

# BENT



A HAMMER NOVEL

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Bent

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# BENT

## *Chapter One*

Marcus checked out his shave and buff in the mirror, his head bald as a newborn baby's. He could do the job himself, and often did, but on a Saturday morning Marcus liked to indulge himself. A little lie in, coffee and something sticky at the cafe, and a close shave of his head, followed by the bookstore.

The little thing who'd shaved him brought the hand mirror out and held it behind him so he could get the overall view. "Is it satisfactory, sir?" Flaming all over the place and cute as hell. It was too bad one look at Marcus' playroom would have the boy fainting and then running for the hills.

"More than, thank you."

He left the wee thing a nice tip and headed off up Brighton Avenue toward Roomful of Books. It wasn't as

big as the Borders, but it had an amazing fiction selection and a surprisingly interesting alternative lifestyle section. And they didn't mind how long you browsed.

The sun was shining brightly, his belly was full of beignets, and he had an appointment in the evening for a whipping. Marcus did love the weekend.

The little bell sounded as he opened the door to the bookstore, and he gave Juniper a "hello" and a wave before wandering toward the mystery section. He was in the mood for a whodunit.

He barely missed the skinny man who was wandering, thumbing through a book and muttering under his breath. Marcus murmured an "excuse me", gave the fellow a smile, and found himself at the mysteries.

A few moments later, the man came behind him, dragging Juniper along, snarling. "Look. I don't know what kind of moron organizes these books, but these are clearly mis-categorized."

"I... I'm sorry, Dr. Upton. I."

"Don't call me that." Someone was *pissed*. "It doesn't take a fucking rocket scientist to keep the science fiction and the mysteries separated."

Marcus raised an eyebrow and looked down on the man. He had the advantage of height and muscles and he used it to come to Juniper's defense. "It doesn't take a rocket scientist to be courteous, either."

"Indeed. Fortunately, the last time I gave a shit whether a muscle-bound asshole found me courteous I was, oh, fifteen or so and scared of my tennis coach. Now, I don't believe I was speaking to you."

"Someone needs to put you over their knee and spank you until you cry." Not only was he deadly serious, he would happily offer to do it himself.

He got a snort, a rolled eye. "If I get the urge, I'll holler. Do you mind?"

Marcus crossed his arms and did his best mountain impression. "I do mind, actually." Juniper ran a stellar business; the man didn't deserve abuse like this man was dishing out.

"Oh, fuck off." The bright green eyes flashed, staring at him, furious. "Look, Puffy, I don't have time to play pet the muscle-bound asshole. I have work to do."

"Sir. Professor. Please. What are you searching for, and I'll find it." Juniper was shivering, fluttering a bit.

"You keep calling me asshole and I will take you outside and beat your ass until it's black and blue and then I'll make you come back and beg for more. This man is trying to help you and you're doing nothing but insulting him and his other customers." Shit, those eyes were something. He'd love to see them full need, full of passion. In submission. Yes, indeed. Although, really, now was not the time to be springing wood.

The long nose wrinkled and those green eyes left him, ignoring him completely. "I need everything you have by Nicholas Blake. Immediately."

Marcus put his hand on Juniper's shoulder, gave it a little squeeze. "Say 'please', professor."

"Now."

Juniper was trembling beneath his hand, so he squeezed again. "No, that didn't sound like 'please' to me. Why don't you try again?"

Those green eyes flashed. "I don't need this shit. I'll find another bookstore and, believe me, I'll be contacting corporate."

"As will I." He dug into his pocket and pulled out one of his cards. "Here you go. Give me a call when you want that spanking badly enough to beg for it."

"That's never going to happen." The card was slapped out of his hand.

"That's a real shame. You don't know what you're giving up."

"Bullshit." Then the man turned on his heel, storming out.

Juniper stared, just blinked. "Man, Dr. Upton's... he's had a terrible time, huh?"

"Oh?" Was there a good reason for the bad behavior?

"Oh, you don't know? He was an English professor and some little girl accused him of rape. Now, we all knew he didn't do it, because the man swings, well, our way, but he lost everything -- his job, his house, his boyfriend. Everything."

"Ouch." It didn't excuse the rudeness -- Juniper didn't deserve to be treated like that no matter what had happened to the man -- but it did explain it.

"Yeah. He's pure evil now. Does freelance stuff, I think. I don't know. He was one hell of a teacher, though."

"You say that as if you have experience. Were you one of his students?" Despite himself, Marcus was intrigued now.

"I was. Five years ago or so."

"Well, if that's the way he treats the people he knows..." Marcus found himself looking down the aisle where the professor had disappeared. He couldn't help it, the man was interesting. Maybe even intriguing. Marcus prided himself on being able to tell if someone was gay or straight, and if they were a top, bottom or switch. Mr. High and Mighty Snooty Professor screamed bottom boy to him.

Juniper shrugged. "I think he's just incredibly unhappy. Let me get him his books and I'll get him on his way."

"Yes, I didn't hear the bell over the door ring. Don't let him be nasty to you just because he's unhappy."

Juniper smiled at him, patted his arm. "You're a good guy." Then the little clerk gathered up four novels and scurried to the professor, who was at the counter, having filled his arms with books.

Marcus turned back toward the mystery section once again, but his mind was filled with thoughts of the professor and all the things he could do to the man. It was amazing what a good beating could do to one's mood. He grabbed a book at random and made his way over to the register, moving slowly and getting a good, long look at the stiff back and tight little ass.

"Here you go, Dr. Upton. Thanks for your business." Juniper handed the man his change.

"You don't have to call me that, Juniper. Did you ever graduate?"

"I did. I'm in grad. school now."

"Going to teach?"

"No. No, I'm a biology major. Research."

"Good. Don't teach if you can help it. It's a crap profession." Then the man just walked away.

Marcus watched him go. That really was a lovely little ass. He had a sudden yearning to see it spanked rosy, to see welts and bruises on it. He turned back to Juniper and handed over the novel he'd picked up. "So, the professor must come in often."



"Oh, yeah. Every other day. Just like clockwork. He goes to the post office, picks up his mail, goes to the coffee shop next door, has half a muffin and a triple espresso. Comes here. Buys books and leaves."

Marcus nodded, unsurprised that the professor was a fan of order. If the man were Marcus', he would be kept on a strict schedule in order to keep him out of trouble.

"That'll be nine fifty-eight." Money changed hands and Juniper offered him a grin. "I hope you enjoy the book, man."

"Thanks." He looked down at the book he'd grabbed. The Pink Lipstick Brigade Murders. "Oh..."

Juniper's laugh was warm, sweet. "If you wanted to exchange it, I promise not to notice."

He gave Juniper a sheepish nod, set the book down and headed back to the mystery section once again, this time determined to pay attention to the books.

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Jim went through his mail -- hate letter, hate letter, bank statement, check, bill, bill, hate letter. He dumped the hate mail in the trash. He didn't need to read them. That bitch and her sorority friends were repetitive and boring, at best. He finished his espresso and grabbed the other half of his muffin, wrapping it carefully for his breakfast tomorrow.

Horror novels today, he thought. He could use fodder for the article he was doing on the changing face of fear. Besides, he liked scaring himself. Jim headed next door, whistling under his breath. Someone else went into the bookstore ahead of him and the door was held open.

"Thanks." He nodded without looking up, heading for the fiction section. They used to shelve horror on its own, but not anymore. Goddamn it. Still, it was easy enough to find, especially as he was only looking for certain names.

He didn't even realize he was being followed until a voice right next to him said, "you're welcome."

Jim jumped, almost losing his briefcase. Oh, fuck. The big, growly guy. Just what he needed today. He nodded, doing his best to ignore the man.

"You appear to be in a better mood today."

"Do I know you? I mean, from beyond last week?" He really wasn't interested in chit-chat.

"Not yet, no. And last week you weren't at your best. Perhaps we should share a meal and rectify that."

"Do you always invite men that you threatened to beat out for lunch?"

"Actually, I usually invite them to lunch and then offer to beat them." He was given a grin and the big, bald guy held out his hand. "I'm Marcus Goodfellow."

"Jim Upton." He shook the man's hand, the skin warm, solid, the handshake firm. Jesus.

"What kind of food do you like?" Marcus kept a hold of his hand.

The question surprised him enough that he answered it. "Oriental. Spicy."

"There's a new Thai place over on Fountain Street. I've been looking for an excuse to try it out. Come with me." The words sounded suspiciously like an order.

"I can't. I have work to do. Books to read. I just ate. You threatened to hit me. It's not a promising start to an acquaintanceship." He thought, maybe, he'd had too much caffeine.

"On the contrary, threatening to hit you is a wonderful start of an acquaintanceship where I come from." Marcus gave him a wink and he wasn't sure if the man was serious or not. "Lunch will be my treat."

"I. Excuse me?"

"I said lunch will be my treat. Choose your books and we can walk right over."

"I. No. No, of course not. I." He closed his eyes and took a deep breath. "If you'll excuse me." He obviously was ill and needed a moment. Jim stepped away, heading for the restroom so that he could wash his face.

"Do you always run away from offers of free lunch?"  
Damn, the man had long legs -- he'd caught up quickly.

"I don't. I don't feel well. Excuse me."

Marcus stopped him, putting a hand on his forehead.  
"You don't feel hot. Perhaps you're hungry. Lunch is a good idea, Jim. Come with me."

"But..." His hand was grabbed and he was led out the door, like he was some fool.

When they got out, Marcus put his hand in the crook of the man's arm and headed up the street. "So what do you do, Jim?"

"I'm an editor." Sort of. Sometimes. Like it mattered.  
"What about you?"

"I have my own business. I make leather goods."

"Saddles? Clothes?" No one would need saddles here.

"Whips, floggers, cock rings. Marcus Goodfellow is a well-known name in the BDSM community."

"Oh." Goodness. He. Indeed.

"Have you heard of it?" He wasn't sure if Marcus meant his name or the BDSM community thing.

"No. No, that is rather outside my circles, I think." Hell, his entire world was destroyed by one little slut who

didn't pass World Lit. He wasn't looking for *more* trouble.

"It doesn't have to be outside your circle. There are people from all walks of life who are a part of it." Marcus stopped and opened the door to the restaurant for him.

"I'm sure." Of course. Him. In leather. Nonsense. Well... perhaps if the leather came in patches on a tweed jacket. Jim almost chuckled.

"As am I. You would look magnificent with a few piercings, some ink." Marcus looked at him over top the menu. "I am, of course, presuming you don't have any already. Do you?"

"Of course not. I intend to return to academia some day and they don't accept such nonsense." With his record, he'd be lucky to teach community college.

"That's bullshit. I know plenty of teachers in the lifestyle and most of them have some ink or piercings."

He rolled his eyes. "Then they must either be incredibly discreet or incredibly lucky."

"Baby, if your cock is pierced there's no way anyone's going to know unless you tell them."

"Well, then one would assume that counts as discreet." His hand dropped to his cock instinctively, just protecting it.

Marcus chuckled, the sound rich and full. "Can you imagine how that would feel? The metal in your cock. You'd always feel it, know it was there, no matter where you were or who you're talking to."

"No. No, I don't think so." He shook his head. "It's simply not my sort of thing. I'm a reader, a bit of a writer." Look at him -- he was the epitome of conservative, quiet, middle-class.

"The two things are not mutually exclusive, you know."

A waiter came and interrupted their conversation and before he could do or say anything, Marcus had ordered for both of them.

Jim blinked, confused. "Excuse me, do you often do that?"

"Hmm?" Marcus took his napkin and spread it on his lap. "Do what?"

"Order for people." He was getting rather unnerved, honestly.

Marcus pondered it for a moment, dark grey eyes thoughtful. "Yes, I do."

"Why? I'm perfectly capable." Incredibly capable. Vastly even. Goodness, he really needed to get on with his day. He had two articles to write, a book to review and a text on Yeats to work on...

Marcus shrugged. "It's just something I do. I take care of people. It doesn't mean they're not capable."

The waiter brought them their water and beer. "Your food'll be along in a couple minutes."

"Thank you." He nodded to the waiter, dug in his bag for a Xanax as his anxiety ratcheted up. He was almost out of his prescription and he was rationing them out.

He was getting his shit together. He had an apartment. He had work. A schedule. A rhythm. He realized suddenly that Marcus was talking to him. "Pardon me?"

"I was asking if you've been suffering from anxiety for long?" Marcus nodded at his packet of pills.

"It's nothing." He took one and then pocketed the rest. "Life's stressful, hmm?"

"Is it? I subscribe more to the life is beautiful camp. It's all in how you look at it."

"I suppose it's a nice philosophy if you can afford it." He simply didn't have the time for it.

"Doesn't it appeal to you? Being happy, enjoying life?"

"I don't have the energy for nonsense. I barely manage as is."

"It isn't nonsense, Jim." Marcus smiled, eyes soft, warm as they looked at him. "I could manage you."

"I don't need a secretary." He chuckled, unsurprised when it sounded and tasted bitter in his mouth.

"Honestly, the fewer distractions in my life right now, the better."

"I wasn't suggesting I be your secretary." Marcus looked like he would have said more, but their bowls were put down in front of them.

He grabbed up the chopsticks, adding some sriracha to his noodles. Marcus watched him as he ate, like he was something fascinating. He was careful not to spill or splash, eating quickly and quietly, focusing on his meal, mind wandering to the books he still needed to buy, to the work he had, to the long, silent night ahead of him.

"Is it good?"

"Yes. It is. I like the way the spice marries to the blandness of the noodle and then there's the crunch of the peanut."

"That's just what the lifestyle is like, you know. Spice married to blandness of life and the crunch of the whip." He couldn't tell if Marcus was serious or not, but he was pretty sure the man was.

"Food isn't life, but it's a pretty metaphor."

"I thought so." Marcus shook his head. "You are a rather dour man, aren't you?"

"I suppose so." He told himself that this asshole's words couldn't sting. He lifted one hand, waving down the



waiter. "Could I please get a box?" He had half left for supper tomorrow when he didn't leave his house.

"The thing is, Jim, you've got happiness in you. Everyone does. Don't you want to grab for it?"

"I'm sorry, sir, but at this point in my life, I'm going for reasonable satisfaction." He pulled out his wallet and found a ten. "Happiness is altogether too much hassle and incredibly apt to disappointment."

Marcus put one of those big paws on his hand. "Keep your money, Jim. I said I'd treat you."

"Are you sure? This wasn't a pleasant experience for you." He was self-aware enough to know that much.

