

## Chapter 2

Tobias looked out the big window and down Lincoln again, then looked at his watch. He'd been doing the same thing for almost an hour, waiting to hear from Noah. Phan didn't usually stay so late; it was almost eleven, and Tobias was about ready to call and check up on them.

Part of it, he thought, was that after a week with Noah constantly by his side, he was reluctant to let go. Spending Monday night alone in his bed had been uncomfortable at best, and he'd decided rather selfishly to hurry along the plans to move. He much preferred to have Noah right there at night. Even having Noah chained to the end of the bed was better than the silence of the apartment.

He growled as he looked at his watch again. There was no way Phan was still there; he usually had orders from Bradford to be back by ten-thirty or so. It was time to call.

Tobias picked up the portable phone and hit the speed dial as he walked to the front door to make sure it was locked, the line ringing in his ear as he flipped off the lights.

It rang several times, but just before he would have expected Noah's machine to pick up, his boy's voice came over the line.

"Hello, sir," Noah said, followed by a heavy sigh.

Tobias winced. "Hello, pet. What happened? You sound like it was a less than happy evening."

"I'm such an idiot, sir, I totally blew it. Phan walked out, I didn't have the courage to stop him, and he probably won't be back. I made everything worse. What a cock-up." Noah sighed again. Tobias could hear him washing dishes.

Tobias felt a knot form in his stomach and he turned around, heading to the hall table and his cell phone. "Back up. He walked out? And stop blaming yourself -- you know he's a mess right now, I'm sure you didn't do anything you shouldn't have."

The water on Noah's end shut off abruptly. "It started fine, but I knew he was covering for something. So we ate and then we came into the living room and as soon as we were settled I decided to ask how things were going with Bradford. He told me they're going through the motions but that it's basically nothing special. It sounded to me like neither of them is really getting anything out of it." Noah cleared his throat, and Tobias heard the refrigerator open and close. "So I suggested that maybe he should look for another Dom, and he said... well, he said no, that he didn't want another Dom, and then changed the subject."

Tobias' hand hovered over the cell phone, but he held back. "Okay," he said slowly. "So, they're doing the basics to fulfill Phantom's needs and nothing more. Phan doesn't want a new Dom -- that's hardly surprising, given his mental state these days. He's working on getting his head right; it's not the time to go shopping for someone new to play with." But there was an uncomfortable pressure building in Tobias' head as he tried to sort through everyone's motives and feelings -- including his own.

"He said it had to stop," Noah continued. "That sucking everyone into his problems wasn't right, that he was happy for you and me, and that he needed to move on, maybe move to New York, and a bunch of other stuff, so..." Noah sighed heavily. "I told him I thought that what he wanted was you."

"Oh, dear," Tobias sighed. He picked up the cell phone and walked down the hall to his room. "Then what?"

"Well, he denied it... sort of. And then he... he said to take care of you, and he left. Jesus, I'm sorry." Noah groaned on the other end. "I really fucked this up."

"Shh, no, you didn't," Tobias said softly. "You asked what needed to be asked. We can't help him -- no one can -- if we don't know what's going on his head." Tobias turned on the light in his room and walked to the bed. "How long ago was this?"

"Maybe two hours? I would have called you sooner, but I feel like a first-class prick." Noah groaned and then suddenly added, "Oh! Sir... before Phan left he told me something odd, too. He said that what he wanted was so huge that it scared him to think about it."

Tobias didn't have time to respond to that before the cell phone rang in his fingers. "Hang on, pet, the other phone is ringing." Tobias lowered the portable and looked at the screen on his cell -- Bradford. He pushed the talk button, the knot in his stomach getting even tighter. "Hello, Bradford. How is he?"

"He says he's fine," Bradford said, skipping the niceties. "But I think you should come over."

Tobias frowned and tried to rub his eyes, but he still held the portable. "Why?" he asked. "If he says he's fine he's hardly likely to talk to--"

"He's called his father. He's informed me that he's going to go to this clinic his parents' people have been pushing for."

Tobias swore. "Damn. Hang on, I have Noah on the other phone." Quickly, he switched phones. "Pet?"

"Bradford, I heard. Go on. Call me if you need me, okay?"

"It's not that -- Phan's called his parents. He thinks he's going to a clinic." He wasn't sure, but he thought there was a note of panic in his voice. The last time Phantom's parents had arranged for a clinic they'd had their son committed, and it had taken Tobias a great deal of legal maneuvering to get Phan back out. It wasn't that Tobias didn't want help for Phan, but he'd rather that Phan didn't have to hear a lot of nonsense about how his kinks were a sickness. The fact that Phantom's parents were more or less directly responsible for his mental state, as well, didn't help Tobias reconcile their efforts, either.

Noah made a rough noise. "What? He never said anything like that to me. What kind of clinic? Shit, this is totally my fault. He wants out, Tobias. He just wants away from us, I think, and I don't really understand why. I know he said that he didn't have anywhere to go; maybe this is his short-term solution?"

Tobias shook his head. "I don't know, I don't know what's going on. But it's not your fault, Noah. Listen to me. We'll sort it out, but right now I need to get over there before he goes. This clinic, it's not a good idea." He looked at the cell phone in his hand and closed his eyes. "Do you want to come with me or wait? Up to you, pet."

"I better stay out of this. I can't... I just don't think I'm... you'd better go without me."

"Come here, then. I have no idea how long this is going to take, but I want to see you when I manage to get it sorted. If you're sleeping here, I can just let myself in and won't wake you up." He lifted the cell and said, "I'm on my way, keep him there."

"Right," Bradford replied, and then hung up.

Tobias thumbed off the phone and tossed it on the bed. "Okay?" he asked Noah.

Noah sighed. "Yes, sir. I'll be there."

"Sweetheart. It's not your fault. I'm not leaving you. I love you. Did I leave anything out?" Tobias asked, picking up the cell phone again and looking for his coat.

"You can't just... don't just *say* that stuff to hold me over, okay? I know you mean it, but firing it off like that... oh, fuck. What is wrong with me? Just go on before I fuck this up too. Please? I love you. I'll be there when you get home."

Tobias stopped dead in his tracks. "I'm not just saying things to hold you over, Noah. I mean it, you're not losing me, and I'm not letting you go. Do you want me to just stay here? Let Phan sink or swim? Because I will." It would damn near kill him, and would possibly be the end of Phantom entirely, but he'd do it.

"No. Please go." This time, Noah sounded completely sincere.

"All right. I love you." Tobias grabbed his jacket and put the cell in the pocket, buzzing the front desk. He'd need his car.

"I love you, too," Noah said, and Tobias hung up the phone, knowing it was true. They'd be okay.

Phantom, he wasn't so sure about.

## Chapter 3

Tobias called for the car, told the desk to let Noah in when he got there, and headed out. The drive to Bradford's was fine, the streets clear of traffic, but Tobias still managed to find himself creeping over the speed limit more than once. He left his car at the club with no trouble, happy enough to see that the staff seemed unaware of any drama; his own sudden arrival was the only excitement, apparently.

He walked over to Bradford's house in the next lot, deliberately not running, and pushed the bell, wondering if anyone had called Dr. Brewer.

Nikki answered the door almost before Tobias' finger was off the button. "Hello, Master Tobias. Master Bradford said to send you right back to his study, sir," the boy told him, not hiding his own worry very well. He took Tobias' coat and pointed the way, not that Tobias needed to be shown.

"Thank you, Nikki." Tobias stopped only long enough to grab his cell phone from his coat pocket. "It'll be okay," he added, patting Nikki's shoulder and walking to the office door. He knocked once and opened the door, not caring if Bradford got annoyed at him.

"Hello, boy," he said, looking to where Phan was curled into the corner of the couch.

"Hello, sir," Phan said softly, not looking up.

Tobias raised an eyebrow and turned to Bradford. "Nice to see you. Sorry I don't have your present with me; it's being shipped from Paris."

Bradford gave him a half-smile. "Always good to see you. Sorry about the circumstances. I can't wait to hear about your trip."

"It was lovely, thank you." He looked around the office and sighed. "All right, what the hell is going on? Phantom?"

Phan unfolded himself from the couch and stood up, his arms going behind his back in what was likely an automatic motion. "I'm trying to fix... everything," he said. "But, apparently, being a submissive is now a sign of a defective brain. Sir."

Tobias' other eyebrow climbed up. "I see. And is this something you think a clinic will fix?"

Phan snorted. "You're goading me."

"Of course."

Phan sighed. "I want to leave. By Master Bradford's reaction and your arrival, I understand that I'm not allowed to make that choice. It... grates, to put it mildly."

"I'm sure it does," Tobias said. "Have you discussed this with your doctor? I'm fairly sure that leaving her care is something that should be planned."

"No, sir."

Tobias turned to Bradford. "Remind me again about your contract? You're responsible for ensuring his mental health, are you not?"

"To the extent that he cooperates, yes." Bradford sounded exasperated. "I'm responsible for providing him with the tools he needs to progress in that respect; what he does with them is his affair."

"I see. All right, Phan. Will you tell us what you're trying to fix and why you think leaving will do that?" He crossed to a chair and sat down.

Phan stayed where he was. "I feel that by staying I'm perpetuating the cycle of dependence I have."

Tobias stared, surprised by both the matter-of-fact tone and the sentiment. It didn't sound like Phan. "How so?" he asked carefully.

Phan's gaze flicked in his direction, though he didn't raise it to Tobias' face. "We all know that I try to pay for happiness with pain. Now I seem to be diverging into emotional pain, and, worse, I'm hurting everyone else. Master Bradford has gone above and beyond what I have any right to expect, and Noah has... become a source of joy for me. I'm hurting people by drawing them into my healing process."

Tobias stifled a sigh and leaned back. "They chose to help you, Phan," he said softly. "Can't they have a say in this? And what exactly do you mean by doing the one thing you said you'd never do? Calling your parents? They won't help you -- they'll try to change what you are, who you are."

"He did that without my permission, incidentally," Bradford added. The man didn't seem to be much help at the moment; rather, he was as caught up in Phan's frustration as Phantom was himself. "I have not gone above and beyond, Phan; we have a contract, and I have simply honored my end of it."

"The time you spend with me is time away from Nikki," Phan shot back, his voice thick. "The chores I do should be his -- I'm doing things he wants to do, things he has the right to do. Every time you have to put off a scene with him to take care of me, it cuts him a little. I'm an imposition, and I'm hurting your relationship with him."

"How dare you take that tone with me. My arrangement with Nikki is none of your affair, boy," Bradford snapped back. "Nikki's welfare, happiness, and fulfillment are not your concern. You are speaking out of turn, and you're earning yourself plenty of strokes for it."

"Yes, sir," Phan whispered, the blood draining from his face.

Tobias looked at him and back at Bradford. With a sigh he said, "Clearly things here are... unsettled. Phan, what happened when you called your parents?"

Phan shook slightly and whispered. "They said they'd come and get me in the morning, that it would take a few hours to get the clinic ready for me. They were... happy to hear from me."

Tobias nodded. Of course they were happy; this was the chance they'd been waiting for since they'd found out their son was kinky. "Where's the clinic?"

Phan shrugged. "I'm not sure."

More like he didn't care, Tobias figured. Phan was running away, and he didn't care to where. "You do know that they'll strip you of everything you are. That they'll try to make you fit their definition of normal."

"Yes, sir," Phan whispered, the shaking more pronounced.

"And you want that," Tobias stated, letting his disbelief be heard.

Phan moaned and blinked rapidly. "I have to go," he said softly. "I can't... stay like this."

Bradford sighed. "Sit down, boy, before you fall down. Please. Just... sit." He ran his fingers through his hair, looking for all the world like he was ready to tear it out. "Tobias." Bradford's voice sounded hoarse. "This contract we have is not working for Phan. As much as I want to help him, I am not what he needs. My style grates with him, my rules frustrate him. He tries to be a good boy, he does what he's told, but inside he's just going through the motions. He's gaining absolutely nothing from it. No confidence, no sense of worth, no joy, nothing. The only thing that is growing in him day by day is this sense of imposition, and his guilt over it. It's become worrisome and counterproductive." Bradford pushed away from his desk and leaned back in his chair. "That is what I was going to tell you tomorrow night, but it might as well be said now in light of where we've found ourselves."

Tobias nodded, watching as Phan folded himself into the corner of the couch again. "Yes, that's fairly clear, I think. Did you have any suggestions?"

"There's only one that makes any sense and it won't sit well with either of you." Bradford pulled out his cigarettes.

"I'm going to want one of those, aren't I?" Tobias asked.

Bradford held out the pack and offered Tobias his lighter. "The only suggestion I have, the only productive one, is that *you* take Phan on again."

Tobias took the package and lit a cigarette slowly, deliberately not looking at Phan. "I've got a sub," he said evenly. "One who is very worried about that very thing happening."

"You asked me for my suggestion, and I'm giving it to you, Tobias. You don't have to take it, but it's all I've got to offer. This arrangement will only get worse for both of us. I haven't discussed any of this with Dr. Brewer; perhaps she will have a... more readily acceptable suggestion."

But he doubted it. Tobias knew damn well he'd left that opinion out.

"It's not about the suggestion being palatable," Tobias said. "It's about it being workable. I promised Noah a long time ago that I wouldn't bring another sub home with me. He's more than happy to play with Phan -- I'd say eager to -- but that doesn't mean he's willing to accept me contracting with someone else. Part of the reason we're moving and giving Phan the apartment is because Noah wasn't terribly comfortable with living somewhere that Phan owned."

From the couch Tobias heard a soft noise, and his gaze went there automatically, on instinct. Phan was staring up at him, his eyes wide and meeting Tobias' for the first time in what felt like months.

"You're giving me the apartment?" Phan asked.



"Of course," Tobias said, hoping it would make a difference but reasonably certain it wouldn't. "I always want you to have a safe place, Phan. It's yours."

But Phan shook his head. "It was never the apartment that was my safe place," he said, looking down and folding up again.

Bradford looked at Tobias and gestured toward Phan in a manner that seemed to say "I told you so," but he didn't say anything.

Tobias sighed. "Phan, what do you want?" he asked. "You wouldn't tell Noah, you're not saying anything here except what you don't want. So tell us. What do you want, ultimately?"

Phan shook his head. "Doesn't matter. Won't work."

"Well, it certainly won't if you don't tell us."

Phan shook his head again, and Tobias suddenly realized the boy was crying silently, tears streaming down his face. He looked helplessly at Bradford.

Bradford stood and went to Phan, kneeling momentarily beside him. "I want you to go upstairs to my bed, boy, and try to get some rest. I'll send Nikki with you, okay?"

Phan shook his head but stood up and went to the door, not looking back. Tobias saw Nikki in the hall, watched as Phan walked into the other boy's arms, and then the door swung shut on them.

"Damn," Tobias said softly, taking another drag off the cigarette. "Has he been sleeping at all? He looks like he's lost weight, too."

"He sleeps better in my bed than his, but he doesn't sleep well. And, no, his appetite has been in the toilet too, though he told me Noah made him eat a big dinner tonight." Bradford shook his head and picked up his cigarettes. "Drink?"

"God, yes," Tobias said gratefully. "And don't hide the nicotine. Jesus, Bradford. What am I going to do?"

"I've been asking myself that very question every day for the last month. I know intervening was the right thing to do, I know he was headed for destruction if he'd kept on that path, but is he better off now? I hate having to second-guess myself." Bradford set a bottle on his desk and poured two glasses. "He needs you. I promised you I would tell you if I thought he really did, and I think he does. He associates you with his self-esteem, his well-being, his happiness; the Phan that needed a beating to feel happy is gone now, and that was the boy who left you. The one that wanted to stay is the one that just walked out that door."

Tobias took one of the glasses and studied it carefully before swallowing the whole drink, neat. "He'll die if he goes with his parents. The therapy will either drive him back to drinking, or he'll kill himself when he can't conform to what they want."

"So we're agreed we're not going to allow him to go," Bradford said plainly.

"Yes. Hell, yes. His protests aside, I'm not about to watch him walk out of here with them." Tobias looked around for an ashtray and stubbed out his cigarette before pouring another drink. "But after that... God. Noah is not going to like this. And I won't lose him as well." He couldn't.

"Phan has a point about Nikki. I didn't want to validate that with him sitting here, but Nikki's definitely

being affected by this." Bradford sipped his whiskey and took a seat again. "Nikki understands why I'm doing this, and he likes Phan, so he's made a sacrifice for me. If I could keep this up I would, but he doesn't... we have no connection, Phan and I. There is no reason for him to please me."

Nodding, Tobias turned his glass in his hand. "Serving isn't enough," he said softly. "Without a connection the dynamic is off, and it's just going through the motions." He looked at Bradford and made a face. "When did this get so complicated? When we were younger, it was enough to know how to hit them right. Now it's all about love and connection and meeting needs... God."

"When we stopped playing and started looking for contracts? Or, in my case, when the contract dissolved and I had a lot of mistakes to learn from. Jesus, I feel old." Bradford knocked back the rest of his drink. "So what are you going to do? Maybe if you give Phan the apartment and... except he shouldn't live alone, should he? Damn."

Tobias shrugged and reached for the cigarettes again. "The apartment is his, or will be as soon as I call my lawyer. Do you really think he shouldn't live alone? I don't suppose playing once in a while is going to work, is it?"

"Playing with you and Noah?"

"Yes, of course."

"That might placate him short-term." Bradford looked at him meaningfully.

"Which will give Phan a chance to find his feet, Noah a chance to be more secure, and me a chance to... God, two subs? This is insane."

"So you're talking about contracting him then?"

"What? No. God, no. I can't even think about that yet. Noah would have my balls. He carries a gun, you know. Cop."

Bradford laughed. "You're a piece of work."

Tobias smiled and shook his head. As he lit the cigarette he leaned back and sighed. "You're sure he needs me?"

"Right now, yes. I'm useless to him, and I can't imagine trying to find him yet another Dom. He doesn't want one, anyway." Bradford finally lit the cigarette he'd been playing with and took a long drag. "Let me know if you need a hand with Noah; maybe I can help smooth it over. I still have his ear."

"Just keep your hands off the rest of him," Tobias said absently. "Oh, you'll be getting a catalogue from Paris, by the way. Some nice things that might interest your Nikki."

Bradford smiled "That sounds delightful. Once we get Phan settled, I owe Nikki some spoiling."

"I'm sure." Tobias smoked silently for a few minutes, trying to decide how he felt about Phan needing him. It was... flattering, part of him noted, and a little bit of a triumph as well, soothing the part of him that had hurt so bad when Phan had used his safeword and started the end of their relationship. It had been a blow to know that what Phan needed him to stop doing was the one thing he could not have stopped: being himself. And now that Phan's needs had changed enough for him to once more want Tobias... "I think I hate myself right now," he told Bradford, reaching for the bottle and his glass once more.

"Don't. You knew what you were getting into when you rescued that street rat." Bradford winked.

Tobias snorted. "Did I? How about when you said, 'Hey, Tobias, happy birthday, have a cop. He's a nice boy'? I didn't know what I was getting then. Oh, by the way, thank you."

"Don't be a smart ass; you'd turned into a hermit. Someone had to pull you out of it. Noah was... my best effort."

"He's my best everything," Tobias said with so much sincerity he heard it himself. He looked at his empty glass and winced. "Oops."

"Don't worry, your secret is safe with me." Bradford was suddenly right there and pulling the empty glass from Tobias' fingers. "Why don't you go home to him while you can still walk?"

"Because while I can walk, I can no longer drive." Tobias stretched, eyeing the couch doubtfully. "I hope you have a guest room."

"Oh, of course, no driver at this hour. Very well, my guest room is yours." Bradford said, helping Tobias to his feet. "Do you want Phan?"

"I don't think you're supposed to ask that when I'm drunk," Tobias said, transferring the doubtful look to Bradford.

Bradford laughed. "No, perhaps not. It is a bit like candy to a baby isn't it? Come on then." He escorted Tobias toward the stairs.

"Don't let him hear you say that," Tobias advised. "He has a thing about being called sweet. Right, I'm not talking anymore." Tobias let himself be led up the stairs, concentrating hard on not talking. "Don't let me drink with you anymore. I seem to have lost all my tolerance."

"Uh-huh." They turned the corner at the top of the stairs, and Bradford turned on the light in the guest room. "Bathroom is the far door there, not to be confused with the closet, hm? There's a robe in the bathroom and pajamas in the dresser. I'll wake you."

"Okay," Tobias agreed easily. "And then I'll call Noah. Who may shoot me for worrying him."

"Goodnight, Tobias." Bradford sounded indulgent. "Thank you for coming by."

"Goodnight, Bradford. Thanks for the alcohol, nicotine, and nerves." Tobias closed the door before Bradford's indulgence could break. He managed to undress without hurting himself, a fact that made him absurdly pleased, and then he fell asleep on Bradford's very soft guest bed, not moving at all until morning, when he heard a tap on the door.

## Chapter 4

Tobias woke slowly, feeling fuzzy and vaguely out of sorts. The tap came again, and it took him a moment to remember where he was, and why. "Yes?" he called, blinking rapidly to help his eyes focus.

Nikki peered in at him. "Master Tobias? Master Bradford asked me to wake you and tell you that breakfast is on the table." He set a mug of hot coffee on the nightstand. "He says to come down when you're ready. Oh, and not to forget to call your boy."

"Thank you, Nikki," Tobias said, reaching for the mug. "I'll be right down. Oh, is Phantom up yet?"

Nikki lingered in the doorway. "Phan is having breakfast, sir. He didn't sleep very well, I'm afraid."

Tobias nodded. "I'd be surprised if he did. I'll be right down. Try to get him to eat, please."

"Yes, sir," Nikki said as he backed out and closed the door.

Tobias searched through his pile of clothes until he found his phone, calling his apartment as he tried to dress and sip his coffee at the same time.

"Jesus, I've been worried sick!" Noah lit into him as he answered the phone.

"I'm sorry, sweetheart," Tobias said immediately, not trying to be smooth about it. "I'm really sorry. By the time I went to bed it was too late to call."

"You think I was sleeping? Are you okay? How's Phan?"

"I'm fine. Bradford got me drunk. And I have no idea how Phan is, I'm just on my way down to see him now. He's still set to leave, as far as I know. We didn't get anywhere last night, other than to clarify that he and Bradford are pretty much at their limit and that Phan's developed a lot of guilt about taking attention from Nikki." He paused while he tried to put on his shirt without letting go of the phone, giving it up as hopeless after a moment. "Hang on."

Shirt finally on, he retrieved the phone. "Frankly, I don't know what to do."

"He seriously wants to go?" Noah sounded more than a little concerned.

"He doesn't think he has a choice," Tobias said, pulling on his socks. "What he wants is another matter altogether."

"Did he tell you?" Tobias could hear the creak of Noah's gun belt.

"No. He either wouldn't or couldn't. Bradford says he needs me -- I said I already have a sub. Phan went to bed. Then there was drinking. Oh, I told Phantom about the apartment; that went over like a lead balloon. Are you getting ready for work?" Tobias sipped his coffee and looked around the room for his shoes.

"Yes, but I'm thinking if Phan's about to ship out I better come over and say goodbye first." Noah sighed. "I can't believe you aren't stopping him."

"What should I do, Noah?" Tobias asked seriously. "I promised you I wouldn't bring him home, and at this point that's the only other choice."

It was quiet on the other end of the line for a very long, uncomfortable moment. "I'm going to stop by," Noah said finally.

"Good. I'm sure he'd like to see you," Tobias said. He almost hung up the phone, but couldn't, quite. "And I always want to see you."

"I'm going to call your driver, okay? Where's the number?" He could hear Noah flipping through the address book Tobias kept by the phone.

"Front page, under the number for security. But I have the car -- bring the truck, I'll need it for work, if I make it in. God, Dee is going to kill me." He groaned and put his shoes on.

"Oh, all right." Noah sounded so tired that it was hard to believe he was going to drag himself into work. "I'll see you in a few," he said, and hung up the phone.

Tobias found himself staring at his cell phone. Noah hanging up first didn't bode well for the day. With a sigh he shut the phone off and left the room, hurrying down to the dining room.

He found Bradford and Phan sitting at the table, neither of them saying anything. He skipped wishing them a good morning and simply said, "Noah is coming over."

Bradford looked up at him. "Oh, good, reinforcements."

"We need them. Unless you've come to your senses, Phan?"

Phan looked at his plate and said nothing.

Tobias sat down next to him. "You can stay at the apartment. We'll work something out. Let us help."

"You've been helping," Phan said quietly. "I don't think--"

"So don't," Tobias said. "Don't think. Just do. Stay."

"And do what, sir? I can't keep... drowning like this. I'm getting through a lot of things, but I want..."

"What?" Tobias pressed quietly when Phan fell silent.

But Phan shook his head and poked at his breakfast.

Tobias looked at Bradford. "Nikki says Phan didn't sleep."

Bradford just shook his head. "No, but he managed a mouthful of breakfast when Nikki came down and told him you said to eat."

"Oh, good. Eat more, boy," Tobias said, rolling his eyes.

Phan ate.

"Oh, dear." Tobias looked at Bradford and shrugged. "Phan, don't go to the clinic."

Phan's jaw twitched. "Sir."

"It's not the answer." Bradford added, "I'm not sure exactly what is yet, but what if we promise we'll help you find it? The clinic, your parents, that's just not the way to go. I think you know that."

"But I don't know what else is," Phan said. "I keep saying that."

"Give us time to find it," Tobias said, trying not to plead with the boy.

Phan sighed and put his fork down. "See what I've done? I've torn up four lives along with my own. How can I live like this, letting you keep losing sleep, letting you keep worrying about me? At least at the clinic I'll know what I am."

"I think it's a mistake, Phan. They'll make you hate yourself." Nikki piped up from the floor beside Bradford's chair.

Bradford blinked and looked down at him before looking back at Phan. "Well, the boy isn't wrong, Phan."

Tobias watched Phan blink rapidly, his gaze fixed on his plate. "I won't let you die," Tobias whispered. "I'll never let you go like this, Phantom."

Phan gasped, his head shaking. "Stop."

"No. I won't let you go with them." Tobias could feel his anger building, his need to fight against what Phan's parents would let happen to their son again.

"With all due respect, it's his decision, sir," Noah interrupted, striding into the room in full uniform and going right to Phan. "Forbidding him isn't the way to do this. Phan..." Noah knelt by Phan's chair. "I'm sorry about last night. But please don't make this decision too quickly."

Tobias sat back, relief washing over him. He had no idea why he was so sure Noah could talk some sense into Phan, but he was.

Phan touched Noah's cheek with one hand for a moment. "I'm sorry," he said softly. "I didn't mean to hurt you. Or scare you. Whatever. And I didn't mean to make Sir come here last night."

"You listen to me." Noah said firmly, tugging over a chair and looking Phan right in the eyes. "Whatever you're doing, don't do it on my account, or Bradford's, or anyone else's. We're grown men, and capable of making our own decisions about how we want to spend our time and energy. If we want to spend it on you, then a simple thank you is good enough. All this guilt is just uncalled for. For all the rough spots, I've gotten as much out of our Tuesday night pig-outs as you have. Okay? So if you're going to do this, do it for yourself. Do it because it's what you want to do, not what you think you have to do. Please? Promise me?"

Tobias found himself holding his breath.

"But they're coming," Phan said softly. "And I don't know where else to go."

"The apartment," Tobias said again. "It's yours. We'll work out the details soon."

"See?" Noah said with a nod of his head. "You have options. And so what if they're coming? We'll turn them away. You don't even have to see them."

Phan sighed. "Noah, you don't understand. Even if I do go to the apartment, and Sir and you go live downtown -- then what? I'm still me, still like this, and still just... broken. At the clinic they'll... do something. Make me better."

Noah stood up and snorted, pacing away from the table. "What kind of clinic is this that can make you better when your closest friends and the best fucking kinky head-doctor in the city can't? Huh? That's crap, Phan."

"Jesus, Noah. Think." Phantom seemed to have forgotten there was anyone else in the room. "I'm a mess, and I can't keep taking forever. If you knew what I think about--" He stopped dead and everyone could hear the knocking at the front door.

Noah froze and stared at Phan for a long moment. Finally, he sighed and raised an eyebrow. "I'll get that, shall I?" He strode out of the room much the way he'd come in.

Tobias watched Noah's retreating back and turned to Bradford. "This could be interesting. Shall we go watch?"

Phan groaned. "I'll get my bag."

"No, you won't. Not yet." Tobias stood up and looked at Bradford. "Your house."

"Come, Phan," Bradford said as he stood and made his way to the foyer. "Come on now, right at my heel." He led them out to the hall, a strange procession intent on protecting one of their own.

"Can I help you?" Noah was asking as he opened the front door.

Tobias watched as Phan's father, several years older than the last time Tobias had seen him and showing it, blinked at the uniformed police officer in front of him. "I'm looking for my son," he said finally. "Has there been some trouble here?"

"Nothing that concerns you, sir." Noah sounded eerily official. "Who would your son be?"

"Phantom Shaw. He's--" Tobias saw the moment the man's eyes found Phan, widening suddenly. "Phan. Time to go."

Tobias watched Phan shrink back against Bradford before taking a hesitant step forward.

"Where is he going?" Noah held up a hand to stop Phan from moving any farther.

Phan's father eyed Noah. "To a clinic, though I doubt you have any right to ask. He's sick."

Noah looked at Phan. "He seems fine to me."

Tobias grinned and had to cough to hide a choked laugh.

Unfortunately, that brought attention to him, and Phan's father frowned. "Dr. Vincent," he said icily. "I should have known he was mixed up with you again. And I suppose that this... man Phan's clinging to is his

new benefactor." He ignored Noah utterly and tried to step to Phan. "Come on. We're going now. The clinic is expecting you."

"Whoa, whoa, wait a minute." Noah stepped between Phantom and his father. "Phan, you don't have to go anywhere if you don't want to, you know that, right? You're an adult and have the right to do as you please."

Phan nodded slowly, gravitating toward Noah.

"Phantom. You called me," his father stated. "You asked for my help."

"He can change his mind. Tell him where you're taking him. Tell him what this clinic will do for him." Noah looked the man in the eye. "Go on, tell us all how this clinic is going to help him."

"They'll finally get this submissive crap out of him," Phan's father said with a snarl. "Help him with trauma, give him coping skills, and teach him to be a man. Phantom. Now."

Tobias watched as Phan flinched, wanting to cheer when he shook his head. "I don't want to," he whispered. "I changed my mind."

"Doesn't work that way, Phan. You called for help, help is here, and it's going to take more than you whispering at me to convince me you don't need it."

Noah looked horrified. "You're saying this place you want to send him to will attempt to strip Phan of his right to choose how to conduct his own life without interference from judgmental prudes who never learned the meaning of the word 'acceptance'?"

Phan's father stared at Noah. "Who the hell are you, anyway? Look, just let me do what my son asked me to. I'm here to pick him up and take him to a clinic. You have no right to stop him from leaving, unless he's under arrest."

"That's an idea I hadn't considered. But, actually, I have a better one." Noah turned to Phan. "Phan, listen. You want a sure thing? You want a plan? Let me give this to you and if you don't want it, then you go if you have to, okay?" Noah took Phan by the shoulders. "Move in with us. With Tobias and me. We'll make sure you have your own space, and we don't have to talk commitments or contracts or anything like that. Just a place to stay if that's all you want. Safe with us. It's a risk, sure, but it's not any more dangerous than the one your father wants you to take. He's full of shit, Phan; in your heart you know he doesn't care about you. But we do."

Tobias' heart stopped for a moment, he was sure of it. Noah hadn't even looked at him, just took Phan on for them both, displaying a level of trust Tobias hadn't seen before. When his heart started again it was in his throat, waiting for Phan's reaction.

Phantom's father was pale, and he was staring daggers at Noah. "You're one of *them*," he spat. "And Vincent's as well. I should have known."

"Shut up," Tobias said succinctly. "Phan?"

Phan kissed Noah's mouth softly and turned from him, walking to Tobias' side. "I have help already," he said, sinking to his knees. "I don't want to go to the clinic."

Tobias stroked his hair, hoping his hand wasn't shaking. "Show the man out, pet. Thank you."



Noah turned and looked at Phan's father. "You heard Phan, he doesn't need you."

"No money, Phantom," the man threatened. "I'm withdrawing everything you've been given."

"I've never used it," Phan said quietly. "And you know it."

"Your mother--"

"Hasn't spoken kindly to him in years," Tobias interrupted. "Please leave."

Phan's father gave him a long stare. "There's no truce this time. I can ruin each and every one of you."

Tobias took a step forward, but Phan beat him to it, rolling to his feet smoothly. "And then all your petty little secrets will come out, Da. The men you left me with, the loving care Mother poured on me, the way I was born as a tool to be used to keep you together. Hey, Mother was in hiding for a reason, right? I wonder how many people still wonder where she is?"

Tobias reached for Phan's shoulder. "Easy, boy. Let's not go making threats. I'm sure we can take care of this much more civilly."

Phan turned to look at him with incredulous eyes, which he hastily dropped.

Tobias glared at Phantom's father. "Mr. Shaw, I recommend you leave. I have little doubt that Phan means what he says. Is it really worth it to take the son you never wanted away from where he wants to be, just so you can say you have a son? Do you hate him that much?"

Phantom's father glared around at all of them, ending at Tobias once more. "He won't get another chance from me."

"He won't need one. Go."

He turned stiffly and went, not looking back. The door closed on him with a thud that sounded very solid and final.

"Well," Tobias said into the silence left by the closing door. "That was interesting." He stroked Phan's hair almost absently, but it was Noah he was looking at. "Come here, pet."

Noah took a couple of steps to Tobias. "I should have asked you first. I'm sorry, but I couldn't let Phan walk out that door. I couldn't let that bigot have him. He's working too hard, he's been through too much, and he's a friend, you know? I hope... I mean you're okay with it, I can see that, but I should have--"

Noah's explanation was cut off as Tobias kissed him, pushing his tongue into Noah's mouth. Tobias held him in place with his free hand until they were both gasping for air. "You did the right thing," he said when he finally let Noah go. "Thank you."

He petted Phan again and looked at Noah. "Do you have time to go to the apartment before your ballgame tonight?"

Noah was still holding Tobias' gaze as Tobias' words registered. "Ballgame. Oh! After my ballgame. Sure," Noah nodded, stepping back from Tobias and righting his uniform. He was grinning and looked a little floaty. "What do you need? I could also call out, I'm wondering if I'm really in the right frame of mind to be trusted with a loaded gun today, anyway."

"Deidre will kill me if I miss today." He looked down at Phan. "Well, boy. Looks like we have some talking do."

"Yes, sir," Phan said, his gaze fixed to the floor even though he was leaning against Tobias' leg.

Tobias shook his head fondly and looked back at Noah. "I have rounds. You can either go to work or take Phan to the apartment -- in either case, I'd like us all there after my rounds so we can sort out some practical details." He transferred his gaze to Bradford. "You can talk now, I know you're dying to say something."

Bradford grinned. Tobias was quite sure he'd been deliberately silent all this time, quietly observing with Nikki kneeling at his feet. He turned his gaze on Noah. "Thank you, boy, I do believe you have solved more problems than you know. It's a great relief to me." When he looked back at Tobias he started to chuckle. "May you take nothing for granted, you lucky old bastard."

Noah laughed. "If it's all right with you, Master Bradford, will you look after Phan today? I think I should get to work, after all." He looked at Tobias. "I'll get one of the other counselors to cover practice tonight; this is important."

Tobias nodded and kissed him again. "I'll see you after your shift, then, pet. Be safe, all right?"

"Yes, always. I better run." He knelt down in front of Phan and touched his face, then kissed him lightly on the cheek. "You made the right decision. Eat, will you? And get some sleep." He smiled and stood up again. "Glad I could be of service," he told Bradford in his most official cop-voice and winked at him. "Got the car keys?" He held out the keys to Tobias' truck in exchange.

Tobias fished the car keys out of his pocket and traded them with Noah just as his cell phone began to ring. "Dee," Tobias groaned, looking at the screen. "Go, we'll see you later." He tapped Phan on the shoulder and said, "Breakfast. Now."

"Yes, sir," Phan said. "Noah--" He paused and shrugged. "I'll try to say thank you later."

Tobias' phone rang again and he pointed to the dining room and the front door, smiling as his boys scattered. "I'm on my way," he said into the phone as he pressed the talk button.

"Oh, good, we've got work to do," Deidre said in his ear.

Tobias looked at Bradford and raised an eyebrow. "We certainly do."

## Chapter 5

Tobias got home at four on the dot, stunned by how quickly the day had passed. He and Deidre had been run nearly ragged, and he hadn't had time to do much more than call Bradford and ask the man to bring Phantom to the apartment at about four-thirty. He certainly hadn't had time to actually sit and think, which was good from a not panicking perspective, but not great when one considered the situation as a whole.

He showered quickly, ridding himself of the smell of livestock as best he could, and dressed in soft jeans and a sweatshirt. Working clothes, really, and probably not appropriate to soothe and coax either Noah or Phan, but sometimes comfort was more important than image.

He'd just put the coffee on when the front desk buzzed him to say that Noah was on his way up, and he found himself waiting by the condo door, eager to see what kind of state his lover was in.

Noah knocked briefly and started to let himself in, seeming surprised to see Tobias on the other side of the door. He looked up and smiled, his eyes tired, but he seemed in good spirits. "Hi," he said as he moved into the hall. He was still in uniform and was carrying a large duffel on his shoulder. "I hope you don't mind, I picked up a few things at home on my lunch break today, figuring it would be a late night or two, and then... well, the weekend."

"Good thought," Tobias said, taking the bag from him and tossing it on the floor. He crowded Noah against the wall and added, "You've had a lot of them today." Then he kissed him thoroughly.

Noah melted into the kiss, sliding fingers into Tobias' hair. When they paused to breathe he looked into Tobias' eyes and said, "I hope this is a good idea. I don't see Phan getting another chance."

"Shh. Phan later. You and me now." Tobias kissed him again, one hand going to the small of Noah's back and pulling him closer. "Mine," he growled. "No matter what."

"Nothing will change that." Noah was breathless from the kiss, and a little flushed. It looked as good on him as his uniform. "How much time do we have?" He tugged on Tobias' sweater.

"Not enough," Tobias said with real regret. "Come on, let's get some coffee into you, at least." He leaned in and took another kiss, though, not ready to let Noah go.

"Coffee sounds great. But promise me that I'll get you alone for at least a couple of hours tonight." He grinned and slipped away, if only a few inches. "I better change. You want my gun and my pager?" He reached for the hefty buckle on his gun belt.

"Yes," Tobias said, holding out his hand. "Give me your gun." He grinned and winked to add to the tease, then added, "I'm sure we can manage a couple of hours -- if nothing else, Phan will fall asleep fast. Hungry?"

Noah pulled his gun out and separated it from the clip, putting both into Tobias' hand and then adding his pager on top. "Not quite yet." He tugged off his tie and loosened the top button on his shirt, showing off his collar. "Should I put my bag in the bedroom?"

"Yes. I'll put these away in the desk." He leaned forward and kissed Noah yet again. "Love you."

Noah let Tobias get a few steps away before he answered. "I love you, too," he said with a smile, then he hefted his duffel and disappeared into the bedroom.

The doorbell rang moments later.

Tobias swore, putting the weapon and pager away quickly and hurrying to the door. He hadn't even managed to get coffee into Noah yet. He pulled the door open and smiled at Bradford, who had Phan at his heel, eyes down.

"Come on in," Tobias said. "There's coffee on, and Noah's getting changed. At least, I think he is."

Bradford nodded and stepped inside, shrugging his coat off and handing it to Phan. "Phan's had a nice long nap, he should be fairly alert this evening. I can't say the same for you, though; you look exhausted. Coffee is probably a good idea." He followed Tobias into the kitchen. "How is he?"

Noah walked in just then, but he didn't answer the question himself. Instead, he lingered just inside the doorway neatly in his display position. He was barefoot, wearing jeans that sat more on his hips than his waist and a black T-shirt that hugged every muscle in his shoulders and chest. His collar stood out prominently against the black fabric.

Bradford looked him over critically.

"He's tired," Tobias said shortly. "I worried him all night and owe him an apology for it. He turned immediately to Noah and said, 'I am sorry, Noah. It was inconsiderate of me, and I regret not phoning you to let you know what was going on.'"

Noah managed to smile for him, "I understand, sir. But thank you, and I accept."

Tobias nodded and glanced at Phan, who was still at Bradford's heel, a duffel bag in one hand. He looked a little better than he had that morning, but Tobias was well aware of the dark circles under his eyes. "Phan, help Noah with your things, please. I have no idea where you'll eventually end up, but for tonight you'll be in the guest room, unless we decide differently as we talk."

"Yes, sir," Phan said softly. He walked toward Noah with a measured pace, clearly unsure if Noah was still as welcoming as he'd been earlier in the day. His shoulders were tense, his back so tight it had to be aching.

Noah reached out and took the bag from Phan, looping the strap over his own shoulder instead, and then slipped his hand into Phan's. "Relax. I've been looking forward to seeing you," he told Phan quietly, and led him from the room.

Tobias felt his shoulders sag. "Thank God for that," he said under his breath. He turned to Bradford and asked, "So. What do you think?" as he reached for four mugs and the coffee pot.

"I think one of us, or both of us, has greatly underestimated your boy. And provided that you can give him the right balance of alone time, I think this could work out very well indeed. But I won't say you don't have

your work cut out for you; I don't envy you these first few weeks. If you need help, or just need to blow off steam, you know you can come to me."

Bradford slid an envelope across the kitchen table toward Tobias. "This is my contract with Phan. It's very mechanical and clunky, but we drew it up quickly and without much foresight. It's up to you whether we should keep it in place for now or shred it. You'll be discussing some kind of arrangement this evening that you'll put in writing, I assume, even if it's not a contract? I would advise it."

Tobias poured the coffee and nodded. "We have to set a lot of guidelines tonight, get certain things settled right away so everyone knows where they stand, yes. I think writing it down is essential, if only because there's so much to cover. Would you like to stay and listen?"

Bradford considered that for a bit. "I'm not sure. I can see the merit as a mediator, but I don't want Phan... I'd hate for him to feel like he couldn't speak his mind about the things he needs and isn't getting from me. What do you think? I'm inclined to leave you three to it."

Tobias chuckled. "Friend, I am adrift without a map here. Whatever you feel most comfortable with -- I may not want you to witness my pitiful attempt to soothe the boys. Or my gloating if it all works out and I manage to get some comfortable sleep tonight without anyone falling apart." He gestured to the living room and picked up the loaded tray. "Shall we?"

Bradford stood, taking Phan's contract along with him. "How about I stay long enough to hand Phan over officially? If he feels like he wants me to stay I will, but otherwise, it's really not my negotiation."

As they left the kitchen, the boys in question were making their way back down the hall.

"Living room," Bradford instructed and the pair followed along.

Tobias set the tray on the coffee table and sat in the easy chair. "All right. Business first." He gestured to the floor beside him. "Noah, here, pet." When Noah knelt beside him, Tobias looked at Bradford and nodded.

Bradford moved to Phan and talked to him quietly for a moment. "Phan, I know you agree that dissolving our contract is the best thing for both of us." He smiled. "And I also know that you're going to be happier and more fulfilled where you're going. So, while we've been through a great deal together, and I will miss you, it's with a very light heart that I step out of your life as your Master to make room for Master Tobias." He handed Phan the envelope. "That's my only copy. I release you."

"Thank you, Master Bradford," Phantom said softly. "For everything." He waited a moment and then turned around and walked to Tobias' chair, kneeling in front of him. "I don't know what you're going to do with me, sir, and I'm not expecting anything. But I come to you freely and offer everything I have for a chance to serve as you see fit."

Tobias petted Noah's hair and nodded. "I don't know yet what I'm going to do with you either, boy. But you're welcome here, and we'll make sure you're safe. Won't we, pet?"

"Yes, sir." Noah smiled at Phan.

"Phan," Bradford said more clearly. "I was planning on leaving you to your negotiations here, unless you think you need me to stay for some reason?"

Phan shook his head and glanced behind him to Bradford. "I'm fine, sir."

Tobias pointed at the coffee table and raised an eyebrow. "You're going to leave me with these two and that much caffeine? You're a hard, hard man, Bradford."

He wasn't sure, but he thought Phan might have almost giggled.

"You know what? I am. And I'm going to go home and take a flogger to Nikki because he's been a good boy and deserves some TLC. Don't get up, anyone, I'll get my own coat." He winked at Tobias. "Good luck."

"Thanks. Tell Nikki he's going to love your present when it gets here." Tobias watched as Bradford left the room, his fingers still stroking Noah's hair.

When he heard the door close he sat back a bit and sighed. "I don't know about you two, but I could use the coffee. Make yourselves comfortable, we're going to talk frankly, as in negotiations. No roles for now, just us, all right?"

Noah stood up and picked up a mug right away, making the transition as easily as he always did. He took a seat in one of the chairs beside the coffee table and took a long sip. "Oh, man, I needed this," he said with a sigh.

Tobias laughed as he reached for a mug. "You look it. Phan? Help yourself, really."

Phan nodded and picked up a mug, still kneeling by Tobias' chair, though looking around. "Um. Can I... Noah, can I sit with you?" he asked in a rush.

Noah looked surprised. "I... sure, it's fine with me if..." he glanced at Tobias.

"No roles," Tobias said firmly. "Not yet. You two want to cuddle up, go ahead."

"In that case, we're taking the couch." Noah grinned. He got to his feet and moved over, settling into the corner of the couch and waving Phan to him. "But if you're leaning on me, you're going to have to refill my coffee when I need it. And I will need it."

"You got it," Phan said with a smile. He sat on the couch and settled against Noah with a sigh, sitting up enough that they could both drink their coffee. "Thanks. I just... kinda needed to cuddle," he said with a half-smile. "You're the best cuddler I know."

Tobias smiled to himself and slouched down in his own chair. "He is," he agreed. "Fill up, and tell me what you want on your pizzas. I figure we can relax for a few minutes anyway before we start talking this out. Unless you two want to get right to it?" he asked, raising an eyebrow.

"I like sausage and mushroom if you're ordering from Romeo's," Noah said. "And I'm ready to start when you are, but I'm really not sure what would be the best approach to this conversation. You think we should bounce around concerns first? Maybe see where they overlap? It might be easier to attack the solutions that way. Just an idea."

"Sounds fine to me," Tobias said, reaching for the portable phone. "It's hardly a secret that we're all feeling our way here -- I've never had to two subs for longer than a scene before, so whatever you two have to say, say it. Phan?"

Phan nodded. "Sure. Don't blame me if I don't shut up, though. Oh, and can I have spinach and lemon?"

"Spinach and lemon what?"

"Pizza."

Tobias stared at him and started dialing. "You've spent far too much time trying new food, I can tell."

"It's good!" Phan insisted, looking at Noah. "They do it with three cheeses and lots of garlic."

"Anything with garlic has got to be good," Noah said with a grin. It was clear, though, that he wasn't inclined to hold off on this discussion until after dinner. "I think I'd really like to hear from you first, Phan, just because Tobias and I already have an agreement between us. What we're talking about tonight, I think, is almost entirely about you." He gave Phan a squeeze with one arm. "And don't pretend you don't like the spotlight, I know you better than that."

"It's kind of different this way, though," Phan said, and Tobias watched him snuggle into Noah a bit more.

Tobias continued to watch them as he ordered the pizzas, surprised to discover that they knew exactly what he was talking about when he asked for spinach and lemon, and added a standard pepperoni and cheese one for himself. They'd be eating leftovers for ages.

"All right," he said, hanging up the phone. "We've got half an hour. The only thing I want to say upfront is that the contract I have with Noah is signed and stands. Anything else has to work within that, understood?"

Phan nodded and then said, "Um, can I see it?"

Tobias snorted. "That would help, wouldn't it? Hang on." He got up and went to his desk, getting both the contract he and Noah had created and a stack of paper, along with some pens.

"Okay, take two," he said, putting everything but the contract on the coffee table. "Bradford suggested we take notes, and I agree." He handed the contract to Phan and picked up the coffee pot. "Coffee?" he asked Noah.

"Please." Noah held out his cup. "Notes. Well, at least I'm not the only one that thinks this is going to be complicated." He set a pen and some paper in Phan's lap as he read.

"Oh, no," Tobias said, pouring coffee. "This is going to be very complicated."

"Uh-huh," Phan said, sounding distracted. "This is really nice. Lots of room to move, but really clear." He looked up and blinked. "Um, I mean for you two, as a contract. Not from an accommodating me standpoint." He flushed and looked down.

Tobias smiled and ruffled Phan's hair. "The playing with others part was for you. And I'm sure that we can work something out without straining that contract."

"Okay," Phan said softly. "I don't know what to say."

"Do you think you made the right decision?" Noah asked simply. "What reservations do you have about it?"

"Getting in the way," Phan said immediately. "I don't want to cause any kind of rift or stress or strain or be something you two worry over. Ever."

Noah sipped his coffee thoughtfully and then looked at Phan. "I think that's a legitimate concern, hon." He touched his fingers to his forehead for a moment. "I'm concerned about that, too. That incorporating a third

person into our lifestyle will be stressful, that I might feel jealous or neglected or something, that there might be times when it's actually not working and needs fixing. But there are two things that you don't need to worry about. Getting in the way -- because you won't be 'in the way.' Whatever agreement we come to will incorporate you. It won't be possible for you to be in the way. As for a rift? Tobias and I have agreed to do this. We'll have some adjusting to do, we all will. There might be stressful things we have to work through. But you? Cause a rift? Not between us. It's just not possible."

Tobias' admiration and respect for Noah grew with every word. "Very eloquent, sweetheart," he said, setting the coffee pot down. "And completely accurate." He leaned over and kissed Noah's mouth gently before standing again and touching Phan's cheek. "That's why I have any hope at all of this working out; Noah's sense of self and what's important always seems to win out -- if he's got an issue he wants to talk about, you can be damn sure that you and I will be sitting and listening." He smiled and winked. "You both know that I'm willing to bring things up. And that I'll pry and poke until you give up anything you think you're hiding."

Phan groaned. "God, yes."

Noah laughed. "I'm not that bad, am I?" He sipped his coffee before continuing. "So, Phan, you think you can speak up for yourself? Because I don't want your concerns neglected either. This is only going to work well if we're all willing to talk, you know?"

"I spend a lot of my time talking about myself," Phan said slowly. "And I know it's different from therapy. I don't think I could hide things from Sir, I'm pretty sure it would be obvious to us both. We... after we hit the wall last time, we spent a lot of time talking, every day."

"Affirmation," Tobias put in, remembering too many nights of sitting with Phan in his arms as they tried to find their way and not quite getting there.

Phan nodded. "It didn't work, but at no point did I feel like it was a wasted effort -- I felt safe telling him what was wrong. I already tell you what's wrong, mostly. I think I can do that." Phan looked at Noah with hopeful eyes and Tobias sat back, nodding his head. Talking was the most useful tool they had.

"Okay," Tobias said softly. "I believe that. Noah?"

"Yeah, I believe it, too," he said, returning Phan's look with a smile and tugging him a bit closer.

Tobias nodded as tension seemed to flood out of Phan and he sprawled farther, melting against Noah. "Good. It's the good start we need. Now, there are things to talk about. Like... oh, my personal favorite, chores. Won't do to have you tripping on each other in the kitchen, would it?" He grinned. "Though I wouldn't say no to more than one cup of coffee in the morning."

"Well, the farmhouse and barn chores will go much faster if we do them together," Noah suggested. "But the city house chores, I think it might be better to trade off so we each get some downtime, you know, one-on-one time with you? What do you think, Phan?"

Phan looked at Noah and then at Tobias, his tongue flicking out to trace his lower lip.

Tobias braced himself.

"I think," Phan said slowly, "that it might make sense if I did the general cleaning and things like that, and you tend to Sir in the mornings. The two nights you're out can be my one-on-one time, and the weekends are already yours by contract. I mean, I'll be around, but that's when his energy should be focused on you. And



the evening things during the week -- like running the bath, doing dishes, and things like that, we can trade off."

Tobias raised an eyebrow. "That's detailed."

Phan grinned. "I can write it down, if you want."

Noah's brow furrowed as he took that all in. He rubbed his forehead and closed his eyes like he was trying to put pieces together in his mind. He looked up at Tobias questioningly. "What do you think?"

"I think it's a complicated way of Phan both trying not to be a bother and give you what he perceives as a gift," Tobias said smoothly.

Phan sighed and rolled his eyes. "That didn't take long."

"I was your Master for how long?" Tobias asked with a raised eyebrow. "Don't try to play me, even if you're being kind."

"Yes, sir," Phan sighed again. "I'm sorry."

"I know. But it doesn't matter anyway, because the gift wouldn't have been accepted. He doesn't do that for me."

Noah looked between them. "I knew something wasn't sitting right. The not being a bother thing I got. A gift? I'm sorry, I didn't see it."

"No reason for you to," Tobias said. "One of Phan's favorite privileges was to dress me in the morning. It was a standard reward for good behavior, and the first thing to go if he was being punished. I think he assumed the same for us, and didn't want to take that away from you -- thus the offer to leave you with mornings."

"Oh." Noah smiled. "Well, thank you, Phan. That was sweet of you, anyway. And if that's something you want to arrange between the two of you that would be fine with me. Quite frankly, I need to be in another headspace altogether on weekday mornings when I'm off to work."

"He does raise a point, however," Tobias said, deliberately skipping over the matter of getting dressed in the morning. "I think it would be a good idea to officially designate the two nights you're out as time for me to work with Phan. The weekends, as he said, are when my energy will be yours. The rest of the time can be a little more up in the air."

"That's fine with me," Noah agreed. "And I'd like to suggest that you take Tuesday nights off. You're going to need a break, too." Noah looked at him meaningfully. "You can't really expect to work seven nights a week."

"Ah, but if I take Tuesday, the now traditional 'Phan and Noah eat and cuddle night,' who's going to pamper me?" he teased.

Phan's eye roll was a wonderful thing to see, the boy finally relaxed enough to play. "We'll make sure you have the remote and a pot of tea," he offered.

Noah just snorted. "While we take over the hot tub in the safe room and watch old Bette Davis movies. Really, Tobias, you're going to be so pampered and spoiled between the two of us, you're going to be glad

for a night that someone isn't right there to cater to you." He grinned and winked.

"So you think," Tobias said in mock protest. "All right, so Phantom will take care of the usual morning things, aside from a cup of coffee -- simply because I'm the boss and I like Noah giving me coffee. Then Noah and I will saunter off to our jobs and Cinder-Phan will clean house. Go to therapy. Get well. Eventually, work. Wednesday and Thursday nights I'll work with Phan, Friday we'll all troop off to the farm, and Tuesdays we all have off. Sound all right?"

Phan nodded and scribbled madly on a piece of paper.

"I'd sign that," Noah teased.

Tobias laughed and was about to move on to his next concern when the house phone buzzed. "Supper," he said, standing up. "Would you two grab some plates, please?" He pulled his wallet from his pocket and went to answer the door, waiting for the elevator to get to their floor. He could hear them moving and laughing in the kitchen, though he couldn't make out the words.

He was just happy they were laughing.

Arms full with three pizza boxes, he went back to the living room to find them sitting on the floor in front of the coffee table, looking up at him with bright grins. "You two look like you're hungry," he said mildly.

They nodded at him, heads bobbing like five-year-olds.

"Oh, dear," he said, putting the pizzas down. "Mine's on top, don't eat it all."

Phan snickered but didn't say anything.

"That's the first time I've heard you say that," Noah teased, peeking into the boxes underneath. "Mine." He pulled out the sausage and sat it on the floor next to him. "I'm starving all of a sudden."

"Eat," Tobias said. He tapped Phan's head. "And you. Eat a lot."

Phan nodded. "Okay. Though it would be better if Noah made it."

Tobias grinned and nodded, taking a couple of slices from his own box. "Where were we?" he asked.

Noah's mouth was full, but he spoke anyway. "We were waiting for whatever was next on your list."

"Very attractive," Tobias said, his own mouth full. "Right." He thought a minute. "Oh. Big ones, boys. Sleeping arrangements and sex."

Phan sat a little straighter, but kept chewing, his gaze apparently locked on the floor.

Noah shook his head. "I have no idea. I was going to bring both of them up myself." He sighed and sipped his coffee. "Ew, I'm getting a Coke. Phan?" Noah hopped up and headed for the kitchen.

"Yes, please," Phan said softly.

Tobias watched Phan eat his pizza, eyes still down. "Hey," he said just as softly.

Phan turned his head slightly.

"What do you think?"

Phan shrugged. "Grateful for what you've offered, don't have any right to ask for more."

"Stop that."

Phan turned his body, still sitting on the floor, but at least facing Tobias so his gaze was more at Tobias' knees than the floor. "I don't know what to say about this. I want to hear what you two think."

Noah returned with the Cokes and handed one to Phan. He glanced in Phan's direction as he sat, and looked him over. "You don't like this part of the conversation, Phan? Makes you feel uncomfortable, makes you feel like you're intruding?"

Phan nodded. "Oh, yeah. And makes me feel like... um. Like there's a line I shouldn't cross, 'cause if I do I'm too open, you know?"

"Too open?"

Phan put down his plate and reached for a napkin, wiping his hands carefully. "Yeah. It's stupid, I know, given that I'm here and all. But I feel like if I talk about this, what I'd like, what I don't want to have happen... I guess I feel like it's not my place to say anything yet, that I should just listen to what you and Sir have to say. So I can see where you want me to fit."

"What your status is," Tobias said.

Phan nodded.

"At the moment, you don't have a specific status," Tobias said slowly, "and that makes you feel uncomfortable."

Phan nodded again.

Tobias thought a moment. "I can't give you status right now. I can't really define what you are, because I don't know. We'll have to feel our way for a while."

Noah interrupted. "I don't like you thinking that it's not your place to say something, though, especially if it's about something you need or something you don't want."

Phan nodded. "Okay, I get that. But we're starting from nothing and you and Sir have a basis -- so while I'm at zero, you're at, like, eight or something. Give me something to work with here."

Tobias nodded. "Noah? What're your thoughts?"

Noah tapped his fingers on the table. "Okay. So, just thinking out loud here, while there may be a kind of hierarchy -- if only because I wear your collar and Phan doesn't -- I think we need to think inclusively about sleeping arrangements. Adding another chain if you want to, even. I just don't see banishing Phan to another room every night of the week."

Noah looked at Tobias. "As for sex, the fact is that the physical part of this relationship is going to become much more fluid over time as we get closer. That just seems like a natural progression to me." He cleared his throat. "That said, you and I have something deep and meaningful that goes far beyond our contract, and I

need that. I need alone time with you." His voice cracked a little and Tobias could feel the emotion in his words. "I need to be assured that we'll preserve that somehow. That little thing with the flower, too, that's just integral to the way we communicate -- to the way we fill each other's needs."

"Absolutely," Tobias said vehemently. "That's exactly what I was talking about when I left here last night -- you aren't losing me, and I'm not going to give you up. You're my lover and my partner, and that has to be clear." He turned to Phan, relieved to see the boy already looking at him. "I don't say it to hurt you."

"I know," Phan said, his voice clear. "It's what I've been meaning when I say you two work. You're..." he waved his hand and smiled. "You're good together. You're in love. And that's the part I don't want to hurt. Well, I don't want to hurt any of it, but that's the part that has to be protected." He looked over at Noah and tilted his head. "The part I don't want to intrude on. If that means I go to my own room some nights -- lots of nights -- that's okay with me. Really, Noah."

"It's not an easy thing to schedule, Phan, that's the thing..."

Phan nodded and Tobias could see him trying not to get exasperated. "I know that. I watch. I pay attention. I get out when I'm supposed to, and if I'm not moving fast enough one of you says 'Phan, we want to be all gooey. Go away.' I know this. Hell, I've been living with Bradford and Nikki. No, you don't want to know."

Noah ran his fingers through his hair. "Why don't you tell us what you think, Tobias, before Phan and I strangle each other with clarifications."

After a moment's thought Tobias leaned forward. "I see a few issues," he said. "First, it's essential that Noah and I have one-on-one time. There are times I need to be more relaxed with him, and it's intensely intimate. We're going to have to deal with that as it comes up -- I don't like the idea of simply telling Phan to take off, but until we're in a bigger place that's what's going to happen. Now, when we do find a new home, there will be other things to deal with, which is me getting ahead of myself."

He took a breath and looked at his boys, then reached for more pizza. "Frankly, the idea of having both of you chained to my bed turns me on, but that's hardly surprising. There are practical matters, though. There will be rules, and I'll expect them to be followed to the letter. They'll change, but not until we're a bit more settled."

Noah nodded. "I guess we should hear what the rules are, but I just want to say that the idea of sex inclusive of Phan is very appealing, too. I really don't want you to think I'm not looking forward to the perks of you moving in, Phan." Noah winked at him.

Phan winked back and grinned, but didn't say anything. He'd been watching both Noah and Tobias, steadily eating his pizza and wiping his hands after every piece. Tobias had an idea that Phan really wasn't going to say much about whatever he and Noah decided; he was just grateful to be there.

Tobias ate his entire slice of pizza before replying, letting both of them sit and wait. He was debating if he should explain each rule or just lay them out and let Noah and Phan pick and choose which ones they wanted to talk about. That could be informative, he figured, so when the pizza was gone he reached for a napkin and calmly wiped his fingers clean.

"Noah and I will continue as we have been. Phan, you and I will only have penetrative sex in-scene for a while. Neither of you will penetrate the other without my express permission -- that includes fingers and toys. However, you can suck each other blind if you want, whenever you feel like it. Well, so long as I get mine, anyway. If I feel like it, I'll probably order one of you not to come for several days -- and as of now,

neither of you are allowed to get off alone. That means no morning fun in the shower, no stroking off alone. Questions?"

"In-scene only?" Noah blinked at him.

"In-scene only," Tobias confirmed. "And probably not for a while, either. We haven't played that way at all for..."

"Years," Phan said.

Noah closed his pizza box and groaned, patting his stomach. "But... Phan and I can give each other head whenever we want?" He seemed to be puzzling out Tobias' motives.

"Yes. Feel free to start right after you digest," Tobias invited.

"Cool," Phan grinned. "Nothing like fostering affections."

"Ah." Noah laughed and winked at Phan. "You're good."

"I've had practice -- Bradford wouldn't let me out of his sight, and you wouldn't believe some of the scheming I've heard Doms planning." His gaze slid to Tobias. "You didn't hear that."

"Didn't hear a thing. And you won't tell a thing."

"Tell what?"

"Exactly."

Noah looked like he might turn purple. "Well, that hardly seems fair."

Phan looked at him pityingly. "Noah. What the Dom doesn't know, he can't whip your ass for. But if you're going to make a big deal out of it, it makes it hard to whisper in your ear later, and we both get stripes. Shut up and wait until lights out, 'kay?'"

Tobias raised an eyebrow and looked at Noah. "You didn't spend a lot of time ganging up on your parents with your sisters, did you?"

"Are you kidding?" Noah snorted. "My sisters always ganged up on me."

"They were trading secrets in the dark," Phan told him. "And now you, pretty boy, have a brother of sorts to swap tales with. But we gotta do it on the sly, see? Can't let the man know. Just between us."

Tobias was fairly sure he'd never heard a worse fake noir accent.

Noah snorted and shook his head. "Do you know, I don't think I have a single secret from the man? I'm going to be terrible at keeping them." He finished his Coke. "So, the rules are understood, by the way."

Tobias nodded. "Good. Phan?"

"Got it. No hands, no cock, but I can suck. Yay!"

Tobias rolled his eyes and got a faintly apologetic look.

"Sorry," Phan said. "Sleep, food, and sugar. Oh, and the whole here thing. I'm a little floaty."

"And Noah's a little exhausted," Tobias said with a smile. He kind of liked floaty Phan. "A couple more things, then. Tomorrow we'll figure out what to do with this place. Until we move, though, I think it'll be a little cramped here for all three of us, and to be totally honest, I'm not sure if just me and Phan living here is a good idea. Thoughts?"

"Phan can stay with me at my place, but you've got him Wednesdays and Thursdays, Tobias; you're going to have at least two nights alone -- unless you send him back late."

"Up to you, sweetheart. It's your feelings I'm thinking of here."

"I've already agreed to you having penetrative sex in-scene only, which presumably will take place whether I'm present or not? I'm not naive enough to think you're not going to want him in your bed if he stays the night, Tobias, but you'll stick to that rule and I'm... okay with that. I think. Yes, I'm okay with that, but I'll miss you." He smiled at Tobias. "The weekends are mine, after all."

Tobias smiled and shook his head. "You two are bending over backward not to hurt each other. Really, it's a nice thing to see, but it gets in the way. All right, Phan, welcome back to service, in which I push you around and give you a lot of orders. And send you off in a chauffeured car after soundly taking a crop to your ass twice a week. Better make sure he has a key, Noah."

Noah did a passable job of hiding his relief. Phan might have been fooled, but Tobias wasn't. "Will do. You gonna clean my place, Phan?" Noah asked with a chuckle.

"Probably," Phan said easily. "I get bored. Got dust bunnies? I'm great with dust bunnies."

"They're hopping around under the bed as we speak."

"Oh, spry little bunnies. Cool. Maybe I'll start a bunny farm. Give Crispin something to stomp on."

Noah shook his head and looked at Tobias. "This might be an adventure I wasn't counting on. Anything else on your list?"

Tobias shook his head. "No, I think I'm done, though I fear for your dust bunnies now. Anything on your mind?"

"Yeah." Noah nodded. "A couple of things. We're still on for the occasional night-out scenes?" he asked Tobias.

"Oh, yes," Tobias nodded. "Absolutely."

"Okay. What about social functions, like club activities or parties?"

Tobias tilted his head. "Well, you're my sub. Anything addressed to me plus guest is you, I assume. Bradford will likely invite the three of us. Did you have anything specific in mind?"

"No, I just wanted to know how you thought you would handle invitations... if you were planning on taking us both out, or just one of us."

"It would depend on the event," Tobias said. He leaned forward. "Noah. You're my sub. I have no definition of what Phantom is becoming, none of us do. But unless or until I contract with him, you're it. I won't leave you home alone, and likely won't leave him either -- hell, Jean-Pierre would happily come over to take Phan to a party with us."

Noah laughed. "Jean-Pierre would love Phan." He seemed to like Tobias' answer.

"Michel would hate him," Tobias said with a wink. "Phan's prettier."

"Who's Michel?" Phan asked. "And I don't mind staying home."

"Liar," Tobias said with a smile. "You live to show off."

"Well, yeah. But not if it's going to make Noah unhappy."

"We're so damn ingratiating it's starting to give me a headache," Noah joked. At least, Tobias thought he was joking. Mostly. "What about you, Phan? What's on your list?"

"Money. Apparently, I have some. I'm better at saving than I thought, and Bradford took my accounts and did... something. I don't know. Anyway, I want to buy groceries and stuff."

Tobias groaned and sank into his chair.

Noah just grinned. "Phan, could you try explaining to Tobias why it's important that we contribute to the household? He doesn't get it. I had this same argument about the mortgage."

Phan blinked. "Um, 'cause a person has to feel like they're contributing? Like they're productive and a part of something? Because it's good manners?"

Tobias held up a hand. "I will not get into this. You want to buy groceries, fine. Noah wants to pay for the house, fine. Write me a check, I'll deal. Badly. And I'll frown a lot. And maybe pout."

"I gave up, Phan. He's not even trying to understand it anymore."

"But he'll take the money, right?"

"Yes, but you know what he's going to do with it. No grocery store or lender is ever going to see it."

"What did I tell you about talking in the dark?" Phan scolded. "And, yeah, I know. But I'll still feel better, and I can still do some actual shopping. Wanna come with?"

"Sounds good." Noah started packing up pizza boxes. "So money... anything else? Are the fundamental things you were missing with Bradford going to be met here? What else do you need?"

"I need to know that I can come back after therapy and fall apart safely for an hour or so. I need to know that I'll be disciplined. I need to know that I'm safe." Phan looked around the room and said softly, "I need to know that I matter."

"You matter, Phan," Tobias said, just as softly. "You matter a great deal."

"This entire evening is about you, Phan. Believe me, you matter, hon." Noah kissed him on his way to the kitchen with the pizza boxes. "And you can fall apart all you like at my place." He disappeared into the

kitchen.

"You can, you know," Tobias said quietly. He slid out of his chair onto the floor and sat with his back against it. "You can fall apart now, if you want."

Phan shook his head. "Don't want to now. It's a good day."

"Okay. Then you can let me hold you for a minute. I'd like that."

Phan hesitated for a moment, then scooted over and leaned against him as Tobias put an arm over his shoulders.

Noah returned and collected plates and napkins and other remnants of dinner. "You okay, hon?" he asked Phan, picking up his empty glass.

Phan nodded. "Just... not falling apart."

Noah let that go a moment and left the room again with his hands full. When he came back he had a box of tissues that he casually dropped into Phan's lap before putting coffee mugs back on the tray. "You're allowed to fall apart if you need to."

"I know," Phan said. He nudged Tobias. "Is he always like this?"

"Yes, pretty much," Tobias said with a smile.

"Cool." Phan wiggled a little more and pressed closer. "I can really stay?"

"Yes."

"Thank you," Phan whispered. "Thank you so much."

Tobias squeezed him a little but didn't say anything.

After a moment Phan said, "Noah's tired."

"He is. He was up all night because I didn't call. I thought he'd be asleep, so I didn't call, because I thought I'd wake him."

Phan groaned. "Okay. I'm going to go lie down in the guest room. You make him go to sleep. Do we start tomorrow?"

"What day is tomorrow?" Noah asked, coming back from the kitchen yet again and yawning. "Oh, Thursday, is that right? I have counseling tomorrow night, so you two will be on your own. I brought enough stuff to get me through the weekend, so we can all stay here again tomorrow night."

"Okay." Phan kissed Tobias' cheek quickly and moved away, rolling to his feet. "Thank you, Noah," he said softly, one hand sliding up Noah's arm. "Get some sleep."

"Come here." Noah grabbed him by the front of his shirt and tugged him close. "You're welcome," he said, and then he kissed Phan soundly on the lips before letting him go. "Sleep well, hon."



"I will," Phan said with a grin. "Try not to yell too loud." He skipped away and darted down the hall, laughing.

"I don't think yelling is in the cards tonight," Noah said softly, stepping into Tobias' arms.

"That's just fine by me," Tobias said. "I've missed you, pet. Come to bed and let me hold you."

Noah surveyed the living room one more time and nodded, then let Tobias steer him down the hall toward the bedroom. "Carol made fun of me all day."

"She did? What did she say?" Tobias asked.

"Oh, about how tired I was, and who kept me up all night. She totally got the wrong impression." He started to strip before they were through the bedroom door.

"Did she?" Tobias asked, bemused as Noah continued to lose his clothes on the way to the bed. "Thought it was all hot sex?"

Noah flopped on the bed in nothing but his briefs. "I think she was hoping for a good story."

"The poor thing," Tobias said absently. He tugged the blankets out from under Noah and urged him to get into bed properly. "You do realize that it's only six-thirty, yes? You're going to be awake damn early."

"It's what?" Noah blinked his eyes open.

"It's six-thirty."

"Okay so wake me up in two hours and..." Noah yawned. "And we'll fuck."

Tobias chuckled. "We'll see," he said, starting to undress. "Go to sleep, pet." He stripped off his clothes, leaving them in a pile on a chair and slipped into bed. He tugged Noah to him and buried his face in Noah's hair. "Love you," he whispered.

"Love you, too, baby." Tobias could feel him already drifting off.

With a smile he stroked a hand down Noah's back and just held him as Noah fell asleep. Tobias stared at the ceiling, listening to Noah breathe, and kept his own breathing light and even, even as his mind began to race. It was the first real chance he'd had to think all day, and he found himself wondering what the hell he'd gotten himself into.

He loved Noah. He and Noah had a balance and connection he hadn't had before; everything worked. But he couldn't -- simply couldn't -- leave Phantom to sink as he'd seemed ready to. He knew that he could help Phan, could work with him to get the boy into a better frame of mind... but he worried that by doing so he'd overwhelm himself.

Two subs would take a great deal of energy and work. Despite their very careful speeches about Phantom not having the same status as Noah, it was what it was -- Phan was a sub, he was a Dom, and no matter what way it was cut, Tobias now had two subs, even without Phan having a contract.

Tuesday nights off was looking better and better.

He lay with Noah sleeping in his arms and started planning how he could best get Phan through the crisis point; once that was done, things would settle a bit and the three of them would see where everything stood. He hoped, anyway. He reminded himself that Noah had strong affection for Phan, and that Noah had initiated this -- perhaps without thinking it all through, but out of good intentions, certainly. The only thing Tobias could do was to make it work. That was his responsibility.

He made a mental note to plan affirmation sessions with both of the boys weekly and request a weekly talk for the three of them in the safe room, where they could discuss how things were going.

Finally, at about ten o'clock, he eased away from Noah, kissing him softly. He'd wake him up for a late night cuddle, but not after less than four hours sleep. Quietly, he slipped on his robe and left the room, planning to make some more notes about the situation.

As he walked down the hall, he saw light seeping out from under Phantom's door, and he paused, unsure if he should check up on him or not. He stopped, listening carefully, but didn't hear anything at all; at least Phan wasn't upset or crying. He thought a moment and then tapped on the door.

"Come in?" Phan's voice said uncertainly.

Tobias opened the door and blinked into the light. "Are you all right?" he asked quietly.

"Yes, sir. I had a nap earlier, so I'm just going to bed now. Is Noah okay?"

Tobias nodded, looking around the room. Phan's bag was empty, his clothes carefully stacked on the dresser. Not moved in, but that made sense if they were going to the country, and then he'd be off to Noah's. There was a pad of paper on the bed and markers scattered all over. "He's asleep. You're drawing again?"

"Yes, sir. Dr. Brewer wants me to, says it'll help."

"She's probably right," Tobias said, his hand on the door knob. "Get some sleep, boy. Take care of your body."

"Yes, sir." Phan grinned, gathering up the markers. "Right now. Can I ask why you're up?"

"I, unlike you two, actually slept last night. I'm going to do some paperwork and then I'll be out. Goodnight, Phantom."

"Goodnight, sir," Phan said softly. "Sleep well."

Tobias nodded and smiled softly as he closed the door. "I will."

He went to his desk, gathered up the notes Phan had made, and organized things into a suitable document. Not a contract, but at least a list of the things they'd agreed to. After adding in the weekly meetings, he put the whole thing into a file, left it out to show them in the morning, and then went back to bed, pausing once more outside Phan's room.

The silence in the apartment was deep and peaceful. He only hoped they could maintain the feeling for a while; he had little doubt that there were bumps ahead of them. With another smile, he went to his room and closed the door behind him, hoping it would be enough to soften any noise he and Noah were about to make.

## Chapter 6

Tobias was dead asleep when a hand gently shook his shoulder. "Coffee?" he asked, before his body was fully aware that he was awake. "Time is it?"

"Six-thirty. In the morning." Noah told him quietly, and now Tobias could smell the coffee on the bedside table.

"Thank you," he said, rolling over and rubbing his eyes. "Good morning, pet." He sat up, leaning on the headboard as he reached for the coffee. "Have you been awake long?"

"About an hour or so. I slept all night, if you can believe it." He sat on the edge of the bed next to Tobias.

"Well, almost all night," Tobias said with a smile. "I did wake you, if you'd be so good as to recall."

Noah looked at him, puzzlement changing to wide-eyed incredulity. "Oh! Oh, yes, you did. No wonder I slept so well." He grinned and rubbed his fingers across Tobias' thigh.

Tobias rolled his eyes. "You forgot," he said as he sipped his coffee. "I don't think that's ever happened to me before."

"I didn't forget! I just... wasn't all the way awake, I don't think. Was I? I remember most of it." He stuck out his tongue. "I wasn't too loud, was I?"

With a shake of his head, Tobias took another sip of coffee, starting to feel more awake. "I don't think so. We can always ask Phan. Is he up yet?"

Noah nodded. "I think I heard the shower."

"Okay." Tobias finished the coffee and stretched. "Hand me my robe? I did some work last night; we can look it over while we eat."

Noah grabbed Tobias' robe and held it open for him. Noah didn't bother with a robe, he just wandered out of the bedroom as he was, in nothing more than a T-shirt and briefs. "I'll have to get ready for work shortly."

"Of course." He followed Noah out into the kitchen, unsurprised to find Phan there, hair still damp as he mixed eggs in a bowl. "Good morning, boy," he said.

"Good morning, sir. Great look, Noah. Hey, you have time to shower before breakfast if you want."

"I do?" Noah blinked. "God, it's so weird to have someone else making breakfast."

Phan grinned. "You can do it if you want. I'm happy to sit on my butt."

Tobias snorted. "You are not."

Phan just laughed and grabbed the bread. "Toast and eggs in ten, Noah."

"I'll be right back!" Noah grinned and left the kitchen abruptly. Moments later the shower was running.

Tobias smiled. "I think he likes the idea of breakfast he doesn't have to make."

Phan nodded. "He's got a lot to think about in the morning -- going to work, getting his head right."

"Yes." Tobias found himself smiling again. "I'm glad you two seem to understand that kind of thing so well. I've been pretty amazed at his ability to switch over so easily."

Phan shrugged. "You're just you, all the time. Even when we're in a place when we talk as equals, you're still your toppy self." He grinned and wiggled his butt. "We like that, though."

Tobias snorted. "I'll be right back," he said. "I wrote out some things last night I want you two to look at." He went to his desk and got the file, coming back in just a couple of minutes to find another cup of coffee on the table and Phan busily making scrambled eggs. "What are your plans for the day?" he asked, sitting down.

"Dr. Brewer at two. I should be back around three-thirty. And tidying up in the morning. Sir."

Tobias could see color rising on Phan's cheeks as the boy remembered his place. He smiled to himself and took out the sheet with the suggested Affirmation sessions on it. "Good boy. I'll be home about four, and Noah shortly after."

"Is that what you wrote up while we were busy sleeping?" Noah asked as he slipped into a chair. His hair was wet, and he had on his uniform pants and a white undershirt.

"Ohh, better look!" Phan piped up.

Tobias rolled his eyes. "Yes. I was thinking last night that it might be a good idea to ensure communication. So, an Affirmation with you both once a week, guaranteed, and a separate talk with the three of us in the safe room. What do you think?"

"I think that will be great, thank you." Noah smiled and sipped his coffee. "Those eggs smell yummy. He's a better cook than I am, isn't he?"

Tobias bit his lip and grinned. "Breakfast, yes. Not quite as good with a stew, and he's been known to burn water."

"Sir!" Phan sounded unamused. "That was a secret." He put a plate of eggs in front of each of them and went to get the toast.

"Ooh. Maybe I'll have Allison come give us both lessons once in a while." Noah laughed. "Don't worry about it, Phan; when Tobias first told me I'd be doing the cooking -- I think it was our very first weekend at the farm, and right after we'd signed our contract -- I panicked."

"God, me, too. Thanks to Elizabeth, I didn't do too badly -- she's the one who saw me burn the water, though. She ratted me out with great glee." He smiled sadly and sat down. "Miss her."

"We all do," Tobias said softly. He cleared his throat and tapped the paper. "Phan?"

"Oh. Oh, yeah, that sounds great, sir," Phan said, nodding.

"She never ratted me out, she just gave me a bunch of tips on what to learn how to make. She wasn't happy with the state of the pantry once, though." Noah looked at Tobias, grinning. "Remember that? You kicked my ass the next weekend. You said breaking your rules was bad, but breaking hers was worse."

Tobias shuddered. "It took me years to get trained to her specs. You two did well -- she was very fond you both." He ate his eggs and reached for the toast. "Noah, Phan has therapy today and... something with me tonight." He still had no idea what he was really going to do with him. "What time do you expect to leave and to be back?"

"It will take me a bit longer to get here after work, so I'll probably get back around four-thirty. And then I'll be going back out around six." Noah swallowed a bite of eggs before going on. "I've got my counselor thing tonight, that wraps up around nine. Want me to call before I head home? If you need me out later I can hang with the guys downtown."

Tobias shook his head. "No, don't call. If we're in deep it would be disruptive. Just come home and listen -- we'll be in the playroom, or if we're done we'll be back in the living room."

"Okay, I'll keep it down if you're not finished. I'll probably walk in around nine-thirty. You guys take all the time you need." Noah grabbed a piece of toast. "I gotta go finish getting dressed."

Tobias nodded and finished his eggs. Phan was eating steadily, if slowly. "Eat, Phan. I have to get moving, too."

Phan nodded. "I'll get the dishes ready while you shower, sir," he said. "Um. Can I dress you?"

Tobias looked at Noah, considering. "I suppose so. Mind, it's still the first thing to go."

"Yes, sir." Phan ate a little faster.

Noah smiled at Tobias and brushed a hand over his shoulder. "I'll be in the bedroom. Thanks for breakfast, Phan," he said as he left the kitchen.

"No problem," Phan called back around a piece of toast.

Tobias stood up. "See you in a few," he said, going off to shower.

"Yes, sir." He could hear Phan picking up the plates behind him.

Tobias didn't linger in the shower, wanting to see Noah before he left. Clean and reasonably dry, teeth brushed and hair smoothed, he went into the bedroom, not realizing until he got there that he'd left his robe behind. Noah was fully dressed, putting on his gun belt, and Phan had clothes laid out on the bed.

"That's a good look on you," Noah licked his lips. He gave the belt a pat and shifted it so it sat correctly on his hips.

Tobias smirked. "You, too."

Phan nodded, but didn't say anything.

"All right, boy. Time to get ready." He quirked an eyebrow at Noah, asking if he wanted to stay, as Phan knelt in front of him with his boxer shorts.

"I'll need my gun and pager, should I just go get them?"

"They're in the desk, but you can stay if you want," Tobias said as he stepped into his boxers.

Phan eased them up and over his hips. "Still dress to the right, I assume?" he said with a grin, settling him efficiently. He reached back for Tobias' shirt. "It's cold, so I thought a T-shirt and the flannel, if you're out in the barns today."

"I'm impressed, I hadn't actually noticed he dressed to the right." Noah grinned and leaned against the bureau.

"That's 'cause you're usually trying to get him *out* of his clothes," Phan said with a grin. "Me? I like to smooth the fabric on." He did just that, smoothing Tobias' T-shirt before holding the flannel open behind him.

Tobias rolled his eyes.

"The man is going to be so spoiled. And to think I was feeling bad about all the work he's going to have to do." Noah grinned and pushed off the dresser. "I'm going to have to run. Shift's at eight." He stepped to Tobias and kissed him. "Love you. See you tonight," he said. "Good luck with your therapy, Phan."

"Love you," Tobias said as Phan did up his buttons. "Be safe."

"Thanks, Noah," Phan said, his eyes on Tobias' cuffs. "Have a good day."

Noah smiled and left, and Tobias could hear him going down the hall.

"Time to sit, sir," Phan said softly, picking up his socks.

Tobias sat on the edge of the bed and smiled as Phan rolled his socks on. "You know, I still don't get why you like this so much."

Phan shrugged, but Tobias could see his smile. "I like making sure you look your best. I like touching you, and I like pampering you. Noah's right, you're going to be spoiled."

Tobias laughed softly as Phan held his work jeans for him to step into. "It'll be fine -- I promise not to let it go to my head."

"Yes, sir." Phan grinned, easing his jeans up. He didn't even grope as he did up Tobias' pants, on his very best behavior.

Dressed, Tobias gave Phan a hug and kissed his cheek. "Thank you, boy. I'll see you this afternoon."

"Have a good day, sir," Phan said.

"You, too. Call me if you have any trouble."

"Yes, sir."

## Chapter 7

Phantom didn't call, and Tobias was relieved for it, though he did find himself wondering about the boy when he knew it was time for Phan to be in therapy. He was still wondering about it when he got home.

"Phan?" he called, as he toed off his shoes inside the door.

"In here, sir," came Phan's voice, and by the sound of it there was little need to wonder why he hadn't met Tobias at the door.

Tobias sighed and walked to the living room, grabbing a box of tissues on the way. "Bad day?" he asked, sitting on the couch and pulling a weeping Phan into his arms.

"Just therapy," Phan said, wiping his nose with a tissue. "It's draining."

"Need to talk about it?" Tobias asked, rubbing his back.

"Not really. Except Dr. Brewer is expressing some concern about me doing this. She thinks it's going to get my hopes up."

Tobias nodded, unsurprised. "Should I talk to her?"

Phan shrugged. "I expect she'll call if she wants to talk to you. We talked a lot about our break-up today. But in a weird way it made me feel better about this. Things are so different now."

"Are they?" Tobias said, handing him another tissue for his eyes. "You could be right. I hope so, anyway."

Phan nodded, and they sat there quietly for a long time.

"This is nice," Phan said softly. "Thank you."

Tobias kissed the top of his head. "You can always cry on me, boy. And I rather suspect Noah wouldn't mind either. Speaking of, he'll be home soon. Why don't you go have a bath? I'd like a few minutes with him, and you could use the soak to relax."

"Of course," Phan said, immediately moving to get up.

Tobias hugged him tight for a moment longer. "Okay, now you can go."

Phan beamed and hurried off down the hall, leaving Tobias to relax into the couch.

Noah walked in the door at just about his appointed hour. Tobias heard him set his keys on the foyer table and hang up his jacket before making his way into the apartment. His patent leather uniform shoes creaked as he walked, and the rubber soles squeaked on the wood floors. He sighed, not seeing Tobias at first, and tugged his tie off. He peered down the hallway toward the bathroom, probably hearing the water sloshing in

the tub.

"He's in the bath," Tobias said quietly. "Bad day for you, too?"

"Hi, didn't see you there. Long day, stupid kids with weapons. It's a shame, really. Phan had a bad day?" Noah walked over and sat with Tobias on the couch.

Tobias opened his arms and pulled Noah closer. "Therapy. He wasn't kidding when he said he needs a bit of time to get himself together after. Dr. Brewer is concerned about this arrangement." He kissed Noah's face. "Missed you."

"Well, we knew this arrangement was going to cause problems as well as solve them," Noah leaned on him. "Did Dee kick your ass today? You sound tired."

Tobias grinned. "She's getting flowers. I was a little growly, I think." He stroked Noah's arms. "Everything will be fine, eventually. Oh, looks like next week will be intense with birthing, but Deidre's on call this weekend, and we've got a couple of students lined up to help out. Do you need anything to wind down?"

"Just a few minutes to change. You have plans for me before I leave tonight?" Noah grinned and sat up, taking his gun off his hip and setting it on the coffee table.

"Nothing concrete, but you know I'm never going to say no to... well, to anything, really." Tobias grinned. "You look so hot in your uniform."

"You want me to keep it on?" Noah opened the buttons at his neck enough to show off his collar. The tease. "I dress left, incidentally, but maybe you know that."

"I did, as a matter of fact," Tobias lied. "Want Phan to dress you, too? He'd probably kill to get to do it with your uniform. I can't promise you'll make it all the way to dressed unmolested, though."

"Save it for a scene." Noah laughed. "I'd never make it out the door on time."

"Probably not," Tobias agreed with a smile. He pulled Noah in for a kiss. "I think I'd kind of like to see that, actually," he said, one hand finding Noah's ass.

"You're the boss, boss." Noah leaned in and kissed him again. "You can see anything you want."

"Oh, good, I like to hear that," Tobias said, letting a little growl into his voice. He pulled Noah tight to him and kissed him deeply, letting his hands wander over his boy's uniform. "Taste good," he murmured, dipping his head to lick at Noah's neck.

"Mmm. Feel good, sir," Noah answered, his fingers pressing against Tobias' fly.

"So does that," Tobias said, arching his back to push his hips up. He was getting hard fast, Noah's touch working magic on him.

Noah's fingers lowered his zipper smoothly and slipped under the denim and into his boxers. He shifted and straddled Tobias' hips, his belt creaking as he moved. "My day just got so much better."

"Oh, mine, too." Tobias moaned softly, a shudder rolling through him as Noah stroked him to full hardness. "God." He ran his hands over Noah's chest and shoulders, his hips rolling up to meet Noah's fist.



"Damn, you really like this uniform. Such a turn-on. Just let me get to my knees, sir, your day will get even better."

Tobias shuddered again. "Hurry up, pet. You've got me impatient." He pushed gently on Noah's shoulders, urging him down.

"Yes, sir." Noah moved again, this time settling on the floor between Tobias' knees. His fingers tugged Tobias' jeans open and then Noah's mouth was on him, surrounding his cock with damp heat.

"Oh, God," Tobias groaned, petting Noah's hair and thrusting slightly. He forced himself to stop, to just enjoy the feeling of Noah's mouth and fingers around him, but found he couldn't look away, watching Noah take him in past swelling lips. In uniform. He groaned again and dug his fingers into Noah's shoulders.

Noah's technique was always artful, but something about his work blues made him a little hungrier. A little less sub and a little more masterful. A little less inclined to play and more inclined to push Tobias blindly over. Tobias went with it gladly, pushed down Noah's throat and then back, making Noah grunt. He did it again and a third time, and Noah's fingers dug into Tobias' hips. "Yes!" Tobias cried, pushing hard into Noah's mouth.

"Oh, fuck."

Tobias looked up to see Phan standing in the doorway, apparently frozen in place. He was still damp, though dressed, and Tobias opened his mouth to say something -- anything -- but suddenly he was coming, Noah's tongue dragging over him.

"Jesus," Tobias gasped, cock throbbing as his head fell back. "Oh, God, oh, God, yes!"

Noah grunted, and Tobias slightly regretted having caught him off guard but, really, it was Noah's own fault, wasn't it? Noah licked him clean and bathed his lips with his tongue before sitting back on his heels, presenting for him.

"Good boy," Tobias managed, feeling utterly boneless. "Want to come?"

Noah nodded and smiled, apparently not expecting the offer. "Yes, sir."

Tobias glanced at Phan, still standing stock still in the doorway. "How about you?"

Phan nodded mutely, his gaze fixed on Noah.

With a grin and a contented sigh, Tobias leaned over and kissed Noah, tasting himself. "Love you," he whispered, just for Noah to hear. He sat back and waved a hand between them. "Have at. Just don't obstruct the view."

Noah turned his head and looked over his shoulder at Phan. "I could really stand to get out of this uniform, it's hot as hell," he announced. He got to his feet and held a hand out to Phan. He was trying to look perfectly serious, but the mischief in his eyes and the grin tugging at the corner of his lips gave him away. "Think you could give me a hand?"

"Hot," Phan nodded. "Hand. Mouth. What the fuck ever." Phan stepped forward and into Noah's space, one hand tangling with Noah's, the other going immediately to Noah's crotch and squeezing. "I'm totally digging this uniform," he said seriously.

Tobias laughed softly and sank further into the couch, getting comfortable.

Noah groaned. "It seems to be popular. You smell great." He slid the fingers of his free hand along Phan's jaw and kissed him soundly. He took a moment and undid the clasp on his heavy belt, tossing it on a chair.

From the couch, Tobias could hear Phan whimper. He watched as Phan opened his mouth wider, his fingers quickly undoing the top button of Noah's pants.

"Taste good," Phan said, pulling away and looking down to ease Noah's zipper down. Noah's cock pushed out at him, straining at his white briefs, and both Tobias and Phan moaned as Phan pushed the cotton out of the way. "Feel like you're about ready, too," Phan added, pumping Noah twice.

"Yeah. Jesus." Noah looked down at Phan's hand on him and then back up at Phan. "Mouth?" he asked. "Would you?"

"Don't ever have to ask -- just give me a shove." Phan grinned and sank to his knees. "Can you see, sir?" he asked politely, burying his head in Noah's groin and tugging both pants and underwear down past Noah's hips.

"Oh, yeah." He could see just fine; could almost see Phan's mouth watering and Noah's prick leaking.

"Good," Phan breathed, licking his way up Noah's cock and suckling at the head.

"I like asking," Noah told Phan after a long groan. "Let Sir shove you around, that's his job. Jesus, your mouth is hot." He spread his feet wider and rested a hand near Phan's ear.

Phan moaned, loud enough that Tobias could hear the sound, muffled by Noah's cock. He pulled back a bit and opened his mouth wider, taking Noah in deep. The sounds of Phan's sucking grew wet and lush, and Tobias found himself moaning in sympathy. When Phan's hand went to roll Noah's balls, Tobias shifted on the couch, his gaze going to Noah's face.

"Jesus, yes." Noah's brow furrowed and his eyes closed. His knees bent slightly, and he pushed into Phan's throat, tucking his fingers behind Phan's head to steady himself. "Ah, sorry," he panted, forcing his hips to go still. "Feels so good, Phan."

"Do what you want, he can take it," Tobias said.

Phan moaned and nodded, his head twisting and turning around Noah's cock.

Reserved wasn't a word Tobias would ever use to describe Noah. Once given permission, Noah did exactly as he pleased. His hips started to move again and he pushed his cock deep. "Oh, God," he groaned and tried it again. "Fuck. Phan!" he growled, and Tobias could see he was close. He watched Noah's ass clench and his fingers curl into fists.

Phan shuddered and went a little higher, changing the angle, and Tobias found himself leaning forward, anticipating. With a long, deep moan Phan took Noah deep into his throat, and Tobias watched him swallowing around Noah's prick. Deep-throating at its finest, really.

"Oh, God." Noah curled forward, rounding his back over Phan and bracing himself with both hands on Phan's shoulders. He came in obvious waves, his hips rolling with each one, thrusting himself deeper and forcing Phan to take every last drop of him. "Phan." His voice was hoarse by the time he was through, and he pulled away gently, staggering back a few steps to sit heavily in one of Tobias' chairs. He was flushed

and still breathless. "Oh, fuck."

Phan panted, rocking back on his heels. He was flushed and his mouth was swollen, his eyes heavy lidded.

Tobias grinned. "Come here, boy," he purred.

Phan whimpered and crawled to him, unresisting as Tobias pulled him up onto the couch. Tobias got him lying back, mostly in his lap, and with a low laugh he said, "This is it for the night, boy." And he shoved his hand down Phan's pants and tugged his cock once.

"Sir!" Phan gasped, heat pouring over Tobias' hand almost immediately.

Noah laughed softly. "I'm so going to like having him around, sir," he said from where he was sprawled half-undressed in the chair.

Tobias grinned and pulled his sticky hand out of Phan's pants. "I'm glad, pet. Now, I think Phan needs a shower, you need to change, I need to plan something for this evening, and someone needs to start thinking about supper." He raised an eyebrow and pointedly ignored Phan's breathless moan. He was still coming down.

"Oh, shit, I have to get out of here." Noah got to his feet and tugged his pants up enough that he could walk. He shuffled over to where they were sitting on the couch, kissed Tobias first and then Phan. "Thank you, sir," he said to Tobias. "And you, too. Oh, my God," he told Phan before hurrying down the hall to change.

"I think you blew his mind, boy," Tobias said with a smile.

Phan giggled. "Can I do it again?"

"Sure. Just don't ever make him late for anything. He gets cranky. Now, shower and then supper. I need to think." He gave Phan a gentle shove and collected a soft kiss on the cheek as Phan scurried off. Smiling, he did up his own pants and made himself comfortable for an hour's worth of planning.

## Chapter 8

Phantom didn't waste time getting supper on after his shower, and Tobias let himself be lured into the kitchen by the scent of thyme, rosemary, and garlic.

"Just fancied up chicken, sir," Phan said, slicing a lemon. "Would you like it with pasta, or with roasted potatoes?"

"Whatever is easiest," Tobias said as he sat at the table. "I have some thoughts about this evening."

Phan nodded and grabbed a pot. "Do you want to talk about it now, or wait until after supper?" he asked, filling the pot with water.

"I think it would be a good idea if we both walk into that playroom with a basic understanding of what's going to happen."

Phan put the pot on the stove, turning up the heat under it. "Pasta," he said absently. "You're right, I think," he added, rummaging through the cupboards. "I'm a little... untethered at the moment."

"Exactly. Frankly, I don't think either of us is up for anything like a deep scene, and I wouldn't know where to start at this particular time. But you do need grounding."

Phan nodded again. "Yes, sir."

"What are your rules about tools and pain right now?" Tobias asked, knowing full well he could just check the contract Bradford and Phan had held. He preferred to get it from Phan, however; it was a better judge of the boy's headspace, and his reactions could tell Tobias a lot.

Phan sighed and leaned on the counter, his eyes down. "I can take a paddle, bare hand, and careful flogging. Dr. Brewer says that I need a certain amount of pain to keep me even, to... to balance me. It's not the pain, it's the discipline and submission. She says that the heavier tools are more about hurting and going deep; no bullwhips, canes, or the tawse. Crops are an unknown right now, 'cause I haven't tried to go deep, but I never used them for the hard hurt."

Tobias nodded thoughtfully. He had no intention of using a cane, and the bullwhip was for special occasions only, so that wasn't an issue. "We'll wait and see on the crops, then," he said. "I know you like the tawse, but it's utterly brutal; we'll figure that out eventually. I'm kind of thinking we'll go easy for while, do more mental work than physical. I do like crops though, so we'll experiment sooner rather than later, get a baseline. With Dr. Brewer's knowledge, of course."

Phan bit his lip but seemed to accept that. "All right, sir. Supper will be ready in about ten or fifteen minutes."

Tobias stood up. "Call me," he said, leaving the kitchen. "I'll be in the playroom setting things up."

"Yes, sir," Phan said quietly.

Tobias spent the time before Phan called him going through the paddles and crops, sorting out which of each were the lightest and best suited to merely grounding and which should be reserved for Phan's discipline or punishment sessions. It didn't take long, and he found himself swinging paddles experimentally, almost smiling as he got his head as ready as his body for what was to come.

He found he was rather looking forward to swatting Phantom's ass again.

Supper was quiet and fast. They didn't talk very much at all, Phan already stilling and becoming more settled, and Tobias keeping a careful eye on him. By the time Phan did the dishes, what little conversation there had been had dried up completely.

Tobias led Phan into the playroom and quietly said, "Strip, boy. Then lean over the spanking bench." He went to the paddles again and picked up the one he'd selected, watching as Phan calmly took his clothes off and folded them neatly.

"You're most of the way there already," he observed as Phan moved to the bench and draped himself over it.

"Yes, sir," Phan agreed. "But not all the way. I'm feeling... almost calm, but still a little twitchy. Like I could go the other way, easily."

Tobias nodded. "I'd like to use our litany." If nothing else, it would be an easy transition for them both. Not exactly a reminder of the way things had been, but instead a confirmation of who they were at that moment and what their roles were.

"All of it?" Phan asked, a little doubt creeping into his voice.

"No. I don't think either of us is ready to go over whom you belong to yet. Not at this kind of level."

Phan nodded. "Thank you, sir."

"Count for me," Tobias ordered, touching Phan's back. "We'll begin now." He raised the paddle and brought it down firmly on Phan's ass.

Phan jumped. "One, sir."

Tobias nodded and spanked him again, not even bothering to remember what Phan's reactions had been in the past; the only safe way to approach this was to more or less pretend he was working with a new submissive, someone whom he had to learn.

"Two, sir."

By the time they'd reached five, Tobias was putting more weight behind his swing and Phan's voice had gotten tight. It felt good, bringing Phan's reactions on, and Tobias was pleased that they weren't doing anything heavier than a spanking; he wasn't sure he'd be able to deal with a Top's high right then.

"Who are you?" Tobias asked, paddling Phan again and beginning their litany.

"Phantom, sir. Six."

"What are you?"

"A sub, sir. Seven.... Eight.... Nine. Thank you, sir."

"You're welcome. Who are you?" Phan was gasping and his ass was getting red. "You may stop counting."

"Phantom Shaw, sir! Thank you, sir!"

Tobias kept it up until tears began to slide down Phan's cheeks, then he backed off a little. "What are you?" he asked softly, watching as clinically as he could, taking in Phan's breathing and the way he seemed to be settling down, getting smoother even through the tears.

It didn't feel like the past. It was very vibrant and present, and Tobias was glad.

"A submissive, sir. Thank you, sir."

"What do you need?"

"This, sir."

Tobias nodded and slowed his hand, still spanking Phan but bringing him down. "Feel better?" he asked, watching Phan's tears and his breathing.

"Yes, sir," Phan sniffled. "Thank you."

Tobias set the paddle down and gathered Phan into his arms. "Shh," he soothed. "Good boy."

Phan trembled. "Thank you," he whispered. "I feel better. Lighter."

"Good," Tobias smiled. "Let's go cuddle, boy. Then you can take another bath."

"Okay," Phan said softly, clinging to Tobias' chest. "Anything you say."

Tobias laughed. "Yes." He stood and carried Phan in his arms to the living room, settling them in his big chair to wait for Noah.

## Chapter 9

Tobias thought Phan might have drifted off into a contented sleep, but when he heard Noah's key in the door Phan shifted a little in his arms and lifted his head.

"Noah?" Phan asked softly.

Tobias nodded.

"Oh, good." Phan smiled and lowered his head. "Miss him when he's not around."

Tobias smiled as well. "Me, too."

Noah came in quietly. He was a minute in the foyer, presumably getting his jacket off, and then he appeared in the living room. When he saw Phan and Tobias there, he stopped short of actually coming in and lingered in the entryway. "Sir?"

"Come on in, pet. We're just relaxing. How was your evening?"

"It was nice, sir. Very productive. It's redeemed my faith in kids." He came in and started to sit, but remembered himself suddenly and knelt by Tobias' chair. "And yours?"

"Fine, thank you." He dropped a hand to stroke over Noah's hair, his fingers tangling in it nicely. Noah was leaving it longer for him these days; he could almost grab a handful at the top. "Phantom has a nicely warmed bottom, and there wasn't need for punishment. How about you? Do you need strokes before bed tonight?"

"I didn't earn any today, sir," Noah said simply.

Tobias nodded and petted him again. "Such a good boy," he said softly. "Do you want some?"

"No, sir." Noah smiled up in his direction. "Thank you for being indulgent, but I think they're better earned than owed for now."

"Okay," Tobias said quietly. "Why don't you go get changed, and we can all curl up on the couch for a bit before bed? Phan, go fetch some sweatpants or something."

"Yes, sir." Phan unfolded himself, wincing a little. He seemed to wait for Noah for a moment and then grinned. "Thank you, sir. Hurts like hell."

Noah snickered, getting to his feet. "You're as bad as I am," he said, heading down the hall.

"At least," Phan agreed.

Tobias shook his head and went to the couch, settling in with a sigh. He was glad to have them both around and glad that they seemed happy; he was also ready for a little pampering. He grinned and admitted to himself that he was always ready to be pampered; Mrs. Miller had once told him that he was "just saved from being an idle wastrel by the possession of a decent work ethic."

He wanted tea and cuddling and kisses, and then bed.

Tobias heard Noah leave the bedroom and knock on Phan's door, waiting for him. He was dressed in sweats and a soft cotton T-shirt, and Phan, when he appeared, wasn't dressed much differently. The pair made their way down the hall together and settled on either side of Tobias.

"So tomorrow we go to the farm," Noah observed, putting his feet up on the coffee table.

Nodding, Tobias rested his hand on Noah's thigh and slipped an arm around Phan, who'd had to curl up to avoid sitting in pain. "I'm not sure about logistics. I'd like to have the truck out there, but we can't all go in it. Why don't you two come out in the car, and I'll meet you there when I'm done at the clinic?"

"Yes, sir. The car can pick us up here. We'll be a little later than usual, because it takes me longer to get here after work than to my place." Noah took Tobias' hand in his. "Phan, I'm sorry that Dr. Brewer is concerned about this arrangement; did she say exactly why?"

Phan shrugged one shoulder. "She thinks it'll get my hopes up," he said, echoing his earlier statement to Tobias. "She thinks it's unsustainable, and that I'll grow to resent not having a contract, that there is no way Sir can balance us. She seemed mostly concerned that both Sir and I would try to go back to our past level of... well, she didn't say intimacy, but the implication was that I couldn't be here and not want that. She says we can't turn back the clock."

Tobias would have stared at the boy if he'd been at a better angle to do so. Phan really did open up to Noah, more than Tobias had expected or surmised.

Noah shrugged. "I get her. Those are all legitimate concerns, but I think she might be underestimating Sir a bit. Kind of shutting doors when she hasn't really seen past the threshold. Do *you* think you're trying to turn back the clock?"

"Nope. It would be a stupid thing to do, given how it ended. Things are too different now, I'm too different." Phan sat up a little, and Tobias had the curious feeling that he'd been almost forgotten as the two talked. "I'm not saying some feelings aren't there," Phan went on. "I mean, I've never denied how much I care about Sir, and that I admire him. But I really don't think I'm trying to go back in time. What do you think, kiddo? What's it seem like to you?"

"I was going to disagree with her. I don't see that happening at all, for either of you. And, if anything, I think you're both trying to avoid that. I don't recall Sir saying that you'd never get a contract; he's just putting it off a bit until you both decide it's the right thing to do. I think she's..." Noah laughed. "Well, I'd like to say talking out her ass, but to put it more kindly, I think she just doesn't understand the dynamic."

Phan looked smug. "She's a sub. I think she's jealous."

Tobias raised an eyebrow.

"Well, who wouldn't be, really." Noah laughed a little louder.

Tobias' other eyebrow went up. He coughed. "Still here."



Noah bit his lip. "Sorry, sir. But, really, I think she's upsetting Phan needlessly at this point."

"Maybe," Tobias said slowly. "But look what it's done. We're talking about the issue, and that can't be a bad thing. She's Phantom's doctor, and we have to let her do her job with as much cooperation as we can all manage. However, if she persists in being negative about the situation, past the point when a little skepticism is useful, I'll step in. Fair enough?"

Phan nodded and smiled, snuggling in again. "Thank you, sir."

"Well, *we* were talking about the issue. You were listening, sir," Noah teased, giving Tobias' hand a squeeze.

"Ah, yes. You were talking. And can I just say, I knew you two were close, but that was a rather impressive demonstration?" He hugged Phan a little tighter and squeezed Noah's hand back. "Thank you, both."

Noah nodded. "We've had some intense Tuesdays."

"Some wonderful Tuesdays," Phan said softly.

Tobias smiled. "Okay, boys. It's almost ten, and we have to go to sleep in an hour or so. I think it's time to talk about that. At the moment, there's only one chain. No shortage of plain collars, though..."

He could feel Phan's shudder.

Noah thought a moment and then finally said, "I think you should tell us what you'd like to do, sir."

Tobias took a breath and decided to simply explain what he was thinking, instead of just giving the rules this time. "Well, I think it would be useless to send Phan to another room tonight," he said. "He's had his spanking, we're all connecting well, and it would just cause distance. However, if he's chained to the bed and you're in it with me... then he's there, there is reinforcement of both my position and yours, and it's a preliminary to the weekend. At the farm, you're in deeper subspace; you'll both be chained to the bed."

Noah nodded but looked over at Phan to see his reaction rather than answering first.

Tobias followed the look but knew what they'd both see; Phan was almost vibrating against him. Sure enough, Phan was biting his lip and his fingers were twitching, the front of his gym pants doing nothing to hide his erection. "Please?" Phan whispered to Noah.

Noah smiled. "Of course; it's fine with me. Good, even. Sir is right, you've earned a place by the bed for sure today."

Phan colored. "Didn't do anything," he mumbled.

"Sure," Tobias said mildly. "Made breakfast, dressed me, cleaned the condo, went to therapy, blew Noah, made my dinner, cleaned up, took a spanking. Nothing."

"Sounds like service and submission to me," Noah teased.

"And me," Tobias said firmly. "Now. Before you come in your pants -- was there anything else to talk about before bed?"

Phan shook his head, still twitching a little.

"No, sir," Noah answered. "Just that I am looking forward to the weekend. I need one."

Tobias nodded. "I'm sure you do, pet. It'll be heavy, though. Saturday, I think. Friday night will be simple, as usual."

"And Sunday night cuddles and movies." Noah's statement was made more to Phan than Tobias.

Phan nodded and rubbed his palms on his sweats. "Okay. Um. Can I go riding?"

"Of course," Tobias said. "Four horses, lots to do. Dianna will be thrilled to see you."

Phan grinned. "That bitch."

"Ha!" Noah laughed so hard Tobias thought he might hurt himself.

Tobias sighed. "She's not a bitch," he said patiently, which sent Phan off into gales of laughter as well.

"She so is! Evil, nasty thing."

"I've finally reached a truce I think, Phan, but forget it if Tobias is around... ah." Noah winced. "Sorry, sir... if Sir is around, she's impossible."

Tobias didn't even bother raising his eyebrows. "One," he said softly.

Phan winced as well, presumably for Noah's ass. "Oops."

"Yes, sir." Noah didn't flinch, he knew the rules. "Anyway, I'll handle her if you want me to."

Tobias grinned. "I think you will, pet. And I'll let Phan turn out Crispin."

"Ah, Crispin's a love," Phan said with a smile.

"And Spot. And Ace."

Phan didn't even blink. "Yes, sir. Exercise, too?"

"When was the last time you rode?"

"Um. With you, sir."

"Just Crispin, then, until you get back into it."

"I'm sure Phan will get his seat back quickly," Noah said, getting to his feet.

"I hope so," Phan said, unfolding himself from the couch and taking Noah's hand for a moment.

Tobias decided he wasn't about to be left on the couch by himself, so he stood up and started walking to the bedroom. "Oh, collar, right," he said to himself, heading toward the playroom instead.

Behind him he heard Phan whimper. "I'm in such trouble," he whispered loudly.

"Did he tell you that you weren't allowed to come?" Noah whispered back. "Oh, he did, earlier, didn't he?"

"Nah, just that he wasn't going to get me off. And you're going to be in the bed with him. And probably having sex. And I'm going to be chained up. Like this."

Put that way, even Tobias had a sympathy twinge.

"Yeah, but we have permission to--"

"Please!"

Tobias grinned and took his time sorting through collars until he heard them get to the bedroom, a tell-tale thump as someone landed on the floor. Casually, he wandered across the hall to watch.

He watched Noah push Phan flat and lick up the boy's length, Phan's gym pants shoved down well below his hips.

"You're not going to last long, are you?" Noah asked darkly, in a voice that Tobias knew well.

"Nope. God, Noah. Suck me." Phan arched his back off the floor, and Tobias stepped into the room, showing him a selection of collars. "Oh, God," Phan gasped, his hips lifting.

"Pleasure." Noah braced a hand on one of Phan's hips and swallowed him down, humming around him until Phan's cock cut off his air.

"Pretty," Tobias observed. He palmed his own growing erection, knowing Phan was watching. "Phan, do you want the plain black leather one tonight, or a dog collar?"

Phan whimpered, his eyes closing as he thrust into Noah's mouth, one hand petting over Noah's hair.

"Hmm. No, on the other hand, I think I'll insist on the black leather one. I like the larger D-ring and a heavier chain."

"Sir," Phan gasped. "Oh, God, Noah!"

Tobias looked on as Noah palmed and fondled Phan's balls. Noah was always encouraged by the sound of his own name and this time was no different. He picked up the pace and his head bobbed fervently over Phan's hips.

"Oh, shit!" Phan yelled. "Gonna -- now, oh, God!" His body went rigid, only his abdominal muscles working as he shot.

"Very nice," Tobias said, fingering the collar. "Catch your breath, Noah, then strip and assume the position." He left the boys to calm down a little, getting the chain and a crop from the cupboard.

When he returned, Noah was naked, his hands braced on the wall and his legs spread wide as instructed.

"Hold like that a moment, pet," he said softly. He stripped off his clothes in an unhurried manner, ignoring his bobbing erection, and went to Phan with the chain and collar. "Knees."

Phan moved quickly, kneeling with his head bowed as Tobias put the collar on him. When he attached the chain and then fixed it to the bed frame, Phan shivered. "Oh, sorry," Tobias said. "Do you want to use the

bathroom first?" Phan shook his head and Tobias nodded. "Strip off your pants and stay," he said, petting Phan's head.

He walked to Noah, crop in hand. "What are you being punished for?" he asked calmly.

"For disrespect, sir," Noah answered calmly, bowing his head a bit more.

"Right. One stroke this time. Next time you forget it will be two, and so on." Tobias smoothed one hand over Noah's ass and then hit him with a firm stroke, bringing up a bright red mark.

Noah hissed and his shoulders tensed, but one stroke was no hardship for him, and he recovered quickly. "Thank you, sir."

"You're welcome, pet." Tobias stepped back and set the crop on the dresser. "On the bed, then. Face down."

From the floor Phan made a soft noise of approval.

Tobias grinned and went to the linen cupboard in the hall, fetching thick blankets and a pillow for Phan. "And you, get settled. Peek if you want, but straight to sleep after, understood?"

"Yes, sir. Thank you."

Tobias kissed the top of Phan's head. "Goodnight, boy."

By the time Tobias was finished getting Phan settled, Noah was right where he'd been told to be -- face down on the bed, his one red stripe standing out nicely against his smooth skin.

Tobias smiled and trailed a finger over the mark as he got the lube from the nightstand. "Nice," he said softly. "Spread your legs."

"Yes, sir." Noah opened them wide and moaned softly.

Tobias hummed as he slicked his fingers, movement caught out of the corner of his eye as Phan peered over the edge of the bed. He smiled to himself as he got on the bed, settling between Noah's legs. "Such a good boy," he purred, plunging two fingers into Noah's ass.

Noah gasped and bent one knee up, opening even more for him. "Sir." He tightened on Tobias' fingers and then relaxed, once, and then again, moaning softly. "Yes."

"You like that, don't you?" Tobias asked rhetorically, slowly pushing and pulling his fingers in and out of Noah.

Noah nodded his head and moaned again. "Yes, sir. Feels good."

Tobias grinned, getting off on having Phan watching. "Tight," he said for the benefit of their audience. He stroked into Noah again, massaging Noah's gland, his other hand dancing up the inside of Noah's thighs.

Noah gasped again and went partly up on his knees as Tobias prodded him. "Sir, sir. God."

"That's it," Tobias encouraged softly. "Lift your ass for me, sweetheart. Give me what I want." He pushed at Noah's prostate again, rubbing it harder.

As Noah complied, Tobias got a good long look at the boy's cock, standing stiffly away from his hips. "Please, sir. Want you inside me. Want to feel you. Need you, please." Noah hadn't lost his composure yet, but he was getting there. His voice was low and thick. "Sir."

Tobias let his fingers slip from Noah and he reached for the lube again. He slicked his hand and then his cock, letting the wet sounds fill the room over Noah's breathing. "This?" he asked calmly.

"Yes, sir. Yes, please." He glanced over his shoulder and watched his fingers. "Yours."

"Mine," Tobias growled, unable to stop himself. He pushed his fingers back into Noah for a moment, and heard Phan gasp. With a grin he stabbed at Noah's gland once more before getting up on his knees and grasping his erection. "Beg me."

Noah whined and begged in earnest. "Want you. Oh, God, sir, please! Want your cock in me, want to feel it burn, want to hear you groan, please, please, sir. I'm yours, sir, fuck me, please?"

Tobias and Phan moaned in unison, and then Tobias growled, leaving Noah empty only for as long as it took to pull out his fingers and drive his cock home, slamming deep in one smooth stroke. "Oh, God, you're tight," he breathed.

Noah grunted at the abrupt invasion. "Sir," he gasped and ducked his head, pressing back and raising his ass higher than his shoulders. "Yes, yes... do it, sir. Fuck me, please!"

Tobias leaned forward and bit Noah lightly on the shoulder. "Who's in charge here?" he asked in a rough voice.

"You, sir, always you, just want you... begging, please, sir," Noah stammered lowering his forehead to the bed.

"You want it deep and fast?" Tobias said, gliding in and out slowly. "Ride me, then. Do it." He stopped dead and slid a hand over Noah's ass, rubbing the red line.

Noah froze a moment, whimpering as if he might protest, but he didn't. Instead he started moving, rolling his hips up and back, taking Tobias deep. "Uhn... Sir. Oh..." He reached forward and pressed a hand into the headboard, increasing his leverage as he gradually picked up the pace, groaning each time he took Tobias in.

It wasn't fast enough for him, or deep enough, Tobias knew, and his boy's groans were peppered with soft frustrated whimpers.

"Come on, pet," he coaxed. "Do what you need." He was barely holding back from pounding into Noah, but he wanted Noah hungry for it; he wanted Noah screaming when he came.

Noah shook his head. "Please, sir. Not enough... please!" Noah rode him hard, deliberately slamming his hips back. He shoved his free hand lower and started to stroke himself, but it only frustrated him further. "Want you, you! Please, sir! Oh, God, please..." Noah sobbed softly, followed by a determined grunt as he tightened ruthlessly around Tobias.

Tobias' somewhat fragmented resolve broke completely as he forgot why he wasn't ramming himself in. He grabbed Noah's hips and slammed into him, pulling almost all the way out to do it again. He heard a growl and knew it was his, loud and buzzing in his ears as his hips picked up speed.

"Yes!" Noah arched his ass high for him. "Yes, sir, yes!" Noah's fingers curled around the headboard and he held on tightly, his other hand still stroking his cock rhythmically. "So good, may I come, sir? Please, may I?"

Tobias heard Phan groan behind him and he pushed harder, driving himself deep. "Yes, pet. Come for me," he said, grinding his hips against Noah's ass, fingers digging into Noah's hips. His own balls were pulled up tight, his cock aching; Noah was going to drive him over the edge as soon as he started to come, he knew it.

"Thank you, sir," Noah panted harshly. Two more thrusts and Noah was howling, shivering and shooting ribbons across the mattress. "Sir! Oh, yes." His body had gone tight, enveloping Tobias in rigid muscle.

Tobias grunted and threw back his head as his cock throbbed, his orgasm pounding through him like a storm. He cried out as he started shooting, his body twitching as he pushed even deeper into Noah's body, his fingers likely leaving bruises.

Panting, he rested his head on Noah's back. "Sweetheart," he whispered. All he could hear was the sound of his heart racing and Noah's gasps.

"Thank you, sir," Noah whispered back, turning his head slightly to be heard. "Such a rush, felt like fire, so good."

Tobias nodded. "Wonderful," he whispered back. His heart began to slow, and he could finally hear Phan, breathing in long, controlled breaths from the floor. "All right, boy?" he asked in a louder tone.

"Fine, sir. Thank you, sir." He sounded like he was being strangled.

Tobias grinned and eased out of Noah with a soft moan. "Get cleaned up," he said quietly, moving to the end of the bed to peer over the edge.

"Yes, sir." Noah rolled away from the mess he'd made and slid out of bed, bending to run his fingers down one of Phan's legs on his way by.

Phan was curled on his side, his hands behind his back and his dick rigid. He rolled his eyes as Noah touched him, still controlling his breathing.

"Going to hold it?" Tobias asked politely.

"Yes, sir," Phan said through gritted teeth. "Though it would help if you didn't talk to me."

"Sorry," Tobias said with another smile. He said nothing more, just lay there watching Phan breathe.

Phan stayed hard. "Maybe you could not look at me," Phan suggested.

Tobias laughed and rolled over. "Welcome home, boy."

"Thank you, sir," Phan said, his voice warmer. His breath caught though, and Tobias peeked over the side to see him gritting his teeth again. "You're not going to do that again tonight, are you?" he asked finally.

"No, I don't think so."

"Jesus, sorry, Phan," Noah said softly as he walked by again. He had a towel under one arm. "That looks like it hurts, sir," he said to Tobias, offering him a warm cloth. The towel he laid out carefully over the damp

streak on his side of the bed.

Tobias looked at Phan's erection with a critical eye. "Looks okay to me. Phan?"

"Fine, sir." He tugged at his blankets and snuggled into his pillow. "Be right as rain in a bit."

"Okay. You've been a good boy."

Phan smiled. "Goodnight, sir. Goodnight, Noah."

Noah climbed into bed laughing softly. "Night, Phan hon," He said and kissed Tobias lightly. "Perfect nightcap, sir."

Tobias smiled and pulled his boy closer. "Goodnight, boys," he said. "Now go to sleep. You'll wear an old man out."

## Chapter 10

Saturday brought gorgeous weather to the farm. Sunny and bright, and warm air coming in on the light breeze spoke of an early spring. The weather had Tobias inspired and Noah attentive and energetic. They were both ready to work, and Tobias would make sure they did.

Phan was doing the breakfast dishes and Noah was dusting the office when Tobias headed to the kitchen in search of some more coffee. Noah tried to take his cup, but Tobias reclaimed it with a grin. "Dust, pet. I need the exercise."

Noah looked like he was trying very hard not to make a smart comeback; Tobias smacked his ass anyway and laughed at his indignant look. "Even if you think it, it counts."

"That's not fair, sir," Noah protested with a grin.

"Nope, it's not." Tobias grinned all the way into the kitchen, but he stopped as he heard Phan sniffle.

"Phan?"

"Sorry, sir," Phan said, up to his elbows in suds. "Just... remembering."

Tobias nodded and held back a sigh. "Are you okay?"

Phan nodded and gave him a watery smile. "Of course. I just miss her. It's odd being back here, sort of."

"You've been back before," Tobias said, slipping an arm around the boy's waist.

"Yes, sir. But not... back. Not as your sub. Not like this. It's just a little odd."

Tobias smiled and kissed Phan's temple. "Odd bad?"

"No, sir!" Phan protested.

Tobias chuckled. "Good. If it helps, I think she'd be very happy that you're here, doing my dishes again."

Phan smiled. "Noah left spots on her glasses once," he whispered with a grin.

"Shut up!"

Tobias rolled his eyes and turned to look at Noah, who was grinning as well. "He saw my reflection in the toaster, sir. He's being a brat."

Tobias shook his head. "Okay, you two. Scat. Phan, you have stalls to clean and horses to make up to, and Noah... you and I have some work to do, don't we?"



"Yes, sir," Noah said, becoming more serious.

"Are you going to be okay?" Tobias asked Phan seriously.

"Yes, sir," Phan assured him with a smile. "If I want to babble about it all later, I'll let you know."

"Do that," Tobias said. "Now, get going, boy."

Phan kissed his cheek and stopped long enough to kiss Noah as well, and then hurried off.

## Chapter 11

Tobias walked Noah across to the play barn. He'd carefully chosen the white stall, its simplicity making the work itself the only focal point. He paced slowly beside the sling while Noah -- naked, kneeling, and head down -- concentrated silently on Tobias' order to clear his mind and secure himself in his subspace.

Noah had been scattered all week, he knew, but now Tobias could see him breathing deeply and exhaling slowly. He could see the boy sink, his shoulders relaxing and his body getting looser the deeper he went.

"Good," Tobias finally said. "Today we're going to work on getting you closer to full sensory deprivation. I'll put you in the sling and use this mask." He held up the mask he'd gotten from the supply stall and showed it to Noah. "It can, and eventually will, block sight and sound, and zip closed at your mouth so you can't speak. Today, I will leave you with sight. Understood?"

Noah nodded, his eyes on the mask. "Understood, sir."

"We'll go slowly," Tobias assured him. "You'll have your bell ball as well. Do you have any questions?"

"No, sir." Noah shook his head, but his voice was a little thin. "I remember the ball, sir."

Tobias smiled. "I do, too." He moved back to the sling. "Come here, please."

Noah stood and went to Tobias, displaying for him once he got there and fixing his eyes on the wall past Tobias' shoulder.

"Relax," Tobias soothed. "You've done this much before." He started doing up the sling, working buckles and straps easily as he petted Noah and urged him gently to move into the proper positions. "Lean back now," he coaxed. "Just let it take you up."

Noah took another deep breath and then lay back slowly, trusting his weight to the sling. He seemed a little nervous, but not like the last time when Tobias was worried about him panicking. This time, Noah breathed through his misgivings and just let go as the sling caught him.

"Someday you might even like it," Tobias said with a smile. To Noah's look he said, "Well, maybe not." He double checked the straps and tightened the belt around Noah's waist. "Move for me, pet," he said. "I have to see where you need support and restriction."

Noah made an effort to move, lifting his head a bit and moving his arms, but his legs seemed well stabilized.

"Good, relax," Tobias said. He tightened up the arms a bit, raised them to take up some slack, and adjusted the head slightly. There had to be room for the mask.

He picked it up again and showed Noah the removable blindfold, a padded eye piece that would keep his eyes closed. "We're not using this," he said. He undid the zipper for the mouth and pulled a ball gag from his pocket. "We are using this."

Noah's eyes widened slightly, but he stayed calm. "Understood, sir."

Tobias nodded. He turned the mask and lifted the flap over the ear hole, showing Noah the padded interior. "We will also use earplugs and this. You won't be able to hear at all."

Noah nodded slowly, but the idea of being deaf was obviously far more worrisome to him than being gagged. He licked his lips and swallowed.

Tobias ran his hand over Noah's leg and up this side. "I will be right here, and we'll do it slowly. You will be able to see me at all times. There will be order and you will be safe. You have my word."

Noah nodded. "Understood, sir," he said, but Tobias knew he was going to have to experience it to really understand.

Tobias petted him again. "Do you feel all right in the sling? Are you cold, or does it pinch anywhere?"

Noah wiggled his fingers and moved a bit, testing his restraints and the comfort for him. "I'm fine, sir. Thank you."

Tobias nodded and put the mask down. "Gag first, then," he said, moving to Noah's head. He bent and kissed his boy, then smiled. "Open up, pet."

Noah accepted the kiss gratefully, then licked his lips a couple of times, swallowed, and opened his mouth wide enough to accept the gag. Carefully fitting it in, Tobias had Noah bite down a little as he fastened it. Once it was secure, he moved back where Noah could see him, ringing the bell ball as he moved. "Here it is," he said, slipping it into Noah's hand. "Ring it, drop it... the mask will come off and then the gag. First thing."

Noah nodded slowly to show he understood and wrapped his fingers tightly around the ball.

"Float," Tobias said softly. "Just let yourself go. Look at me, or the ceiling, or even close your eyes. Don't think about anything but being warm and secure. You're safe and loved, and I'm so proud of you for even trying. You're a good boy. You can do this. We'll do it together." He stroked a hand over Noah's chest, letting him have tactile stimulation for the moment.

As Noah's breathing evened out Tobias slowed the touch, but he didn't break it until he picked up the mask. "Float," he repeated. "You're secure. Safe. Warm. I'm right here."

Noah let his eyes close after the second time Tobias told him to float. He was watching his breathing, slowing his heart rate; for the moment, he was doing everything right.

Slowly, Tobias eased the mask over Noah's face. "The mouth, eyes and ears are open," he said. "It's just going into place. I'll zipper the back, and you can float for a while before we move on. Relax, pet, you're doing a great job." He talked softly as he closed the mask at the back, keeping his voice low and soothing. "There." Once again he touched Noah. "I'm here, you're floating. Safe."

Noah gave him a slow nod, keeping his eyes closed. Noah swallowed a couple of times and the fingers of his free hand started to curl into a fist, but Noah fought that urge and just kept breathing.

"That's it," Tobias said. He talked and petted Noah for a long time, his voice soft and soothing, his touch light. When Noah calmed again, his breathing steady, Tobias said, "Hearing now. Easy, it's just an

adjustment. I'm still here, still touching you. You can open your eyes and see me at any point. I'm right here, pet."

Slowly, he plugged Noah's ears, watching as Noah tensed. He stroked his hands over Noah's skin, watching goose bumps form and fade away again, then did up the ear coverings. He stopped talking, Noah unable to hear him, but he stayed where Noah would see him, his touches once more constant and soothing. He hoped.

Noah's eyes opened as soon as he was unable to hear any longer and locked on Tobias' torso. They looked a little panicked at first but softened the longer he had Tobias in his line of vision. Tobias continued to touch him, smoothing over his skin for a long while until, finally, Noah's eyes drifted closed again.

Gradually, Tobias stopped his hands. First, he kept the left moving, but his right stilled on Noah's shoulder for a long moment and then he lifted it off. He allowed the left to roam freely for long minutes, but eventually he slowed that too, right over Noah's heart, and lifted it away. His gaze, he kept on Noah's face.

The boy seemed fine at first, still and centered, with his eyes still closed. But after a moment Tobias noticed a subtle change in Noah's breathing. His boy's eyes flew open wide and his chest started to heave. He made a sound, though his voice was muted and muffled by the gag and the mask, and he stared at the ceiling, not even looking for Tobias in his panic. Both of his hands turning to fists, shaking as his body went tight, but Noah's bell-ball remained silent and clenched tightly in his fingers.

Tobias ignored the ball, Noah clearly in distress. He ran his hands over Noah's torso, hoping to draw attention to himself, but when Noah hadn't so much as blinked in a few seconds, Tobias uncovered his ears. One hand stroking the boy, the other unplugging his ears, Tobias began to talk again. "Right here, sweetheart," he said softly. "I'm right here, and you're safe. I'm taking off the hood, but I need you to breathe, pet." His hand slid to the back of the mask, easing the zipper down.

"Noah, breathe," he said again, keeping his voice low and calm. "The mask will be off in a moment. Look at me, pet. Find me with your eyes; you can see. I'm right here."

Noah's eyes flicked over to him and then everything started to get better. Tobias got the hood off, and Noah began to get his breathing under control. His color got better, and his heart was no longer pounding in his chest.

Tobias moved slowly and deliberately, still saying Noah's name and repeating soft, encouraging words as he reached for the gag to remove it. But as soon as he got to the clasp Noah turned his head, pulling it from his fingers.

Tobias looked at him curiously. "Pet?"

Noah managed one more deep breath and then shook his head in an emphatic "no."

"Are you sure?" Tobias asked seriously.

Noah's eyes were on him and he nodded confidently.

Tobias nodded back, his hand rubbing slow circle on Noah's chest. "Okay. We're going to stay just like this until you're calmer. Just you and me, pet. You're safe, you're secure, and I'm right here. I'm touching you, you can see me, and you can hear me."

Noah nodded again and Tobias kept talking him through it, waiting for his heartrate to drop and his breathing to once more become restful. When that happened, not too much later, Tobias moved slightly to

the side. "Let's try this again, pet. You want my voice? I'd like to blindfold you, then, but I'll keep touching. You will be able to hear me and feel me. You will always know that I'm here, I promise. We're slowing down even more."

Noah swallowed and then nodded again. He had a thing about his Master's voice, Tobias knew -- it made him feel safe. Tobias was reasonably certain he could even stop touching Noah eventually, as long as Noah could still hear him. Getting Noah to trust without that reassurance was something to work on.

"Good boy," Tobias said softly. "Just listen to me." He showed Noah the blindfold, holding it above his face. "I'm here and I'm not leaving," he said, slowly lowering the padded strip. "I will never leave you; you're safe with me." He secured the blindfold, keeping words flowing easily and lightly. He didn't care if he repeated himself, and he was certain Noah didn't either; his voice was the key.

Tobias walked around Noah, touching him lightly and monitoring him visually. He seemed settled; Tobias smiled to himself and glanced at his cart. It was time to sweeten the deal with a reward.

"Good boy," he said yet again. "You're doing well, pet. We won't block anything more today -- nice and slow, like everything else. But maybe you'll see a few of the rewards." He stopped touching Noah out of necessity, going to the cart for some hand lotion, talking the whole time. "I'm here. I have a treat for you, pet; something smooth and cool, to help you float."

Tobias noted with some amusement the way the mention of a reward brought Noah's cock to life. Not hard, just a twitch; an unconscious expression, betraying the arousal of his curiosity. He noted the way Noah moved his head just slightly to follow the sound of Tobias' voice, too. Or maybe it was so he could try to figure out what Tobias was doing. Everything else about him seemed perfectly relaxed.

Tobias made the cap of the hand lotion pop as loudly as possible. "This is going to feel nice," he assured Noah, pouring a good portion into his hands and rubbing them together to warm it a little. He moved between Noah's legs and smoothed his hands up his boy's body. "See?" he asked playfully, sliding and slipping over Noah's skin. "Light touch, heavy cream... and all you have to do is float."

Noah took a deep breath and exhaled slowly, presumably finding his space again, or perhaps just relaxing and enjoying the attention. Either way, Tobias felt him get heavier, letting the straps of the sling do the work of supporting him.

Finally.

Tobias talked softly and rubbed lotion into Noah's skin, taking his time. He explored Noah's chest and sides, moving away when Noah began to squirm, and worked his way down one leg and up the other before walking around doing his arms. All the while Noah lay there motionless, breathing evenly and listening to Tobias' voice. This was what Tobias meant when he spoke of floating. He wondered how aware of his state Noah was, or if he was simply so deep that it was happening naturally. Knowing Noah, he suspected the latter.

He got more cream, working his way back up Noah's thighs, letting more of a growl into his voice; it was an experiment of sorts, to see what exactly he could do. Touching Noah was an added bonus. Noah responded to the change in Tobias' voice with a soft moan but remained as he had been, perfectly still.

"Nice," Tobias purred, working the muscle a little harder, letting his hands go higher to sweep just past Noah's balls, up and over his hips. Noah sighed for him, and his balls tucked a bit as Tobias fingers swept past them, then relaxed again as he moved farther up Noah's hips. His cock showed some weak interest, not nearly as much as his nipples, which grew full and hard at the deliberate near miss.

Tobias grinned and did it again, this time circling Noah's nipples carefully. He loved seeing his boy react, especially at such a deep level. Noah moaned again, gently, and tried to arch his chest to Tobias' fingers, but he was too securely restrained to manage it. He didn't fight the bonds, just relaxed back into them and moaned once more.

"Can't move, pet," Tobias said softly. "There's nothing for you to move against. You only exist; what happens is out of your control and in mine. Trust in me -- float and feel and merely be. It's time to let go." He circled a nipple again and drew his fingernail across it lightly, teasing.

Noah nodded slowly, listlessly, as if it were an unconscious move. He let out a long, soft sigh, as his nipple strained and reddened under Tobias' fingers.

"Just drift," Tobias whispered. "Float." His fingers moved down to slide easily over Noah's belly, now slick with lotion. "Feel." He moved lower, caressing Noah's balls, one hand pushing slightly on Noah's hip to make the sling sway. "Trust." One slippery finger traced over Noah's hip bone.

Tobias could almost see the blood rush, watched as the color rose in Noah's cock and it started to stir again. Noah groaned behind his gag and swallowed.

"Pretty boy," Tobias said, letting more of his growl out. "Such a good boy. Trust me, pet." He began to stroke and pet Noah's cock and balls, focusing his touches there while keeping an eye on Noah's other reactions. Satisfied that Noah was calm, if beginning to become aroused, Tobias started the sling swaying, rocking it like a swing.

"Can't move against it," he said in a low voice. "Can't fight it. Give me all your control, Noah. Trust me to keep you safe. Feel me touching you. You can't thrust, can't beg; you have no leverage. You have no choice but to let the sling hold you, let me love you. Let it happen, pet."

Noah's prick grew stiffer in Tobias' fingers but Noah didn't move. Tobias continued to stroke and fondle him and Noah stayed still. He moaned, and his breathing grew slightly shallower, but he remained relaxed and made no effort to give or take.

Tobias played with Noah's cock until he was hard -- until they both were -- and then let him go, the sling gliding back and forth. "That's it," he praised. He reached into the cart again, one hand on Noah's hip to get the sling moving at the correct angle; he wanted Noah's body moving toward him as he stood between Noah's legs.

Tobias let himself fall silent for a moment, his hand on Noah's hip their only link. Before Noah could rouse himself enough to react, he moved again, back into place and with one hand around Noah's cock. The motion of the sling controlled the stroke as Noah moved in and out of his grasp.

In his other hand he carefully slicked a narrow silicone dildo.

Noah started panting evenly, in time with the swing and with Tobias' stroking. Mixed with his panting were warm moans, not pleading or needy, but a pure vocal reaction to the physical sensation. Noah's skin started to flush and his stiff cock strained proudly away from his hips.

Tobias hummed at him, growled a little; there really weren't words that would reach Noah in this state, other than the occasional reassurance and possessive "mine," which he made sure to use. He rubbed at the skin between Noah's balls and his ass, gently at first, but moving quickly to dip a finger inside every now and again.

The sounds Noah was making grew a bit more intense at the intrusion, but Tobias was fairly certain he had him where he wanted him -- deep enough not to slip, deep enough to be trusting implicitly, and deep enough to need to be brought back when it was time.

He moved his finger in a little farther, letting the sling take care of the force, not going any deeper than Noah's weight moved things. Tobias' hand was slick with lotion, Noah so relaxed that the finger sunk in with every swing, deeper each time. When the sling slowed, Tobias gave it a gentle push and added a second finger, touching Noah nowhere but there, inside him.

Noah grunted at the second finger, and his cock made a little bow to one side before straining outward once again. He grunted a second time and a third until he was accustomed to the extra girth. He was still panting, though somewhat less rhythmically and harder.

"That's it," Tobias soothed. "Let me in." He pushed the sling again, this time crooking his fingers and rubbing at Noah's gland, making Noah moan even louder. He smiled, playing Noah like he was a finely tuned instrument, searching for the sounds and reactions that he knew Noah was capable of. A moan, a sigh, a long groan... and all the while, Noah remained pliable and open to him.

He withdrew his fingers, letting them slip free as the sling took Noah from him, and on the return glide he nudged the dildo into Noah in place of his hand.

The sound Noah made was pure sex. It was a low, pleased groan that started in his gut and vibrated outward, echoing in his chest, and in Tobias' ears. Everything about Noah was pliable and slack except his cock, which was starting to leak musky fluid over the tip and slowly down the shaft. Even if Noah's eyes had been open he wouldn't be seeing anything now, hearing anything; he wouldn't have anything to say but to deliver that lush groan.

Tobias licked his lips, watching the dildo slide deeper, watching the angle of it until Noah's body moved away and it slipped out. He held his hand steady, let the sling do the fucking for him. It was a curiously detached way of pleasuring Noah, but at the same time, Tobias had a certain amount of fear that his pride in Noah's submission would bring him to his own climax.

Over and over again the sling brought Noah to him, then pulled him away. Each time, Tobias let Noah's body take the toy. When Noah's moans were constant, when the fluid leaking from Noah's cock had begun to pool, he added a twist of his wrist, bringing Noah even closer to coming. The sound would have been a harsh cry if Noah had been able, and Tobias felt himself break, felt his will let go.

"You can come," he whispered, dipping his head to lap at the swollen crown of Noah's erection.

As with everything else in the session, Noah did precisely as he was told, and one more twist of Tobias' wrist sent him over. He'd remained remarkably relaxed right through to that moment, then Noah's body shivered involuntarily as he slicked his hips and stomach with his own spunk. The tension behind his release had been emotional, and as Noah's body let go, he sobbed softly with it, cleansing tears finding their way out from under his blindfold.

Tobias smiled, though he gritted his teeth to keep his own control. He eased the toy out of Noah's body, one hand smoothing lotion and come into Noah's skin. "Good boy," he praised. "Such a good boy for me." He moved carefully, his tone soft and affectionate as he undid the blindfold. "Keep your eyes closed for a moment, sweetheart, let yourself relax. Just breathe and float."

He wiped his hands on his trousers, making a mental note to bring towels even when sex wasn't planned, and removed Noah's gag. "This is going to be uncomfortable, pet. Just work your jaw and try to relax. I'll get you water in a moment or two."

It took a moment for Noah to respond. He started to move his jaw, letting the muscles come back to life. He licked his lips and took a couple of deep breaths, making no effort to open his eyes yet.

"Well done, pet," Tobias said, fully aware of the pride in his voice. "Very well done. Relax for a while; just let the sling hold you. Walking right now would be a very bad idea."

"Yes... sir," Noah tried to say, but his voice was dry and hoarse. He swallowed again and cleared his throat. He blinked his eyes a few times and squinted against the bright whiteness of the room before wincing and shutting them again.

"It'll get better," Tobias said softly. "Your eyes will adjust. But really -- take your time. Come back slowly." He opened a bottle of water from the stash on the cart and brought it to Noah with a straw. "Here, drink. Just a little."

Noah took a sip and swallowed it down, sighing gratefully. "Better," he said softly. "Thank you, sir."

"You can have more in a moment. How do you feel?"

"Light, warm."

Tobias grinned. "Floaty?"

Noah nodded. "Yes, sir. Floaty." He smiled a little.

"Good." Tobias smiled again, or possibly still, and let Noah have more water. "So, sight can go, but not hearing. Interesting. Although possibly touch is a big one, too..." He shook his head and ran his hands through Noah's hair, feeling affectionate and playful. He felt like he could laugh for an hour or run a marathon.

Noah nodded. "I'm ready, I think, just... take it slowly, sir? My legs feel like they've gone to jelly."

Tobias nodded. "Easy as pie, sweetheart." He stood behind Noah and wrapped an arm around him, easing him down and into his arms. A few tugs of the quick releases at Noah's wrists and ankles, and Tobias was able to pick Noah up and carry him across the stables to the room full of pillows. "Better?" he asked, laying them both down.

Noah sighed and nodded. "Oh, yes, sir." Noah rubbed his hands together and touched his face, then slid his fingers down his own body. "Better."

"Sleep, if you like," Tobias invited. Tobias only wanted to hold him, watch him. Noah glowed.

Noah shifted just slightly, leaning closer into Tobias. "Thank you, sir," he said, his eyes already drifting closed.

"Thank you," Tobias countered. He held Noah closer to him and felt him melt, just as relaxed as he'd been in the sling -- more so. He smiled as Noah fell asleep, floating with his boy as high as they could go.



## Chapter 12

Noah had floated like that all afternoon and straight through bedtime Saturday night. He'd been quiet and affectionate, and just looked happy all evening. Phan remarked on it several times. Tobias had started to despair for his plans for Sunday, but Noah apparently woke up with his usual energy and had awakened Tobias just past dawn to put that energy to good use. Breakfast was cheerful, and Noah seemed very relaxed, validating for Tobias the reasons he put his boy through that kind of hard work.

Tobias could hear his boys giggling together as they cleaned up downstairs. It would only take a few minutes, he knew -- Phan had been very thorough in his work the day before. Just dishes and picking up a few stray items, which didn't give Tobias a lot of time to lay things out in the safe room.

He got clothes from the cabinet, improvising a little; having two subs was going to mean a serious shopping trip for costumes, he saw. Humming, he changed his own clothes, donning the severe robes of a school master over his own loose trousers and button-down shirt. Really, his own costuming seemed to take so much less time.

With another quick hum and a grin he moved to the door and leaned out to yell downstairs. "Boys. Safe room when you're done!"

"Yes, sir!" Phan called back. "We're on our way."

"Coming, sir!" Noah's voice joined in, and Tobias could hear the murmur of Phan saying something to him. "Phan! That's a cheap joke," Noah scolded and Tobias rolled his eyes. It was a cheap joke, not to mention predictable. But it meant Phan was in a good mood.

He waited for them in the center of the room, listening to them thump up the stairs. Regardless of their easy manner with each other, they both came in quietly, eyes lowered as they knelt on the floor in front of him.

"Good boys," he said with a smile. "And because of that -- Noah's wonderful job yesterday and the cleaning and chores Phan managed -- I've decided on a reward for you both."

Phan's back straightened, but he didn't say anything, his grin enough.

Noah was checking out Tobias' robe but was careful not to raise his eyes too high. "Thank you, sir," he said cheerfully, and after a glance at Phan, he straightened his back further as well.

Tobias tried to look stern, but he could feel his grin tug at the corners of his mouth. "Good boys get naughty rewards. We're off to the stables, as you can see." He turned on his heel and paced a few steps. "Your clothes are laid out -- Noah's on the right. They're not identical, but close enough, and I want to see two rather shamefaced school boys ready for me in... oh, two minutes."

"Yes, sir." Noah stood quickly and moved to the bed to look over the clothes. He grinned and started to change, bumping elbows with Phan on purpose as Phan did the same. "Oh, no, not one of these," he sighed, frowning and puzzling over the uniform tie. Finally, he handed it to Phan to tie for him.

Phan looked at him and raised an eyebrow. "Two minutes, kiddo. Better learn fast." He tied his own tie with a flourish and wink.

"Phantom," Tobias said mildly.

"Yes, sir." Immediately, Phan looped Noah's tie around his own neck and tied it loosely. "Here you are," he said, passing it back and kissing Noah's nose. "I see lessons are in order for Tuesday."

"I could use a lesson. Not that Sir ever takes me out in a tie," Noah said with a wink. He tightened the tie neatly, folded his collar down around it, and turned to face Tobias as he did up the buttons on his vest. Then he slouched, stuffed his hands in his pockets and looked down at the floor.

Phan grinned and tucked in his shirt. He tugged the back out a little, and put on his vest, a look of utter boredom settling over his face as he stood next to Noah. "Sir."

Tobias looked them over, smiling. "Very nice. Well, shabby and petulant, but nice. Follow me, please."

He walked smartly to the door, hearing them shuffle along behind him. Down the stairs they trooped, pausing at the back door to put on their shoes, and then across to the stables. Tobias unlocked the door and held it open for them, saying, "I'll take care of the lights and supplies, you two scoot down to the stall and sit in the visitors' chairs."

Phan grabbed Noah's hand and dragged him down the row, going right to the stall with the big desk. It was a wonder they didn't trip in the dark. Shaking his head, Tobias turned on the lights and checked the heat, still up from his session with Noah. It only took a moment to retrieve water bottles; the other things he'd need were all in the desk.

After a moment of checking his headspace, he walked slowly down the hall and into the stall, his face stern. "Gentlemen," he said by way of greeting as he moved to stand at his side of the desk. "In trouble again?"

Noah didn't say anything. Instead he crossed his arms and sunk a little in his chair, looking for all the world like a teenager trying to become invisible. His eyes were focused on his own knees.

Tobias raised an eyebrow. "I see. And you?" he asked, turning to Phan.

Phan shrugged and tipped his head back, looking at the ceiling.

Tobias put the water bottles down on the floor and stood with his hands clasped behind his back. "I have been informed by Mr. Bradley that you were found in the library engaging in behavior he feels is grounds for expulsion. I had to send the man home to rest; he looked positively ill. What do you have to say?"

Noah kept his arms crossed, but glanced sidelong at Phan. "I told you not in the library," he hissed to Phan. "My father's gonna kill me when he finds out."

Phan sighed. "Yeah. Blame me. Whatever."

Tobias rolled his eyes and lifted a ruler from the top of the desk. He brought it down hard on the edge, the whistle of it being swung cutting off as the ruler broke. "Do I have your attention now, Mr. Dolan?"

Noah jumped. His eyes widened, and he scrambled a bit to sit up straighter. "Yes, sir."

"Good. Do I have to remind you who I am? Your father is the least of your worries at the moment." Tobias glared, looking from Noah to Phan, who'd sat up as well, his eyes wide. "Now. Please tell me precisely what you were doing in the library."

Noah swallowed hard and looked at Phan, who didn't appear to be in a hurry to answer the question himself. He bit his lip and looked back at the desk. "It was... nothing, sir." Noah's voice was slightly shaky. "Mr. Bradley was wrong. He didn't see what he thought he saw. Right, Phan?"

Phan bit his lip and looked down. "I guess," Phan said softly. "Will you really expel us, sir?" he asked Tobias.

With a shrug Tobias tossed the broken end of the ruler down on the desk. "I will if you two don't stop playing games and tell me what happened. And then, we'll see."

Phan sighed and looked over at Noah. "I can't get kicked out," he said simply. "Not over something like this."

Noah looked at Phan for a long moment, earnestly searching Phan's eyes for something. Finally, he sighed and nodded. He looked in Tobias' direction but didn't meet his eyes. Not even close. "We were... kissing, sir," he mumbled.

"Ah. Lewd behavior in a public space. How very refined of you both." He opened a drawer and pulled out a stack of files. "Do you have any idea how many boys are found in a similar position? And how infrequently I get told? No, Mr. Dolan. You were doing more."

Noah's eyes went wide and he looked over at Phan for help.

Phan shifted in his seat and Tobias bit the inside of his cheek to keep from smiling. The boy was hard already.

"Well," Phan said carefully. "We were kissing. And there might have been a little... um. Well, sir, it was sort of... rushed. And we were trying not to be seen."

Tobias rolled his eyes. "Do I have to ask you to draw me a picture?" he said coldly.

"Not that good an artist," Phan said with a roll of his eyes.

"Fine." Tobias' voice was like ice. "Show me then."

Noah's head snapped around and he stared right at Tobias. "*Show* you?"

"If you won't tell me, how can I decide on an appropriate and suitable punishment?" Tobias asked calmly. "Now. Stand up and show me what was going on, what sent one of your teachers home for the day." He looked at Phan, who somehow managed to look both embarrassed and eager. Really, he should have gone into the theater.

Noah did his best to blush, but the boy was so shameless that he didn't pull it off very well. He stood slowly, and Tobias got his first look at the bulge in his trousers as well. The schoolboy took a few steps backward until his back was to the wall and looked at Phan.

Phan licked his lips and looked to Tobias, who merely nodded.

"Show me what was so worth risking being expelled," Tobias purred. His hands he kept behind his back, waiting as Phan unfolded himself from the chair and walked toward Noah.

"Like in the library," he heard Phan whisper, one hand resting on Noah's hip. He leaned in and nuzzled Noah's neck and added, "Let the man get his thrills. Doesn't matter."

"Matters to me," Noah answered just as softly, "but my father... I can't very well get expelled, either." He turned his head slowly and kissed Phan tentatively. His hand wrapped around Phan's lower back and pulled him closer, trapping Phan's erection against his thigh.

Tobias kept his face as void of reaction as he could, but Phan's throaty moan and Noah's usual skill at throwing himself into a scene made his groin tighten. He'd expected the feeling, hoped for it, but it was still an adjustment and a bit of work to keep it from showing.

"That's it," Phan murmured. "Come on, pretty boy. Kiss me like you want to." His tongue flicked out, licking at Noah's lips, and Tobias watched as his hips shimmied a bit, Phan rubbing himself on Noah's leg.

Noah pulled away a moment and sighed. When he leaned into Phan again, he kissed Phan much more in earnest, pushing his tongue into his mouth eagerly. He blindly fumbled and grabbed for the hand Phan had on his hip and pushed it into his groin, moaning with the touch.

Tobias nodded, stepping a little closer. "Sluts and whores," he said with condemnation in his voice. "I expected little else. Rutting like dogs, uncaring about anyone around you."

Phan lifted his head and sneered, rubbing and tugging at Noah's cock. "At least we touch instead of getting off by watching. Pervert."

"Deviant," Tobias corrected with a cold smile. "However. This is all?"

Phan ignored him, kissing Noah again and undoing the top button of Noah's pants.

Noah made a strangled sound and grabbed Phan's wrist, tugging his mouth away from Phan's. "That's all, sir," he said, slightly breathless. He pushed Phan back a step. "Can we go now?"

Tobias snorted. "Hardly. We have to decide on a suitable punishment. Mr. Bradley is correct, you know. Sending you home is entirely possible."

Phan laughed, the sound almost bitter. "But you'll reconsider, won't you?"

"Possibly," Tobias said with a smile, leaning on his desk. "Sway me. Or I can call your fathers now and tell them what fine, moral characters you have. Imagine... frottage in the library. Utterly without shame."

"This is bullshit." Noah mumbled and sighed heavily, turning to look Tobias in the eye. Tobias held his ground, the smile still on his lips. "Fine," Noah said tersely. "Why don't you tell us what you want? What will sway you?" Noah's grip on Phan became more protective.

Tobias stood up and took the few steps he needed to get close to them, crowding them both back into the wall. "Tell me," he said softly, his mouth by Noah's ear. "Why the library? Why didn't you do what any of the other boys would have done -- merely take young Phantom here by the hand and move to your rooms? Why would you play in the stacks, your cock out and his hand wrapped around you, your heart pounding and your blood ringing in your ears?" He licked his lips and watched as Phan's eyes fluttered and closed as

he almost swayed into Noah. "You wanted to be seen, slut. So, if you want an audience -- that's what I'm offering."

Noah flushed and squinted, turning his head slightly away from Tobias. "It was his idea," Noah explained reluctantly, looking dismayed, "and I thought it sounded pretty hot."

"And now?" Tobias said with a slight smile. "Less fun. Though your cock is still stiff, boy, and you're caught between a rock and a hard place. Your father's a banker, is he not? It really wouldn't do to have it known what you like to do in the book stacks. His reputation will suffer momentarily -- yours for a lot longer."

He saw movement, caught Phan's hand creeping up Noah's thigh, but Phan was looking at the wall, the very picture of contrition.

Noah took a deep breath and looked at Phan. "So we'll give the man what he wants?" he asked, dragging Phan's hand higher. The button on his pants was already undone, so he lowered the zipper and let his cock fall freely from behind it. His other hand tugged Phan close again.

"Give me what *I* want," Phan said, wrapping his hand around Noah's cock and moving in to kiss Noah.

Tobias nodded and moved back, laughing softly. "See, that's not so bad, is it?" he asked, watching Phan play with Noah's cock. He crossed his arms across his chest and tilted his head. "Oh. Don't come -- I can't have you messing your uniforms."

Noah groaned pathetically at that but apparently decided that he wasn't going to be the only one left wanting. He let Phan rub on him for another moment and then worked his fingers between them to pop his button and loosen his fly. "What you want," he whispered to Phan.

"Uh-huh. Feel you. Hear you. Taste you," Phan said, his voice ragged. He pushed against Noah again and moaned, his hand stuttering in its rhythm.