"On the contrary -- you are a fascinating man, Jim. In fact I'd like you to come home with me. I know you're going to say no, but the offer is genuine and I'm hoping you'll surprise me and say yes." Marcus looked like he was serious about this, too.

"I'm sorry. I can't. It would be unfair to both of us." He couldn't even get it up right now. The idea of having sex made him ill.

"Unfair to both of us how?"

"I'm not capable of entering into an affair and your... interests aren't something for me."

"Not capable -- that is nonsense. As is your feigned disinterest. You don't know enough about my interests to

decide if they're for you or not." Marcus leaned in across the table. "You need me, Jim Upton, whether you'll admit it or not."

"I'm afraid you've misread me, sir. Just because I had to come out of the closet when I was accused of raping that girl, does not mean I am sexually... viable. Good day."

He grabbed his briefcase, his food, and he ran. He could get books tomorrow.

## *Chapter Two*

The good thing about being your own boss was that you could take days off when you wanted to. Or you could work one day on and the next day off for the whole week. Which is what Marcus did, because he knew what Jim Upton's schedule was every second day.

Some people might think Marcus was crazy -- Jim had been pretty clear that he wasn't interested. But Marcus listened to more than just what people said with their mouths. Jim needed someone in his life to take charge. Marcus *knew* it like he knew how to breathe -- he just did. He'd learned to trust his gut implicitly.

Which was why he was sitting in the cafe next to the bookstore, waiting for Jim. The man would be here any minute now. Marcus' plan was simple. He was going to wear Jim down. That the coffee here was awesome didn't hurt any.

Jim didn't notice him. The man looked pale, drawn. Sure enough -- one muffin and one triple espresso and the man sat, sorting mail, tossing a huge amount in the trashcan before drinking down his coffee.

The man needed him. It was as plain as day to Marcus. Jim, of course, was going to take some convincing.

He took his super tall latte and moved to sit across from Jim. "Hi, there."

Jim looked up, blinked. "Hello."

Marcus smiled. "I thought I might find you here."

"Yes? Did I leave something at the restaurant?"

"Just my invitation." He was going to wear Jim down.

Jim shook his head, almost smiled. "I think I handed that back to you."

"Yes, without giving me a chance to insist that no, it's yours." He reached out and touched Jim. Marcus had a hunch the man didn't have a lot of touch in his life.

Jim shivered, actually shook for him, leaning into his touch for only a second before pulling away. "Do you come here often?"

"No, I came today because I knew you would be here." Had anyone ever done something just to be with Jim? He didn't think the man would be so bitter if the answer to that was yes.

"Did she send you? Because I'm following all the suggestions of my lawyer, I'm not teaching, I've moved. I don't need any trouble." Jim frowned, fingers digging into his partially-eaten muffin.

"She? She who?"

"Listen. Just leave me be. I'm not ready to deal with her shit right now." Jim stood, heading for the bookstore.

Marcus pondered who 'she' could be and decided it had to be the coed who'd accused Jim of rape. But hadn't the man been exonerated? He went over to the trash bin and put his empty cup in, leaning to do it and grabbing the mail he'd Jim throw in. A single piece of junk mail and three letters, all with a sorority as the return address.

He opened the first one.

*Don't you think we aren't watching you, you fag. You think Jessica's going to let you have a life after you ruined hers? We're going to fuck up everything you ever do. We have friends. Boyfriends. Men that will make you wish you had died.*

Jesus.

He opened the other two. They were variations on the same theme. He tore them up and tossed them back in the trash, angry on Jim's behalf. Growling, he headed for the bookstore.

He heard Jim snarling. "Where is the McCammon stocked?"

"I pulled it for an end cap display, sir. Which one do you need?"

"I've told you before not to snarl at people, Jim." Marcus could understand the man being in a shit mood, but that still didn't mean he could take it out on the people who were good to him.

"I didn't ask your permission." There wasn't even the slightest thing in those eyes but fury. Nothing.

"Let's take this outside. In fact, let's take this to my place." He had a home for that fury, a way for Jim to spend it.

"Leave. Me. Alone." Jim shook, the books dropping.  
"Keep the fucking books. I'll find another store."

"Oh. Oh, Dr. Upton. Please."

"DON'T CALL ME THAT!" The scream was pure pain, and Jim headed for the door.

"Stop that." Marcus spoke quietly, but his voice cracked like a whip. "You're coming with me." Enough was enough. It was time for Jim to find a focus for that anger, that pain. Time to find a way to let it go.

"No. No. Leave me alone. Leave me alone." The door opened, Jim's hand shaking.

"No." He grabbed Jim's hand, gave Juniper a wave and headed out toward his car. "You need for me to not leave you alone."

"Let me go. I need to go home."

"So you can hide from life? Try it my way first." He got to the car, opened the door. "Sit, Jim. It's just for an hour."

"What?" His poor baby, so confused. So needy.

"Sit." He pushed Jim into the seat and pulled the belt over the man. "It's going to be all right." He moved quickly around to the driver's side and got them moving with the traffic before Jim had a chance to find his voice.

"Let me out. I have work to do and I have a fucking headache."

"Just an hour, Jim." Marcus headed toward his house in the suburbs, reaching with one hand to squeeze Jim's thigh.

"Don't touch me. I'm not in the mood to play games."

"This isn't a game, Jim. Not at all." Just a few more minutes and they'd be there and he could put Jim over his knee in private and spank the man's ass until he screamed.

"I want you to let me out of the motherfucking car."

"While we're moving? That's not a very good idea." He gave Jim a wink.

Jim stared at him, eyes rolling a little, control lost.  
"You're like some axe murderer, aren't you?"

"Not at all. With an axe murderer it would be all over in minutes." If those amazing, green eyes weren't so panicked, it would be cute. He squeezed Jim's thigh again. "You may not think so today or tomorrow or the next month, but it's going to be all right. You'll see." He pulled into his quiet neighborhood.

"Please. Stop the car; I'll call a cab."

"I'm just around the corner. I can have you home in a couple of hours." Days. Weeks...

"What do you want?"

"To give you what you need." To teach Jim how to submit, how to be happy.

"How the fuck do you know anything about me!" It seemed Jim could be shrill when he was scared.

"Because I do." He had a feeling Jim wouldn't be too receptive to his gut feeling.

"That's not good enough." The car stopped and Jim grabbed the seatbelt.

He cut the engine and took off his own belt, hurrying around the car and opening the door for Jim. "You're here now. Come on in."

"I'm not an idiot. I'm not going into your house like some sort of a fucking victim. Who *are* you?"

"You already are a victim, Jim. And I'm the man who's going to help you get your life back." He leaned into the car and used his most commanding voice. "Now get out of the car and get in the house."

"You can't. Don't you get it? I can't have it back." Jim's eyes were fastened onto his.

"Nonsense." The man was scared to take it back. Marcus took Jim's arm and tugged him up, leading him up the lane to the house.

"This is... this is wrong, man." Jim followed him, cheeks pink, eyes wild.

"No. No, there isn't anything wrong with what we're going to do. My life is good and rich and very right." He opened the door and nudged Jim in over the threshold.

"What are you going to do? What do you want with me?" Jim stumbled forward, catching sight of himself in the mirror and wincing.

"You could be beautiful, Jim. You need confidence, baby, to believe in yourself." He came up behind the man, one hand reaching over Jim's shoulder to stroke Jim's jaw.

"Take me home." The pretty eyes were sparkling.

"Yes." He nodded and took Jim's arm, bringing him to the living room. There was a comfy chair there, something big enough for him to sit in and put a man over his knees.



Jim looked confused, lost. "My head hurts. You're very confusing."

He drew Jim over to the chair, sat and patted his knees. "I know how to help you let go of the pain."

"No. No you don't. I won't do this." Jim's hands opened and closed, over and over again.

"But you need it." He tugged Jim down, the man falling into his lap. Jim gasped, jerking, trying to fight. "You can fight and scream and cry as much as you need." It would be good for the man. Then he started to spank Jim, his hand coming down hard and fast over the pretty ass.

"Let me go!" Jim's scream rang out, legs kicking furiously as Jim struggled, fought with him. He put one hand on the man's back, holding Jim down while he continued to spank. "Please. Please, stop. Please, you have to let me go!" The struggles were easing a bit, Jim's breath beginning to hitch.

"Come on, Jim. Let it all out. All of it." He smacked harder, whaling on Jim's ass, even as his hand burned and ached.

"FUCK YOU! LET ME GO!" Jim pushed himself up, elbows and knees flailing as that rage tried to rise again.

"No, Jim. You need this." He thought for a moment Jim's anger might outlast his hand and arm, but he caught his second wind and continued with the spanking.

Finally, Jim just collapsed, deflating like a popped balloon on his lap. His smacks slowed, and then stopped. He let his hand rest on Jim's ass, rubbing. The cloth-covered skin was fiery, swollen. He wanted to see it, see what his hand had done. It would be beautiful, he knew.

Humming, he pushed his hand beneath Jim, going straight for the button at the top of Jim's trousers. Jim whimpered softly, jerking away. "No more."

"I want to see."

"Why?"

"Because it will be beautiful. Because we did it together." He undid that button and pulled down the zipper. Jim wasn't hard, but that didn't surprise him, not as much as Jim needed. He tugged the pants down, moaning at the sight of the swollen and reddened ass. He slid his hand over it, fingers pushing into the taut skin.

Jim shuddered, pulling away from his touch.

"You'll feel my hand all day and tomorrow. It'll still be tender when you sit down the day after that. When I see you again at the bookstore."

"I'm going to find a new bookstore."

"Oh, I don't think so." The man had his life strictly regulated, ordered.

"I am. I'm going to find somewhere new." Jim levered himself up, trying to stand.

"Mmmhmm." He wasn't worried. Jim wanted this. He steadied the man, hands on Jim's hips, admiring the pretty cock, the heavy balls below. Jim blushed, reaching for his slacks, to cover himself.

"You need a ring. Right here." He reached out and touched the tip of Jim's cock before the man could cover it.

"A ring?" That pretty cock jerked, bobbed for him, and Jim looked shocked before the thin slacks were tugged up.

Yes. Oh, yes, he knew he hadn't been wrong about Jim. A little spanking, the mention of a Prince Albert and the man was responding beautifully. "A pretty little gold ring. Maybe even with a stone in it. Garnet for healing."

"No. No, I... I have to go home." Jim curled into himself, comforting himself.

Marcus wrapped a hand around Jim's arm and tugged the man back into his lap, cradling Jim. "The best part of a spanking is not being alone when it's over."

"There's a best part? Of something so..." Jim shook his head, but didn't pull away.

"So what? Intense? Shocking? Necessary?" He offered Jim a few words and stroked the man's back. Definitely touch-starved. It was no wonder, given the man's disposition, but he had to wonder how much of that nastiness came out of everything else.

Jim didn't answer; he just sat there, quiet, breathing.

Marcus would take it.

The silence stretched, but didn't feel strained or awkward, only like a blanket that had drifted down over both of them. Marcus knew, in that gut of his that had never steered him wrong, that this was where they both belonged.

The trick would be to convince Jim.

### *Chapter Three*

Jim had managed to avoid the bookstore and the post office for two weeks, hiding in his apartment and staring at the garbled page of one book or another. He'd let that man hit him. It just kept going through his brain, over and over and over. He'd let that man hit him. Hit him hard enough to bruise.

Finally the need for the checks in his mail and new books drove him out into the early autumn rain. He went in the evening instead of the morning and he didn't stop for coffee. Jim figured, should anyone ask, he could tell them he'd been ill.

It wouldn't even be a lie.

He hadn't been in the store ten minutes when a shadow was cast over him, blocking his light. He didn't look, he

didn't snap. He just grabbed a couple of books and shifted.

The shadow shifted, too, coming closer, and now there was a warmth at his back as well. "Aren't you going to say hello, Jim?"

"H...hello." Jim closed his eyes, squeezed them tight. Don't look. Don't breathe. Just be still. Don't panic.

That huge hand landed gently on his back, rubbed in a soothing circle. "Hi, Jim. You've missed your schedule."

"I... I've been..." He leaned back. "I haven't been well."

"I should have taken your number -- I would have called and brought you chicken soup." Marcus' voice was deep and it reached something inside him.

"I... I have to buy my books." That dull shame and horror that lived inside him faded, eased.

"You read a lot. More than anyone I've ever met, I think." Marcus smiled at him, eyes warm. And that hand, it kept rubbing, kept touching him.

"I do." When had he opened his eyes? Why wasn't he leaving?

"I'm glad you came in tonight. I was hoping to see you again. There's a cafe on Hudson that has the best cheesecake I've ever tasted."

"Cheesecake?" His stomach growled so loudly the people outside must have heard it. He'd missed his coffee. Desperately.

Marcus chuckled, hand sliding from his back to his belly where it rubbed. "Your stomach is saying yes."

"I don't..." He sighed, the touch comforting, warm. "I'm not sure it's a good idea."

"Your carefully ordered schedule is already out of whack -- what's one more thing?"

"It's not that ordered..." He made himself step away, made himself cope. *Go buy your books, Jim.*

"Then come have cheesecake with me. They make a mean cup of coffee, too. It might be a bit late for an espresso, but a latte or mocha..." Marcus stepped right back into his space. "It'll be yummy, I promise."

"I. Okay. I can meet you there, if you want." He didn't have a car, but he could catch a cab.

"You can ride with me." Marcus' hand was on his back again. "Have you chosen your books yet?"

"Yes. I have a few." The last time he'd been in Marcus' car hadn't gone so well.

"Cool. Let's go."

He paid for his novels, putting them in his briefcase along with his mail, tugging his hood up to keep the

winter rain off. Marcus opened an umbrella as they went out, putting his hand on Marcus' arm so they could share it and leading him to the familiar silver Lexus.

"I don't know... this is very awkward. Perhaps I should just go home..."

"Just get in the car, Jim. It'll stop being awkward sooner or later." The car door was opened and he was, well not pushed, but Marcus definitely encouraged him to sit. He settled in, chewing on his bottom lip, trying to figure out what the hell to do next. His stomach was churning, his anxiety ratcheting up.

Marcus slipped into the driver's seat and started the engine, pulling out into traffic. "You need to relax."

"What?" Nonsense. He was fine. Fine.

"I can feel you going tense next to me. I won't bite." Marcus glanced at him quickly, winking before turning back to the wet road. "Unless you ask nicely."

"I... I don't think I should be here. This is very irregular."

"Having cheesecake is irregular?"

"You. You are irregular."