It was the skip in his arm, the glide that turned into a jerk that showed Tobias how needy Phan was feeling; he did some quick math in his head and suddenly realized he hadn't gotten off since Thursday. Grinning, he moved around the desk and opened a drawer.

"For punishment," he said, laying the broken end of cane on the desktop. He'd broken the cane on that very desk years ago -- thus the supply of rulers in the drawer. They were cheaper.

Phan whimpered and tried to move away from Noah. "Ah, fuck."

Noah pulled his hand away rather abruptly, leaving Phan's cock bobbing freely as he retreated. Apparently he had also noted Phan's distress and was sensitive enough not to deliberately tease him further. It was Tobias' job to push him, after all, so Noah, in character or not, could be as sympathetic as he wanted to be.

The cane caught his eye, too, however, and he groaned softly.

Tobias beamed at them. "Oh, don't stop on my account."

Phan whimpered, squeezing his cock hard at the base in an obvious attempt not to come. "Sir," he said softly. "Not that. Please."

Tobias raised an eyebrow. "It's broken; you hardly think I'd strike you with it, do you?"

Phan shook his head wildly.

Tobias looked at Noah. "Do you have any idea how much it hurts to be properly caned? It falls well outside of my disciplinary discretion."

"But watching students stroke off in your office is fair game? What are you going to do with it, then?" Noah looked over at Phan and then back to Tobias. He was still leaning on the wall, his cock exposed. "You need to let him come, sir. Poor boy's in a state. Let him come, it'll be better after. Please?"

Tobias pulled himself up to sit on the desk and looked them both over as he arranged his robe neatly. Phan was almost quivering. Tobias clicked his tongue and leaned over, pulling open another drawer and picking up a tube of lube.

"Here," he said tossing the lube to Noah. "He can hold off long enough for you to get him ready, I'm sure."

Noah caught the tube, wide eyed. He looked at Phan, and swallowed hard. "You're going to let him do this?"

Phan closed his eyes. "Let's see. Take a hunk of wood up my ass instead the cock I'd been hoping for, or be disowned, thrown out of school, and sent into a life of God knows what? Hmm." He opened his eyes and looked at Noah. "Plus, it's not like I've *never* had anything that wasn't purely anatomical jammed into me."

Tobias resisted the urge to roll his eyes, noticing that talking and having to think to stay in the scene seemed to have gotten Phan under control again. "I'm not going to do it, anyway," he said with a slight smile.

Noah turned and glared at Tobias. "Prick," he said, and then looked at Phan. He moved to him and ran his hands down Phan's back. "Put your hands on the desk, okay?" he said softly. He got his fingers into the waistband of Phan's pants to pull them down.

It was gratifying how fast Phan moved, bending slightly at the waist and clinging to the edge of the desk.

"Little close," Tobias noted, looking down at Phan's head, which was almost in his lap.

"Should give you your thrills," Phan said dryly, nuzzling Tobias' hip. The boy had nerve, he had to give him that. Again.

Tobias looked at Noah and raised an eyebrow. "Waiting," he said, his voice carrying a hint of growl. He could feel Phan's breath warming him through the robe and his trousers.

"Don't rush me." Noah took a deep breath and was doing a damn good job of looking like he didn't plan to enjoy any of this. Tobias doubted that to be true at all. Noah slicked his fingers and stood behind Phan before sliding one between his cheeks and then slipping it slowly inside him.

"Oh, shit," Phan gasped. His hips rocked forward and then back, and his head lowered to rest on Tobias' thigh.

Tobias smirked and stroked his hair, then tugged hard. "Problem?"

"No, sir. Yes, sir. Oh, God."

"That's very succinct of you." He looked at Noah and then at his hand, watching Noah's finger slide slowly in and out of Phan's ass. "And do you have a problem?" he asked politely.

"Only if he does," Noah growled. His eyes were also on his own hand as he carefully added a second finger to the first.

"Do you want him to stop?" Tobias asked Phan.

"No, sir," Phan panted. "Oh, God, no!"

"There you go," Tobias said to Noah. "Proceed."

Noah worked his fingers in Phan, prodding him deeper and deeper in long steady strokes. "How's that feel, Phantom?" he asked, his other hand migrating to his own cock. He started stroking slowly in time with his fingers.

Phan shuddered. "Good," he said, his voice both low and throaty as well as muffled against Tobias' robe. "Noah."

Tobias watched Noah's hands, both of them, and reached for the cane, simply to keep from joining in. "See?" he said. "He likes it. You both do. Hardly punishment."

"You're not here," Noah said simply.

"Oh, but I am," Tobias said serenely. "Your fingers are mine. I'm touching you, I'm touching him -- he's close enough to smell me."

"Smell musty," Phan muttered.

Tobias pulled Phan's hair, lifting his head up. "Lick it," he said, holding the handle of the cane to Phan's face. It wasn't thick, but it was definitely phallic, smooth and rounded.

Phan glared at him and opened his mouth, moaning as Tobias set the smooth wood on his tongue.

"Suck it," Tobias ordered. "Suck my cock."

Phan whimpered, his mouth closing around the handle.

Noah raised his eyes to the cane and watched Phan take the handle between his lips. He grunted and pushed his fingers deeper, twisting them inside Phan.

Phan groaned, his eyes going wide and his gaze flying to Tobias' face. He was too close, and Tobias found himself in a predicament. He glanced at Noah and at the now wet cane handle and smiled.

He looked back at Phan and winked.

Phan's eyes rolled back and he came, crying out around the cane, his tongue pushing it out as he panted. "Noah, God, yes! Sir," he gasped, his head falling once more to Tobias' thigh, which he rubbed and nuzzled like a kitten.

Tobias sighed and looked at the cane, his cock twitching. "Looks like this is for you then, Mr. Dolan."

Noah's eyes narrowed. "Haven't you had enough, you perv?"

"Not hardly. Be so kind to your... friend as to help him sit, will you?" He got off the desk and reached for the lube, watching Noah's face.

Noah tugged his fingers free and reached for Phan, supporting him into a chair. "You okay?" he asked Phan, smoothing a hand over one shoulder.

Phan nodded, pulling Noah down for a fast kiss. "Be fine. Whoa." He shook his head and slouched down in the seat, trying to look like he was struggling to pull up his pants, but not managing to hide a huge grin.

Tobias smirked and smoothed lube on the cane. "Mr. Dolan?"

"Forget it; you've seen enough, old man." Noah started to tuck his stiff cock back into his pants.

Tobias dropped the cane and took Noah by the scruff of his neck, pushing him up against the wall in a fast, smooth move. "All right, little boy. Here's the situation," he hissed. "You bend over the desk and take it, or I call your father. And expel you. And call your friend's father. There will be Mr. Bradley as well, and you'll be very publicly made to tell what you were doing in the library -- and you won't get away with that feeble hand job story you tried out on me. Enough?"

Noah jerked once, but he wasn't really trying to get away. He kicked the wall and growled. "Fine."

"Wonderful." Tobias pulled away and shoved Noah to the desk. "Pants down."

Noah pushed his pants down angrily and they fell neatly around his ankles.

"Bend over, please, and spread your legs." He picked up the cane once more and glanced at Phan, who was watching avidly. He rolled his eyes and Phan blushed, immediately dropping his eyes and getting back into character.

"Leave him alone," Phan said sullenly. "Got what you wanted, didn't you?"

"Hell, no. I wanted to ram this up your ass."

Phan winced. "Sorry, Noah."

"Not your fault, Phan, he's a pig," Noah said, spitting out the last few words. He turned and lay over the desk, spreading his legs as wide as the pants around his ankles would let him. He took hold of the far edge with his fingers.

"And you're a slut," Tobias said smoothly, shoving his fingers into Noah's ass.

"Fuck!" Noah gasped and pressed his forehead into the desktop. "Ah, Jesus."

Tobias thrust again, feeling Noah cling to him, his ass opening and letting him in, even if his character seemed to be resisting. "So, Phan. Did you ever get this far, or was it all fumbles and pretty kisses?"

Phan was staring, the hand in his lap twitching. "Shut up," he said through gritted teeth.

"Ah, jealousy. Such an ugly thing." Tobias moved his fingers, playing a little before he reached around showed Noah the cane. "Don't worry. It won't hurt much."

Noah just growled at him. "Go on, get it over with."



"Oh, I like it when they're eager," Tobias said with a grin. He pulled his fingers free without ceremony and set the cane handle at Noah's hole, pushing slowly. "Watch, Phantom. See him take it. This is what a slut does."

"Screw you," Noah said in response, but then he sighed at the intrusion, and moaned softly.

"No, I believe it's you being screwed," Tobias said, twisting the cane a little as he sank it into Noah's ass. He turned it again as he pulled it back, fucking him slowly. "Tell you what -- you don't come until I say so, and I'll let you and your friend suck me off after."

"Goodie," Noah groaned.

"One can only hope." Tobias watched the cane, the smooth and slick handle, as it went in and out of Noah's ass. He watched Noah's hips move with it, tiny motions Noah couldn't stop, and he watched Phan's hand stop flexing as he started to rub at himself through his pants. "Let me hear you, boy," Tobias said. "Let Phantom hear what he's missing. He's getting off on this, you know. He's hard again, wanting."

"Phan?" Noah pushed back more this time, groaning. "Feels good, makes me want it, want more. Want you." He moaned louder. "Should be you, Phan."

"Will be," Phan promised. "Pretend it is--"

"No. It's me, boy. My cane up your ass. Be glad it's not my cock, it's far wider. Think of this as the easy part." He grinned and twisted the cane again, speeding up and pushing harder, starting to fuck Noah in earnest. "Take it, Noah. Take it and know it's me doing it to you, making you feel so good. Making you leak and throb and ache."

"Oh, God." Noah whimpered and rolled his hips with it, rubbing his cock on the desktop. "Oh, God, Phan? Phan... feels good, makes me need... oh, God." He planted his elbows on the desk and pushed up until he was braced on them, arching his back. "Oh!"

"That's it," Tobias whispered. "Take it and hold on." He thrust the cane into Noah again and again, hitting the same spot.

Phan shoved his hand in his pants, whimpering when Tobias glared at him. "Take it out," Tobias ordered. "Your hand, not your dick."

"Bastard," Phan groaned, pulling his hand free.

"Ah, fuck," Noah growled. "Want... oh, God, right there. Good! Oh... oh, Jesus." He was panting hard now, and up on his toes, moving as Tobias fucked him with the wood. "Yes, yes, please... Want to come, please, please," he babbled riding the stick as Tobias thrust it into him.

"Not yet." Tobias looked at Noah's ass swallowing the cane, and then at Phan. "Suck him."

Phan leapt forward, crawling between Noah and the desk to grab Noah's cock and aim it into his mouth.

"Come in his throat and I'll let you--"

Noah didn't give Phan much time. He reached one hand down and tangled his fingers into the hair at the back of Phan's head, and used the leverage to shove his cock into Phan's mouth and deeper, into his throat.

"Oh, fuck! Yes!" Noah shot hard down Phan's throat, moaning and whimpering with the release. "Yes, yes, oh, God, yes."

Tobias raised an eyebrow at the intensity, pleased and proud of his boys. "Well done," he said, easing the cane out of Noah and going to sit in the chair Phan had abandoned while they caught their breath. Phan was still suckling, licking Noah's cock clean and petting his thighs, his own legs spread wide.

Noah came down quickly, much more quickly than usual, which made Tobias grin a little smugly. He pulled Phan to him and leaned on the desk, then looked over at Tobias. "What did you say was next on your agenda, sir?" Noah practically purred at him.

That sounded a little more positive than it had when he was resisting being fucked. Tobias raised an eyebrow, unsure of the change, but flipped his robes open so they could see his erection pushing at his trousers. "My cock, your mouths."

Noah leaned over and whispered something in Phan's ear. They looked at each other, practically giddy, and then Phan moved to Tobias and knelt to undo Tobias' fly. Noah was right behind him, kneeling close as well. Once Phan got them open, the pair tugged Tobias' trousers around his ass and pushed them all the way down to his ankles.

Tobias watched them warily, but Phan almost immediately swallowed him down, mouth hot and wet, suction light. Tobias groaned and thrust up a little, his head falling back for a moment as he just enjoyed it. Phan's mouth wasn't Noah's, and the difference was a huge turn-on.

Noah slipped his arm around Phan and fondled Tobias' balls, making a bit of a show of how hard they were to get to with Tobias so far back in his chair. "Come forward, sir. Come forward so I can get my mouth on them." His voice went into that low and husky register. "Come on, scoot forward."

A warning bell went off in Tobias' head, but his hips had already moved, and the warning fell silent as Phan sucked hard.

After that it was mostly sensation. Phan's mouth was hot and sweet around him and then Noah joined him, crawling under Phan and licking Tobias' balls for a few moments as promised. But then he was moving, farther and farther back, across his perineum until Noah's hot tongue encountered his hole.

"Oh, God!" Tobias arched, his body convulsing before he could get control. He gripped Phan's shoulder, the other hand clutching the chair. "Oh, shit," he gasped, eyes closed tight as Phan took him deeper. Noah's tongue dragged over his hole and Tobias gritted his teeth to keep from begging.

Tobias felt hands shove his knees wide; he wasn't even sure whose. Noah's tongue danced and flickered across his ass, teasing his hole and threatening to push inside.

"Please!" He didn't mean to say it, but he did. He wasn't even sure what he was asking for, but he wanted it. Wanted more and wanted hard and fast and so very, very much. "Please, more," he begged.

Noah's tongue invaded him finally, pushing through and inside him over and over. Warm fingers rolled and tugged at his balls and Phan was making little grunting wet sounds, never letting up, sucking him down deep, his head bobbing in Tobias' lap.

Tobias gasped, all the air in his lungs rushing out. He was helpless, couldn't even move as Phan went down on him and Noah sent him higher and higher. He was on fire -- was fire itself -- racing and raging and

screaming. He tensed, felt the impossible tightness of his stomach, and then he began to shake, his orgasm slamming into him two heartbeats before he began to shoot.

Noah groaned and kept tasting him, though more gently, even as his body shook, as he started to spill into Phan's mouth. Phan moaned, swallowing again and again, his sounds vibrating all along Tobias' cock, making his climax longer, until he was so sensitive he almost hurt.

Slowly, they withdrew, but kept physical contact, sitting or kneeling on the floor, and leaning on him and each other. Tobias couldn't be sure how long it took him to climb out of the fog, but it was long enough that everything had come to a complete halt. The stall and his boys were still and quiet.

"Remind me again who was in charge of that scene?" he asked blearily, looking down at himself and then at them. "You're both expelled." He was a mess, almost out of the chair, half dressed and completely debauched. Really, he'd lost control there somewhere. He couldn't quite make himself care, though.

"We deserve it." Noah said, laughing lightly. "After we're disowned by our families, we'll run away to San Francisco and start a fringe theater company."

"Oh, that could work," Phan put in. "Sir can be our manager."

Tobias groaned and sat up, then stood up on shaky legs to put his clothes to rights. "I don't think so," he said, looking around and finally sitting back down. "God, melted my brain. Clean up in here, you two, and we'll go back to the house. I think it's time for a bath, a nap, and then you can fight about who's cooking and who's picking the movie."

Phan grinned at Noah. "That worked well," he said, snuggling up against him for a moment.

"I had a feeling it might," Noah winked and stood. He held a hand out to help Phan to his feet, then turned to Tobias, eyes appropriately low. "Yes, sir. Would you prefer to take Phan with you to start your bath? I can stay here and clean up."

Tobias considered that for a moment, weighing attention and fairness and eventually nodded. "You took the scene, so you get to clean up. And you'll have stripes too, pet. It was fun, but it wasn't exactly in character, was it?"

"No, sir, not in character at all." Noah was trying to look contrite, so apparently the punishment wasn't unexpected. "How many have I earned, sir?"

"I have no idea -- I said my brain was melted, right?" Tobias grinned. "Three. One for getting Phan involved, one for your tongue up my ass, and one for making me beg like a sub."

Phan snickered.

"And one for you, for going along with it."

Phan beamed. "Yes, sir."

"I'm surprised that you remember the begging part; you were pretty gone, sir," Noah teased, walking Tobias and Phan down the aisle on his way to the supply stall.

"Unlike yourself, who doesn't even remember ripping off a cock ring and coming all over a poor submissive who was only trying to help?"

Phan stopped dead and stared at Noah for a second. "You... ah. Paris."

Noah laughed. "Paris. I'm rather proud of that particular blackout, thank you. Sir is pretty smug about it, too. Ask him about it while you're getting his bath ready, he'll probably get hard again." He stopped by the supply stall and leaned on the door, looking like a cat in cream. "See you both inside in a bit."

Tobias shook his head and led Phan out. "Don't ask," he said mildly, squinting into the sunlight.

"Oh, I wouldn't dream of it, sir," Phan said with a grin. "Making you relive a highlight of your trip? What a cruelty."

Tobias laughed. "I won't get hard."

"No, sir." Phan sounded gleeful.

"Really."

"Of course."

"Oh, shut up. Bath, boy. Then a story."

Phan just grinned.

## Chapter 13

The following Tuesday, Noah arrived home from work to find Phan busy in his kitchen. "Oh, my God, what smells so good?"

"Dinner," came Phan's disembodied voice from down the hall.

"Ha, ha." Noah opened the closet door to hang up his coat and froze a moment, trying to figure out what was different about it. It seemed bigger than he remembered, there was plenty of space where before he'd barely had room to jam anything in there. He closed the closet door perplexed, but everything became much clearer as he made his way into the living room. "Oh, my God, you cleaned."

"Hm?" Phan asked, sweeping into the room and kissing him on the cheek. "Oh, yeah, hope you don't mind, the place was a sty. A total bachelor pad. I've wanted to offer for a while, but you know, now that I live here, well, what else do I have to do all day?"

"Nothing, I guess," Noah said slowly. "It's fine." He blinked and looked around. Everything was more or less in its place, it was just... neater. Less cluttered. Not dusty.

"Hungry?" Phan asked cheerfully, making his way back into the kitchen.

"Yeah." Noah smirked and shrugged. He hadn't expected Phan to play housekeeper, but if it made him happy, then what the hell. "Starving. But you didn't have to cook, too."

"Again with the bored." Phan rolled his eyes. "Therapy day. Had to do something, you know? So I put the non-seasonal stuff from the front hall away in that back closet, picked up the stacks of books, dusted... you weren't kidding about the dust bunnies, by the way. And then I still had an hour, so I cooked." He paused at the stove, oven mitts on, and said, "Um. I did too much, didn't I?" He looked faintly chagrined. "Do you mind? Kind of a big assumption there, I guess."

"No, no it's not that I mind -- believe me, you're right, since I'm not around to clean up on weekends, this place has gone to hell. It's just that I don't want you to think you have to clean up after me. Because you don't. Okay?" Noah ran a hand down Phan's back.

Therapy day. Well that would explain the need to keep busy. Noah was insatiably curious about how it'd gone, of course, and he might ask if Phan didn't offer anything, but then again, everyone needed a night off. He decided to let it go for now and see where the evening took them. "Be right back," he said, taking off his gun belt and pager. He took them to his room and came back with a smile for Phan, not wanting to make him wait while he changed. "That smells really, really good."

Phan smiled at him. "Just shepherd's pie, nothing fancy. And I don't mind the cleaning -- makes me feel useful, like I'm... contributing, you know?"

Noah empathized with Phan completely. It was that contributing thing that he'd spent all that time in Paris trying to get Tobias to understand, the need to feel productive, useful, carry his weight. The need to feel like a participating member of the household and not a sponge. Yeah, he knew what Phan was saying, and as far

as he was concerned, Phan could do anything he needed to. There really wasn't any point in discussing it further.

Phan opened the oven and took out a casserole dish, then carried it to the table and put it on the trivet. "Don't touch. I don't want to have to tell Sir you burned your fingers."

"Yeah, if I burn my fingers that would end up my next deprivation session. Food." Noah grinned. That had been a rough session at first, but Tobias seemed pleased with him by the end, and he'd felt great for hours after. Next time, he told himself, he wouldn't panic. If only he knew that to be true. "I love shepherd's pie. Reminds me of home. My mom used to make it all the time."

"Yeah?" Phan asked with a quick grin. "That's cool. I like it 'cause it's comfort food -- potatoes and meat and veggies, all in one dish. Warm and easy and not hard to clean up." He smiled again and shoved Noah's plate to him. "Water or Coke, kiddo?"

"Coke, please, it's a tradition now, isn't it?" While Phan was getting the drinks, Noah dug into dinner, serving himself a mom-size portion just like he would have back at his mom's. "Oh, I probably should have changed before I sat down," he said, looking down at his filthy uniform shirt. He pulled it off along with his tie and dumped them on the floor by his chair. "I had such a weird day today. The usual speeding violations, a shoplifting thing, a couple of teenagers fighting, and then I rescued four kittens from a storm drain. They were so cute. Little tiny fuzzy things. Carol, my partner -- have I told you about Carol? She took them home, she's even going to keep two, I think."

Two glasses of Coke in hand, Phan came back and sat down. "That's great," he said with a grin. "Hey, ever wonder about why there aren't any cats in Sir's barns? We should totally take one up. Give The Bitch something to think about."

"He must use mouse traps. Cats are much more fun, and they entertain the horses, too. I hope she hates cats." Noah winked and took a bite of his pie; comfort food indeed. "Oh, this is really good, Phan." He dug in with great enthusiasm.

"Thanks." Phan grinned at him and started eating his own meal, going a fair bit slower than Noah. He was eating, though, and he'd lost the shadows under his eyes. A week's worth of decent sleep seemed to have done him wonders. "Have you talked to Sir today?" Phan asked, lifting his fork again.

"Oh, yeah, I meant to tell you. I heard from him on my way home, he called my cell. He said he's going to be out late on a call. I'm assuming he'll be delivering a calf or something. He said he'd check in with us later tonight if you want to talk to him. I know he'll want to know how your therapy went."

Phan nodded. "Yeah, I figured he was in the barns when he didn't check up on me earlier. No big deal if he doesn't call -- it went okay, and I've got cuddles tonight. It'll be fine." Phan gave him a considering look. "Going to be weird, not leaving after snuggling the evening away."

"It's all going to take some getting used to, I guess." Noah agreed with a smile. "I think it will be nice, actually."

"Be nice not to have to go out into the cold night, yeah. Not that it's cold, but I always kind of hated leaving a good cuddle to get a ride home -- weird bouncing reality thing." He ate another mouthful and reached for his glass. "So did you tell your partner you'd suddenly gotten a roommate? Oh, hey, you tell her you're moving?"

"No, I haven't told her any of that yet." Noah wasn't entirely sure why he was holding back about it; Carol had been pretty open-minded about him so far. "She knows I'm queer, she knows about Sir, but she doesn't know about my lifestyle, you know? And suddenly adding a third into the picture and all of us moving in together... just seems like a lot for a fairly straightlaced mother of two to swallow all at once. I don't know. I guess she's going to find out eventually."

"She's a mom?" Phan raised an eyebrow. "Neat. Good shift to have, too, home for supper each night." He got up and took his plate to the counter, having eaten only slightly more than half his portion. Noah was beginning to see a correlation between therapy and lack of appetite -- though Phan had certainly taken his share of pizza the day he'd left Bradford's. "Want to take the rest for lunch tomorrow?" Phan said, pointing to the casserole dish. "I can pack it to go for you."

"Now you're packing my lunch for me, too, Mom?" Noah grinned, still finishing off his plate.

Phan's cheeks colored. "Sorry?"

Noah winced. "Joke, hon. Cleaning up after me, making me dinner, packing my lunch... I was just joking. Sorry."

Phan gave him a wan smile. "Don't be. I'm kind of steamrolling along here. It's... this is what I do. I take care of... well, of my Master. And you're not my Master, but this is your place and I kind of just fall into a place where I *do*." He walked over and leaned on the table by Noah, looking him in the eye. "It's going to take us all a little getting used to -- I never even really noticed that I do this. Tell me cut it out, yeah?"

"Phan," Noah said, getting up and leaning on the table beside him. "It *is* what you do. I know. I do it, too." He took Phan's hand in his and ran his fingers over the back of it. "I wouldn't want to sit around here all day waiting for someone to give me a purpose any more than I want to let Sir pay the mortgage on the new place by himself when I have a perfectly good salary coming in. I get it. But I'm not your Master, I'm your peer. We're equals, you and me, especially when we're here at my place, on our own."

Phan nodded. "I know," he said softly. "So, if you want to take that for lunch you can damn well pack it yourself." And then he took off for the living room, giggling madly.

Noah laughed, and pretty hard, too. He followed Phan into the living room. "But who's going to do the dishes?" he joked, getting an arm around Phan's waist and wrestling him to the couch. "I suppose you expect me to do that, too?"

"Well, Sir isn't going to do them!" Phan laughed harder, rolling them over, and Noah found himself pinned down. "Maybe you should have brought one of those kittens home to lick the plates."

"Probably would have been a good idea, as my house boy is falling down on the job." Noah grinned and made a show of struggling. Phan wasn't that strong, and if Noah really wanted to get free he had no doubts that he could. But what fun would that be? "Why, Phan, I had no idea you were so aggressive."

"I just know what you like," Phan said with a wink. He made a show of pinning Noah's shoulders down and grinned before leaning down to kiss Noah's mouth quickly.

Noah smiled up at him after the kiss. He caught Phan's eyes and made sure his words had weight. "You are such a sweetheart, you know that?" He leaned up and kissed Phan in return, deliberately lingering a bit. "Now let me up before we get ourselves in trouble."

"You're the sweetheart. Sir says so," Phan said with another smile. He looked pleased, though, and rolled off Noah, landing on the floor with a thump. "Thanks for not just shoving me -- know you could have. It would have been really embarrassing, totally blowing away my tough guy act."

"Well, you know, I try to be good for the ego." Noah got to his feet. "I better get those dishes done. Come tell me what Dr. Brewer thinks of us this week." He winked and made his way into the kitchen.

Phan trailed along, his hands waving wildly. "Oh, Phantom," he said, falsetto voice. "I'm glad you had a good weekend. I'm glad you seem optimistic. Now, let's talk real life. Phantom, you must see how unhealthy it is to do this. Phantom, you must see you're only putting a Band-Aid on a situation you're clinging to. Phantom, chores and a regular spanking won't make you feel complete." He snorted. "It's bullshit, man."

Noah laughed. "Well, to be fair, to a certain extent she's right, it is a Band-Aid for now. But you have to start somewhere. I don't think any of us knows every step we're taking, but I think we're doing a good job of making sure no one gets run over." He sighed. "I suppose she means that you need to find someone to fall in love with? Is that her job? To make sure you 'feel complete'? I thought it was to help you sort out which of your needs are healthy and which are not? Does she really see us as part of a self-destructive pattern?"

All right, he was a little defensive. Fine, so what? The shrink wasn't getting how much of their relationship he and Tobias were redefining to include Phan. She obviously had no clue as to what lengths Tobias would go to see Phan safe and healthy. She clearly didn't understand how much Noah cared about Phan, either.

He was starting to think someone ought to tell her.

"I don't know," Phan said with another sweep of his arm. "She's supposed to... to be a safe ear right? Not judging. Now, granted, if I said I was going to start parachute classes and the first day we were going to jump without a chute just to practice the jump part -- then I'd like it if she said something. But this... Noah, I've been kinky all my life. I've been a sub ever since I can remember, and Sir is the best, most respectful Top I've ever had. I know I'm safe with him, no matter what my mental state is -- that's part of why we split up. I didn't want to be safe, and I knew he wouldn't hurt me."

Noah paused in his dishwashing and looked at Phan. "I see that, though I'm surprised to hear you say it that way. I guess she's been some help, but I don't think she's being non-judgmental right now. That's just my opinion, of course, and I'm kind of prejudiced, so maybe I should keep my opinions to myself."

Phan grabbed a tea towel and started drying. "Oh, I totally get that she's not being completely professional," he said slowly. "I just don't think it's me she's judging." When Noah looked over, Phan was very carefully studying the plate he was drying, not meeting Noah's eyes.

Well, Noah had always been part of Phan's therapy, so she certainly wasn't judging him either. "You think it's Sir."

"I think... I think she's unimpressed." He sighed and put the plate down and went to put the leftovers in a container. "I get the impression that she's questioning his motives."

"What could she possibly think his motives are? Did you tell her it was my idea?" Noah shut the water off and dried his hands on Phan's towel.

"Yeah, I told her." Phan rolled his eyes. "She just nodded and made a note. She doesn't say much -- and honestly, aside from this she's been really great -- didn't flinch at all about the floggings or the kinds of punishment I asked for, which was always the stumbling block before. Shrinks tend to want to fix the kink -- at least the ones I've been seeing."



"Well, maybe we should all go talk with her," Noah suggested. It wasn't a preposterous idea, it would be kind of like family therapy or relationship counseling, right? People did that all the time. "I mean, all three of us. She could ask direct questions, get answers... see for herself?" Noah put on the teapot. "You want tea?"

"Tea's good," Phan said absently. He seemed to be studying the far wall. "Could talk to Sir about it, anyway." He shook his head. "Enough about her. Tell me more about your day. Or something. Tired of thinking, kiddo."

Noah smiled. "Yeah, okay, hon." He got two mugs out and set them on the counter. "Tea's in there... pick something. And grab me the mint?"

"Mint?" Phan rummaged around and came up with chamomile and the mint. "God, I thought you meant... real tea. This is all herbal and caffeine free." He raised an eyebrow. "Are you turning into a froufrou fag on me?"

Noah laughed. "I like mint tea! There's some black tea in the tin there. Leaves." He started to rummage in another drawer. "I have a ball somewhere..."

"Two, the last time I checked."

"Perv. Aha." He handed the tea ball to Phan. "So how come Sir can listen to jazz and drink herbal tea, but I'm froufrou? Huh? How is that fair?"

Phan gave him a hard look. "He's Sir. He could wear a freaking dress and still be... Sir. You, on the other hand, are cute. Hot, but cute. And only in that uniform can you be close to that sort of authority."

Noah snorted. "That's it, I'm changing my clothes." He winked and headed toward the bedroom.

"Naked cop?" Phan called after him. "Fine. I'll just stand here! Pick out a movie! Make tea! Be a good boy!"

"You do that. I admire your restraint!" Noah shouted from the bedroom. He tossed his clothing in a pile as he stripped off and found himself soft sweats and a T-shirt to pull on.

"I'm faking it!" Phan called back, his voice a little closer, but probably still in the living room. Probably.

"Watch the kettle!" Noah put on his decorative cock ring, as he did everyday after work, then tugged his sweats on and headed back toward the kitchen still pulling the T-shirt on over his head.

"It's not going anywhere. Seriously. It's attached to the wall." Phan's voice was fainter again, and Noah could hear him rattling something in the kitchen. "Does popcorn go with tea?"

"You're the expert on tea, remember? I'm froufrou," Noah said as he returned to the kitchen. "But I'd say popcorn goes with everything. Did you find a movie?"

"Oh, yeah. Um, over on the coffee table; your kettle is ready and I'll put the popcorn in. You get us past the piracy crap, yeah?" Phan moved to the microwave, waving a packet of popcorn. "Mint, indeed. And tea balls. Sheee."

"Kiss my ass." Noah headed for the living room and started the movie. "You know I still haven't gotten this remote fixed?" he called back toward the kitchen.

"You need a keeper. And I'm allowed to kiss your ass, you know, so don't tempt me." The microwave started up and Noah could hear Phan pouring the water. "How long does this mint stuff have to steep?"

"I like it dark; just bring it in and I'll let it sit for a while." Noah punched at the dead fast-forward button on the remote several more times in denial. Sadly, it still didn't work. "Fucking thing," he snorted, tossing it on the coffee table.

Phan brought the mug in and set it down and a plate for the tea bag. With a wink he picked up the remote and banged it on the table, then pressed the fast forward button. When nothing happened he shrugged and went back to the kitchen without saying a word. He took the remote with him.

"Ha!" Noah shouted after him. Man, that was a nice view walking away. "Think you're so smart, huh? Don't you think I've tried that?" He had. And he'd also tried throwing it against the wall again and taking it apart.

"Did you check the batteries?" Phan called as the popcorn started popping like mad.

"Do you have to take classes to be such a successful smart-ass?"

"You didn't, did you?"

Noah laughed. "Ooooh, touché! I'm wounded!"

"Oh, poor baby," Phan said, coming back with his tea and the bag of popcorn. "Want me to make you feel better? Ease the agony of your wound? Check the batteries, teach a class, nag you into getting a new remote?"

"You know the fire escape is not a comfortable place to sleep this time of year."

"Why on earth would you do that?" Phan asked, his face all innocence as he sat down practically in Noah's lap. "I say, stay in here with me. It's much more comfy."

Noah shook his head. "I am apparently extraordinarily naive to think that I can out-snark you." He curled an arm around Phan and tugged him even closer.

"You can do other things so well," Phan said in what Noah assumed was a comforting tone. "You save kittens. Keep the streets safe for smart-asses like me. You're a hero!" Phan beamed at Noah and licked his ear.

No, he wasn't a hero, but he did okay in his little corner of the world. "You're too much. Hand me the popcorn." Phan smelled good. In fact, he smelled like Noah's shampoo and Noah's aftershave. It was pretty fucking sexy on him, too. Noah bent his nose to Phan's jaw and inhaled. "Mmmm. I love that stuff."

"Yeah? Kinda figured you'd like it, what with it being in your shower and all. Oh, leave me a list of stuff to get tomorrow and I'll do errands. And can I just say how much I hate this no wanking rule? Nearly killed me in the shower today."

Yeah, well, Noah could fix that for him later. He'd love to fix that for him later. Come to think of it, he'd be more than happy to fix it for him right now. But that's not what he said. He said, "You know, Sir has done it to me so many times I'm used to it."

"Used to it?" Phan looked both startled and horrified. "I never ever got used to it. How'd you do that?"

"Not 'used to it' like 'okay with it.' 'Used to it' as in I expect it, I can manage." Usually. Not so well tonight, apparently.

"Christ, I wind up aching," Phan said seriously. "And the dreams! The dreams always get weird and intense. And Sir doesn't really make a distinction between whacking off and wet dreams."

He had dreams? "Tell me about your dreams," Noah purred. He suddenly had this need to know.

Phan blinked at him and then smiled slowly. "You mean in general? Or say, in the last three days?"

Noah snorted. "The raunchy ones, of course. The ones that make you come in your sleep."

"We're not going to watch this movie, are we?" Phan asked, wiggling a little.

"The off button is one of the ones that works." Noah grinned.

Phan grabbed the remote and turned off the DVD just as the previews were starting up. "Right, then. Drink your tea." He took a handful of popcorn and tossed a couple kernels at Noah, smiling broadly. "The weirdest one so far was Saturday night at the farm."

"Oh, Saturday was a good day." Noah's cock twitched as he remembered Saturday. A very, very good day. "You were dreaming while we were chained up and sleeping together?"

"Uh-huh. You were warm and there and you were all... content and happy. So sleeping wasn't an issue. But the dreams were wild -- in one you were a bird. That one wasn't sexy."

"Well? Get to the sexy ones already." Noah picked up his tea, pulled out the tea bag with his fingers, and dropped it on the plate Phan had provided him.

Phan grinned. "Had a dream that he caught you and me making out in the barn when we were supposed to be cleaning stalls. The horses weren't there, 'cause I'm not that insane, and we were rolling around in the hay, rubbing off on each other."

The picture formed in Noah's head. In full color. With sound. "Mmm. Nice."

"I thought so. So, you were on top of me, and we're kissing and moaning and rubbing off, and then you're, like... gone. And Sir's standing there, so pissed he's gone silent."

"Uh-oh. Did he have that look?"

"The one that means your ass is going to hurt inside and out for days? Oh, yeah." Phan shifted on the couch, tugging his jeans. "So, I'm lying there, you're sprawled off to the side, and he just undoes his pants. It's a dream, though, right? So he's way taller than normal, and his dick is huge, and I'm looking at you trying to figure out if he's going to hurt you or not."

"That sounds about right." Noah laughed softly and slid his hand up under Phan's shirt.

"So you begged," Phan said softly, sounding distracted. He licked his lips and blinked once. "You begged and turned around, ass in the air, and I watched him fuck you. My hands were tied and I couldn't do anything at all, just listen and watch."

"I love an audience. It's a kink." Noah's voice was much huskier than he'd meant it to be. "So... he fucked me? Is that it?"

Phan shook his head, his eyes dilating. "It shifted around. First the barn, then the house -- the club, my room at Bradford's... him fucking you, me kissing him and you. There was rain, and I was running, trying to get to him, and you found me. I think I actually almost came when we were climbing a tree." He grinned. "Told you it was weird. But yesterday morning? Before you both left for work I woke up thinking about the three of us going at it in one of the leather bars. Lots of noise, lots of people... and you with that swirly, spikey leather mask on, sucking my cock."

Noah slid his thumb over one of Phan's nipples. "I would love to suck you off in a leather bar." He would, in a heartbeat. The idea made his cock fill and he was sure Phan could feel it against his hip. He didn't care. "That mask is in the bedroom."

Phan arched. "We going there, or are you going to get it?" he asked, voice rough.

"Get up." Damn, without Tobias around, Noah was feeling awfully topsey for a sworn sub. Something about Phan just made him want to initiate things.

Phan scrambled up, tugging Noah to his feet as well. They didn't get much farther than that before Phan grabbed him, kissing him hard and shoving a hand between them to squeeze Noah's cock.

Noah moaned against his lips and pushed his cock into Phan's fingers as they moved awkwardly down the hall. They were bumping into everything along the way, and Noah didn't care. It was hot, it was mutual, and they had permission, and that was all he cared about. "Jesus, Phan."

Sex with Tobias was intense and heated. Even when they were rushed it was still about control. But with Phan, it was just getting off, in all its free-spirited, shameless glory, and Noah was loving every minute of it. He didn't even care if they ever made it to the bedroom. He dropped to his knees right there in the hall.

"Please--" Phan had his cock in his hand, already stroking himself. "Noah, please!"

Batting Phan's hand away, Noah opened his mouth and took Phan in. He angled to take Phan's cock straight down his throat and worked him that way several times in succession before pulling back and gripping the shaft with his fingers.

"God, don't stop!" Phan stared down at Noah, eyes wide and desperate.

Noah ignored him and pulled back to lick up his length, then ducked and bathed his balls with his tongue. His fingers slid down and pinched the base of Phan's cock hard enough to hold him off.

"Noah," Phan groaned. "You're teasing."

"And?" Noah asked, taking him into his mouth again. He made a point not to let his fingers falter for a moment.

"But why?" Phan sounded downright pitiful.

Noah pulled off his cock and stood. "Because I want to hear you beg," he said frankly, and kissed Phan hard.

Phan kissed back, pushing his tongue in deep and then retreating for a moment. Noah could feel him trying to push and shove them toward the other wall again, but the move more or less wound up as Phan rubbing

against his leg. "Suck me, Noah," Phan whispered. "Want your mouth around me, need to come for you so bad..."

"How bad?" Noah asked, looking Phan in the eyes.

"So bad I'll get on my knees and beg if that's what you want. I'll rim you, suck you, do anything Sir lets us, make you come so hard your eyes cross." Phan started to slide down Noah's body, licking at his collar.

"Please, Noah? Suck me, let me come in your mouth? Please?"

Noah put his hand on Phan's chest to stop him, pushing him back into the wall. "You can do all of those things... in a minute." He slipped to his knees again, put his lips around Phan's prick and let him go. His hands slid around to Phan's ass and gave his cheeks a squeeze.

Phan moaned, the sound loud in the hallway, and his hips twitched, the thrust shallow and more than likely instinctive. "God, yes," he said, one hand stroking through Noah's hair to curl at the base of his skull. "Let me? Christ, so hot. Want to fuck your mouth."

Noah swallowed him deep in response. It was such a turn-on to let Phan do exactly as he pleased -- Phan, the one that didn't want to ask for anything, the one that was always putting his needs after everyone else's. *That* Phan was asking for control this time, asking to take. He wanted this? He damn well could have it.

The sounds Phan made were more whimpers than cries, but they were constant and honest. Noah could feel Phan's legs shaking and then Phan was pushing deep, his hips rocking and snapping as he moved, fast and hard.

"Noah! Oh, shit, gonna come -- Oh, God!"

Phan's cock swelled in Noah's mouth and the taste of him grew stronger as Phan started to come, the hand on the back of Noah's head holding him tight as Phan pushed into his mouth, spunk filling his throat.

Noah swallowed over and over to keep from choking. Phan had been saving it up, on Tobias' order, and his orgasm seemed to go on and on. When Noah finally needed some air, he pushed Phan's hips back against the wall and held them there, pulling off Phan's dick to gulp down a few quick breaths, then spent more leisurely moments licking Phan clean and worshipping his body.

At last he stood slowly, his tongue working its way over Phan's abs to his chest, hands shoving Phan's shirt up until Noah's tongue could circle a nipple on his way to Phan's collar bone. He engaged his teeth along with his tongue on Phan's shoulders and finally took his mouth in a long, unhurried kiss.

Phan was pliant and malleable under Noah's hands, his breath coming in quick gasps and pants as they kissed. His tongue slid along Noah's own as if seeking every bit of his own flavor that he could find, and Phan's hands were skimming Noah's body, not stopping anywhere for long.

"God, that was good," Phan murmured into the kiss, his mouth sliding away to kiss and nibble on Noah's neck. "So fucking good." A hand finally wrapped itself around Noah's prick, gripping him lightly. "Let's go take care of this."

Noah hissed and pressed his forehead into Phan's neck. God, he ached. He'd been so focused on Phan, he hadn't realized how much until Phan touched him. But he felt it keenly now, all the way up his spine and into his belly. "Yes," he panted. "Need it, Phan."

"Got it." Phan buried his head in Noah's neck and inhaled. His hand was still loose on Noah's cock, like he was trying not to tease but just didn't want to let go. "Bed," he said, finally giving Noah a gentle push. "Lie down with me; less chance of falling. God, you're hard. Want me?"

"God, yes. Yes." Noah moved away stiffly and made his way into the bedroom, letting Phan hustle him over to the bed. It wasn't a long walk. Tobias had once joked about how little room there was to move in the bedroom because the bed took up three-quarters of the floor space, but Noah had just stuck out his tongue. He liked comfort.

They stripped off as fast as they could, clothes flying, and Noah pulled himself up onto the bed, his arms out to Phan.

Phan grinned at him, still breathing heavily as he moved over Noah, straddling him and kissing his chest. "Relax. Let me take care of you," he said, pausing to lick and suck a nipple. "Going to make you feel so good."

"You've done a damn good job so far." Noah hissed at the attention to his nipple and reached up to rest his hands on Phan, anywhere he could reach him. "Oh... fucking love that."

"Yeah?" Phan lay down beside him and started tormenting one nipple with his mouth, his fingers drifting over to play with the other. He licked and plucked and dragged his teeth, sucked gently and then harder before stopping and pinching them both hard.

Noah arched with the sting, not really meaning to be wanton and shameless, but not really caring if he was, either. The nipple with the ring in it buzzed especially painfully; it had been more sensitive since the day he'd had it pierced. "Jesus, yes!" His fingertips dug into Phan's flesh.

Phan chuckled, the sound only slightly evil, and he gave the ring another tug. "Pretty," he said, moving down Noah's bed. "So pretty." He licked Noah's hip and nuzzled his belly for a brief moment. "Open up for me," he urged, rolling to lie between Noah's legs.

"You're going to kill me." Noah felt his whole body shiver at the thought of what Phan was going to do to him, and he bent his knees and opened his legs wide.

"Nah, no fun if you're dead. Might just short out a few circuits -- see if you yell like Sir." Phan winked and kissed Noah's belly and then the tip of his cock before licking a trail down his prick to suck on his balls. Humming, he drew one into his mouth and then the other.

Noah groaned and pushed his fingers into Phan's hair as the wet heat of Phan's mouth claimed every ounce of his attention. "Good," he managed, panting, noticing how quickly he was losing the ability to think. Something told him he would scream, maybe even louder than Tobias did. Didn't matter, Phan was obviously having fun, too.

Phan hummed again and let his balls go, but his fingers came to play, tracing over the wet skin. "Taste good," Phan said, his voice so low Noah didn't know if he was supposed to hear it or not. Phan licked him again quickly, and then darted down to lick over his hole, his tongue slick and fast.

"Oh, fuck." The touch of Phan's tongue sent bolts of electricity through his body. He was dimly aware that he had a death grip on Phan's hair but wasn't in control enough to do anything about it. All the sensation quickly settled into his cock, and he could feel it straining against Tobias' ring, even though the ring was mostly ornamental. He was heat and need and he ached terribly but all he was able to do was beg and whimper and groan. "Oh, God. Please, Phan. Oh, fuck, please!"

In the back of his mind he knew he couldn't have what he really wanted in the moment, to feel Phan inside him, to come with Phan hanging over him -- yet somehow, that was okay. What he could have, however, he wanted badly and he wanted it now.

Phan groaned against him, his head buried between Noah's legs as he did everything except tongue fuck him. He licked and lapped and nibbled and left small biting kisses everywhere, pushing his tongue hard against Noah's hole and dragging it back and forth. The hand on Noah's balls slid up to start jerking him off, the fist tight and fast as Phan pumped him.

"Yes!" Noah shouted and grunted. His hips began to move of their own accord, fucking Phan's fist. He knew he must look shameless; he'd become a quivering, aching lump of hard flesh and weak spirit, and he loved every second of it.

He felt the pressure build, heard the rush of his own heartbeat in his ears, the tightness in his groin and knew he was going to come, but the warning never made it beyond his own mind. Suddenly, he shot hard, grunting and babbling, feeling the warm stuff jet from his cock and settle wetly on his stomach. He could barely breathe.

He was vaguely aware of Phan licking him -- his ass, his balls and finally his softening cock -- playing with him gently and humming bits of some song that Noah couldn't recognize. He felt Phan press kisses on his thighs, his cock again, and then up his sides as Phan moved to settle beside him, curled around his arm and one leg.

"You scream longer, he's louder," Phan teased. "Wanted to crawl right inside you, though."

"Someday," Noah managed to say. He was pleased to find he was starting to get his breath back. "But that was... Jesus, so good. Thank you. Really good." He grinned and laughed softly. "I'm such a slut, aren't I?"

"Pretty hedonistic, yeah." Phan grinned at him. "Hell, I'm the one who popped in the hall, though."

"That was awesome. You were so hot, you wanted it so bad." Noah shifted and got his arm around Phan to pull him closer. "What a turn-on."

Phan giggled and snuggled in. "I was kinda horny. But wanted you -- God, you kiss nice. Hey! We forgot the mask, damn it."

"Oh, no!" Noah laughed. "Well, we can do that next time." It would have been fun, but he hadn't missed it one bit. He felt great. Boneless and satiated, and Phan was warm and snuggling hard. Right now, everything was perfect. "So tomorrow night you go to Sir's? Are you staying the night or coming back here? Oh, did you get the key copied today?"

"Coming back," Phan said. "And yeah, got the key, thanks." He yawned and sprawled a little more, draping himself over Noah. "Want me to call before I come back?"

"Nah, I'll be back here about nine, and I'll either be awake or asleep depending on when you get in." Noah grinned. They'd been awkward about sleeping arrangements the night before, but now Noah was much clearer in his thinking. "If I've gone to bed just climb on in, don't worry about waking me."

Phan lifted his head and smiled. "Yeah? Cool." He cuddled up a little more and kissed Noah's shoulder. "Um. We should clean up a bit," he said, trailing his finger through the cooling mess on Noah's stomach.

"Oh, yeah." A shame; that meant he had to move. Noah sighed and sat up, nudging Phan up as well. "Sir and I don't fit in my shower together. You and I? We might, but I'm not making any promises."

"You can go first, if you want," Phan offered. "I'm thinking if we both go in I'm just going to want another round."

"Slut," Noah said with a laugh, and hauled his still shaky self out of bed. "Man, my legs still feel funny. You are entirely too good at what you do." He opened a drawer and pulled out something to wear after his shower. "What time is it?" He squinted, but Phan was between him and the clock.

Phan rolled over, showing a lot of smooth skin. "Oh, it's late. Almost seven." Phan grinned at him. "We're pathetic."

"Seven, huh? Sounds like we have time for that movie after all. Unless you keep showing me that ass." He headed out of the bedroom but popped his head back in. "Answer the phone if it rings, it might be Sir. I've got caller ID so you'll know." With that he took his satisfied and sticky self off to the shower.



## Chapter 14

Tobias looked at Deidre and smiled. "That wasn't so bad, was it?"

Covered in blood and birth fluids, she glared at him. "It was fine. Thanks for your help."

"Hey, not my fault she went before I got here. Besides, I was the one over at Hafford's until three this morning."

Deidre nodded and headed for the buckets to start washing off. "I haven't seen the charts -- everything okay?"

"Oh, fine. Just kind of a late night." They watched the calf for a moment, both of them smiling. Healthy animal, the mother resting easily; it was a good morning.

Dee washed up and got ready to go, Tobias catching her up and comparing notes as she took off her overshirt and put on a clean one. They walked out of the barn together and talked to the owner for a few minutes, turning down coffee in favor of heading back to the office to make some calls and check in with the other cases.

"See you back there," Tobias called, climbing into his truck. "Or maybe not," he added as his phone began to ring.

"Whatever. Just come in at some point, okay?" Deidre tossed her bag into the back of her Jeep and waved.

"Soon," Tobias promised, pressing the talk button on the phone. It was Noah's cell, according to his caller ID. "Hello, pet," he said quietly, closing the door of the truck.

"Sir," Noah's voice sounded cheerful. "You'll never guess where I'm standing."

Tobias tilted his head. "Probably not," he said, putting the truck key in the ignition. "You're on duty?"

"Well, yes, I'm on duty, but that doesn't have anything to do... I am standing outside of a brownstone with a realty sign on it. It's in a great location, right on Vine between 4th and 5th. Looks like it's in pretty good shape, and it's even got a gated driveway, maybe a garage in the back."

"Huh." Tobias started the truck and checked the mirrors. "You like the looks?"

"From the outside, yes. Seems like the owner tried to keep it up. Also I can kind of see in the bay window in the front, looks like a big open room, maybe a living room? High ceiling. Seems nice, though I'm the first to admit I know nothing about real estate. I do know that buildings like this don't stay on the market long around here, though."

Tobias backed the truck up and turned it, waving to the farmer as he headed down the short lane. "Got a number on the sign?" he asked as he pulled onto the highway.

"I was hoping you'd ask," Noah said. "You want it? Or should I just hang onto it for now?"

"Call, if you don't mind. See if we can take a look as soon as possible." He shifted the phone to his other hand and smiled. "I'm not hands-free, sweetheart, call me back when you know what's going on. I'll get the damn thing set up right."

"All right, give me ten minutes, sir." Noah might have been excited, but he still waited for Tobias to hang up first.

Tobias' smile grew into a grin as he shut off his phone and plugged it into the hands-free set up, one eye on the road. Noah was eager. Not only was Noah eager, but he was looking at houses on patrol and taking notes.

Really, it was kind of sweet.

Tobias sped up a little, keeping an eye out for patrol cars and crossed the city limit a few minutes later. He headed toward the clinic, taking a meandering route to give Noah time to call back.

The phone rang again, and Noah's voice came over the line.

"Okay, so he can see us tonight, which I know is your night with Phan and I have the counseling thing, so I told him we were very interested and we'd see him tomorrow at five. Is that okay? Before we head out to the farm?"

"Sweetheart, tomorrow is Thursday; you have ball tonight," Tobias said with a laugh. "Listen, calm down -- it'll be fine. Promise. We'll see the place soon, and if it's the right one everything will work out. Did you and Phan stay up all night or something?"

"Actually, we uh... turned in kind of early. I guess you were out late? You didn't call."

"I got to my place about three-thirty this morning," Tobias said, taking the bypass to go around the downtown area. "Thought you'd be asleep by then, at least. How come you went to bed early -- was therapy bad for Phan? I'll call him when I get to the clinic."

"No, no therapy was okay, I think. He cleaned the hell out of my place while I was at work, and he made dinner, too. And then we were kind of hanging out on the couch and he... mentioned how hard it was not to jerk off in the shower in the morning... oh, and he mentioned this really hot dream he'd had and... well, you know. We got kind of caught up in the moment." Noah paused. "Oh, we didn't break any rules though, I promise."

Tobias snorted. He really should have known; sleep deprivation wasn't doing him any good at all. "So you ate, cuddled, and went to bed and made out like kids?" he asked, still grinning.

"Well..." Tobias was trying to figure out if Noah sounded embarrassed or excited to be telling the story. "It was like kids while we were still in the hall where I sucked Phan off, but by the time we made it to the bedroom? That wasn't kid-stuff. He is really, really good with his tongue."

"So are you," Tobias assured him, figuring that Noah had never been embarrassed about sex since he'd come out. "But as I'm almost to the clinic I suggest you don't give me any more details, pet -- I have to work. Speaking of, where's your partner?"

"She's getting a sandwich, but she'll be back any minute. Call Phan when you can, sir. He was disappointed not to hear from you yesterday, and there was some therapy stuff he'll want to talk to you about."

"I thought you said he was fine." Tobias felt bad about not being able to talk to them the night before, but he'd been rather busy; he should have at least called Phan on his way to help Dee, though.

"Well, he is fine, but he's still got therapist issues. Possibly big ones. She's not the least bit objective when it comes to you."

"I beg your pardon?" Tobias asked, sure he hadn't heard correctly. "Did you just say that Dr. Brewer isn't being objective? That's highly unlikely, given her reputation and training."

"But it's what he tells me. He says she is really good about everything else, but that she seems to have a stick up her ass about you. He says she's questioning your motives when it comes to him. I told Phan I thought the three of us, or at least the two of you, should go in and talk to her together."

"I'll... well, I'll talk to Phan," Tobias said, slowing for a light. "I think I should talk with her anyway, but it's up to her what she'll tell me about Phan's therapy. Look, will I see you later? Oh, I won't, will I. Damn. Any chance we can have lunch tomorrow? I miss you, pet."

"If you don't mind keeping it to an hour and you can meet me downtown? Yes, sir. That would be nice."

"I'll call if I wind up being called out, okay?" Tobias said. "And I'll talk to Phan as soon as I can. Thanks, sweetheart."

"Talk to you later, sir. Love you."

Tobias smiled. "I love you, too." He disconnected as the light changed and drove to the clinic, his mind occupied with houses, Noah, Phan, and therapists. As his pager went off he sighed and added animals to the list.

It was going to be a busy couple of days.

## Chapter 15

When he got home it was late, almost six-thirty. He was tired and hungry and hadn't had time to give the brownstone a second thought; unfortunately, he also hadn't been thinking about Phan's scene for the evening.

He opened the door and almost walked into the boy, who was standing in the hall with lowered eyes, his hands already reaching to take Tobias' coat.

"Good evening, sir. Your dinner is on the table. I hope today wasn't too stressful."

Tobias smiled. "Just busy. Thank you, Phan." He left Phan with his jacket and took a moment to enjoy just looking at him, dressed only in low-slung jeans. His torso and feet were bare, and he smelled like Noah's soap. "How was your day?"

"Fine, thank you," Phan said, following him into the kitchen. "I did some cleaning at Noah's and came over early to tidy up here. I sent your clothes out to the laundry and took care of the pile of mail for you."

"Good boy," Tobias said as he sat at the table. Phan had made a simple stew for him, the broth thick and aromatic. "And how was last night? Noah said you both went to bed early."

"Yes, sir." Phan grinned and knelt beside him. "Twice."

Laughing, Tobias began to eat. "Therapy? How did that go?"

"All right, I guess. I talked to Noah about it -- he seems to think that it would be a good idea for you, or even all of us, to meet with Dr. Brewer. She seems to be worried about what we're doing."

Tobias nodded. "He told me. Oh, he called me around lunchtime -- he might have found us a house. You and I are going to have to contact a realtor soon to sell this place."

"Yes, sir." Phan didn't seem to be bothered by the prospect. "Where's the house Noah found, sir?"

"Downtown, on Vine. Between 4th and 5th, he said. Know the area?"

"Yes, sir. It's nice. Tidy, quiet. There's a summer street fair on Sundays a few blocks away."

"Okay." Tobias ate in silence for a time, occasionally petting Phan's hair. "So," he said as he finished the stew. "You ate?"

Phan nodded. "I had a huge salad and some of the stew. Not much, but enough. The salad had a lot of good stuff."

Tobias smiled. "I'll take your word for it. I'm going to shower. You head into the playroom and kneel -- we'll talk when I get there."

"Yes, sir," Phan agreed, getting up and taking Tobias' plate to the counter.

Tobias left him, showering quickly and then dressing in comfortable but conservative clothes. It had always been important to Phan that the differences in their relative status was symbolized somehow, and clothes were the easiest way to do that; Tobias wasn't ready to move on to less subtle tools of dominant expression yet. He had a feeling he'd have to meet with Phantom's therapist before he truly started to assert himself.

He walked into the plain playroom to find Phan exactly where he was supposed to be, on his knees and waiting. He'd anticipated, or fallen back on his training, and was rightfully naked. "Tell me," Tobias said as he walked to the cabinet and opened it up to reveal his tools and toys. "What is pain for you now?" He opened a drawer to find the rubbing alcohol.

"It grounds me," Phan said softly, his eyes still on the floor. "It's a part of what I need. That's still the same."

Tobias found himself nodding again. There wasn't any way he could see Phan never needing a certain amount of pain. "On the table, please. We're going to do something different tonight. All you need to do is feel and know I'm doing this for you. All I ask is that you take it."

"Yes, sir. Thank you, sir," Phan said, scrambling up and going to the massage table. He paused.

"On your back. You can watch. No coming," Tobias said, not even looking at him as he checked the manacles for safety.

Phan lay on the table and passively let Tobias strap him down, his breathing even and slow.

"Good boy," Tobias said, swabbing his chest with alcohol.

Phan's eyes widened, and he took a deeper breath. It was clear that he knew what was coming.

Tobias stepped back and picked up the box. Phan was already hard. "Need a cock ring?" he asked politely. At Phan's headshake Tobias smiled and opened the box. "Then we can start," he said, taking out the scalpels.

## Chapter 16

Tobias drove downtown just before the midday rush, talking to Noah on the cell phone to find out exactly where they were meeting. "So, the realtor -- what's his name again? -- definitely said he could take us through?" he asked, turning down Vine. "Oh, there you are. Be with you in a moment."

He pulled over and parked on the edge of the street, only a few cars away from where Noah was standing. Noah looked so good in uniform, Tobias thought with a grin. He locked the car and went to Noah, blatantly checking him out. "Should have brought Phan; he'd love to see you like this outside of the apartment," he teased as he got near.

"He can come see it after we decide we like it." Noah grinned. "During my shift." He produced a key on a gaudy plastic key chain and held it out in front of him. "Realtor was busy, but he told me I could pick up the key and have a look myself. He said that if we want more information we can call him later this afternoon. There are some advantages to being a cop."

"You look very trustworthy," Tobias agreed. "Let's go then."

Noah unlocked the door and let it swing open. "After you."

Tobias led them in and up a few stairs to the entry hall, opening a closet door curiously and finding the laundry. "Convenient," he said dryly, then wandered through to the living room. "I like this, though." It was a large open space, combined with the dining room, and had huge windows that let the sun stream in. "How many bedrooms?"

"He said three; the master should be on this floor at the back and then two more upstairs, plus a den and a bonus room. I have no idea what a 'bonus' room means." Noah meandered farther down the hall. "Decent kitchen, and aha, the master bedroom. Oh, it's big." He disappeared inside.

Tobias glanced in the kitchen, just to make sure it had a fridge and a stove. He didn't intend to do a lot of cooking. "Three? That works out well," he said as he joined Noah in the master bedroom. "Oh, this is big. Lots of room for a king-sized bed and still room to have a couple of boys sleeping on the floor." He winked and started trying to imagine his furniture in the space.

Noah turned around in the space. "Your bed on that wall, your big, heavy, masculine dresser over there, and we'd end up right about... here." He lay down on the floor. "In chains, of course." Noah winked and sat up on his elbows.

"Of course," Tobias said, looking down at him. "Very nice, pet. Should we look at the rest of the house, or simply christen this room right now?" He grinned and turned on his heel without waiting for an answer. "Bonus room. If it's good for play, we can talk -- can't buy a house we can't torture you in."

Tobias heard laughter echoing in the bedroom and then Noah's heavy work shoes on the floor as he followed him up the stairs. "Dominate, sir. Not torture. It's an important distinction."

They hit the landing and Noah poked his head into each of the upstairs bedrooms.

"If I want to torture you, I will," Tobias promised, walking past the two bedrooms and the bathroom they shared at the end of the house to stand in the wide open expanse that was the entirety of the rest of the floor. "Now this has potential," he said, walking to the window. "Dark curtains, about... what? Six hundred square feet? This is huge." He walked along the edge of the wall, pacing out where the cross would fit. "It's over the entry, the living room and the dining room... we'll have to block it from the stairs... soundproof... The bedrooms are okay?" He started across the front, idly wondering if they could cork the floor without losing too much height.

"Bedrooms are nice, pretty identical, not huge, but big enough." Noah joined Tobias in the open space. "And this space definitely has potential." He was grinning as he looked out one of the windows. "My own space, a garage, a decent kitchen, nice big playroom... my criteria are met. How about yours? Where would we put your office? Is soundproofing outrageously expensive?"

"The last time I soundproofed it was just the one room at the condo," Tobias said absently. "Before that I had specialists in to do the stables. I'll be happy if it's a lot less than that job was." He turned a circle in the middle of the room and nodded. "Room for you, room for Phan... I suppose we can put a writing desk in the living room; I don't need a full office here. Is the basement okay for storage? We should go look."

"Yes, sir," Noah said instinctively, despite the uniform. He turned and headed downstairs, peeking into the kitchen again before heading to the basement door. The stairwell was dark. "See a light switch anywhere?" he asked, feeling along the walls as he headed down the steps.

Tobias flicked switches in the kitchen at random until the basement light came on. "Got it. Smells okay." He had a horrid memory of musty cellar smells when they'd had a nest of dead mice one winter at the farm. Smell was important, almost as important as moisture.

"Looks broom-swept. Floor seems dry." Noah ventured around the corner and out of sight. "Good God, it's really fucking big, too."

Tobias laughed. "Dungeon."

"You're having too much fun with this!" Noah's voice echoed.

"Just wait until you see me talking to contractors about blocking off part of that open space for a safe room. Hot tub by the window, remember?" Tobias flipped the basement light off and on a few times. "Come up here, pet."

"Yes, sir." Noah made his way up the steps again. He grinned at Tobias and closed the basement door. "So what do you think?"

"I think you're going to go back to work a little debauched." Tobias stepped forward and grabbed Noah's hand, then dragged him back to the master bedroom. "Give me the realtor's card and the key when we're done, I'll drop it off. Now, as you were."

"As I *were*, sir?" Noah asked, a leer in his voice. "Oh, you mean..." He stretched out on the floor in the spot he'd been before they'd explored the upstairs. "Here?"

"That would be the place, yes," Tobias said cheerfully. He tossed his coat behind him and set about enjoying the first nooner he'd had in a long, long time.

## Chapter 17

Tobias spent the weekend checking his pager obsessively and reassuring Noah that the realtor would call when he knew anything. He also spent time describing the house over and over to Phan. By Saturday night he'd had them both tied to chairs, gagged, just to get some peace. Then he turned the chairs so they couldn't make eyes at each other.

Sunday, Noah was calmer, but Phan needed a rather abrupt order to sit his ass down and stop fidgeting. An hour later he was settled enough that the three of them could play for a while -- and after that they were all a lot calmer.

Monday morning he was at the clinic when Dr. Brewer called his cell phone to politely request he come to pick up Phan after his therapy appointment the next day; she'd scheduled an extra half hour for the occasion.

"Of course," he said easily. "Would you like Noah to come as well?"

There was a brief silence and then she said, "That... would probably be best. I may ask to speak to you and Phantom alone, however."

"I'm sure that will be fine."

Phantom seemed easy about it when Tobias spoke to him that night, and, as he'd expected, Noah was more than happy to go along. Tuesday morning, however, Tobias called them both to make sure it was what they wanted.

"You don't need to go," he said. "In fact, we can all say no, or any of us can."

Phan insisted he was fine with it. Noah sighed and the sheer exasperation in his voice convinced Tobias to drop it. They'd go.

At two-thirty he picked Noah up at his apartment, both of them thinking it wiser that Noah not appear in uniform. By the time they got to Dr. Brewer's office they'd discussed the fact that the realtor hadn't called, the state of listing the condo, and Noah's day.

They weren't exactly nervous, but they were... anxious. Tobias hoped that the actual therapy session had gone well for Phan. He and Noah sat next to each other in the waiting room, silently watching the clock and looking around at the tasteful and subdued décor. When the door to the office opened, Tobias forced himself to stand slowly instead of leaping up.

"Good afternoon, Dr. Vincent, Mr. Dolan. Come on in," Dr. Brewer said with a friendly smile.

"Good afternoon," Tobias said just as politely as he led Noah in.

Phan was sitting in a deep chair, looking calm. His smile was warm as he looked up at Tobias. "Hello, Tobias," he said.



"How are you, Phan?" Tobias asked, taking the chair next to him.

"Fine. Really. Hey, Noah."

"Hey, hon," Noah smiled back and took a seat a few feet away. "Dr. Brewer, please feel free to call me Noah."

She smiled at him and sat in another chair, not going behind her desk. "All right," she said easily.

"How did things go today?" Tobias asked Phan, refraining from offering to let Dr. Brewer use his first name.

"Not bad, I guess," Phan said. "I feel pretty good." He looked at Dr. Brewer and raised an eyebrow.

She shrugged. "If you feel good, that's good. I'm not going to tell you how to react to therapy, you know that. Did you want to talk to Dr. Vincent about what we covered today?"

Phan waved a hand. "Just more stuff about pain, really. My perception of it, why I like it, how scene pain is different from punishment pain and how they're both different from the pain I craved when I was... paying off my happy debt."

Tobias nodded. "They're all different?"

"Oh, yeah." Phan looked at Noah. "You know what I mean."

"Sure." Noah nodded and looked at Tobias. "Pain for pleasure and pain for a reason... like punishment or atonement, they're totally different."

Tobias looked at Dr. Brewer. "I knew that," he said. "I just didn't realize that the punishment pain and the... debt pain were different."

She nodded. "It's a subtle distinction, and that Phan sees it is a great breakthrough."

Tobias smiled at Phan and got a shy grin back. Phan hadn't looked shy in about seven years, so Tobias could easily judge how pleased he was with himself.

"Well done," Tobias said softly, smiling as Phan's smile grew into a grin.

Dr. Brewer smiled as well. "Shall we discuss the current situation?"

Tobias nodded. "You have concerns."

"I have... questions, I suppose. For what it's worth, Phan seems more settled this week than he did last."

Noah nodded. "I think that's worth quite a bit."

"It is," Tobias said. "Perhaps you could ask some of your questions -- it would give us an idea of what the issues are, if there are any."

She looked thoughtful for a moment. "I know you have a long history with Phantom, Dr. Vincent. I have concerns that one or both of you may be trying to recapture the past. As we all know, one can't go back."

Tobias waited, but she said nothing further. Noah noticeably shifted in his chair, resting one ankle on the opposite knee, but he didn't say anything. With a glance at Phan, Tobias said, "How so?"

"I think that in a relationship like yours, when you know each other so well, it's entirely likely that previous patterns of behavior will repeat. That based on what you knew before, you'll make choices without really looking at the current situation. If you're not vigilant, I can see lines becoming blurred to the detriment of the whole of the relationship. For example, right now you are all being very careful to establish rules and guidelines, but as you each settle into the dynamics of the new relationship I think that it's possible you or Phantom will begin to make assumptions of one another."

Tobias tilted his head. "Assumptions?"

"Take sex, for example," she said, leaning forward.

"We're not having sex," Tobias said, looking at Phan. "Well, he did suck me off in scene, so I suppose that counts. But Noah is my lover and partner." He grinned quickly. "Phan's getting laid a lot, but not with me."

Dr. Brewer looked at Noah. "And you're okay with things as they stand right now, in that regard?"

Noah nodded. "Both Phan and Tobias have been very mindful of my feelings. Phan is staying with me, and we have rules established that make it easy on us. We know what we're permitted to do and what we're not, we don't have to make decisions. It's quite liberating. As for Tobias and Phan, they have rules as well. Rules that I have agreed to, and I trust them. If Tobias wants to go further, or change the rules, we'll discuss it in context."

Dr. Brewer sighed and sat back in her chair. "I'm not a relationship therapist, nor am I anyone's doctor but Phantom's. I'm not going to tell you how to work this; my only concern is for Phantom's health. So I'm just going to say what I see, and what I think the dangers are."

Tobias nodded sharply. "As long as you have Phan in mind, we're happy at least to listen."

She looked at him, meeting his eyes easily. "I see three men with strong personalities trying to have a relationship with many different levels of intimacy. Polyamory is difficult under the best of circumstances, but you might have an actual advantage as you're all very rule based. As long as everyone is clear on limits, and knows that the limits are fluid and have to be talked about at regular intervals, that's a point in your favor."

Tobias nodded again, agreeing with her so far. Rules had been the basis of almost every adult relationship he'd had; he was comfortable with them.

"However. You are a Master with two subs. That's a lot of needs to be met -- yours, Noah's, and Phantom's. I find myself wondering why you're doing this -- aside from the obvious affection you have for Phan. You've welcomed a past lover into your current relationship and started Dominating him. You've added work, stress, and energy to an already busy life. What's the payoff for you?"

Tobias opened his mouth, but she held up a hand. "In a nutshell, if you're doing this simply because you're trying to save him, this whole thing is doomed. You can't reasonably add a third partner to a relationship for only his benefit. You and Noah have to be emotionally invested, and you have to be willing to give up a little of yourselves, take a little of him. A rescue effort will not work; a true relationship might."

"We're not *trying* to save him, Dr. Brewer, we already have." Noah interrupted.

"You think so? Why? Because he's not with his parents?" She looked at Noah with honest curiosity on her face. "He's not in a hospital, but you have to think longer term than that, Noah."

"I am. We are. We're not setting up something short-term to make Phan better, we're setting up a lifestyle that meets all of our needs. Part of that is Phan continuing his therapy with you, but the rest is something much broader for all three of us. Phan has as much input as we do into how we set things up. He's reluctant to contribute sometimes, and I understand that, but he's learning quickly that it's in his best interests *and* ours for him to be honest." Noah looked at Phan. "He knows we care about him."

Tobias looked at Phan and saw the smile he gave Noah.

"I know," Phan said softly.

"Do you?" Tobias asked, just as softly. "It must be... odd, suddenly having this."

"Of course it's odd," Phan agreed. "But I know Noah cares for me -- he has for a long time. And it's no secret that you love me on some level; you and I never stopped caring about each other, we merely changed how we do it. I never really imagined that we'd be like this, but we are, and I'm grateful for it."

Dr. Brewer watched them discuss it for a moment, not saying anything.

Tobias looked at her, then at Noah. "I love you," he said. "I'm in love with you. But Phan's right -- we do love each other; I'm just not in love with him."

"At the moment," Dr. Brewer put in. "That's what I mean -- rules are good, labels can be good if they establish boundaries but are seen as fluid and changeable. Emotions are much harder."

Tobias sighed. "We know that," he said irritably. "And what we're saying is that if the emotions change, the three of us are capable, willing and eager to talk about it."

"What I'm seeing, Dr. Brewer, if I may," Noah said, sitting up in his chair again, "is a lot of skepticism on your part aimed at putting doubts in Phan's head about how good this is going to be for him. Why do that? Why pull the rug out from under him just when he's starting to get to his feet?" Noah took a deep breath and got his emotions under control, and his tone was more even when he spoke again. "I'm sorry. Look. We don't have this all worked out. This is a continuous, ongoing, evolving situation. There are a lot of new things happening. New relationships, a new home, a new contract -- and we're not doing any of it blindly. We all want to give it a shot, and we are. We've promised to communicate honestly and we're committed to working things out as they come up. I don't see how you can expect us, or anyone, to do any better by Phan than that."

"I don't expect anyone to do better. I'm just questioning if something that happened so quickly is wise. You, Noah, invited him into your relationship as a snap decision. Would you have done the same thing if his father weren't there, saying horrible things? Would you have taken him home with you if Bradford had merely told your Master that he was done with Phan?"

Noah seemed to consider his response carefully. "I can't say for sure. I believe that Tobias would have wanted to honor his sense of responsibility to Phan, and I think it would have been difficult for him to ask me. I've felt very threatened by Phan in the past, jealous even. I don't think that's any secret to either of them." He cleared his throat. "When his father showed up and Phan was ready to give up on himself to keep from coming between Tobias and me... I guess I saw everything differently. He respects our relationship, he really doesn't want to hurt anyone." Noah sighed and looked at Dr. Brewer. "It changed the way I thought about Phan completely."

"You don't still worry that I'm trying to take him away?" Phan asked quietly.

Tobias forced himself to let Noah answer for himself, stifling the immediate reaction to deny that such a thing would ever happen.

Noah almost laughed. "No. No way."

Phan grinned, looking more than a little relieved. "Good. I'm not."

Tobias looked at Dr. Brewer. "I don't know what we can say to make things seem any more stable than they are. We're all well aware that we're feeling our way, but we're doing it with nothing but respect for each other and our relationships. We're going slowly."

She nodded thoughtfully. "All right," she said, shrugging her shoulders. "I wanted to make sure my concerns were heard, and they have been. I'm here for Phan to talk to, and I will do what I can to help. As I said, I'm not a relationship expert, and I have no desire to be one. As long as Phantom continues to improve--"

Tobias' pager went off and he rolled his eyes. "I apologize," he said reaching for it. "Work is busy." He looked at the display and sighed. "Except it's the realtor." He stopped the beeping and put the pager back in his pocket.

"It is?" Noah suddenly looked like a kid who'd just heard that Santa was on the roof. "About the offer?" He looked over at Phan. "Wait until you see the place."

Phan looked at Tobias. "Well? Call!"

"Perhaps we should finish here?" Tobias said dryly.

Dr. Brewer watched Phan wiggle in his chair. "I suspect we're done," she said with a smile. She stood up and said, "I'll see you Tuesday, Phantom."

Phan grinned. "Yeah, see you then. Thanks."

Tobias stood up and shook her hand. "Thank you for your time. I hope we've eased your mind a little."

"Well, if nothing else I know that the three of you talk to each other, which is essential." She turned to Noah. "Thank you for coming."

Noah offered his hand. "Sorry to bust your chops."

"Oh, please. You're a kitty compared to some." She grinned and looked at Tobias. "Though I suspect he could give *you* a hard time if he wanted to."

Tobias smirked and held up one hand. "Only when he wants to."

"Fortunately for him, that's not very often." Noah held a hand out to Phan. "Come on, hon."

Phan took Noah's hand and grinned. "Only once a week or so."

"Out," Tobias ordered, smiling. "And if you're both good we'll stop for ice cream."

"Oh, goody!" Phan laughed. "Come on, I want to listen in while he calls the realtor. Love it when he gets all businesslike."

Noah and Phan left the room quickly. "Ice cream. He's funny." Tobias heard Noah snort as they disappeared down the corridor.

Tobias nodded to Dr. Brewer and followed them, already reaching for his cell phone.

## Chapter 18

Tobias sighed and looked around his living room, half packed up and in a state of untidiness that only moving could create. He'd finally stopped Phan from puttering by simply sending him to Noah's for a cuddle, promising to call before he went to bed. Right then, he'd be happy to have one of his boys there, though, if only to get a cup of tea and a kiss of his own.

He sighed again, then jumped slightly as the phone rang, shrill in the quiet.

"Hello?" he said, picking up the phone without looking at the display.

"Hello, stranger." Bradford's voice was smooth and cheerful. "You're actually home, eh? It's been an age since we've spoken."

Tobias smiled, leaning back in his chair. "Hello, friend. It's been a while, yes. I trust all is well?"

"Well, yes; excellent, in point of fact. Business is good, Nikki has been a real treat lately, I'm doing quite well. Which is not to say that I don't miss Phan; I almost feel like I have too much time on my hands."

"Want him back?" Tobias teased. "I'm sure we can work something out, so long as Noah goes with. They're rather inseparable these days."

"Isn't that sweet." Bradford laughed. "The three of you should come out for an evening and show off. How are things going? I trust Phan is doing better or I would have heard from you."

"Phan's doing well." Tobias smiled. "He's responding well to his therapy, and he's settled most of the time. Not sure if we're ready for a public scene, but I might take them out. Things are up in the air these days -- most of my time is spent with animals and contractors, and it's becoming hard to tell the two apart. Do you know how much a new bathroom costs?"