"I'm not sure if I should take that as an insult or a compliment. Oh! Look at that, a spot just opened up right in front of the cafe." Marcus slipped into the spot, parallel parking easily.

"You do that well." The compliment slipped out of him.

"It's all about confidence. Like this." Marcus undid his seat belt and leaned over, kissing Jim hard.

Jim blinked, hands landing on broad shoulders -- whether to push Marcus away or pull him closer, Jim didn't know.

Before he could make up his mind, Marcus backed off again, smiling at him, eyes holding his gaze. "We'd better go in. There's cheesecake with our name on it."

"I'm fairly sure they don't make Jim cheesecake." He tried for funny, but he thought it sounded sad.

Marcus chuckled for him, though. "We'll have to ask."

Jumping out, Marcus came around with the umbrella, opening the door for him. So very chivalrous. He grabbed his briefcase and stood, reminding himself that he used to be strong and smart and respected. Marcus certainly didn't look at him as if he was a worm.

Once again his hand was put into the crook of Marcus' arm, and he was escorted into the cafe. The host seating people knew Marcus, smiling warmly and ushering them both in. His coat was taken and they were shown to a quiet booth, tucked neatly into a corner.

Marcus took his hand and stroked his palm. "What would you like? If you're a chocolate fan, then I suggest the triple chocolate delight. If you prefer fruit, go for the seasonal fruit cheesecake. And if you want something



different, try the hint of cinnamon." Marcus laughed. "I might have tried them all at one point or another."

"You're touching me." His fingers curled up, on their own accord. He could try all three.

"I am. You're touching me back." Marcus reached out with his other hand and stroked Jim's cheek.

"Don't. Don't. I can't. Not in public." Not that he was in the closet, but... Still. "Do they have raspberries?"

"Oh, yes, they do." Marcus' hands dropped away as the waitress came. "We'll have the white chocolate cheesecake with raspberries, and the hint of cinnamon. And we'll take the triple chocolate delight and seasonal fruit to go. With two lattes, please."

"I..." He needed a triple espresso. "I think I need more caffeine than that."

"It's too late in the evening for more caffeine." Marcus kept doing that, telling him what to do, ordering for him. Hitting him.

"I need it." He was going to shake apart.

"Be happy with the latte, Jim. You're not having more caffeine."

"This is ridiculous..." He swallowed hard, trying to make his brain work.

The lattes came to the table, the scent amazing. "Mmm... I always think of you now when I have coffee." Marcus breathed in the steam coming off his cup.

His cheeks heated and he drank deep, the cream comforting, easy. "I usually like my java harsher, but this is lovely."

"It smells divine. I'm going to make mine last -- it's a treat I don't have every day."

"No? I drink pots and pots of coffee."

"Ah..." Marcus nodded, looking like he'd just solved a puzzle. Jim looked around, trying to find something to talk about, something to do. Marcus' foot slid against his calf. "I told you to relax, Jim. We don't need to fill every second with noise."

"I'm okay. I don't. I mean, this is the strangest thing that I've ever..."

"You're not talking about sitting here having cheesecake with me, are you?"

Speaking of the cheesecake, the waitress reappeared with two plates and two little boxes.

"So pretty..." The raspberry sauce was lovely.

Marcus nodded and moved both plates to the center of the table from where the waitress had set them down in front of each of them. "We'll share. You need to taste both."

"Need is a strong word, but I'd be happy to." See him. See him try to take control of this situation.

Marcus' blue eyes were pretty amazing all lit up by laughter like that. Then the big man dug into the cakes, moaning and groaning over the cheesecakes, licking the fork clean after every bite. He ate less, but he enjoyed every bite, nodding when the waitress asked if he needed more coffee.

"Actually, no thank you, honey. We'll just take the bill." Marcus gave her a charming smile before turning it on him. "We have our two take-out cakes to eat back at my place."

"I... I'm sorry. I can't. I have work to do. Editing." Hiding. Worrying. Lots of worrying.

"You can spare an hour." Marcus put some bills on the table and stood.

"You don't know that." He grabbed his briefcase, digging out his wallet. "What do I owe you?"

"I invited you, that makes it my treat."

"But you bought lunch before..." And that made it a date and he didn't know what to think about that.

"Yes, and I invited you to that, as well." Marcus led the way back out, putting the umbrella up for him when they hit the sidewalk.

"I. Thank you. I can walk home from here." He could almost see his place from here.

"I could drive you and you could invite me in."

"I could. It's messy. I wasn't expecting company." He could make coffee.

"Or you could come home with me like I suggested."

"Why?" It was important that he figure this out.

"Because you like spending time with me. And I like spending time with you." Marcus led him to the car and opened the passenger door for him.

"Thank you." He slipped in, dropping his briefcase in the gutter, the bag starting to float. "Fuck!"

He stood, running after it, feet slipping on the wet concrete and he fell as he grabbed for it, chin banging on the ground, the world going a little black.

"Jim!" Marcus was there as the black went grey and faded back in. Those big hands helped him stand, moving over him. "Is anything broken?"

"I..." He swayed, holding on. "My bag?"

"Yes, I have it. Come, Jim." He was all but carried back to the car, Marcus settling him back in the passenger side and putting his briefcase on his knees. "Do you need the hospital, baby?"

"I don't think so. I..." He looked at his hands, one palm scraped a little. "Just bruises, I think?"

"All right. I know what to do for that." Marcus squeezed his shoulder, put on his belt and closed the door, coming quickly around to the other side. They pulled out into traffic in no time.

"You do?" He rested his head back, breathing deep, trying to ease his nausea.

"Yes, I do. Don't you worry; I'll take care of you."

It was awhile before he realized they weren't headed toward his place at all. He was going to complain, but he didn't want to, not really. He wanted to keep his eyes closed and breathe. Marcus let him do that. There weren't questions or small talk, just a quiet that somehow felt like one of Marcus' touches to his back.

Jim let himself doze a little, every inch of him exhausted, sore. He woke again as they stopped, as Marcus came around the car to help him up and lead him along the walkway and into the big, quiet house.

"I'm sorry." His head felt as big as a melon.

"It's okay, Jim. Let's just get you in here and sitting down." Marcus guided him down onto the couch. He sat there, staring at his hands. What did he do now? Marcus disappeared, coming back a moment later with a large first aid box. Really large.

"Let's see what we can do for those hands."

"You have a lot of cuts with your work?" He held his hands out, palms up.

"Sometimes. It can be dangerous work." Marcus' hands were so big, warm as they gently took his and examined them.

"They're going to be a little sore tomorrow." Not as sore as his chin.

"Not if I have anything to say about it." Marcus gave him a wink and began to slather ointment on his palms.

It burned.

Oh.

He moaned, surprising himself.

Marcus' eyes met his. "It'll ease in a moment, Jim."

"It's not bad." In fact, it wasn't bad at all.

"Good. Good." Marcus wrapped his hands in gauze. "What else is hurting?"

"My chin." He looked at his hands. "I can't type like that."

"You'll have to wait a day or two, maybe. Tilt your head up." Marcus' fingers were there to encourage him. So gentle. Especially for such a big guy.

"A day or two?" Bound up? Like this?

"Uh-huh. You can stay here. I'll make sure you don't starve." Marcus tsked and put more ointment on his chin.

"I can't... I..." The heat spread through his jaw, the sensation making his cock throb a bit.

"You say that a lot. I don't want to hear it anymore."

"What?"

"I can't. I don't want to hear you say that again." Marcus didn't sound like he was joking.

"But... It's a common phrase. You can't just *stop* saying it."

"You *can* try."

"This is insane. I think I need to get home." He needed coffee. He needed a nap. A bath.

"You're hurt, Jim. And I'm offering to take care of you. Accept it." Marcus waved a finger at him. "And don't tell me you can't."

"I'm a grown man, you know." A very tired, very worn out grown man.

"I am very aware of that, Jim. Come on. You're tired. I'll tuck you in and everything will seem better tomorrow."

"What? I... It's not late. I can't stay here. I..." He dropped his head in his hands, crying out at the sting.

"Jim." Marcus sat on the couch next to him and pulled him into the ample lap. "You *can* do anything. Including staying here." Those big hands smoothed down his arms, his back.

"This is all too much." He felt like he was going to go into overload, like he couldn't breathe.

"So let it go, Jim. Let me take care of you." Those hands kept stroking, kept touching.

"I can't. I don't know how. I don't understand this." He needed to know the rules.

"Do not say 'I can't' again. And all you need to understand is that I'm going to put you to bed and you are going to sleep."

"Stop it. Stop treating me like I'm stupid, like I can't cope. I'm not stupid! I'm just very, very tired and I've had a bad life lately!" Jesus. Was he screaming?

Marcus stood up, picked him up and carried him to the stairs, going up them. "Go on. You can scream as much as you like. Get it out of your system."

"What's wrong with you? Why aren't you hearing me?"

"I'm not listening to your words, but I am hearing you, Jim. I hear your heart." Marcus carried him to a bedroom and set him down on a huge bed.



"I cannot *do* this! I need my apartment. I need my life back." He stared at Marcus, his entire body shuddering. "You showed up and my life is all horked!"

"Oh, no. You can stop that shit right here and now. Your life was pretty damn horked before I showed up. The only thing I've done is forced you to do more than just survive."

"Don't you say that! I was COPING! I was trying to stop having panic attacks! I was..." Oh. Oh, he couldn't breathe.

Marcus sat and threw Jim over his knees and began to spank. The first hit of that hand against Jim's ass was loud and shocking. He gasped and fought, eyes rolling, the panic and pain so big he couldn't get it out of him. Marcus didn't slow or stop, he kept bringing his hand down, smacking Jim's ass again and again.

"Stop. Stop. Stop." He reached out, his bandaged hands screaming. "Help me! Please!"

"I am helping."

He tried to roll away, his chest hurting. "I'm letting you hurt me. There's something wrong with me. Something broken. Please. Let me go. I'll move away. Just let me go." He took a deep breath as the words pushed out.

"Keep talking, Jim. Let it all out." Both ass cheeks and the tops of his thighs took the hits.

"I need to go home. I need my coffee. I'm letting you hurt me. Let me GO!"

"You need to be right here with me."

"I can't think. My chest hurts. I don't understand this. She keeps sending letters over and over, threatening me."

"Keep talking." The smacks became even harder, coming faster.

"I don't want to. I can't eat anymore and I can't sleep right and I didn't touch the little bitch, but it didn't matter. I lost everything and she won and I'm going to move. I'm going to pack and move away." Every sentence got easier, the tension in him fading, which was stupid because Marcus was *hitting* him.

"You got any more, baby?"

"You wouldn't let me have my espresso and my head hurts."

"That's right." The smacks changed, became lighter but faster, the pain somehow different.

"Why?" He relaxed, panting now.

"Coffee's not good for you. I am."

"I need my coffee." His cock was twitching.

"Oh, I've got something better than coffee."

Jim shook his head, stilled. "I need to get up, now." He was not going to get an erection like this.

"Not yet." Marcus stopped for a moment, rubbing his ass cheeks.

"Please. I'm... I need to get up." His cock filled, slowly, surely.

"I say no." Marcus continued the spanking, one hit following the other.

"No more." He ached, bone-deep. "Please."

"Two more."

"Then you'll stop? You promise?" Another blow and he arched, trying to keep his prick away from Marcus' leg.

Marcus rubbed his ass again, fingers digging into the abused flesh. "One more."

"One more." He was going to burst into tears like an idiot.

"Let it all go with this one, Jim. Let it all go." Marcus' hand came down hard, the sound seeming to thunder and echo in the room.

Jim sobbed, something in his chest feeling like it had cracked open.

Marcus turned him, pulled him up against the solid chest, rocked him. "That's it, baby. Let it all go. Let it out."

He held on, sobbing, hiding in Marcus' chest. Marcus petted him, deep, soothing rumbles coming from the man.

"M sorry." His head was bobbing, exhaustion riding him hard.

"It's all right. Everything's all right. You can sleep now." Marcus moved them, lying on the bed with him. "You can sleep."

He pressed closer, cuddling, asleep almost immediately, so exhausted he didn't dream.

## *Chapter Four*

At some point Marcus woke up enough to get them both naked, Jim sleeping hard enough he did no more than snuffle and moan as Marcus moved him. Poor man was exhausted. And hurting. On the surface, in the middle, and deep down inside. There was a beauty in Jim, though, Marcus was more sure of it than ever. And he was just as sure he was the man to find it.

Marcus woke at his usual seven-thirty am and watched Jim sleep. There'd be time to give Jim a schedule. Soon. But today his poor baby needed the rest. So he kept watching as each breath moved in and out of Jim's lungs.

Finally the pretty green eyes opened, slowly, blinking at him. "I... Good morning?"

He nodded. "Yes, Jim. I do believe it is." He leaned in slowly, bringing their lips together in the softest of busses.

"I slept a long time."

"You did. It's been awhile, hasn't it?" He wondered when the last time was that Jim had had a good night's sleep.

"Yes." Jim smiled, and then winced, the bandaged hands coming up to rub. "My chin's sore."

"I'll bet." He tilted Jim's head, checking the gash in Jim's chin. "You tore a good chunk of skin off when you fell and it's an awkward spot to bandage, so I didn't."

"I feel hard. Fell. Fell hard."

Marcus couldn't help the way his lips twitched at Jim's slip, and he put his hand on the man's chest, slowly dragged it downward.

"I... I have to tell you. I... I can't get it up. I don't. I haven't in a couple of years." There was pure shame in Jim's eyes. Despite that, he'd felt Jim last night, felt the man getting hard for him as Jim let everything go during the spanking.

"Since it happened?" he asked, fingers finding Jim's cock and wrapping around it -- it didn't matter that Jim wasn't hard, the silky skin was hot and good in his hand.

"Yes. Yes. I keep jacking off. I even hired someone to suck me. I couldn't get off."

Marcus fondled the cock he held, the lovely balls beneath. Jim should be bare down here. "You need someone who cares about you to get you off, baby, not some faceless whore who only cares about how much money you're giving him."

Jim nodded, the action immediate, instinctive, and pressed closer. Jim's cock was long, thin, but promised to be lovely. Marcus slid his free hand down along Jim's back, feeling the heat of the man's ass as soon as he got near it. He was gentle at first, fingers brushing over top of the abused muscles. Then he rubbed harder, letting his fingers dig in.

"S...sore. So sore." Jim's cock jerked in his hand, started to fill.

Oh, Jim had no idea. None at all. It made things both harder and much, much more fun. Everything would be new. Absolutely everything.

"You should start every morning with a spanking." He smacked Jim's ass, not too hard, not today as he'd really whaled on the man the night before.

"I." Jim moaned, eyes fluttering open, staring at him. So green.

He smacked Jim's ass again. Ten was a nice round number and today it was more taps than a spanking. Eventually Jim would be able to take a full on spanking every morning. Holding Jim's gaze, he administered spank number three.

"This... I can't think. I can't think like this."

"Yeah, it's good, isn't it?" Four and five. They were going to have to work on that 'can't' thing.

"I. What's wrong with me?"

"Nothing. Absolutely nothing." Well, Jim was probably too smart for his own good and had bad instincts when he was left on his own, but Marcus imagined that at the moment, the man was focused solely on the spanking and why it was making him hard, why he liked it so much. And that was what Marcus answered.

Six. Seven. Eight.

Jim shifted, pulling away a bit, cock bobbing between them.

"Two more." He wrapped his arm around Jim's waist and dragged the man back in, close enough that that long cock pressed against his belly. He put a little force behind number nine.

That husky little cry could make him ache. Honestly.

"One more," he whispered the words against Jim's lips before letting his hand fly and giving this last one at full force.

Jim's lips opened, eyes huge, bandaged hands holding him tight. He took a kiss then, with Jim's entire focus on him and on the sensations he was giving the man. Jim opened for him, and then kissed him back, pushed into

the kiss with a fierce hunger. Such hunger and need. All pent up for two years. He rubbed against Jim, his own cock hard, responding to Jim. Those green eyes stayed open, watched him. Jim was right there, kissing *him*. He grabbed that ass again, fingers digging in as he dragged Jim's cock against his belly. Jim moaned for him, hips rocking, pushing back into his hand. Sweet little pain slut. Needy baby.

Marcus kept moving his hand, readjusting his hold so that fresh pain would bloom over the abused flesh. His cock rubbed against Jim's, making him moan at the silk and fire of them together.

"So good. So fucking hot..." Jim's groan pushed into his lips, along with the hot, slick tongue.

He sucked on it, tugging hard as his hips moved faster, rubbing them together more vigorously. Jim was hard as diamond against him, leaking and needy. So close. He raised his hand and let it fly, offering another hard, hard smack to his pain slut. Just as it landed he bit Jim's bottom lip and growled, "Mine."

Heat sprayed up over his belly, Jim's face all pleasure and shock and pure, incredible joy. He watched closely, savoring the moment, holding that joy close. Then he gave Jim's ass one last squeeze, forcing another small spurt of come from the long cock.

"Marcus." Jim groaned, taking a long, deep kiss, hips rocking for him, against him.



His prick slid through the come on Jim's belly, and he let himself sink into the taste and smell and incredible feeling of Jim's body touching his. He moaned into Jim's mouth as he came.

"So fucking fine." Jim looked... Well, the man looked well-used and sated and utterly relaxed.

"Yeah. Yeah." Marcus patted Jim's hip and then dragged him in close again, holding them together.

It was a good look on the man. Really good.

He was going to have to arrange to keep it there, permanently.

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Jim surprised himself by dozing off again for a bit, dreams of warmth and laughter in his head, his body cradled close. He knew that it wasn't going to last, that in a few minutes, he was going to have to get up, go home, go back to real life, but right now, he was so basking.

Marcus was warm and large, the hand on his hip huge as it held him close to Marcus' body. Every now and then Marcus would pat his hip and murmur something soft and unintelligible.

He tried to pet back, but the bandages on his hands were maddening. He brought one to his mouth, grabbing the gauze and starting to work it off.

"Hey. What are you doing?" Marcus took his hand and held it.

"Need my hands free." Silly man.

"For what? They're hurt, Jim." Marcus stroked his wrist.

"I can't touch you. I can't use the bathroom. I can't make coffee. Type. You know, functional stuff?" He hummed at the touch.

"You can still touch me with your mouth. I can help you with the bathroom and functional stuff. Take the day off from the typing. We can spend it together -- I want to show you what it could be like." Marcus popped him on the ass. "And I told you to stop using the word 'can't'."

"It's a very necessary word." His cock jerked at the blow and he wiggled. This was bordering on ridiculous.

"It is only necessary if you want to throw up obstacles to things. I want you to start looking at life in terms of *can*." Marcus' hand stayed on his ass, rubbing, making his abused flesh ache in the most interesting way.

"As in I can get incredibly grumpy before my first pot of coffee?" He winked, trying to lighten the mood. Honestly, it was a touch... unnerving.

Marcus laughed, the sound deep and bright. "That's a start, baby. And I'll take it. I doubt you need the caffeine, though. I have much better ways for you to start the day. Coffee should be an occasional treat."

He patted Marcus with his useless, padded hands. "If by occasional, you mean a few times an hour, I'm with you."

There was that laugh again. "We're going to have so much fun together, you and I."

Jim grinned, cuddled in for another minute. He thought so, too. At least for as long as it lasted.

"Well, you've had your morning spanking -- would you like your morning reward?" Marcus's fingers were teasing his ass, tiptoeing across it on fingertip and tapping and rubbing it.

"My... my what?" He leaned forward, let his mouth slide over Marcus' collarbone.

"Mmm... uh-huh. Just like that." Marcus kicked off the covers, baring himself. The man tapped his prick, which was slowly filling. "It's all yours, baby."

"What if I don't give head, hmm?" Right. Because gay men never gave blowjobs. Jim chuckled at himself, heading south easily. Marcus had been... unusual, but generous, helping him come.

"If you don't give head, then you're depriving yourself of something you absolutely love." Marcus said it like he knew it to be true, like he could see right inside.

"Mmm. Lucky guess." He nuzzled the tip of Marcus' prick, rasping it with his morning stubble before letting his tongue ease the sting. Groaning, Marcus spread his legs, offering him the whole package. It was easy to get

down to business, really. Jim explored the long, heavy cock, humming happily as his tongue mapped it.

Marcus' fingers landed in his hair, tugging at the short strands. "You should grow it out."

Right. It was wild, uncontrollable. Bright red. He chuckled around that heavy cock, licking as he shook his head. He thought Marcus said "you will," but the words were lost in a groan as his tongue slid across the tip of Marcus' cock, teasing the slit.

Mmm. Someone liked that. He did it again and again, eyes closed, lost in the scent and flavor of man and sex. Marcus moaned and groaned for him, shifting and pushing deeper into his mouth. There was no doubt that Marcus was enjoying what he was doing. That made him more confident, his head bobbing as he took that cock in. He could feel Marcus' cock getting harder, swelling on his tongue. Then those big hands landed on his head, holding him in place as Marcus groaned and thrust a few times, hitting the back of his throat.

The first couple of times he gagged, pulled away, then his body got it, trying to let Marcus in.

"That's it, baby. Good." Marcus thrust a few more times, getting a little wild, and then he shot, come spraying down Jim's throat.

He could almost take it, only losing a bit as he fought to breathe.

Marcus settled back against the bed with a happy sounding sigh, the hands in his hair gentling, petting now. "Mmm..."

He cuddled in, eyes closed, floating. Maybe he could wait to go home. For a little while.

### *Chapter Five*

It was after ten before Marcus finally hauled himself and Jim out of bed.

"We've been lazy." It wasn't a complaint, though. They'd actually gotten a lot accomplished during their time in bed. "I have a pair of sweats that you could borrow. They have a drawstring at the waist and elastic at the ankles -- they'll be big, but they'll stay on."

He dug a well-used pair out of a drawer, knowing how soft and comfortable they were. "And I'll redress your hands for you." Tie them up behind the man's back... the thought had him humming.

"I bet they're okay today. Coffee. I need coffee." Jim struggled, trying to get the pants on.

"There are far better stimulants than coffee, Jim." He gently batted Jim's hands out of the way and helped the man get the sweats on. "There." He let his hand slide up over Jim's belly and along the breastbone.

"I'm not into speed... Oh..." Jim hummed, body rippling for him.

"I'm talking about natural highs, baby." Marcus grinned, hand sweeping back down, fanning out across his belly. "Like this one."

"That's lovely, but it won't help the headache." Still, Jim stepped closer, pushing in.

"No? It isn't easier to ignore while I do this?"

"Right now, but it won't be soon."

"You tell me when it gets really bad and I'll take you to Permanent Ink." Marcus put an arm around him and guided him out of the bedroom and toward the stairs.

"What?" Jim followed easily, walking with him.

"You have several things to mark, but we'll stretch it out, do them one at a time as needed." They headed for the kitchen, Marcus still close, touching him.

"You're not making any sense..." Jim stretched, back cracking and popping.

"It'll make sense eventually." Marcus gave him a wink and went to the fridge. "What kind of breakfast foods do you like? What can you cook?"

"I eat half a muffin and a triple espresso. I don't cook."

"Don't you like cooking?" Marcus began to take things out of the fridge, peppers and onions, mushrooms, cheese and eggs.

"I don't. I don't own dishes. I have a system."

"You don't *own* dishes? Good lord, man. No touching, no cooking, no sex. You're not living, you're barely existing!"

"I didn't say I didn't eat. I have a system -- I eat half of everything, save the other half for home. It works."

"But cooking is..." Marcus shook his head. "Never mind. Will you help me make us breakfast?"

"Sure. If you have scissors, it'll be faster." Jim held up his hands.

Marcus shook his head. "No, I'm going to get you to stir and stuff you can do with your hands bound up." Four eggs were cracked into a bowl, Marcus putting Jim's hands around a whisk. "Go ahead and whisk those."

Jim nodded, stirring and whistling softly, the sound maddening.

While Jim whisked, Marcus made quick work of cutting up all the vegetables, adding spices to the eggs. "We're having a scrambled omelet. Basically you soften your vegetables, whatever you've got in the fridge, and then add your eggs, stir while you cook and you're done."

He took the whisk from Jim, gave him a spoon to replace it. "You can stir the veggies as they cook."

Marcus moved around his kitchen, keeping half an eye on Jim to make sure the man was doing okay with the stirring while he set the table for one -- he'd feed Jim. Those hands were the perfect excuse. "Those vegetables softening yet?"

"I think so, yeah." He could hear Jim's stomach rumbling over the sounds of cooking.

He stepped up behind Jim and stirred with the man, nodding. "Yeah, they look and feel about right. Besides, I like them a little crunchy." He poured in the eggs. "You have to start stirring right away with scrambled. If it was a real omelet we'd have just poured the eggs in and then flipped it halfway through." He would teach Jim to cook and eventually it would be the man's job.

"It smells good. Do you want me to make coffee? I'm good at that."

"No, we'll have juice and water." He was going to throw out what coffee he had in the house. Jim didn't need the stimulant -- it wasn't helping the man's moods any.

"Look. I'm sorry if you're all health-nutty, but I wasn't joking about the caffeine. I ended up in the ER last time I missed a day. I have to have my fix."

"I have Coke in the fridge. You can have one of those when you start getting the shakes." He smiled at Jim as he dished the eggs up into the plate. "You can be weaned



away from it, you know. Now, come and sit." He sat and patted his knee.

"I don't want to be. It's one of my only vices." Jim sat gingerly, cheeks heating a little, even as the man pushed down against his thigh. "I don't think this is going to be very easy for you. I can sit in a chair..."

"Easy is not the point. Being close and feeding you is." He grabbed the fork and speared some egg and peppers. He popped it into Jim's mouth. "Only vice or not, it's not good for your, for your nerves."

"Nerves?" That color got deeper. "My shrink says it's stress."

"Nerves, stress, call it what you want, the coffee isn't helping." He took a bite of food for himself and then fed Jim some more. It was an intimate act, feeding someone, especially if it was because they were bound.

"Mmm." Jim enjoyed the food, making happy little noises, moaning softly with each bite. The man was a sensualist, and yet he'd buried it deep inside and spent all his time trying not to feel. Marcus wanted the hedonist in Jim to come alive.

He kept alternating bites between them. "So how long have you been seeing the shrink?"

"Since the... incident." Jim looked down, shook his head.

"Is it helping?"

"Sort of? He gives me the good drugs for the panic attacks."

Oh, now, that wouldn't do. Jim didn't need drugs. He didn't need coffee. He needed a Master in the worst fucking way. Marcus needed to move Jim in. Now.

"Can I ask you about the letters?"

"Which letters?"

"The ones from that little bitch's friends." He wasn't going to pretend he hadn't seen them.

"Oh. Those. She's in a sorority. I'm their pet project. I don't read them anymore." Jim turned in on himself a little, sighing.

He rubbed Jim's back. "Have you shown them to your lawyer?" It had to be harassment. Jim had been cleared of the charges.

"Yes. He... He said I should just ignore them. She's got a lot of money and they could still sue me civilly, you know?"

"I think you need a new lawyer." He knew a few good ones in the community.

"I think I'm going to have to move. I work all freelance, so that's easy enough." Jim shook his head at another bite.

"I think you should move in with me." He hadn't meant to bring it up quite yet, but there it was and he had no desire to take it back.

"That's sweet, but I can't live with someone. I need my schedule."

"There's that word again." He smacked Jim's ass for using it. "I can make a schedule for you. Make sure you stick to it, too."

"Stop hitting me." Jim jerked, cock starting to push at the sweats.

"I might. If you didn't like it so much." They needed to talk about safewords, actually.

"No one likes it, do they?" He could hear the need in Jim's voice, the need to be told he wasn't broken.

"Are you kidding? I can name fifty people who like it. Doctors, lawyers, cooks, clerks. Men from all walks of life who like being spanked, tied up, whipped. People who do it casually, those who make it a lifestyle. You are not alone, Jim. And what's more, I'm qualified to give you exactly what you need." He needed to call the club, see if anyone was planning a display tonight -- he would show Jim the man wasn't the only person in the world who got off on getting spanked. Who needed it.

"I don't need it. I just... I don't know."

"I am a Dom. I am proud of my community. It's a healthy exploration of sexuality and for many, a necessary way

of life." He squeezed Jim's ass, watching the long prick twitch beneath the sweatpants. "I can bring you order, pleasure, love."

"It's fascinating, how invested you are in it." Jim stroked his face.

"It's my life. My job is wrapped up in it, the way I live my life." He gave Jim a serious look. "I am invested in it. What are you invested in? In not feeling? In not succumbing to these people. You are their prisoner."

"Books. I am invested in reading, writing, editing." Hiding. Jim hid in words.

"That's not incompatible with what I want for you. For us." He decided to go for it. "Jim, I want you to move in. We'll set up a schedule for you. Make sure you get your work done, make sure you do more than just work and subsist. You'll choose a safeword and let me be your Master."