"Considering I have twelve bathrooms at the club, I should hope so," Bradford laughed. "Are you soundproofing? Because that will set you back a few ducats, too."

"Just the playroom. You want to talk about soundproofing? I have a soundproofed stable, Bradford. I know all about that." He looked around the condo and grinned. "You should have seen the look on the listing agent's face when Phan and I took him through here. He suggested rather firmly that the chains come off the walls."

The laughter on the other end of the line was so boisterous Tobias had to pull the receiver away from his ear for a moment. "Oh, Tobias. You're shameless."

"It was Phan," Tobias protested. "He even left the chains on the bed. The poor agent looked like he was going to have a stroke. He'd come in all PC about dealing with gay owners and got smacked by BDSM hell in the form of Phan. I think the boy was even ready to kneel if it would have gotten a reaction."

"You know, I love Phan dearly, but maybe you should make sure he's otherwise occupied when the realtor brings people through," Bradford suggested, still snickering. "Though, he sounds a lot like the Phan I remember from, oh, seven or eight years ago, Tobias. Remarkable."

"He's doing well," Tobias said again, this time smiling. "He's... he's Phan. There are moments when he looks like he's conflicted, like he wants to ask for a flogging, but he seems to manage it well. He's drawing a lot again."

"I knew Dr. Brewer had suggested that, I'm glad to hear he's doing it." Bradford sighed. "Well, that's a relief. I'm sorry that things got so complicated here, but I'm glad that he's doing better. Truly. He deserves some peace." Tobias heard Bradford light up a cigarette and then he went on. "So... things are working out? With the three of you? Noah?"

"It's... it's interesting," Tobias said slowly. "Noah's thrown himself into this like he was made for it. He's intense in his scenes with me, he's emotionally open to us both... he's having more sex than anyone on the planet, I think. We're all working really hard to balance."

"The boy's got depth. I've always said so." Tobias could almost hear Bradford nodding on the other end. "You think he's overdoing it?"

"Oddly, I don't. I trust him to tell me if he is -- he's remarkably self-aware. He's got a full plate, for certain, but he seems to thrive on the relationships he's created. He gets something he needs from Phan."

"Sounds ideal for you, hm?"

"We're happy," Tobias said simply. "Which isn't to say I'm not going to play games -- have to keep them on their toes, don't I? And I expect that once we move there will be things that come up."

"I'm looking forward to seeing the new place. I expect to be invited for dinner," Bradford told him. Tobias knew the man was quite serious. "And how is work?"

"Busy as hell, actually." Tobias automatically rubbed his thigh, still bruised from where he hadn't moved fast enough. Cranky cows. "So, I've got a house that's in mid-reno, a condo half packed and on the market, two subs, a full caseload, and a farm that's leaking money like a bucket without a bottom."

Bradford whistled softly. "Still wrestling with the land? I thought you'd have sold it off by now. Wild acres need a lot of TLC. I like the suburbs, all I need is a boy to mow my lawn and trim the hedges. I don't know how you manage it all."

"I have Peter," Tobias said dryly. "You know very well that I've never worked the farm myself. It just seems wrong to sell it. Plus, if a realtor blanched at my playroom here, can you imagine trying to get the stables ready to sell? Lord."

"Oh, I can't imagine you selling the house itself. That barn is a work of art, and your whole soul is in that place. But you've got what, four horses and how many acres? Personally, I'd keep the house and the barns and sell the rest. Just a suggestion, of course. Unless you're planning on sending the boys out to tend it when they get in your hair; it's a shame you can't get Noah to agree to move out there for good."

Tobias shrugged. "Kind of hard to be a city cop with an hour commute each way; besides, he loves his job. But I'll take your advice about the land under advisement. Right now I have too many things on the go to think about it." He stood up and went to the kitchen, looking for that cup of tea. "Tell me, how's Nikki?"

"He's a love," Bradford said, gracefully accepting the change of subject. "We're working hard at defining his limits; it's really bothered me that he's been so bottomless. Thankfully, he's responding well and is willing to talk about each session in depth so we can find his breaking point without breaking *him*. Nikki doesn't like to admit he can't take something if he thinks I want him to. I think it's a symptom of his youth; he wants so badly to please me. I used to think he could take anything, that he was a pain slut, something like Phan used to be. But I realize now that he's simply been taking whatever I dole out. Not good. So I badgered him into admitting when he'd had enough. It was more what I had to say than what I hit him with. Very cathartic for him, I think."

"Wow." Tobias got down the tea and started to fill the kettle. "He loves you, you know," he said almost absently. "He wouldn't do that for everyone."

"Yes, I know." Bradford sighed and was quiet for a long moment before adding softly, "It's entirely possible the feeling is mutual."

"If I drop this kettle, you're buying me a new one," Tobias said crossly. "Wait until I put this down and then tell me that again." He set the kettle down on the counter and pulled out a chair from the table. "I beg your pardon?" he said, sitting down.

"You heard me, you bastard." Bradford snapped, but, really, he didn't sound angry.

"I'm old, humor me." Tobias grinned and nodded his head. "So. Are you going to give that boy his collar soon? Or is this something else altogether?"

"I haven't thought that coherently about it yet," Bradford admitted. "We had that long cathartic session, and then he spent the night in my bed. I couldn't sleep, I was so proud of him. I watched him sleep for a long time and then woke him up to... make love. We've had sex but we really hadn't been that intimate before. Maybe he just hadn't felt completely honest until that night, I don't know. Maybe I hadn't. Don't push me to babble about this sober, it's hardly fair."

"Want me to come over and get drunk with you?" Tobias offered in all seriousness.

"No, no," Bradford assured him. "Eventually, yes. I have no idea what I'm doing, but I intend to figure it out relatively soon."

"Okay," Tobias said with a grin. "At least you're not down in the bar babbling in full view of everyone. That would be so embarrassing. Or going to his old Dom to grill the man. Or making it perfectly obvious to the world that you're a goner. Because that only happens to special people, like me."

Bradford laughed. "Oh, yes, thank God for that."

"Bastard," Tobias said with a grin. "All right, so where were we? I'm busy, my boys are well and likely getting off while we speak -- they do that a lot -- and you're having those special feelings." Really, he was having far too much fun with this. "Oh, you didn't tell me if you liked the cane I had Gregory send you. Did Nikki like it?"

"Oh! I knew there was another reason I'd called. Yes! That was one of the instruments that I used the following night as a reward. Nikki is very fond of it. And it's gorgeous, too. Is the whole thing handmade? We've been perusing his catalog."



"I think so, yes. I have a lovely cane, as well, you'll have to try at some point. His work is wonderful -- really, if you can spend some time with him you'll come away with magnificent tools. I wouldn't stock the club with them, but for your own collection? Absolutely."

"It's lovely; Nikki and I thank you very much. So. Tell me, you let the boys fuck?" Tobias knew Bradford wasn't going to be able to let that one go.

"Depends on your definition," he hedged, smirking. He remembered the kettle and went to turn it on.

"My definition of 'fuck'?" Bradford laughed. "You're baiting me, Tobias. How ungentlemanly of you."

"Sorry," Tobias said, utterly not. "I let them get off with each other, how's that? No penetration. They seem rather fond of sucking each other's cocks."

"Very clever," Bradford said knowingly.

"I thought so. Phan, of course, saw right through it and shared the information with Noah. Who didn't really seem to mind, now that I think about it. Might be time to restrict them for a few days."

"Only if you're ready for them to turn the brunt of that energy on you," Bradford teased. "You might be shooting yourself in the foot."

"True, but there's a lot to be said about enthusiasm," Tobias deadpanned.

"You're such a good deviant. Have you and Phan signed anything more formal than that first list, yet?"

"No."

"No? 'No' as in you're not going to, or 'no' as in not yet?" Bradford redirected.

Tobias rolled his eyes. "'No' as in we haven't even talked about it."

"You're moving him into your new home, Tobias. Why ever not?"

"Because... well. Because."

"Tobias," Bradford sighed, pushing. "Because you don't want to? He doesn't?"

"Because I don't want to rock the boat," Tobias admitted. "We're... even right now. Little waves are one thing... contracting is a big fucking wave, Bradford."

"Who are you worried about falling overboard? Phan or Noah?"

Tobias closed his eyes. "What do you mean?"

"I mean, why do you think a contract with Phan is going to shake things up so badly? Are you worried about limiting Phan or alienating Noah? Or is it something else?" Tobias heard Bradford light another cigarette. "Maybe you're worried it won't work out and Phan will be asking to get out of it again?"

"Not so much that," Tobias said slowly. "I'm reluctant to bring up the topic because they're settling well and things are in a state of transition right now. Noah might not react to a contract the same as he did to bringing Phan home."

"It's tough, balancing it all. I thought it would be difficult. I'm only prodding you because I worry. I really don't envy you this early stuff, but I have confidence you can make it work, I really do."

"Thank you, that means a lot," Tobias said. "I don't know. Maybe it would be good. Add some solidity. Something else to think about, anyway."

"Like you need something else to think about." Bradford sounded sympathetic. "Doing the right thing isn't always a picnic. I know I've said this before, but if you need to blow off steam, you know where to find me."

"Blow off steam or get my ass kicked?" Tobias asked with a grin. "Go on, admit it. You like the thought of flogging me. It charges you up."

"Oh, and hitting me with that bullwhip didn't turn your crank?" Bradford laughed. "No, I meant blow off steam. I hope I never have to kick your ass again."

"I wouldn't bet on it," Tobias said under his breath. "And you told me to whip you -- if you remember, I had objections."

"Right, minor piddling objections because you were wrong..." Bradford's voice was cheerful again. "Ah, that's better, we're much more ourselves when we're picking on each other."

Tobias laughed. "An old married couple, without the sex."

"Thank God."

"I'll have you know I'm a sex god," Tobias said flatly. "You'd be lucky to have me."

"I'm sure I would be." Bradford chuckled. "But I'd spoil you for other men. It's just not a good idea, I'm sorry."

"I guess we'd better just stick to nailing our boys and keep away from each other," Tobias said, trying not to laugh. "Speaking of, I should let you go moon over yours."

"Aw. Are you alone?"

"I sent Phan to Noah's. He was... well, I was beginning to suspect OCD with the packing boxes."

Bradford laughed. "Very well. And for the record, I don't moon, jackass."

"Oh, you do so, I'd bet money on it. Of course it would be cleverly disguised as looking stoic, but I think you moon."

"Well, it beats declaring undying love and devotion in public after the second session..."

"Oh, shut up. I did not."

"Brett told me you looked smitten, but you know, he's just Noah's former Dom. You have a good night, Tobias, and good luck with that packing. If you need help I'll be happy to send over a gaggle of subs to entertain you."

"Oh, God, not more of them." Tobias looked at the kettle and his unmade tea and sighed. "I think I'll just recall my own."

"Probably wise, the troublemakers. Goodnight, then."

"Goodnight, my friend. Watch for the invitation to the housewarming party."

"Oh, I will! You know how I love a good party." Bradford hung up and the line went dead.

Tobias looked at the phone in his hand and then the clock. Smiling, he dialed Noah's number.

The line rang. And rang. And then the receiver was picked up and apparently dropped, then picked up again. "Hello, sir," Noah sounded suspiciously hoarse, and Tobias thought he might have heard Phan giggle in the background.

"Hello, pet. Having fun?" Tobias asked, grinning to himself. He left the kitchen and the unmade tea, heading back to the couch.

"Yes, sir. I didn't expect you to send Phan back so early. We, uh--" There was some rustling and the sound of a slap, and Phan's laughter was unmistakable this time. "Had a nice dinner."

"That's good," Tobias said, trying to sound like he didn't know exactly what was going on. "And now? Are you relaxing?"

"Yes, sir. Very relaxed. Shut UP, Phan. Would you like to talk to Phan?"

"Depends. Can he talk with a full mouth?" Tobias grinned and threw himself onto the couch. "What are you doing, pet?"

"I, uh... I'm in bed, sir. We were... oh, fuck. Phan, stop. Phan..." Noah groaned. "Phan is... he's... God."

"He is not, that's me." Tobias tried not to laugh. "Tell me. What's he doing to you?"

"Sucking, sir. Like he was when you called. He's got my cock in his mouth. Jesus." Noah was panting, decidedly heated. He must have been close already when Tobias called. "And his fingers are stroking me and... fuck, he's good at this."

"He is. Have you sucked him off yet?" Tobias looked down at himself, unsurprised at the effect Noah having sex had on his own cock. He wasn't planning to do anything about it, though. Not yet, anyway.

"Yeah, got him as he walked in the door. Had him naked before we left the foyer." Noah moaned and his breath was heavy over the line. "He's such a slut. Oh! Phan... oh, fuck, yes!"

"Don't come," Tobias snapped. "Tell him I said stop, if you have to."

"Stop, stop!" Noah begged. Apparently he had good timing. "Sir says stop!"

Tobias could hear a sound that he took to be frustration. "Why?" Phan whined.

"Doesn't want me to come." Noah whined but his breathing was still erratic. "He's stopped, sir."

"Good, put him on. You just... breathe. Come down a bit."

"Yes, sir." The phone rattled, and Tobias could hear mumbled voices as Noah handed over the phone to Phantom.

"Sir?"

"Are you hard?"

"Uh, yeah. I had his cock down my throat, of course I'm hard, sir." Phan didn't sound amused.

"If you can find a condom you can fuck him," Tobias purred.

The phone clattered and Tobias listened as Phan apparently dumped the drawer out of Noah's bedside table.

"What? What did he say?" Noah's voice came over the line. It didn't sound like Phan answered him.

Tobias eased his hand into his trousers, trying to picture the mayhem Phan was causing.

"Rubbers, damn it! Where are they?" Phan whimpered.

"Rubbers?" Noah sounded confused. "We don't use them." There was a pause. "Oh! Oh, fuck, uh..." The bed creaked and there was some background noises that Tobias couldn't identify. Noah finally made a triumphant sound, and Phan sighed loudly.

"Sir?" Phan came back on the line.

"Still here. Nice hunting."

"Thank you. Ready?"

"Oh, yes. Are you?"

"Am now."

"Okay. Just don't hang up the phone, boy, or it'll be a long time before you get to do this again."

Phan made a snorting noise and then said, "Roll over, kiddo."

"You?" Noah groaned. "Oh, fuck, I thought he meant me." The bed creaked again, and Tobias could hear the condom wrapper tear. "Lube's right there," Noah pointed out. He sounded like he was panting again.

"Got it," Phan said. Tobias didn't hear the sound of the lube, but he did hear Phan groan. "Jesus, you're tight. God. Going to feel so good..."

"Hurry up about..." Noah groaned. "What? Did he give you a map, too? Fuck."

"Don't need a map, Noah. Just know what feels good." Phan's voice was tight, and Tobias found himself clutching the phone.

Noah's moans were familiar, as if Tobias' own fingers were working inside him. "More, more, please."

"Yeah," Phan panted. "God, yeah."

There was a heartbeat of silence and Tobias wrapped his hand around his cock, squeezing when Phan groaned.

"Ah, shit, Noah."

"Oh, God, yes." Tobias knew Noah's sounds well, and Phan's were coming back to him slowly. Tobias heard the bed springs again and then Noah, begging. "Deeper, Phan, like it... oh, yeah," he groaned. "Like that, hon, just like that." Noah whimpered and grunted, and the sounds of the springs became more rhythmic.

Tobias bit his lip, listening hard as his hand matched their rhythm. He could hear Phan's moans, knew when he was hitting Noah's prostate. He could hear the creaks of the bed as Phan sped and slowed. It was almost as good as being there.

Almost.

For the next few minutes the air was filled with grunts and moans and soft words -- a "yeah" here and there, an occasional "so good," and a handful of murmured things that Tobias couldn't make out; until Noah finally broke, his voice strained and begging. "Please. Don't stop, just... so close Phan, I'm... are you? Jesus, don't stop!"

"Uh-huh," Phan said, his voice rough. "Fuck, yeah. Close. Jesus, Noah." The bed squeaked louder, faster, and Tobias' hips jerked as he pushed his cock through his fist, racing to meet them.

"So fucking good," Phan groaned. "Oh, God, oh, God, oh, God, Noah! Now, come on, now, now!"

"Oh, God, yes, yes!" Noah had always been good with cues. Tobias heard him dive, tumbling over the edge of coherence as he came. His sounds were hot and needful, honest and familiar. "Oh, God. Phan," he whimpered, his voice still shaking.

"Fuck! Yes!" Phan was just as vocal, the bed protesting, creaking again, and then again. He grunted as he came, and Tobias could picture his face, his head probably thrown back in pleasure.

Tobias came almost silently, spilling over his fist, a wet stain spreading on his now ruined trousers. He was in a bit of his own fog for a moment, but he was pretty sure that he hadn't missed anything but heavy breathing and the sounds of his boys recovering before Noah's voice came much more clearly over the phone. He must have picked up the receiver. "Thank you, sir." His voice was still hoarse and thin, but in a different way.

"Was it good?" Tobias asked with a grin. "Sounded like you had fun."

"Mmm. Yeah. Real good." He could hear the grin in Noah's voice over the line. "Oh..." Noah laughed softly. "And he cuddles even closer after fucking."

"God, he must be about attached to you then," Tobias laughed. "Get cleaned up and go to sleep, pet. I love you."

"Yes, sir. I love you, too. You want to talk to him?"

"For a moment. Thank you, sweetheart."

He could hear Noah get up as he handed the phone over to Phan.

"Sir? Thank you."

"You're welcome, boy." He smiled and wiped his hand on his trousers. "Feel better?"

"Than what?" Phan sounded confused. "I'm fine."

"I know," Tobias soothed. "But not being able to penetrate was frustrating you, I know."

"Fingers would have been fine, sir. Didn't have to let me stick my dick in him."

Tobias laughed. "No, I didn't. But guess what?"

"Ah, shit."

"Yes."

"How long?"

"Oh, let's say three days. Both of you."

"You going to be there when the time's up?"

"Hell, yes."

Phan laughed. "Evil. Thanks."

"No problem. You get to tell Noah."

"Very evil."

"I'm the Master."

"You are indeed." Phan giggled at him. "God, what a great fuck, though."

Tobias grinned. "Glad you liked it. Sleep well, boy."

"You too, sir. Goodnight."

"Goodnight, Phantom."

Tobias hung up and looked at the packing boxes. All in all, it was a good night. With another grin he stood on wobbly legs and headed for the shower.

## Chapter 19

It hadn't taken a lot to set it up, once he had the urge to play. Tobias had merely checked his calendar, called Dee to make sure the evening looked free and clear, and then called Bradford. He didn't need the man's help, but Tobias felt odd about simply whisking Noah away to play for the night, so he made sure Phan would be happy at the club and sent him off to show the pups how a real sub took orders. Bradford promised to put Phan through his paces -- he had three Doms who'd been itching to take Phan on for a while.

That taken care of, Tobias sent Noah a text message on his phone: 8PM, Claudia's. Dress nice. Strangers.

He took his time getting ready, picking clothes that screamed dignified and perhaps a little uptight. Not a hint of personality in them, but a lot of money; he'd let his reactions tell Noah all he needed to know about the game.

At seven forty-five he arrived at Claudia's, claimed a seat at the bar, and ordered a bottle of San Pellegrino. He watched the clock but made a show of looking around at the other patrons, all nicely dressed and enjoying quiet conversations. The bartender gave him a knowing look.

"Meeting someone?" he asked, giving Tobias a second bottle.

"We'll see," Tobias said with a wink.

The bartender didn't look like he held out much hope for him.

Noah walked in a couple of minutes late, dressed in a pair of black dress pants, a linen dress shirt and a very trendy silk tie. He glanced around the room a moment and then headed over to the bar, taking a seat one stool over from Tobias. He waved down the bartender. "Ginger ale, twist of lime. Thanks." He reached in his pocket and pulled out a pack of cigarettes.

Tobias looked at the cigarettes and tried not to chuckle. Noah's love of playing had become a constant source of amusement. He waited until the bartender had turned to get Noah's lime slice and then looked Noah over, obviously and quickly, before turning back to his drink.

Noah cleared his throat as the bartender brought over his soda and looked in Tobias' direction. When Tobias turned and met his eyes he said, "Hey," and looked back at his soda, picking the straw out with obvious distaste. He lifted the glass and took a sip. "I should stick to water. They bring you water with a nice wine glass. Soda? You get this clunky kid's glass that sends me back to when I was sixteen and wishing it was a beer."

"Or you could just order beer," Tobias said. "Or even wine. The thing with the water is that you pay four times more than the soda, and only get half as much." He smiled and added, "But the twist is a nice touch. Very grown up."

Noah shook his head and laughed. "Touché. Next time I'll stick to, what is that? San Pellegrino? I'll look like less of a dork." He pushed the cigarettes toward Tobias. "Smoke?"

"Thanks." Tobias reached for the pack and looked at Noah again. "And you hardly look like a dork." He took one of the cigarettes and glanced at the bar for matches.

Noah picked up a pack of matches smoothly and offered it to Tobias in his fingers. "I'm glad to hear it."

Tobias lit the cigarette with a flourish and dropped the burnt match into the ashtray. He offered Noah his hand and said, "Matthew."

Noah took his hand and shook it. "Jon," he said looking Tobias over. "You have that traveling-on-business look about you, Matthew. Not from around here?"

"Do I?" Tobias asked, lifting an eyebrow. "And here I was trying not to look obvious."

"Where are you from?" Noah turned and took another sip of his soda.

"Up north a ways. Just down for three days and then back to real life." Tobias poured more water into his glass and looked at Noah. "So you're from here, then? Out on your own, or are you meeting someone?"

"I'm on my own, late night at work." Noah grinned. "Just here to relax a little before going home to stare at the walls. I bet the wife misses you, huh?"

"No wife," Tobias said casually. "And staring at walls in a hotel room is what I'm avoiding." He looked Noah over again, a little slower this time. "Better scenery out here."

"Yeah?" Noah shifted and sipped his drink again. "I hate staying in hotels alone. At least if someone is with you it feels more comfortable. All by yourself, it's dreadful. Had to stay in this hotel in the middle of nowhere once for training, I about slit my wrists I was so bored. You travel a lot?"

"More than I'd like... It wouldn't be so bad if it was the same places, but it's new almost every time. Hard to make friends, you know?" Tobias took another drag off the cigarette and put it out. "What kind of training did you do?"

"Oh, it was manager training. You know, they throw you in a room with a bunch of other people who need to learn to manage and teach you to act like people instead of animals. I didn't get a thing out of it, but it sure was entertaining." He laughed. "I work in one of the jewelry stores downtown."

"As a manager?" Tobias asked, impressed by Noah's ability to build a character.

"How ever did you guess?" Noah winked.

"You have an air of authority," Tobias said with a grin. "Like you tell people what to do, fully expecting it to get done. Plus, you dress like you're in charge."

"That's me, in charge." Noah snorted. "What do you think of our little town?"

"Sleepy. Not a lot of excitement. Quiet. Quaint. How's that?" Tobias tried to look hard put upon, like he just knew there was a seamy underbelly to the town if only he could find the right guide.

Noah raised an eyebrow. "How long have you been here?"

"About nine hours." Tobias grinned.



Noah smiled. "Oh, good, I was going to accuse you of not looking hard enough."

"Ah, so there is excitement somewhere!" Tobias laughed. "I was worried. Now tell me... Claudia's isn't part of it, is it?"

"This place? As stuffy as they get. What are you looking for? What turns you on? Dancing? Girly bars?" He glanced at Tobias. "Boy bars?"

Tobias looked at the top of the bar and then back again. "Something a little off the beaten track, actually."

"Off the beaten track." Noah studied Tobias carefully. He lowered his voice. "Okay. Drugs, sex, or bondage?"

"Not drugs," Tobias said, his voice also low. "Sex, maybe. Bondage, yes and boys, yes."

"I never would have guessed. You look like a straightlaced stuck-up geek." Noah grinned and signaled the bartender. "This is so not your scene, Matthew." He tossed money on the bar and slid off his bar stool. "I'll cover him, too."

Tobias smirked. "Like I said -- I don't like to be obvious." He followed Noah out of the bar, watching his ass. "So, you know my scene?" he asked.

Noah stopped on the street outside the bar, turning to look at him again. "I'm in your scene, Matthew. Top or bottom? Dom or sub? I'm not second-guessing you again." He grinned and stuffed his cigarettes in Tobias' pocket.

"Switch," Tobias said, winking at Noah. "Usually Top, though. Depends on my partner. You always give strangers your cigarettes?"

"Don't smoke." Noah winked back. "I just use them to pick up good-looking men."

Tobias laughed. "Consider me picked up, Jon. So, where do we play?"

"We'll start way off the beaten path to get a taste, shall we? And then see where we end up?" Noah stuck out his arm to hail a cab.

"Sounds fine to me," Tobias said. "Your town." He found himself intensely curious about where Noah would take them, intrigued by this man his lover had become for him. When the cab pulled up, Tobias herded them both into the back, head tilted as he waited for Noah to give an address.

"Avenue S and Clyde," Noah said easily, and then repeated it when the cab driver looked at him in the rearview. "I know, we're overdressed," he laughed. The driver just shook his head and drove on.

Tobias barely kept himself from raising an eyebrow, trying to appear oblivious. He didn't know that Noah even knew about the clubs in that part of town -- they were going to talk later. For now though, he was going to enjoy the surprise. He leaned closer to him and said softly, "You didn't say -- Top or bottom? What are you in the mood for?"

"Switch," Noah said. "But usually bottom. As for my mood? Well, as a rule, I don't let strangers tie me up. You have rules?"

"Of course," Tobias said. "No blood, no humiliation, and, for a one-off like this, no marks. Safe words, no drinking... the usual stuff. You?"

"Just about the same. If I'm Topping, then you make the rules, and I follow them. You're living dangerously aren't you? Letting a stranger whisk you away to a raunchy underground club on the darker side of town, no one knows where you are, offering to bottom... you always take risks?"

"Yes," Tobias grinned. "It's part of the fun. All right -- I let strangers tie me up. You can use a paddle, crop, or cat, no cane. My hands and feet can be tied, but I have to see and hear. Gag if you like, so long as I have a clear way to signal you. Anything else?"

He watched Noah carefully, wondering if this was going to fly or if he'd have to do an abrupt U-turn to salvage the evening.

Noah seemed to think it over and tossed it off with a shrug of his shoulder. "Works for me. It's a good thing I'm not a psychopath. Ah, here we are. Are we picking this up right away, or do you want to get a feel for the place first?" Noah paid the driver.

"I'm good to wander." Tobias waited for Noah to lead the way, enjoying being the one waiting for once. He couldn't do it all the time, but this was kind of like an unexpected vacation into a strange new world. "If it's not my style, I'll let you know."

The outside of the club was completely dark, with not even a sign on the door. Noah walked up to the door confidently and knocked. The man that answered looked like he was going to laugh at them until Noah undid his tie and showed the man his collar, which gained them instant entrance. They climbed a stairwell to a smoky second floor bar. The lighting was mostly amber and red, tough on the eyes, and there were men in all stages of undress hanging around talking, smoking, serving.

Noah headed right for the bar, and they drew eyes as they crossed the floor. They must have looked like quite a pair. Noah reached across the bar and offered his hand to the bartender. "Mikey."

"Noah!" The man grinned widely.

Noah shook his head. "Jon tonight. This is my sub, Matthew."

"You're Topping, now? Man, you get around."

"I do. Water?"

"Yes, sir." Mikey disappeared a moment and returned with a bottle. "First one's on me, sir."

"Thanks. We're going to watch the show."

"See you later, sir."

Tobias trailed after Noah, keeping strictly to heel and resisting the urge to look around too much. He'd never been here, but it was obvious Noah had, and that made him want to ask a lot of questions. Later. He kept his eyes down, trying very hard to make Noah look good by being the best sub Tobias knew how to be.

He was horribly out of practice, he decided, but one night wasn't going to kill him.

Noah pulled out a chair at a table off to the side with a good view of the room and the stage. The show was a

rope bondage scene, with very elaborate knots and suspension. There was one Dom and two subs, the boys each naked but for the ropes, ringed, and hard. "You may watch the scene, boy," Noah said, taking a seat.

"Thank you, sir," Tobias said, sinking to his knees by Noah's side. It was a strange feeling, how quickly the instinct to serve came back, his training still there after so long. He'd trained hard, and the very motion of settling down brought back a headspace he hadn't really felt in years. Decades.

He knelt on the floor and watched the scene, trying to keep a critical eye on the Dom but more and more watching the subs, almost feeling how hard they were trying, how badly they wanted to please. He felt his own breathing even out and become deeper, part of him wryly amused as he moved into subspace.

He ached to lean against Noah's leg.

Noah looked down at him. "Good boy," he said, offering Tobias his water bottle. "Thirsty?"

"No, sir. Thank you," Tobias said softly, shaking his head.

"All right." Noah leaned back in his chair and got comfortable, then slid his hand over Tobias' head, petting his hair as he watched. "Beautiful knot work."

Tobias almost moaned, moving into the touch. "Yes, sir. He's very talented," he agreed.

Men moved around and past them, some in leather, some in jeans, some in head-to-toe bondage. The music was fairly loud and had a repetitive beat, much like a dance club, even as the tunes changed. "Those boys look so hard. I bet they just ache. Do you want me to make you ache like that, boy?"

"You already do, sir," Tobias whispered. "Whatever Sir wants," he said a little louder.

Noah nodded and sipped his water, then set it down on the table. "Very well. You may look forward to it." He turned his attention back to the show, where the Dom was letting one of his boys suck the other one off. They were both still fully bound. "Are you hard, boy?"

"Yes, sir," Tobias said. He pulled his shoulders back and tightened up his display position, suddenly wishing he'd worn leather so he could show off for his Master.

Noah looked down at him critically. "Are you comfortable? You look warm. Would you like to take off your coat? Is your tie too tight?"

"Whatever you wish, sir. I can, if you'd like it." Hell, he'd strip naked if Noah asked him to, but getting rid of a few layers was a good start. The sooner the tie came off the sooner it could be wrapped around his wrists. Tobias bit back a moan and kept his eyes firmly lowered.

"I don't need your permission to do as I wish, boy." Noah looked down at him sternly. "I was asking if you would like to take off your jacket. Yes or no."

"Sorry, sir," Tobias said softly, inwardly cursing himself even as part of him grinned at Noah's game. "Yes, I would like that, sir. Thank you. May I do so now?"

"Yes." Noah got to his feet. "Stand up."

Tobias stood up and stripped off his jacket, not rushing too much but definitely not lingering. He kept his eyes down, gaze leveled just at about Noah's belt as the jacket slipped off his arms. "Where shall I put it, sir?" he asked.

"I'll take it. The tie, too. Open a couple of those buttons at your throat and roll up your sleeves." Noah held his arm out and took the jacket and waited.

Tobias did as he was told, trying very hard to keep his movements smooth and graceful, ignoring the press of his erection against his trousers. He was well aware of eyes on them, and he wouldn't give Noah anything other than his best. He passed his tie over and unbuttoned his shirt at the throat, fingers perhaps a little too eager, but the sleeves went up without issue. When he was done he automatically went into standing display, his arms behind his back and his pelvis thrust out.

A lesser man would have blushed. Tobias was not a lesser man.

Noah grinned. "Good boy. Beautiful." Noah pushed his hand into Tobias groin and pulled it away again. "Now, what are your words?"

Tobias moaned, unable to stop himself. "Yellow and red, sir," he managed. "Sorry, sir."

"Don't be, I like your sounds." Noah drew a finger along his jaw. "Turn around."

Tobias turned, forcing himself to keep his breathing even as Noah wound his own silk tie around his wrists. He wasn't at all scared or worried; he did wonder when exactly the last time he'd been so aroused had been, and finally gave up trying to think about it. All that mattered was Noah and being good.

When Noah was finished he tapped Tobias on the shoulder. "You may kneel with me now," he ordered gently as he took his seat again. "Good boy," he added, running his fingers across Tobias' shoulders once he was kneeling. "I expect you to let me know, or to use your words if anything is uncomfortable." He picked up his water again and took a long sip.

"Of course, sir," Tobias said, lightly testing his bonds. He made a soft sound before he knew it was going to happen and froze, his eyes down and his back straight.

"Something wrong?" Noah asked.

"No, sir," Tobias said immediately. "Not at all, sir."

"I don't think we'll stay very long. I'm looking forward to getting you alone."

"Me, too, sir," Tobias said, with more enthusiasm than he'd really intended.

"Oh, you sound so ready, boy." Tobias thought he finally heard a tightness in Noah's voice, too. "Been thinking about that crop? Where do you like it best? Your ass? Your shoulders? Thighs? Tell me."

Tobias swallowed. "I like it best if it starts at the top and goes down; shoulders, ass, thighs... and then back to my ass. I like to ache, sir." He closed his eyes and tried not to sway into Noah, his heart pounding wildly.

Noah hissed softly and very obviously shifted in his chair. He cleared his throat and stood abruptly. "On second thought, we're going now. Ready? I want to lead you out just like this. Any objections?" Noah asked, apparently giving Tobias the opportunity to put limits on the game if he needed them.

"No objection," Tobias said, waiting for Noah to stand so he could walk at heel.

Noah seemed pleased and got his feet, taking Tobias' jacket with him as he slowly wended his way through the tables toward the exit. He didn't so much as glance back to see if Tobias was following.

"Short visit, sir." Mikey grinned and winked from the bar.

"Just a teaser, Mikey. Call us a cab?"

"Right away. Goodnight, sir."

Noah nodded and led Tobias down the stairs again.

There must have been a cab in the neighborhood, or the club had a deal with a particular service, because they only waited about three minutes before a car pulled to the curb. Tobias held himself back, wanting to open the door for Noah but utterly unable to. It was an odd feeling.

Noah got the door and helped Tobias in instead, putting a hand on Tobias' head to keep him from cracking it on the door frame just exactly as any good cop might, before sliding in after him. Noah gave his address, and the cab made its way into more adequately lit parts of town. "That knot work was superb. I took a knot work seminar a few years back, nothing nearly that elaborate, but I think I'll refresh my memory tonight. How does that sound?"

Tobias nodded, his mouth going dry. He was discovering all sorts of things out about Noah. "That would be wonderful, sir," he said honestly.

"Excellent. Good boy." Noah was quiet for much of the cab ride after that, stroking his fingers across Tobias' shoulders and through his hair. When they arrived at Noah's apartment, Noah paid the driver and helped Tobias out of the car. "The outside steps are steep; we'll go up together, all right?" He threaded his fingers around one of Tobias' arms. "Easy does it."

Tobias let himself be guided up the familiar stairs, everything unfamiliar with his hands tied. It was an other-worldly feeling, and he could feel how protective Noah was being of him, how careful.

The elevator was much easier on them both, and thankfully they didn't run into any of Noah's neighbors as Noah unlocked the door to his apartment. "Go right into the living room and kneel," Noah ordered, stopping to hang up Tobias' coat. "Straight down the hall."

"Yes, sir," Tobias said, following his orders and going right to the center of the room, where he sank to his knees. He kept his head up and his eyes down, but he'd lost his breathing for the moment, almost panting as he tried to center himself.

"I'm out of your sight, but you're safe, I can hear you just fine if you need me. I'll be right there." Tobias didn't even have time to answer, as Noah was by his side in moments with a bottle of water in his hand. "Water before we start, boy?"

"Thank you, sir," Tobias said gratefully, his head tipping back for Noah to pour some into his mouth.

Noah gave him small amounts, until Tobias had had his fill. He helped himself after that and then took a few steps away. "Bedroom, then. Come, boy."

"Yes, sir." Tobias got to his feet with a little trouble, his head spinning slightly. He took a deep breath and

went to Noah's heel, following him carefully.

Noah stopped just inside the door and turned to face Tobias. He reached forward and tugged Tobias' shirt out of his pants, then started to unbutton it. "Turn around," he ordered.

Tobias turned, slowly, unsure of what exactly Noah was going to do. He was more curious than nervous, and with a shudder he suddenly relaxed, willing to let Noah do exactly what he wanted.

Noah took his time untying Tobias' hands and then removed Tobias' shirt, tossing it, along with the tie, on a chair in the corner. "Turn to face me and strip," he ordered, but only waited there long enough for Tobias to turn before walking away. He stepped into his closet and returned with several lengths of bright red bondage rope, which he tossed onto the bed. From a drawer he pulled two crops, one longer, one shorter with a flatter, wider leather lash.

Tobias wondered when exactly Noah'd started keeping ropes in his closet, but didn't react otherwise. Instead, he undid his trousers and pushed them down, taking off his socks at the same time. He folded his pants and put them to the side, then stood and hooked his thumbs in the waistband of his boxers. Fully aware of his erection and his audience, he slowly lowered them and stood up, his cock bobbing as it was freed.

Noah swung both crops and seemed to settle on the shorter one. He made his way over to Tobias. "Very nice," he said, giving Tobias' erection a firm tug. "On the bed, on your knees and face the headboard."

Tobias moved quickly, another soft noise coming from his throat. He did as he was told, knees spread for balance, and felt utterly exposed, his nipples tightening in anticipation.

Noah climbed up on the bed and knelt behind him, far enough away that their bodies didn't touch, but close enough that Tobias could feel his body heat. He took one of Tobias' arms, bent it gently at the elbow and rested it against the small of Tobias' back, then did the same with the other arm. "Hold onto your forearms... yes, like that, good boy," Noah praised him and Tobias saw a length of rope disappear from his peripheral vision.

Noah began to bind his biceps together, looping the rope around one arm and then the other carefully. His fingers felt confident, but he was moving slowly, probably from being out of practice. "This should feel firm, but it shouldn't pinch or interfere with your circulation. If you notice the ropes are too tight as I am still binding you, please tell me so and I will fix it." He reached around Tobias, securing his forearms to his torso. "If at any point you do use your words, I'll stop what I'm doing and ask you what you need first, all right? If you need me to undo the ropes I will, but it takes time, so don't wait until the last minute if your fingers feel like they're going numb. Understood?" Noah paused while he waited for Tobias' reply.

Tobias nodded. "Yes, sir," he said in a low voice. "Feels fine so far." It did; it felt good actually, the rope smooth and cool, holding him firmly where it touched him, supporting his arms.

"Good." Noah continued to tie him, this time binding his forearms together from elbow to wrist, leaving his hands and fingers free to move. "All right," Noah said moving off the bed. He put his hand on the front of Tobias' shoulders. "Stay up on your knees and bend forward at the waist. We're going to lower your shoulders to the mattress. Go on, I'll make sure you don't fall over."

As Tobias leaned forward, Noah guided him to the bed. "You'll want to be comfortable, you won't be moving for a long while. What do you need? Does this hurt your back at all? I can prop your shoulders on a couple of pillows if it does."

"Back's fine," Tobias said after a moment. "But the pillows will help me keep off my neck, so, yes, please, sir." Really, he would be comfortable, once he got past the initial resistance to being bound. He deepened his breathing and concentrated on working past the mental block, knowing he was safe with Noah.

Noah moved quickly and helped settle the pillows until Tobias said he was comfortable. "Your ropes look very nice. I haven't bound anyone in quite some time; it's satisfying to use them again." Noah was well out of sight behind Tobias when he felt hands on his ankles. "I'm going to bind your ankles now," he said helping Tobias cross one over the other. "You should be concentrating on breathing and relaxing, I'll be rewarding you with the crop soon."

Tobias moaned and nodded, his breathing off for another moment until he could get settled again. He wished he could see what Noah was doing to him.

Noah slowly lashed his ankles together, and Tobias could feel him placing each turn of the rope carefully and finally knotting it off. The rope was pulled up between his thighs and looped through the lines of rope across his chest. "Oh, that is pretty, boy, all that red rope against your skin. You look lovely, I wish I could show you... wait, I can." Tobias heard a drawer open and close and then Noah was holding a square mirror where he could see it. He angled it slightly and Tobias got a partial look down the length of his body.

He stared, lost in the intricate knots for a moment. "It's beautiful, sir," he said honestly. "Thank you."

Noah smiled. "You've been very patient, boy; are you ready for the crop?" He moved away, taking the mirror with him.

"God, yes," Tobias whispered. "Please, sir."

"I don't want you to come without my permission. Do you need a ring?" Tobias could hear Noah testing out the crop rather heavily on his own body, probably his thigh. It had obviously been a while since he'd held a crop in his fingers, too, so his caution was appreciated. Noah slapped himself several times and then swept the crop through the air so it made a loud whooshing sound.

Tobias shook his head. No way was he going to depend on a ring to do as his Master asked. He'd make Noah proud of him. "No, sir. Thank you, sir," he said softly.

"Good boy." Noah sounded pleased. He appeared at Tobias' right side, just in his peripheral vision. "Breathe, and we'll get started."

Tobias had a few seconds to steady his breath and then the first blow came down on his right shoulder, the crop making a snap against his skin. Tobias jumped, as much as the ropes would let him, and let out a hiss. It was a good strike, nice and sharp, and it tingled in his bones. It made his balls throb. "Thank you, sir, may I have another?" he whispered.

There was a short silence and Noah took a few steps back, but his voice was clear and confident when he finally spoke. "Yes, my boy. You may." Tobias heard Noah's footsteps round the foot of the bed and he came up on Tobias' left side. He didn't warn this time, just raised his arm and laid another stripe.

Tobias closed his eyes and breathed through it, wanting to wiggle. When the sting had faded a little he said it again. "Thank you, sir, may I have another?" The words just fell from his mouth, coming back like a mantra.

Noah laid another stripe on each shoulder before taking a short break for water. Tobias caught the movement as Noah tossed his own shirt and tie on top of Tobias' things. He felt the crop slide across his ass,

but Noah was no longer in his line of sight.

"We continue," Noah said softly, his voice low. The sting was to his ass this time, his right cheek, and the blow was crisp.

"Oh, God," Tobias gasped, quickly following that with his thanks, his cock leaping. He could feel the head getting wet as he leaked pre-come.

Another stroke matched it on the other side, and then a third. "Tell me how it feels, boy."

"Feels good, sir," Tobias managed. "Stings. Hot. It tingles and feels like... like more, sir." Oh, God, he wanted more. He wanted whatever Noah would give him, whatever he'd be allowed to beg for.

Noah's groan was unmistakable. He wasn't used to keeping his own reactions a mystery; that kind of subtlety was trained into a Dom. "More?" Noah added a fourth sting to Tobias' ass. "On your thighs now, then?" A blow landed squarely across one and then the other. "Ask me."

"Please, sir!" Tobias said immediately. "More, sir, if you please. Please flog me, please take your pleasure from me, Master." He tried to bury his head in the pillows but couldn't, quite. "Oh, God, sir, please," he whispered. "More."

The blows started to rain down on Tobias' thighs -- three, maybe four more before Noah moved back to his ass. "Talk to me," Noah ordered after adding another stripe. His voice was husky. He still wasn't hiding his own arousal as perhaps he ought to have been, as a more experienced Dom would have. "How do you feel?"

"Feel like I'm on fire, sir. Like I'm going to explode, yell, come... God, please. Fuck me, please. Hit me, fuck me, do what you want, just use me, sir," Tobias said, talking as fast as he could, panting. His balls were tight, his chest heaving, and he felt like he was walking a fine line between begging and losing what small amount of control he had.

"Fuck you? Did I promise to fuck you?" Noah growled behind him. "You're going to have to do much better than that if you want my cock in your ass." Noah suddenly spread Tobias' ass wide with his fingers and the unmistakable hot warmth of Noah's tongue invaded him.

Tobias screamed. He knew he did, he hated that he did, but he had to. "Oh, God, no," he yelled, fighting not to come. "Sir, please! Please!"

Noah pulled back. "Please what? More of my tongue? Fuck you? Stop? Please what?" Noah teased and badgered him slightly, his voice raised. "Come on, think! What do you want? Tell me! Make me want to do it, boy. Beg me." Noah didn't wait for an answer before picking up where he left off, tongue and teeth teasing Tobias' hole.

Tobias shook, tried to spread his legs, to move, but couldn't. He cried out and moaned, finally sucking in a deep breath and obeying. "Lick me, sir! God, yes, please more. Need your tongue, fuck me with it, please, sir! Lick me, fuck me, shove your cock in me and fuck me hard, sir!"

Noah groaned into his ass, fucking him with his tongue for a few long moments before pulling away. Tobias heard the familiar pop of the lube before Noah's legs straddled his bound ankles, and then his Master was pressing against him, pushing slowly into him. Maddeningly slow. Torturously slow. "Fuck, yes, boy. Tight." Noah stopped, balls deep, and leaned over Tobias back to lick him between the shoulder blades. "Can you hold on a little longer?" he whispered, his tone suddenly gentle.



"Yes, sir." Oh, God, he hoped so, prayed so. Tobias tried to breathe, tried to hang on to his control over his own body.

"Good boy. Such a good boy," Noah praised him softly and started to move, picking up the pace with each thrust until he was grunting with them. His fingers held Tobias' hips firmly and their bodies came together with the rhythmic sounds of skin on skin. "Beautiful boy," he panted. "Making me so proud."

Tobias moaned, soaring on the praise. "Thank you, sir," he whispered, his voice hoarse. "God, feel so good, sir. Thank you." He moaned and gasped, his back arched and he swayed with every thrust.

"Gonna let you come, boy. Soon now." Noah grunted and started to surge harder, deeper into Tobias. "Soon. God. So tight, so good."

Tobias whimpered. He concentrated on Noah and not on his own prick, tried to make it good. He squeezed Noah's cock hard when he pushed in, adding a little friction, a little pull. If he could have, he would have added a shimmy or something else, just anything to make Noah fly with him.

Tobias knew it was time seconds before Noah said it. Noah's body got tight, his thrusts faltered, and his fingers dug harder into Tobias' hips. "Now, boy. Come for me. Come now!" Noah ordered with half-filled lungs and a shaky voice.

Tobias came. He came in soft waves that flooded through him. He came in leaps of flame. He came in gushing spurts that soaked the bed. And through it all he was crying out, wanting Noah -- wanting his Master -- to come with him, to be there with him.

"Yes!" Noah shivered and spilled over. He shoved his cock deep and kept it there, throbbing inside Tobias as his release washed through him. He made delicious pleased sounds, moans and sighs, and a long groan, at the end of which he planted kisses along Tobias' back. "Oh, good boy, good boy," Noah pushed a hand into Tobias' hair and tugged it gently, then scritchd his fingers through it.

Tobias might have purred. He wasn't exactly sure, as he was busy trying to breathe and stay conscious, but there was a very strong chance he was purring. "Thank you, sir," he said softly.

"You are so very welcome, boy." They hung there together for a while, each recovering to some degree, each regaining some conscious thought and settling their breathing. When Noah finally pulled away, he sighed heavily, and kept contact with Tobias, leaving his hands on him. "I'm going to take these off now, boy. It'll take a little time, just relax. Sometimes this can be the best part."

It did feel good. Noah's hands on him, the ropes sliding over his skin... everything was sensitive, every touch magnified. Tobias moaned as Noah moved over and around him, freeing his legs but not stopping the constant contact.

Noah helped him stretch out on his stomach before removing the ropes on his arms and wrists. When he was done, Noah tossed several neatly coiled ropes on the pillow by Tobias' head before he climbed onto the bed with him. "Come here, I want to hold you." He opened his arms and waited for Tobias to settle himself in them.

The purr was joined by a cling, and the few remaining clinical parts of Tobias wondered when he'd turned into Phan. He decided he didn't care, and rested his head on Noah's chest, kissing the closest bit. "If I say thank you again will you get annoyed?" he asked with a smile.

"No." Noah laughed softly.

"Thank you, then." He sighed and wiggled his toes. "That was amazing."

"That was... not how I expected the evening to go. Wow." Noah petted him some more, running his fingers over every inch of skin he could reach.

"Nor I," Tobias said with a laugh. "But I'm glad you ran with it. I haven't had a night like this in... well, how old are you again?" he teased.

Laughter shook Noah's abs. "I haven't ever had a night like this."

"Are you sure?" Tobias asked with a grin. "You knew what you were doing. Noah, I hadn't been that far into subspace in literally fifteen years, perhaps more. That was damn fine work."

"Well, the rope bondage I'd done, but not in this context. The crop? Well, that's just something I picked up when I was between Doms. As for the rest, I've been observing the best for a while now."

"It was good," Tobias said again. "You could train, if you were interested. Someday when you're bored with me and want someone to spank..."

"Pfft!" Noah snorted. "Bored with you? Bored? Shit, you're a bottoms-up Dom, how the hell could I possibly get bored?" He laughed again.

Tobias laughed too, laughed until his sides started to hurt. "Oh, God, I love you."

"Love you too, old man. But we reek. We need showers."

"I'm not able to move yet."

Noah gave him a push onto his back. "Okay, then. Just kiss me."

That he could do. That he wanted to do. For a long, long time. Like sixty years or so.

## Chapter 20

Noah and Tobias coasted on the high of that strange and powerful night of role reversal for days. It seemed like time had flown by with all the activity surrounding moving, and Phan, and the arrival of spring. The renovations at the new house went fairly quickly as far as construction went -- less than a month to complete everything, including the long-lusted-after hot tub. Not that Tobias had permitted anyone to see it yet; he claimed it was a surprise. By the time the three of them did their final walk-through before hiring the movers, the house had already started to feel like home.

Phan continued his therapy with Dr. Brewer, and while he had the occasional bad day, mostly Noah was seeing positive things. Phan seemed a little more self-possessed, and in general more confident and happier than Noah had seen him in... well, quite frankly, ever.

They hadn't had any tense moments or rough scenes yet. Noah continued to search his soul for the last vestiges of jealousy over Phan but honestly hadn't found any. He kept looking for the feelings he'd buried or the needs he'd put aside to make sure Phan felt safe and wanted, but they just weren't there. It surprised him, and it was a relief, too. He was on solid ground; very solid, secure ground.

Things were going well. The move had been horrid. Absolutely horrid. There had been the truck from Tobias' condo, the truck from Noah's place, and, in addition, Bradford had stuffed Tobias' truck with things that belonged to Phan. It was near chaos directing the movers, and finally Tobias had told Noah and Phan to go sit on the deck until the movers had gone. They didn't pout, but Phan was close, and Noah was frustrated and angry. They went to sleep behind three separate closed doors, and it was the best thing, really. By the morning they were all rested and hungry and ready to start unpacking.

It had taken days. But the fun part, the best part, was saved for last -- the playroom. And that was where Noah had spent the last day and a half, hanging chains, moving equipment, and seeing to the safety of the room. Phan, bless his heart, had spent his time unpacking and repacking the trunks, organizing the armoire, and picking out curtains. And all the while, Tobias had animals in labor to contend with.

The longer Noah was on top of the ladder, the more he was glad this was only May and not the dead of summer. But all the same, it was hot. He sat down on the top step and sighed, letting the drill rest in his lap.

He looked down at Phan, who was doing a bang-up job of holding the ladder steady for him. The boy hadn't even broken a sweat. "Toss me up that water bottle, hon?"

Phan grinned at him and passed the water bottle. "I can do that, too, you know. I don't have to just hold the measuring tape. And the level. And the ladder. I'm not entirely without talents, I promise."

"Oh, I've never questioned your talents. But I've been warned by he-who-is-delivering-a-foal that you are not to be trusted with anything more complicated than a hammer, and even that is to be with close supervision. You want to argue, argue with The Man, not me." Noah smiled, accepting the water bottle. "Could you open a window or two?"

"Yeah, yeah. Break one little table, try to fix it, and never get to use a drill again. It's my lot in life," Phan grumbled, going to the windows. He opened two and turned to look at Noah. "Mind you, I get to look up at your ass a lot doing this. And that's never a bad thing. Think you can put on your uniform for me?"

"I think if drilling through your finger hadn't sent you to the emergency room things might be different." Noah laughed. "And no, you slut, I am not putting on my uniform." He upended the bottle and drank deeply.

"Okay, then. Just keep giving that bottle head and I'll *imagine* you're in uniform. And I didn't drill a hole through my finger. It was my thumb. Stupid thing. And! While we're talking and not working... how come there are three sets of chains, hmm?" Phan wiggled his eyebrows. "And how come Sir won't let us look in the safe room? And how come you got the bedroom closest to the bathroom? And what's for supper?"

"Are you five?" Noah nearly dropped his drill, he was laughing so hard.

"Not in ages, kiddo. How come you're laughing at me when you should be giving me kisses to shut me up?"

"Because you're eight feet below me. I got the bedroom closest to the bathroom because I called dibs before you did, the safe room is a surprise and I partly know what it is, the chains are for you, me, and someone taller than both of us... and you're making dinner because I can reasonably count on you not hurting yourself while doing it."

"Dibs?" Phan yelled. "There was dibs and you call *me* five? Jesus. And what's the surprise? And we're ordering pizza, yay!"

"I'm not allowed to tell what the surprise is, and it's not like I've seen it, I just know what Sir and I talked about." Noah tossed the empty water bottle to Phan and stood up again, pulling a heavy bolt from his pocket. "Oh, and I have money in my wallet, and make sure you order me sausage and mushroom."

"My treat," Phan said absently, looking at the chains. Noah had hung them at Tobias' request, a little promise of things to come after their successful and satisfying evening trading roles. "Um. Who's the tall guy we have to kill? I mean be nice to?"

Noah laughed and stretched up to slide the bolt through the top of the St. Andrew's Cross. "The man I tied up the other night with that red rope you were admiring." He pulled out his wrench and started to lag the bolt into place.

There was dead silence from the floor.

"I see you've guessed it." Noah peered down at Phan and had to laugh again; Phan was staring in complete disbelief. "He requested them. I measured him this morning."

"Shut the fuck up. He didn't. You didn't. Shut up." Phan was staring up him, looking more stunned by the moment. "No way."

Noah seated the bolt and made his way down the ladder. "Oh, yes, I did. Rope bondage and that short whip I kept in my dresser." Two more steps and he was standing right in front of Phan. "It was the night you went to Bradford's. We hadn't planned it at all, it just happened. It was his idea, really, or his offer, and I took him up on it. It was... it scared the hell out of me at first, but you know how I am with roles, I just kind of went with it."

"It... you. Oh, man." Phan let go of the ladder and leaned on the wall, sliding down into a crouch. "You flogged Sir."

Whoa. Maybe he shouldn't have said anything; Phan looked a little pale. "Phan? Are you all right?" Noah knelt next to him on the floor.

"Yeah. Yeah, I'm fine." Phan blinked at him a few times. "You got off on it? Since when do you switch? Since when does he switch? God, I go to one party..." Phan grinned, but it looked like it was an effort.

"I don't switch," Noah protested. He didn't really, did he? "This was my first time, I'd never done a full scene before, but it seemed like Sir wanted it and... yeah, I got off on it a little. Maybe more than a little. I don't know..." Noah sat next to Phan, also leaning on the wall. "Maybe we did switch. I really don't know. It was incredible."

"Oh." Phan still looked stunned, but maybe there was a bit of curiosity working in there too. "Um. Okay. Whatever works, I guess. Everyone had fun? He... huh. I mean, I know he likes to bottom every now and again, I guess I just never thought about him subbing, too."

"Trust me, he loved it. If he'd thanked me one more time I might have had to slap him. I never thought I could do it, Phan, not to anyone, let alone him. But when he wants something... I just want to be what he needs. It's so important to me." It was maybe the most important thing to him.

Phan nodded. "I get that. Trust me," he said. "Was it weird for you the next day? Not with him, I mean, just in general. When I used to do something really new like that it took me a couple of days to really wrap my head around it." Phan's eyes were definitely full of curiosity now.

"Yeah, it was weird. I felt so out of my skin, kind of disoriented. Work helped a lot, because I'm used to putting Sir and the lifestyle aside when I'm working. I think without that to ground me things would have been much harder to resolve. And I'll be honest, I haven't thought that hard about it until now." That was the truth. Thinking about it meant redefining himself in a way he hadn't ever expected he'd need to. He found himself thinking out loud. "I don't have a niche anymore."

"Of course you do," Phan said immediately. Phan pulled him over, wrapping his arms around Noah and kissing his cheek. "You're his. His pet, his lover, his partner. That's all you need to know, kiddo. No matter what, you're his, and he'll walk you through whatever you need."

Phan's words were like fresh air. Noah leaned on him heavily and sighed, relieved to hear the one truth that outweighed absolutely every dilemma. "God, Phan. You're right. You are so right." He sighed again. "Thank you."

"Hey, I'm the guy with the answers. Not allowed to use power tools, but I'm good with love stuff."

"I'm glad someone is." He pulled away from Phan and kissed him. "You have been such a blessing in disguise. I hope you know that." He got to his feet. "If you'd lean against the cross for me I'll have it done in five minutes."

Phan pushed himself back up the wall again and nodded. "Right. Me, cross holder. You, power guy. I think I need a union..." But he turned and leaned on the cross, wiggling his butt.

"So you're okay with this, right?" Noah asked one more time before climbing the ladder. "I mean, he didn't tell me I shouldn't tell you so... You should talk to him if it makes you uneasy."

"Nothing for me to be okay or not with," Phan said, looking at the wall. "It's between you and him."

"Between me and..." Noah sighed, not sure how to feel about that. "All right, Phan, if you want it that way." Noah got his wrench out and made his way up the ladder again.

"What?" Phan said, looking up at him. "What does it have to do with me?"

"You're saying I shouldn't have told you."

"I am not!" Phan stared up at him. "I'm saying that if you two want to switch, it's not up to me to interfere or say good or say not. It's not about me."

"No, but it's about Sir. Something's bothering you about it, Phan, I can tell. All I was saying was if you don't want to discuss it with me, discuss it with him." Noah frowned and rubbed his forehead. There had to be a reason he started this argument.

Phan sighed. "I... ah, shit. Just finish up so we can order supper, kiddo. I need to think." He sounded tired, like all the energy he'd had ten minutes before had been burned away.

Noah smiled down at Phan another second. "Right," he said finally and got back to work. Fixing the cross into the wall took him no time at all.

Downstairs, Phan ordered the pizza and looked at the phone for a long moment. "Did he say when he was getting back?" he asked finally.

"No, he said he had a lot of calls." Noah felt bad for Phan, but he'd be damned if he was bringing the subject up again. "Thanks for ordering the pizza. I'm starving."

"Be here in twenty or so," Phan said absently. "I'm going to go shower -- don't eat the spinach, 'kay?"

"I hate spinach. Don't use up all the hot water." Noah sighed and watched Phan go. The house felt big now that he was sitting all alone in the living room. He got up and looked out the window, then wandered a bit from room to room downstairs on the pretense of checking out what still needed to be unpacked, but he wasn't even fooling himself. He was worried about Phan, about what he'd told him, about starting a stupid argument over nothing... and about completely ignoring the issue ever since. He probably should have apologized.

He was lost in thought, leaning in the dining room doorway, when the doorbell rang. It was a grand, loud, musical thing, and it scared the hell out of him. "What the fuck was that?" he practically shouted before heading for the door. He paid for the pizza and took it from the delivery boy but couldn't help leaning out the door and pushing the doorbell button again. Elaborate chimes went off so loudly it felt like their entry hall had become Grace Chapel. "Oh, that has got to go," he muttered, heading for the kitchen.

He was barely finished with his first slice when Phan reappeared.

"Who the fuck put those bells in?" Phan said, eyes wide. "They gotta go."

"I don't know, Liberace? Fucking thing scared me out of my skin." Noah pointed to the pizza boxes. "Yours is on the bottom, appropriately, staying warm."

"Oh, yum!" Phan pounced, grabbing the box and opening it. "So, the scary bells go. We're agreed. We're a united front against the doorbell of doom. It's like church -- and I didn't get on so well with church."

Phan was babbling, which was his way of keeping his mouth so busy that he couldn't talk about the things

that he didn't want to talk about. Noah had seen it dozens of times now, and why Phan thought it would fool him anymore, he couldn't fathom. But the fact remained that he didn't want to talk about it either.

"No one that's kinky gets along well with church," he said picking up his second slice.

"I think Elizabeth liked church. But then, she might have just liked to sing. And she wasn't kinky, just... open-minded." Phan finally sat and started eating. He ate one slice and then another, not looking up until he'd started the third. "I'm sorry," he said softly.

Noah snorted. "No, I'm sorry." Okay, there it was, he'd said it. "Your reactions were honest; mine were defensive."

"Yours were honest, too, Noah," Phan said, still speaking softly. "You shared something really important and special with me and I wigged. You're allowed to be defensive."

"You're allowed to wig. Hell, I wigged."

Phan shrugged. "You were in it. It was you -- your wig was earned. Mine was... reactionary and selfish. Why are we arguing about who's sorry?"

"Because we both feel like crap about it. Apology accepted, better?" He smiled. "I do think an honest reaction, though, selfish or not, needs addressing."

"Yep. But I seem to be having some trouble getting to the root of it," Phan admitted. "Might take more thinking."

"Fair enough. You know I'll listen whenever you're ready to talk about it." The knot in his stomach seemed to be receding, and in its place was a big empty spot with room enough for a few more slices. He got up to fill his plate.

"Sure you don't want to try the spinach?" Phan offered, with a grin. "Oh, I'm missing a box for my room. Markers and shit. They go into yours by accident?"

"Is the box labeled 'colorful stuff,' by any chance?"

"Um, yeah. Though there just might be a secret in there, too."

"Ooh. Tell me the secret and I'll tell you where the box is." Noah grinned mischievously.

"Brat."

"Fine. Find it yourself." Noah picked up his pizza and took a bite.

Phan glared at him. "I'm not allowed in your room by myself."

Noah said nothing, just continued to eat his pizza, grinning.

Phan looked like he was going to protest again, but really, he'd brought it up without having to, so Noah knew he wanted to share. He just wanted to be made to share.

"Contraband," he whispered dramatically.

Noah looked up, still grinning. "Am I going to have to arrest you?"

"Nope. But one of us might get spanked."

Noah grinned wider. "The box is actually in the dining room; I was staring at it a little while ago."

"Bastard!" Phan jumped up and made a dash for the dining room, hollering when he found the box. "Baby! My sweet baby!"

"Bring the contraband to me, boy," Noah ordered, deliberately sounding Toppy.

Phan appeared, clutching his box. "No," he said, sticking out his tongue. "You tricked me."

"I did not! I never told you that box was in my room. You assumed!" Noah got out of his chair.

"Uh-huh. Trickery. And then Toppy voice. Bad Noah. No sweet for you," Phan said, backing up.

"You have sugar?" Noah stalked him.

"I have... um. No?"

"Chocolate or candy? Fess up, I know where you're ticklish."

"Please, if I had chocolate... well, I wouldn't. I can't make it last, you know that." Phan made an obvious attempt to look pathetic.

Noah bolted, getting between Phan and the stairwell so he couldn't disappear into his room where Noah couldn't follow. "Aha! It's all over now; I am much more patient than you are."

Phan eyed him. "That's true..." he agreed slowly. "But I have a higher pain threshold. And the sugar."

Noah sat on the bottom step. "Okay, we'll see who lasts longer -- you, without reaching in there for the sweets, or me, sitting comfortably on the steps waiting for you to give up."

"Why on earth would I do that?" Phan asked, clearly baffled. "I'm going to eat 'em. You get to babysit me."

Noah's eyes widened. "Babysit? You little prick, Sir will murder me if you OD on sugar tonight!"

Phan nodded frantically. "See? Spankings."

"Give me the box." Noah stood up and stepped toward Phan.

Phan's eyes widened and he backed up. "Um. Noah? That's a scary look on you." He tried to get the box open without taking his eyes off Noah.

Noah decided to use his best cop voice. "Put the box on the floor and step back."

Phan flinched. "You're good." He wedged a hand into the box and pulled out a handful of markers. "Ah, shit. Fine. Here," he said, passing the box over. "I'm going to draw."

Noah grabbed the box and set it quickly on the floor. He managed to pounce on Phan before he could get to the stairs, pinning him flat on his stomach in the foyer. "Drop 'em!" he shouted.



"Never!" Phan shouted back. "You'll never take me alive, copper!"

"What the hell is going on here?"

Noah blinked at the sudden interruption but continued what he was doing. "Contraband, sir! He was planning on sneaking it up to his room where I couldn't stop him from ingesting it. He wasn't even going to share."

He looked at Tobias who was standing over them, staring down in what could have been confusion. "Phantom?"

Phan had gone still under Noah. "Um. Markers, sir. He's clearly insane."

"Markers, my ass." Noah pushed off of Phan and got to his feet.

"No," Phan said slowly. "Your ass is at the top of your legs. These are my markers."

Tobias held his hand out. Phan looked at the hand and sighed, handing his markers over. He sighed again when Tobias popped the end off one and poured pink sugar into his own mouth.

"Thank you, Phan. I needed that. And you need.... what?"

"A spanking, sir. And a cuddle."

"Markers." Noah snorted. "I'm going to clean up the kitchen. Oh, sir! Wait until you see the cross! We got a lot done today."

Tobias smiled at him, one hand petting Phan's hair. "Good job, pet. I'll be right up to see it -- and apparently to use the spanking bench. Want to watch?"

"Yes, sir. Definitely, sir." Noah hurried off to the kitchen.

## Chapter 21

Tobias was tired, but not wrung out, and something had obviously happened. Noah and Phan were silly and happy, but Phan was clearly in need of something. Tobias watched Noah rush off and then heard Noah moving things in the kitchen. He looked down at where Phan was sitting on the floor, eyes down, still a little giddy, but curiously twitchy.

"Go to the playroom, boy," he said softly. "Strip and kneel and try to center yourself. I'm going to take a shower; use the time wisely."

"Yes, sir," Phan said immediately. He scrambled up and took the stairs two at a time.

Tobias sighed and took off his coat, hanging it neatly in the hall closet before going to the kitchen. "How was your day, pet?" he asked, walking up behind Noah and kissing his neck.

Noah leaned into him. "It was great, sir. The playroom is really coming along. One more day and we should have it in working order. The cross and the chains are all secure; I need to put up the sling and a few other details. Phan was a great inspiration holding my ladder for me." He turned in Tobias' arms and kissed him. "Long day?"

"Not too bad," Tobias said. "Better now that I'm here. I've sent Phan up to get ready -- you can join him when you're done here. Don't talk to him, just be there, okay? I'm going to shower."

"Yes, sir. And you definitely need a shower." Noah grinned and gave Tobias a light shove.

"Mm. Horse. See you upstairs." Tobias dropped another kiss on Noah's mouth and left him, going to his room to strip off his dirty clothes. His bathroom was clean, shiny, and still smelling of the cleaner his boys had used, and Tobias took his time in the shower, letting the hot water ease away a few aches.

Clean and refreshed, he dressed in leather pants and a white T-shirt before going up to the playroom. He hadn't intended to use it for the first time until he had a scene planned, but scenes were for play -- Phan needed to be taken down, and that took priority. So he dressed for work, for maximum effect.

He climbed the stairs slowly, taking care to school his features and straighten his spine. When he walked in, he saw Phan by the spanking bench, naked and on display, his eyes closed. Noah was also kneeling, to one side, still wearing his jeans and T-shirt. "Nice work," he said, looking at the cross and the chains. "Well done, boys."

"Thank you, sir," Noah answered softly. His eyes had been on Phan, but he lowered them quickly.

"Phantom?"

"Thank you, sir. Noah did all the work."

"I'm sure he appreciated any help you gave him," Tobias said easily.

"Yes, sir," Noah agreed quickly. "He was good company, an excellent assistant, and he put your trunks in order as well. Things went much more quickly with his help."

"Good." Tobias went to the trunks and opened two, finding the paddles and crops all nicely lined up, everything precisely in order. "Oh, very good," he said, picking up a paddle. "Phan, the bench, please."

Phan moved without a word, bending over the bench and taking hold of the handholds under it.

"Why am I doing this?" Tobias asked, walking to the boy.

"Because I'm... scattered," Phan whispered.

Tobias nodded. "Not for punishment?"

"No, sir. Unless you think I need to be punished."

"Do you?" he asked curiously.

"I don't think so, sir. But I could be wrong."

"Noah, does Phan need to be punished for anything?" Tobias asked.

"No, sir." Noah shook his head, his eyes once again on Phan as the boy settled himself on the bench. "Unless you consider sneaking sugar a punishable offense, he's done nothing to deserve punishment. But I agree that he hasn't seemed grounded."

"Sneaking sugar is almost expected," Tobias said with a smile. "Okay, boy. Hang on tight." He lifted the paddle and smacked Phan's ass hard, without any more warning than that.

Phan jumped and grunted, but didn't make any more noise as Tobias spanked him. Five strokes into it, Tobias realized this was far more than just a spanking. He stepped up the pace, hitting faster and harder, and Phan merely took it, his breath coming in pants.

Finally, Tobias dropped the paddle on the floor and went to the trunks again. "Who are you?" he asked Phan, hoping the familiar litany they used would bring the boy around.

"Phan," came the whispered reply.

"Who are you?" Tobias asked again, picking up a crop. Noah moved back a bit, the movement a slight distraction, hardly noted.

"Phantom, sir."

Tobias nodded and struck Phan across his reddened ass. "Who are you?" he asked a third time.

"Phantom, sir!" Phan yelled.

"And what are you?"

"Nothing!"

Tobias stared, and then gave him three stripes. "What are you?" he demanded.

"A sub!"

Two more stripes. "Who are you?"

"Phantom." He could hear the tears in the boy's voice now, the sobs just starting.

"And what are you?" he asked, his tone gentler.

"A submissive, sir," Phan whispered.

Tobias looked at the crop in his hand and sighed. "What do you need, boy?" he asked softly.

"Grounding," Phan said, shaking. "Oh, God, please, sir."

That was really all Tobias needed to hear, and he set to grounding his boy, laying on stripe after stripe. Phan's ass, his thighs, his shoulders... all available space was filled until Phan was sobbing, tears rolling down his face, his body shaking. Tobias stopped then, glancing at Noah to see how he was reacting to Phan's form of grounding.

Noah was still kneeling, though he'd moved farther out of their way and was now several feet across the room. If the tension in his body wasn't enough, the look on his face spoke volumes. His brow was furrowed into a frown and he was biting at his lip, but his eyes were soft and sympathetic.

Tobias ran a hand through Phan's hair, touching him softly. "Do you want to leave, pet?" he asked Noah quietly.

Noah schooled his expression quickly now that he knew Tobias was watching him. His posture relaxed and he straightened his back. "No, sir," he said, his voice betraying him a bit. "I want to be here to support Phan."

Tobias nodded. "Good boy," he said gently, though it was for both of them. He had to trust Noah to take care of himself for the moment. "Who are you, boy?" he asked Phan.

"Phantom, sir," Phan managed through hitched breath.

"And what are you?"

"A submissive."

"You sound like you're clinging to the word," Tobias pointed out, kneeling next to him.

"It's what I am, sir. All I want to be. I don't want to be anything else."

"No one says you have to be," Tobias said slowly.

"I know," Phan said, starting to cry harder.

Tobias sighed, utterly confused. He set the crop down and gathered Phan into his arms, ignoring the whimpers and mutters that went with touching red and raw skin. "What are you?" he whispered.

"Sub."

"Whose are you?"

"No one's." And Phan broke down, sobbing and clinging and tripping over his words as he tried to correct himself.

"Shhh, boy," Tobias whispered. "It's okay. It'll be all right. Never apologize for telling me what you feel. Shh...." He glanced back at Noah. "You heard?"

Noah nodded slowly. Tobias could see Noah warring with himself, struggling with what to say and how to say it. "You want him to be able to say that he's yours." Noah said finally. It was a statement, not a question. "What do you need, what does he need from me for that to happen?"

Tobias shook his head. "We're not talking about that now. Not like this. I won't make choices based on circumstance and overly emotional states." He took a breath and pulled Phan closer to him. "I think it's time we moved to the safe room."

"Yes, sir," Noah got slowly to his feet. "Hear that, Phan?" He tried to smile. "We're finally going to get to see the mysterious safe room."

Tobias closed his eyes. It wasn't supposed to be this way.

Phan shook his head, still crying. "No. Sir, no. I'm sorry, so sorry."

"Shh, Phan. It'll be okay. Come now, we'll make it better." He stood up with an effort, Phan still in his arms and looked at Noah. "Lead on, pet. I hope it's what you imagined."

"I'd be just as comfortable in your bedroom, sir, if it's all right with Phan." Noah headed out the door, but didn't head right for the safe room.

"Good idea," Tobias said. "I should have thought of that." He followed Noah down the stairs, carefully holding Phan. The sobs were tapering off, though Phan still shook and Tobias could hear more apologies.

"Shhh," Tobias soothed. "It will be fine, and you'll see the surprise soon enough." They went into his room and Tobias set Phan on the bed, climbing on and holding him close. "You too, pet. Let's just... get that cuddle in for now."

Noah joined them on the bed, sitting close so that Phan was between them. Silently, he reached a hand out and threaded his fingers through Phan's hair, combing it out of his face gently.

"Phan?" Tobias said softly. "We're here. Just us three, and it's okay. You can say what you like, cry if you want... we'll still be here." Phan shook his head, but the shaking began to ease, and Tobias went with it. "Really, we will. You're not nobody's, you're ours. We care about you, you live here... You're not alone."

Noah's jaw tightened, but finally he spoke up, too. "Everything you're feeling is valid and important, Phan. The truth is more important than anything. You're not nobody, and you're not alone. We care about you, and between me and Sir, you're completely safe." He leaned in and kissed Phan on the cheek.

"I'm sorry," Phan whispered again. "It's just... hard sometimes. When it's so clear that you're able to share so much. Be so solid and secure in who you are and what you mean to each other. I don't always know my place, what I'm supposed to do."

"How so?" Tobias asked. "Phan, I need to know exactly what you mean."

"It's not how we three fit so much as it is... I don't know."

"You do know," Tobias insisted. "What's wrong?"

Phan moved closer to Noah, wiggling. "I'm a sub. I don't want to be dominant. Ever. I can't give you that."

Tobias blinked and stared at Phan. "I wouldn't... I don't want you to," he said, completely stunned.

"But you wanted Noah to. I can't give you that," Phan whispered.

Noah paled, looking pained, like he'd been hit with a brick. "He... he asked me why there were three sets of chains on the wall in the playroom, and I told him. It never occurred to me that... I'm sorry, sir."

"Don't be," Tobias said. "It would have come up, and there is no reason for him not to know." He leaned over, almost squishing Phan, and kissed Noah. "This is not your fault. It's mine. We have something to talk about, boys."

He shifted, holding Phan still between them. "Phan, I owe you an apology. I let the business of the past few weeks give me an excuse to put this off, and it's been to your detriment. We have to drop the trappings of who we are for a while, and talk about contracts."

Noah sighed, but he nodded and slid off the bed. "I'll make us some tea. It'll give Phan a few minutes to adjust. We can't talk contracts with him upset, and he's only just grounded."

"Noah," Tobias said softly, looking up at him. "It will be okay, I promise."

Noah looked back at Tobias, smiling slightly. "I know," he said quietly, giving Tobias a nod. He left the room, and Tobias heard him moments later next door in the kitchen, running water.

"Phan," Tobias said gently. "Look at me."

Slowly, Phan rolled over, his face flushed and tearstreaked. "I'm--"

"No. I'm sorry. We'll talk more when Noah comes back, but I want you to know that I'll never ask more of you than I know you can give. I know you can't dominate -- and I don't want you to. Never once did I want you to. What happened with Noah was a wonderful thing, fun and timed right. We both hit our stride, and he was ready to play a new game, try something new. I don't want him to do it all the time, or even semi-regularly, but it's something we're going to explore. I don't want that to threaten you."

"I'm not threatened by you playing," Phan said slowly. "And I'm not even flipping about you subbing. I thought that's what it was, honestly. It's more... I don't know what my role is. If you're our Dom, and Noah's your primary and I'm your secondary, what does that mean, exactly? Are there separate rules I have to learn? Is there a time when I'm just not supposed to be anything other than the subbiest sub? Where's my voice?"

Noah wasn't gone long, returning with the teapot and three mugs on a tray, along with some cookies and one of Phan's sugar sticks. He set the tray on Tobias' dresser and poured the tea. He had to have heard the last bit of what Phan was saying, but he apparently was choosing not to interrupt.

"You have a voice," Tobias said, sitting up. "Right now, when it can be its strongest. I need to know what you want, what you need. I'm not making empty promises here, Phan. I'm not making any promises, in point of fact. I haven't offered you a contract, and I won't until I talk to Noah about it. Together, all three of us, we'll decide what's the best choice for each of us as individuals and as people in a very complex relationship." He tugged at the duvet until Phan moved a little, hissing as the fabric rubbed on his back. Tobias covered him carefully, trying not to hurt him any more than he had to, and got a weak smile in return.