"What? I. No. No, I... I..." Jim stood up, blinking at him, throat working. Panic. He could see it flaring.

He stood and held Jim's shoulders, looking into those green eyes. He chose his words carefully, looking for the ones that would speak most strongly to Jim. "You said yourself you wanted to move. Well, I'm giving you an option to do that. A place to hide from the world."

"But. But. You don't. I don't. I. I can't just, not after one night. No one does. Can. I." Jim started shaking, violently.

"Yes, Jim. You *can*." He reached in and took Jim's prick in his hand. "Yesterday you believed you couldn't come. This morning I proved you could. Today you say you can't move in with me. But I'll prove you can. All you need to do is not leave." He grabbed Jim's hands, held them in one wrist. "I could tie you to the bed to keep you here." That way Jim wouldn't even have to think about it.

"That's not. I can't. This is too much. I can't think and I don't think tying me up will work."

"No? Spanking does." Speaking of which... He set Jim on his feet and spanked the man twice. "That's one for each 'can't'."

"I need to go home, I think." Jim was hyperventilating, panting.

"I have somewhere I want to take you first."

Jim needed ink. He needed to mark each milestone and he needed the natural high of the adrenaline rush. Ink and piercings. This man was going to be beautiful with them.

"What?" That caught Jim's attention.

"Come with me and see."

"Won't I ... I'm in your sweatpants."

"And looking mighty sexy, too." Still, he had a hunch Jim wasn't ready for half naked visits to the tattoo shop. "I have a washer and dryer, your stuff could be ready in an hour and a half or so."

"Where are we going?"

He chuckled. "You'll see when we get there. First we need to get the washer started, do the dishes and... well, we should have nearly an hour to wait. I'm sure we'll think of something."

"I. Okay... Can you help me take the bandages off?"

"Oh, yes, I was going to check your hands, wasn't I?" He led Jim to the bathroom where the light was best, had the man sit on the counter and carefully removed the bandages.

They looked okay -- deep bruises and a couple of rough scratches, one that had a pebble and dirt trapped in it.

"This should be cleaned out so it doesn't get infected." He grabbed a pair of tweezers from the medicine cabinet.

"It's fine." Jim put his hands behind his back. "Really. It'll work itself out."

He frowned. "What's the problem?"

"It's going to sting."

That tickled him. This man who'd gotten hard, who'd come because his ass was sore, was worried about a little sting. "Yes, but then it'll be over and it'll heal much faster."

"I haven't even had coffee yet, man. Let me do it."

"Just give me your hand, Jim." He held his own big paw out expectantly.

Jim's lips twisted. But those hands were offered over. He gave Jim's wrists a little caress as a reward, and then cradled the hand with the pebble in his left hand, wielding the tweezers with the right.

"Can I have that Coke, man?" Jim's fingers were curled, touching him.

He snatched the pebble out of Jim's hand and nodded. "You bet. This hand'll need more cream and a bandage, but the other's fine."

"Cool. Just a little bandage, huh? I need my hands back."

"You don't like me taking care of you?" He finished taking care of Jim's hand.

"That's a trick question."

"Not really."

"It is. If I say yes, I'm weak and girly and incompetent. If I say no, I'm rude and ungrateful and lying. So I'm fucked no matter what."

"That's not true. I know you aren't weak or girly or incompetent." Marcus shook his head. Subs weren't weak. Jim wasn't either.

"So what does it make me? I mean, I'm not trying to be a bastard, I just... How can you respect me if I don't take care of myself?"

"Because I know you have the strength to step back and let me take care of you." He smacked Jim on the ass again, just because he could. "Come on."

"Ow! Shit."

He chuckled and drew Jim in, kissed Jim's mouth. Jim stepped in, opening up, tongue sliding against his. He loved the eagerness, the way Jim pressed against him. Jim's hands wrapped around his shoulders, tugging him in tight.

"Needy baby." He took Jim's mouth, pushed his tongue in. He hadn't wanted anyone this much in... ever. He wrapped his hands around Jim's ass, squeezed hard, loving that deep, husky cry. "Laundry." He muttered the word and started backing them where they needed to go.

"Huh?" Jim licked at his lips, eyes heavy-lidded.

On the other hand, the longer it took them to put in Jim's clothes, the longer he had the man here.

"Nothing." He pushed Jim up against the wall, letting his prick rub along the man's belly.

"Oh, good." The kisses got sharper, Jim pushing right into him, into his mouth.



He squeezed Jim's ass again, feeling that sweet prick filling against him. All the man needed was the right stimuli.

"You feel that?" Jim looked so proud. So pleased.

"I do, baby. So damn sexy." He rolled their hips together.

"I've missed it -- feeling good." Jim crawled up his body. He helped, grabbing Jim's leg and hoisting the man higher. Oh, yeah. That rubbed their cocks together. "Yeah." Jim looked right into him, tongue fucking his lips, the heat ratcheting up and up.

With them both in sweats it took no effort at all to push them down and catch both their cocks in his hand. Jim was right with him, demanding more, harder, faster. Now. Pushy little bottom. He bit Jim's lower lip, fingers squeezing their pricks tightly together.

"Mmm. We could stay. We could stay here a little while." Listen to Jim.

"Yeah, we can do that." He traced his thumb around the tip of Jim's cock, letting his nail catch at the man's slit.

Jim's entire body jerked, hips humping the air once, twice, the tip of that pretty cock leaking.

"Give it up to me, baby. Let me have it."

"I. I don't want to." He got a grin that was all trapped together with a deep, low moan. "I want it to last and last."

"I can arrange for that." He got both hands beneath Jim's ass and tugged Jim away from the wall, heading for his office.

"Huh?" Jim looked honestly, beautifully confused.

God, it was going to be fun, amazing, to teach this man everything he knew.

"One of the things I make is this leather ring." He sat Jim down on the table and pulled open a drawer, finding a nice black one with little, silver flat studs on it.

"You made this?" Jim looked interested, honestly curious and pleased. "Really?"

"Yeah, I did." He let the man touch it before taking it back and wrapping it snugly around the base of Jim's prick.

It made a sweet, nearly obscene package with Jim's cock and balls, pushing them out for him to see. "We should have shaved you first." He slid his fingers over it all, tracing the beautiful skin.

"What?" Oh, that shock...

"These little curls. You'd look very sexy without them. Everything all trussed up like this. Mmm..." He squeezed those balls.

"Oh. Oh, damn." Jim's cheeks turned a deep red.

"We should do it now." He took Jim's hand and tugged the man off the table.

"What?"

"We're going to bare you. Make a pretty package even better."

"Now?" Look at that need. Look at those wide, hungry eyes.

"Yes. Right now." He kept moving, taking them to the upstairs bathroom this time.

"Marcus. I've never. I want. Damn, you make me dizzy."

"And I make you need. I make you hard. I like the things I make you."

"I do, too."

Oh. Oh, fuck him. Listen to that. He tugged Jim close and gave the man a brutally hard kiss as a reward for that. And if it left Jim clinging to him, lips parted, nearly vibrating in his hands, all the better. They got to the bathroom somehow, his mouth leaving biting kisses on Jim's lips, neck and shoulders. Jim arched against him, dripping cock sliding against his hip, over and over. He could smell Jim's pre-come and the man's sweat as it drew up on Jim's skin. His own prick was hard as nails, leaking nearly as much as Jim's.

"This is so hot." Jim licked his chin, eyes rolling a little.

"It is. *You* are." He grinned, moving them into the bathroom.

"It's you. Damn. Damn, I need to breathe a second."

No. No, he didn't think so. Breathing and thinking weren't helping right now. "You can breathe tomorrow." He leaned Jim against the counter and grabbed the shaving gel he used on his head.

"Tomorrow." Jim stared at him, fingers dropping down to trace the cock ring, the long, thin shaft.

He leaned down and licked the head of Jim's prick before rubbing shaving cream on the hair surrounding it.

"It's cold." Jim jerked away, staring a little. "I don't know if I want to do this."

"It'll warm." He picked up a new razor and, not giving Jim another chance to protest, took a line of hair off.

"Marcus!" The soft, red curls came right off, leaving creamy, pale, soft skin behind.

He moaned. "Oh, baby... look at you. Just look at you."

"Do you like it?"

"Very much." Marcus shaved another line. "Do you?"

"I don't know. I keep trying to catch my breath."

He shook his head. "Now's not the time to worry on that."  
He made quick work of the rest of the shaving. Jim stayed still, stayed spread for him, pretty body going bare. He had such plans for Jim.

"Fucking beautiful." He dampened a cloth and wiped Jim down.

"I can't believe I let you do that." Jim reached down, hands working his cock, touching the newly bared skin.

He let the man touch because it was so new. There would be plenty of time for the rules to come down. Jim moaned, shook his head, staring at his bared skin. Marcus touched as well, his fingertips sliding. The skin looked so very pale against the dark leather of the cock ring.

"Do... what do you think?"

"I think you're sexy, Jim." Sexy and needy and he was keeping the man.

"That seems fair. I feel hot."

"Excellent." He wrapped his hand around the long, hard cock and pumped lightly, spreading the leaking pre-come along the shaft.

"Oh. Oh, damn. Damn. That feels so fucking good."

"Then I'll have to keep doing it..." All day long. He was going to make Jim insane.

"Okay." Jim looked at him. "It's been so long that it just feels amazing."

"You can have this every day now."

"Oh, I wish."

"It doesn't have to be a wish. It can be real." He swept his thumb across Jim's slit.

Jim arched, body begging for him, lips open. He traced those lips with his tongue, and then dipped into Jim's mouth, groaning at the flavor. Jim's hand joined with his, stroking Jim off, up and down. He touched the bared skin with his free hand, and then reached around and slapped Jim's ass.

Jim jerked, gasped into his mouth. "What was that for?"

He met the bright green eyes. "For fun -- because you like it."

"I never said I liked it..." Jim winked, grinned at him.

"Your mouth didn't." He chuckled, pleased Jim was getting comfortable enough to joke.

"No. It didn't. I haven't been this happy in years. Thank you."

"You can thank me by staying." He pressed their lips back together again, squeezing Jim's prick hard as the kiss went deep.

Jim submitted so well, so easily, so eagerly -- it was a shock to him that no one had snapped Jim up yet. Eventually he stopped jacking Jim and broke the kiss. "Suck me off, Jim."

"Say please." Oh, ho, look at that happy, horny little grin. He didn't think so.

He reached around and smacked Jim. Hard. "On. Your. Knees." Jim blinked, looked honestly unsure, a bit lost. He cupped Jim's cheeks with both hands, thumbs stroking gently. "You need to remember I'm the Top. That means you do as I say."

"But... I'm a grown man. We're not supposed to blindly follow orders." Jim moaned, leaning into his touch, cuddling in.

"Except that you want to. You need it, baby." He kissed Jim gently. "Now, suck me."

"Okay." Jim let Marcus ease him down, gentle him down to his knees.

He rubbed his prick against Jim's lips, his pre-come painting them. When that pretty mouth opened, Jim's tongue slapped the tip of his cock before Jim let it in and wrapping around him. Groaning, he wrapped his hands in Jim's hair, rubbing the man's scalp. He didn't hold Jim in place or try to force a rhythm. Not yet. His mind wandered to the things he was going to teach Jim -- from the most basic obedience to pain to service. This would be Jim's reward, to taste him, to bring him pleasure. This and to be cherished and touched and seen. Marcus

watched as Jim's head bobbed on his prick, tongue working him. Marcus could tell that it had been a while since Jim had given regular blowjobs -- the touches were a little more careful, the gag reflex a little more sensitive.

A spanking and this. The way to start every day. Oh, he wanted Jim, as he had not wanted anyone, ever.

Stroking his hand through the short curls, he gave encouragement. "That's it, Jim. Make us both enjoy it." When he rubbed the hinges of Jim's jaw and his baby moaned, those tight muscles relaxed a little. "Play with my balls, baby. It's all about sensation."

His words earned him another moan, Jim relaxing more, hands moving to touch him. Those fingers were warm, almost soft, sliding to rub the strip of skin behind.

His moan came up from deep inside him. He let Jim have it, let Jim hear him. The touches continued, tapping and stroking and petting him even as Jim started sucking harder, trying so hard to please him. He could see Jim's cock, leaking and bobbing, the black leather almost shocking against the pale, beautiful skin. One of Jim's hands slipped down, rubbing the long cock in time with the bobs of Jim's head.

"Don't," he murmured. "Not unless I say." He began to thrust, pushing into Jim's throat.

"Mmm?" Jim pulled back, gasping.

"No touching yourself without my say so. Focus on bringing me off, baby. Just that." He stroked Jim's cheek,



Jim's throat. And guided the slightly swollen lips back to his prick.

He watched as his prick spread those pretty lips, pushing over the soft, wet tongue and sliding in. One hand cupped his balls, the other wrapped around his calf, rubbing the muscles there. That was it. That was what he wanted -- Jim's focus. He encouraged Jim to take him in deep, moaning happily as this time Jim was able to take him all, however briefly. It suited him down deep, that Jim wanted to please him, taste him. That those touches continued. He stroked the auburn curls over and over.

The pleasure built slowly, warming in his balls, pulling them up against his body. Jim's finger slid back farther, heading for his hole.

"You haven't earned that." He stilled Jim's hand.

Jim pulled off, eyebrows pulled down in a frown.  
"What?"

He smoothed Jim's forehead. "No touching me there. Not until you've earned it."

"Oh. Sorry. I get that. I haven't bottomed either. We're cool." Jim patted his knee, and then leaned on his thigh.  
"Man, it's been awhile; my jaw's wearing out after all the talking and all."

Oh, Jim was cute. He hadn't bottomed either... no wonder the man was unhappy.

"Finish what you started, baby." He gave Jim some help, though. "I like a little tongue-play with my slit." Jim nuzzled the tip of his cock, the stubble rasping, his toes curling with it. Groaning, he thrust, bumping his prick against Jim's cheek. The chuckle tickled his skin, the rasp and nuzzle coming again. "More," he growled. "I want your mouth."

Jim's lips trailed down the length of his shaft and then landed at the base of his balls, leaving teasing little kisses. Oh, someone was being cheeky, was looking to see how much he could push.

"My cock. Your mouth. Now, baby."

That mouth headed back up, nipping and licking and tasting.

He gave praise as soon as Jim's mouth wrapped around the head of his cock. "Good, baby. So good."