"Phan, if it makes you... if you'd rather, I can leave you two alone to discuss this." Noah brought him a mug. "I mean, if it's easier for you to be honest."

Phan shook his head and shifted a little before taking the tea. "I'd just have to go over it again," he said softly. "I tell you everything."

Noah laughed softly and waved the sugary candy in front of his nose. "This is true."

"Gimme." Phan snatched the sugar and grinned for a moment. "But maybe I should go do something while you and S -- Tobias talk."

"Nope, same problem." Noah grinned. "I tell you everything, too. Might be what got us all here in the first place, hm?" Noah fetched a mug for Tobias and one more for himself, then seated himself cross-legged on the bed facing them. He looked at Tobias and rested a hand on his knee. "Maybe I can make this a little easier. I don't have an issue with you contemplating a contract with Phan. I appreciate that you want my input, and I do feel like that's important, but fundamentally, he's got every right to expect a contract from his Dom, and you have every right to want one. I can see the slippery ground under Phan's feet; I wouldn't want to feel that way, either."

Tobias closed his eyes, surprised at the relief that he felt. He would have encouraged Phan to stay with them without a contract if that had been what Noah wanted, but in his heart he'd long known that this would come. Since the moment Noah told Phan to come with them, Tobias, in his bones, had wanted a contract. It felt right. It would make both him and Phantom feel secure. It might even make Noah more secure to have Phan's duties and rights laid out.

"Thank you," he said to Noah. "I... your generosity leaves me breathless sometimes, you know."

Phan was staring at Noah with wide eyes and an open mouth. "You'd really... You. Really?"

Noah glanced between them for a long moment, looking lost as to what to say. Finally, he just laughed. "Relax, you two, if that was your biggest worry about this subject, then the rest of this should be cake." Neither Tobias nor Phan said anything for another moment, so Noah kept talking. "Look, I had big issues, I know. I seem to be over them, which surprises me, too, believe me. I'm not saying I won't have others -- I reserve the right to wig out in the future -- but for now? For now I *have* a contract. I'm very secure in my relationship, and I can understand Phan needing a contract, too. It makes everything easier when there's a solid agreement in black and white."

Tobias nodded. "It makes things... clear. Leaves fewer things to chance," he agreed.

Phan was still looking somewhat shocked, but he sipped his tea and looked at Noah with shining eyes. "Thank you," he said softly.

"You're welcome." Noah winked at Phan and sipped his tea as well. "Of course, I have no idea how to go about this."

Phan gave him a wry grin and turned to Tobias. "Me neither."

"Well," Tobias said, stretching out on his side, legs across the bed, "we don't start writing at this very moment. It's a sudden thing, brought up in reaction to an event, and we all need to take some time to think about what we want. I know that a contract will be primarily between you and me, but Noah has a say -- can even sign with us, if he'd like."

"I'd rather not." Noah sighed. "Suppose you make it just between you two and Phan and I can sign a rider saying that we've read and agree to honor each other's contracts," he suggested. "As an agreement between us."

Tobias raised an eyebrow. "If you'd like. Can I ask what your thinking is? What you're feeling?"

"Me?" Noah looked into his mug thoughtfully. "I just think..." He looked back up at Tobias. "No offense to Phan, but I'd want our agreement to be between you and me. Between me and my Dom. It's a one-on-one understanding, and while this is an unusual circumstance, once that contract between you and Phan is signed, I want no part of enforcing it. It's not my place. If I sign off on it, then it becomes my responsibility, too." He squinted and looked at Phan. "Does that make sense?"

Phan nodded. "Perfect sense. I'd like to hear your ideas, though. Just so I know where your head and heart are."

"My ideas about your contract?" Noah looked confused and shook his head. "I don't want you to sign anything that doesn't completely meet your needs as a sub. There's no point in doing this if your needs aren't met, and so I don't think I should have any input as far as that goes." Noah looked between them. "Look. You two are doing an excellent job of trying to accommodate me. You're giving what I think and what I have to say more weight than your own voices. I appreciate your concern for me, but I'm asking you, please, stop."

"That's not fair to me," Tobias said, shaking his head. "I can't make an agreement outside of our relationship without your opinions. It's an impossibility, and I'll hold back. What I *can* do is negotiate with Phan and show you the results. But without your say it will be... restrained."

Noah sighed. "Maybe if you could ask me more specific questions? What is it you want my opinion on? I can't second-guess this. If you want me to participate in the negotiation, I will. Start negotiating. I can't know what I'll have issues with until I hear what you two want to agree to. You two know each other very well. I'm flying by the seat of my pants here. You saw how off guard I was in the playroom just now."

"We were all off guard," Tobias said gently. "We still are -- and, honestly, I'm exhausted." He leaned over and rubbed a hand along Noah's thigh. "We'll leave it for now."

He moved the touch to Phan, petting him through the duvet. "We'll talk when we're calmer."

Phan nodded, looking from one to the other. "Okay," he said softly. "I..." He sighed and tilted his head. "I hurt. My back is killing me."

Noah glanced quickly at Tobias with worried eyes and slid right off the bed. "I'll get your kit," he said and disappeared off to the playroom to do just that.

"Show me," Tobias ordered, and Phan sighed, setting his mug down and turning. "No, I mean show me. Lie down, flat out, on your stomach."



Phan rolled his eyes. "It's fine, just tender. You really went to town."

Tobias snorted. "Had to, didn't I?"

Phan nodded. "I guess so." He lay down, holding himself still as Tobias ran his fingers over the skin.

Tobias stood next to the bed and examined every mark, every bit of skin he'd struck. "Okay, a few bruises, one raw spot where the paddle or the crop scraped. And an acre of warmed skin." Tobias smiled, running his hand over Phan's ass. "Very warm."

Noah returned quickly with the first aid kit and set it on the bed. He whistled softly. "That looks warm, all right. I'm sure it hurts, Phan, but it sure looks pretty." He pulled out ointment and a couple of large cotton swabs, and started applying it to Phan's back, moving a little to be close to Tobias by the bed, but not in the way. "So, did it work for you? Did it ground you? Or have we completely ruined it now with this half-scattered talk of contracts?"

"I'm good," Phan said, his voice tight.

Tobias looked down at him and watched Noah smoothing ointment on. "Are you?" he asked, taking the ointment and smoothing it on Phan's ass. "Sure?"

"Grounded," Phan said shortly.

"Fine?" Tobias asked, winking at Noah.

"Fine. Thank you. Just... fine."

"You're sure?" Noah grinned. "Because I think Sir could find a couple of spots that haven't been hit. Maybe on the soles of your feet..."

Tobias laughed softly, rubbing a tiny bit harder and sliding his fingers up to tangle with Noah's.

"No, no," Phan said quickly. "I'm grounded. Sore. All together in my head. Thanks, though. Nice to see you're thinking of me, kiddo."

"I suppose you think you're helping?" Noah asked Tobias playfully, still trying to spread the ointment evenly despite the obstacle of Tobias' fingers.

"I am helping," Tobias insisted with a smile. "I could go back down here..." He slid his fingers over Phan's ass again, not even raising an eyebrow at the groan that caused. He'd been surprised Phan had kept it in that long.

Noah handed him the ointment. "Be my guest." He looked at Tobias. "Not to second-guess you, but are you going to get him in trouble with Dr. Brewer for flogging him? Or were crops okay?"

"She can talk to me if she's got *issues* with the way I take care of my boys," Tobias said shortly. And he'd very politely point out that he didn't damage Phan, didn't punish him or take payment for happiness. He'd met Phan's needs. Period. Phan tensed under his hands for a moment and then relaxed, moaning softly. Tobias leaned over him, hands still petting, and said, "I take care of my boy."

Phan whimpered.

Tobias smiled and looked over at Noah. "Want to help?" he asked.

"If it pleases you, sir," Noah answered with a similar smile and lowered eyes. "I am, as always, ready to serve."

"It pleases," Tobias growled, his hands still stroking Phan's ass. "Come here." He waited until Noah leaned closer and then took a kiss, pushing his tongue deep. With his knee, he urged Phan to spread his legs a bit. "Distract him, please," he said to Noah with a grin.

"Yes, sir." Noah slid his fingers between Phan's thighs and closed them around his balls. "Kiss me again?"

"Of course." Tobias grinned and dove into the kiss, listening to Phan moan and feeling him squirm under his hands. He could feel Noah smiling into the kiss, which was nice, but kind of odd. He thrust his tongue into Noah's mouth and made a sound -- not quite a moan -- and stroked his fingers between Phan's ass cheeks.

"Oh, God," Phan whimpered.

Noah returned the kiss with interest, and Tobias felt Noah's fingers moving near his own. When he finally pulled away, Noah looked down at Phan and slid his fingers farther under Phan's hips, to stroke him. "Your stripes look great, sir," Noah said in a low voice.

Tobias looked at Phan's ass and tilted his head, trying to study the boy clinically as he rubbed the soft skin between his balls and his hole. "Little uneven, don't you think?" he asked Noah.

Phan whimpered again and spread his legs, his ass tilting up, his hips lifting.

"He must have moved," Noah sounded amused. "But I particularly like this work through here." Noah reached out with his other hand and traced a set of stripes across Phan's thigh.

"Oh. Oh!" Phan shook, his head turning. "Noah."

Tobias laughed, sliding his hand under Phan to stroke his cock. "Problem, boy?"

"No, sir," Phan gasped.

"Oh, good." Tobias purred. He let Phan go and cupped his balls. "I wouldn't want you to be wanting for anything." He leaned over and kissed Noah again.

The kiss earned him a soft moan from Noah this time. Tobias suddenly felt fingers stroking him through his pants. "Mmm. Leather."

Tobias chuckled softly, fingers slipping and sliding and hips pushing. "You just noticed?"

"I noticed!" Phan piped up, groaning as Tobias rolled his balls.

"Of course you noticed, Phantom. You're a little slut," Noah teased, his voice light to soften his words. "I'd noticed, too," he said, turning back to Tobias. "Been itching to touch you." He pulled his fingers away from Phan and went to work on Tobias' fly.

Phan shifted on the bed, his legs spreading a little more as he moved closer to the edge of the bed. Tobias made a soft noise, smiling as Noah worked at his fly. "You're both sluts. My sluts." He sighed as Noah got his fly open, his cock pushing out at the same time he pushed a finger into Phan.

"Someone's happy to see me," Noah went right to his knees. He reached into Tobias' fly and freed his balls as well before leaning forward to bathe them thoroughly with his tongue.

"Always," Tobias moaned, his free hand stroking through Noah's hair. With the other, he stroked in and out of Phan slowly, listening to the wet sounds of Noah's mouth on his balls and the whimpery sighs from Phan as he started moving and pushing back.

"That's it," Tobias said softly. "That's my boys. Come on, make me feel good." He slipped a second finger into Phan, going slowly but still getting a needy gasp. "He's tight," Tobias told Noah.

Noah moaned for him in response and ran his tongue up the length of Tobias' erection. "Nice," he breathed, "I love his sounds."

Noah took Tobias slowly into his mouth, sliding over his erection until Tobias could feel the resistance at the back of his boy's throat. "God, pet," Tobias breathed, pushing a little deeper before pulling back. "So good." He glanced over at Phan, watching his fingers sliding into Phan's ass and matched their pace. "He wants to hear you, boy. I want to hear you."

Phan moaned, his ass lifting higher. "Please, sir," he whispered. "Feels so good."

Tobias hooked his fingers and Phan cried out; his own cock throbbed in response. He tightened his fingers in Noah's hair and growled. "That's it."

Noah slid up and down the length of Tobias' cock, making wet sounds and soft muffled moans. The pace wasn't rushing a thing, wasn't pushing Tobias at all, just letting him feel and enjoy. Noah reached for Phan again, maneuvering his hand under Phan's hips, and gripped him gently.

"Oh, God!" Phan gasped, his hips starting to work as he moved into Noah's hand. "Please, oh, please, yes."

Tobias watched, held his fingers still as Phan effectively fucked himself between the two hands. His own cock was rigid, Phan was soft and clinging around him, and Noah's mouth was magic. Tobias moaned, then moved once more, thrusting into them both a little harder.

Noah seemed to take the cue, sucking harder and picking up the pace. He took Tobias deep, only slowing now and then to get a deep breath before swallowing him down again.

Tobias groaned, his hips rocking harder, his fingers probing Phan, who was starting to pant and cry out in turns, yelling Noah's name and "sir" at the top of his voice. Tobias felt the growl in his chest, let it out and roared, coming down Noah's throat in spurts.

Noah swallowed, sucked, and licked Tobias until he was spent and clean, and then stood slowly, stepping in close. "You taste so good," he whispered, resting his head against Tobias' shoulder. He looked down at Phan, and Tobias watched as his hand sped up, pumping Phan harder, even as Phan pushed through his fingers.

Tobias kissed Noah's cheek and crawled onto the bed between Phan's legs, pulling Noah with him. He leaned over Phan's body, blanketing him, and said, "You're my boy," in a low growl.

"Sir!" Phan yelled, his ass clamping down on Tobias' fingers as he came, shaking and moaning.

Tobias kissed his spine and looked over at Noah. "Get naked," he ordered. "Now."

"Yes, sir." Noah let Phan go and moved away a few steps. He tugged off his T-shirt and jeans and tossed them onto the floor. Typically for an evening at home, he hadn't been wearing any underwear. When that was done, Noah stood carefully on display, eyes low and back straight. He was hard, not desperately so, but definitely nicely aroused.

Phan was panting, almost lying flat again, but Tobias could see him taking a few breaths to admire Noah. "Nice, huh?"

Phan nodded enthusiastically. "Uh-huh. He's beautiful, sir."

"What should I do with him, do you think?"

Phan grinned. "I could suck him off for you?" he suggested.

"Ah, no. Brat." Tobias grinned and kissed Phan's back again. "Any other ideas?"

"He could... hmm. Well, we could just look at him until you're hard enough to fuck him. Or... actually, I'm kinda having a hard time thinking."

Noah glanced at Phan and then looked down again. "I've been a good boy today, sir," Noah told him. His voice held a mixture of mischief and arousal. "I haven't earned a single stripe. I think I deserve, eventually, to be well fucked."

Tobias smiled. "And I've been in barns since eight this morning and had to bring one of you back into his head, then got my brains sucked out my cock. You might have to wait until after I've had supper and a nap for that to happen. However, it would go a long way to refreshing me if you'd be so good as to bring yourself off for me. With... hm. With the dildo in my top drawer."

"Anything you wish, sir." Noah grinned and made his way over to Tobias' dresser. He opened the top drawer and froze. "Sir?"

"You might want to use lots of lube. And I advise against standing."

Noah reached in and pulled the dildo out with both hands. It was long and quite wide, and almost comically pink in color. He made his way around to the other side of the bed, staring at it, and set it down before climbing onto the bed himself. "This could take a while, sir."

"Take your time," Tobias said graciously. He stood up and stripped off his clothes, then lay on the bed next to Phan. "Can you see?" he asked Phan politely.

"Uh-huh. Sir." Phan was staring at the dildo. "Can, um. Can I...?"

"Not tonight."

"But sometime?"

"Yes."

"Oh, good."

Noah dug out a tube of lube from the bedside table and slicked up his fingers. Kneeling upright and facing his audience, he reached around, twisting slightly, and although they couldn't see it directly, it was clear when Noah pushed a finger, or perhaps two, inside himself. He sighed heavily, and his eyes slid closed. Tobias had a feeling that was the last he'd see of them until it was all over. Wherever Noah was sending himself was deliciously sexy to watch, but he wasn't taking Tobias or Phan with him.

Noah worked his fingers slowly, sometimes pumping, sometimes stretching, from what Tobias could tell. He groaned loudly, and Tobias almost wished that he could see.

"That's it, pet," Tobias said softly. "Open up. I want to see it all going into you, filling you right up."

It was another several minutes before Noah grunted and he pulled his fingers free, by which point he was panting lightly and was fairly flushed. He reached down and adjusted his decorative cock ring and then picked up the dildo and lube and started to slick it down. He spread his knees wider and again reached behind him. In the space Noah created between his thighs, Tobias could see him set the base of the dildo on the bed. Another adjustment to his knees and he began to lower his hips slowly, sinking onto the dildo and letting it fill him as he moved.

He gasped and slowed even further, then froze, breathing in deeply and puffing the air out until he'd relaxed again. He took his cock in his fist and started to pump, and this time, once he started to move, he didn't stop, sinking lower and lower until his ass sat nearly flat on the bed.

"Oh, God," he panted. "Fucking huge." He shifted slightly and whimpered, still stroking himself at a moderate pace. He reached back again and grasped the dildo by its base as he lifted his hips a bit, then lowered them again. A long, low moan made its way from his chest to Tobias' ears.

"Hurt?" Tobias asked, shifting a little. He wasn't getting hard quite yet, but he was certainly interested. Beside him, Phan wriggled, his eyes wide.

"A little. Yeah, some. Burns, too. A lot of stretch." Noah panted. "Getting used to it, sir." He sat nearly flat again and groaned. "Do I... need your permission to come, sir?"

"No, I don't think so," Tobias said. "I'd like you to enjoy this."

Noah nodded quickly and pulled up again, this time coming down a little faster, and a little harder. "Oh, sir, that's... good," he said with a whimper in his voice and did it again. His hand stuttered on his cock as he rode the monster dildo, and he finally gave up on it completely, pushing up on his hands and knees. He gripped the toy tightly and started to fuck himself with it, faster and deeper, grunting and sobbing with every thrust.

"Yeah," Phan said, then gasped. "Sorry, sir."

"No, I was thinking the same thing," Tobias said, throat dry. Noah was gorgeous, stunning and needy, his cock leaking, his hand working the dildo hard. "He's going to shoot."

"Buckets," Phan agreed. "Fucking hot, sir."

"Are you hard again?" Tobias asked, not looking away from Noah.

"He always gets me hard," Phan confessed. "Standing stop to shooting in my jeans."

"Me, too. You can come too, if you want."

Phan shook his head. "Noah's turn."

"Good boy," Tobias said, honestly pleased. "Noah. Come for me, pet."

Noah nodded, shoving the dildo deep and screaming something incoherent as he soaked Tobias' bed sheets. He rode it out, moaning and gripping his cock. He stroked and squeezed out every last drop until he'd gone soft, and hung unsteadily on his hands and knees with the dildo still in place. "Oh. God." He paused, still catching his breath and coming back to himself.

Tobias lifted up and crawled over to him, easing him into a comfortable position. "Push a little," he said softly, easing the dildo out.

"Got it," Phan said, appearing at his side to take the toy and clean it. "Wow. Big."

"What a burn," Noah sighed and accepted the close cuddle. He was breathing much easier. "Still like it better when it's you."

Tobias smiled. "Me, too. But for a show, it was quite nice. Phan liked it, too."

Noah laughed softly. "Is he jerking off in the bathroom?"

"He better not be."

"Who?" Phan said, coming back with a stack of linens, his cock pointing the way. "What?"

"You. Jerking off in the bathroom. But I see that's not the case." Noah pushed a hand between Tobias' thighs. "Are you hard, too, sir?"

"Not hard enough to fuck yet," Tobias admitted. "But getting there."

Noah gave him a light stroke and then moved his hand away. He sighed, and settled, resting against Tobias gently. "You liked that, Phan?"

Phan nodded. "Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah." He looked at the sheets in his hand. "Um. Can you move yet?"

"With a little help. Maybe."

Tobias sighed. "Upsy daisy," he said, standing and then scooping Noah into his arms. "God, have you lost weight?"

Phan stared at them. "Have you? You look the same."

"I don't think so... unless I've sweated it out." Noah wrapped his arms around Tobias' neck. "You're going to throw your back out, and then no contract in the world is going to help either of us, sir."

Tobias grinned and set him down, letting Noah lean on him while Phan fought with the sheets. It seemed to be an effort to make up the king-sized bed, but that could have been because the boy was hampered by his cock, which kept rubbing on things when he least expected it. Tobias found it amusing, and the longer he watched, the harder he got, listening to the sudden gasps and watching Phan's ass.

Noah lifted his lips to Tobias' ear and whispered, "To hell with the clean sheets. Go get him."

Tobias turned his head quickly and stared. "Sure?" he asked seriously.

Noah nodded, still speaking softly. "It's the last real barrier for us, go break it down. Show him who he belongs to." He leaned up and kissed Tobias and then smiled. "Go on."

Tobias kissed him, long and deep, one hand rubbing Noah's back. Then Phan gasped again and his cock leaped. "Okay."

He let Noah go and walked to Phan, trying to watch them both at the same time, but finally having to look only at Phan. "Boy," he said softly, running a hand down Phan's still red back.

Phan jumped, looking at him quickly, eyes not quite meeting his. "Sir?"

Tobias lifted Phan's chin with his fingers and kissed his mouth for the first time in years. Phan moaned and melted against him for a moment, lips parting. "Sir?" he said again, even as Tobias plunged his tongue in.

"On the bed, dear," Tobias whispered. "I want you."

Phan shook in his arms and moaned again. "Yes, sir. Oh, God, yes."

Noah moved slowly around to the far side of the bed and stretched out on his side, leaving them plenty of room to move. He stayed silent, but Tobias felt his eyes roaming everywhere.

"Hands and knees, boy. Remember your back."

Phan scrambled on the bed, presenting immediately.

"Eager," Tobias laughed.

Noah chuckled softly, too. "Don't be shy now, Phan," Noah teased in a lilting tone. "Share with me. Tell me how he feels."

Phan nodded happily, his ass wiggling. "Oh, you'll hear."

"The neighbors will hear," Tobias promised. He went to the bedside table and got the lube Noah had left there, then pulled open a drawer to find condoms. He wasn't an unprepared man, but sometimes he was an embarrassed one. He shrugged at Noah, and hoped he understood why they were there in the first place.

Phan's head was hanging between his shoulders when Tobias slipped two fingers into him and found him still open. Three made Phan gasp and arch. He might have been open, but he was tight.

"Oh, God," Phan groaned. "Yes, yes, yes."

Tobias grinned and pulled his fingers out, reaching for the condom. "I'll be gentle."

Tobias saw Noah grin, too. "Oh, this is going to be fun."

"Is already," Phan said, softly.

Smiling, Tobias rolled the condom on and slipped his fingers back into Phan. He thrust a couple of times and then lined up his cock, his hands on Phan's hips. "Welcome home, dear," he whispered, gliding in. He went deep and held there, his hips pressed against Phan's butt, both of them breathing hard.

"Oh, wow," Phan gasped. "Oh, God."

Tobias nodded. "Oh, God, indeed," he managed. "Fuck, you're tight."

"Fuck, you're bigger than I remember."

"Thank you."

"You're welcome."

Tobias found himself grinning again. "Ready?"

"Lord, yes. Please, fuck me, sir."

Tobias closed his eyes for a long moment, his hips grinding against Phan's ass. "All right," he said graciously when Phan swore and started to pant. He pulled out, all the way, and slammed back in before starting to rhythmically thrust into his boy's body.

Noah made a soft noise and shifted a bit. "Want you to be part of us, Phan. Want you to feel like you belong. Want you close."

Phan moaned and Tobias thought he might have tried to say something, but he gasped instead. "Oh, God!" he yelled. "There, oh, fuck, there, sir!"

Tobias smirked and pushed into him again, but Phan was losing it fast, rocking back onto his cock and trying to get as much of Tobias into him as possible. He was yelling, one hand going to his cock before Tobias could knock it away.

"On me, boy," he ground out, thrusting faster. Deeper. Harder. "Just me."

"Sir, yes, sir!" Phan barked. "Soon, oh, fuck, soon, please. Fuck me, sir!"

Tobias groaned, pushing hard, any fleeting thoughts of being gentle gone. He dug his fingers into Phan's hips and pulled the boy back onto him, circling his hips. His cock was hard and heavy, his balls tight; this was Phan. He had Noah watching, his eyes shining, his love still there and present, and he was in Phan, welcomed and cared for.

He pushed deeper, suddenly close to coming, too close to really stop. "Phan," he gasped. "Come for me, boy. Want to feel you coming around me again."

Phan screamed, pushing up on his knees and coming in a long arc, laying stripes across the clean sheets. Tobias almost laughed, but his orgasm rolled over him in waves, Phan's body milking him until they were a panting mess, sprawled on the bed, both of them reaching for Noah.

Noah moved right to them, kissing them both in turn and lingering a bit longer over Tobias. "Beautiful. The two of you are just beautiful together."

"Love you," Tobias whispered, kissing him again, his hands floating over Phan. "Thank you." He moved



slightly and kissed Phan as well, then let his head fall. "So tired," he said, slipping out of Phan and stripping off the condom.

"Good." Noah ran his fingers along Phan's jaw, smiling. "You okay, hon?"

Phan nodded slowly. "Wow," he said finally. "I mean, yes. I mean... oh, wow." He moved into Noah's touch, and Tobias grinned to see it. "Did you see?" Phan asked Noah.

"Oh, I saw, hon. I saw everything. You're absolutely gorgeous." Noah sat up slowly. "I think it's my turn to find clean sheets."

"Can you walk yet?" Tobias asked seriously. "I'll do it."

"As if you could walk any easier. No, sir. I've got it. Why don't you drag Phan off for a shower?" He winked and slid off the bed.

Tobias looked at the mess on the bed and at Phan's wilted and wrung out body. "Come on, boy," he said with a smile. "Quick clean up and then into bed, I think."

"Yes, sir," Phan said, blinking slowly. "Sleepy."

"I'm sure." Tobias rolled off the bed and held out his hand.

Phan went to him, smiling and blinking, and together they stumbled off to the shower, stopping only long enough to kiss Noah as he made the return trip with clean sheets. Tobias found himself smiling, eager to get clean and into bed, where he could sleep with his boys on either side of him. Warm and surrounded.

## Chapter 22

Negotiating with Phantom was a far different thing than with Noah; it was a return to something far less formal, both of them tossing things out in the middle of conversations and thinking out loud. It was how they'd managed almost every negotiation aside from the very first one and the slave contract -- building on a basic premise, long established. It was different now, though, in that they were both mindful of Dr. Brewer's admonition to remember that they could revert to former expectations; they carefully phrased each thought to reflect the newness of this incarnation of their relationship.

Finally, though, about four days after they first discussed it, Tobias was able to sit down and put it all on paper. They'd had a calm weekend at the farm, and the birthing cycle seemed to be in a temporary lull, so he sent Phan out to do the grocery shopping on Monday night and went to find Noah.

He was in the kitchen, filling out an order form for new shelves. He was happy and relaxed, possibly still floating a little from the weekend and a quiet day at work. Tobias watched him for a long moment, smiling as Noah hummed snatches of a song, his ass wiggling as he danced a little to his own tune.

"Hello, sweetheart," he said at last. "I have something for you to read."

"We wanted three of the four-foot shelves or four, sir?" Noah asked, but he already knew the answer. "Three. It was three of those." He scribbled something into the order form and left it on the counter. "Is it a contract, sir?" He smiled and danced his way over to Tobias. "We need a radio in the kitchen."

Tobias laughed and swept him into his arms, leading him into a quick two-step. "Buy one," he said lightly. "And, yes, it is. Basics, really -- what we've been doing but with a few added requests."

"You have a nice strong lead." Noah smiled at him. "Why don't we dance more often?" He took the paper from Tobias' fingers and spun away from him. "Anything specific we need to discuss, or do you just want me to look it over?"

Tobias shrugged. "We can discuss whatever piques your interest. I'm fine with it as is -- his chores are listed, the time frame, what my responsibilities are. The special requests are a loosening of my prohibition on sex outside of scenes and the fact that he wants never to see me sub. I said I wouldn't ask him to witness it; he said he'd never ask to watch, so we're good."

Really, it was a pretty simple agreement, and Tobias had little worry that Noah would find any of it objectionable. There were provisions made for dedicated time away from Phan for Tobias and Noah, and it was stated in the contract that the agreement with Noah was a prior contract to be honored, not only to the letter but to the spirit.

Noah sat at the kitchen table and started to read. It wasn't a very long agreement, either, and he had it read in a few minutes. "We can amend the section in our contract about scenes with third parties," he suggested. "And sex outside of scenes, well, it would be impossible to exclude it. This seems fine to me." He put the contract down on the table. "I only have one question."

Tobias nodded. "What's that, pet?"

"Are you absolutely sure he asked you for everything he needed?" Noah tapped his fingers on the table. "I can't be constantly concerned that he's giving things up to make way for me. It makes me very uneasy."

Tobias smiled. "He asked me keep the bullwhip at the farm so he couldn't ask for it. He asked me to include his Tuesday nights to you for power cuddling. He asked me to make sure I kept up practice with the tawse, something I won't hit you with. He asked for more knife play. I'm pretty sure he's made his needs clear." Tobias sat at the table and reached for Noah's hand. "You two both need to be a little selfish, you know. I won't break."

Noah tangled his fingers with Tobias'. "Maybe not, but you'll stretch." He looked at their hands. "It sounds good. When are you signing?"

"Oh." Oh, dear. He honestly hadn't thought about it. "When he gets home, I guess; tomorrow is your night. Should we order something nice for supper?"

"I hadn't even thought about supper yet. Should I run down the street and pick up a lasagna from Amicis?"

Tobias nodded and stood up. "Thank you, that would be nice. Oh, and salad, too. I'm going to take a shower." He walked toward the door, already trying to decide what to wear. "Oh, and I think we should have a housewarming dinner on the weekend -- maybe Sunday night? Come back early?"

Noah smiled. "Hey, that would be nice. You could show off your boys and your house." He winked and got up, reaching for his keys on the counter.

"That's the plan," Tobias said, walking into his bedroom. "You'll be in costume..." he called out, grinning.

"Costume?" Noah turned around in the hall, walking backward. "Sounds like fun."

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Noah arrived home shortly after Phan. In fact, Phan was still putting away groceries when Noah walked in with an armload of lasagna, salad, and crusty bread. There was something to be said for living in the city, especially living close enough to neighborhood restaurants where you could get take-out as good as what you could make in your own oven.

They ate as if none of them had eaten for days. Even Phan was complaining of an aching stomach by the time they were done. Noah volunteered to clean up, and Tobias took that as his opening to bring up Phan's contract.

He started to talk twice and finally gave up on trying to appear casual about it and merely shoved the paper across the table.

Phan's eyes lit up. "Is this it?" he asked, flipping through the sheets.

"Yes," Tobias said, smiling. He saw Noah grin back at them as well.

"Noah saw it?" Phan started reading, glancing up at Tobias and back to the sink where Noah was rinsing dishes. "It's okay?"

"It's fine." Tobias laughed. "What do you think of it, though?"

Phan read the document through to the end. "It's great," he said, beaming. "When do we sign?"

"When we find a pen?"

"Oh!" Phan jumped up. "There's something I gotta do first. Last act as a free man and all that."

Amused, Tobias sat back in his chair. "And what's that?"

Phan winked at him and ran over to Noah, kissing him hard, one hand on Noah's ass and the other on Noah's cock.

Noah made a startled sound as Phan pinned him to the counter. Tobias saw Noah start to push Phan away and then decisively change his mind, kissing Phan back and tugging him closer. When Phan finally pulled away, Noah was flushed and breathless, and all he could do was laugh. "Jesus," he swore between breaths.

Phan grinned at him and kissed his nose. "Yummy," he said happily. He spun around and bounced to the other end of the counter, picking a pen out of the cup by the phone. "Ready?" he asked, dancing back to the table.

"Sure," Tobias grinned. "I can do that to you both whenever I want."

Phan grinned back at him and signed the contract neatly, then slid it over to Tobias. Tobias wasn't sure, but he suspected Phan held his breath until the "t" in "Vincent" was crossed.

Tobias had barely set the pen down when Phan was on his knees beside him, as still as he could be, eyes lowered. Still amused, Tobias carded his fingers through Phan's hair. "I think we deserve a treat, we three," he said, smiling at Noah.

"As long as it isn't food, sir, I'm stuffed." Noah grinned and closed the dishwasher.

"Not food," Tobias promised, standing up. "Come along, boys. Time to see the surprise."

Noah respectfully allowed Phan to get to his feet before rushing over to accost him. "Congratulations, Phan," he said, smiling and kissing him on the cheek. "Congratulations, sir."

Phan squeaked a little, beaming, and Tobias shook his head. He wondered if his smile looked as goofy as it felt. "Thank you, pet. *Now* can we go upstairs? I've been dying to show you both this."

"Yes, sir. We've been dying to see it." Noah and Phan fell in neatly at heel, though the stairwell and doorways weren't quite wide enough for them both. By the time they reached the top of the stairs, they'd sorted themselves out.

"Cute," Tobias observed with another grin. "Like puppies."

Phan's giggle escaped despite his obvious attempt to stifle it.

"Okay, close your eyes," Tobias said, leading them to the door of the safe room. It was actually part of the big open area that was the playroom, but he'd sectioned off a good sized room next to Noah and Phan's bathroom so the plumbers wouldn't have to run pipe everywhere. It was on an outside wall, but the city view

of the next building was a little less romantic than he'd hoped, so he'd had the entire wall rebuilt out of glass bricks. Lots of light, none of the city "view."

When the boys had closed their eyes Tobias opened the door and turned on the lights --the soft ones overhead on tracks, and the hidden pot lights set around the huge whirlpool hot tub. There were green plants everywhere, in the corners and on shelves, and sleek metal cabinets finished in brushed steel held the few toys he wanted in there. An over-stuffed loveseat was placed along one wall, and there were soft blankets and towels within easy reach from wherever they sat.

Along the edge of the tub, fixed into the mortar of the glass bricks, were narrow glass shelves, holding bath accessories, lube, and his collection of glass dildos.

"Open your eyes," he said softly. "Come see."

"Oh, my God." Noah stared, stepping slowly into the room almost as if he didn't trust his footing. "Oh, my God. This doesn't even look like the same... wasn't there a window there? This is gorgeous."

Tobias stepped to the side and let the boys wander around. He chewed his lip as they pointed things out to each other, touching everything and turning in circles. "Do you like it?" he finally asked.

Phan gave him a look of utter disbelief. "Yes, sir. Would you like a bath? We can make tea."

Tobias couldn't fathom why Noah thought tea was so funny, so he just let him giggle until he seemed to be in control again.

"It's gorgeous," Noah said, once he could speak without wheezing. "You can't possibly expect us not to want to fire it right up, sir?"

Tobias looked at them both, bemused by the giggling, and nodded. "Run the bath, boys. And tea would be lovely."

Phan fell to the floor laughing and crawled over to Noah. "Which do you want to do?" he asked through gasps.

"Enough," Tobias said, trying to sound cross. "What is so funny?"

"Nothing, sir," Phan told him, looking like butter wouldn't melt in his mouth. "Just an in-joke that's got the best of us." He slid toward the door. "I'll just... go put the kettle on. Now. Be right back!"

Tobias watched the boy run from the room and heard him laughing all the way down the stairs. "Pet?"

"He'll be okay, sir, it's a temporary affliction. Everything will be fine after a good night's sleep." Noah gave him an innocent look. "Show me how to work this thing?"

Tobias let it slide, but the lingering feeling that the joke was at his expense stuck with him as he showed Noah how the jets worked. While Noah filled the tub and got everything ready for their bath, Tobias excused himself to the playroom, getting the last of his surprise for them. It wasn't much, but he thought they would like the thick terry and silk bathrobes he'd gotten them all; red for himself and deep blue for each of them.

When Phan came back up with a tray, tea for three set out neatly, Tobias checked the water level in the tub and nodded. "Now we can... relax," he said with a grin. "Naked, boys. Now would be good."

Clothing started flying but managed somehow to fall into one neat pile to the side of the room. Noah started to head for the tub but stopped himself suddenly after a few steps and displayed neatly instead.

Phan giggled and stood next to him, also in display, both of them waiting. Tobias raised an eyebrow but said nothing until he finally finished undressing himself. "A little excited?" he teased.

"Yes, sir, he is," Phan piped up with a grin.

Tobias snorted and went to the tub, climbing in and settling himself with a contented sigh. "Nice. All right then, before I get lonely. But no splashing!"

Noah stuck an elbow in Phan's ribs. "I'm excited? You're hard already!" Noah winked at Phan and slid slowly into the tub with a sigh.

"I'm always hard," Phan admitted with a grin. He carried the tea tray to the tub, slipping it onto a convenient shelf before pouring. He handed a mug to Tobias and then two to Noah.

"Get in the tub," Tobias growled, feeling a little impatient. He sipped the tea, and Phan hurried up, gasping as he sat down next to him and taking his tea from Noah. "Oh, this is nice," Tobias said, closing his eyes.

Noah sighed. "This is absolutely decadent. Thank you, sir." Tobias felt Noah's hand slide along his thigh and rest on his knee.

"It's mostly for my benefit," Tobias said, not really believing it. "Count it as a tool. Naughty boys don't get tubs."

"Good thing we're so well behaved," Phan murmured.

Tobias opened an eye and looked at him. "Did you just say something?"

"No, sir," Phan said, as a smaller hand settled on Tobias' other knee.

"Oh, good, I thought you'd been rather silly."

"I do get silly, sir."

"...given enough sugar," Noah added and sipped his tea.

"Nah, it's my natural state."

Tobias snorted, and sipped his tea. "Your natural state is on your knees waiting for orders."

"Uh, yeah. That, too."

Tobias smiled, but otherwise ignored the tightening of the fingers on his knee and the husky note to Phan's voice. "What's your natural state, pet?" he asked Noah, mostly teasing but also a little curious about what he'd say.

"Does madly in love count?" Noah gave Tobias' knee a squeeze. "If not, I'll go with the on my knees and awaiting orders thing."

Tobias chuckled and turned his head to kiss Noah's temple. "Your natural state is helping people, pet."

"Hm. Sounds an awful lot like bragging to me," Noah leaned into him more. "I do need to contribute. I feel... worthy of all the privileges I have in my life as long as I'm contributing, helping out. Sounds corny, I suppose."

"It's not bragging if it's true, and it's not corny," Tobias assured him. He finished his tea and passed the mug to Phan, who set it on the side of the tub. Hands and arms free, Tobias held both his boys a little closer. "There's a jet pointed right at Phan's balls," he said a moment later. "I can tell because he's quivering."

"Do I have to move?" Phan asked, probably entirely serious.

Tobias started to laugh, and once he started he didn't seem able to stop, it felt so good. "No, dear," he finally managed. "You don't have to move."

"Oh, good. I like it right where I am." He smiled and Tobias knew that he meant far more than just that he liked what the jet was doing to his body.

"I like you where you are, too," he said with a smile. He turned his head to kiss Noah. "And you."

Everything was just right.

## Chapter 23

Tobias had once more been pleasantly surprised with Bradford's ability to organize on short notice. Granted, the man didn't have to do anything other than show up for dinner, but he did let Tobias know that Luca was in town, and that it might be a good idea to invite him along.

So Tobias had brought his boys back from the farm on Sunday morning and set them to cleaning every inch of the new house. The meal itself was a joint effort between Noah and the caterer, so Phan got to finish in the playroom without his cleaning partner. He didn't seem to mind. Tobias sometimes thought Phan got off on simply organizing the tools.

About an hour and a half before their guests were due to arrive, Tobias checked on the meal preparation and made sure the dining room table was set. "Time to dress, boys," he said, nodding to himself. They'd done well.

He took them into the playroom to dress, simply because everything he needed to prepare them was right there. "Strip," he ordered as he led them in. "And then I want Phantom on his back on the massage table; Noah, you can go to the spanking bench."

"Yes, sir." Noah had been deep into their session the day before and had made an admirable effort to stay there. He'd said almost nothing since unless spoken to and seemed relaxed and thoroughly at ease with his cleaning and cooking duties today. He carefully removed his clothing and piled it neatly, then walked to the spanking bench and knelt over it to await Tobias' orders, his breathing deep and steady as he took hold of the handles underneath.

"Good boy," Tobias praised, petting Noah's hair as Phantom finished undressing. "I'm going to be a few minutes, so just stay quiet and relax. Phan needs some prep; you don't."

Noah nodded and Tobias petted him again before going to where Phan lay, pliable and easy on the table. "You're a good boy, too," Tobias told him. "And I'm going to show off both of you tonight. You'll serve and kneel and make me proud."

Phan smiled, his eyes drifting closed. "Yes, sir." He wasn't quite as deep as Noah, but he hadn't had the intensity of the session Noah had; Tobias knew how to take him down, though.

He got the can of shaving cream and the bowl of warm water from a nearby table, swinging a soft towel over his shoulder. "Relax," he urged, as he got Phan ready. He spread Phan's legs and carefully, almost silently, shaved Phan's balls bare, smoothing hair away with a straight razor until Phantom was clean, and really rather hard, which was expected. Tobias slipped a black leather cock ring on him and smiled. "Hold it now, boy," he ordered, reaching for the lube.

"Yes, sir," Phan said softly. His legs opened even more.

"Wanton," Tobias teased, sliding slick fingers into him. He added more lube, making Phan's hole shine. "Want you slick, boy."



"Yes, sir," Phan agreed, his voice thready. "Very slick. Ready."

Tobias grinned and jammed three fingers into Phan. "Very pretty," he praised as he let them slide free. "Go and kneel in front of Noah -- he'll need something pretty to look at as I warm his bottom."

Phan smiled, his eyes a little unfocused. "Yes, sir," he said, going to kneel a couple of feet in front of Noah, proudly on display.

Tobias wiped his hands carefully with baby wipes from the cabinet and slipped a couple of sample sized lubricant blister packs in his pocket. Then he took a paddle from the trunk, gathering another cock ring and a plug on his way to the spanking bench.

Without warning Noah, he reddened his ass just enough to give him a glow. Noah breathed through it, his back arching slightly as Tobias spanked him firmly. "There, pet. So pretty..." He slipped two lubed fingers into Noah's ass and wiggled them. "Going to show it off."

Noah groaned and reflexively arched to allow Tobias' fingers easy access. "Yes, sir. Thank you, sir."

Tobias opened him a little and then pushed a plug in, jiggling it a little to make sure the narrow part at the base was seated properly. He really didn't want the thing to slip out. "Doesn't Phan look pretty?" he asked softly, playing with the plug. "I'm going to decorate him."

Noah grunted softly as Tobias settled the plug and raised his head to look at Phan. "He looks even prettier than usual, sir," Noah said softly, and sighed through another moan.

Tobias smiled and slapped Noah's red bottom. "And you're going to be stunning, pet. Time to show off those chaps we got at Gregory's."

"Thank you, sir." Noah pushed off the bench and got to his feet. He seemed pleased about the attire and Tobias knew he liked those chaps; he suspected it had a lot to do with the instant visuals of a memorable evening.

Tobias grinned and motioned for Phan to stand as well as he crossed to the costume wardrobe. "Here we are," he said, casually swinging both doors open. Noah's chaps were hanging on one door, along with finely chained nipple clamps that would be fixed to both his collar and his cock ring. On the other door there was a matching set of nipple clamps, a simple link collar for Phan, and a very short leather skirt.

"I think," he said as he backed away from the cupboard, "I think I should like to watch you dress each other. Oh, and I want it understood that you will both remain hard this evening, and you're not allowed to come. Understood?"

"Yes, sir," Phan said immediately. "Thank you, sir."

"Understood, sir." Noah said on the heels of Phan's gratitude. He made his way directly to where Phan's collar hung on the wardrobe door, and ran the chain through his fingers, smiling at Phan. "Come here, Phan. It will be simpler to start with you; my chaps have miles of laces."

Tobias backed all the way up and leaned on the wall to watch. He loved the way his boys were so easy with each other, loved that they touched and enjoyed each other; there was so much potential for jealousy and anger. Really, the fact that they were always smiling and eager to please was a credit to both of their personalities.

Phan dipped his head and let Noah slip the collar on him, shuddering slightly as it settled on his collarbones. "Um, skirt first?" he asked Noah. "Or does the chain to my cock have to go on first?"

"Um," Noah looked over the chain and the skirt. "I think the chain first; it'll have to go under the waistband." Noah's hands slid up Phan's torso, closing around his nipples, and he rolled them between his fingers. "Want these nice and tight, right?" He gave them a tug and let them go before reaching for the chain and clamps.

"Uh-huh," Phan moaned. He shook his head as if to clear it. "I get to do yours, remember," he warned. He gasped as Noah put the first one on, and Tobias saw his cock leap. Phan always did love clamps.

"Yes, and you'll be gentle with me won't you? They kill me when they first go on." He smiled and attached the second clamp, then smoothed his fingers around them to soothe the skin. "Okay? I'm going to hook this chain on now." Noah winked at Phan and reached down. He wrapped his fingers around Phan's cock with one hand, while fastening the clip to the boy's ring with the other.

"Not fair," Phan protested weakly, thrusting into Noah's hand.

Tobias cleared his throat. "Time, boys."

"Yes, sir." Noah let Phan go with real reluctance and reached for his skirt. It was so short it was difficult to call it that really, but it was the closest approximation. He moved around behind Phan and fastened it around his hips. "Oh, this is very nice," he said with a smile, smoothing the leather down over Phan's ass.

"God, it feels like my balls are showing," Phan said, looking down.

"They will be, when you bend over," Tobias said with a smirk. "Noah's turn. Chains first, then the chaps."

Phan grinned and lifted the clamps. "Oh, this is fun," he said, tugging at one nipple and bending down to suck the other.

Noah hissed and grinned. "That's hardly fair, either." He tangled his fingers in Phan's hair for a moment and then tugged him away. "And before you complain about your balls showing, hon, wait until you see how the chaps lace."

Phan smiled and clamped Noah's nipples, quick and hard. Noah yelped and his shoulders curled forward. "Jesus Christ," he hissed again.

"Hurts a little more, but stops faster," Phan said quickly, moving to lick and soothe each one. "God, you're sexy," he said, one hand moving to Noah's ass.

"Ahem," Tobias said clearly. "That's one, Phantom. Mine."

Phan's hand stopped. "Yes, sir." He seemed contrite as he got the chaps down. He looked at them for a moment and whistled. "Wow. Okay, this... wow. Very nice." He set them aside for a moment and looked at Noah's cock. "Right. Okay. Chain first, then tie you up pretty."

All business, he carefully put the second cock ring on Noah and then attached the chains. That done, he held one leg for Noah, smoothing the leather of the chaps on with as much care as he showed in dressing Tobias. The second leg went on just as smoothly, and Phan set to work, lacing everything up.

Noah dropped his hand down to stop Phan as the laces reached his hip. "I need a little more room right there so I can kneel without popping the grommets." He grinned smugly.

Phan snorted. "Yeah, yeah. Either that or strangle your dick..." He obeyed, though, not even glancing back to see Tobias' smile.

Tobias moved closer as Phan looped the leather laces around and around Noah's cock, petting him and making Noah arch a little as his prick was laced into position. Slipping one hand between Noah's legs to cup his balls, Tobias said, "Should have shaved you too. Be so pretty, pet. Next time."

"Next time, sir," Noah agreed with a little grin. His voice was suitably tight. "How do you like the chaps, Phan?"

"Sexy as fuck," Phan said frankly, stepping back to admire. "Um, sir? If you let go I can see better."

"Tough." Tobias grinned and rubbed his thumb along Noah's cock. When Phan sighed he laughed and let go. "Cheeky boy."

"Yes, sir. Oh, wow. Noah, you're gorgeous."

Tobias smiled. "Lovely. Turn around and show me your ass, pet."

Noah turned and bent forward, resting his hands on his knees. It was still pink from the spanking, but it likely wouldn't stay that way all night.

"Hmm." Tobias slapped him, hard enough to raise a hand print. "I think we're going to have to be inventive, pet." He went back to the trunk and found a paddle that had a loop strap on the handle and handed it to Noah. "Keep this with you. I want to keep you red all night -- and, yes, I'm fully aware of what will happen if I hit the base of that plug. You're not allowed to come."

"I believe you have already instructed us to that effect, sir," Noah said dryly, looping the handle through the laces at his hip.

"Ah, but clarity is never a bad thing," Tobias said, grinning widely. "All right. I have to get changed and our guests will be here any time now. Phan, you open the door, Noah, you take coats, then you both will make sure everyone has something to drink. I'll be in soon. Now, shoo. And no making out while you wait," he cautioned while he headed to the trunk to replace the other paddle.

"Dang," Phan whispered loudly.

"No making out, sir." Noah laughed softly. "Try to get the door before they ring that bell."

Tobias stopped walking and turned around. "Why?" he asked curiously. "What's wrong with the bell?"

Noah looked in his direction. "You've... heard it, sir?"

"Of course." Hell, he'd picked it out. It was majestic and surreal and full of bells. He'd spent two hours listening to whiny chimes and dingy little clatters before he'd found it.

"Oh. Well, then nothing's wrong with it, sir." He glanced at Phan. "It's very... unusual."

"It's... um. Effective, sir," Phan said, looking very hard at nothing.

"You hate it," Tobias stated.

"Um. Well..." Phan sighed. "It scares the hell out of me."

"And it sounds like church," Noah added. "Sir."

Tobias stared at them. "I see. I'll... think about it. In the meantime -- you'll let them ring the bell. Clear?"

"Yes, sir." Noah nodded once. "We'd better get downstairs, I need to check the food, sir."

Tobias sent them off, replaced the paddle in the trunk, and cleaned up from shaving Phan. After he closed the cupboard doors he went down to his room to dress, one ear out for the doorbell. He liked the bell. He could understand jumping a bit the first time it went off, but it was... a doorbell. A work of music. Not some stupid buzz like the condo had had.

He looked in the mirror as he knotted his tie, immediately stopping his pout. He didn't have the lips to pout - that was for Noah to do, or Phan when he was in a mood. Tobias did not pout. Ever.

Finally, he heard the musical chimes and headed out to the entry, eager to show off his boys and home. And to hear the end of the doorbell.

Bradford was standing in the entry with Nikki, and the pair were handing Noah their coats. He smiled as he saw Tobias coming down the hall. "Your boys look wonderful," he said, favoring Tobias with one of his most earnest smiles. He looked over at Phan, and shook his head in apparent disbelief. "Absolutely wonderful."

Noah turned briefly to hang the coats in the hall closet and Nikki went to his knees when Bradford made no effort to leave the foyer.

"Thank you," Tobias said, smiling broadly. "Welcome to our home, both of you. Nikki looks wonderful as well. Calm."

"Nikki has been a very good boy this last week. Say thank you, Nikki, Master Tobias has given you a compliment."

Nikki's clear voice rose from the floor. "Thank you, Master Tobias."

Bradford smiled broadly. "So, the house looks very good from the outside; stately, well looked after. I hope you've planned a Grand Tour."

Noah moved to stand next to Tobias, both of his boys flanking him. "I have," Tobias said, "but I think we'll wait for Luca. Come in and sit, see the living room at least." He gestured with one arm, more or less ignoring his boys. "By the way, did you hear the doorbell?"

Bradford moved toward the living room. Nikki stood and followed at heel. "Oh, I did! Marvelous. Very formal and stately. I approve."

Noah followed, but Tobias had a suspicion his boys had exchanged glances behind his back. "Master Bradford, can I get you something to drink?" Noah asked their guest.

"Ah, bourbon. On the rocks, boy. And a small glass of water." Nothing coming from Bradford was ever a request if it was said to a submissive; it was always an order.

"Yes, sir." Noah nodded and disappeared again.

Bradford took a seat and looked back at Tobias as Nikki knelt by his chair. "Did you pick the bell out, or did it come with the house?"

Tobias petted Phan's hair as the boy knelt beside him. "I had it installed, of course. Brownstones don't come with something like that."

Phan went utterly still and Tobias suppressed a smile. There was making up to do.

"And you're happy with the place so far?" Bradford asked. "I have to say you picked a great neighborhood; very lively, lots of trees."

"We're very happy with it," Tobias said, letting himself smile again. "Noah actually found the house; we've had nothing but kind words with the neighbors, even when there was construction. It's working out very well; close for Noah, easy for Phan to get to his appointments."

"Glad to hear it. Very glad."

Noah returned with Bradford's drinks and handed the water to him first, which Bradford in turn handed to Nikki, before taking his own drink. "These chaps are something else. Your friend in Paris?"

"Gregory's a genius," Tobias said, nodding. "Turn around, pet. Show off a little for us."

Noah turned slowly and showed Bradford the back of his chaps, as well as his slightly pinked backside. Tobias could tell by the look in his eyes that Bradford approved.

"Stunning," he said. "Showing off the boy's best assets."

"Absolutely," Tobias agreed. He reached out and nudged the plug in Noah's ass, just a little.

"Very nice," Bradford said with a smile. "What do you think, Nikki?"

Nikki looked up to see and Tobias saw the boy grin and blush before looking down again. "They are very good on him, sir."

"They are indeed. Noah?" Bradford sat up a bit in his chair and sipped his drink while Noah turned back to face him.

"Sir?"

"How are you and Phan managing?"

Noah smiled. "We're more than managing, sir, we're getting along very well."

Tobias smiled and petted Phan a moment. "Very well," he agreed. "Phan, wouldn't you say so?"

"We're... good," Phan said softly. "Fun."

The doorbell chimed again and Tobias leaned back, grinning as Phan jumped. "So much better than a buzz," he said lightly. "Off you go, boys. Let them in."

Noah nodded and followed Phan out of the room.

"I have something for you later," Tobias said to Bradford as he stood up, straightening his tie. He smiled and took a few steps toward the entry before adding, "Be right back with Luca; make yourself at home."

"Will do," he heard Bradford say as he left the room.

Noah was hanging Luca's coat in the closet as Tobias arrived in the foyer. Luca's boy was with him, looking as sweet as Tobias remembered.

"Hello, Luca," Tobias said with a smile. "You're looking well. Danny, too."

"Tobias." Luca smiled, coming forward to shake his hand. "Thank you. And thank you for inviting us, it's good to see you." He looked curiously at Phan and Noah as the boys moved to stand behind Tobias. "I'd heard you had an addition. It's good to see them both looking so... well." He winked and made a show of studying Noah's chaps and Phan's skirt. "Do you always keep them dressed like this?"

Tobias laughed and led the way back into the living room. "No, usually they're naked."

"Ah. Even better. Hello, Bradford."

Bradford was instantly on his feet. "Luca!" He greeted the man with a warm smile and an enthusiastic handshake. "So good to see you again. You look wonderful, so I suppose you weren't placating me when you told me you were feeling better these days. I love the jacket."

"Thank you," Luca said, smiling warmly. "And I feel fine. Not a hundred percent, but doing better. Nikki looks well." He pointed to the floor without looking and Danny sank down next to him.

Tobias sat down again, inviting Luca to do the same with a sweep of his arm. "Noah, Phan... please see to our guests, then we can show off our home."

"Just water, thank you," Luca said, petting Danny's hair.

"My pleasure, Master Luca." Noah nodded and left the room quickly.

"Nikki is doing very well." Bradford said, setting his glass down on the table. "And Danny...well, he always looks happy to me, and he's deep every time we see him. You must prepare him well for outings, hm?" He took Nikki's empty water glass from him and handed it to Phan.

Phan scurried away as Luca nodded. "He takes such good care of me that I think he deserves to be treated well when we're out." He winked at Tobias. "Like last time... very pretty, dear heart. Can we hope for another?"

Tobias laughed. "We'll see," he said with a grin. "What do you think, pet?" he asked Noah as he returned and knelt.

"I would be pleased to ensure your guests have a memorable evening, sir," Noah answered.

Bradford laughed. "Noah is so cheeky. Does he always answer such questions with innuendo? I assume he is speaking of more than dinner, which smells wonderful, by the way. Luca tells me the New Year's scene was memorable indeed."

"He does, thank you, and it was," Tobias said with a smile. "Ah, Phan. Good. Would everyone like to see the house? I admit, I want to show off a little."

The tour began downstairs. Noah and Phan walked into each room and knelt until Bradford and Luca were finished commenting on the windows or the decor and then they moved on. The dining room caught Bradford's eye especially for the trim and the detail work over the doorways.

The tour of the upstairs, naturally, was far more interesting. Bradford admired the safe room for quite some time. "I've never thought of a putting hot tub in my safe room, but what better way to relax?" he commented, running his fingers along the edge of the tub. Noah had scrubbed the tub until it sparkled that very morning. "And those glass dildos are gorgeous. Something of a fetish?" He grinned. "You'll have to invite us for a soak sometime." He winked and made his way back into the hall.

Luca nodded at the safe room and seemed impressed, but appeared to have much more fun wandering through their playroom. Noah and Phan knelt side by side while Luca and Bradford led their boys through the room. Bradford was even brazen enough to open the armoire and several of Tobias' trunks as well. "You've done very well, Tobias, I'm really impressed with the whole place."

"It's not the stables," Tobias admitted with a falsely modest shrug. "But it's nice and meets our needs. The tub, however, is sheer luxury." He grinned at Bradford and glanced at Noah. "The glass is a... well, shared fetish, I think."

Bradford smiled. "Ah. Yes, I might have guessed. I remember Noah's penchant for pretty tools. And Phan has always been a bit of a peacock."

Tobias grinned. "Are you a peacock, boy?"

Phan smirked and wiggled his butt, his skirt riding up a bit. "Oh, yes, sir."

Laughing, Tobias tugged it back down, cupping Phan's balls for a moment. "All right then, gentlemen. Dinner first, play later, maybe. Oh, and Phan, you can get the envelope from the top of my dresser for Bradford." There were actually two envelopes there, but Phan knew which one to bring; the other was a surprise for Phan himself, the results of his blood work, and the last thing Tobias needed to know about his boy.

Luca raised an eyebrow as they left the safe room and headed for the stairs. "Is there something going on?"

"Maybe," Tobias said with a wink. "It'll keep another few minutes. Now, I think Noah has something to do in the kitchen, and then we can sit -- my boys will serve, and yours can sit at the table or kneel, whichever you prefer."

Noah bowed quickly. "Masters," he said and hurried downstairs.

"How mysterious." Bradford grinned. "Come, Nikki, love." He made his way toward the stairs with Nikki silently at his heel.

Tobias led the way into the dining room, pulling out the chair at the end and sitting while Phan went to fetch their contract. "Please," he said, gesturing to the table. "Sit."

Luca did so, taking the chair at his left, Danny sinking to the floor beside him. "I'll feed him," Luca said softly. "Please have Noah or Phan serve me a larger than normal portion."

"Of course," Tobias said. "He looks so content."

Luca smiled down at Danny, the silent boy kneeling and almost glowing in his sub space. "I worked hard to get him there," Luca said with a grin. "It's been a while."

Bradford followed Luca's lead and sat as well, then turned to Nikki, speaking quietly. "Would you prefer to sit or kneel, my boy?"

"As Master Luca's boy is kneeling, sir, I would prefer to kneel as well."

"Ah. Yes, good boy," Bradford seemed pleased. Tobias wondered if it was Bradford's pride in his boy that made Nikki stand up straighter. Bradford pointed to the floor and Nikki knelt gracefully.

Noah appeared a few moments later with salad plates and warm rolls, and set them before each of the Doms. "Master Bradford, will Nikki require a plate or will you be feeding him, sir?"

"He'll eat on his own, Noah, thank you."

Noah nodded. "Master Luca? How about Danny, sir?"

Luca's eyes cut to Tobias approvingly. "I'll be feeding him, Noah. Well done, Tobias."

Tobias shrugged. "He's a helpful boy, aren't you, pet?"

"I try to be, sir." Noah's modest words were slightly betrayed by the smile that passed quickly across his face.

Tobias was about to shoo him back to the kitchen when Phan came in, going directly to Bradford and kneeling in front of him. Instead, Tobias pointed to the floor and Noah sank down, watching as Phan held out the envelope.

"Master Bradford," Phan said respectfully. "For your safe, sir."

Bradford looked at Phan for a long moment, and then turned and looked at Tobias. "For my safe?" He raised an eyebrow slowly in question, then looked down at the envelope and opened it. The room was still for a moment as he glanced at the contract and started to smile. "Ah!" His smile grew broader and he pushed his chair back from the table and stood. "Up, boy, and give an old man a hug, then. Congratulations!"

Phan's smile was as sudden and as bright as the tears in his eyes as he flew into Bradford's arms. "Thank you, sir," Tobias heard him whisper.

Smiling, Tobias stood up as well, grinning as Luca nodded approvingly.

"Well done, Tobias," Luca said. "They both look utterly delighted to be yours. Adjusting well?"

"They are," Tobias said softly. "We all are." He petted Noah and watched Phan, still hugging Bradford.

Bradford held Phan close for a long moment and then kissed his cheek as he let the boy go. "I am thrilled for you, Phantom, and I couldn't be more proud." He gave the boy's shoulder one more pat and then made his way down the table to Tobias, offering him his hand and a positively jovial grin. "I'm thrilled for you both. Congratulations."



"Thank you, old friend," Tobias said quietly. "It was a bumpy road, but we seem to have smoothed it a bit." He reached out for Phan and pulled him in for a fast kiss. "Haven't we, boy?"

"Yes, sir," Phan said happily. He sank down beside Noah and kissed his cheek quickly. "We have."

"Congratulations," Danny whispered, peeking at Phan under the table. Noah gave Phan a silent pat on the knee.

Phan blinked and leaned down lower, tugging Noah with him. "Thank you," he said softly. "Hey, Nikki?"

Nikki had been watching them and smiling. "Congratulations, Phan."

"Hey, you. We gotta hang sometime soon, 'kay?"

Nikki nodded, still smiling. "Soon. I'll talk with Master about it."

"Master says yes, we'll work out the rest later." Bradford shifted his gaze to Noah. He leaned down and gave the boy's shoulder and squeeze and spoke softly. "Proud of you too, boy. Quite a long way you've come."

Noah looked more than a little surprised at the praise. He cleared his throat. "Thank you, sir."

Bradford winked at Tobias and headed back to his seat. "I hardly know what to say. All this good news has made me work up quite an appetite."

"That's your cue, boys," Tobias said with a smile.

"Yes, sir," Phan said, jumping up and heading to the kitchen. His skirt had ridden up again, and his cock was poking out, hard and leading the way.

"Noah, take care of that for me."

Noah stood up and followed. "Yes sir, but it's so pretty." He caught up close behind Phan and tugged his skirt back down around his hips.

"They play together?" Luca asked, looking curious.

"God, yes." Tobias rolled his eyes. "They play a great deal, actually. I think Phan is actively trying to wear us both out."

Bradford chuckled. "Ah, yes. That's why Noah is so easygoing about him these days. Clever, clever man." He grinned. "Well, if anyone can manage to wear the both of you out, it's Phan. Besides, you're an old man now. Maybe you should have your heart checked out."

"My heart is fine," Tobias said with a mock growl as he sat back down. "Maybe we should talk about the state of yours? Hmm?"

"Perhaps another time." Bradford growled right back. His growl sounded more serious, and to ensure that was an end on the conversation, the man even changed the subject. "Luca, what have you been up to?"

"Mostly thinking I should stay in town and see how this all works out," the man teased. "Things seem to be... changing."

Tobias beamed at him. "Love to have you around, old man; a partner in crime, as it were."

Noah began serving dinner plate by plate. He started with Luca, then Bradford, then Tobias and lastly he produced a smaller plate with bite-sized portions for Nikki. He sat the plate in the boy's lap along with a glass of water and a napkin.

"I don't know, Tobias has become exceedingly smug and proud these days," Bradford teased. "He might be bordering on insufferable."

Tobias might have heard Noah snicker, but he couldn't be sure. He raised an eyebrow. "Is that a complaint?" he asked Bradford waspishly. "I was planning on letting you do unspeakable things to Nikki in my tub..."

"Hardly. I've been damn near insufferable half my life." He winked at Tobias. "I'm sure Luca would agree." Bradford glanced down at Nikki and ran fingers through his hair. "My goodness, my boy seems to like the idea of some time in your tub."

Tobias checked out Nikki's erection, which was rather impressive, really. "It's a very nice tub," he said solemnly.

Bradford smiled and petted Nikki's hair again. "I suppose I'll just have to stay on my best behavior, then."

Noah and Phan each had a small plate like Nikki's and knelt to eat next to Tobias' chair, quietly listening. Tobias checked to make sure they were both hard still, smiling at the way Phan wiggled as he began to eat.

"So, what would you like to try, Luca?" Tobias asked. "Anything at all, or would you rather watch Bradford try one of my new toys -- I have a cane Nikki might like, or Danny."

Luca smiled and fed Danny some salad. "I think I'll treat my boy tonight, but I'm not quite sure how. What are your plans?"

"Depends on my boys, honestly," Tobias said. "They've been good all weekend, they deserve a treat."

Noah shifted beside Tobias and the boys exchanged a glance.

"Oh, wonderful, I do so enjoy a busy playroom." Bradford glanced at Nikki again. "All done then, love?" He took Nikki's plate and set it on the table. "Apparently Nikki has decided to eat light in anticipation of a big evening."

Tobias raised an eyebrow. Nikki hadn't eaten much at all, possibly three bites of salad -- the word "cane" seemed to have affected him.

"You eat," he said to Phan. "Or you won't get anything at all."

"Yes, sir," Phan said meekly, sighing as he began to eat. Noah gave Phan's knee another pat, sympathy showing through his grin.

Bradford looked at Luca. "So were you serious about moving back to the city, or was that a ruse to get us all riled up?"

"Ah, a ruse, I'm afraid," Luca said with a small smile. "My doctors, Danny's family... we'll be away for some time to come, sadly. Although it does make me happy to know how much I'm missed." He gave Tobias a cheeky grin and fed Danny another bite before taking one of his own. "Tell me, where did you get that

wonderful doorbell?"

Tobias glanced down to where Phan was almost cringing. "Do you like it?"

"It's very... Tippy. I love it. Did you pick it out?"

"I was just telling Bradford about that, before you got here. It took me a lot of time to get that one. You know, I don't think my boys like it, however."

Luca winked at him. "Too bad for them, then."

"Perhaps," Tobias said with a smirk. "We'll see. Won't we, Noah?"

Noah coughed before answering. "Uh... yes, sir."

"Indeed," Tobias said, patting Noah on the back. "No choking. Now, eat up, everyone. There's a lot of food, and a great deal of fun to be had upstairs."

## Chapter 24

Tobias watched as Bradford circled the room slowly. He'd left Nikki bent over the spanking bench, the cane Tobias had given Bradford from the cabinet lying on the floor where Nikki could see it.

He stopped first near Luca and admired Danny, suspended as he was in a sturdy but simple sling over by one of the blacked-out widows. Bradford walked a circle around the boy, looking at him carefully. He grinned and whispered something to Luca, then made his way over to Noah, who was bound by hands and feet to the cross. Tobias had had the boy strip naked except for his clamps and Bradford admired the round swell of Noah's bare ass then winked at Tobias.

"Nice. And what about Phan? You've left him chained there for what purpose?" Bradford asked, making his way over to Phan and looking him over.

"So he can watch, of course," Tobias said with a grin. "Watch everything and just... wait. Like the good boy he is. You are a good boy, aren't you, Phantom?"

"Yes, sir," Phan said immediately.

"And not come until you say so, of course," Bradford observed. Tobias saw his eyes flick over Phan's tight erection. "May I?" He asked, then reached out and gave the chain connecting Phan's nipple clamps to his cock a light tug.

"Oh, God," Phan moaned.

"Easy," Tobias cautioned. "Tell me, how many strokes are you going to give Nikki?" He watched as Luca gave the sling a push and reached for the lube.

"I'm thinking four." He looked at Tobias. "Actually I'm hoping he'll have had enough at two or three and then I'll just paddle his butt pink after that, but sometimes he needs that last one." Bradford took slow steps toward his boy. "And Noah? I take it you'll be at him for a bit with that flogger?"

Tobias nodded. "He's entirely too smooth at the moment. I prefer him to wear a mark or three."

Bradford gave him a grin. "Have at, then," he said as he bent to pick up the cane. Nikki made a soft whimpering sound. "Oh, my boy, are you ready for me?" he asked, running the cane flat across Nikki's back. "First aid is, ah, on the wall, I see it."

"God, yes," Tobias said. "Luca?"

"Got it already, dear one, never fear." Danny moaned and Tobias grinned as Luca opened his boy with a couple of fingers.

"Find what you wanted?"

"Oh, yes," Luca said, holding up a long and very thick dildo of red silicone. "Very nice."

"Have fun," Tobias said, walking to Noah and picking up the flogger. "And you, pet. Ready?"

Noah nodded. "Yes, sir. Rules?"

"Use your words if you need to," Tobias said. "Scream if you want. Come when you can't hold it another moment, and make sure I know it's going to happen."

"Yes, sir. Thank you, sir." Noah took a deep breath and stared straight ahead. His shoulders settled and his body relaxed, and Tobias knew he was ready. Behind him he heard the swoop and crack of the ornate cane as it landed on Nikki's ass. The boy grunted and panted heavily, thanking Bradford in a tight voice.

"Count for me, pet," Tobias murmured as he brought the cat down. Behind him, Danny moaned again; in front of him, Phan looked around with wide eyes, his cock peeking out from under his skirt again.

"One, sir," Noah exhaled and settled his shoulders again. The early blows were teases, it wasn't until his skin started to pink that Noah would really start to feel it.

Tobias struck him again, one ear on Noah's breathing, the other on the sound of Bradford's cane. There were so many rhythms in the room it was hard to judge where people were at in their scenes. He glanced back as Noah counted two and watched as Luca began to push Danny's sling again, the boy's ass opening to the red dildo.

"Nice, don't you think, Phan?"

"Yes, sir," Phan said breathlessly.

"Want that?" Tobias indicated Danny's dildo with a nod of his head.

"No, sir."

Tobias turned back to Noah and petted the boy's hair before striking him again.

The cane came down a third time and Nikki's scream was so loud it completely drowned out Noah's attempt to count three. "That was three, sir," the boy repeated. Nikki was still sobbing softly. As for Noah, his back was pinking up now and Tobias knew he'd soon be losing his composure; the best part. "More, sir? Please."

"Of course, pet," Tobias purred, striking him harder and faster, two strokes together.

"Ah! Four and five," Noah hissed and panted. "Thank you, sir." He dropped his head forward and rested it against the cross. The sounds of the cane had stopped for the moment and with a quick glance, Tobias noted Bradford kneeling next to Nikki and speaking with him softly as the boy whimpered and caught his breath. Nikki nodded and Bradford was on his feet again, cane in his fingers.

Tobias looked at Phan, unsurprised to see him with wide eyes, quivering in his chains. He was looking at Nikki and then Danny, watching as Luca fucked the near-silent boy with the dildo; his eyes always went back to Noah though, lingered there. Tobias grinned and raised the flogger, bringing it down hard and starting a faster rhythm.

"Six, seven..." Noah's counting started to sound mumbled and Tobias watched his ass tighten and his toes curl as eight and nine landed soundly. "N...nine. Oh, God, sir, so hard. So good."

"Good boy," Tobias soothed, all his attention on Noah now. "Come on, take more for me, pet." He raised the flogger and set to coloring the boy's ass to match his back.

Ten, eleven, and twelve had Noah moaning almost constantly, deep and low and unconsciously. He miscounted the next two as fourteen and fifteen but Tobias let it go. Noah's breath was coming in harsh pants now and his ass was rosy. "Six... sixteen... sir," he managed.

"How do you feel, pet?" Tobias asked, walking around Noah in slow steps.

Noah licked his lips and swallowed before answering. "I feel... light, sir. Warm. So close, please, sir."

The rest of the room seemed almost silent.

"You're the last, pet," Tobias said, taking another step. When Phan whimpered, he amended it to, "Well, almost the last. Should we play with Phan a little longer?" He raised the cat and swatted at Noah's ass with it.

Noah's ass twitched. "Phan is a good boy, sir."

"Of course he is. And the fact that you're getting desperate is nothing," Tobias said with a grin. "All right then." He started working again, knowing full well it was only a matter of moments before all was done.

Noah had either forgotten he was supposed to be counting or given up on it in favor of concentrating his attention on his climax. It was indeed just those moments, or perhaps it was those few strokes, away. "Sir! Going to come, sir, going to... oh!" His hips made a couple of jerky thrusting motions and then he froze, his ass clenching and his legs stiff as he started to come.

It was lovely, really, and Tobias watched as Noah's cock leapt and throbbed, come splashing on the floor. The entire room smelled like sex, and he glanced over to see Luca petting a very relaxed Danny.

"Easy, pet," Tobias said, stroking Noah's hair. Phan keened in the background, his chains rattling, but Tobias took his time, checking on Bradford as well.

Nikki hadn't moved, still kneeling over the spanking bench with his head down. Bradford was sitting on the floor beside him, speaking to him softly and tending to a few spots of broken skin with an ointment from Tobias' first aid kit. It seemed that as far as Bradford was concerned they were the only two in the room.

Noah had his forehead pressed into one of the sturdy leather-clad beams of the cross. His trembling eased slowly and his breath, though still a bit thin, quieted too. He leaned affectionately into Tobias' touch. "Thank you, sir."

"For you, anything," Tobias said softly. "I'm going to play with Phan a moment; can you see us if you stay here?"

Noah turned his head, looking over at where Phan was chained to the wall. "Yes, sir."

Bradford stood about then and returned the ointment to the first aid kit.

Tobias nodded and kissed Noah lightly. "Nikki all right?" he asked Bradford as he crossed to Phan.

"He's fine, he says he feels good. That's a lovely instrument." Bradford touched Nikki on the shoulder. The boy slid off the bench and went directly to his knees. "Phan looks to be needy." He gave Tobias a grin and a wink.

"Not for long," Tobias promised, showing the key to the manacles. "He'll be less needy when he's been fucked."

Phan moaned. "Please, sir."

"With everyone watching."

"Oh, God, sir. Please!"

"Here's your show, Luca," Bradford said with a chuckle. "Oh, doesn't Danny look happy and well-fucked? What a darling."

Danny did indeed look well-fucked, and Luca looked hard as stone. Danny's eyes were vague and unfocussed as he knelt in front of Luca and rubbed his face on Luca's thighs.

Phan whimpered.

"Easy, boy," Tobias said softly, finally turning his full attention to Phan. "Hold on for me."

"Yes, sir," Phan promised, falling to his knees as soon as Tobias unlocked his wrists. "Anything you want, sir."

"What I want," Tobias said, kicking Phan's legs apart, "is to hear you." He pushed Phan's skirt up and out of the way, taking in the way the lube still glistened around Phan's hole. "Still open?" he asked, almost politely.

"Yes, sir," Phan whispered, almost shaking. "Ready for you, sir."

Tobias undid his trousers and pulled his cock out, almost wincing as he touched it. He hadn't realized he was that hard, that swollen. He'd paid attention to everyone's needs but his own. That was about over, though. With almost no warning at all he sank to his knees and pushed into Phan's heat.

"Sir!" Phan screamed, rocking back. "Please, sir. Fuck me, sir, I'm going to come!"

Tobias slammed into Phan's ass again and again, not sure if the boy even knew he was being taken bare. All too soon, though, he was as ready as Phan; it was probably the fastest fuck they'd ever had.

With one hand he took off the boy's cock ring, his head going back as Phan screamed and started to come, taking Tobias with him in waves. He thought he was going to shoot forever, the way Phan's ass was working him.

Finally, Phan fell silent and Tobias pulled out, panting. A trickle of come slid down Phan's leg, silver, shiny and slick.

"Sir?" Phan whispered.

"Mine."

"Yes, sir."

"Yes, sir," Noah agreed, looking at Phan. Noah appeared to be well recovered, and his back, ass and thighs were a lovely hot-looking pink.

Across the room Bradford grunted, drawing Tobias' eye. He couldn't remember the last time he'd seen the man come, but there he was, Nikki's mouth on him and his pants shifted low on his hips. He cupped the back of the boy's head and tugged on him, letting his head fall back as he shot down Nikki's throat. He was almost entirely silent apart from the low and husky words, "My boy."

Tobias nodded and smiled, moving slowly to right his clothes and free his boys. Phan slid onto the floor, lying mostly still as Tobias undid Noah's bindings and kissed him. "Go to Phan," he whispered. "Luca's almost done, and then we'll see who wants a soak, and who wants tea."

Noah made his way to Phan, his steps tentative at first, and more confident as he got closer. Kneeling beside the boy, Noah reached out a hand and ran it down the length of Phan's spine. "Congratulations," he said softly, giving Phan's ass a squeeze.

"I'm not getting my own mail," Phan whispered back. "Isn't there a rule about that?"

"It falls under me being responsible for your health," Tobias said dryly, watching Luca thrust into Danny's mouth. "Congratulations, Phan; you're the only one to get fucked tonight."

Phan purred and wrapped himself around Noah. "So far," he giggled.

Noah laughed and turned to give Phan a kiss on the cheek. "So far, indeed. Watch the shoulders, hon, they're a bit sore still."

Bradford appeared beside Tobias and gave him a pat on the shoulder. "Very pretty boys," he said with a wink.