Those sucking kisses became full-out suction, the tugging sensation pulling from deep in his balls, making his thighs go rock-hard.

"That's it." He ground the words out, close now, suddenly.

"Mmmhmm." Jim let him have it, tongue slapping the slit of his prick every time that sweet mouth pulled up.

"Fuck! Yes!" He started pumping his hips, gasping as the sensations rode up along his spine right into his skull.

With a last thrust, he held onto Jim's head and came, seed pouring out of him. Jim swallowed hard, shaking, fighting to drink him down and breathe and keep balanced. He kept stroking Jim's head, praising the man. It took a little while, but Jim cleaned him up, rested against his thigh.

"We should do that laundry now. And then I'll stroke you off some more." They'd make Jim's erection last all day long.

"Mmm." Jim nodded, the short curls brushing his damp balls. The man looked so good on his knees like that, happy and sexy.

It had him making plans.

## *Chapter Six*

They rested and cleaned, did laundry, talked about normal things -- books and news, politics. Religion. Normal things. Easy things. Happy things. Jim was a little stunned. He was wearing the sweatpants again, waiting for his briefs to dry, looking through Marcus' bookshelves. There were lots of mystery, crime and horror novels, and an eclectic mix of non-fiction as well as a whole shelf on leather working.

"Your place must be wall to wall books." Marcus came in with a tray full of sandwiches and two tall glasses of water.

"It is." He headed for his briefcase, needing some pain killers with caffeine in them.

"Your head bothering you?"

"Yeah."

"Come here." Marcus sat on the big, leather couch and spread his legs. "Sit there."

"Just let me grab this, huh?"

"Trust me to help you, Jim, and just come sit."

"O...okay. I might have to have a coffee IV." His hands were shaking a little bit.

He sat on the floor between Marcus' feet and the man started massaging his shoulders, fingers sliding up to dig into the back of his neck.

"I. Oh. Wow, you do have good hands..."

"Thank you." Marcus' voice was like velvet.

He was going to go home tonight, make himself coffee and cookies and re-live this, over and over again.

"Are you hungry?" Marcus asked. "Your stuff is dry and I want to take you to that place."

"I wasn't, but the sandwiches smell good."

"Help yourself, but keep it light." Marcus' fingers were making him melt.

"Mmm." His head fell forward, eyes closing. His spine was traced, top to bottom, and then back up again. He caught himself moaning a little, panting a bit.

"Such a sensual man. How did you survive so long all closed up and alone?"

"I..." He caught himself wanting to answer and bit his tongue.

"Hmm? I would like an answer." Marcus' fingers were back at his neck, chasing the headache away.

"It sounded like a rhetorical question. I'm not closed up. I just am... cautious."

"I can't say I blame you." The massage turned into a caress, the touch comforting.

"It sucked. I went to jail for almost three days. They took my computer and read my emails. They trashed my house." Jim tried not to tense up. "All because I wouldn't give her an A."

"And she's still harassing you." He could hear the anger in Marcus' voice. "I know a lawyer."

"I have a lawyer. Sort of." He just didn't want to face it anymore. Ever again.

"I'll give Benjamin a call tomorrow. It doesn't hurt to get a consultation." A kiss dropped on the top of his head.

"You can't just fix everything for me, but I think it's sweet that you try."

Marcus made a non-committal noise and patted his back.

"There. Now, are you ready to go on a little road trip?"

"I guess? It's been nice -- a little bit out of my normal life."

"It will be your normal life soon enough." The big man stood and held out a hand. Jim chuckled, reached up for Marcus. The man was optimistic, wasn't he? Marcus led him to the little utility room, pulling his clothes out of the dryer and passing them over. "I don't suppose you'd go out topless?"

"Topless? No. No, people would look at me."

"The only eyes you need worry about are mine. It's okay, though, go ahead and get dressed." Marcus leaned against the washer, eyeing him.

"I think I'm going to have to move. Maybe to the east coast..." He stripped his sweats off, looking for the snaps on the cock ring.

Marcus' hands stopped his. "Leave it."

"But... you don't think it'll show in my slacks?"

"I don't think it matters." Marcus grabbed his prick, stroked him a few times.

"Marcus!" Oh, fuck, that felt good, but a hard-on would show.

"Yes." Marcus grinned, thumb rubbing over the tip.  
"Come on. Get dressed so we can go."

"I hope we have a little bit of a drive or I'll look silly." He tugged his briefs on, hoping that they hid his package.

"I think you look sexy."

Him? He hadn't been sexy in a long time. Not a very long time. He tugged his sweater on, scowling a little. "I'm plain."

Marcus growled. "Are you calling me a liar?"

"What?" Liar was a strong word.

"You *are* sexy. I don't want to hear you claim you aren't." Marcus took his hand and they headed for the door.

"But..." Jesus, he was confused. By Marcus. By himself. By this whole fucking situation.

"You have enough people saying bad things about you, Jim. You need to ignore them and believe me." Marcus winked and opened the passenger door for him.

"I do, do I? You're a very unique individual, Marcus."

"Thank you. You're not so bad yourself." Marcus slid into the driver's seat and they were off... somewhere.

"Where are we going?"

"Someplace to mark our first day together. Your first spanking. Your first orgasm in two years."

"You spanked me before." It made him uncomfortable, a little ashamed. "I. I don't know if I'm ready to think about that right now."

"No? You liked it. A lot." Marcus' hand slid along his thigh, voice dropping. "We'll be doing it again."

"I don't know. I have to think about it, about what it all means." He needed to talk to his shrink. Needed to figure things out. Tomorrow.

They pulled up in front of a tattoo parlor.

"Here we are."

"Are you getting another tattoo to go with the whip over your shoulder?" He wouldn't mind watching that. Not at all.

"I am. And then you're getting one." With that, Marcus got out and walked around the car to open the door for him.

What?

What did he say?



"I can't. I can't. That. I." That crushing wave of anxiety hit him and he scrambled for his briefcase, taking a Xanax and four Excedrin.

Marcus grumbled as he stepped out of the car. "That'll be two smacks when we're in private. And you most certainly can. Just a little something on your shoulder."

"I. No. No. I can't just get a tattoo. They last forever. They..." He blinked, gagging a little on the pills he dry-swallowed. "Those are nasty."

"You should stop taking them." Marcus' hand wrapped around his and he was led to the tattoo shop, a bell ringing over the door as they went in.

"Hey, beautiful!" A man stood up, grinning ear-to-ear, the sweet man enveloping Marcus in a multi-colored hug, beaming from ear to ringed ear. "Treat. Treat, honey. Marcus is here and he brought a sweet baby."

He stood up taller. He was not a fucking baby.

Marcus hugged the man back and then slid an arm around his shoulders. "Jim, this is Killian. Killian, this is Jim."

"He's beautiful. Is he yours? Look at that pale skin. Treat! Treat, come out here!"

"I think I need some air."

"No, you're good. I'm here." Marcus' hand slid along his back, soothing.

Another man, tattooed and pierced and obviously Treat came up front. "Marcus! Oh, look at this beauty!"

Jim could feel his cheeks heating and he stepped back, right into Marcus' arm. This was all just too much input.

Marcus kissed the top of his head. "Shh, baby. It's all right. Everything is good."

Treat walked around them, staring.

Marcus chuckled. "Can we go in the back with *one* of you?"

"Do you want the whole scene thing, sweetheart, or the normal thing?" Killian was like a giant puppy. A giant tattooed and pierced puppy.

"Just a normal thing for today, Killian. Maybe next time we'll do the scene thing." Marcus kept propelling him forward after Killian until they were in the back.

"Piercing? Ink?" The walls were covered in pictures of Killian and Treat, naked and together, showing off their bodies.

Jim was fairly sure he was going to die.

"Ink today. Jim and I will each get something similar. Something to commemorate our meeting." Marcus' eyes turned to him. "Our beginning."

"Oh. Oh, how incredibly lovely. What do you like? Hearts? Paddles? Initials?"

Jim felt his knees trying to buckle.

Marcus' arm around his waist held him up. "Something simple but beautiful. Is there anything that would signify the occasion to you, Jim?"

"I. I can't. I can't. Is there a bathroom?" He needed to get his shit together. He needed a breath.

Killian nodded. "Sure, honey. Down the hall to the left."

"Thank you." Okay feet. Left. Right.

Marcus stopped him and pulled him up against the solid body. "You're only delaying the inevitable. Just think, baby. My mark on your body. Forever."

"I can't do this, Marcus. You don't know me; I don't know you. I can't just get a tattoo. People will look at me." He leaned hard, staring up into Marcus' sure, lovely eyes.

"I will look at you. That's all that matters. You *can*. You *can*. All you have to do is sit there and let the experience take you." Marcus squeezed his ass.

He was horrified to feel his eyes tingle, start to well with tears. He yanked away from Marcus, slapping his cheek hard enough to sting. "Jesus. Jesus, what is *wrong* with me?"

"Nothing. You're just coming alive after two years of being frozen and closed away." Marcus led him to the chair in Killian's corner and sat him down. "I think

maybe a sun on your shoulder -- because you're stepping out into the sun after hibernation, hmm?"

"I. I."

"Color or black and white, Marcus? He's lovely, honestly." Killian grabbed a piece of paper, started drawing.

"Yes, he is lovely. My beautiful Jim." Marcus might have been talking to Killian, but those eyes were on him, staring into him. "Color, Killian. With the thought that it's the beginning of something bigger."

"How do you feel about Celtic? I could do knot work in the center; rainbow rays?" Killian wasn't even speaking to him.

"Oh, that sounds lovely. I could have just the knot for mine." Marcus leaned over Killian's shoulder, looking at the man's sketches, and nodded.

Jim knew his Xanax was working, because he wasn't screaming, wasn't running. He couldn't do this. He couldn't. People didn't *do* this.

"I need him to sign the paperwork, honey." Killian handed Marcus a sheaf of paper.

"No problem." Marcus' focus came back to him, hand taking his as the paperwork was set down in front of him. "Basically, it says you aren't sick, you aren't drunk and you understand that tattoos are permanent." One hand

slid over his cheek as Marcus chuckled and smiled at him. "Which is kind of the point."

"Marcus. I don't know if this is a good idea..."

"Of course it is. The endorphin rush will take care of that caffeine monkey that's been on your back all day."

"Well, the migraine meds helped that." There was a ton of caffeine in those. Marcus put the pen in his hand; the barrel was cool and slick.

Marcus grumbled something about getting him off the meds, and stroked his wrist. "It's still a good idea, baby. You're marking an important event. A life-changing one."

"But Marcus, how do you know?"

"Because I trust my gut, my instinct." Marcus leaned right in. "Try trusting yours, baby. Don't listen to the can'ts and shouldn'ts and what ifs and listen to your body. It knows."

"I... But this is forever." Always.

"Yes, Jim." The words were softly and patiently spoken. There wasn't a shred of doubt in Marcus' voice or face.

"I don't know if I'm ready. I don't want people to look at me." He looked down at the paper, that he'd signed. Right there.

"Jim, the tattoo is going to be on your back and last time I checked -- you don't go out without your shirt on. No one is going to know it's there." Marcus handed the paper over to Killian. "Except for you and me."

"It's tough to be a new sub. So many rules." Killian nodded. "You going to shave him for me?"

What? What? Wait.

"Oh, we haven't gotten to the rules yet, not really," Marcus said casually. "You'll need to take your shirt off, Jim, and straddle the chair so you can lean against the back of it while Killian does the tattoo. And yes, I'll shave the area."

"Oh, man. Is he in training? That's always exciting. Treat wants us to train another one, but I'm not ready."

"He is." Marcus helped him take off his shirt and guided him to the right position. "Killian and Treat are both tops. They put on the most amazing shows. Peter was their sub, their lover."

"I'm feeling a little lost..." Training? Who? And what shows? "Was?"

Killian nodded, sighed. "Cancer. It was quick, but hard."

Marcus rubbed Killian's shoulder and was quiet a moment. Then Killian handed over a disposable razor and Marcus began to shave his back. "As soon as I have this done, I'll sit where you can see me properly. Then you'll be fine."

"I'm sorry about your partner. That's just awful." He'd missed Chris for months, and that hadn't been cancer.

"Oh, aren't you a sweetheart? Thank you." Killian was putting out little containers with colors, and a bunch of instruments.

Marcus patted his back. "All shaved." Then the man moved to a seat in front of him. Eyes brimming with excitement.

"This is going to feel like scratching a sunburn. You just need to remember to breathe and tell me if you're going to move." Killian pressed a piece of paper on his back, peeled it off.

"I don't know if I want to do this..."

"Shh..." Marcus' mouth covered his, tongue pushing between his lips. "Stop thinking."

"I can't. Thinking is what I do. My job." Oh, God. He hadn't worked since two nights ago. Oh, God. Oh, God.

"Jim." Marcus' voice had that snap like a whip quality to it again. "Look at me. Killian's going to start now and you're going to focus on the sensation of the needle on your skin, and on my eyes." Marcus nodded to Killian.

This high-pitched whining sound started, making him jerk and start. "Okay, now. That's one of the things you can't do, honey. You'll get hurt." Denim-clad legs slid close to him, a solid, warm hand landing on his shoulder,

keeping him still. "I'll do a short line first, so you can get the feel of it."

Then a line of fire slid over his skin and he groaned, body tensing for flight.

"It'll just hurt worse if you tense up."

Jim couldn't decide if Killian sounded gentle or amused.

Marcus grinned at him. "Some people like it to hurt more. But like it or not, everyone gets off on it. Your brain releases endorphins." Leaning in close to his ear, Marcus added in a whisper. "It's one of the reasons why you like getting spanked so much."

"I never said I liked it."

Marcus' mouth twitched. "No, you never did actually *say* that."

The fire on his back continued, one line after another. He wanted to go home. Right now. He closed his eyes, willing the ground to open up, something, anything so that he could ignore that buzzing little line of fire.

"No, look at me," Marcus ordered, hand on his chin.  
"Open your eyes."

"I can't." He was shaking, they were squeezed together so tightly.

"Jim." Marcus's mouth was suddenly on his, the kiss hard and deep and demanding his attention.



Oh. The ball of tension in his chest dissipated with a pop, the kiss letting him breathe.

He distantly heard Killian's chuckle, felt the needle again. "Nicely done, my dear."

Marcus didn't respond to Killian. Instead the kiss went on, all of Marcus' focus on him, like he was the center of the universe. His eyelids unquincched, his eyes finally able to open as he relaxed more.