Tobias smiled. "They are. Oh, Luca's done. Oh, my, has he always done that lip-biting thing when he comes? Very sexy."

"I'm not sure," Bradford glanced over. "Might be the work of a very talented sub."

"Maybe we should all start, then," Tobias grinned. "All right. Noah, Phan... when you can walk, you can clean up. Bradford, would you like to try the tub, or is Nikki too sore? Personally, I suggest the couch and a pot of tea."

"Yes, I think we'll have to pass on the tub, but the tea sounds wonderful." Bradford made his way over to his boy. "Next time, love," he promised, and Nikki nodded. He didn't seem terribly disappointed; it must have been worth it.

Noah extricated himself from Phan and got to his feet. He was naked and his soft cock hung loosely between his legs. "I guess I'd better get the mop," Noah told Phan, and Tobias caught him flash a quick grin.

"At least two," Phan grinned back. "There's a lot of cream here."

Luca laughed softly, holding Danny in his arms. Tobias looked closer and saw that the boy was actually taking most of Luca's weight for him, somehow standing submissive and saving Luca's strength. "I think we'll take the tub," Luca said softly. "And tea, if it's not a bother."



"No bother at all," Tobias assured him. "Noah, could you run the tub before you clean up, pet?"

"Of course, sir. Come when you're ready, Master Luca." Noah hurried from the room.

"Need a hand there, Luca?" Bradford asked, keeping it light. "Looks like your boy wore you out nicely. Nikki, are you recovered enough to see what you can do for Master Luca?"

"My pleasure, sir," Nikki answered brightly and moved with only a slight stiffness to Luca's side.

"I'm fine!" Luca protested with a smile. "But added attention is always nice." He slipped a very careful arm around Nikki's shoulders. "Don't hurt yourself, boy," he cautioned.

Nikki shook his head. "No, sir, feels good."

Bradford laughed. "This is clearly why Tobias needs two boys now; he's getting old."

Nikki helped Danny maneuver Luca down the hall toward the tub.

"He looks so much better, but I see he still has a fight ahead of him," Bradford said softly to Tobias after the three had left the room.

Tobias nodded. "It's good that he has Danny. That boy is strong -- I think he'll make Luca well through sheer force of will. And I am not getting old. You're just jealous you don't have two. Though... the love of one is something special, don't you think?" He stepped out of Bradford's swinging range, just in case.

"Careful, that cane is still within my reach." Bradford's threat was softened by his smile and light laughter. "It is special. But we're not discussing this tonight, you cad. We'll discuss it when I call you to invite you to his collaring."

Nikki was making his way back down the hall with Noah. "They're nicely settled, sir," Noah told Tobias.

The conversation effectively ended with Nikki's reappearance, Bradford grinned smugly and gave Tobias' arm a pat. "Tea?"

"Bastard," Tobias said fondly. "Honestly, you're worse than me. Off to the safe room with you, then; there are more first aid supplies if Nikki's back looks bad when the bruises come up, and you can help with Luca if he gets sleepy. My boys and I will be along shortly."

"We're on our way. Come along, Nikki." He took Nikki by the hand as they made their way down the hall.

Noah appeared at Tobias' elbow and offered him a bottle of water. "Thank you, pet," Tobias said, taking the bottle gratefully. "How are you feeling?" Behind them, he could hear Phan moving things out of the way and preparing to clean the floor and equipment.

"Wonderful, sir," Noah said, leaning on him a little. He sighed. "Light, free, a little sore -- I love that flogger."

"Good," Tobias said with a smile. "You were beautiful, sweetheart." He kissed Noah's cheek and gave the boy a quick grope. "Help Phan clean up, pet. I'm going to get the tea ready; when you're done you two can come to the safe room and relax for a bit."

The rest of the evening was slow-paced and full of light conversation and banter. Noah continued to keep the tea coming and Phan was on towel duty as people rotated in and out of the tub.

Luca and Danny left first; after a long soak they were both half-asleep. Phan arranged a cab for them, and Tobias made sure their goodbyes were short. Bradford and Nikki left a bit later, because after a second treatment to his stripes, Nikki had fallen asleep with his head in Bradford's lap and Bradford didn't want to wake him.

The house seemed unusually quiet after all the company had gone. For a few minutes, Tobias wandered through the halls thoughtfully. Finally, he sat in the overstuffed armchair in the living room, a piece he'd handpicked just for the brownstone, and listened to the clinking dishes, running water, and soft voices coming from the kitchen as his boys cleaned up after dinner. He felt utterly content.

When Noah and Phan were done they joined him, going to their knees silently. He smiled at them and stood without a word. In the bedroom, they undressed and exchanged sleepy kisses, and then Tobias put both boys on the floor with their collars and chains. He was feeling particularly smug about how well the party had gone as he drifted off to sleep.

## Chapter 25

Tobias was at the clinic doing the last of his paperwork after a long night in a barn when his cell phone rang. He looked at the clock, wincing when he realized how long it had been since he'd checked in with his boys. He was so busy these days that he was counting it as a huge blessing that there were two of them; they weren't alone.

"Hello?" he said, not bothering to check which one of them it was calling in to touch base. It was Wednesday, part of him noted. He hadn't seen Phan since before his therapy appointment the day before.

"Tobias Vincent?"

He sat up a little straighter, something cold blossoming in his belly. "Yes. Who's calling?"

"Officer Gibson, sir, from--"

"Noah?" Tobias stood up and reached for his coat.

"Officer Dolan has been involved with a shooting, sir. He'd like you to meet him at Saint Mary's--"

"On my way." Tobias thumbed off the phone and dropped it to pull on his coat. "Dee!" he yelled, stuffing the phone in his pocket and walking out the door. "I'm going to the hospital, Noah's hurt."

She ran out of her office just as he reached the main door. "What happened?" she asked, grabbing his arm.

"Shooting. Call my place -- no, I'll do it. I'll call you tonight."

She stared hard at him. "Can you drive?"

"Yes," he insisted, pulling away. "I'll call you."

"Tobias. I hope he's okay," she said softly.

"Me, too." He went to his truck and sat there for a moment before calling Phan.

The phone at the house rang twice before Phan answered. "Hello, sir," he said cheerfully. "Wondered where you were."

"Phan, we need to... I need you to call a cab and meet me at Saint Mary's," he said gently. "Right away."

There was a long pause and then Phan said, "Yes, sir," in a whisper. "Sir, the local news said there was an armed hold up--"

"Then you know more than me," Tobias said, starting the truck. "He needs us, dear. Come quick."

The line went dead and he turned off the phone.

The drive to the hospital went unnoticed; Tobias parked and ran to the emergency room, almost getting hit by an equally rushed cab. He wasn't terribly surprised when Phan bounced out of it.

"Tobias!" Phan yelled, throwing money to the cabbie.

Tobias waited for him, one hand extended. "Let's go," he said grimly. "Find him."

They walked into the triage area and Tobias descended on the check-in desk. "I'm Tobias Vincent, looking for Officer Dolan. He asked for me."

"Yes, Mr. Vincent, one moment. I'll have someone escort you." The nurse at the desk was on the phone, had a file in her hand, and was trying to help someone else at the desk at the same time.

Two men in police uniforms came in, flashed badges at the nurse behind the desk, and continued on down a long hall to the left. Tobias watched them go, and on impulse grabbed Phan's hand, dragging him along as they followed.

"Sir?"

"Shh, boy. We're going to get some facts." He sped up a little. "Excuse me," he said, a little louder.

One of the men turned to look at him, but didn't stop walking. "There's hospital security if you need help, sir, we're on police business," he told Tobias in a curt but polite tone and turned away again.

"So am I," Tobias said firmly. "I'm looking for Noah Dolan."

"Oh." The cops glanced at each other, stopped walking, and looked at Tobias and Phan. "Yeah. You're related? There was a robbery, and a shooting... we don't have all the details yet ourselves, but I heard it was pretty bad. We're headed that way," one of them offered.

The other officer added, "Just follow us," before they continued down the hall.

It wasn't a very long walk. Tobias squeezed Phan's fingers and the followed silently. Phan was holding up better than Tobias had expected; better than he was. The two cops stopped by one of the ER rooms and looked in through a glass window. There wasn't much any of them could see, just a hospital bed surrounded by a curtain, a lot of wires and equipment and feet. A nurse came out from behind the curtain with a clipboard and spotted them. "Hello, officers," she said, opening the door for them. "It was touch and go for a bit there, but everything went just fine. You're looking for Officer--"

"You have to let me see her!" A voice shouted from a room across the hall. It was followed by a loud crash and cursing. "Fuck."

A quieter male voice answered him. "I'm afraid we can't yet, sir, she's in surgery. But--"

Tobias turned and pulled Phan with him, heading to his lover.

"What about Dr. Vincent, I gave you his number; did you call him?"

"Yes, sir--"

"How long ago?" It was Noah's voice, no question, and he sounded more than a little agitated.

"I'm here," Tobias said, using the most firm voice he could. No one was going to keep him from his boy, and he was going to keep his boy together.

"Tobias!" Noah started to move toward him but the orderly that was with Noah stopped him.

"Your IV, sir."

Noah swore again and tore the needle out of his arm. He looked a little pale but otherwise seemed fine. It wasn't until he got his arms around Tobias' waist that Tobias noticed the bandage at the base of his skull.

"Shh," Tobias said, letting go of Phan's hand to hold Noah. "I'm right here. We both are. What happened?" His hand fluttered over Noah's head, the bandage.

Noah winced as Tobias touched it. "He's trying to sedate me."

The orderly sighed heavily. "I am not, Mr. Dolan." He looked at Tobias for help. "He needs to calm down, Dr. Vincent. He has a mild concussion and he's been--"

"Tell them I need to see Carol." Noah interrupted. "I heard shots and then everything went black and I don't remember anything until after. They shot her, there was blood, and she has kids and I couldn't help! They took my gun. She's my partner, Tobias, I'm supposed to look out for her! I need to see her. I need to see if she's okay. Please."

Tobias nodded. "Take a breath," he said calmly. He looked at the orderly. "Can you find out his partner's status, please. I'll calm him down."

The orderly looked relieved. "I'll be right back," he promised. "I'll find a nurse..." He left the room, leaving the door open.

Tobias looked at Noah. "I need you to breathe, pet. Deep and calming, now. Good boy. I heard the doctor say she's going to be fine, but we have to wait a few moments." He rubbed Noah's back. "On the bed, boy. You can't do anything right now but try to calm down."

Noah seemed reluctant, but he let Tobias help him back into bed. He took a number of deep breaths, staring at his blankets and was much more even-keeled when he started to speak again. "We were there on a robbery call, no one told us they were armed. They started shooting as soon as we arrived, and Carol..." He sighed, speaking slowly. "She took a couple of bullets, one went through the side of her neck, one stuck in her vest. I saw it but then everything went black. I woke up to ambulance sirens and EMTs. They said the assholes that shot her took off." He looked up and caught sight of Phan, maybe for the first time. "Hey, Phan, sorry about all of this."

Phan blinked. "Oh, shut up, kiddo," he said. "Don't be stupid."

Tobias almost smiled. Almost. "We came as soon as they called. Were you shot?" He sat on the edge of the bed and reached for Noah's hand, eyeing where he'd torn out the IV needle. "Phan, find me a jar of cotton balls and some gloves, please."

"No, no, I wasn't. I was out cold, I guess they figured that was good enough. I don't even know what they hit me with." Noah looked down at his arm as well and shook his head. "Okay, that was stupid." He sighed, seeming much more like himself now.

"Very," Tobias said dryly. "However, fairly understandable. Thank you, Phan." Tobias took the purple latex gloves and snapped them on, looking for something to clean the wound with. He swabbed it with rubbing alcohol and put a Band-Aid over it, then sat down again and trashed the gloves. "You have to let them help, pet. Understood?"

Noah looked like a chastised child. "Yes, sir." He sounded like one, too.

The orderly came back in right then. "Mr. Dolan, your partner is out of surgery. She is stable, her husband is with her, and the doctor says she is doing very well but has advised against other visitors for the moment. She asked about you and I told her you were fine and asking about her as well."

Noah stared at the orderly and ignored the nurse that stepped around him to put Noah's IV into his other arm. "Thank you."

"You're feeling better, I see."

Noah looked embarrassed. "Yeah, sorry about that."

"I'd have been worried, too." The orderly smiled and then left the room.

"You think you can leave this one in place, Mr. Dolan, or do I need to strap you to the bed?" the nurse asked, grinning at him. She touched Noah's collar with one finger. "Or maybe I should let your friend here do it?"

"I think he'll behave himself now," Tobias said smoothly, not at all bothered to be seen for what he was. He was, however, concerned about what impression Noah's colleagues were getting.

In the corner, Phan snickered and then looked down at his shoes when Tobias glanced at him.

"Were you saying something?" Tobias asked politely.

"Not at all," Phan said to the floor. "Just glad Noah's fine and Carol is going to be."

Tobias nodded and looked at the nurse. "How long do you need to keep him?"

"Maybe another hour just to make sure he's stable, then he'll probably be released. It's a mild concussion, you'll want to watch for vomiting and disorientation, and keep him awake for about eight to ten hours. Lots of clear fluids, no food." She tucked a blanket around Noah's hips and smiled at him. "You're actually quite sweet when you're not pissed off, Officer Dolan." She looked at Tobias. "I'll be back in a bit."

When she was gone, Noah looked at Tobias and shrugged. "I hate this."

"So deal with it like you deal with everything I make you do -- it's better than being in the sling and not seeing, isn't it? Forget the helpless feeling and just let yourself be." He moved closer, his voice low. "You're safe. Carol is safe. You only need to know that you're mine and I'm here."

Noah nodded and looked down at his hands, tightening his grip on Tobias' fingers. He didn't have much to say after that, they just sat quietly and he rested while they waited for a doctor to come look him over and sign his discharge papers. By the time they let Noah leave, he'd stopped bleeding where he'd been hit and a Band-Aid easily covered his couple of stitches. Carol, however, was still unable to see visitors.

He was just as silent on the way home in the car.

"Safe room," Tobias said gently as they all took off their coats. "We need a cuddle, and Noah can't fall asleep."

Phan nodded. "I'll put some broth on and bring it up. Sandwiches for you and me."

"Thank you," Tobias said, stopping him long enough for a fast kiss. "See you there." He took Noah's hand in his own and said, "Come on, sweetheart. I want to hold you."

Noah allowed himself to be led upstairs, just as he'd allowed himself to be led from the hospital and from the car. He didn't seem sleepy, which was a good thing, just a little occupied in his own mind. Or maybe he wasn't thinking at all.

Tobias only stopped long enough to set the lighting, then he pulled Noah onto the loveseat, holding him close. "Talk to me, sweetheart," he said. "I need to know what you're feeling." He really didn't like Noah closing off from him.

Noah leaned against him. "I'm feeling... I'm worried about Carol. I'm feeling bad for her family. If I were her, with kids and all, I'd never be a cop. Not anymore. It was easy to believe that it was all about helping people, helping the community before... but now -- it's not about that anymore. Now it's different. Dangerous."

"Because the bad guys got really bad?" Tobias asked, confused. "Sweetheart, there's so much more to the job, and what happened today... that's part of what you trained for." He knew that Noah would have counseling in the very near future; it was standard after a shooting, he assumed.

Noah's shoulders grew stiff. "I didn't train to let my partner get shot and be completely useless to her. I didn't train to end up in the hospital not having a clue what the men who were responsible even look like."

"That's not what I'm talking about and you know it, pet," Tobias said softly. "But yes, let's talk about that. You're being entirely too hard on yourself. Now, if you suddenly had psychic powers and could see out of the back of your head, I would happily let you get worked up about not being able to prevent what happened."

Noah apparently didn't like that response. He pushed away from Tobias and sat up. "You don't know if I'm being too hard on myself. Carol could be dead right now, Tobias, and all I can think about is what I might have done wrong."

Tobias nodded. "Okay. What did you do wrong, Noah? Tell me exactly how this is your fault."

"I should have gone in first. I'm not the one with children. I shouldn't have let her lead in." He seemed fairly certain of his assessment.

"Who's senior?" Tobias asked, suddenly realizing he didn't know.

Noah looked at him. "She is. Technically, anyway, but only by a year."

Tobias leaned back and thought. "So, you arrived, and got out, she's leading. This was typical?"

Noah sighed. "I don't know. Yes? Maybe? We weren't that regimented. Look, I know what you're doing. It would have been perfectly natural for either of us to lead in. She got to the back door first, she led. But it should have been me. It would have been better if it had been me."

"Why? Does it somehow make her more important because she's a mother? Noah, she chose her job. She loves her job. She would have been furious if you were putting your life on the line and denying her that same right just because she's a mother. Not to mention denying her the right to do her job to the best of her ability."

Noah sighed. "She does love her job," he conceded, softly. His brow furrowed thoughtfully and he went quiet again.

"And she was doing it. You were doing your job. And you are both perfectly aware of the risks. Your guilt is misplaced, sweetheart. Can we talk about another part of it? The fear, the anger?" He reached out a hand, almost willing Noah back into his arms. He really didn't want to let go.

Noah moved back to him, settling against his chest. "Fear and anger don't have any place in police work."

"No. But they do have a place in your heart and mind. You're a cop, but you're a man."

"I'm not afraid."

"I would have been," Tobias said. "I was. I was terrified."

"Oh, Jesus." Noah sighed. "I'm sorry, baby," he said and pressed closer. "I'm so sorry."

"Will you stop that?" Phan said, coming in with a tray.

Tobias smiled. "Yes. Stop that. You're not responsible for my response to getting a call that you were in a shooting. That smells wonderful, Phan."

Phan nodded and put the tray down then leaned over and kissed Noah hard. "I'm glad you're still here," he whispered roughly.

Noah reached out and put an arm around Phan's neck before he could get away. "Oh, shit, me, too, hon," he sniffled.

Tobias nodded and let Phan take things into his own hands. His boys were perfectly capable of using a power cuddle for emotional release; the only difference was who needed it this time.

"Sir called me, and then I called a cab and I just sat down and cried," Phan whispered. "I was so freaked, so fucking worried about you. And then we heard your voice and you were upset and I just wanted to crawl on the bed with you and touch you and--"

"What? I told that stupid orderly to tell Tobias I was okay." Noah's voice sounded rough now, too. "Damn it, don't you make me cry."

"What's wrong with crying?" Phan asked, tears starting to stream down his face. "You're alive and here and I can hold onto you. Best thing in the world to cry about."



"Oh, God." Noah turned their cuddle into a full-blown bear hug. "Here I am all worried about Carol's kids, I wasn't even thinking what I'd put you two through. I'm so sorry." Genuine tears rolled down Noah's cheeks now. "Fuck." Noah swallowed.

"You didn't put us through anything," Phan insisted. "Stop saying you're sorry. I'm just... God. It was scary, Noah. But part of me wants to hang onto that fear a bit."

Tobias raised an eyebrow, used to the way Phan's mind jumped around from idea to idea and emotion to emotion. He didn't say anything, just watched and waited.

Noah pulled back a bit, giving Phan some room. "What? Why?"

Phan wiped his eyes. "Jolt, you know? Makes you think. Puts shit in perspective and... just... God, I'm glad you're okay, baby."

Noah hugged Phan close again. "I'm okay. Promise. I love you."

Tobias smiled and leaned back again. That hadn't taken as long as he'd figured. Only a few months, really; or a few hours, depending on how one counted.

Phan, on the other hand, went utterly still. "What?"

Noah let Phan go again, looking a little shocked himself for a moment. But then he smiled and touched Phan's cheek. "I said I love you, hon." He swallowed and went on. "It's been building, I sort of knew it was there. I'm not sure exactly when that became clear to me finally, maybe when I saw you with Tobias today at the hospital. Nothing like a good whack on the head to clear your vision."

Phan nodded, apparently unable to speak.

"You can tell him, dear," Tobias prodded gently. "Really."

Phan nodded again and swallowed. "That's what I mean," he whispered. "Makes things clear. Love Sir, you know that. And I love you."

"Well, damn, it's a good thing I got smacked in the head today or we might never have had this conversation." Noah smiled weakly and kissed Phan. "Thanks, hon," he said more seriously. "I needed to know that."

Phan shook his head frantically. "Not good! Not at all! Your poor head. Oh! You need to eat, I made broth, and then we can cuddle and you can talk if you want, but you have to eat--"

"Phan," Tobias said gently. "What do you need?"

"A good hard smack?"

Tobias rolled his eyes and pulled Phan close, kissing him deeply. "Will that do, boy?"

"Yes, sir. Thank you," Phan said, taking a deep breath. "Wow." He blinked a few times and leaned closer. "He loves me," he whispered to Tobias, grinning from ear to ear.

"I know," Tobias whispered back. "And if you're good and get the soup served I might even let you sleep in the same room tonight."

"This day has been a nightmare," Noah sighed and leaned back into Tobias again.

Tobias nodded. "I know, sweetheart. I have a suggestion."

"Start drinking?" Noah joked.

"No," Tobias smiled. "Though you know I'm going to go outside and smoke after I call Dee. No, I suggest we drink our broth, eat our sandwiches, take turns snuggling and cuddling, and just... talk. Not about the day or what happened or anything in particular, unless it comes up. Just be us. Be secure and loved and somewhere safe. If you want to talk, we're here. If you don't, we're still here. And we'll be here when it's the right time for you, pet."

Noah nodded. "Like family," he said simply and sipped his broth.

"Like family," Tobias agreed. "Oh, there were two police officers at the hospital. They took us to you, didn't wait for an answer when they asked if we were related, thank goodness, because at that point I was willing to say you were my husband if they'd have let me in any faster."

"I'd have been fine with it if you had," Noah looked at him. "Really."

"Can you be that out at work?" Tobias asked seriously.

"Can I? Sure. Should I? I might catch some flack for it, but I can't be the only one." Noah shrugged and sipped his broth. "Maybe it's time."

"A little flack is one thing, sweetheart," Tobias said. "Getting the crap beaten out of you is another. There's a world of difference between being a very wealthy large-animal vet who's out and being a cop in a closed system."

"Or being me!" Phan put in, waving a hand.

"Or being you," Tobias agreed.

"Oh, yes, it's so difficult being you," Noah teased in a woeful tone. "Knocking about the house all day lounging and eating chocolate while your men are out bringing home the bacon, being spanked and tied up so well it makes you squirm, getting enough sex to satisfy a rabbit..." He grinned and sipped his broth again.

"Hey, I haven't gotten off in almost... oh. At least ten hours." He had the grace to look abashed, Tobias noted.

"This morning?"

Phan nodded. "Kinda had a shower together before Noah left for work. And nice deflection of the topic, Noah."

"You liked that, did you?" Noah looked at Tobias. "It was a quick shower. Really."

"I had cold coffee," Tobias said sadly.

"You're working too hard."

Tobias shrugged. "It's my job. I do miss you both, though. Quite a lot, actually. It will slow down soon, I promise."

"We're not the ones operating on four hours of sleep a night, baby." Noah put a hand on Tobias' knee.

"All right, I promise myself it will slow down," Tobias said with a grin. "And I promise each of you a large chunk of time chained to my bed. Better?"

Phan rolled his eyes.

"Is that my cue to shut up and be subby?" Noah leaned up and kissed him.

"You can do whatever you want," Tobias said expansively, grinning.

Phan snorted and looked around the room. "You know, I don't think I've ever been in here fully clothed before."

Tobias chuckled and kissed Noah again. "Drink your broth."

Noah sipped his broth dutifully, then grinned at Tobias. "Yeah, why does he have his clothes on?"

"Because if he was naked he'd want sex, I suppose," Tobias said.

"Or a bath," Phan said slyly. "Can I use the tub?"

Tobias rolled his eyes. "What do you think, Noah? Naked, wet Phan?"

"My favorite kind."

Tobias pretended to think about it. "Well, I don't know..."

"I won't put bubbles in this time," Phan promised.

Tobias stared.

"Um. Oops."

Tobias looked at Noah. "Do you know anything about this?"

"Nothing, sir," Noah said seriously.

Tobias gave him a hard look. "Noah?"

Phan sighed. "I'm here a lot. Alone. I can only clean so much, you know. So I had a bubble bath. It was... exciting."

Noah looked shocked but amused. "Do you think I'm lying, sir?"

"I wondered. Now I'm wondering just how exciting this bath was. Seeing as how he's not allowed to get off alone and all."

Noah half-hid behind his mug. "All I did was leave the bubbles near the tub."

Phan nodded. "He wasn't here. He didn't even help me clean up."

"Clean up."

"There was a lot of water in the tub..."

"So you... used a lot of bubbles."

"And the jets..."

"Oh, dear."

"Won't happen again, sir."

"I wouldn't think so." Noah finished his broth and set the mug down.

"No bubbles," Phan promised.

Tobias looked at them both, trying not to laugh. "All right, have a bath," he relented.

"Yay!" Phan bounced up and started filling the tub with hot water, his clothes flying off. He was, not surprisingly, half hard. "Noah? Come with? Make it fun..."

"Oh," Noah shook his head. "I can't get these stitches wet, hon. I'll have to watch and snuggle with Sir." He seemed perfectly happy with that solution.

Phan looked unsurprised. "Okay," he said, watching the water rise and rubbing his thigh. Tobias thought he looked rather adorable.

"So, what happens next?" he asked Noah. "I assume you have time off -- do you have to meet with your shift supervisor?"

"We didn't discuss it. They told me to go home and call them tomorrow. I'm assuming there will be counseling I'll have to do and mandatory leave of some kind. And then I'll be back on shift before Carol so I don't know what they'll do with me. I guess we'll see."

Tobias nodded and watched Phan shut off the water and turn it back on. "Okay. If your head is clear tomorrow you can take the car, of course. If not, you'll have to drag the bathing beauty out of the tub and have him chauffeur you. Oh, and you'll be at the hospital, too, I assume?"

"I definitely want to stop by to see her for a while. Talk, you know?"

"Of course." Tobias kissed him again, then watched Phan finally climb in the tub, the water still running. "Does it always take this long to fill?"

"It's a huge tub. Plus you have to watch it to make sure the water stays the right temp until you turn the jets on. It's so worth it though." Noah sighed. "Okay, now I'm getting tired."

"You can't sleep, baby," Tobias said gently. "What would wake you up?"

"I'm not sleepy so much, just heavy. Body-tired, you know? Scratch my back?" Noah grinned.

Tobias snorted. "I don't think so, boy. Get Phan to do it when he's all waterlogged and wrinkly." He shifted Noah a bit and sat up straighter. "Talk to him for a bit, pet. I'm going to make some calls and get some water bottles. We'll be up for a bit."

Phan made a happy noise in the tub. "We need a rubber duck."

Tobias looked at him and then at Noah. "Bradford's right. I'm getting old," he muttered, leaving the room. He added calling Bradford to his mental list; he'd know where to get adult duckies.

## Chapter 26

It didn't take Noah long to stop trying to assign blame to himself. When he saw Carol the very next morning, she smiled at him and waved him over. Her voice was a little raspy but she was able to talk with him a while. She was completely herself and seemed to be handling it all far better than he was. She told jokes about what a lousy shot the guy was, and that she hoped she'd done better. That was the first he knew that she'd fired her weapon, and it gave them hope of finding the guys if they turned up in an emergency room. She laughed at Noah for getting himself hit on the head, and he hadn't been there half an hour before he was laughing himself.

Her husband came by with the kids while he was there. Noah wanted to apologize to him too, but Ken shook Noah's hand and had kind things to say, and the kids wanted to see his stitches, and both of them thought their mother was a hero. By the time he left the hospital that afternoon he felt a great deal better.

It was a shame that his first day of counseling didn't go as well.

He'd come home surly and irritable and for the first time since they'd signed their new contract, Noah asked Tobias for the night off. He spent it behind closed doors in his room; he just couldn't deal with having to be civilized company.

The buttons the counselor was pushing went right to what Tobias had tried to get him to talk about -- fear, anger, and his own competence. It got better over the course of the week as he accepted that wanting to rip the shooters' heads off with his bare hands for hurting Carol was perfectly normal under the circumstances. He shouted and threw things and paced the room; he cried and told the counselor that he felt real fear for the first time since he left the academy -- fear about getting back into the squad car, fear about letting Carol down again, and fear about getting hurt, or killed, himself.

But all that ranting was cathartic, and though he'd asked Tobias to keep the weekend low-key, he'd been able to trust him. He'd been able to spend most of Saturday in his space, serving Tobias in more mundane ways than usual, but it had been good. He'd regained some sense of self, some confidence, and, much to his own relief, his sex drive.

He'd been looking forward to his Tuesday evening with Phantom. He always did, but this time was different. With Tobias, he wanted and needed to serve. Recently, he'd needed to be sure of his footing and his place, and he hadn't asked for much for himself. With Phan it was easier to be selfish; he could ask for things if he needed them, like asking a friend, or a brother.

He'd been home all day. He was only due in for counseling twice this week, Wednesday and Friday, and then Monday they were putting him back in a car with a temporary partner until Carol recovered. It would be slow going, but she insisted that she would be back.

The hardest thing he'd had to think about all day was what to have for dinner.

Phan came home whistling, the tune just off-key enough to be vaguely annoying, but the sound of it happy. Noah heard him putting his coat away and then the whistling grew to a rousing crescendo as Phan wandered through the living room to the kitchen.

"Hey, kiddo," Phan said cheerfully as he came in. "I had a great day, I'm mildly horny, and I think we should order pizza." The last was whispered in Noah's ear as Phan got close enough to kiss his cheek.

Noah smiled and turned his head to catch Phan's lips with his own. "Oh, thank goodness, I was just standing here staring into the cabinets blankly. Pizza sounds perfect. And Coke. And you for dessert."

"Mmm." Phan grinned and chased his mouth for another kiss. "Perfect. Going to try the spinach this time?"

"I told you, I hate spinach. How about mushrooms? Will you call? I don't feel like dealing with people."

Noah watched Phan move around the kitchen. He must have had a good day in therapy, if all that whistling was any indication. He looked great, too. He'd put on some weight, his skin was smooth and healthy; even his spiky, unruly hair was looking thicker. It suited him well, this new lifestyle, and that suited Noah just fine, too.

Phan wiggled his butt as he picked up the phone. "I shall deal with that pesky humanity for you, and even buy the pizza. Then you and I, kitten, will settle down and see if we can tend your bruised nerves." Phan nodded firmly and dialed their favorite pizza joint, dancing to something only he could hear.

"I keep telling Sir we need a radio in the kitchen," Noah said softly, while Phan ordered the food. He wasn't sure Phan could hear him, but it amused him all the same.

Kitten. That was a new one. It was sort of cute in that "only Phan could get away with it" kind of way. If anyone else tried to call him "kitten" he'd probably deck them. He went to the fridge and took out a bottle of Coke.

"Be about half an hour," Phan said, dancing over to him. "I think it's the floor. It invites dancing. Plus! Dr. Brewer and I decided to drop down to once a week for the next while, and are looking to go to twice a month. That's dancing feelings." Phan pulled both him and the Coke bottle close. "Sugar and you -- my Tuesday joys."

"Twice a month!" Well that was excellent news. Noah didn't have anything personal against Dr. Brewer, but it seemed to him that most of Phan's issues had been solved by a stable living arrangement, people who cared about him, and a solid contract. "That *is* dancing feelings." He scooped Phan and his Coke bottle into his arms and danced him out into the hall.

Laughing, Phan tried to steer them to the couch in the living room. "I can't lead!" he giggled. "I'm such a sub."

"Oh, let me lead, I'm the switch, remember?" Noah didn't really consider himself a switch as such, but he fit the bill better than Phan did, that was for sure. He spun Phan around and dumped him on the couch. "I was going to ask how your therapy went. I take it that it was good. Oh! Glasses!"

He ducked briefly into the kitchen and returned with two glasses filled with ice.

"My therapy was fine," Phan said, taking a glass and reaching for the Coke. "Tell me how yours is going." He looked at Noah expectantly before opening the bottle, holding it out as it hissed loudly. "Oops. Dancing and Coke don't mix."

Noah waved his hand. "They want me back on my rounds on Monday. They're assigning me a new partner until Carol is back on her feet."

Phan nodded, eyeing the fizzy soda as he poured them each a glass. "Uh-huh. That'll be weird, riding with someone else."

"Riding with someone else, yeah. Riding at all, too. I got the falling-off-a-horse speech, and I guess the shrink is right, but it doesn't feel right going back without Carol. She's... my other half, you know? We had a great thing going." What he should have said was that he trusted Carol. They were close. He wasn't sure how long it would take him to trust someone new.

Phan nodded again and sat back. "It's hard working with someone new, learning to trust -- hell, it's like trying a new top. That first time is always scary as fuck, not knowing the signals and not really trusting. The basics are all there, but the relationship isn't."

Phan could be so clever and observant. Noah picked up his glass and sat back with him. "It is like that. It's just like that. Not sure how we'll work together, how we'll get along. Hell, I don't even know whether or not I should tell him I'm into men. I mean with Carol there's no threat there, right? But a male partner? Well." Noah shrugged. Well, indeed. He stared into his glass, missing Carol even more now.

"Is that something you want to decide before you even meet the guy?" Phan asked, his head tilted to the side. "Hey! Tell him you're married and have a hot little thing on the side."

Noah laughed. "Well, that would be the truth, wouldn't it?" He looked at Phan. "No, I don't want to decide that now, it's just... stuff I'm worrying about. Stuff on my mind."

"Oh, I get that, kitten." Phan held out his hand, palm up. "Come sit with me and spill your guts. I owe you venting time by the metric ton."

Noah took his hand and cuddled into Phan. It was a change, all right. It felt odd, but comfortable. "I just hate being insecure. Especially when none of it is rational, really, you know? I mean, I know it, I do. But I still feel... I still feel like I'm walking on ice."

Phan rubbed Noah's arm and wormed that hand under until he could touch Noah's belly instead. "Doesn't have to be rational to feel that way. And when you get back to it, maybe that slippery feeling will go away. Maybe just the routine of it all will make you more comfortable."

"I hope so. I mean, that's what the shrink said, too. That's exactly what he said. You've had way too much therapy." Noah laughed softly, but Phan's embrace felt good, it felt better coming from him than it did from a head doctor. He took Phan's hand in his and pushed it up under his shirt.

"I have," Phan agreed, the grin clear in his voice. "Still. Never been through anything like what happened to you." Phan's hand stroked over his skin, warm and gentle. Teasing. "I couldn't do your job. I admire you, you know?"

"Oh, stop. Anyway, I'm not even sure *I* can do my job anymore."

"That bad?" Phan said sympathetically. "I admire you for a lot more than your job, kitten." Phan's hand stilled, palm flat on Noah's belly. "Talk to me."



"It's just a big 'what if.' What if I fuck up? What if I can't handle it? What if this guy's a complete asshole?" Noah sighed. "What if I can't get over this?"

"Then you move on," Phan said quietly. "But you have to try, Noah. You have to give it your best shot, or you'll always wonder."

"I know, I know." He sighed. "I know. And I want to, I do."

"Sure?" Phan asked, starting to rub again, his hand sliding easily. "You sound tired to me. Worried."

"Worried, yeah. Concerned, apprehensive, moderately terrified -- call it what you will. What I'm tired of is feeling this way. So I hope getting back in the car on Monday fixes this." It should. Everyone said it would. He wanted to believe it, too.

Phan nodded. "You need distracting. And pizza. And to just take a break from worrying."

"That," Noah turned and looked over his shoulder at Phan, "is exactly what I need; a change of subject, a better way to spend my time, something else to think about. And food."

And right on cue, the doorbell rang.

"I didn't need that fucking doorbell, however." Noah almost fell off the couch laughing.

"Need it?" Phan squeaked. "We're damn lucky he didn't cane us over that thing." Phan ran to the door, pulling his wallet from his back pocket. "Needs a mute button!"

"What if I accidentally broke it?" Noah followed Phan out into the hall and then headed back to the kitchen for plates. "Oops! I don't know what happened, I accidentally stuck a screwdriver in it. Sorry, sir!" He chuckled and got plates out of a cabinet.

"Oh, only if I get to watch your punishment. I swear to God, I almost died when he said he'd picked it out himself." Phan put the box on the table and went to get the napkins.

"And then Master Bradford and Master Luca loved it! What was that about? I wanted to shake sense into them both." Noah dug right in, pulling a piece from the box onto his plate.

"Maybe it's a Dom thing. A musical tribute to their balls?"

"Are you trying to make me choke?" Noah laughed. "Though maybe you're right. Maybe it is an eccentric top thing. Are you saying we should think it's cute instead of loathsome?"

Phan smirked and started in on his own pizza. "No, I'm saying we should feel sorry for them. You and I are utterly secure in our natures as sexual beings -- don't need a theme song, just a little leather."

"And a good flogger." Noah winked and took a bite. "Theme song." He snorted. "I'm never going to get that out of my head now."

"*Dancing Queen*?" Phan suggested around a mouthful of pizza. "*Macho Man*? *It's Raining Men*?"

"*YMCA*?" Noah had to put his pizza down he was laughing so hard. When he could breathe again he shook his head and smiled at Phan. "Whoo. God, I needed that."

Phan looked shocked. "YMCA? Oh, please. If that's our theme song I need a new act. Finish your pizza like a good boy and stop being silly."

"Not ours, theirs. Ours would be something more like *Too Sexy*." Noah took the last few bites of his pizza and followed it with a gulp of Coke.

"Oh, well that makes sense." Phan nodded and grabbed another piece of pizza. "Come on, eat. Your dessert is getting hard."

Noah laughed. "I'm done. God, if I eat any faster I'll be useless to you." He closed the pizza box. "See? So, how hard are you exactly?"

Phan waved his hand in the air as he chewed. "Not bursting out of my jeans yet, but definitely needing room. Kind of... oh, okay. Now I'm about to burst out of my jeans. It's like my dick suddenly realized it's going to get happy."

"You are such a slut." Noah poured himself more Coke. "So where do you want to do it? Shower? Hot tub? Sir's bed?" Noah grinned, speaking in as unaffected a tone as he could manage, despite the fact that his own prick was suddenly getting the wake-up call. "Kitchen counter?"

Phan had stopped in mid-chew. "We can't do it in Sir's bed!" He looked completely shocked at the idea. "That'd be... no, we can't. Damn you." He reached for a napkin and started wiping off his fingers. "That's very naughty, kitten."

"Was that in the rules? 'No fucking in Sir's bed'? I don't remember that... and where did this kitten thing come from?"

Phan shrugged and undid his jeans. "Don't know, just came out. Do you hate it?"

"No, no. From you? No." Noah bent over and kissed Phan on the nose. "It's sweet."

"Cool. And I don't think there's a rule, really, it just seems... naughty." He shivered and ran his hand up the inside of Noah's leg.

"It is naughty." Noah grinned. "Very naughty." Naughty was always such a turn-on. He slid off the couch and started backing slowly toward the hall. "So are you coming with me or am I going to have to be naughty all by myself?"

"You're not *allowed* to be naughty by yourself," Phan pointed out with a grin. He stood up, one hand almost inside his open fly as he walked forward.

"That's naughty, too. Are you getting ahead of me?" Noah kept moving backward, into the hall toward the master bedroom. He popped the button on his jeans and lowered his fly as he hit the threshold. "Are we going in?" he asked, tugging his cock free.

"Oh, yeah," Phan breathed, his eyes on Noah's cock. "God, yes; sixty-nine in the middle of the bed. And then we can talk about Sir and get all wound up again..."

"Works for me." Noah dropped his jeans and his shirt in a heap at the foot of the bed. "I get top," he said with a grin as he threw himself onto it. He gave his balls a squeeze and watched Phan undress.

Phan nodded, trying to take his T-shirt off without losing sight of Noah. It looked kind of funny, but Phan's cock was sticking out of his jeans, looking hard and needy, and that killed some of the giggles. "Yeah, you on top. Gonna fuck my mouth?" Phan asked, shimmying out of his jeans, his prick waving madly.

"Might. If you ever get over here." Noah hadn't meant to growl, but he was quite sure that was how it sounded.

Phan climbed on the bed and batted Noah's hand away from his cock. "Here," he pointed out, licking at Noah's nipple and wrapping his hand around Noah's dick. "Fuck, you make me hot."

The feeling was mutual, but Noah didn't feel like talking about it. Instead, he grabbed the hair at the back of Phan's head, turning his face upwards, and kissed him hard, pushing his tongue past the boy's lips. Phan's hand felt so good, his body was warm and the way Phan just melted against him made him shiver and his skin tingle.

He wanted to make Phan feel just as good.

Whimpering, Phan kissed him back, mouth wide open and his body wiggly as Phan tried to rub off on him, the hand on Noah's cock tightening. Shaking, Phan suddenly pulled away, his breath coming in pants. "Want to suck you." He lay back, tugging Noah to move, to turn around. "Love your cock in my mouth. Taste so good."

It was a good thing they had permission to do this, as Noah didn't know how he'd ever manage to stop himself. He turned and raised his knee, setting it down carefully so he was straddling Phan's head, a knee by each ear. He grinned at what he was presented with in turn, Phan's stiff cock straining upwards toward him.

"Want to make you come so hard you see stars," Noah said, growling again, his voice deep like it always was got when he was aroused. It was the last thing he said with words, the rest he managed with his tongue.

He licked up Phan's length, and then let Phan's cock slide along his neck and throat as he bent farther to suck his balls one by one into his mouth. The mixture of Phan's own musk and the sweet tang of his sweat made Noah a little lightheaded. He was so different than Tobias, in all the right ways.

"Oh, God," Phan moaned, his hips twitching. Then Noah's cock was bathed in heat as Phan took him in, Phan's hands playing with Noah's ass and balls. Phan's constant moans and gasps added to the tease.

Noah felt himself groan as heat rushed to his hips, making his balls feel heavy and his cock ache. He let himself enjoy it for a moment before taking a deep breath and returning the favor. He took Phan in slowly, scrubbing Phan's shaft with his tongue and swallowing him down his throat.

In moments the room was awash in sounds from both of them, moans and grunts that Noah was only dimly aware of. It was hard to concentrate, and Noah found that the more keenly he felt his need, the more attention he gave to Phan, sucking harder and deeper even as Phan did the same.

Phan was hungry, his mouth devouring with an intensity that Noah hadn't felt from him in a while; fingers traced his inner thighs and up to his hole before moving quickly past, like Phan was fighting to play by the rules. The sounds he made grew louder, and Phan's hips moved faster, pushing his cock into Noah's mouth with increasing urgency.

Noah felt himself starting to thrust. He tried to hold back, he didn't want to push Phan too hard or take too much, but it felt so good. It was getting more and more difficult not to use his leverage and as he felt his balls pull up and his hips tighten he gave in, fucking the deep, wet heat of Phan's mouth without restraint.

He rubbed his fingers over Phan's hole as he took the thrusts, spreading him slightly and putting pressure against him but also careful not to break the rules. He wanted to, though; God, how he wanted to.

Phan went wild under him, thrusting and sucking and Noah knew that if he could have, Phan would have been begging for it, pleading. The cock in his mouth swelled even harder and Phan froze as he started to come, shooting down Noah's throat.

Noah's hips kept moving and he shoved an arm under Phan's hips and held them up off the mattress as he swallowed. He managed to hold his orgasm off until Phan had finished, then pulled his mouth away and gasped as he let himself spill. His thrusts became jerky and shallow and finally stopped altogether as the blood roared in his ears and his knees went to jelly. He might have screamed, or maybe he begged, he really didn't know what sounds had come from him as he filled Phan's mouth.

Phan swallowed and moaned and licked him clean, his hands petting Noah constantly, his entire body still twitching and moving under Noah until he finally moved to the side and let Noah collapse. "So sexy," Phan whispered, turning on his side and nuzzling Noah's balls. "You're amazing, you know."

"Your mouth is incredible," he said as he flopped on his side facing Phan. "I could just stay there forever -- well, I couldn't manage it, probably, but I'd like to, you know what I mean. Oh, God, I'm babbling. That was amazing. Jesus." He was still catching his breath. He shouldn't try to talk after sex, he always sounded like an idiot.

"Uh-huh." Phan just nodded and leaned close to kiss him softly, taking his time. By the time he was done he'd curled around Noah and was in full snuggle mode, with one hand cupping Noah's cock and balls gently. "God, I wanted you to finger me," he said with a sigh.

"Fuck, yeah. I so would have, too. And you, I thought for a minute I was going to have to stop you." Noah grinned and pulled Phan close.

Phan giggled, his breath still coming in pants, his hand heavy on Noah's balls. "Usually I like Sir's rules. Even when he's way over the... uh, the top." Phan giggled again.

Noah laughed. Phan's fingers were warm, and not particularly distracting. Yet. "He has a reason for this one, and I get it, but it's getting... uh, harder." Noah snickered.

Phan snorted. "That was bad, kitten. Naughty, even." He grinned and kissed Noah again. "What's the... hmm. What's he done to you that was really hard but so, so worth it? Sex, I mean -- I know the cage was hard, but that's not what I mean."

"Sex? Hm." Noah thought about it. "Well I remember early on, back when we were still kind of getting to know one another and we only saw each other on the weekends, there was this one week when he'd told me Monday morning before I headed off to work that I wasn't to touch myself at all, all week, except to take a piss or in the shower and then only to wash and nothing else, right?"

Noah remembered that week well. "So, of course, the whole idea of saving myself for a whole week for him, just because he wanted me to, well it was such a turn-on I was hard all the way to work." He laughed. "God, that was awful. So I managed it, somehow, and by Friday I had the worst case of blue balls I think I've ever had. I was so horny and so hard by the time the car got me to the farm that I walked in the door and made a complete fool of myself begging him to let me come, any way he wanted. I guess he pitied me because we ended up making love... long and slow, and it was amazing. His hands and his mouth and... Jesus, it was incredible."

Phan purred against him. "Denial; lovely trick of his. He used to put me on a no contact rule and then spend an hour or so telling me about his jerk off session in the shower."

Noah nodded. "Yeah, he tied me up and jerked off for me one day. Told me to watch him, learn him. It was hot as hell."

Phan wiggled again, his cock firming up against Noah's thigh. "The hardest times though, were when he got all... super Dom on me. Once, when I was a slave, we were out at the farm for a weekend. He'd had his breakfast and showered, then announced he had some work to do. So he got me hard, put a ring on me and tied me up. I mean, full bondage, with chains and straps and hands cuffed behind my back... and he jammed a plug in my ass and made me kneel by him. In his office downstairs."

Phan shifted again, his hand starting to massage Noah's balls. "He blindfolded me and I wasn't allowed to talk. He did his work, and all I had to do was stay hard, you know? Not allowed to come, just... be there. I don't know how long it was before he got up -- I thought he was done. But he got down on the floor and sucked me, noises and all, playing with the plug and sucking my dick..." Phan's breath was coming faster, his fingers starting to stroke Noah.

"And then the doorbell rang. He got up and let in whoever it was -- I never found out, but it was someone scene friendly, 'cause Sir brought him right into the office and they talked about something for a long time, and I was just... there. Like that. When the man left, Sir fucked me so hard I came twice."

Noah was stiff against Phan's palm. He loved that image -- Phan tied up and blindfolded, helpless -- and Tobias on the floor sucking on him. He groaned and before he could stop himself he'd pushed Phan onto his back and was hanging over him.

"God, I want to fuck you," he growled and shoved a knee between Phan's legs. "I know we can't; I know, but Christ, I want you so bad."

Phan nodded, his legs wrapping around Noah's waist. "Want you to do it," he said roughly. "Can almost feel it, my ass is aching for it." He rocked, rubbing them together. "Love you. Want you."

Noah leaned down to kiss him, trapping their cocks between their bodies. He closed his eyes and he could almost see them fucking, his cock buried deep inside Phan, pumping and thrusting. He ground his hips into Phan's and moaned. "Love you, Phan. Want you," he repeated. "Want you so fucking much."

Phan bucked up against him, his hands grabbing at Noah's ass and squeezing, the tips of his fingers brushing close to Noah's hole. He was panting against Noah's skin, the smell of sex strong around them. "Fuck me hard," he whispered. "Think about it. Pushing into me, filling me. Oh, God." Phan moaned and bucked again.

"Yes!" Noah thrust, rubbing off on Phan's belly. He let himself get lost in the fantasy to the point where he could almost feel Phan's ass tight around him. He grunted and opened his eyes to watch Phan's face. "Take it, baby, you feel it? I'm shoving into you, fucking you, deep and hard. Oh, yeah. Oh, God, so good." He had one arm braced by Phan's head and the other tangled in the sheets. "Uh! Yes!"

Phan shook under him, his back arching. "Harder, Noah. God, more. Fuck me, need it -- need you -- so much!" His eyes were glazed, their cocks leaking and slipping, and Noah could feel Phan's prick throb. "Fuck me!" Phan cried out, the tendons in his neck standing out as he strained toward Noah.

Phan was beautiful. Noah loved the way his whole body begged for release. Every muscle, everything Phan had ached for Noah to give him what he needed. "You're gorgeous," he whispered, panting heavily as he continued to grind, pressing their bodies close together. "So tight, baby, so good." his voice was rough and tight, and it was getting harder to breathe as the fire in his belly made its way lower. "Come for me, Phan, show me."

"Oh, God, oh, God," Phan chanted, his eyes drifting closed. "Oh, fuck!" His eyes flew open again and he stared at Noah. "There, there, there, now!" A gush of warm fluid spurted between them and Phan cried out Noah's name as he came.

Phan's eyes alone could have pushed him over. They were deep and trusting and hot, and Noah had no way of hanging on once Phan started to go. He gulped air and twisted his body slightly getting in one more perfect thrust before he fell, his climax tumbling from him out of control, mingling with Phan's spunk and soaking them both.

"Oh, *God*," Phan breathed. "I have *got* to work on my connection to reality. I almost felt that."

"Fuck reality." Noah grinned and leaned down to kiss Phan. When he pulled away he looked down at the sticky pool of come between them. "Damn, that was messy."

"Did we get any on the sheets?"

Noah looked around critically. "If we're very careful, the sheets might be safe."

Phan nodded. "You be careful. I can't move."

"Oh, that makes me so smug, you have no idea." Noah leaned down and kissed him again. He could still taste a little of his own seed on Phan's tongue.

"Whatever," Phan grinned at him. "Come on, kitten. You spilled the cream, you get to clean it up..."

"Har har. I beg your pardon, but half this mess is yours. In fact, I think you made a mess first, didn't you?"

Phan nodded. "I did. And then you made a mess -- and it was your idea to make a mess on Sir's bed, don't forget. And the mess is on me, it's not like I can get up." He looked rather smug about that, actually.

Noah laughed. "Then I guess you're stuck here. And believe me, if we're going to get in trouble for being naughty in Sir's bed, the fact that it was my idea isn't going to help you."

Phan tilted his head and stretched. "You don't think?"

"No," Noah said coyly. He wasn't convinced what he was saying was true, but it was fun to tease Phan in any case. "Because you had a choice; I certainly didn't force you to be a bad boy."

Giggling, Phan just shook his head. "Noah. I'm lying here with cold spunk all over me. Go get a fucking cloth, will you? Then we can curl up in the bed and wait for Sir, and maybe get off once more." He wiggled his eyebrows outrageously.

"I was enjoying torturing you." Noah stuck out his tongue and slid off the bed carefully. He stomach was slick, too, though not quite as soaked as Phan's was. "I don't know if I can get off again. I saw lots of little stars that last time," he muttered, as he went into Tobias' bathroom. He spent a few minutes cleaning himself up before returning to bed with a damp cloth for Phan. He cleaned Phan's stomach and chest carefully, and

said, "A nap is sounding so good."

"Uh-huh." Phan barely moved as Noah cleaned him up, his eyes blinking slowly. "You and me, curled up in bed -- he'll like that, yeah?"

"I think he might." Noah smiled and moved away taking the cloth back to the bathroom. He probably would. Either Tobias was going to like it, or he was going to banish them both to the playroom and beat their butts.

Either way, it was a win/win situation.

## Chapter 27

Tobias bought the flowers on the way home. It wasn't really an occasion that demanded flowers, but he did want something specific, and he wouldn't order Noah to do it. Also, the flowers would be a cue to Phan as well, and reduce the need for any awkward talks. He hoped.

When he walked in the door, Phan met him with eyes down and a welcome smile on his face. As he took Tobias' coat he eyed the flowers and the smile became a smirk.

"Plans for the evening, sir?" he asked, all innocence.

"Yes, boy," Tobias said evenly, trying not to smile himself. "Is he home?"

"Not yet. Do you want me to leave?" The question was offered with an air of genuine willingness to be helpful; Tobias knew very well that if he said yes, Phan would happily take himself out of the house for however long Tobias needed.

"No, that's okay," he said, walking into the living room with his flowers in hand. Noah had been back to work for only a few days, and Tobias had had a rising need with every morning he'd left in uniform. Seeing him come home and take it off was getting to him. "The playroom is nicely soundproofed," he added to Phan.

Phan nodded. "Can I go to my room? Watch TV?"

"Sure."

"Can I watch porn?"

Tobias raised an eyebrow. "If you want."

"Can I have sugar?" Phan asked slyly, starting to bounce.

"Hell, no!" Tobias grinned and pulled Phan down onto the couch with him. "Have you had any already, boy?"

"Me, sir?"

"Yes, you!"

"Can I watch porn and get off?" Phan wiggled against him, neatly avoiding the sugar question.

Tobias was laughing, a lap full of wiggly, sugar-hyped Phan. "No."

"Sir!"



The doorbell rang.

Seconds later there was a key in the door and Noah came in, laughing. "That damn thing," he muttered. "Hi honey! I'm home!" he called out from the foyer.

Tobias dumped Phan to the floor. "Porn. Jerking off, no toys."

Phan beamed up at him. "In here, Ricky!" he yelled.

"Oh, Lucy! I'm getting rid of the single beds!" Noah laughed and danced into the living room. His eyes widened when he saw Tobias. "Oh, shit. You're home."

Tobias raised an eyebrow. "And waiting for a proper greeting, for you to finally accept the doorbell, and I'm thinking I should be home early more often just to keep up with you two."

Phan, he noticed, just sat the floor watching avidly.

For a moment Noah looked like he'd just swallowed glass. He went right to his knees. "I'm sorry, sir. I'm glad to see you home early, I was only surprised because you've been working so hard lately."

Tobias bit his tongue. Hard. Sometimes it was fun reminding them who was in charge. "Got you something, pet," he said, stroking Noah's hair.

"Thank you, sir." Noah's tone had changed completely. "Though I'm sure I don't deserve it after that entrance."

Ah, well that was a sticking point. He didn't mind them having fun -- hell, he was thrilled to bits that they did, and that they were so easy with each other. But he'd started something, and there was really only one way to get them both out of it.

"I deserve it, though," he said, passing the flowers to Noah. "I deserve something rather specific, actually."

Noah stared at the flowers a moment, then took them and stood up. "Mmm. Iris. I love iris." He stepped close to Tobias and kissed him, exhibiting, as usual, his uncanny ability to shift gears on the fly.

"Oh, good," Tobias said with a smile. "I have a request, sweetheart. The flowers are basically so it's clear that you don't have to do this."

"I think that's my cue to scoot," Phan said, standing up. "See you, kitten. Have a good night, sir." He paused long enough to kiss them both and danced to the stairs chanting, "Porn, porn, porn, no toys, porn, porn, porn, no toys..."

Noah watched him go and shook his head. "It's his fault, really, I never used to be so giddy." He looked back at Tobias smiling. "Baby, I'll do anything you want."

Tobias bit his lip and then bit the bullet; he'd been needing too long to let it slide. "Okay," he said, taking Noah's hand and bringing it to his crotch, to his already -- still and frequently -- hard cock. "I want to go upstairs to the playroom. I want you in uniform. I want you to stay dressed while you rim me until I beg, and then I want you to fuck me hard." His breath was catching near the end of his request, little shocks shooting up his spine. He'd be lucky to make it upstairs, really.

Noah stared at him for a moment, then swallowed hard. "Are you trying to make me come right here in the

living room?" Noah gave Tobias' bulge a firm squeeze.

"Maybe I won't be alone then," Tobias said, surprised his voice wasn't shaking. He felt like his legs were going to give out.

Noah cleared his throat and stepped back. "Turn around, face the wall," he ordered with a gesture in the direction he wanted Tobias to move. "Now."

Tobias blinked slowly and moved, his hands coming up to brace the wall at shoulder height. "Don't forget Phan," he said softly. "But God, don't stop."

"Hm. Phan, right." Noah slapped him on the ass. "Upstairs. Move it!"

Tobias shuddered and moved. He didn't look back, didn't even try to do anything but get upstairs as quickly as he could, Noah chasing him step-for-step all the way. Phan's door was closed, Tobias noted as he passed, the horrid soundtrack of some porn turned up exceptionally loud and Phan's laughter spilling out. Tobias grinned and went into the playroom, waiting for Noah to tell him what to do next.

Noah slammed the door to the playroom and turned the lock loudly. "Now, then. Face the wall." He pointed again, this time to the wall with all the chains hung neatly side by side. "Hands flat, legs spread, eyes forward."

Tobias could barely breathe, but he did it, only thankful he was in work clothes and not a suit. The thought of taking the time to deal with real clothes when all he wanted was to be manhandled was too much. He put his hands on the wall again, at shoulder height, and spread his legs.

Noah stepped up behind him, pressing close and talking in his ear. "What have you got for me?" he asked, patting Tobias down in a more risqué manner than was absolutely necessary. His fingers paused on Tobias' cock. "This feels dangerous." Deftly, he opened Tobias' jeans.

Tobias gasped. "It's not a sharp object," he pointed out.

"I'll have to see that for myself. Legs together," Noah ordered, and as soon as Tobias complied, Noah slid his jeans and boxers down to his ankles. He made quick work of Tobias' shoes, tapping one ankle and then the other so Tobias could step out of the jeans as well. "That's better," he growled, standing.

"Uh-huh," was about all Tobias could say, his breathing labored. He stared at the wall and tried to calm himself. It simply would not do to come all over the wall as soon as Noah touched him.

Noah ran fingers over Tobias' ass, then kicked his legs open wide again. He ran his fingers over Tobias' hips and around to his chest, pinching each nipple before relieving Tobias of his shirt. "You smell like horses and sweat and hay. It's fucking hot." Noah rumbled approvingly and tossed the shirt aside. He moved around to Tobias' side giving Tobias a good view of him in his uniform, and reached for his cock. "Not so dangerous after all, is it?"

Tobias shook his head, his hips pushing his cock through Noah's fist. "No," he moaned. "Oh, God."

Noah leaned toward him. "How close are you?"

"Too close. Sorry." Tobias moaned again and tried to still his hips, rather ineffectually.

"Don't be, I'll get you up again, believe me." He slid to his knees between Tobias and the wall, and then

Tobias felt damp heat as Noah took him down his throat.

Tobias groaned and looked down as Noah sucked him off in full uniform. "Oh, fuck, yes," he hissed, leaning into the wall and thrusting into Noah's mouth quickly. "Going to come," he warned. He could feel it racing up and down his spine, the anticipation of days suddenly coalescing in his balls.

Noah reached up and grabbed his ass, and moaned around him between thrusts when he could get air. His throat was loose and open and he sucked Tobias down greedily. Tobias grunted and came, his eyes closing and his hands flexing on the wall. "Oh, fuck, yes," he panted, thrusting lazily as he finished shooting. His limbs were lax, his blood was still roaring in his ears, and he had the vague impression that his hunger wasn't at all satisfied.

Thank God. He'd been fantasizing about this for far too long to just get sucked off.

Noah licked him clean and looked up at him. He grinned and stood so his head popped up between Tobias' arms. "Better, baby?"

Nodding, Tobias kissed him, tasting himself and seeking out more with his tongue. "Thank you," he whispered. "Love you."

"More than anything," Noah said returning the sentiment, and the kiss. He didn't linger too long though, ducking out from between Tobias' arms before either of them could get enough. "You know what I want?" Noah asked, his voice getting stronger again. He paced just behind Tobias, close enough for his clothing to brush past his ass.

Tobias shook his head. "No."

"I want you to ask me for everything you want. Ask, request politely, beg if you must." Noah stopped next to him again and pressed his erection into Tobias' thigh. "Feel that?"

"Yes." Tobias nodded and licked his lips. "I... yes."

"I should hope so." Noah breathed in his ear again. "It's your fault. You do that to me, all the fucking time. You walk by me smelling musky and like you've been working hard, my knees get weak. This bad boy stands up if you say my name right. I can hardly watch you shave without getting stiff. You're the fucking God of my cock."

Tobias shuddered and turned his head slightly. "As it should be," he said, trying to sound matter-of-fact but missing. "And... ditto." He could feel his cock stir, his heart pounding as Noah roused him again.

Noah snorted softly and moved away. "Indeed." He moved back into Tobias' line of vision. "So what is it about the uniform? Is it the fit? The cuffs? What?" Noah was fishing, he knew, trying to make him talk. He knew damn well it wasn't the handcuffs.

Tobias swallowed. "The fit. The... authority." He looked at the wall and breathed as his cock didn't so much stir as twitch. "The masculinity of it, and the way you become something untouchable when you're wearing it. It's... taboo. A boundary I shouldn't cross. So I have to."

"Ah," Noah grinned and leaned his back on the wall. "But you can't unless I let you. You love that, don't you? The one thing about me that you still need my permission to have. The one part of me I don't have to give you." He reached out a hand and played with one of Tobias' nipples.

Tobias nodded sharply. "Yes. I *like* having to ask. I like it being separate." He moaned softly as Noah brushed over this nipple. "More?"

"Plenty more, love." Noah pinched him hard.

"God, yes," he hissed, arching into the touch. His palm slipped on the wall and he shifted his weight.

"Turn around, back to the wall, hands at the small of your back." Noah pushed off the wall again and watched him turn, then stepped in front of him and kissed him.

Tobias opened his mouth wide, letting Noah in and trying to devour him in return. He loved Noah so much, loved that they could do this. He tried to say thank you in that kiss, his mind scattered and overwhelmed as his arousal grew again, his hunger stoked once more.

Noah's fingers found his balls and fondled him as they kissed; he flicked and tugged on a nipple with his other hand. "Want you hard before I give you what I know you want, baby. Want you wanting it," Noah whispered between kisses.

"Wanted it for days now," Tobias admitted, having to fight to keep his hands behind him. "Want it so bad, love." He felt himself surge at the neediness in his voice, the thought of Noah in him making his blood slam south.

"Yeah, that's it." Noah tugged on his cock, purring against his lips. "I know you want it. Ask me again."

Tobias licked his lips again, searching for the taste of Noah. "I want you to lick me," he whispered. "I want you to lick my ass, tongue fuck me until I beg for you. I want your cock in me." His eyes fluttered as a groan ripped through him. "Please."

"Oh, yeah. I'll do that for you. You're making my cock ache." Noah stepped back again. He turned and surveyed the room. "Over the massage table. Now." He snapped his fingers at Tobias.

Tobias took a deep breath and walked as steadily as he could to the table, and draped himself over it. "Remind me to put mirrors in here," he said, looking around.

"Ooh. Kinky. I love it. In fact..." Noah stepped around the table to the armoire and opened the doors, on the inside of which was a full length mirror. Noah angled the door until he could see Tobias in it. "How's that? Not the full effect, but something to watch." He walked back over to the table.

Tobias stared and nodded. He'd be able to see -- not Noah's tongue, not even his cock when he finally, finally fucked Tobias, but the rest he'd see. His own face, his body... Noah's uniform. Noah's face. "Oh, God," he groaned, his hips shifting restlessly. "Please."

"I think I've been very accommodating so far. From now on, my first answer to everything you ask for is going to be 'no.' You want it, you're going to have to convince me you need it." Noah stepped up behind Tobias and kicked his legs open wider, completely ignoring the mirror.

Whimpering, Tobias nodded again. "Okay." He took another breath and looked in the mirror for a long moment before dropping his head down. "Please lick me," he said softly, into the massage table. "I've been wanting to ask for so long, watching you dress in the mornings, seeing you go off to work. I've been thinking about it for days, jerking off thinking about it, dreaming at night about your tongue in my ass. Why do you think I'm all over you as soon as I get home? Need it so much, sweetheart."

Noah raised an eyebrow and adjusted himself through his uniform pants. "That's the stuff, love." He braced his hands on either side of Tobias' hips and drew a circle on Tobias' lower back with his tongue. "I dress in your room because I know you like to watch." Teeth pinched him, moving slowly south. Noah moved both hands to stretch him open even farther, and then his tongue found the sensitive skin around Tobias' hole.

"Oh, God!" Tobias yelled, the one thought he had flying out of his head. Little wonder Noah teased him every morning; it was an elaborate game, and if its conclusion was either of them getting fucked... well, that was fine with Tobias.

Noah's tongue lapped around in a circle, and Tobias shifted his legs, tried to draw Noah where he wanted him most. A glance in the mirror showed him to look as utterly depraved as he felt, his ass going higher in the air as he went up on his toes. "Fuck," he moaned, unable to look away. "Oh, fuck."

Noah hummed against his ass, teasing him further. His tongue flicked and circled and finally, mercifully, slid over his hole once and then again, until Noah settled into a rhythm.

Tobias screamed once and clamped his mouth shut, every fiber in his body bent to concentrating on that one spot. It felt more intense than ever before, the soft, velvet heat and wet promise of it making him tingle. There were spots of black dancing in front of his eyes before he remembered to breathe, and air rushed into his lungs in a long whoosh. "Oh, God!" he cried out again. "Please, oh, God, please, more! Anything, just more! Fuck me with it, please!"

There was a stranger in the mirror, getting his ass eaten by a cop in uniform. A stranger with wild eyes and a rigid cock, his legs spread wide and humping air; desperate and horribly selfish, but so far gone there wasn't going to be any stopping until he'd had his fill. "Please, Noah," Tobias begged, watching and moving. "More."

Noah pulled away briefly and bit Tobias in the ass before looking at him over the length of his back. "No." He licked the spot he'd just bitten, babied it and soothed the skin, but he didn't go back to what he'd been doing.

"Please," Tobias begged, his gaze fixed on the mirror. "I ache. I want this so much. I hardly slept last night thinking about it." His voice was rough, his body not stopping its restless sway as he talked. "I almost--"

Noah looked up, still ignoring the mirror. "Almost? Almost what, baby? Tell me." Noah's voice was husky and warm, and his breath seemed a little thin.

"Almost fucked myself this morning after you left," Tobias admitted, color rising in his cheeks. "With that blue dildo in my shower."

Noah groaned. Tobias was certain of it. "I'm going to make it so much better for you, baby, so worth the wait," he said, returning to what he'd been doing, only this time he pushed his tongue into Tobias every third or fourth pass over his hole. He moaned, one hand leaving Tobias' ass and disappearing below the table.

Tobias' back arched, and he called out again, his eyes closing almost against his will. "Yes, yes, yes," he chanted. "Oh, God, so good, thank you." There was heat building in him, little prickles like sparks settling on his skin. His ass felt like it couldn't get any higher, he couldn't possibly be any more of a slut, but he knew very well he'd do whatever it took to get what he wanted. "God, yes," he gasped as Noah's tongue slid into him again.

Noah picked up the pace until his tongue was thrusting into Tobias steadily, fucking him over and over, pushing in and slipping out again and again. He made hungry sounds, moans and grunts that betrayed Noah's

own desires and his fingers came back to grip both cheeks again and spread them wide, digging into Tobias' skin.

Tobias groaned, beyond words as he felt, saw, heard. He rocked his hips, moved and fucked back, trying to get more and more, his cock throbbing. "Fuck me," he whimpered. "God, please!"

Noah grunted and stopped, actually pushing away from Tobias a couple of steps. "No," he growled. Tobias heard him pant and then the sound of Noah's zipper as he kept his promise.

"Please, love," Tobias begged, almost sobbing. "I need you, need your cock. So ready, so empty. Fuck me hard, Noah, fill me and fuck me and make me scream. I need you in me."

"Jesus, when you talk like that..." Noah stepped close again, running one hand over Tobias' ass. The other reached under the table and came back with a tube of lube. He popped it open and hissed as he stroked himself with it, slicking his cock. "Want you, baby. Gonna take you like you want, like I need. Gonna fuck you so hard." Fingers landed on his hips again and dug into his skin and then Noah was pushing into him with a groan.

Tobias stared at the mirror, unable to look away, unwilling to miss a heartbeat of watching Noah take him. He was impossibly handsome in his uniform, his face tight with pleasure, and Tobias found himself even more taken with the image than he had been when Noah was lower, his tongue buried in Tobias' needy ass.

There was no tongue in him now; his hole was stretched taut around the thick cock filling him, so sensitive to the friction that even the lube was acting as yet another stimulation, its cool comfort heating rapidly as Noah pushed forward, claiming him.

"Thank you," Tobias said, over and over. "Thank you, fuck me. God, yes, so good." He knew he was raving, but he wasn't able to stop, his own prick pounding out his pulse as he tried to get more of Noah into him.

Noah sunk deep and stayed there a moment, getting comfortable and widening his stance as he stared down at Tobias' back. After a couple of deep breaths he groaned and his brow furrowed. "Hang on, baby," he growled and then he started to thrust again. He took Tobias hard and fast, pounding into him and holding onto his hips for leverage.

Tobias' hands scrabbled on the table top, looking for leverage so he could push back, but they slipped away. "Christ." He was panting, his breath coming in gasps when he remembered to breathe at all. He was soaring, crying out every time Noah pegged his gland. Grunting and gasping, he rode Noah's cock and tried to spread his legs more, feeling like he was being split open. "More," he demanded. "Everything!"

Noah didn't refuse him this time. He reached up and grabbed Tobias by one shoulder, bending his shorter body partly over Tobias' back and slammed deep, deeper, grinding and pinning him down to the table with his will more than his weight. He was breathing hard and Tobias felt him panting, hot air against across his spine. Apart from the grunts and harsh gasps for air, Noah didn't have much to say.

Tobias opened his mouth to scream, but the sound deserted him as he began to come, his climax exploding through him and catching him unaware. He'd meant to warn Noah, signal him, anything... but instead he just froze, his cock spurting without so much as a touch as Noah pounded into him.

Noah gasped, and froze with him for a moment. "Jesus. Fucking hell," he groaned. He didn't wait for Tobias to finish but picked up fucking him right where he'd left off. He ducked his head against Tobias' back and whimpered almost pitifully, stabbing into him with short, shallow strokes. When he finally came, he sobbed with it, throwing his head back and babbling. "Love you! Oh, God, yes, baby, so beautiful. Love you so

much."

Tobias nodded, unable to speak, unable to breathe. He was lost in the mirror, watching Noah come, watching himself shudder through the aftershocks. He laid his head on the massage table and trembled, floating.

Noah finally relaxed. He lay across Tobias' back and hips, and Tobias could feel Noah's buttons, his belt and his badge press into his skin. In the mirror, Tobias could see that Noah's eyes were closed and he was smiling slightly.

"Thank you, sweetheart," Tobias whispered, unsurprised at the raspiness of his voice. "I love you." He let his eyes drift closed, wishing they could stay like that, with Noah in him, over him, for a great deal longer than he knew it would be possible.

"I know you do." Noah turned his head and kissed his shoulders. He sighed and laughed softly. "I'm so glad I bolted this thing to the floor."

"God, me too," Tobias said weakly. "I'm buying mirrors. Lots of mirrors. Just so you know."

Noah grinned widely. "Works for me. We can hang black velvet over them for when you don't want them." He put a hand on Tobias' hip and pulled out with a soft moan. "How do you feel?"

"Better than I have in days," Tobias said honestly. "I've been... distracted." He wiggled slightly, pulling Noah's arm closer and wrapping himself in his boy.

"I can't believe you waited so long." Noah pressed close again and nuzzled Tobias' neck.

Tobias sighed and closed his eyes. "I can't either, now. I don't like asking -- imposing something like this. It's frivolous."

Noah shook his head. "Tell me how this is an imposition," he teased. "Please."

Tobias opened one eye. "It was months before you'd fuck me, Noah. Longer before you stopped being nervous about it. I know very well that it's not one of your favorite things, and it's outside of our... contracted obligations. It's something just for me."

Noah hummed thoughtfully. "I was nervous about it. I was nervous about a lot of things. I never thought of myself in this light, is all. I never saw myself holding the reins, and I certainly never pictured you giving them up. It was a lot for me to process." He kissed Tobias' ear, speaking quietly. "But now, I mean, please don't think I don't enjoy this. Sure, it's something for you. And you do a lot of things just for me. I love you, I love to be able to give you exactly what you want. Whatever it is. I get off on being what you need."

Tobias smiled. "I love you. I love being with you. I love talking to you, I love flogging you, I love fucking you. And I love it when you.... this." He sighed and shifted again. "And I'd really love a bath. I got rubber duckies."

Noah laughed and nipped his ear before lifting his weight off Tobias' back. "Sounds great. I really want out of this uniform, it stinks."

"It smells wonderful to me," Tobias said with a grin. "Trust me on that." He pushed himself off the table and stood on wobbly legs, feeling the trickle of Noah's come slide down his thigh. "God, that was good," he said dreamily.

"It was." Noah smiled at him. "Let's go start a bath and put you in it before your legs collapse."

Tobias nodded and let Noah lead him to the safe room. They swung the mirrored cabinet door closed as they passed, but not before Tobias recognized himself where the stranger had been -- goofy grin and all.



## Chapter 28

He was dreaming. He knew it had to be a dream, because it was still dark out, and he hadn't made it home until after three; there wasn't any way he'd be waking up yet. The birth cycle had finished, thank God, but he'd been called out to help with a herd of horses that had been fed bad grain. Hours of dealing with colic and hoping for the best had wrung him out, even more than he had been.

Tobias had come home to a dark house, his boys curled up together on the floor by his bed. They were in their chains, obviously having locked themselves in for him, and the room stank once more of sex. He was getting tired of missing them. Once more they'd sought what they needed with each other, and while he was glad they could, it only underlined how much he'd been neglecting them.

It felt like weeks since he'd been able to give either of them his full attention. Far too long since he'd been able to focus on their needs and meet them fully. His boys were forgiving, were loving and respectful, but the fact of the matter was, he missed them.

He was dreaming. It was dark, and there was the sound of metal chains rattling, voices talking, and then warmth behind him, around him. He tried to sit up, but a gentle voice shushed him, warm hands eased him back, and he could hear a whisper telling him, "It's okay, sir. Sleep. We're here."

Tobias slept.

When he woke up the room was bright; too bright. With a groan he sat up, alone in bed, to find Phantom kneeling on the floor beside him. "What time is it?" he asked, blinking.

"Almost two," Phan said, his face worried.

"Oh, crap!" Tobias threw off the covers, but Phan shook his head.

"Stay, sir. Deidre called, and you're to rest."

Tobias shook his head and reached for the phone, calling the clinic even as he struggled to sit on the edge of the bed.

"Really, it's okay," Dee assured him when she got on the line. "We're on it -- me, Nancy and Luke. We hauled in a couple of students, too."

Tobias sighed and leaned back, listening as Phan moved around the room. "We have to talk," he said, exhaustions sneaking over him again. "Soon."

"We do," she agreed. "It might be time to reevaluate a few things." She didn't sound upset, just tired, like him.

"Soon," Tobias said again. Sleep was calling him back to bed. "I have to go. See you tomorrow."

"Turn off your pager," she advised before disconnecting.

Tobias was asleep before he could manage it.

When he woke up again it was dark. He could smell supper -- at least, he assumed it was supper -- and he could hear Phan and Noah talking in the living room. He wanted so badly to go to them, to have a meal with them, and just relax. He missed that. He missed so much. The previous Tuesday, when Noah and Phan had their night, he'd gone to the farm and slept until his pager went off the next morning; he hadn't even made it home.

Something had to give, and he was afraid it was going to be him.

Without turning on the light he reached for the phone again and dialed the one person who might have an idea about how to prevent that.

"Hello?" Bradford's voice was cheerful and friendly.

"It's me."

"Tobias? Uh oh. You sound like hell, are you sick?"

"Tired. I think I just slept for about eighteen hours."

Bradford whistled softly. "Can't have been the boys...?"

Tobias snorted. "No. Work. I think I'm drowning, Bradford. There's just... too much. Work is insane, I can't remember the last time I took Noah to his limits, Phan's... well, Phan's doing well, but he's not being pushed."

Bradford sighed over the wire. "There's no need to drown, Tobias, there's always a solution."

"Sure, but I'm too tired to think of one," Tobias said, only half joking. "What time is it, anyway?"

"Close to eight. Why don't we have dinner tomorrow night?"

"Sure. Is tomorrow Thursday?"

"Jesus, you really are tired."

Tobias nodded. "Yes," he sighed. "I really am. And hungry, and lonely. I'm going to go see my boys. Tomorrow, then? At the club or your place?"

"Let's make it my place so we won't cause a stir, shall we? Any time is fine." Bradford's voice sounded soothing, the way he might speak to Nikki. "Go on and be with your boys, and we'll wrestle this out tomorrow."

"Okay." Tobias sat up with a struggle. "God, when did I get this old?"

"Right about the same time I did," Bradford teased. "Goodnight."

"Goodnight. And thank you." Tobias hung up and forced himself out of bed, grabbing only his robe to wear as he went to find his boys.



## Chapter 29

When Tobias got to Bradford's he was seriously considering apologizing. Another long night's sleep and a quiet day had put him in better spirits, and it was really only the chance to visit that had brought him out after all.

Nikki met him at the door and took him to Bradford's gentlemen's parlor, a small and very stately room with a fireplace and lots of dark wood and burgundy leather seating. Bradford met him as he came in, offering a hand in greeting. "Welcome." He smiled. "Still drowning?"

"Above the waterline," Tobias said with a smile. "Never pay attention to me when I've just woken up, all right?"

"Ah, no. On the contrary, a man's mind is at its most uncensored when still addled by sleep. Drink?" Bradford crossed the room to his liquor cabinet.

"And by drink as well," Tobias agreed with a wink. "And yes, please. Maybe if I have one we can get me back to that state." He made a face. "Not that I want to do that."

"That wasn't part of my plan," Bradford said casually, pouring Tobias a glass and bringing it over to him. "Please, have a seat."

Tobias went to sit near the fireplace, preferring the overstuffed chairs. "If you say so. How have you been?" he asked, swirling his drink before sipping.

"I've been busy, but all in good ways. In addition to those summer workshops I told you about a few months ago, I'm working on some new endeavors for the club for the fall. Nikki and I have had some intense sessions lately, as well." Bradford sat in a chair near Tobias. "It's been good. I hired a third bartender, and two more waiters, too."

Tobias' eyes widened. "Very impressive," he said honestly. "Things are going well."

"Very well; in some respects, too well. I've had more referrals and applications for membership in the last two months than I had all last year. The dining room has become strictly reservation only and is nearly full every night. Business has been truly overwhelming." He shook his head and sipped his drink, grinning. "I'm thrilled."

Tobias laughed. "I bet you are. Running a Top-heavy club was a good idea -- there are always way more bottoms than Tops around; this is the place to come. Are you getting enough Tops? Good ones?"

"To be honest, I haven't had time to review many of the applications, I had thought to ask you for some help with them, but I see you're entirely too buried yourself." Bradford crossed his legs. "I've simply gone to a waiting list."

"Is that entirely wise?" Tobias asked, raising an eyebrow. "If they have to wait too long, they'll go

elsewhere. Might lose some good players that way. Exclusivity is a fine line to dance upon."

"It certainly is," Bradford agreed. "Wise or not, I am only one person and there are only twenty-four hours in the day. I'm being forced to admit that I might need some help, if that isn't a blow to one's ego." He smiled at Tobias. "But you are not here to discuss my schedule, hm?"

"I have no idea why I'm here, honestly. For dinner, perhaps?"

Bradford laughed. "Ah yes, under the pretext of dinner."

Tobias sighed. "I'm busy. You understand. I got a little overwhelmed, but things will be fine, I'm sure." He leaned back in his chair and sipped his drink again, thinking about the club and how wonderful it was to see the place blossoming.

Bradford shook his head. "You'll end up back there again," he cautioned. "You're stretched pretty thin, don't you think?" The man scratched thoughtfully at where his beard would be if he had one, which he never had. Day or night, Bradford was always impeccably clean-shaven.

"Next spring," Tobias said lightly. "This year was bad because of the move, taking Phan on, going to Paris..."

"Tobias." Bradford interrupted. He leaned forward in his chair, holding Tobias' eyes. "Who do you think you're kidding? Talk."

Tobias stared at him for a long moment and then more or less collapsed. "I can't do this," he said softly. "I can't... be what they need. It's too much and I'm messing everything up."

"Two subs under contract is very difficult," Bradford agreed. "They'll tolerate the current situation for a while, they like each other well enough, but they're both there for you, really. They will start to feel neglected if you can't be available to them."

"I know." He did. "And there's the farm, almost forgotten -- my father must be spinning in his grave -- my practice, the stables, everything. I'm... drowning." He stared at his glass and emptied it with one swallow. "I think Dee wants me out."

Bradford studied him for a long moment. "So get out."

"And do what? Spend my days spanking the boys and looking out the window at my farm?" Tobias snorted. "Hardly likely. Or worse -- we're in town for Noah's job, I'd spend my days watching paint dry. Literally -- Phan's into acrylics now."

Bradford looked at Tobias thoughtfully, then stood and went to the door. He opened it and seemed unsurprised to find Nikki kneeling quietly. "Nikki darling, run and bring me the white folder on my desk, will you? Quickly now."

Nikki stood up and hurried off.

"How is it you define yourself, Tobias?"

"I try very hard not to," Tobias said dryly. "But as you're going to push me for an answer, I'll give you what you already know. I'm a Dom. I am a Master, if you want to use the term. I am also a veterinarian, the heir of a large fortune, and a snob. What are you?"

Bradford met his gaze evenly. "I'm a Dom and a Master and the proprietor of a very successful establishment, and I'm not nearly as defensive as you are."

"You're also not coming home to boys who're spending their nights getting each other off because you're simply not around."

"No, I'm not. Because I was fortunate enough to be able to make what I am my career, and so I am never forced to make such choices."

Nikki reappeared with an enormously overstuffed folder and handed it to Bradford before kneeling outside the door again. Bradford thanked the boy and then quite casually closed the door in his face.

He walked toward Tobias and held the folder out to him. "Being a vet has nothing to do with how you have chosen to live your life. It's a distraction and a source of stress and guilt. Take a look at these."

"I like being a veterinarian," Tobias protested. He took the file, however, and peered in. "What is it? Applications? Christ, there must sixty of the things. Are we importing people from the west coast now?"

"I like that 'we.'" Bradford grinned, taking a seat. "I couldn't tell you where they're from; I haven't had a moment to look them over. Those are the potential Doms, only. The potential subs take up three folders that size. And all are potential *members* that I am going to lose if someone doesn't take the time to meet them and evaluate them."

"Ah, so I should give up my practice and spend my days interviewing people. No thanks." Tobias put the folder down. "Lots of luck, though."

"Well, that would be one of your responsibilities, yes." Bradford finished his drink and set it aside. "What I'm trying to tell you, Tobias, and apparently too subtly, is that I need a business partner. This establishment, and the plans I want to put in place, are too big for me to manage on my own anymore. I need someone I can trust. And oddly enough, I don't trust anyone as much as I do you."

"Oddly enough?" Tobias smiled. "Thanks. I think." He looked at his glass and asked, "May I have another? I have a feeling I'll need it. And where are your cigarettes?"

Bradford pointed to a slim silver case on the table beside Tobias' chair. "I'll bring the bottle over." He made his way to the liquor cabinet again. "You haven't asked me what my plans are for the fall," he said casually.

"I'm afraid to ask," Tobias said, reaching for the cigarettes. "Tell me, Bradford, what are your plans for the fall?"

"Well, this business partner that I am desperately seeking will of course be a top-rate Dom," Bradford said with a wink, offering Tobias the bottle. "Someone who is quite capable of training other Doms -- young ones, older ones with a particular skill they'd like to learn, members who I think need to work on something, you get the idea."

Tobias chuckled. "Of course. Training could be a thing -- special workshops, weekends, all that fun stuff. Where are you planning to buy space? The club can hardly hold something like that. Especially if you have all these new members trying to book rooms."

"Funny you should ask." Bradford looked at Tobias. "The ideal candidate for this position would have access to enough open space that events like workshops and weekend intensives would be possible."

"The farm," Tobias said coolly. "And just how long have you been planning this?"

"It's never been a plan, Tobias, it's a thought." Bradford smiled. "Just an idea. Something I've been tossing around for almost a year now."

"That long?" Tobias asked, surprised. "Good thing we didn't talk then -- the place was covered in dust."

"Actually, that was when I got the idea to put it and you to better use, but then Noah came along and I thought better of pitching it to you."

Tobias nodded, thoughtfully. "He needed work out there," he agreed. "And he still does. So does Phan. But there's a lot of time..." He stood up and took a long drag off the cigarette in his fingers. "Let me think for a couple of minutes."

"You've got most of the summer. Think as long as you like. Mull it over, talk to your boys. Get your feet wet instructing at my summer workshops. I'm going ahead with the plans to some extent in any case, it's only a question of whether you're in, or if I have to dig up the next best thing to the perfect instructor." Bradford helped himself to a cigarette as well.

"Yes, I'll have to talk to them." He walked a few more steps, mulling it over, questions coming to him fast and furious. "Partnership?" he asked, almost absently.

"Absolutely." Bradford nodded, watching him. "It would be insulting to offer you anything less."

"So, how would that work? Would I buy in? Would the stables be part of the club?" He stopped and shook his head. "This is big, Bradford."

"Too big?" Bradford eyed him.

"I don't know yet. There's a lot to think about -- aside from me leaving my practice. Noah's job, the land around the house, what Phan would do. What exactly I'd be responsible for." He shrugged. "Maybe it's just a lot all at once."

"We can discuss how you want it to work. The stables are your private property after all, and if you don't want them to be part of the business per se, we can work something else out. We can arrange terms of use and the club could rent, you could buy in... or we could even build a separate building on your grounds and not touch your stables. This could work many different ways. It depends on what's comfortable for you."

"I see." He didn't really, the big picture was eluding him. Mostly, he was just trying to imagine himself dealing with people all day long -- or his evenings -- and what it would mean to his boys. "No more late night pages," he said to himself.

"You'd make your own schedule..."

"Be home or here..." Tobias blinked and brought himself back to the room. "Shut up," he said with a grin.

Bradford grinned back at him. "You have to admit, it's got possibilities."

"Oh, it does," Tobias agreed. He looked at the folder full of applications. "Let me talk to my boys. See what they think."

"You know, they could be included, too. Work with you and other subs -- we could definitely include them." Bradford paced back to his chair.

"Phan, maybe. Actually, probably. He's going to need something very soon. Did you know he's down to once a week with Dr. Brewer, and working toward twice a month?"

"That's excellent news." Bradford smiled. "But I knew you would be good for him."

"Well, we'd hoped," Tobias said easily. "I think it's got a lot to do with Noah, as well."

"Noah has really blossomed with you, too."

"He's... happy." Tobias stubbed out his cigarette and sat down again. "We all are, I think, over all. I just haven't been spending enough time with them."

"I'm sure they understand." Bradford was watching him again.

"They coddle me. I don't know if they'd tell me if they resented it." Tobias waved his hand. "Phan is happy to have a contract with me at all, and Noah's a mother hen. Would Nikki tell you if he wasn't getting enough of you, what with all this club business going on?"

Bradford shook his head. "Nikki never said a word when Phan was living with us and I knew I was neglecting him. I think he would probably let it go, hoping I'd fix the situation, until he couldn't take it anymore, and then we'd end up having a conversation about terminating and I would be backpedaling and apologizing in a very un-Dom-like manner."

"So... you need a partner; for many reasons. And I need to find a way to balance my life."

"Right. I think that we've been over that." Bradford smiled.

"I'll talk to them. Talk to Dee. Talk to... a few people about many things. That's the best I can do right now, old friend."

"Splendid. Hungry?"

"Rather. Let's eat." Tobias looked once more at the folder and tucked the matter firmly out of mind until he got home.



## Chapter 30

It was just after nine-thirty when Tobias got home, pressing the doorbell for the hell of it as he unlocked the door. "Hello, boys," he yelled over the sound, grinning.

"Hello, sir!" Noah sang along with the bell tones. He appeared at the top of the stairs. "Phan's been very busy tonight, you should see."

"Oh, dear." Tobias almost shook his head, just imagining the trouble the boy had gotten into, but then he stopped. "Wait, painting? Or bubbles in the tub?"

"Painting." Noah laughed. "I hid the bubbles."

"Good boy," Tobias approved, hanging up his coat. "Now, if we can just hide the sugar..." He walked up the stairs and took a kiss from Noah when he reached the top. "Lead on, pet."

Noah lingered just a bit longer over the kiss than Tobias had intended, then took his hand and pulled him over to Phan's bedroom. He let Tobias go inside, but he waited in the doorway.

"Hello, sir," Phan said, bouncing over to claim his own kiss. He drew it out as well, and Tobias decided it was going to be a fairly physical night. "Come on in, kitten," he added as he let Tobias go.

"That's a no-no, Phan," Noah said, staying put. "Unless Sir says it's all right."

Tobias rolled his eyes. "Come in, pet. It's his space, he said it's fine." He made a mental note to refine the rules a little. Really, obedient subs were a joy -- except when they weren't. He laughed to himself and looked expectantly at Phan. "So? Show me, dear."

Phan grinned. "It's not much." He swiped at his cheek, and the little blob of blue paint there turned into a streak. "Damn."

"It's cute," Tobias assured him. "Painting?"

Phan pointed to one corner where he had a makeshift easel set up. The canvas wasn't overly large, perhaps twelve by sixteen inches, but he'd filled it well. A nude male figure was outlined in dark swirls, the paleness of his skin almost glowing in the contrast. "Is that Noah?" Tobias asked, staring. It was a gorgeous image.

"Uh-huh. He didn't pose or anything, I just kinda... did it. It's not horrible, is it?"

Tobias assumed the question was rhetorical, because the painting was lovely.

"Wait, that's me?" Noah stepped into the room, moving closer. "You didn't say that was supposed to be me." He got even closer. "Wow, Phan."

Tobias snorted. "There's no 'supposed to be' involved, pet. Look at the shoulders, the line of the hip. The

cock alone should have clued you in. It's beautiful."

Phan bit his lip. "Are you mad, Noah?" he asked quietly.

"What? No!" Noah moved to Phan and put an arm around his waist. "No, hon, I'm... wow. Stunned. Flattered. It's beautiful. I mean the painting is beautiful, you made me way too hot." He grinned.

Phan smirked. "You really should look at yourself more often."

Tobias had to agree. "Can I have this when it's dry?" he asked.

He watched Phan blink. "Of course," Phan said, looking more and more startled. "If you want it."

"I want it," Tobias said, studying the painting. "And I have to figure out where to hang it. What do you think?"

"Your room?" Phan suggested. "Or the living room?"

Noah looked between them. "You want to hang a nude painting of me in the living room?"

Tobias nodded, his eyes on the painting. "Yes, I think so."

Noah shook his head. "I mean it's a beautiful painting, it really is, but... "

Tobias grinned. "You don't want our friends admiring you? After I've dragged you out in all kinds of gear, fucked you in an alley in front of most of them, and had you wear those chaps in front of Luca and Bradford? After I had you naked in front of everyone at your collaring? After all that, you don't want your beauty on display in the living room?"

Noah rubbed the back of his neck. "Well, when you put it like that, sir..."

"Indeed. Yes, I think it'll go in the living room. Well done, Phantom. It's beautiful."

Phan smiled and wiggled. "Thank you, sir."

"It really is. Even if it is me," Noah joked and kissed Phan soundly.

Tobias rolled his eyes. "You'll never be vain, will you, pet?"

"On the contrary, I know I look damn good in those chaps." Noah smiled. "How was dinner?"

Tobias laughed. "I love those chaps. Dinner was... interesting. Actually, it's given me a few things to think about. To talk to you both about."

"Uh-oh." Noah looked at Phan. "That sounds ominous."

"Maybe. Maybe not." Phan instantly looked worried and Tobias pulled him closer by instinct, petting him before kissing his nose. "Are you two settled for the night? Chores done?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," Noah answered. "Oh, except that I need a shower, and I haven't unloaded the dishwasher yet. I got distracted by Phan's work."

"Understandable," Tobias grinned. "Go unload the dishes and put the kettle on, then. We'll all curl up on my bed and have a chat."

Phan made a noise and Tobias kissed his nose again. "Shh, boy. It's about making it better, meeting needs. It'll be fine, I promise."

"Okay," Phan said softly. "I'll help Noah, then. Hurry us along."

Noah grinned and headed for the stairs. "Come on then, slowpoke," he teased. The pair sounded like a herd of elephants on the hardwood staircase.

Tobias looked at the painting for a long moment and finally nodded to himself. It was time to make some changes, only part of which would concern his working life. With a last look at what Phan had created, he headed down to his room, planning how he would approach the various topics. Most important, he decided, was to reassure them both of his commitment to them.

He found his room in its usual tidy state, the bed made up with fresh linens and the boys' chains neatly coiled on the floor. He looked around the room, thinking about how many nights he'd not been there lately, and settled himself on the bed, sitting up against the headboard but in the middle so he could have a boy on each side.

Before long, Noah appeared, carrying two mugs, Phan close at his heels with his own. "You look comfortable, sir," Noah said, handing Tobias his tea. He kicked off his shoes and joined him on the bed.

"Better now," Tobias said with a smile, holding Phan's mug while he joined them. He tangled all their legs together, the three of them shifting and tugging at pillows until they were comfortable. "We have to talk. Honestly and freely, all right?" He waited until each of the boys nodded and then went on, "I've missed you. Missed you both, very much, and I'm sorry I've been so absent."

Noah sighed and looked at his tea. "You've been busy with work. You warned us. But I've missed you, too. It's... Phan and I have had fun, but it hasn't been the same lately, you know?"

"But we've been okay," Phan said quickly. "We missed you, but we haven't been... no, we've missed you." He sighed and leaned in. "We've needed you, but not 'cause we're in a bad way. Just because we need you."

Tobias nodded, understanding what he was trying to say. "I know. This has been a hard few months, with a lot of changes, and I haven't been able to be what I promised I would be. I regret that because, while I am a vet and have been for a long time, at heart I'm your Master. I've been a poor one lately, stretched too thin by other obligations. Important ones, but not as important as you both."

"I've missed you," Noah said. "I'm not trying to make you feel guilty, but this hasn't been an easy couple of weeks for me with work and Carol, and... well, I'm glad that you brought this up because I've been trying to find the right time to mention it. I just want to hear things are going to get back to normal soon."

Tobias nodded, his eyes on his mug. "I know. And I didn't have a clue how to do it, honestly. I called Bradford yesterday because I knew I was drowning -- it's not just work, it's the farm, too. I have too many things going on, and I'm in a state of constant exhaustion right now. It makes it hard to see solutions." He smiled wryly. "But that's what Bradford is for, apparently. He's made an interesting proposal which I said I'd talk with you both about."

Phan said nothing, but he moved a little closer, his fingers gripping his mug a little tighter.

"A proposal?" Noah asked seriously.

"He told me to retire and offered me a partnership in the club."

Noah turned and looked right at Tobias. "You're kidding?"

"Not in the least. He's expanding. Rapidly, in fact. Things have gotten away from him and he needs a Dom to handle screening and training. We tossed around the idea of incorporating the farm as well."

"Jesus," Phan said, turning to stare as well. "Training? Doms or subs? Never mind, it would have to be Tops, and if you did it at the farm you could do some really intense stuff and long workshops -- Christ, you'll make a fortune. Another one."

Noah stared at Tobias. "Okay, it's a good opportunity; a really good one for you. I don't mean to sound cynical but Bradford is busy. How does this partnership make things better for us?"

"Well, no more pages, and nights away. My focus won't be so scattered. I'll be home all the time, or at the club, and I'll need you both for demonstrations. It will mean more scenes, more time with me, and my being immersed in the lifestyle." Tobias sipped his tea. "I'll be able to make my own time -- if we use the farm I can either arrange it so we have our weekends as usual for us, or I can do workshops, depending on your needs. My time at the farm wouldn't have interruptions about the land, because I'd likely sell most of it off."

Noah nodded slowly, and bit his lip looking thoughtful. "Sounds ideal, I guess. I mean it sounds pretty good. I will be happy to personally shred your pager." He grinned.

"Can't shred plastic, kitten. Mallet."

Tobias looked at Phan and grinned. "Seriously, though, there are things to talk about. Retiring is a big deal. Deciding if we should use the farm or not. What to do about the land -- it's been in my family for a long time, and I don't know what to do. Sell the horses? What about this place? We'll still be based in town, of course, but what about you, Phan? You must be getting bored silly sitting around here; Bradford suggested that you work at the club too, in some form."

Phan squeaked. "Doing what?"

"I have no idea yet -- this is only about three hours old for me, too."

"Don't sell the horses." Noah interrupted. He seemed pretty insistent about it. "I'd miss them. Even the bitch."

Tobias laughed. "Yes, me, too."

"Crispin would never forgive you," Phan said pointedly.

"Fine, the horses stay. But what about the rest? What do you think, honestly?"

"Honestly? What enjoyment do you get out of most of the land? I mean apart from being able to ride it? You could work out something with the new owners where you're still allowed to ride the land, right?"

"The land is a huge money sucking responsibility I've wanted to shed since about five years after my parents died," Tobias said promptly. "But it keeps Peter working, and Mrs. Miller was attached to it."

"Um, sir?" Phan said gently. "How old is Peter? Sixty? Older? Let the man retire, too. Hell, give him a few acres of his choice as a retirement present, or the option to buy it up."

Noah nodded. "Unless there's something you're not telling us, it's not like you have anyone to pass the land on to, right? This is the end of the line for it anyway."

Tobias stared at him. "Jesus. What a horrible thought." He'd honestly never thought about it.

Noah laughed softly. "Don't get all sentimental now, I'm not raising children."

Phan wiggled. "I am a child."

"True." Tobias grinned at him. "All right then, sell the land, keep the horses. Retire or not?"

"I'm not answering that one for you," Noah said.

"Thanks so much. Don't answer, just tell me what you think. Do you think it would help us?"

"Well, all right." Noah sighed. "As much as I respect your dedication to your work, I think not being paged for a sick dog or a raccoon in the henhouse or a cow in labor at three a.m. or in the middle of dinner would be a great improvement."

"Phan?"

The boy shrugged. "You don't need the money, you have things to do, and you want more time to yourself. You said yourself that you're our Master first, a vet second. Come home to us."

Tobias nodded. "Okay."

"You're sure? You're not going to regret it in a year?" Noah sipped his tea.

Tobias shook his head. "I don't think I will. And if I do, I'll still have my license. I could always start again. But honestly, these past few months have proven that I'm not as young as I used to be. I can't Top you both, mentally or physically, and keep up the pace of even our small practice. I just can't."

Noah nodded. "Then I'm with Phan."

Tobias drained his mug and leaned all the way over Noah to put it on the nightstand. "Done then. I'll talk to Dee tomorrow. This thing with Bradford has a lot of details to work out, though."

Phan curled right around him, his own mug suddenly gone. "So sort it out. Tomorrow."

"Again, I'm with Phan." Noah smiled, and tugged Tobias right down on top of him.

"Oh, really?" Tobias asked with a grin. "And what are you and Phan going to do?"

"Everything," Noah purred and wrapped his legs around Tobias' waist.

"Oh, that's a lot," Tobias said. It was the last thing he said for a while, other than names and assorted praises. All in all, it was a good way to end the night.

## Chapter 31

Between his boys, work, and the one emergency call he had to take on Monday afternoon, it was Tuesday before Tobias finally got to talk to Deidre. He did his paperwork in the morning, the entire process taking longer than it would have if he'd been able to settle his mind and just do it, but by about two o'clock he was caught up enough that he really couldn't delay much longer.

He walked across the tiny hall that separated his office from Dee's and tapped on her doorframe, watching her slave over her own files.

She didn't even look up, just waved him in. "Almost done," she said, jotting another note. "What's on your mind, Tobias?"

Tobias sighed and sat in her visitor chair. "I'm tired, Dee. We have to talk." He hadn't meant to put such an air of finality in his voice, but in his heart he knew that he'd already made up his mind.

She tossed her pen onto the open file and leaned back, pushing a hand through her hair. "Yeah. Me, too."

Tobias nodded to himself. "I'm going to retire."

The words hung there for a long moment while she stared at him. "Well. That'll make this easier."

He raised an eyebrow. "You want me out," he stated, unsurprised. He hadn't exactly been one hundred percent there for her, any more than he had been for his boys.

But her eyes widened and she shook her head. "No, don't be ridiculous. I mean I want out. This way I don't have to convince you to buy me out, we can just sell the practice."

It was his turn to stare. "You're too young to retire. You're what, thirty-five?"

She laughed at him. "Thank you for the compliment," she said with a grin. "And you're too young to retire, too, but it's not like you need the money. And seeing as how Phantom is answering your phone as often as Noah these days, I'd say you have your hands full."

He sidestepped that as neatly as she'd skipped over her age. "I do," he said with a nod. "So where are you going?"

"Nebraska."

"Nebraska."

"Nebraska. It's time to go home, Tobias. I want to go home."

Tobias nodded. "All right then. We'll... sell the practice."

She smiled. "Good enough. Soon. I'd like to head out within the month."

He stared again. "Dee?"

She blushed. He'd never seen her blush, ever. "His name is Derek."

Tobias grinned. "Good for you. Congratulations, Deidre." He stood up and looked around her office. "I'll call the lawyers, then."

"Okay," she said, smiling back. "It's been a pleasure working with you, Dr. Vincent."

"And you, Dr. Cade."

Still smiling, Tobias went back to his own office and started making phone calls.

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Tobias made sure that his boys knew their Tuesday night cuddle would be uninterrupted, had a light dinner out on his own, and headed to the club to annoy Bradford for a while. He suspected that the man had been on tenterhooks since they'd last talked, and a bit of the devil stirred him to go on over and talk about a few details without calling ahead first.

He was let into the club with a minimum of fuss, mostly fielding questions about Noah and Phan. With a grin of anticipation, Tobias went right to the bar, knowing that if Bradford wasn't there, he would be as soon as he got wind of Tobias being in the building.

Nikki appeared first. "Master Tobias, it's good to see you again, sir." Nikki said, standing by his elbow. He sounded more confident these days, and wasn't showing that nervous fear of his own mistakes that he had in the past.

"Nikki," Tobias said with a smile. "How are you this evening?"

"I'm well, sir, thank you. Master is on the phone in his office; he's invited you back to join him there if you like, or else he'll meet you here at the bar when he's finished."

"Which do you think he'd prefer?" Tobias asked, grinning. "Has he been impossible these last few days?"

"It wouldn't be polite of me to say, sir." Nikki grinned. "But I know he's anxious to hear from you about his proposal. I suppose he'd like to talk in private, so I think he'd prefer his office."

"Ah. Then I'll only make him wait a few moments," Tobias said, pointing to his glass of water. "Tell him I'll be along shortly, if you would."

"Yes, sir." Nikki gave him a quick bow and headed out the door and down the hall.

Tobias grinned at the bartender. "Boss been a bear?"

He got a wink back. "Tell me you're here to soothe the savage beast, Tobias."

Laughing, Tobias picked up his glass and stood. "I'll be in the office. If there's yelling--"

"I'll ignore it, just like always."

"Good man."

Tobias wandered toward Bradford's office, stopping to say a quick hello to Logan and to pinch Brian's butt on his way past the dining room. The place was packed, and there was a steady stream of people up and down the stairs. Bradford hadn't been exaggerating. He sipped his water and tapped on Bradford's door, still smiling to himself.

"Come on in, Tobias," Bradford's voice came through the door.

Tobias opened the door and looked around the office with a keen eye. "I'll need my own office, you know," he said, sauntering in and sitting down. "Lord knows where you'll put it, though."

"Right. Yes, that will be fine, then. Goodnight to you, too," Bradford said and hung up the phone. "You can have Nikki's room." He leaned over to where the boy was kneeling at his feet. "Just kidding, love."

"And not a spare closet, either," Tobias went on. "I haven't lived in a closet for years, I'm not going back. Besides, I'll at least need room to swing a crop. And then there's office furniture and supplies, and room for the boys to look pretty... all that stuff."

"And I suppose you'll be wanting everything carefully bolted down and a full-size mirror on one wall?" Bradford stood and made his way across his office toward him.

"Oh, great idea. I had mirrors ordered for the brownstone, did I tell you?"

"No, but I'm not surprised." Bradford grinned. "Well, you're a partner now, write your damn office into the budget and shut up about it already." He offered Tobias a businesslike hand.

"In effect, yes," Tobias said, standing up to take Bradford's hand. "There are some tricky details to work out, though."

"I'm so pleased, Tobias. Truly." He pulled out a chair for himself rather than put a desk between them. "Sit, and let's hammer out your concerns."

Tobias smiled and took his chair. "My first concern is always my boys," he said, glancing at Nikki. "As is yours."

Tobias knew that he and Bradford had spent entirely too much time together when a glance was all that was needed to get his point across.

"Nikki, darling," Bradford said smiling. "Tobias and I need to talk in private for a while, feel free to do as you please until I come find you again, all right?"

"Yes, sir." Nikki stood. He seemed happy to be spared the business details. "Thank you, sir," he said with a smile and slipped out the door.

"Our boys should always be our priority, Tobias," Bradford said as the door closed again.

Tobias nodded. "And to that end, I have to take care of some things. I can't do anything without assurances that this will increase my time with them," he said, leaning forward. "I know you can't dictate how many people apply for membership, but I need to set my own training schedule. Interviews will be during normal



working hours, not in the evenings, and I have to retain control over my stables. We can use them for the club, but if one of my boys is in crisis I have to be able to cancel weekends, if need be."

Bradford nodded. "Done. The application procedures are entirely up to you, Tobias. I have no interest in setting your schedule. I am more interested in running the club smoothly and making improvements where I can. The application and training end of the business is something I would prefer to leave to you and simply not worry about. Though final membership decisions would be discussed between us, of course."

Tobias nodded and stood up to pace. "Of course. I'd like to bring Phan in, on my end of it. He's a heavy masochist, and incredibly articulate. He'll know how to express if the Top in question is paying attention and doing well. Plus, he's mine, so I'll be able to set all the limits without any questions."

"That's between you and your boy. If you'd like to put him on the payroll, go right ahead. At some point I'll go over the books with you and get you up to speed on what I pay people and the like. Do we need a partnership agreement? Or shall we do without for a while and determine that later?"

Tobias gave him a pitying look. "We live by contracts and my daddy taught me better than that. Oh, and I was serious about the office, by the way. I'll need someplace that I don't live in to manage this and meet people."

"Of course. Do you want something here at the club, or off site?"

"Here would make the most sense, really. Tell me, when are you going to marry that boy?"

"Right through that wall," Bradford said, pointing, "is a room about this size that I've been using as storage. I'll have it cleaned out and you can do with it what you like. Is that large enough?" Bradford looked right at him, pointedly ignoring his question about Nikki.

"Should be. I was thinking a gold collar would look good on him. His skin tone screams for it. Now, Phan... that boy is silver links, but it's too soft, so I guess it'll have to be solid." Tobias grinned and looked around the office. "Is yours bigger, even by a bit?"

"I don't know, should we stand up and compare?" Bradford crossed his arms, but he was barely hiding a smirk.

"Please. We both know my dick's bigger and my balls hang lower. So, you're in love with Nikki. Congratulations."

Bradford laughed. "You are impossible, Tobias. What is it you really want to know? Yes, I want to collar the boy. You're saying you're going to collar Phan, too?"

"Oh, didn't I make that clear? Sorry. And I want to hear you say it, Bradford." Tobias beamed at him. "Come on. Just for me? Say the words; it'll do me a world of good."

Bradford sighed. "I'm absolutely in love with Nikki." He reached into his jacket pocket and pulled out his cigarettes. "You dog."

Tobias shook his head and stepped to his friend, pulling him into a hug and crushing the cigarettes between them. "Good," he whispered in his ear. "You deserve to be happy."

"Do I?" Bradford sighed again. "Well, that's a relief anyway."

Tobias raised an eyebrow. "Sit. Talk." He snatched the cigarettes and lit two, handing one to Bradford.

"Oh, no, you don't." Bradford said with a grin, taking the cigarette and sitting back in his chair. "I've spent years in denial building up this cool and uncrackable façade, and I'm not about to let you destroy it with anything so mundane as sentimentality and truth."

"Fuck that," Tobias said bluntly. "You're talking to a man who is about to re-collar Phantom Shaw. That trumps anything you have. Talk to me."

"Damn you and your trump card anyway." Bradford took a long drag and blew the smoke out slowly, watching it dissipate. "Nikki is a kid. He's twenty-two, did you know that? Twenty-two. I've been quite sure all this time that what I needed most was a mature sub, someone that had been around the block. Someone with baggage of his own, jaded and layered and complicated. Someone that could look at me and forgive my faults."

He took another drag, following it with a sip from the water bottle on his desk. "Nikki is none of those things. None. He's sweet and trusting, he's never been mistreated or hurt or lied to, and I've taught him just about everything he knows about the scene. He has no baggage, no layers, he just... is. He's a blank slate, a wide-eyed innocent. He doesn't need to forgive my faults because he doesn't see them."

Another drag and Bradford fell thoughtfully silent.

Tobias waited for a moment. "But you see them, and... what? You're worried that someday he'll notice your flaws and leave?"

Bradford shook his head. "No, no. I think by the time he sees them he'll know me well enough to handle them. That's not it."

Tobias tilted his head. "So what is it? His age? He's legal and seems to know himself. He knows what he is."

"It's a lot of responsibility, Tobias, a lot to live up to. If and when he gets hurt for the first time, or disillusioned -- the first time that happens to him? It will be my fault." Bradford finished his cigarette and put it out in an ashtray on his desk. He pressed the heels of his hands to his eyes. "Damn it."

"And what makes you so sure you'll hurt him?" Tobias asked gently. "Why do you assume you'll do something wrong?"

"I'm not assuming I will, I'm just not confident that I won't."

Tobias smoked his cigarette, absently noting that he was doing that far too often. "What's the alternative?" he asked. "You either love him, be his Master and partner, or you don't. Take the risk or set him free so you can both be miserable, and he will, in fact, be hurt for the first time."

"Must you make me feel trapped, too?" Bradford sighed and held up a hand. "Don't answer that, it was argumentative, defensive, and unfair." He chugged his water. "I love him. I want to collar him publicly and tell everyone how proud I am of him. I want to keep working with him. I don't have any reason to think I'll fuck it up, it's just a responsibility that I haven't given an ounce of consideration to in years. Like ten, maybe fifteen years, Tobias."

"And you feel trapped?" Tobias put out the cigarette. "Okay, let's go back. Tell me what happened last time - I was a little... not here, remember? Well, it was fifteen years ago, we were through training and I was flogging anything that moved. Ten years ago I was in Paris."

"You know, what happened with Dario isn't even relevant anymore. That fell apart naturally. I didn't hold up my end of the bargain and he wasn't honest about what he needed."

"Right. So... you're doing everything for Nikki you told him you would. I know you are. And he's been damn clear about what he needs -- and he put up with Phantom. He loves you, Bradford, but he's a sub. He's happy and healthy and calmer than he was when he first turned up... What am I missing here?"

Bradford tapped his fingers on the desk. "I don't know. Nothing. I'm just off guard. I never expected this to happen. I thought he was a cute kid that needed some shaping. He asked me, so I took him on. I don't know when or how he got under my skin, I just woke up one morning with my arms around him and didn't want to let go. I'm walking on new ground, and for me, that's very... unusual."

Tobias stared at him. "You're in love, you idiot. It's supposed to feel like the rug has been ripped out from under you."

Bradford snorted. "Well, that's easy for you to say now that you're the expert on it. But I remember how your hands shook that night we talked at the bar."

"Ah, but that wasn't love, my darling. That was sheer terror. There's a difference. I didn't want a permanent sub, and he cried out to me like no one had since Phan." It hadn't been love, not then. Complete and utter lust, maybe, but not love. That waited at least a week to start sniffing around.

"Call it whatever you like." Bradford sighed, "I'd stop a little short of sheer terror, but fear wouldn't be far off."

"Want to know what got me past that?" Tobias asked him softly.

Bradford's eyes flicked up to meet his. "Yes."

"Noah. Trusting him to be party to it; letting him make his own choices within the boundaries of our agreement. I fulfilled every single promise I made him, and he gave me back tenfold what I'd expected." Tobias sat down and met Bradford's eyes. "Let him love you. Let him be what he has to be. It'll guide you both."

Bradford studied him a moment and then looked down at his hands. "Good advice. I'll try to do that."

"If you let him give to you... let him meet you halfway... it'll be amazing, Bradford. I promise you."

Bradford nodded. "Sounds so easy. Do you still feel like the floor is shifting or does that go away after a while?"

"It went away. And then Phantom... well. There are no rugs in our house. It's much safer that way." Tobias leaned back, looking for the bottle.

"Library cabinet." Bradford pointed. "So you're going to collar Phan?"

Tobias got up and walked to the cabinet. "Want one?"

"Oh, sure. When we're business partners though, we have got to watch this." He grinned.

Tobias laughed. "Call it our last fling." He poured two glasses and brought them back, passing Bradford his. "Yes," he said, slumping into his chair again. "I'm going to collar Phan. Part of it is that I really messed up lately; he's part of us, and he deserves more than a short contract. He's my boy, and I think we three all know it's long-term. But part of it is that I want to see him wearing my collar again."

"Nothing wrong with that." Bradford took his drink.

"No." Tobias sipped his drink and stared at the ceiling.

"What?"

"What what?"

"If there's nothing wrong with that, why are you studying my ceiling?"

"It's nice. White. Flat. Good workmanship. And there is nothing wrong with me collaring Phan. You should see the painting he's done of Noah. Stunning."

Bradford leaned forward. "You know, you and I would see a lot less of each other if we stopped hedging and denying things that we know the other one is going to make us talk about."

"Bastard," Tobias said mildly. "All right then. I think I might be a little jealous of them."

"You're serious?" Bradford asked with a raised eyebrow. "Of what exactly?"

"Of the way they are together, the easy way they have of just being. They're so affectionate -- don't get me wrong, it's wonderful, I like that. They're best friends. They're insanely hot for each other. They're just... right. And they're both mine, and they love each other and I should be happy, right? And mostly I am. But part of me wants to be in that, too. They hate my doorbell. They have in-jokes and pet names and more sex than I could hope to keep up with." He sighed and stared at the ceiling again. "I'm a sixteen-year-old girl wanting to be part of the in crowd."

Bradford shook his head. "Tobias, from what I've gathered you've been noticeably absent lately, right? So they've had lots of time to bond. Besides, what's stopping you from being in on it? Noah is in love with you. I'd bet money Phan is, too."

"Nothing's stopping it," Tobias agreed. "It's just time, I know that. But that's what's in my head, anyway -- I didn't promise it would make sense."

"And you're in love with Phan, too."

Tobias blinked and ran through the conversation. "Oddly, I don't remember saying anything like that," he observed.

"You're collaring him."

"So?"

"So you didn't collar Noah until you were in a well-established love affair. It's your pattern."

Tobias rolled his eyes. "We're in a well-established relationship. Again. It's the logical next step."

Bradford leaned back in his chair. "Mm. Logic. I see."

"Oh, shut up."

"You're irrationally jealous of your boys being free with each other, but you suddenly call on logic to defend your need to collar Phan?"

Tobias eyed him. "Yes? That doesn't mean that I'm in love with him. I care about him -- hell, I've never denied that. I love him, and that's not the same thing at all. How could I not love him? That doesn't mean I'm in love with him. I'm in love with Noah."

Bradford nodded. "And, logically, you can only be in love with one person."

"Oh, shut up." Tobias looked at the glass. "New stuff? I usually don't start repeating myself so soon."

"Top shelf. Oh, all right, far be it from me to tell you who you're in love with." Bradford smiled at Tobias. "Shall we drop it?"

"Please. And bury it. And never speak of it again. Shall we talk about.... oh, hell. What do I do with this now? Thank you ever so much, you bastard." Tobias frowned at the floor. "Damn."

"What is there to do?" Bradford tossed Tobias the cigarettes. "Phantom is your boy, he's living in your house with your lover who also loves him. I don't see the problem. Logic again?"

Tobias did not tell Bradford to shut up. He thought it very loudly, but he didn't say it. "I hope Noah sees it that way."

"Well, there's only one way to find that out."

"Ah, yes. 'Noah, I've just been informed by Bradford that I'm in love with Phan as well as you. How do you feel about that?' I can see it now."

Bradford laughed. "You are really something. It was the boy's idea to ask Phan in, he agreed to a contract alongside him, he's been fucking him while you're out delivering sheep. Give the boy a little credit."

"He hasn't fucked him," Tobias said. "He's not allowed. Though I did let Phan fuck Noah one night while I listened on the phone." He looked up and blinked. "Damn, this is good stuff."

"Like I said, top shelf. You'll be taking a cab home." Bradford grinned.

"Lord, yes. And soon, I think. Can we change the subject before I get hard, please?"

"Sure. How about a double ceremony?" Bradford swallowed down the rest of his drink.

"Oh, good idea. Noah can be the collar bearer." He grinned, warming to the idea. "Where should we do it?"

"I'd like to do it here, if you don't mind. And soon. Next weekend? The weekend after?"

"Jesus." Tobias thought about another drink. "Not much time for us to get cold feet. All right then, today is Tuesday, it'll take a few days to get the collars made... Saturday might be pushing it."

"Next weekend then. Say, seven o'clock, here. I'll make the arrangements, let me know who you'd like on

the guest list."

Tobias nodded. "Luca, if they can come. The usual crowd from here." He grinned. "Phan's dad."

Bradford laughed. "Yeah, okay, and his therapist, too?"

"God, don't invite his father! But yes, Dr. Brewer might be nice," Tobias smiled and stood up. "Call me a cab. I have to go home. Now."

"We'll talk more later then, partner." Bradford stood up. "Come on out, Joe can call you a cab, you can wait at the bar."

"Got any of that lovely stuff out there?" Tobias asked with a smile. "A short one for the road... We really do have to stop doing this."

"You're a lightweight tonight, friend." Bradford led him out to the bar. "Joseph, Tobias needs a cab and no matter what he asks for, give him water."

"Yes, sir." Joe grinned and picked up the phone.

"He's a lying, pushy Top," Tobias informed Joe. "Except the part about the cab. I do need that."

"Pushy I'd believe," Joe said hanging up the phone. "About five minutes."

"Really, Tobias, have I ever lied to you?" Bradford grinned.

"Sadly, no. And look at the mess you've gotten me into," Tobias said mournfully, playing it up for Joe. "I'm ruining cuddle night by coming home early, you know."

"Somehow I have this feeling they'll be happy to see you."

"Depends what they're doing." Tobias looked around the bar and nodded to both Bradford and Joe. "Think I'll wait outside for that cab."

"All right, but Joe's going to be watching you. Don't you dare reach for those car keys." Bradford escorted him to the door.

"Please, I'm not that desperate to get laid."

"Oh, look. There it is." Bradford let go of his arm. "You okay on the steps?"

"It was one drink!" Tobias glared at him. "I am sober. I'm just in love and have that floor thing going on. Goodnight, Bradford, you bastard."

"Goodnight, friend." Bradford waved at him.

## Chapter 32

Tobias got home far earlier than he'd intended, and most of him was hoping that the boys had moved out of the living room for their cuddle so he could sneak in unnoticed. He unlocked the door quietly and slipped in, his eyes on the floor as he tried to walk on cat's feet.

No such luck. The house was dark except for the flicker of the television in the living room. There were sounds, but they were soft and difficult to identify. The floor creaked under his feet and Tobias froze.

"Did you hear something?"

"Shhhh!"

"Sorry."

When no one came out to investigate, Tobias figured he had a pretty good shot at slipping past the living room door and into his room. Carefully, he made his way farther down the hall.

"Don't do it!" one of the boys whispered.

"She's gonna do it, they always do it."

"Are women really that stupid or is it just in the... OH MY GOD!" That was Noah's voice.

Phan screamed in response. "AHH!"

"Jesus, we told you not to do that, you idiot!"

"I told you she would." Phan seemed to be panting.

Tobias stopped in the doorway, too curious to keep on walking. Phan was in Noah's lap, and both of them were half covering their eyes and looking through their fingers at the television screen.

Really, it was impossible to resist. He waited as the music rose, the eerie and predictable soundtrack heightening the tension in the room as he crept forward. Just as the music reached its apex and Phan started to make high pitched "eeping" noises, Tobias put one hand on each of them, clasping their shoulders.

Phan screamed.

Tobias wasn't entirely sure what happened next. All of a sudden everyone was in motion, and Tobias hit the carpet behind the couch face down with one arm wrenched up behind his back.

"Get the light, Phan! Light!" Noah barked, planting a knee in Tobias' back to keep him down.

Tobias sighed, fighting the instinct to move; Noah would break his arm. "This really isn't my night," he said. "I hate Bradford."

"Oh, shit." Noah backed off quickly, letting Tobias' arm go and moving off him. He babbled in a panic as he tried to help Tobias up. "Are you all right? I'm so sorry, sir. You're home early; you scared the fuck out of me. I'm so sorry." He actually brushed off Tobias' pants and straightened his shirt. "Shit."

"I'm fine," Tobias assured him. "I still hate Bradford, though." He leaned forward and kissed Noah quickly, and then Phan, who was looking at him with wide eyes. "Goodnight, boys." He gathered his dignity around him and started walking back to his room.

"Whoa, have you been drinking? Why do you hate Bradford?" Noah trailed after him. "What happened? You smell like cigarettes, too. I thought you were just talking business? Do you need help?"

"I had one drink, one cigarette, I don't need help, and we talked business," Tobias rattled off. "Go finish your movie, sweetheart." He didn't want witnesses to the sulk he was planning on having, certainly not Noah and Phan. They'd never let him get away with it.

Noah lingered uncertainly in the doorway to the bedroom. "Are you sure?" he asked. "Tea, maybe? Did you get dinner? Maybe I could run a bath for you?"

"Noah," Tobias said softly. "Go enjoy your evening. It's everyone's night off. I'm sorry I scared the crap out of Phan; go love on him."

Noah nodded. "Yes, sir. All right," he said and backed out of the doorway before turning and heading back down the hall toward the living room.

Tobias sighed and scrubbed at his face. That hadn't gone particularly well. He stripped off his clothes with jerky movements and went to take a shower, hoping he'd feel a bit more settled afterward.

The shower helped, but he still felt embarrassed when he was done, a little stupid about scaring them that way. He made his way back to the bed, listening to the movie with half an ear as he climbed into bed. He lay there, wondering if he should read; it was early, and he'd more or less caught up on his sleep. He sighed again and closed his eyes.

The sounds and the light from the television ended abruptly. Moments later, he felt movement on either side of the bed and warm, naked boys cuddling up under the covers with him.

"We decided we don't need the rest of the night off, and neither do you, sir." Noah said softly.

He smiled, slipping his arms around them. "I didn't mean to interrupt," he said quietly.

"That was a hell of an interruption; Phan and I just spent the last ten minutes laughing about it. I didn't even hear you come in! Usually you ring that damn doorbell." Tobias could hear the laughter in his voice and sense him grinning even if he couldn't see him well in the dark.

"I was planning on sneaking past," Tobias admitted. "But when I saw you and realized it was a horror movie, I couldn't stop myself." Tobias felt himself start to smile. "Forgot you were a manly stud of a cop, though. Fatal flaw to the plan."

Phan giggled. "He's all manly stud, how you forgot is beyond me."



Noah chuckled. "Well, I had to look out for Phan, after all; he's such a delicate flower. Now you have certain proof that he's safe with me. Though if you hadn't been tipsy I doubt I'd have gotten you on the floor so fast. I don't believe you only had one drink."

"It was good stuff. Hey!" Tobias blinked as Phan crawled over him to get to Noah.

"I am not a flower, you brute!" Phan declared, pinning Noah down.

Noah let himself be pinned, though Tobias knew he was hardly helpless. "Brute? I'm no brute, I'll have you know. Okay, I'm sorry. You're a delicate fairy. Better?"

Phan tried to snarl, but he wound up giggling. "Careful, or I'll wave my wand at you."

Tobias laughed and moved over a little, giving them room. This threatened to be entertaining, but the chance of getting squished was high.

Noah leaned up and licked Phan's nose. "For a fairy you have a very impressive wand."

"I know," Phan said, looking smug. "Wanna touch it?"

Tobias grinned and rolled on his side, so he could watch.

"I don't know, are you going to turn me into a toad or something?" Noah reached a hand down and slid his fingers around Phan's dick. "Jesus, are you ever not hard?" Noah laughed.

Tobias watched Noah's hand and Phan's cock, his own erection firming up fairly rapidly. Pretty boys playing with each other; sometimes he had to just wonder what lucky star he'd been born under.

Phan sighed and shook his head. "In a bed with you and Sir? Not hardly." He pushed through Noah's fingers slowly. "Oh, yeah. Like that."

"I should hope by now I know how you like it," Noah purred at him. He leaned up and kissed Phan, holding his hand more or less in place so Phan could fuck his fist.

Tobias reached over and tugged Noah's nipple ring, watching as Phan rocked slowly.

Noah hissed. "Oh, God, yes, sir," he whispered, falling back into the pillows. "Yes, please."

Tobias looked at Phan's cock, the hard shaft getting harder. It was a thing of beauty, really, and Noah's hand touched Phan expertly. A bead of fluid formed at the head and Tobias licked his lips, content to watch for a while longer. He hummed and pulled on Noah's ring again. Phan's breath was coming quicker, though he kept his thrusts steady and slow, drawing it out. Tobias watched his skin start to flush, his chest growing pink as his blood ran faster. "Beautiful," Tobias whispered. "So pretty." He leaned over and kissed Noah, pushing his tongue deep.

Noah moaned into his mouth, opening wide to let Tobias in. His free hand moved around him and tangled and tugged at the hair at the back of Tobias' head, and he groaned, sucking on Tobias' tongue greedily.

Phan moaned. "So hot," he said, sounding choked. "God, Noah. Sir." He moaned again and Tobias pulled on Noah's ring, fucking his boy's mouth with his tongue.

Noah was fairly motionless, well pinned between Phan's weight and Tobias' attentions to his ring and his mouth. He moaned and hummed around Tobias' tongue, but wasn't able to get out anything coherent. He was hungry, though, sucking and scrubbing Tobias' tongue with his own.

Tobias could hear Phan begin to pant, his motions starting to rock them all as he moved over Noah. With a groan, Tobias pulled away from Noah's mouth and dove for the nipple ring, licking around it before he headed farther down.

He heard a gasp, but couldn't tell if it was Noah or Phan as he licked his way down Noah's chest and stomach. When he lapped over Noah's fingers though, and licked the head of Phan's cock, he knew Phan's cry.

"Oh, God! Sir!"

Tobias made an encouraging noise and opened his mouth, letting Noah guide Phan's cock in.

"Oh, yeah." Noah's fingers let go as Phan pushed into Tobias' mouth, and he moved sideways, getting out of their way and allowing Tobias easier access to Phan's cock.

"So hot, sir." Noah groaned and then his sounds and Phan's were muffled in what had to be a kiss. It wasn't long-lasting though, as Phan's harsh pants returned quickly. "Suck him hard, sir. Listen to him, you're making him crazy. He loves this." Noah's voice sounded tight and husky, and he kept his fingers in Tobias' hair.

Tobias moaned, almost smiling around Phan's cock, the taste rich and heady, flowing freely as he licked and sucked. He took Phan in, let him thrust into his throat for a moment before holding onto his hips and taking charge. He moved on the bed to get a better angle, then started bobbing, twisting his head from side to side.

"Oh, God, oh, God," Phan said hoarsely. "Sir!"

Tobias felt the head of Phan's cock swell and quickly tugged the boy's balls, hard. Not yet. He moaned again and let Phan slip from his mouth, waiting until Phan's urgency had passed before licking and slurping his way down the shaft to lick Phan's balls.

"Yeah, oh, God, yes," Phan babbled. "Noah, oh, shit, look!"

"Oh, I see, baby, I see. You're beautiful. You both are. Sir has a wicked tongue." Tobias could feel him moving around on the bed, but it wasn't until he felt hot breath on his chest that he realized what he was up to. Noah moved over him and licked and teased and bit at his nipples and chest, working his way lower.

He shuddered, spreading his legs to give Noah some room. "Come on, pet," he said, licking at Phan. "Suck me." He growled and took Phan back into his mouth, sucking hard.

Phan cried out, his hands sliding through Tobias' hair. "Fuck, yes. Oh, God, yes!" He thrust hard, pushing against Tobias' grip on his hips.

"Can't wait." Noah lapped at his balls and then up his length. He took Tobias in shallowly at first, wrapping warm fingers around his shaft and giving it a squeeze. He bathed the head of Tobias' cock with his tongue and slid the tip along its groove.

Groaning, Tobias thrust gently, slower than Phan was fucking his mouth. Phan was close, and Tobias wasn't going to stop him again; he'd let him come, let him watch Noah suck, and then see what else they could get up to. If nothing else, there was an endless supply of lube and a lot of toys around.

Phan babbled and Tobias moaned again, Noah driving him slowly crazy. He started losing his rhythm on Phan, who didn't seem to care, crying out and pushing into his throat, babbling about how good they looked, how good it felt. Tobias shuddered again and let go of Phan's hips, sliding a hand under his ass to tease his hole.

"Fuck!" Phan screamed. "Coming, sir!" And he did, his prick rigid and then throbbing as Tobias swallowed everything Phan had to give him.

Noah made a growling sound as Phan came, and he let go of Tobias' cock to swallow him deep instead, sucking hard and picking up a strong rhythm. His fingers moved to Tobias' ass and teased, sliding over his cheeks, over his hole, caressing muscle and sensitive skin.

Tobias growled right back, his hands holding Noah's head still as he thrust rapidly into Noah's mouth. "Do it," he said roughly. "Take it, pet."

Noah let him thrust, opening his throat for Tobias and bracing himself on the bed. He took Tobias' cock over and over, swallowing and scraping his tongue along the shaft. He tried to make sounds but most were cut off as Tobias' prick slid down the back of his throat. With his free hand, Noah's thumb pressed and teased and rubbed along Tobias' hole.

Tobias let his head fall back as he got lost in the sensations. He could hear Phan whimpering softly beside him and he reached out, pulling him close enough to kiss. Phan tasted wonderful, like Noah's kisses, like popcorn and Coke, like sex.

Groaning again, Tobias shuddered, his legs spreading farther. "Close," he whispered into Phan's mouth. "Oh, God, he's good at this."

Phan nodded, licking at his lips. "I know it."

Without warning Noah shoved a dry finger into Tobias' ass. He seemed to increase his efforts, too, sucking harder and letting Tobias thrust deeper down his throat.

"Noah!" Tobias arched his back, his ass clamping down on the finger as he started to shoot. He tore his mouth away from Phan's and cried out again, his legs trembling as he came hard.

"Oh, yeah," Phan breathed. "He's good at that."

Tobias gasped and panted, his body relaxing little by little. "I think he earned something special," he said to Phan, trying to get Noah to come up and kiss him.

"You think?" Noah said still lapping at Tobias' cock and balls. He finally allowed Tobias to drag him up his body and kissed him hard. "I wasn't trying to earn anything; that was just for you."

Tobias shrugged. "Night off. Not everything has to be just for me, pet. Why can't it be about the three of us?"

"It can. It will be. It was about you that time because I wanted it to be. It was how I chose to spend my night off. Don't be so grouchy." Noah grinned and kissed him again.

"I'm not grouchy, I'm horny." Tobias grinned and rolled on top of Noah, then smirked at Phan. "Want more?"

Phan nodded frantically. "Oh, yeah. Whatever you're offering."

"See?" he said to Noah. "I want more. Phan wants more. And you? Are you ready to be a little selfish? I think Phan's got another couple of goes in him, and I'll be ready for another round in a while. Let's play, love." He winked and rocked his hips, Noah's erection sliding along his skin.

"I could handle some selfish," Noah said after a moan. "I could definitely handle some selfish." He reached up and ran his fingers along Tobias' jaw, behind his ear and then down his neck to his shoulder. "Touch me."

Tobias grinned. "That's better," he said, moving to the side enough that he could take Noah's cock in his hand. He stroked him slowly, teasing at the head with a feather light touch. "Tell me what you want. Phan and I are both here -- what's your wish, pet?"

Phan stretched out next to them, his hand floating from Tobias' side to Noah's cock and then his belly, petting them both. He was grinning broadly. "I can think of a million things, personally."

"My wish?" Noah looked between them. "Okay, I'm not shy." He shifted, raising one knee so his foot was flat on the bed. "I'd like a really hot rim-job and a really slow blow; at the same time. Think you two can manage that without cracking heads?"

Tobias snorted and then smirked at Phan. "I get his cock."

Phan nodded, already sliding down the bed. "I suck him off all the time, this'll be fun." He stopped and stared at Tobias. "Um, the penetration rule?"

"Fuck him hard enough he screams."

"Not a problem."

Tobias rolled off Noah and he and Phan spent a moment draping his legs where they wanted them and arranging pillows, completely ignoring any sounds he made. The whimpers were cute, Tobias thought, but he was after shrieks and fountains of come.

He kissed Phan hard for a moment, then they moved as a unit, both of them licking Noah's cock and balls, their tongues meeting in another kiss over the head. Then Phan moved lower and Tobias took just the head into his mouth, tongue working the tip with determination.

"Oh, God, maybe this was a bad... idea." Noah gasped. He tried to move one of his legs but Tobias had it pinned. "Oh, fuck."

Tobias chuckled and heard Phan giggle. He had no idea what Phan was doing, but Noah was wiggling far too much, so Tobias added a little distraction by taking more of Noah into his mouth, still sucking hard.

Noah hissed and tried to arch, but again, he was too pinned down. One hand settled on Tobias' head. "Tobias, Phan. God." His other hand reached up and grabbed at the headboard. He started to pant between moans.

Tobias hummed as he sucked, his fingers joining in to tease, sliding over wet skin. He went low, let Phan lick them, and pulled Noah's ass cheeks open as he started to bob his head.

That earned him a groan and Noah's fingers tangled in his hair. Tobias could feel how hard Noah was, and assumed half of his arousal was coming from the just the idea of both of his men on him. Noah gasped again, likely at something that Phan was doing, as he started to twist, fighting for a different position. One he wasn't at all likely to achieve. "Phan!" Noah shouted and Tobias knew he was right. "Oh, God, yes!"

Tobias pulled back, let Noah's cock slip from his mouth to his hand and watched Phan tongue fuck Noah for a moment. "Nice," he purred, his own prick waking up slightly, his own hole twitching. With a groan, he went back to sucking Noah, fast and furious.

"Oh, God, so good," Noah made a choking sound and managed somehow to thrust upward only to whimper and pant pitifully when Tobias and Phan restrained him again. He was losing himself steadily, sinking into babbling and begging much more quickly than a blow job alone would have caused him to. It was only moments more before he was literally writhing, his begging words so mumbled and strung together he was difficult to understand.

Tobias opened his throat and went down, taking Noah as deep as he could without choking. He stroked Phan's hair, heard Phan's hum and moan, and then he swallowed.

"Oh, God, coming! Oh, God, yes!" Noah cried, then suddenly his body went stiff and still, arched as far as Phan and Tobias would let him and he screamed as he came, not once but several times, riding out a climax that seemed to roll out of control like a runaway train. He came forever, shooting down Tobias' throat. "Yes, yes... oh, yes, God, yes."

Tobias swallowed as much as he could and then just settled for sucking, licking Noah clean as Phan backed away and rolled over.

"Jesus," Phan panted. "Oh, God, that was something. I'm fucking ready to go again."

"Don't you dare," Tobias said, still licking Noah's cock. "You alive, pet?"

"Uh?" Noah lifted his head and dropped it back in the pillows again. "Need... a minute." He was still panting, his chest rising steeply and falling heavily.

"Take as long as you like," Tobias offered, licking his way up to Noah's nipples and then his neck. "We'll be here."

He rolled over Noah and gathered Phan up so he was in the middle again. "What's next?" he asked with a grin. "Fucking? Toys? Making out for a while? Water?"

Phan giggled and moved against him. "Whatever you want."

Tobias shook his head. "What do you want?"

Phan blinked at him. "You sucked my cock. I'm a happy boy."

Tobias shook his head again. "What do you want?"

Phan bit his lip and looked at Noah.

Noah turned his head and looked back at Phan with soft, sated, adoring eyes. He smiled just as smittenly. "What do you want, hon?"

"Want you to fuck me," Phan whispered. "Like we never do."

Tobias looked at Noah and smiled. "And you?"

"Me? If he wants that from me, he's going to have to wait a bit." Noah was still grinning, but managed to haul himself up on his elbows.

"Well, yes," Phan conceded. "But that's what I want."

Tobias kissed him softly and then turned his head to kiss Noah. "We can wait. Tease. Torture. Drink water."

Phan laughed. "All right, all right! I'm going. Three bottles of water coming up!" He climbed off the bed and padded out as Tobias curled around Noah.

"Love you," Tobias whispered.

"Oh, baby, love you so much." Noah nuzzled back. He was calm now, still pliable and relaxed, but breathing normally. "I'm so glad you came home early. You okay?"

"Fine," Tobias assured him. "Bradford has a bad habit of making me think about things though. To be fair, he had as rough a time as I did."

"He's a good friend." Noah kissed Tobias softly.

"He's a royal pain in the ass. But he's a good friend, yes." Tobias deepened the kiss for a long minute, listening for Phan.

Noah pulled back abruptly. "Are you sure you want me to... I mean, if you'd rather it just be something between you and me, I don't have to... I can get Phan off another way. A toy?"

Tobias blinked. "What? I mean... what?" He tried to change gears, but it took him a moment to make the switch. "Oh, love. No, it's okay, really. He wants it. You do, don't you?"

"I think about it a lot," Noah admitted. "It's kind of a thing. A fantasy, yeah."

Tobias grinned. "Then do it. Have fun." He leaned closer and whispered, "He's really tight. Feels so good around you..."

Noah grinned. "Keep talking like that and I'll be back up in no time."

"He's noisy and he moves and... well, he's like you, actually." Tobias grinned. "And me."

"You're tight, you know." Noah whispered back. "Man, I can tell you don't get penetrated often. Damn, so good."

"Just you," Tobias whispered as Phan came back in, his erection swaying with every step. "Look at him," he said to Noah, his eyes on Phan. "He's beautiful. He should have been a dancer."

"Graceful as a cat," Noah agreed, singing his words slightly. "Smoooooooooth as satin."

Phan paused and looked at them warily. "What?"

Noah looked at Tobias and then at Phan again. "Nothing." He held out his hand for a water bottle.

"Just admiring," Tobias said, passing a bottle to Noah and taking one for himself. "You're lovely."

Phan preened. "Thank you," he said with false modesty.

"Well, as long as we're all three agreed on that score." Noah snorted and pulled Phan back into bed, then sat up slightly to drink.

Tobias nodded and drank most of his bottle of water in a few gulps. "You're both gorgeous," he said, stating a fact. "I love showing you off, you know."

Phan wiggled against Noah, one leg draped over Tobias' thigh. "We love you showing us off. We love showing off for you."

Noah reached down and slid a hand along Phan's thigh. "Tell me a story. Something about Tobias. Something sexy that he wouldn't have told me."

Phan grinned and Tobias rolled his eyes. There wasn't anything about his sexual tastes that Noah didn't know.

"Did he ever tell you about Spain?" Phan asked.

Tobias groaned.

Phan raised an eyebrow and Tobias nodded his permission with a sigh. He was starting to grin anyway; this could be interesting, hearing it from Phan's perspective.

"The second time we went to Spain," Phan said to Noah, "I was pretty deep into subspace. He'd been priming me for almost a week, keeping me quiet, making me be still, using me hard. Flogged, fucked, cut, gagged -- anything he could think of, really."

"Ooh, we'll have to try that the next time we go to Paris," Noah said with a grin, glancing over at Tobias. "Hm?" He looked back at Phan. "Go on."

Phan wiggled a little more, so he could look at Noah easier. "So we get there, right? Nice little place, pretty hotel, everything's perfect. I'm kind of hazy, but disgustingly happy."

"He was," Tobias put in. Phantom had been almost too happy and content, almost blissed out. Too calm.

"Then he told me I wasn't going to come until our last night there, and he wasn't giving me a ring."

Noah nodded and grinned. "That sounds evil and very familiar." He looked at Tobias. "How many times have you done that to me? You love it."

Tobias snorted. "Like both of you don't get off on denial?"

"Yeah, yeah." Noah leaned against Tobias and looked back at Phan. "Did you make it?"

"Not a chance," Phan said with a grin. "Three days of torture, then he took me to a party, kind of like the Kinkfest they have in Seattle. And he made me watch everything. And he showed off his arm."

Tobias grinned. That had been fun, actually.

"With someone else," Phan added, his eyes as wide as he could make them.

"Ah! How insulting. Yes, I think I would have been insulted," Noah teased. "Or really, really glad because I probably would have come if he touched me with anything." He laughed softly.

Phan giggled. "I came anyway, after. He flogged this poor sub into coming all over the floor and then he stomped back to me, looking all pissy."

"I wasn't pissy, I was frustrated," Tobias said. "The boy didn't last as long as he told me he could. I didn't mean to make him come."

Phan nodded and looked at Noah. "The kid's Top wasn't happy. So, anyway, Sir came back over to me. I'm kneeling on the floor, watching like I was ordered too and eating my heart out. Big huge boner for everyone to stare at, 'cause even when it wasn't me, watching got me hot. No ring."

"Very pretty," Tobias said.

"Mmm. Kind of like now?" Noah's eyes flicked down to Phan's cock. He grinned.

Phan looked down, too, and nodded. "Yeah."

"Oh, yes," Tobias agreed reaching over to pump Phan's cock once. "Very pretty."

Phan gasped. "Story."

Tobias sighed and let go. "If you must."

Phan blinked a few times and looked back at Noah. "He came over and looked down at me, his face all hard planes, and said, '*You* would have held out. *You* know how to control yourself. *My* boy is the best fucking sub in this place.' And then I came."

"Oh, no.... oh, dear." Noah laughed. He looked at Tobias. "Tell me you didn't punish the poor thing."

Tobias shook his head and looked at Phan who was grinning wildly.

"He came, too," he whispered loudly to Noah. "Right there. Filled his lovely leather pants."

"No. Really? Oh, my God, that's beautiful." He smiled and kissed Tobias. "I would have loved to have been there for that."

"It was rather embarrassing," Tobias said dryly. "Phan loved it, the brat."

Phan beamed. "It was intensely flattering. Best part of that trip."

"I might have to make it a goal now." Noah reached over and pressed a hand into Tobias' groin. "I love catching you by surprise, it's so hard to do."



Tobias grinned and spread his legs as much as he could under Phan's thigh. "It's nice that you have goals, sweetheart," he teased.

Phan snickered. "All of his goals are centered around sex."

"And yours are more lofty?" Tobias asked, unable to keep a straight face. "That's just silly."

"Not all," Noah protested. "Though, speaking of which, any minute now I should be ready to finally attain one of my goals that *is* about sex."

Phan rolled over and waved his ass in the air. "Someone get me ready," he demanded.

"Not that he's a slut or anything," Noah snorted and smacked Phan's ass. It made a satisfying sound and was hard enough to leave a light mark. "Oh." Noah glanced at Tobias to find him wincing slightly and then at Phan, who looked a little shocked. "Sorry about that." He laughed.

"Not ready that way!" Phan protested. "He hit me," he informed Tobias with a pout.

"I saw that," Tobias assured him. "And you're begging for his cock. Frankly, I'm shocked and appalled. Where's the lube, Noah?"

Noah pointed to the bedside table. "Maybe he can take care of you while I fuck him," Noah suggested, holding his hand out for the lube. "It's not like he ever needs to breathe; he must have gills or something."

Tobias shook his head as he fetched the lube. "I'm going to fuck you. When you're in him."

Noah's breath caught and he stared at Tobias. "Oh, my God. I've never done that before." He glanced over at Phan. "Have you?"

Phan's eyes were comically wide, but it wasn't affected this time. "No," he said, grabbing for his cock and squeezing hard. "Oh, God."

Tobias smiled and popped the lid on the tube. "Asses high, boys. Bend over."

Noah shifted so he was kneeling right next to Phan and followed Tobias' instructions going right down on his elbows. He looked over at Phan. "I am such a goner."

"You're going to be on another planet." Phan grinned. "Oh, God!" Phan gasped loudly as Tobias' fingers penetrated him.

Tobias smiled to himself and plunged a couple of fingers into Noah as well, having a wonderful time.

"Ah!" Noah gasped and dropped his head to the mattress. He pushed back, already wanting more. "Oh, yes."

"That's it," Tobias purred, watching them both move and rock. He wondered if they were consciously matching their rhythms or if it was just coincidence. He slipped another finger into each of them, opening them and slicking them up to the sound of Phan's moans and Noah's cries.

Noah reached out with one arm and grabbed Phan by the back of the neck, pulling him close and kissing him hard. Tobias watched their exchange of tongues and the occasional play of teeth, and their sounds started to mingle so it was hard to tell one from the other.

Tobias grinned and hooked his fingers in Phan, making the boy cry out and break away from Noah with a gasp. Still grinning, he pulled his fingers out and smacked them both on the ass. "Okay, Phan, drop down and brace yourself."

Phan moaned and his shoulders hit the bed, his ass high. "Please?"

"Shh," Tobias soothed. "Noah. He's waiting," he invited.

Noah moved deliberately, his eyes and attention all on Phan. "Just another minute, hon." He knelt behind the boy and ran his fingers over Phan's smooth skin before taking him by the hips and lining up. "Love you," Noah said softly and then pushed into Phan, sinking gently until his hips pressed into Phan's ass. "Oh, God. Tight, hon. Jesus."

"Told you," Tobias whispered, running his hands down Noah's sides to his hips, and past him to Phan. He kissed Noah's neck. "Stay there," he said, petting them both as Phan whimpered. "Just... hang on a moment."

Carefully, he pushed Noah's knees apart a little more and centered himself against Noah's entrance. "Okay, love. Move slow, just let it happen." He pushed a little, sliding in just enough to breach his boy; when Noah pulled out of Phan, he moved back onto Tobias.

Noah groaned loudly and Tobias could feel him fighting for control of his breathing. He huffed out a couple of heavy breaths and then let himself pant lightly. "Fuck... oh, fuck." He tightened around Tobias and stayed there another moment before slowly moving forward and sinking into Phan again. "Feels good. So good," he said, moving forward and back once more.

Tobias thrust forward, unable not to move. "Oh, God," he gasped, his hands gripping Noah's hips.

Phan whimpered. "Yes, please! Noah..."

"Oh, fuck. Phan, I... oh!" Noah tried to move. Tobias knew he had Noah somewhat pinned between the two of them but couldn't stop himself. What Noah managed was a set of hard, shallow thrusts into Phan, fed mostly by Tobias' momentum, and otherwise just took Tobias in deep, mumbling and trying to communicate between needy cries and heated moans. "Oh, God, please. I need... oh, fuck, yes."

Tobias growled and switched his grip to Phantom's hips. With a pull and a hard shove, he impaled Noah between them and began to thrust harder, guiding Phan with his hands so they were both fucking Noah, hard and fast.

"God!" Phan screamed. He lifted himself up on his hands and braced himself, moving easily with Tobias. "Noah, oh, fuck, yes! Love you, oh, God oh, God, oh, God!"

Noah screamed. He tossed his head back so it hit Tobias' shoulder and left it there. One hand came up and tucked behind Tobias' neck and the other stayed firmly on Phantom's ass, fingers bruising the skin. His body shuddered and the stream of curses or praise that came from his lips was completely unintelligible. He whimpered and grunted and merely held on for the ride.

Phan's back arched, and he froze; Tobias held him against Noah's hips, feeling the tremors that wracked him through his silent orgasm. The smell of his come filled the room, hot and musky, and Tobias bit down on Noah's bare shoulder, fighting for his own control.

"Tobias!" Again, Noah screamed. But this time his body shuddered hard and his hips jerked spastically into Phan. "Phan, Phan, Tobias! Oh, yes, oh, God," he babbled as he came, clenching reflexively around Tobias' still-hard prick. He leaned forward again and hooked an arm under Phan, panting hard.

Phan was crying, Tobias knew he was; he knew the tears for what they were, knew the catharsis and sympathized with it, but before he could do anything his body reacted. He swore, his cock throbbing, and he clutched Noah's hips, driving into him deep and hard. With a sharp, short cry he let go, pounding into his boys, Phan through Noah, until his climax erupted out of him and he fell forward, toppling them all onto their sides. Hands and arms and touches were a blur, the soft sounds of each of them coming down and trying to breathe filling the room.

Through the cacophony of heavy breathing and sated moans, Tobias could hear Noah whispering on and off to Phan. He wove his fingers in with Tobias' and tucked Tobias' arm around them both, pressing deep into Tobias' chest. "Love you," he said more clearly, and louder, so they both could hear.

Phan echoed him, wiping his eyes and sighing. "Love you."

Tobias shifted a little and kissed Noah's cheek. "I love you," he said softly. He moved again, pulling out and making them both sigh, and then leaned over him to reach Phan. "And I love you," he said, his voice catching.

Phan swallowed hard, but didn't look away and didn't blink. "I... you know I love you."

"I do. Doesn't hurt to hear it again."

"I love you," Phan whispered, a smile flitting across his face.

Noah pulled out of Phan gingerly and rolled onto his back. "I know it was easier to believe it wasn't true, Tobias," he reached up and slid a finger along Tobias' jaw. "But it might have been true as long as I've known you."

Tobias shook his head. "Don't think so," he said, wondering. "Doesn't matter anymore, anyway." He kissed Phan gently, then moved between the two of them and kissed Noah as well. "You're okay?"

"I ache everywhere." Noah smiled at him.

"That's not what I meant, pet," Tobias said.

Phan giggled, and turned it into a cough. "He means about me."

"Oh." Noah laughed. "Of course. I'm happy, really. It's better this way."

Tobias sighed and snuggled down. "We stink," he observed. "And I might not hate Bradford anymore."

"Bradford is a good man," Phan lectured. "And he's good to Nikki. You can't hate Bradford."

Tobias raised an eyebrow. "You take your nights off pretty seriously don't you? Maybe I should bring back your morning discipline..."

"Yes, please," Phan said sweetly.

"I think it's time," Noah agreed, poking a finger into Phan's ribs.

"Mmm," Tobias mused. "Morning spankings for Phan, evening spanking for Noah... get you two back in shape for the... uh. Thing. In a week or so."

Noah looked at Phan. "Thing?" He looked at Tobias. "What thing?"

"Secret thing. Go to sleep."

"First of all, we stink and I'm showering and changing the sheets before I sleep. Second of all, you are evil." Noah pushed out of bed. "Evil."

"But in a good way," Tobias deadpanned.

"No, just evil," Phan said easily, slipping out the other side. "But that's okay. I'll call Nikki tomorrow and he'll tell me."

Tobias snorted and rolled over. "Leave me some hot water. And spankings hurt, don't forget. Especially if I do them on wet skin."

"Night off!" Noah sang, turning on the shower in the master bathroom.

"Not tomorrow," Tobias called back. "Brats!"

Phan giggled and Tobias heard him getting clean sheets from the closet. With a groan Tobias got off the bed, his legs still a little wobbly as he stripped off the messy ones and dumped them in the laundry. He went into the bathroom to find Phan standing there looking amused.

"What?" he asked, slipping an arm around Phan's waist.

"Noah's showering alone. Said he'd make up the bed and we should clean up together."

Tobias looked at Phan and then the shower. "Oh. Did he say why, exactly?"

Phan grinned. "He's being all romantic and mushy."

"Ah." Well that made sense, and really was rather thoughtful, in Tobias' opinion. Just like Noah. "That's sweet," he said to Phan, dropping a kiss on his shoulder.

"Uh-huh." Phan sighed happily and leaned into him.

The shower turned off and Noah stepped out, dripping and grinning as he reached for a towel. "In you get," he said, starting to dry off. "See you in bed." He kissed both Phan and Tobias and left the room with a flourish of still damp skin and flowing towel.

Tobias and Phan both grinned and watched him go, trading the towel for the stack of sheets.

"Come on," Tobias said softly. "Let's get clean." He stepped into the shower and pulled Phan with him, setting the water to a comfortable temperature. They didn't say much as they moved together, washing each other, but they really didn't need to.

Phan spoke with his touch, the light kisses he gave, and the way he took care of Tobias before himself. Tobias washed Phan's hair, something he hadn't done in years, and took the time to just hold Phan to him,

kissing him softly over and over.

"I love you," Phan whispered as the water began to cool. "So much. I'm scared."

"Of what, dear?" Tobias whispered back, one hand smoothing over the small of Phan's back.

"Of being happy. Of course. Don't let me fall, okay?"