He looked right into Marcus' eyes as his own opened, the man holding his gaze. "Killian's a real artist. The tattoo will look beautiful on your skin." Marcus rubbed their noses together. "It's okay if the needle makes you hard."

"Is it?" He didn't want to embarrass himself. Marcus. Hell, Killian.

"Most people do. Don't they, Killian?"

"They do. It's biological. Once you learn to enjoy it, though? It's magical." Killian's voice sounded warm, gentle. Happy. "You should keep him in denim, dear. Slacks are made of such unnatural fabric."

"We haven't gone shopping yet. Hell, I haven't convinced you to move in yet, have I? You should, baby. You can work from my place as well as you can from yours. Besides, you said you wanted to move." Marcus' voice was low and soft and it somehow melded with the buzz from the ink gun.

"I..." He reached for Marcus.

"Don't move." Killian's gentle voice was suddenly sharp, demanding.

Marcus' hand slid over his arm. patting and soothing. "You'll mess up the ink if you move, baby. And that'll make Killian pout. Which is never pretty." Marcus' mouth closed over his again, tongue lapping at him.

He opened, letting himself sink into Marcus' touch. Marcus' hands. So good. The pain had a rhythm to it, one that Marcus seemed to know, the kisses and touches picking it up and going with it. It all fitted together -- kissing and touching and feeling, the buzz of the needle. The way Killian's hands touched his back. Jim found himself moaning, his cock heavy and hard, trapped in the ring.

"There you are, Jim. Now you're getting it." Marcus licked his lips and kept touching him, kept the flow going.

"Hmm?" He breathed deep, lost in it.

"He's a natural, honey. Bone-deep."

"I know. He's amazing. You're amazing, Jim."

His cheeks heated, a swell of pride filling him. "Marcus."

"Yes, Jim. So beautiful, so wonderful. The day we met was my lucky day."

"Flatterer." He couldn't look away, couldn't even feel the needle.

"No, Jim. I don't flatter. It's truth." Marcus' gaze held his, those eyes intense, looking right into him.

"We're almost done, honey. You're going to need to take a deep breath, okay?"

"Oh, I can't wait to see Killian's art making your skin even more beautiful. Take a deep breath, baby."

He started to tense up, waiting for something horrible as he breathed in, when an icy cold spray spread across his skin, leaving him gasping, cock jerking wildly in his slacks. Oh. Oh, good. Oh, God.

Killian chuckled. "I think he likes it."

"Of course he does, it's an amazing feeling." Marcus kissed him again, mouth hard and eager.

"Give us a minute." The words growled out of Marcus and the heat of Killian's body disappeared. Then Marcus' fingers pushed between them, hand shoving past his waistband to grab at his cock.

"Please." He bucked up, eyes rolling wildly in their sockets. Needed. He needed. Now.

Those long fingers moved all the way down to the cock ring, the snap opening, suddenly releasing his prick.

"Thank you." He humped up, riding the pain and stress and buzz for all he was worth.

Marcus' hand wrapped around his prick, jerking him off roughly. "Come for me, baby. Show me how good it is."

"Yes. Yes, sir." The words slipped out as he shot, toes curled, entire body focused on sensation.

Marcus continued to stroke him, his orgasm lasting longer than any ever had.

"You... you'll keep me hard." His head bobbed a little, lost in the touch.

"Sounds like a plan." Marcus kissed him, hand still working.

"Mmm." Jim stopped worrying about it, balls beginning to ache, entire focus on Marcus' hands.

"My sensual, beautiful man." Marcus' lips were back on his, tongue playing inside his mouth.

He dove into the kiss, letting himself fly. Fingers curled in his hair, tilting his head so Marcus could deepen the kiss. He stood, pushing closer, trying to get around the chair and press against his lover. Marcus stood as well and grabbed his ass and tugged him against the solid body. His ass cheeks ached, and he felt the heat of Marcus' cock against him.

"Fuck." He nodded, reaching for Marcus' fly, trying to get to the hard cock, to get Marcus off, too.

His pants were opened properly, Marcus tugging them down along with his briefs just as he got Marcus' jeans

undone. The large prick, red-tipped and wet, jumped into his hand. Marcus gathered both their cocks together, pressed them into his hand. "Do us together."

"Your friend won't come back?" He reached anyway, hand moving up and down, sliding over their pricks.

"Not until we're done."

Groaning, Marcus took his mouth again, hips moving, sawing the thick cock alongside his own. Oh, good. Jim nodded, jacking them harder, his moans pushed into Marcus' lips. Both Marcus' hands pushed into the back of his pants, grabbing his sore ass. One finger slid along his crack and circled his hole. He stepped forward, groaning into Marcus. He didn't bottom. That finger stayed where it was, teasing and tapping against his opening as Marcus' kisses devoured more and more of him. If he could have thought, breathed, spoken, he would have told Marcus so, but he could only touch, taste, feel.

Marcus kept teasing his hole and squeezing his ass cheeks, the other hand coming around to wrap around his and speed the movement around their cocks. Slick and slippery, hot and hard, and it felt so good. He moaned into Marcus' mouth, over and over, dicks rubbing together.

Then, just as Marcus' hand tightened his almost unbearably around their cocks, the finger playing with his hole pushed in, spreading him. This shocked sound escaped him, heat pouring out of the tip of his cock. Marcus shouted his name, come splashing up between them. That finger stayed inside him, even wriggled a bit.

He leaned in, breathing hard. "I should. We should get dressed..."

Marcus' fingers slid away, making him cry out, and then his pants were tugged back up, closed. "Killian needs to cover your tattoo first, and tell you how to care for it. And you haven't even seen it yet!"

"O...okay. Right." It didn't seem real, yet.

"Killian?" Marcus did up his own pants and smiled at Jim. "We're ready for the lecture, and Jim would like to see the beautiful piece of art you inked onto his back."

"Of course. It's spectacular and, if you take care of it, it'll be the start of something wonderful." Killian started talking about Vaseline and chlorine and sunshine, and handed him a mirror. The piece was huge -- covering his shoulder blade with a green Celtic knot and brightly colored rays.

"Oh. It's huge."

"It's stunning. Like you." Marcus breathed into him a moment and then stood back. "I'll have a smaller version of that knot. Where should I put it?"

Marcus took off his shirt and turned slowly. A black handled whip sat on his right shoulder blade, the tip curling up over onto his chest.

"I... Where do you want it?" Jim reached out, tracing the whip.

"This one is to commemorate you. I want your opinion on where it should go."

Marcus' muscles moved beneath his touch. Jim's fingers found the spot above Marcus' heart. There. He wanted it there, but he couldn't ask.

A slow, warm smile broke across Marcus' face and one big hand landed on top of his, holding it there. "Yes, Jim. Your mark should be over my heart."

"Oh, that's lovely. I approve. Sit." Killian beamed and Jim couldn't stop watching Marcus long enough to pay attention.

Marcus sat on the chair he'd vacated, hand finding his, linking their fingers together. "In the same green, about a third the size." Marcus might have been speaking to Killian, but those eyes stayed firmly locked with his.

"Absolutely. Are you going to be ordering jewelry? I have an order going out for custom work tomorrow." Killian went to a copy machine, pushing buttons.

"What do you think, baby? Ready for some jewelry to go with your new tattoo?"

He was pretty sure Marcus was joking. He thought. "I don't wear jewelry." Never.

"You'll look lovely in gold, especially when you bulk up, get some sun." Killian's voice sounded like he was going to suddenly become a body builder or something.

"Rings on fingers and bells on toes, he'll have music wherever he goes." Marcus gave him a wink. "Not this time, Killian. There must be a meaning to it, like the tattoos. I'm sure we'll see a lot of you in the coming months."

"You know you're always welcome -- scene or not. Are you coming to the Hammer soon? Treat and I go on Thursdays, still, just to relax." Killian shaved Marcus quickly, placed the pattern. "I like the peace on Dom night."

Dom night?

"Things are so new for Jim right now. Look for me in time." Marcus looked so relaxed, ready.

"I will. I miss how it used to be, hmm?" Suddenly there was this overwhelming loss, this sorrow, and Jim just wanted to reach out to Killian. Tell the man that he understood hurting so badly. When he did reach out it shocked him, rocked him to the core.

Killian patted his hand where it rested on the man's arm. "Oh, you are a sweetheart, thank you. Marcus, you take care of this one."

Jim stepped away, nodding, blushing deep. He was losing his mind. Marcus hummed as the tattoo gun started buzzing, hand reaching out for him again. Jim held on tight, fingers sliding over Marcus', feeling the scars and calluses. He'd have a scar on his palm, too, from falling.



Marcus tugged him closer, putting a hand on the growing bulge in his jeans. "You see?"

"Marcus!" His eyes went wide, flashing over to Killian.

"Oh, honey. I've seen it."

Marcus chuckled. "It happens to us all in the chair, Jim. It is nothing to be ashamed of."

"I just don't... I ought to be in control of myself."

"Baby, you only just got it back -- take a little joy in it."

He rolled his eyes at Marcus and stuck his tongue out.

Marcus laughed, and then bit his lip as Killian shouted at him not to move. "Sorry." Marcus grinned over at him, not looking in the least bit sorry at all.

"Do you have a Coke machine nearby? I could use a drink and I imagine Marcus could too." He was feeling solid, settled in his skin.

Marcus nodded and smiled at him. "That would be lovely, baby. There's one at the front of the shop."

"What would you like?"

"Mmm... a lemonade, baby." Marcus looked like was enjoying getting the tattoo a lot. "Hurry back."

"Okay." He got two Diet Cokes -- drinking one while he bought a lemonade, the liquid hitting him square in the belly. Then he headed back in.

Killian was nearly done with the tattoo, the green beautiful on Marcus' skin. He couldn't help but notice how hard Marcus still was, too.

He handed over the lemonade after opening it up, careful not to make Marcus move. "Can I get you anything, Killian?"

"No, no, sweetheart. I'm fine. You're a sweet boy, though."

"My sweet boy," murmured Marcus. "Just in case you were inclined to forget."

"As if I would forget, Marcus." Killian chuckled, filling in another line.

"I'm probably older than both of you..." He was thirty-one. Old enough to know better and possibly old enough to care.

"You're not old." Marcus reached for his hand, smiling over at him.

"How old are you?" He took Marcus' hand, squeezed.

"I will be thirty at the end of October."

"Oh. A Halloween baby. How fun. Mine's in January."

"If I'd known you a little bit sooner I could have gotten you a gift."

"Take a deep breath," Killian warned, and Marcus hissed as his tattoo was sprayed.

"Oh, there's nothing that compares to that."

"It's beautiful." He couldn't believe that he'd done this. He couldn't believe it made him feel so proud.

"It is. And now we have matching marks." Marcus stroked his belly.

"I. We do. What do I owe for the ink?" He needed to get to work. Really.

"Nothing, baby. I'm taking care of this. You could take care of something for me if you like..."

Killian laughed. "That's my cue to go check on supplies in the back."

He finished his Coke, the bubbles burning through him. He leaned close. "I want to."

"Mmm..." Marcus licked his lips and sucked on the lower one before leaning back again and patting his crotch. "I need."

"What do you want?" His mouth? His hands?

"I want you, baby. I want you."

That made him blush, made him hot, all through. He bent down, worked Marcus' jeans open. Groaning, Marcus spread his legs wider. It was easy, to suck the heavy cock into his lips, draw Marcus in.

"Oh, you're getting good at that. Such a quick study."

Oh, God. That. He couldn't decide if he was embarrassed or proud.

One groan after another fell around his shoulders, Marcus' hands wrapping in his curls. He opened wide, groaning as his jaw ached. He'd given more blowjobs in the last twenty-four hours...

"That's it, baby. Oh, shit, it's not going to take much."

He nodded, head bobbing with it, trying not to gag when he took Marcus into his throat.

"Jim!" Marcus arched, hips pushing, come spilling down his throat.

He choked a little, but this time, he got it all. Marcus' grip on his curls loosened, fingers stroking along his head, his face.

"Thank you, baby."

"Thank you."

It was going to be so hard, going home. Going away.

Marcus tucked himself away and Killian came back to bandage the tattoo. "You know the routine."

"I do."

They dealt with the money and then they were outside, heading for the car. His shoulder was sore, stinging a little.

"I have some steaks at home. We should grill them with some vegetables."

"I... I should probably go home. Maybe after supper, though. That sounds delicious."

Perfect.

"It will be. Mostly because we'll make it together."  
Marcus' palm stroked his cheek.

Jim caught himself leaning in, telling himself that he could let himself enjoy it. Just for one more evening.

One more.

## *Chapter Seven*

Marcus was stuffed like a tick. Grilled steak, baked potatoes and grilled asparagus, zucchini and peppers. For dessert they had huge pieces of chocolate cake that they'd made together. "For someone who doesn't cook, you sure make a mean chocolate cake, baby."

"It wasn't me. You did it. I just helped." Jim was next to him, blinking slowly, cuddling. They'd cleaned the tattoos, both of them shirtless to let the ink breathe.

"Don't sell yourself short -- I directed. You baked."

"I don't cook. Those steaks, though. My God." Jim's fingers slid over his skin. "I guess I have to go home, hmm? Get some work done."

"Why don't I drive you back to your place to pick up some clothes and your work and we'll bring it back here?" It made perfect sense. He just hoped Jim saw that.

"I. I don't know if I can work here, Marcus. I'm sort of a creature of habit." That wasn't a no.

"So you make new habits." He had a whole new schedule to lay out for Jim. And the sooner they started it, the sooner Jim would be comfortable and happy.

Jim murmured, shrugged a little. "I don't know, Marcus. Maybe I need to go home and think about all this. You make me feel very... Confused, maybe?" Oh, thinking was not a good idea for Jim.

"No, my idea is better." Confused trumped miserable any day.

Jim's laugh filled his living room, bright and happy. "You think so, huh?"

Now that was a great sound. He nodded and leaned in to kiss Jim's smiling mouth. "I do."

"Have you always been so sure of yourself?"

"No." He'd been a terribly shy boy. "But I am now."

"Did something happen to you?" Those bottle-green eyes were curious, engaged. Focused on him.

He nodded. "I fell in love. Or thought I did. He wasn't a very nice man and I thought it was all my fault." He chuckled. God, Browly had been *such* a jerk.

"And then I met a Dom who took me under his wing, introduced me to the lifestyle, and taught me what a real relationship was."

"Where you a... Is the correct term slave? Sub? Do you think you would have done it if you hadn't met him?"