"We won't. I promise." He meant it; he and Noah would watch carefully, make sure that Phan was on level ground and had access to any help he'd need as he fought the instinct to pay for his happiness. "No flogging for a while, Phan," Tobias said. "Until it's passed."

Phan nodded and buried his head in Tobias' chest. "Thank you."

Tobias turned off the water and lifted Phan out of the shower. "I'm going out to the farm tomorrow to talk to Peter. Why don't you come with me? We can go riding in the afternoon."

Phan smiled. "That sounds fun. Okay."

Tobias smiled down at him and kissed him again. "Bedtime, boy. Let's go make sure Noah hasn't sprawled all over."

"And if he has?"

"Tickle him."

Phan bounced. "Yay!"

Laughing, hoping for the best, Tobias turned off the light and took his boys to bed.

## Chapter 33

Dressing Phan and Noah turned out to be easy.

"Get dressed in what's laid out for you in the playroom."

"Yes, sir."

Tobias loved being in charge. He loved being able to just say 'do this' and not having to explain why. It made surprises so much easier to manage.

He'd had Phan's collar delivered to the club by messenger, utterly pleased with the way it had turned out. Solid silver instead of steel like Noah's, the outside was done in etched vines instead of Celtic knots, with the words "boy," "master," "serve," "obey," and "love" hidden among the leaves. He doubted even Phan would know they were there until he'd had a long time to study it. On the inside were their names and the date.

Dressing himself was a matter of doing what he knew Phan would like; lots of leather and his jack boots. Noah would be almost entirely covered, although the almost severe uniform cut of his new clothes was more for Tobias' enjoyment than anyone else's. Phantom would be wearing new leather as well, although hardly any of it. Tobias hoped the leather duster he'd gotten him as a gift to preserve decency on the ride to the club would make everyone happy.

He could hear them talking as they dressed, obviously having left the door open, and he set out his boots, admiring the high gloss polish as he reached for the phone. He really had to check in with Bradford.

Tobias was surprised when Joe answered the phone. Bradford was letting his bartenders pick up his personal line now? But Joe said he would transfer Tobias back to Bradford's office, and the phone rang twice before Bradford answered.

"Hello, Tobias." Bradford sounded busy but not stressed. "Everything in order on your end?"

"More or less," Tobias said, still looking at his boots. "Delivery get there?"

"Yes, and I've looked it over. Really, he does such beautiful work; it's a shame he doesn't work in gold, though I think Nikki's turned out very classy. I put him through his paces this morning. He's so sweet when he's deep. I mean he's sweet all the time but especially... okay, I'm going to stop now before I make a complete fool of myself." Bradford laughed.

Tobias grinned and glanced at the stairs. "So I don't need to give you the speech I have ready in case of cold feet, then?"

"I didn't say that, did I? Haven't been into the liquor cabinet yet, though."

"Well, that's a plus." Tobias walked to the stairs and listened. They sounded like they were almost ready; he could hear Phan making squeaking noises. "You're doing the right thing, Bradford," he said seriously. "Really. And I know several people who will brain you if you back out now."

Bradford snickered. "Now you sound like your boys. Don't worry, I'm not going to back out. I'm proud of him; he deserves this. So does Phan."

Tobias smile broadly. He was fairly sure he looked rather smitten, so he tried to tame it a little. "He does," he agreed. "Oh, I think Noah knows what's going on, by the way. He's playing along, but he's been a little... strange for a couple of days; lots of smiles and knowing looks. Phan's noticed, so Noah might just be teasing him, I'm not sure. Doesn't matter really, does it? Am I babbling? Oh, God."

"We're a pair aren't we?" Bradford laughed again, more easily this time. "I wouldn't be at all surprised if Noah knows. Staying in town for the weekend, new outfits, lots of secrecy... he's probably figured you out. Hopefully Phan is still clueless. I think Nikki is, but you have no idea how hard it is to plan an event with him at my heels all the time."

"Where is he now?" Tobias asked curiously. "Oh, and where do you want me to take the boys? Right into the room, or do you have an entrance planned?"

"He's upstairs getting dressed," Bradford said. "Take them through the front entrance and up to the heavy bondage room. Nikki will be kneeling there alone when you arrive. He'll think he's waiting for me, your arrival might confuse him a bit, but he won't speak to you so you won't have to explain anything. Leave Phan there, Noah, too, if you like, and we'll send for the boys when we're ready. I've got the stage cleared and two sets of manacles are hanging from the ceiling. What did you have in mind for Phan?"

Tobias nodded. "Manacles are good. I'd originally intended to cane him, but we're a little concerned about his appetite for pain at the moment, so I'm bringing my tawse as well. Still packs a wallop, but the pain isn't as bright."

"Very nice. I didn't know you still used the tawse. I'll have Nikki's favorite cane and he'll be blindfolded as well. Hopefully he can keep his knees under him."

"Sir?"

Tobias looked up the stairs and smiled. "I have to go," he said to Bradford. "They're dressed, and ready for the rules. I'll see you soon, old friend."

"See you soon." Bradford laughed softly and the phone went dead.

Tobias picked up his boots, smiling as Noah went to his knees and waited for Tobias to reach the top of the stairs before following him into the playroom.

"Good pet," Tobias said, pointing to a spot on the floor. "Kneel there, please. Phantom, let me look at you, boy."

Phan stood on display, his eyes carefully lowered as Tobias walked around him. The leather harness and jockstrap outfit was horribly clichéd, but it suited Phan well; he liked being dressed up, he liked leather, and he liked being obvious. His erection strained at the leather nicely and Tobias glanced at Noah. "Did you ring him, pet?"

"No, sir," Noah answered from his spot on the floor. "I didn't find a ring with the clothing and you hadn't left instructions to do so."

Tobias nodded. "Good." He looked at Phan again and pointed to the floor until the boy sank to his knees. "Not a sound, boy. Understood?"

Phan nodded slowly, his breathing even. He would be just fine, Tobias thought.

"Your turn, pet. Let me see you."

Noah stood gracefully, his arms behind his back. Tobias walked around him to and smiled as he looked at Noah's ass. Really, he should always wear uniform pants a size too small. "What do you think, pet?" he asked, reaching out to smooth fabric over Noah's hip.

"I think I had better be very careful how much I eat, sir." He grinned. "And I like it."

"So do I," Tobias said with a smirk. He circled around in front of them and had Noah kneel once more. "All right, we're going out, as you know, and as you've likely worked out, it's a special night. You will be on your best behavior, period. No talking to each other or anyone else without my express permission. No looking around and no leaving my side unless I say otherwise. It's a big night for Bradford, and I expect nothing but your best, understood?"

"Yes, sir," Phan said softly.

Noah's voice was stronger. "Yes, sir."

Tobias nodded sharply and went to the cupboard for a set of nipple clamps for Phan and two leads. "You'll be at my heel, of course," he said as he tugged at Phan's nipples, playing with them until they stood tight and hard and Phan was swaying slightly into the touch. With quick movements he attached the clamps and one of the leads.

"And the standard rules apply," he added, clipping Noah's lead to his collar. "No coming, no touching, all of that." He stood up and backed away a step, smoothing his own leather pants a little. "Very pretty," he said approvingly. "Okay, I need help with my boots, Noah, and then I think I'll let Phan lick them before we go."

Phan gasped. "Thank you, sir."

"Yes, sir." Noah went for the boot hooks in the armoire. He was barely hiding a grin, looking happy, and proud, too. He helped Tobias stomp into his boots with much-practiced skill and then returned the hooks to their place.

Tobias grabbed him on his way back and kissed him hard before letting Noah kneel again. It still took him by surprise, the depth of Noah's generosity and the way he could open his heart. Tobias had no doubt at all that Noah knew what was going on.

When Noah had settled again, looking even more pleased for the kiss, Tobias crossed his arms and looked down at Phan. "Pay your Master respect," he ordered, his voice pitched low.

Phan shuddered slightly and went to his hands and knees, crawling across the floor to Tobias. He moaned softly and licked the toe of Tobias' boot, and then up to his ankle. "Master," he whispered, turning to the other foot and doing the same, worshipping at Tobias' feet. He licked his way up to the top of Tobias' boots and moaned again. "Thank you, Master," he said, his eyes down.



Tobias suspected his eyes were not only looking down, but were glazed over as well. He glanced at his watch. "Keep going, boy," he said gruffly.

Phan whimpered and licked up one leg, then mouthed Tobias' erection through the leather for a moment. When he seemed to be starting a rhythm, sucking harder, Tobias stepped backward. "The car should be here," he said calmly. "Come." He gathered the leads and tugged gently. "Noah, help him down the stairs, please."

Noah nodded and stood. "Yes, sir." He helped Phan up, too. "Come on, hon," Noah said softly, and made sure that Phan made it to the foyer in one piece despite his fog.

Tobias smiled at them and handed Noah his cane. "Hold this, please," he said, letting the leads drop while he shook out the new duster for Phan. "What do you think, pet? Keep him presentable?"

"Oh, Phan, look!" Noah nodded. "It's beautiful, sir."

Phan blinked a few times. "For me?" he whispered cautiously, then reached out to touch the leather. "Wow."

Tobias smiled and settled the coat over Phan's shoulders. "You can thank me later."

"Yes, sir. Wow." Phan seemed to wake up a little, feeling the leather and looking down with wide eyes. "It's gorgeous."

Tobias let Noah help him with his own coat, then he took his cane and the tawse in hand as Noah put on a leather jacket. "We are a walking advertisement for \*SM Digest\*," Tobias observed, rolling his eyes. "Let's go, boys. Enjoy the car ride -- silence goes into effect as soon as we arrive."

"Yes, sir." They got into the car, and Noah took the opportunity to chat with Phan. "You look great in that coat, hon. Hot."

Phan smiled. "Thanks. It's really... posh."

Tobias nodded, arranged his boys so that he was in the middle, and peered at the driver. "Charlie?" he asked, the name more a guess than anything.

"Yes, sir. All set?"

"All set." Tobias smiled. He leaned back and turned Noah slightly for a kiss, then kissed Phan. "Good boys," he whispered.

Despite being given permission to talk, the car ride was remarkably silent. Noah looked out the window and held Tobias' hand most of the way, and Phan leaned on his other shoulder. Upon their arrival, the club looked unremarkable, just like any other day, really. They were greeted at the door and their coats were taken and hung for them. Bradford was nowhere in sight.

Tobias took their leashes and led them through the heart of the club, not looking around even though he knew they were drawing attention. He went right up the stairs, glancing by reflex into the mirror. He grinned as both Noah and Phan straightened; some habits never die.

He took them both to the bondage room, the leads loose in his hands as they walked down the hall. "I promised to help Bradford for a few minutes," he said quietly. "You will follow my orders to the letter."

He turned sharply and tapped the door he wanted with the cane, once, and then opened it. As Bradford had promised, Nikki was there.

Nikki didn't so much as twitch when they came in. His eyes were focused on the floor a few feet in front of him and they stayed there as Noah and Phan followed Tobias into the room.

Tobias let go of Noah's lead and took Phan to a spot where he wouldn't be able to see the door or Nikki, and had him kneel. "Stay here, boy, until I send for you. Just relax and wait."

Phan nodded, not even looking at Nikki, and settled himself.

Tobias went back to Noah and kissed him softly. "Stay here," he whispered. "Keep an eye on them -- I doubt they'll be any trouble."

"Yes, sir. I doubt it, sir," Noah whispered back, grinning. He knelt as well, in a way that he could see both Nikki and Phan.

Tobias grinned. "Someone will come soon," he said, petting Noah's hair. He turned and left the room, whistling, closing the door quietly behind him.

He found Bradford on the main floor, after ducking past a few knowing smiles and nods.

"All set, then? Was Nikki being a good boy?" Bradford asked, leading Tobias through the bar to the large room at the back of the club. It was sometimes a dance floor, sometimes an extra dining room, but tonight it had a low stage, with two sets of manacles hanging from the ceiling center stage on thick chains.

Bradford was wearing burgundy leather pants and a well-tailored black shirt. It was a far cry from his usual club-owner tuxedo, but suited the mood and the occasion much better. Against one wall was a heavy table on which were laid out Bradford's chosen tools -- a light flogger, a cane, a stylish leather blindfold, and several bottles of water.

"Of course. I don't think he was even aware of us," Tobias said, putting his cane on the table, and the case with the tawse. "Noah's keeping an eye on them. How are you doing, old friend?"

"I'm feeling much more ready for this now that I'm dressed and have had a cigarette." He gave Tobias a knowing smile. "You?"

Tobias shrugged and smiled. "More ready now than I was last week. Where are the collars?"

"Oh, yes, they're here." Bradford stepped to the end of the table and opened the box containing a silver collar. "Phan's," he said and picked up the other box. "And this is Nikki's."

Nikki's collar was made of hammered gold, roughly a half-inch wide, and was made to sit flat around his neck. It had a sturdy circular charm on the front that would double as a ring for a leash and it closed in the back with a lock and key.

"Oh, nice," Tobias said, admiring it. "Very, very nice. Noah knows, by the way, I was right." He passed the collar back and looked around the room. "So. Do you want the set on the left or the right?" he asked, pointing at the manacles. He grinned and winked. "I suspect that at this point, nothing much matters. How much longer do you want to wait?"

"Doesn't matter to me, there's plenty of room to move around both." Bradford waved his arm toward the chains. "I don't see any reason to wait. Shall we call everyone in and send for our boys?"

Tobias glanced at his tools and picked up the tawse. "Let's." He went to the manacles and tugged them. "Bradford?" he called out as his friend moved to the door.

"Oh, they're height adjustable," Bradford called back. "Or was it something else?" He stopped in the doorway.

Tobias rolled his eyes. "Something else, but you've gone and ruined the moment." He stepped off the stage and walked to Bradford and held out his hand. "It's an honor to do this with you, old man," he said sincerely.

"After all these years, we need a moment?" Bradford smiled and took his hand but instead of shaking it he tucked his other arm around Tobias' shoulders in a brief and rare hug. "It's a great honor," he said, letting Tobias go. "And the beginning of what I hope will be a joyful new chapter in both of our lives, hm?"

Tobias stared at him. "That is taking our moment entirely too far," he teased. "Open the doors before we start to cry."

"Oh, now that *is* going too far," Bradford said with a wink. He turned away and flung open the doors, inviting their guests inside. It wasn't a large crowd and the faces were all familiar, including Logan, Luca, and Dr. Brewer, who may very well have been the first female sub ever to walk through the front door.

Bradford caught Luca and Danny and after a quiet word, sent Danny off to retrieve the boys.

Tobias found himself staring at Dr. Brewer, who was dressed appropriately for the occasion. In this case, that meant a frighteningly short leather dress which displayed her assets very well, and both collar and cuffs.

He went to her, taking his cue from her lowered eyes. "Good evening," he said politely. "Thank you for coming. Is your master here as well?"

She shook her head. "He has a late appointment and didn't want to risk a disruption by arriving late. He sends his regards and congratulations, Master Tobias. He spoke with Master Logan, who kindly agreed to... watch over me."

Tobias looked at Logan, surprised. "Thank you," he said, hoping he didn't sound baffled.

Logan looked amused. "Jordan Thatcher. You didn't know?"

"I had no idea," Tobias admitted, as his respect for Dr. Brewer rose. Thatcher was a quiet player, but well known for being strict and demanding of his subs; he was also a lawyer in the firm Tobias had on retainer. "Well done, Doctor."

She dimpled. "We're very happy."

Tobias smiled. "Good. Excuse me?"

"Of course."

He turned to go and gave her one more look. "Nice dress," he said with a wink at Logan as Dr. Brewer blushed.

Tobias slapped his tawse against his hand and went to stand by Bradford. "Thank you for coming," he said the assembled guests. "The boys will be down in a moment; we ask that you move to the sides and remain quiet as Bradford and I make our marks."

Danny and Noah arrived shortly thereafter with Phan and Nikki following behind. Danny turned off as they passed Luca, but Noah continued toward the stage.

Bradford gestured toward the chains. "They'll kneel below the chains, Noah, thank you."

Noah nodded, keeping silent as he'd been instructed. He stepped to the side displaying neatly after Nikki and Phan went to their knees, and awaited Tobias' instructions.

Tobias smiled and went to him. "Thank you, Noah. At my side, please." He brushed a hand through Phan's hair. "They behaved?" he asked Noah as he reached for the manacles.

"They were both quiet and still, sir," Noah answered, keeping close to him as Tobias bound Phan's wrists. Phan was unresisting, merely offering his wrists one after another for Tobias to cuff.

Bradford stepped up in front of Nikki. "Good boy," he said softly. "Stand, love, and let's get started."

Nikki stood gracefully and kept his eyes very low. Bradford put each of Nikki's wrists into the manacles, checked them for comfort, and then crossed the stage to several levered-winchers that were set into the wall. He worked one of the levers until Nikki's hands were straight above his head, careful not to pull the boy off of his feet.

"Tobias, when you're ready," Bradford offered, laying his fingers on another lever.

Tobias nodded and gestured for Phan to stand, watching as he wrapped the chains around his hand and used them to pull himself up. "Let go," he said softly, and Phan obeyed, letting the padded cuffs take his arms up. "If you feel your fingers tingle, tell me," Tobias cautioned. "They won't be up long, but I don't want you losing circulation."

Phan nodded and Tobias looked at Bradford. "Go ahead," he said, moving away with Noah at his heel.

Bradford pulled the chains up slowly, locking them off at a height that seemed comfortable. When he was done he checked both boys to make sure the chains weren't too tight and then turned to face his audience. "Tobias and I appreciate your presence tonight. We have a very simple evening planned, to show off our boys for you and demonstrate their willingness to serve as we need, and then we will reward them both accordingly. We're very proud of our boys and we know you will be, too." He made his way across the room to the table and picked up his cane and the blindfold.

Tobias slapped his hand with the tawse again, the sound loud in the room, and smiled at Bradford. "After you, my friend."

Bradford smiled and gave Tobias a nod. He approached Nikki, and stood in front of him, talking to him softly. The boy nodded and Bradford tied on his blindfold. A few more soft words and Bradford stepped away again, while Nikki took a moment to check his stance. He swung the cane in front of him two or three times, possibly testing it in the air, but more likely it was for Nikki's benefit, and then landed a stripe across Nikki's shoulders.

"One. Thank you, sir," Nikki called out, the sting of the cane barely registering in his voice, but Bradford striped him again, and Nikki quickly dissolved, sobbing out his gratitude, counting two and shuffling from foot to foot.

Bradford circled him. "Good boy," he could be heard to say, but the rest of it was too quiet. Bradford stepped away again and stood a few feet away. "For me, boy. This one is for me."

Nikki nodded, trembling lightly. "Yes, sir. Thank you, sir!"

"Stand ready," Bradford warned. He only paused a moment before adding one more stripe, this time across his ass.

"Ah! Sir!" Nikki cried out, choking slightly on the words. "Three..." he managed. "Thank... thank you, sir. Oh, God. Sir..."

"Good boy," Bradford's voice was encouraging but he was watching Nikki with a critical eye. "Good boy. Breathe, Nikki. My boy." Bradford circled him again, inspecting the stripes. He reached up and checked Nikki's fingers and made sure he was still standing on his own. When he was done, he smiled smugly and stepped away again. "This last one, love, is for you."

Nikki sobbed and nodded. "Thank you, sir, thank you."

Bradford steeled his expression again and looked at Nikki's back critically. The last stripe was fast and hard, making the cane swoop and snap sharply against the boy's skin. Nikki shuddered and groaned and his whole body seemed to relax.

Bradford walked to him quickly, checking him over once more. He stood in front of Nikki for a long moment, his voice again too soft to be understood. The more he spoke, the stronger Nikki seemed to become. Finally, Bradford stepped to the side a bit. "Tobias, may I have Noah's assistance, please?"

"Of course," Tobias agreed, touching Noah's shoulder.

Noah took instructions from Bradford and walked to the wall where he released the lever very slowly while Bradford helped Nikki to his knees. He let the boy's hands rest in his lap but left the cuffs and chains in place, removed the boy's blindfold and then gave Noah a nod. Noah locked the lever off and went back to Tobias' side.

Bradford looked at the crowd and smiled, looking so proud that he might pop the buttons on his shirt. "I give you my boy, Nikki. I have never been so proud."

The gathered onlookers applauded and Nikki's back straightened a bit. Bradford let it go on for another moment and then held up a hand to quiet them. "Tobias, the stage is yours, my friend," he said, stepping aside.

Tobias smiled and nodded. "Well done," he said softly, looking at Bradford's eyes. He didn't say anything about the shine to them, the hint of tears his friend was fighting back. He doubted anyone else noticed.

Tobias looked back at Noah and gestured for him to stay where he was as he stepped toward Phan. "We've all seen Phan take pain," he said almost casually, holding the tawse up. "This isn't about pain. If it were, I would use a bullwhip." He walked slowly in front of Phan, noting the quickening of his breath. "Steady, boy," he whispered. "For me."

Phan nodded, and took a deep breath, stilling almost immediately.

"To demonstrate how much pain Phan would take for me would be an exercise we'd all enjoy, but would be, essentially, useless. He's a heavy masochist, and we all know it. This is about something else."

The room was silent and Tobias traced Phan's jaw with one finger. "This is about love."

Phan sighed and leaned into the touch.

"Pay attention, boy, there will be a test," Tobias said softly. "Are you ready for me?" Phantom nodded slowly and Tobias smiled. "I know, dear." He checked Phan's wrists and hands once more and moved behind him. "This will be fast, and it will hurt. React as you wish, there's no need to be silent." He lifted the tawse and started working, hitting Phan's back with precision, stroke after stroke, keeping each stroke the same weight as the one before. The tawse was wide, so his spacing was careful, making sure he avoided danger areas like the kidneys. He started at the top, off center of Phan's spine, and worked his way down, forming letters as he went. Used without care, the tawse would break bones; Tobias' goal was to bruise evenly.

By the third stroke Phan was moaning. At the seventh he cried out, and by the tenth he was yelling. The eleventh brought tears, and the twelfth, the last, made him scream. Tobias was sweating, the heavy thud of the tawse and the concentration it took making him pant.

He stepped back and waited for Phan's voice to die down. "Noah," he said, not looking back. "The lever, please." Tobias felt more than he saw Noah move to the panel, and held up a hand to him, keeping him from lowering Phan's arms. "Phantom. What does it say?"

Phan gasped and arched his back, his breath hitching. "It says 'MINE,' sir," he managed. "Oh, God."

Tobias nodded and went to him, signaling to Noah who began to lower the chains, settling Phan into Tobias' embrace. "I give you my boy, Phantom. Know that I'm proud of him, and proud to call him mine."

Bradford started the applause, stepping over to Tobias and patting his shoulder. "Does he need a minute?" he asked. "Or shall I get them?"

Tobias looked at Phan's rather stunned face and grinned. "Might as well get them now, he can't take too many shocks all spread out."

"Well done, Tobias. Phantom." Bradford stepped away as the applause began to settle down. "We promised that our boys would get a reward for their service," he said as he handed Tobias his box. He opened Nikki's, removing the collar and handing it to the boy to look over.

Nikki gasped and his fingers trembled as he took it from Bradford. "Sir..."

Bradford smiled. "I am very proud of you, and I wanted to honor your service to me and my responsibility to you with more than a contract, Nikki." He took the collar back and locked it carefully around Nikki's neck. "You are mine, this collar will herald that to everyone you meet. It is a constant reminder to you that I am looking after you, that I have committed to your growth as a submissive and as a man. And, it is, of course, a symbol of my love for you."

"Thank you sir, love you. Thank you," Nikki said several times over.

Bradford smiled once more, combing his fingers through Nikki's hair, and the boy went silent apart from his soft sobs.

Tobias watched and couldn't help smiling, his heart skipping a beat at Nikki's obvious joy and the openness in Bradford's face. It was all he could do to keep himself from cheering, really, and if it weren't for the box in his hands he might have. He waited until Nikki seemed to gather himself, although the adoration in the boy's eyes suggested he'd have to be reminded in the morning about anything else that happened that evening.

With a deep breath to steady himself, Tobias opened his box and lifted out Phan's collar. "We've been down this road before, dear," he said clearly. "And it's with joy that I take these steps again." He held the collar out to Phan, who stared at it almost blankly. "With this collar, you and I complete our journey, coming full circle as new men. We are changed, and we'll continue to grow, together. You are mine, Phantom, and you will wear my mark, my collar. You are my boy, my submissive, and *our* lover and partner."

Phan swallowed thickly and blinked, tears sliding down his cheeks. "Yours, sir. Always. I... My... Love."

Tobias smiled and opened the collar, slipped the locking bolts in place and collared him. "Yes. Love." He held a hand out to Noah and brought him forward. "Love."

Noah came over quickly and knelt with Phan, who was still holding Tobias' hand. "Congratulations, hon," he said softly. "And welcome."

Phan burst into tears.

Tobias smiled and undid the cuffs, finally freeing him and gathering him up into his arms. "Let's look at your back," he whispered. "And then you and Nikki and Noah can have a good cry while Bradford and I do the social stuff for about ten minutes. And then I suspect escape will be called for."

Noah put his arms around Phan carefully and kissed him, then stood and kissed Tobias as well. "Congratulations to you, too, sir."

Bradford's voice cut through the applause and congratulatory chatter. "Everyone, drinks are being served at the bar and there is a buffet in the dining room. Give us a moment, and we'll come join you." He had evidently released Nikki's bonds while Tobias was talking with Phan, and already had ointment on his fingers, smoothing it carefully on Nikki's back. For his part, Nikki seemed to have gotten over the initial emotion of it all and was sniffing softly while Bradford did his work.

Tobias and Noah convinced Phan to stand still by the simplest method; Noah stood in front of him and held him carefully, and Tobias examined his back, smoothing on arnica to keep the bruising at an acceptable level. "All right then, boy," he said. "Time for the kissing."

Noah grinned and took Phan by the shoulders, turning him around to face Tobias. "You may kiss the bride," he said with a laugh. "Sir."

Phan didn't even protest the word "bride," simply threw himself into Tobias' arms, his eyes closed and his face upturned.

Tobias laughed, delighted, and kissed him deeply, taking his mouth with powerful and bruising passion. "Love you, boy," he said when he released him.

"Love you, sir," Phan said, beaming at him, his arms looped around Tobias' neck.

"Your collar is gorgeous," Noah started to say, but apparently caught sight of something else. "Oh. Wow." Noah cleared his throat and pointed discreetly to Tobias' left where Bradford and Nikki were engaged in much the same activity. Bradford had given Nikki a soft, loose shirt, long enough to cover his sore back and ass. Bradford had one hand on the boy's jaw and was kissing him gently, and Nikki had all but melted into Bradford's silk and leather.

Tobias smiled as he watched them, more at Bradford's obvious tenderness to his lover than anything else. He had an arm loosely around Phan and with the other he reached for Noah, pulling him close. "They look happy," he said softly. "It's been a long time coming."

"Are you two ever going to join the party?" came a familiar voice from the doorway. It was Logan. "Our champagne is getting warm!"

Bradford broke it off with Nikki and turned around to look at Logan. "Oh, very well," he said with a sigh, as if a party were a great hardship for him. "Come along, Nikki, darling. Bring your boys, Tobias." Nikki snapped to his heel and followed him from the room.

Tobias looked at his boys, still smiling. "Let's go make them swoon with envy, boys." He took Phan's lead and attached it to his collar, then led them from the room, fully aware that they were holding hands as they walked at heel.

As they should.



## Chapter 34

Tobias raised an eyebrow and sank deeper into the tub, waiting for his boys to join him. If he didn't know any better, he'd think Phan was lingering on purpose, preening with his new collar.

On second thought, he did know better; his boy was a peacock and he'd do well not to forget that. "Phantom. It's lovely. We all know that. Get your ass in here and let Noah pour the tea!"

Phan grinned and turned to the tub immediately. "Yes, sir," he said, climbing over the edge and curling into Tobias' side. "Sorry."

Tobias couldn't help smiling. Phan had been floating for the entire day, clinging to him and smiling non-stop. He kissed the top of his head and looked over at Noah, just in time to accept the two mugs of tea. "Thank you, pet."

"My pleasure, sir. Anything I can do for my Master and his newly collared boy." Noah grinned and slipped into the tub with them. "Oooh. Hot," he said with a long sigh.

Phan squeaked and Tobias could feel him smile. Rolling his eyes, he relaxed into the water, tangling his legs with Noah's until he could finish his tea and hold him. "We know how Phan is," he observed. "How are you, pet?"

"I'm good," Noah said thoughtfully. "Still kind of riding on last night, you know?"

Tobias nodded. "We all are," he said with a smile he thought might be a smirk. "And there's nothing wrong with that at all." He gave Phan a squeeze. "There is life after collaring parties, however, and we've got a lot of changes going on."

"Mmhm," Noah hummed, sinking low in the tub. His voice was relaxed. "You're about to be a teacher. That's pretty cool. Are you looking forward to it?"

"I am, actually. It kind of surprises me how much."

"Why?" Phan asked softly. "I mean, why the surprise? You're as good with people as you are with animals. Well, unless the people are stupid."

Tobias laughed just as softly. "I guess I never thought about living the lifestyle to the point where it would be a full-time thing. I thought it might be restrictive... instead, it feels freeing. Well, at this point, anyway."

"Surrounding yourself with an environment where you can be completely you?" Noah smiled. "I bet it feels great. I think you'll do really well. And you and Bradford will work well together, don't you think?"

"If we don't kill each other or become raging alcoholics," Tobias replied with a wink. "No, I think we'll do fine. We're pretty good about staying out of each other's way unless it's important to interfere. And even then, the one who needs a push usually seeks it out."

"Like you calling him when it all got too big," Phan said softly, pressing a kiss against his chest.

"Yes," Tobias agreed. "Like that. Plus, Bradford really likes the business side of things, running the club. I'll like making sure everyone who walks in those doors knows what to do." He grinned. "Plus, I'll get to watch you get taken down fairly often, brat."

"Oh, joy," Phan deadpanned.

Noah laughed. "You and Bradford will probably see little of each other anyway, with Bradford running the club at night and you running your training and interviews during the day, you know? I don't mean to sound selfish, but it's really going to be nice having you home again, knowing your schedule, you know?"

"That's the general idea." Tobias sighed, sipping his tea. "Home for supper every night... Get to leave in the morning at a normal hour..."

"Ten is not normal, sir," Phan put in.

"You don't leave until ten?" Noah stared at him.

Tobias nodded. "I get to watch you dress, every morning," he said with a grin. "And then I get to linger over breakfast. Take a long shower. Spank Phan. And then... then I drive to a sex club to interview and screen Doms." God, it sounded better every time he said it.

"And I'm out of the house by seven-thirty." Noah shook his head. "I'm doing something wrong." He grinned and sat up straighter. "You're going to do other stuff too, right? Plan workshops and things like that? Is that where the farm comes in?"

"You've been paying attention," Tobias teased. "That's one thing Bradford and I'll probably work on together. It's outside of membership issues, but part of the expansion. Essentially, when I'm ready, we'll take one or two Tops up to the farm for a weekend and put them through their paces, or I'll give extended lessons on whatever they want to work on. You and Phan'll be part of that, too, and Phan's going to help with the screenings."

Noah looked at Phan. "You're okay with that? Other Tops and all?"

Phan giggled. "Hell, yeah. It'll be like a party on my back." He sobered up a little. "Seriously, Noah. For me, it's not a big deal. They can't have sex with me, and I can tell Sir exactly how good they are, both with the tools and with a random sub they've never met. It's... well, it's kind of my thing, you know? And he'll be right there, or in the security room."

Tobias nodded. "They'll know the rules, dear," he promised.

Noah studied him for a bit. "It's odd, I guess. I went through so many Tops before I met Sir, you know? But I don't think now... I don't think I could do that."

"Makes sense to me, pet," Tobias said softly. "You were looking very hard for something specific. Phan's broader... you're deeper." He leaned over and kissed Noah softly. "I wouldn't ask it of you, honestly."

Noah nodded. "I'll be happy to let them watch," he said with a sly grin. "But no touching."

Tobias laughed and kissed him lightly. "All right."

"I get to touch," Phan said insistently. "Noah. Tell him I can touch."

"Is that a pout?" Tobias asked Phan, trying not to grin.

"No. But I need kisses. Noah kisses."

"You're another matter entirely, hon," Noah assured him. "You can have anything you want from me." He glanced at Tobias and quickly added, "As long as Sir says it's okay, that is."

"It's nice that one of you remembers who the boss is around here," Tobias teased. "And here I thought that because I'm the only one without a collar that it was perfectly obvious."

Phan quivered beside him and Tobias had no doubt that the boy's cock had just gone rigid at the mention of his collar.

"I have matching chains in my room...." Tobias tempted.

Phan nodded, his eyes wide. "Please, sir? Noah?" He leaned forward and twisted, one small hand sliding up Tobias' thigh, the other, no doubt, landing on Noah's leg. The mug he'd been holding slowly sank to the bottom of the tub, the water changing color. "Oops."

Noah took Phan's fingers in his and lifted them to his lips to kiss them. "You're still so floaty from last night; it's adorable."

"Apparently so," Phan said with a grin. He darted forward and kissed Noah's mouth. "Sir, I think we better get out of the tub," he said earnestly, his hand finally wrapping around Tobias' cock. "There's tea in the water."

Tobias grinned and nodded. "All right, dear. If you really think it's best."

"Oh, I do. Sir. Really. Tea is for drinking. Not bathing in." He looked amazingly serious, but he was bouncing a little with every word.

"Noah?" Tobias asked politely. "Do you think we should take Phan downstairs and do nasty things to him?"

Noah pulled himself up so he was sitting on the edge of the tub, his feet still dangling in the water. "You mean more nasty things?" He winked and swung his feet out as well and reached for the towels.

"Of course," Tobias said, sliding out of Phan's grasp. "I was thinking about taking a nice crop to his ass, chaining him to the bed and making him watch me fuck you. Then, if he's a very good boy, maybe I'd let you suck him off." He stood up and ignored Phan's whimper as he took a towel from Noah.

Noah set a towel on the edge of the tub for Phan, too. "I'm liking the sound of that, sir," he said, a teasing tone to his voice. "Oh, are you going to chain him to your desk at work?" He looked over at Phan and Tobias saw him wink.

"More than likely," Tobias said conversationally. He smiled and started drying himself off. "Probably gag him, too, just so I can get my work done. That would look nice, don't you think? A man of my position with a pretty sub all tied up for me?"

He heard Phan moan and then splashing as the boy stood up and climbed out of the tub. Phan's towel flicked

over Tobias' legs as he dried himself in record time.

"Oh, sir, that would be lovely. All tied up." Noah approached Phan slowly, his voice dropping in pitch.

"Gagged. Chained to Sir's desk. Probably half-naked." He stopped in front of Phan and took his towel from him. "You'd love that, wouldn't you, hon?"

Phan nodded and moaned again. "Sir?" he pleaded.

Tobias shook his head and smiled. "Not yet, dear. Noah, be a good boy and take the tea things down? Phan and I are going to select a crop. We'll meet you in my bedroom."

"Yes, sir." Noah turned and brushed past Phan, fondling him quickly before stepping over to the tea tray. He turned off the jets and reached into the tub for the mug Phan had dropped.

Tobias admired Noah's ass for a moment and then watched Phan admire it as well. Grinning, he cleared his throat. "Phan. Playroom."

Phan jumped and nodded, then practically ran out the door. Tobias laughed and followed him; it was going to be a fun night, the perfect end to their weekend. A fitting kick off to his new career.

## Chapter 35

Noah spent most of Tuesday afternoon walking instead of working. He toured his beat, walking up and down sidewalks, waving now and then to familiar faces but otherwise lost in his own thoughts.

He was out of uniform, wearing just blue jeans and a T-shirt. His badge, his gun, and his pager were all sitting on his Captain's desk. He knew he'd made the right decision. It wasn't as abrupt or sudden as the Captain seemed to feel, it had actually been on his mind since that horrible day when Carol had been shot. Sure, he was going to miss the beat, and there was a lot to miss about his job, but in his heart, he knew he couldn't do it anymore.

The Captain had very kindly left the conversation open with regard to whether he was retiring or taking a leave of absence, but Noah knew he wouldn't be back.

He arrived home long before his usual hour and Phan was still out at his therapy appointment. He poured himself some Coke and sank into the couch, turning on the TV and flipping channels.

He wasn't even really aware of the time passing, only looking at the clock when he heard the front door open and shut, Phan's voice low and indistinct coming from the hall. He was mumbling to himself, but it wasn't until the coat closet closed and Phan came around the corner that the words made any sense.

"Cream for coffee, milk for cereal, and loose tea. Cream for coffee, milk for cereal, and --" The litany broke off with a bit of a cry. "Noah! Sorry, kitten, didn't know you were home." Phan came around the couch and peered at him. "You're home. Are you okay? Feeling sick? Want me to call Sir? Can I--"

"I'm fine." Noah interrupted. He looked at Phan and waved his hand. His voice seemed strangely distant, even to himself. "I'm fine. You better write that stuff down."

Phan stared at him and sat on the couch, one hand reaching out to rest on Noah's thigh. "I'll remember," he said. "What's wrong?"

Noah shook his head. "Nothing's wrong," he said, more or less truthfully. It wasn't so much that anything was wrong, just that he was feeling a little bit lost. "I'm just trying to figure out what to do now that I've turned in my badge."

Phan didn't say anything for a long moment. "Oh, Noah," he finally breathed. "What happened?" Phan's arms went around him, pulling him close.

Noah shrugged letting himself be coaxed into Phan's arms. "I almost had to pull my gun again this morning," he told Phan, leaning a bit into his arms. "I really didn't want to. I hesitated. If I had to pull it, then that would mean that I'd have to threaten to use it. And *that*... that would mean that I might actually have to back up that threat with action. I didn't want to. I don't want to."

Phan urged him to lean even closer. "I'm sorry, sweetie," he said quietly. "It sounds... huge and difficult."

"It is huge." Noah sighed. "It's really huge. I think that's what I'm so... overwhelmed about." He shifted so he could look at Phan. Maybe if he could explain it better. "It's not the part of the job that I enjoy. I think I made a mistake, Phan. I'm not into 'law enforcement'." He made little quote marks with his fingers around the words. "I wanted to be a cop so I could help people, you know? Get kids back in school. Keep drugs out of their hands. Help little old ladies cross the street. Sounds corny, I guess. But I didn't become a cop so I could chase down thieves or direct traffic, and I didn't become a cop so I could fire a gun."

It did make sense somehow. Carol had said almost the same thing to him in the hospital. "My new partner, he loves it. 'Hunting down the bad guys,' he says. I'm in the wrong career."

Phan's eyes were wide and Noah wasn't sure he'd ever seen him concentrate so hard before, outside of a scene. "Okay," Phan said slowly. "That's... that's good, right? That you see it and want to... to... to make a change? What did they say when you told them?"

"The Captain told me he respected my decision but that he hoped I'd be back." Noah shrugged.

Phan bit his lip. "What did Sir say?"

Noah looked at Phan. That was a worry. "He doesn't know yet."

Phan's mouth made a perfect O and he took a deep breath. "Okay," he said slowly. "Um. Maybe we should. You know. Call him. He'll want to know."

"Well, yeah," Noah sank back into the couch. "I guess we should call him. He's probably deep into something with Bradford though, don't you think? I'd hate to interrupt."

Phan stared at him.

Noah blinked at him. "You think I should interrupt him."

"Duh." Phan tilted his head. "Do you seriously think that he'd thank you for letting him work in peace over God knows how many stupid files while you're sitting here dealing with a major life change?"

Noah shifted in his seat. It just wasn't a phone call he wanted to make. It would be so much easier just to tell him when he got home, wouldn't it? "Well... when you put it that way..."

Phan reached for the cordless phone, resting on the coffee table. "I'll call him if you want. See if he can come home."

Noah sighed. "Just don't make it sound like he has to, you know? I'm fine. Really. It can wait. He doesn't have to rush home like it's some big emergency."

Phan snorted and started pushing buttons. "His line is direct, yeah?" he asked Noah. Before Noah could say anything, Phan blinked. "Oh, hey, Joe. Phantom. Still sorting out the freaking speed dial. Can you switch me to -- yeah, thanks." Phan rolled his eyes. "Joe says 'hey.'"

Noah waved absently, watching Phan. "Joe screens for them now. That's what happens when you get popular and busy."

"Ah." Phan winked at him and tucked his feet up under Noah's butt on the couch. "Hi, Sir!" he said cheerfully. "How's your day going? ... Uh-huh. ... Oh, good, thanks. We talked about a couple of things, went over what's been coming out on canvas and how it relates to pain ... Yeah, she thinks so. ... Sure, if you

want. Haven't even looked in the kitchen yet. ... Okay. ... No, no, just wondering if you'd be able to sneak home early. Noah's had a rough day and I think he could use a ... Yeah, but-- ... He's fine, really. Just thought you should know— ... Sir. ... Yes, sir."

Phan turned off the phone. "Um, he's coming home."

Noah rolled his eyes. "Everything with him is so dramatic," he said with a sigh, but he couldn't help but grin a little. "Not that I'd change him or anything."

Phan grinned back. "It's kind of cute really. Don't you think?"

"It is. It's nice to feel taken care of. Unless he runs in the door in a panic." Noah winked.

"He does do that, doesn't he?" Phan laughed. "It'll be fine, kitten. He'll ask a million questions, then take you upstairs and either bring you down or bring you off." He stood up and headed for the kitchen. "Hungry?"

"On that note, maybe I shouldn't eat." Noah grinned, but he got up and followed Phan anyway. "Maybe just some peanut butter."

"Spoon or bread?" Phan asked, apparently serious as he got the jar down.

"Spoon." Noah answered just as seriously, getting one from a drawer. "So I overheard -- you had a pretty good session? Did she swoon over your collar? Because she should have."

"She did," Phan nodded, grabbing a spoon for himself and digging into the peanut butter. "She found a word in it, but wouldn't tell me what it said. I got some serious time with a mirror coming up." He winked and started licking the peanut butter off his spoon, his tongue flat.

Noah nodded. "I noticed one Sunday night. Sir is clever that way. Ever read my cock ring?"

Phan shook his head. "Usually too distracted by the time I get down there. Show me?"

"Now?" Noah asked around the spoonful of peanut butter in his mouth. He licked the spoon clean and stood up. "Okay." He set the spoon down and popped his jeans open before tugging his cock free for Phan to inspect. "It's pretty, yeah?"

Phan snorted and went to his knees. "And you call me a peacock?" He looked up at Noah and grinned. "Prettiest cock ever, kitten."

Noah snorted. "Yes, but I meant the ring, hon."

"Ah, well just let me see, then," Phan said, his voice teasing. One slim hand gathered his cock up and tugged gently, the other touching the ring and his balls and Phan took a look; a very long, close look. "Uh-huh. Very, very pretty."

Phan's inspection segued into admiring and playing rather quickly, his hands warm and knowledgeable. "Lean back, kitten."

Noah leaned back against the table. He wasn't asking for this, he certainly hadn't expected it, but he wasn't particularly inclined to dissuade Phan either. Phan's touch was reassuring and affectionate, and Noah wasn't ashamed to admit that he needed a little bit of that. He felt his blood heading south and decided not to fight it at all. Still, he felt like politeness required him to put up at least a weak protest. "Hon, you don't have to..."

"Shut up," Phan growled, the sound an adorable imitation of what Tobias gave them. "Never have to, always want to." Phan's tongue slid up the side of his cock and over the head, wet and hot. "Taste like peanut butter," Phan giggled before going down the other side.

Noah felt his cock spring to life at that growl. Imitation or no, Phan did it well. He also did this well, and God, did it feel good. He gripped the edge of the table with his fingers and moaned. "Love your tongue."

"Yeah?" Phan sounded like he wasn't really expecting an answer as he licked his way around Noah's cock ring and down to suck on his balls. He made a short noise of pure pleasure and his knees spread wide as he nuzzled and licked at Noah's sac.

Noah groaned and closed his eyes. His cock filled and tightened and he didn't much feel like talking anymore. He dropped one hand to Phan's head and when he spoke, his voice was much more unsteady than he'd expected. "God, please."

"You got it." Phan licked right up him again like he was a candy stick and then set to sucking his brains out his cock. His mouth was hot and loose, then damn hot and tight, the sounds Phan was making just adding vibrations and hunger.

Phan sucked the head of his cock and played with his balls; his fingers traced the ring, and the palm of Phan's hand slipped and slid over hard, wet skin. "Love you," Phan whispered, looking up at him. "Everything is going to be just fine." He opened up his mouth and started sucking again, looking up at Noah with wide eyes.

Noah hung on to the edge of the table to keep from losing his balance completely. He knew the fact that he was ready to come so soon made him shameless, wanton, a fucking horny slut even, and he didn't care. He moved both hands to the table as his breath became ragged and looked down at Phan again. He was beautiful. "Oh, fuck. Fuck! Yes!" Noah grunted and started to come, groaning and shooting into Phan's mouth.

Phan moaned and swallowed, going down on him fast and furious as he took it all, his hands tight on Noah's hips.

"So... not so much an emergency?" Tobias said from the hall, leaning on the wall as he watched.

"Oh, fuck," Phan gasped, his eyes rolling and a wet patch rapidly forming on the front of his trousers, the smell of his spunk rising up fast and strong.

Noah stared down at Phan, still panting. "Jesus, you just made him shoot, sir."

Tobias chuckled and walked into the kitchen to stand next to him as they looked down on poor Phan, panting and blushing like mad. "And he made you shoot," Tobias said as he took a kiss. "Hello, pet."

Noah kissed him back, leaning into it a bit. "Except he meant to do that." Noah smiled, tucking himself back into his jeans. He looked down at Phan again. "You okay, hon?"

"Uh-huh. Forgot to read the ring, though." He closed his eyes and sighed. "I gotta change. You talk."

Tobias smirked, pulled Phan up off the floor and dropped a kiss on his swollen mouth. "Hello, boy."

"Hello, sir. Make him talk to you," Phan said as he walked away muttering about damp denim.



Tobias shrugged and slipped a hand around Noah's waist. "Let's see. Home early, eating peanut butter from the jar, out of uniform, and getting a distracting blow job in the kitchen. What happened, sweetheart?"

"I quit." Noah blurted out. For some reason it didn't feel like such a big deal anymore. "Turned in my badge and my gun this morning."

Tobias gave him a long searching look, his head tilted to the side like he was looking for something. "Okay," he said, nodding. "Are you all right? Need centering?"

"For now I just need to sit down, sir," Noah said, taking Tobias by the hand and leading him into the living room. He sat facing Tobias and went on. "It's like I was telling Phan. I think I made a mistake. I didn't really mean to get into law enforcement. I meant to get into some other kind of public service. I don't want to chase crooks down and intimidate them with my firearm. I want to help people, kids mostly. Like what I do in the evenings. I enjoy the counseling so much more than I do my job."

Tobias nodded again and brushed his jaw with one hand. "Are you going to be able to keep doing that?" he asked.

"Oh, yeah, that's through the YMCA. I guess maybe if I'm not working I could even pick up another shift or two. I won't be able to pay you for the mortgage anymore, but I guess you don't care about that. I'm not sure what I'm going to..." He looked up at Tobias. "I guess I'm feeling a little manic now that I feel like everything is going to be okay. I was kind of overwhelmed earlier. I think I freaked Phan out. There's a lot more to the story."

He blinked, feeling a great deal better. Huzzah for Phan and his magic tongue. Centering might be exactly what he needed.

Tobias didn't disappoint; his Master didn't. Slowly, with the same deliberation Tobias always showed when he did something important, he leaned forward and kissed Noah carefully. "I think it's time to go upstairs, pet. We'll do some work, then have a nice long soak, and maybe I'll join you and Phantom for your movie tonight. We'll order in supper and you can simply not worry about anything at all until tomorrow."

Noah nodded, gratefully. "Yes, sir."

"Tell Phan to order in Chinese," Tobias said, standing up. "Then go wait for me in the playroom. Strip and kneel, pet; I'm going to change."

"Yes, sir," Noah said again, and left the room quickly, hurrying up the stairs to find Phan. He poked his head in Phan's room.

"Sir thinks we should work," he said, smiling at Phan. "I think he's right. He says order Chinese."

"You got it, babydoll," Phan said, wiggling his butt and dancing naked through his room to his stack of clothes. "It'll be ready when you are. I'll even save you an eggroll."

"You better," Noah laughed softly. "I better run, but thank you." He winked and ducked out again, stripping in the safe room as instructed and knelt on display to wait for Tobias.

## Chapter 36

Tobias went up the stairs dressed only in jeans. He didn't think that Noah was going to need a lot of help, just a reminder and some grounding, and getting fully changed from work would take too much time. He went into the playroom and shut the door, smiling at Noah's kneeling form.

"I want to try something with you that I've done with Phan," he said, going straight to the trunks and lifting out a heavy wooden paddle.

"What is it, sir?" Noah asked curiously.

"Litany. You just answer the questions, pet." Tobias studied the wooden paddle and swung it through the air. It was smooth as silk, but had a series of holes through it so the air whistled. He knew for a fact that it packed a punch. "Over the spanking bench, please."

"Yes, sir." Noah moved to the bench and settled himself over it, taking hold of the handles and letting his head fall naturally. He took a deep breath and let the bench take his weight.

Tobias nodded and stood behind him, waiting until Noah's breath was nice and even before spanking him hard. "Who are you?" he asked, before the smack had even stopped vibrating up his arm.

"Noah Dolan, sir."

Tobias spanked him again, a little harder. "What are you?"

Noah played with his grip on the handles. "I'm your sub, sir."

"Who are you?" Tobias demanded again, upping the rhythm and the weight of the blows.

Noah hissed. "Noah, sir!" he said more loudly, the heavier blows registering in his voice.

"Who loves you?"

"You do. And Phan, sir." He was breathing evenly but more shallow.

Tobias struck him again and then again, watching Noah's breathing, the color of his skin and the way he was beginning to move into the blows, riding the pain. "What are you?"

Noah lifted his head this time to answer. "I'm yours, sir. Your sub. Ah..." he gasped softly.

"Good boy," Tobias said quietly. He lifted the paddle high and brought it down fast and hard. "What do you need?"

"To be still, sir." Noah's answer was very much like what he'd said the first time they met at the club. "To be grounded." He moaned at the blows and dropped his head again. "Focus."

Tobias spanked him steadily, spreading the blows over Noah's ass in a constant rhythm. He watched the color and went down to Noah's thighs, wanting Noah to be able to recover quickly. This wasn't punishment, it was just weight, something to focus on. "Mine," he said occasionally. "Trust. Let go."

"Yours," Noah repeated now and then as the words reached him consciously. Noah steadily relaxed over the bench, his body going very still. He was making almost constant sound, moans and soft begging, rough whispers of "thank you, sir," and "your boy."

Tobias smiled to himself as Noah settled. "Who are you?" he whispered, slowing the blows, starting to back off a little.

Noah was well enough settled in his space to answer a direct question. "I'm Noah, sir. Your boy."

"And who loves you?" Tobias kept the slower rhythm, but started to lighten the weight behind the spanking.

"You do, sir. You are my Master, you love me." He sighed and grunted lightly with each blow.

"That's right, boy," Tobias confirmed. "I will take care of you and help you move forward. You are my boy and I love you. Phantom and I are your support." He slowed the blows further, working into a light spanking that kept the contact, but had very little actual pain behind it.

Noah took an unsteady breath and nodded. He seemed emotional when he spoke. "Yes, sir. Thank you, sir."

"We will always listen, pet. We will always support you. We will help you in any way we can," Tobias said firmly, bringing the spanking to an ending. "You have nothing to fear, sweetheart. No matter what you decide to do, we'll back you up."

Noah nodded, again. His catharsis was palpable, he had tears of relief falling from his cheeks and making tiny puddles on the floor. He was completely relaxed, the tension and frustration and worry that comes with letting the familiar go and turning to something new drawn from him by the paddle and Tobias' firm reassurances. "Thank you, sir. I love you."

"I love you, Noah," Tobias said softly. He set the paddle down and carefully gathered Noah into his arms. "Always." He kissed Noah's cheek and brushed a few tears away. "Breathe for a bit, and we'll get cleaned up, sweetheart. Take your time."

Noah leaned into him heavily. But despite his physical weight, he sighed and said, "I feel very light, sir."

Tobias nodded and kissed him again. "Endorphins are wonderful, wonderful things, pet. As is catharsis. Listen to me now -- I meant what I said. We don't have to talk about this until morning, if you don't want to. A night not to worry, yes? Whatever you want, at your pace."

Noah smiled. "Phan rented another scary movie."

"Oh, lovely," Tobias deadpanned. "I promise to stay in plain sight if you promise to save tackling me until we go to bed."

"Deal." Noah seemed more himself. A little clingy maybe, but that was to be expected.

"You can even sit in the middle," Tobias offered. "And get in your Phan power cuddle. Ready to take a quick bath?" He grinned suddenly. "I bet we can actually have the Chinese in the safe room and then just hose everyone off."

Noah chuckled. "Sir!" He pushed back from Tobias, but kept hold of his hand as he got to his feet. "A bath anyway."

Tobias gave Noah's fingers a squeeze. "It's a fabulous start," he agreed with a smile. There was really very little wrong with hot baths with his boys. Even if they were followed by scary movies and long, life changing talks in the morning.

For now a bath would do quite well.

## Chapter 37

Tobias looked at his watch and checked the clock on his desk to make sure the last hour had really happened. "Sorry, boy," he said quietly, dropping a hand to brush over Phan's hair. "I didn't mean to neglect you."

Phan leaned into his touch, appearing to be perfectly content. "It's all right, sir," he said. "Is it time?"

Tobias nodded. "Just about." He smiled and looked around his office at the club. "I like having you here with me," he said as he stood up. "It's... comfortable."

Phan smiled, his eyes down. "It's nice."

"Boring for you," Tobias teased.

Phan snorted. "Oh, yes, I'm so bored being a... guinea pig. And sitting at your feet while you interview Tops. And being at your beck and call. And getting paid for it!"

"You're hardly a guinea pig," Tobias protested, putting on his suit jacket. "You're... you need an official title, to go with the paycheck. What does one call a man who gets flogged about twice a day and then tells me if the Dom is good enough for our club?"

"Yours," Phan suggested, grinning.

"I like it." Tobias did up his coat and checked his watch again. "All right then, dear. Time to go to work. Let me look at you."

Phan stood up and put his forearms behind his back. He was dressed in low-slung jeans and a plain white T-shirt, his hair as spiky and out of control as ever.

"Lovely," Tobias approved. "Do you think we can convince Noah to let his hair grow a little longer now that he's left the force?"

Phan tilted his head. "Just tell him to, sir. Or ask."

"I suppose." Tobias sighed. "I just don't want to look like I'm thrilled his life is currently upside down. I'm the support, remember; ask too much and..." He shook his head. "No, right now it's time for me to take care of his other needs, not tell him I want something to hold onto when I fuck his mouth."

Phan swallowed. Hard. "Yes, sir."

"You are so easy," Tobias said with a smile.

"Yes, sir," Phan agreed. "I know." It didn't sound like that bothered him in the least. "Have you talked to him about working here?"

Tobias nodded and went to the small cabinet next to the door. "I mentioned it," he said, taking out a flogger. "Deerhide all right with you?"

"Of course. What did he say?"

"He'd think about it. I think today he was going to go to the Y to see what he could set up there. Honestly though, we could use him here; security alone needs the help, and I wouldn't mind having him help out on this end, either. Still... it's up to him."

Phan nodded. "It's only been a few days," he said quietly. "Noah will figure out what he wants to do."

Tobias smiled. "He will indeed. And we'll back him up. But right now, boy, it's time to go screen a Dom. Ready?"

Phan nodded and squared his shoulders. "Ready, sir."

"Good boy," Tobias said softly. He walked to Phan and kissed him deeply, one hand tangled in Phan's hair. "You're mine," he whispered as he stepped back. "Don't forget that. Ever."

"No, sir," Phan said just as quietly. "Yours."

Tobias led Phantom up the stairs to the first room just off the landing, reserved for Tobias' use. It wasn't a theme room; in fact it held the bare essentials only, partly because of its smaller size. "He should be here, boy, so mind your manners."

Phan didn't say anything, but the air behind Tobias was thick with an air of injury.

"Sorry," Tobias said, rolling his eyes. "You always mind your manners. I forgot."

Phan snickered.

Tobias shook his head and pushed the door open, striding in with Phan at his heel. "Good afternoon, Tom," he said to the man waiting for them. "Thank you for coming."

"No trouble at all, Tobias," Tom said, taking a step forward to shake Tobias' hand.

Tobias had spoken to the man on the phone the week before and read his application thoroughly. He wasn't in the least disappointed in what he was seeing. Tom was only twenty-three, but he'd been playing in some of the better crowds and had a lean, self-confident look which went with the voice on the phone. He didn't appear nervous; in fact he seemed in his element, standing at ease in the middle of the room and not fidgeting at all.

Tom looked at Phan, standing in position behind Tobias, but said nothing until Tobias turned and gestured Phan forward. "This is Phantom. As you can see, he's collared, so there are rules from his Master."

Tom nodded. "Hello, Phantom," he said politely.

Tobias smiled, pleased. Occasionally a Dom wouldn't even acknowledge the sub until they were about to begin.

"Hello, sir," Phan replied with a smile of his own.

Tom looked at Tobias again. "I'm not surprised his Master has rules -- he's very pretty."

Tobias grinned. "He is." He handed Tom the flogger and said, "We're here to see how you play. Phan can take a lot, but the point isn't to break him -- you won't. What I want to see is you reacting to him, getting from him the reactions you want. You can't make him come and you can't get off yourself. Officially, the club stays out of sex between consenting partners, but as this is an audition of sorts and I'll be watching, it's something else altogether. Also, his Master said so."

Tom nodded. "Accepted."

"Wonderful," Tobias said with a brief smile. "I'll be out of the way, just ignore me. You can start whenever you're ready." He turned on his heel and walked to the far corner of the room and leaned on the wall, his arms crossed over his chest.

Tom looked at Phan and ran his hand over the flogger. "What are your safe words, Phantom?" he asked quietly.

"Drake and gander, sir," Phan said.

Tom nodded and took a step back. "Please remove your clothing, and stand against the wall, arms braced."

Phan nodded and undressed, folding his clothes neatly; he made no effort to disguise the fact that he was getting hard, and Tobias smiled to himself.

"Drake and gander," Tom repeated as Phan braced himself, his arms and legs spread for balance. "Do I have to remind you that you can't come?" He had a teasing note in his voice and Tobias decided that he liked the man. He only hoped Tom's arm was as good as his demeanor.

"I remember, sir," Phan said, wiggling his butt. "Master said so."

"He did indeed." Tom lifted the flogger. "Let's play."

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Tobias was still chuckling to himself as he rubbed cream over Phan's ass half an hour later, back in his office.

"Not funny, sir," Phan protested.

"It was so, and hush up."

Phan sighed and arched his back as Tobias slid fingers over his reddened skin. "He's in, isn't he?" he asked.

"He's *so* in. I might adopt him."

"Oh, no, you have enough subs as it is." Noah snorted, coming into Tobias' office without knocking. "Unless you're talking about children, in which case I'm moving out. Oh, should I have knocked, sir?" He nudged the door closed behind him and went right to Tobias and kissed him, then gave Phan a quick smooch as well. He was grinning ear to ear and seemed to be in an excellent mood.

"Yes, you should have, and he's not a sub, he's a Top with an excellent sense of humor," Tobias said with a grin.

Phan grumbled.

"Hush, dear," Tobias said, finishing with the cream and closing the jar. "All done." He left Phan lounging on the couch. "Hello, sweetheart," he said to Noah, taking another kiss. "You look pleased with yourself. What's up?"

"Had a good chat at the Y. They've offered me a part-time staff position. It's strictly volunteer for a while, but it's some counseling, some mentor kind of stuff, just working with the kids in general. I'll still have my two nights a week, but also two afternoons and the occasional outing or special event. I think it's going to be great." Noah leaned on Tobias' desk and grinned. "Phan, honey, did you get your ego bruised or just your ass?"

Phan gave him an acid look. "Do I look like a puppy to you?"

Tobias rolled his eyes. "Yes, actually. Though the newspaper might have been... no, the newspaper was funny, too."

Phan sniffed and looked away.

"That's wonderful," Tobias said to Noah, pulling him closer. "Well done."

"Thank you, sir," Noah leaned into Tobias. He was still smiling, and his mood was far lighter than it had been for days. "He hit Phan with a newspaper?" He laughed. "I guess everyone's got their kinks."

Tobias snickered. "No, he just kind of... handed it to him and patted his head. Told him to be a good pup and take his master the paper."

Phan made a noise from the couch. "He did not! Sir. He tapped my nose with it!"

Tobias shook, trying not to laugh. "It was cute."

Noah wasn't as polite. "I can see why Phan is so fond of the guy," he said with a laugh. "So, sir, I've got the afternoon free. Actually I'm going to have quite a bit of free time... so what are you going to do with me?"

"Oh, now that's an open invitation," Tobias said with a smile. He gave Noah's ass a squeeze. "I'm open to suggestions. We can have something to eat. Bother Bradford. Wander around and annoy everyone. Watch Phan's butt heal... In the larger scheme of things, you *are* going to have a lot of free time. What would you like to do?"

Noah snorted. "Well, long-term I think I'll talk to Bradford about filling up my schedule. Security maybe, or maintenance. I don't know. But short-term? Short-term," Noah dropped his jacket over a chair and tugged his shirt off over his head, "I think I'd like to celebrate. Just the three of us." He pushed Tobias's fingers into his groin. "Right here," his boy teased rubbing his erection in Tobias' palm. "Or upstairs, in a room of your choosing."

"Oh, look, Phan. Noah's making a pass at us," Tobias grinned. "And the thought of having you both around here makes my change of career all the more appealing." He gave Noah's cock a rub and a squeeze, listening as Phan tumbled off the couch and crawled toward them.



"Don't know if there are any free rooms," Phan said, moving in to nuzzle at Noah's erection, earning himself a pat along the way. "But we can check."

Tobias stepped back and leaned on his desk, watching them for a moment. "I think I'd rather like to christen my office," he said as Phan started to mouth Noah through his pants. "What do you think, pet?"

Noah moaned softly and pet Phan's hair. "I think I'm going to have great difficulty with the stairs at this point anyway, sir," he answered, looking down at Phan and smiling.

"Stairs are a bitch," Phan agreed, nodding and rubbing his cheek on Noah. "I almost didn't make it down."

Tobias laughed. "Poor baby. The newspaper thing made him hard."

Phan had the decency to look at least mildly ashamed of himself. "Well, it's not the newspaper this time, sir," he said with a grin. "Can I play with Noah now? Please?"

"Since you asked so nicely," Tobias agreed. He crossed to the door and made sure it was locked, then pulled his office chair around his desk and sat down. "Nice view," he observed as Phan tugged Noah's zipper down.

It was, in point of fact, a *very* nice view, with Phan's ass a nice red and Noah's cock pushing out of his jeans. Tobias leaned back in his chair, his legs spread slightly to avoid his own discomfort.

Noah made no move to help Phan with his zipper. Instead, he merely kept his eyes on Phan and ran his fingers across his own chest to give his nipple ring a tug, making him bite his lip and moan. "I think this career change of yours is going to make us all... ah, God--" Noah gasped as Phan took the head of his cock into his mouth. "Make us all very happy, sir."

"It certainly has its perks," Tobias said, watching Phan's mouth slide down Noah's prick. "Phan, get his jeans off, dear. I want his legs spread wide. You can take him with your fingers, boy -- open him for me."

Phan moaned and immediately took Noah deep, his hands grabbing for Noah's jeans and yanking them down.

"Jesus!" Noah reached back and grabbed the edge of the desk to keep from losing his balance. He lifted one foot and then the other so Phan could remove his boots and jeans, and then he was nicely naked, hips arched into Phan's mouth and letting the desk take most of his weight. He grunted and his voice went dark. "Ah. Phan."

"Nice?" Tobias asked, reaching to one of his nearby shelves. He had a candy dish filled with samples of lube and, grabbing one, he waited until Phan had Noah's balls in the palm of his hand before tossing it to the floor in front of them. "Open him, dear."

He undid his own trousers and leaned back, tucking his shirt out of the way. He rather liked being fully clothed when his boys were naked.

"Nice," Noah panted at him. "More than nice. God, he's being evil with that tongue."

"Fingers, Phan," Tobias ordered, pulling his own cock free from his boxers. He nodded approvingly as Phan spread Noah's legs, Noah having to lean even more on the desk for support, and then plunged two slick fingers into Noah's ass. "Lots of lube, boy. I want him wet."

Phan moaned and nodded, his head bobbing over Noah's groin, his own prick standing away from his body and twitching madly.

"Oh, fuck, yes," Noah groaned and his face twisted into a lovely grimace as Phan pushed his fingers into him. "Good, Phan. Feels good." His eyes were half-lidded, his legs wide and he had one arm braced well behind him on the desk to support the strong arch of his body. "Jesus, yes." His other arm stretched out toward Tobias, fingers open. "Sir," he begged. "Kiss me? Touch me, sir, please? Want you."

"Not yet, pet," Tobias purred. He ran a hand over his erection, watching as Phan added a twist of his wrist. "I want to watch you come in Phan's mouth. And then, sweetheart, you're going to ride me where I am."

Phan whimpered, his free hand fluttering to his prick but moving away again before he could touch himself.

"Oh, don't worry, dear," Tobias soothed. "I'll take care of you, too."

"Yes sir!" Noah grunted loudly. "Getting close, anyway." He dropped his outstretched arm to Phan's head. "Wanna fuck your mouth, Phan. Sir, can I?" he asked, both politely and with some difficulty, already tangling his fingers in Phan's hair. "Oh, God. Yes! Wanna come."

"Go ahead," Tobias invited, holding himself a little more firmly. His gaze flicked from Phan's mouth to Noah's face and back again. The room was filling with the smell of sex as both he and Phan started to leak, all three of them sweating lightly. He heard Phan groan and Noah grunt, all of them breathing faster. He stroked himself, his cock full and heavy, and watched.

Noah tugged on Phan's hair and pushed his hips forward so he was back on his feet instead of leaning on the desk. He couldn't quite stand straight with Phan's fingers in his ass so he bent his knees slightly and started to thrust, panting with the effort as he shoved his cock down Phan's throat. His eyes closed as he came and he tossed his head back with a cry as Phan swallowed around him. "Yes! Phan! Thank you, sir. Oh, God." He fell back heavily against the desk again, bracing one hand and panting hard.

"Let him go, Phan." Tobias waited for a count of three and then said, "Phan!" much more sharply.

"Sorry, sir," Phan said, pulling away. "He was still shooting." Phan's eyes were dark, his chest rising and falling rapidly. "Sir?" he asked, pleading.

Tobias looked him over and smiled. "So pretty, dear." he praised. "Help Noah over here, if he can move yet, and then find yourself a toy. I'd like to watch you for a while, I think."

Phan beamed and finally stopped stroking his fingers in and out of Noah. "Come on, kitten," he coaxed. "Sir wants you to sit on his lap." He giggled and licked Noah's nipple ring.

"Sitting sounds like a good idea," Noah said still half-dazed by his climax. He leaned slightly on Phan and groped him a bit while he let Phan lead him over to where Tobias was seated.

"That's it, sweetheart," Tobias said. He held out one arm, let Phan turn the mostly oblivious Noah, and guided his cock right into Noah's slick and open body as Phan let Noah "sit."

Noah groaned and came back to life abruptly. "Oh, fuck," he groaned again, one hand moving quickly to the arm of the chair. He shifted and let Tobias take his weight, adjusting until he felt comfortable. He turned his head over his shoulder toward Tobias. "Sir."

"Yes?" Tobias asked innocently, pushing a little deeper. Noah was hot and clinging to him, his body moving so slightly, but every flutter of his muscles was reverberating through Tobias. "Phantom, you might want to hurry," he said a little unevenly.

Noah leaned back against Tobias and straddled his legs. He glanced up at the mention of Phan's name, as if he'd forgotten he was there. "Gonna watch him, sir?" he asked roughly, rocking his hips forward and back again.

"Oh, yes," Tobias breathed, his hands on Noah's hips. "We are." He thrust minutely into Noah and then just let Noah dictate the pace, his own attention on Phan.

Phan had apparently taken the admonition to hurry up to heart, and had scrabbled for a dildo and lube. The toy itself was fairly plain, maybe two inches thick and six or seven long, but Phan didn't seem to even notice as he arranged himself on the couch. He draped one foot over the back and had the other on the floor, and he wasted no time at all in sliding a finger into himself.

"Pretty," Tobias said in Noah's ear.

"Hot, Phan." Noah eyes were riveted on the boy. He wasn't moving much, just slow, shallow rolls of his hips, rocking gently in Tobias' lap.

"More," Tobias ordered, though he wasn't sure which of them he meant. Phan obliged, adding a finger to his ass, stretching himself wide.

"Oh, God," Phan moaned, his eyes on the ceiling.

"Don't come yet, boy," Tobias said, his fingers digging into Noah's hips a little.

"No, sir." He shoved a third finger into his hole, his entire body curling up as a tremor raced through him. "Sir--"

"Fuck yourself," Tobias hissed, his breathing getting ragged. "Noah. Ride me."

Noah groaned and arched in Tobias' lap. "Yes, sir." He started to grind and rock his hips, gripping the arms of Tobias' chair for leverage. Once he got a rhythm going he was able to stretch farther, impaling himself on Tobias' cock over and over, deeper and faster the hotter Phan became.

Phan finally looked at them, his eyes wild. "Sir. Noah." He reached for the dildo and slammed it into himself in one thrust that had to have hurt. "Fuck, yes!" he screamed, his back arching and his hips starting to move.

"Jesus," Noah growled, still watching Phan as he moved. "Sir," he panted. "Phone's..." he waved a hand in the direction of Tobias' desk and that was the first that Tobias realized his office line was ringing.

Tobias swore and gripped Noah's hips. "Stay," he ordered. "And you--" He glanced at Phan, "--keep going."

The phone rang again, the peculiar double ring that signaled an internal line. With a smirk and a glance at the wall he shared with Bradford, he picked up the receiver. "Too noisy?" he inquired politely.

"It's entertaining, I must admit," Bradford said casually, an answering grin evident in his voice. "Whatever it is you've done to your boys has got Nikki hard."

"How nice for you," Tobias said, his eyes on Phan's hand as he worked the dildo in and out of his ass. "I'm glad we could--" He took a deep breath as Noah rocked slowly on him. "Oh, God," he said faintly. "Do you wish to hear the end, or shall we hang up?" he asked Bradford.

Bradford laughed. "No, I was just calling to badger you actually, simply because I could. Please don't let me interrupt further."

"Sure, whatever," Tobias said, tossing the receiver away. He had no idea if it disconnected or not, nor did he care. With a long groan he lifted Noah off his cock and gave him a gentle shove. "All fours, pet. Suck him."

Phan's eyes widened again and then rolled back in his head as he apparently tried to stop himself from coming. His hand stilled, his entire body tense, and Tobias had to be near him. He'd take Noah, be with them both... just as soon as Noah hurried up and bent over.

"Now, pet?" he said, hoping Noah would get his reflexes back immediately.

Noah blinked and didn't wait for his legs to be entirely sturdy. He stumbled to Phan and knelt on the floor bending over Phan's hips. "Here I am, hon," he said in a strange, soothing voice and smoothed his fingers over Phan's belly. "Right here." He opened his mouth and greedily devoured the boy.

"That's it," Tobias said, mostly to himself; he doubted either of them even heard him. He moved behind Noah and shoved himself back in, thrusting into his boy in a pounding rhythm. With a groan that was mostly snarl, he leaned forward and to the side, kissing Phan deeply.

Joined. Cock and ass, mouth and dick, the three of them found an irregular and unstable pattern of thrusts and sounds that meant nothing to anyone that wasn't them. Phan cried out into Tobias' mouth and Noah was moaning and humming, the sound muffled by Phan's prick.

Tobias forced himself to leave Phan's kiss, and with a final grunt of his own he reached for Phan's toy, twisting it hard. Phan screamed, his hips out of control, and Tobias froze, shooting deep into Noah.

Noah went still and took Phan's thrusts, swallowing the boy's spunk, even as Tobias filled him with his own. Noah had to tear his mouth from Phan before the boy was entirely finished to gasp for air as he came, too, but licked Phan clean once he'd gotten his breath back. He lay across Phan's hips, looking well used and worn out. "Oh, God. Love you," he said softly, not indicating which one of his lovers he meant. Tobias took it to mean both of them.

Phan mumbled something and Tobias had to agree with him; far too boneless to make sense right then, but feeling just fine. He kissed both of his boys and held onto them, floating for a while.

"I love my job," he finally said, grinning broadly.

## Epilogue

Tobias walked around the ring, checking the height of the whipping post and making sure that the doll was in easy range. "Phan," he called out. "Bring up the ring lights a bit, dear."

"Yes, sir," came Phan's voice from down the hall and a moment later the lights came up a little. "Enough?"

"Yes, thanks." Tobias nodded and paced back to the mark, coiling his whip as he walked. He snapped it twice and nodded again. "Done." He set the whip on the library table next to two more, as well as a selection of crops and an extensive collection of cat 'o nine tails. "What do you think, pet?" he asked Noah. "Are we ready?"

"Seem to be, sir." Noah ran his fingers along the lash of one whip and Tobias caught a smile. "Should be an eventful weekend. Do you *feel* ready?"

Tobias nodded. "Oddly, I do. I wondered what it would feel like to open the house and stables to clients, but I'm actually almost eager. It's been far too long since this place was used to its full potential."

Phantom came into the ring and stood on display. "The supply room is stocked, sir, and I've checked all the medical supplies."

"Good job," Tobias smiled. "Remind me to talk to you about getting your nipple pierced to match Noah; I rather like having you two standing together bare chested like this." He leered a little for effect and laughed as Phan preened. His boys were in jeans and boots, their collars gleaming; Tobias was quite sure they'd make an impression on the two clients coming for intensive weekend training.

"You said these Tops were new to the club, sir?" Noah asked. "They were men you interviewed?"

"Yes. Actually, Reid's sub was a member first. He's a good Top, just really wants to get better with the bullwhip. I suspect he's working up to a collaring, actually. His boy is coming with him... um, Taren? Do you know him?"

"Oh, Taren," Noah smiled. "Yes, sir. He's sweet. Very subby, kind of like Phan that way."

Phan grinned. "He's adorable. And Reid looked good in the testing. Who's the other one, sir?"

"A man named Jaxon. With an 'X', no less. He came recommended by several people and his interview was wonderful; his test scene was with Brian, who said it was a good experience. I was there and didn't see anything to raise any alarms." Tobias pointed to the cats. "Those are for him."

Noah looked the cats over. "Experimenting in slow torture, sir?" He seemed to be mostly joking, but he looked over at Phan and winked.

Tobias laughed. "Maybe next weekend, pet." He walked over to Phan and gave him a kiss. "He knows the rules, dear. You're mine, and he does nothing to you he wouldn't do to me. I'll be watching and helping, and

before every session we'll go over the limits. All you have to do is... well, be you."

Phan nodded, smiling broadly. "Yes, sir."

Tobias kissed him again. "Mine," he growled.

"Yours," Phan replied, leaning into him. "Always."

"It's almost time, sir," Noah told him, gently interrupting the moment.

Tobias nodded and looked around. "All right then, boys. Go and make sure our guests get settled all right and then bring them here to me." He looked down at himself and straightened his tie. "Do I look all right?" he asked, suddenly wondering if he shouldn't have gone for the leather daddy look and jack boots.

Noah stepped close. Very close. "You look hot, sir. You can kick my ass any day."

Tobias laughed and kissed him. "Brat. Off you go, then. Buzz the intercom before you bring them down, please."

"Yes, sir." Noah turned and followed Phan up the aisle and out the door.

Tobias paced once more around the ring and found himself smiling. There was a tingle under his skin and he felt charged, alive. He was truly in his element.

He really did have to find a way to thank Bradford. For a birthday dinner, a protective net around Phantom, a nudge to retire. If the man weren't such a wonderful pervert, Tobias might have suspected a bit of angel in him.

Laughing to himself at the thought, Tobias centered himself and used his breathing to bring himself back to earth; one could hardly instruct if one's brain and heart were soaring far above the ring. The buzz of the intercom was welcome when it came about twenty minutes later and Tobias readied himself, standing in the center of his ring.

Noah and Phantom brought the clients in and walked, side by side, up the aisle and across the ring, one going to either side and standing on display just behind his shoulders.

Jaxon and Reid nodded to Tobias respectfully; Taren sank to his knees behind his Master.

"Welcome to the farm," Tobias said with a smile. "Shall we begin?"