"Whether you are a slave or a sub is really up to each couple. I was a sub. Oliver knew I was a Dom, and he knew that to be a good one, I needed to know the other end inside and out." He pondered the rest of Jim's question. "I don't know if I would have fallen into it on my own or not. I did it *right* because I met him."

"Did you like it?"

If they were going to play twenty questions, he ought to get his turn. "I liked knowing I'd be the one on the other end of that whip one day. And I liked knowing I'd know how it felt." He gave Jim a smile. "My turn. Have you ever thought about the lifestyle before you met me?"

"No. No, not at all. I had some fun in college, then a long-term partner throughout grad school and until the mess."

Marcus growled. "He left you because of it?"

"Well, yes and no. I can't blame him -- they arrested me, destroyed the house, took his computer. The police read his emails, everyone watched him. Hell, he didn't deserve that. He's in Atlanta with a nice man -- another professor." Jim pulled away a little, pulled into himself. "Do you have a lot of family?"

He tugged Jim back against him. "My folks live in Chicago. And I have a sister there. We don't see much of each other. My family is here. In the community."

"I grew up in New Mexico with my parents and grandparents. I thought my family was at the university, but... Well, things change."

He ran his hands through Jim's short curls. "They do. Come stay a few days, Jim. See how thing could change for the better."

"Maybe. Maybe. It's good to be here. I hate my apartment. You should have seen my house, before. I had a yard, a dog."

"Then that's what we'll do." And he would talk to a lawyer, because from where he sat, Jim should be suing the little wench who was making his life a misery.



"Only for a day or two, though. I have a routine." Jim was cuddling in against his side, humming softly, fingers tickling the hairs on his belly.

"Mmm... sensual thing." He reached over and stroked his fingers across one of Jim's nipples. A ring there. That needed to be next.

"I never thought I was. Should I make us some coffee?"

"I'd rather you stay right where you are so we can play." He tweaked the nipple in his fingers.

He loved that gasp, that jerk. "You don't have near enough caffeine here."

"And you're hooked." He leaned in to lick at Jim's earlobe, to suck on it.

"Yep. Unrepentantly. I need coffee."

Oh, he'd wean Jim off the stuff. Eventually. "I can think of better things to need."

"I can't get it up again, man. I've had more sex in a day and a half than anyone on earth. Ever."

"Is that a challenge?"

"No, just the truth. How long have you lived here?"

"Four years. Business has been good." He fingers danced down along Jim's belly to play with the man's waistband.

"Have you always done leatherwork?"

"I have. I've always loved leather. The smells, the textures, the things you can make with it..." He popped the top button of Jim's pants.

"I'm not into it. I do like the smell of it, though." Jim moved away a little, belly tight.

"You'll learn to love it. I can just imagine your ass encased in tight, butter-soft leather." His next personal project had to be pants for Jim.

"I haven't ever had the body for tight clothes. What do you like to make best?" Jim grabbed his hand, fingers sliding over the palm.

"You can work out with me. You're good looking and sexy, but with a little toning, you'd have every gay man on the planet drooling." He closed his hand around Jim's fingers. "Whips and floggers are my favorite. There's a lot of room for creativity there."

"Floggers?"

"They're... well, you'd understand best if I showed them to you."

"Okay. Do people buy them for show?"

"No. I mean you could, but the people who buy mine use them. I even have a room downstairs where they can test them out."

He stood and led Jim to his office -- he had a few in progress floggers there.

"That doesn't worry you? Having people in your house?" Jim followed easily; that curiosity was something special, something he could work with.

"I trust the people in the lifestyle. And they're the only ones who get to buy in person. Most of my sales come from the virtual store.

He pulled open a drawer in the large vanity and pulled out a heavy flogger with a black, braided handle. "This one still needs to be oiled, but it is otherwise finished."

"It's pretty. Can I see it?" Jim held out his hands and then explored the toy, fingers sliding and touching.

"Can you guess what it's for?" His fingers ached to take the flogger, to use it on Jim's lovely ass.

"Well, that's obvious, isn't it? It's a weapon. They used to have a flagellation day in Sparta."

"A weapon?" Marcus shook his head. "It is a toy or a tool, but not a weapon. You do not flog someone out of anger. Only out of love and a desire to ultimately bring pleasure."

"People died from flogging, Marcus."

"Yes, I'm sure they did. But that doesn't happen anymore." Marcus took the flogger and let the leather brush against Jim's chest. "It's like the spanking -- pain

for pleasure's sake. And while some floggers do break the skin, most don't."

Jim's nipples drew up, goose bumps covering the thin chest. "What else do you make?"

"Whips. Cock rings. Some clothing. Hoods. Cuffs. Would you like to see any of those?" What would intrigue his sub?

"I would. It's fascinating." Jim reached for the flogger again, fingers trailing through the strands.

All of it. Jim was intrigued by it all. Yes.

He opened the drawers, one after the other, showing Jim the things he made, the things he wanted to use on the man. It was amazing -- to have Jim pay attention, touch, ask questions, be interested in each and every piece.

"I've been a real boon to the community -- being able to do custom pieces and not judging or calling the cops or anything." He did good work.

"They're beautiful. You should be so proud."

"I am." Even more so with Jim's praise. "Would you like something? Anything you want."

"I don't know enough about it to know what would be too expensive a gift, Marcus." Jim's fingers went to a bracelet that could double as a cuff.

"It's not about how much the materials cost or what I could sell it for." He picked up the bracelet and took Jim's arm, attaching it around Jim's wrist. "It looks good on you."

"It's amazing." Jim looked fascinated, almost awed.

It was a single thick, black band, intricate patterns worked into the leather. "It's yours."

"Thank you." Jim leaned toward him, kissed him well enough that his knees went a little weak.

He wrapped his hands around Jim's waist, the man's skin warm and good against his fingers. "We could go get your stuff tomorrow..." He wanted to spend the rest of their evening making long, slow love.

"Mmmhmm. We could get a coffee." Jim was warm against him, sensual.

He chuckled, but Jim had managed the entire day without one. "As long as there's also something sticky and gooey to go with it."

"They have muffins."

"They also have cinnamon buns with that gooey white icing." He might have spent a day or six at the place, waiting for Jim to show up.

"Yeah?" Jim didn't look like he cared, not really.

"Uh-huh. So tomorrow instead of today." He kissed Jim again, started walking them out of his workroom and toward the stairs.

"Hmm?" Jim licked his lips, bright green eyes fastened to his.

He growled a little, his cock suddenly fully hard again. He grabbed Jim's ass and pulled him close.

Jim moaned low, ass cheeks going hard. "Sore. Hot."

"Yeah, I know."

He half walked, half carried Jim to the stairs, getting too caught up in their kisses. Rather than risk tumbling on the stairs, he pushed Jim up against the wall.

"Not... Not going to get it up again tonight..." Jim groaned, teeth tugging his bottom lip.

"Sure you will." They had all night long.

He pushed Jim into the wall again. Jim's fingers wrapped around his head, massaging his scalp. Shit, that was good. He rubbed his aching cock against Jim's belly. He'd come more today than he had maybe ever, but Jim just made him hard, made him want.

He could smell the leather -- his cuff, wrapped around Jim's wrist -- mixed with Jim's musk.

"I want you," he growled. He wanted to be buried deep inside Jim.

"Mmm." Jim nuzzled his throat, lips and tongue hot and wet.

"Upstairs. Bed. Us. Now." He was nearly grunting the words, Jim making him so hot.

"Kay." Jim bit him, sucking up a mark.

Jerking, he pushed Jim against the wall again. The suction went on and on, stinging and heating his throat.

"Jim..." His hips started rubbing again and he had to pull away. "Upstairs," he said again, grabbing Jim's hand and almost dragging the man up the stairs.

Jim was laughing and the sound made things better. The urgent need eased and he slowed as they got to his bedroom, his fingers tugging gently at Jim's pants. Jim worked on his jeans, fingers sure until his own fingers trailed over Jim's newly bared skin.

"Feels good, doesn't it? Had you forgotten about it?"

"Yeah. Yeah, I was thinking about something else."

He hefted Jim's bare balls, rolling them before stroking along the pale skin around the man's cock. "What were you thinking about, baby?"

"You." Jim went up on tiptoe, throat working, head falling back.

"Mmm... good answer."

He pushed Jim toward the bed, pushing his baby down onto the mattress, hearing the hiss as Jim's shoulder touched down. "Stings."

He nodded. "On your stomach." He slapped Jim's thigh to get the man moving.

"I can't touch you like that." Jim turned, though, letting him see that still-pink ass.

He bent and bit Jim's ass, his teeth sinking into the hot flesh. "You'll have to just feel."

"Fuck!" Jim jerked forward, pulling away.

He grabbed hold of Jim's ass, dragging Jim back and biting the other cheek. He loved those little cries, the way Jim bucked for him. He spread Jim's cheeks with his thumbs, his tongue just barely touching Jim's hot little hole.

Jim went still, breath stopping. "Marcus?"

He blew gently, licked again. "Relax, baby. You're going to like this."

"I haven't. I haven't ever."

"Just my tongue, Jim."

"Okay."

Fuck. Fuck, that trust rocked him. He rewarded it by dragging his tongue along Jim's crack. Jim moaned,



staying still, shivering for him. "How does it feel?" Marcus asked before licking the wrinkled flesh with the tip of his tongue.

"I don't. I don't know." Jim's laugh was husky, breathless. "It's too much to just feel."

Breathing hard, Marcus blew air over Jim's hole, making it wink. He licked again, tongue pointed, tongue flat, tongue slapping at the ultra-sensitive skin.

"Do that again..." Demanding boy.

He slapped Jim's hole and this time, alternated it with a gentle poke of the very tip of his tongue against the tight ring of muscle. Natural as breathing, Jim started rocking, started moving for him in this easy, steady rhythm. Fuck, it was sexy, the way Jim needed, the way Jim trusted. He spread those cheeks wider and let Jim's own motions take his tongue in a little bit more with every rock. The bedroom walls rang with the moans and sighs, Jim singing for him.

While Jim was busy fucking himself on Marcus' tongue, Marcus shifted his hand along Jim's ass cheek and let his index finger push in as well.

"I don't..." But Jim did, that swaying movement never slowing or speeding up, either one.

He didn't say anything, just went with Jim's body, wriggling his finger inside the tight little hole. Jim shifted, hand reaching down for that pretty cock -- the one that was hard again, thank you. With both his hands

busy, he let Jim touch himself, groaning a little as the first touch made Jim tighten, the little hole squeezing his finger and tongue.

The heat between them swelled, making his own cock ache, his balls throb. He pushed his finger deeper, searching for that place inside Jim that would make his baby scream. It took a few thrusts, but then he found the flat gland, pegging it hard. Jim bucked, pulled out of his hands, almost climbing the headboard.

He chuckled softly, reaching for Jim's ass and caressing it. "No one's ever touched you there before."

"No." Jim groaned, eyes rolling. "Damn."

"Oh, I don't know. I mean I'm sorry you've never had the pleasure, but I am happy to be the one to introduce you to it." Down-deep, growly and possessively happy about it.

"Kiss me?" Jim turned, pushed into his arms, cock hot against his belly.

He took Jim's mouth with a fierceness that almost surprised him, born of that possessiveness. Jim was his. His.

Jim rocked up, tongue pushing against his, hands holding his head. Groaning into the kiss, he reached around to work his finger back into Jim's body, the man's hard cock pressing against him. Those lean hips started rocking again, moving sure and steady. He hummed and moaned, loving how responsive Jim was, how his baby took to this like a duck to water.

Jim pulled him down into the mattress, wrapping around him, loving on him. They writhed together, his hips pushed, rubbing his cock with Jim's as his finger pushed in and out. Jim's hand wrapped around their cocks, stroking them both off.

"Mmm... baby. Yeah." He wrapped his own hand around Jim's, tightening the hold.

"Our...our cocks are going to fall off." Jim winked, cheeks flushed, eyes dancing.

Oh, that had him laughing, his finger pushing deep and nailing Jim's gland again, his own balls emptying, heat pouring over their hands. Jim's body clenched all around him, an answering heat following close behind.

He let his finger slide out of Jim and lay panting, petting Jim's hip.

They dozed off, curled together, the scent of his leather band and Jim's sweat mingling together.

## *Chapter Eight*

Marcus had been sleeping hard when Jim woke, so he left a note explaining that the coffee was calling his name and so was work, along with an invitation for lunch and his address. Then he walked to the nearest bus stop and went home. He got his mail, his coffee, his books and then he headed home to check his email.

When he headed up the stair, Marcus was there, waiting. "You're earlier than I thought. I would have brought you a coffee as well as your pastry." He held up the bag, smiled.

Marcus grumbled. "I thought we were going to come and pick up your stuff together?"

"You were sound asleep and didn't even budge when I kissed you. I figured you needed your rest." He handed over the pastries. "I found bear claws."

Marcus blinked and stared at him for a moment. "Oh. Thank you." Marcus took the bag and opened it. "These look good. Let's go get your stuff."

"Okay. I can make you a latte, too." He nodded, dug out his keys and opened the door. The place smelled musty, a little moldy. "Have a seat in the recliner. Watch for all the books, huh?"

He knew what the single room looked like -- with the old recliner that functioned as chair and bed, the huge desk with the computer equipment and research, the carefully organized stacks of books filling the rest of the space. He had a microwave, a dorm fridge and a professional coffee maker. Everything a man needed.

"Wow. I knew you had a lot of books, but wow." Marcus picked through some of the stacks before moving to sit.

He nodded, booting up the main desktop before going to start the coffee.

"So what all do you need to bring with you? We could bring the computer. It'll fit in my car."

"I don't know. I'll have to look at my schedule and see what I haven't done, what information I need." He finished his espresso and grabbed his mug. He'd put Marcus' coffee in it and he'd reuse his cup.

"Bring what you need for a couple weeks. And then we'll go shopping, find you some decent clothes."

"A couple of weeks?" His hand shook, hot coffee spilling over his fingers. "I have to be out of here or sign a new lease. I'm moving away, maybe to the East Coast, where no one knows me."

"I don't think you should make that decision yet. Move in with me while you think about it." Marcus looked around. "I've got lots of boxes, it wouldn't take too many trips to have you cleared out of here."

"I... I don't know about that. How much rent would you need?" He sucked the coffee off his fingers, humming at the sharp bitterness. "Besides, if they find me, you'll get harassed. I don't like that."

Marcus growled. "I'd like to see them try."

The man cleared his throat and sat back, nibbling on his bear claw. "How much are you paying here?"

"Twelve hundred a month plus Internet and electricity. They pay water." He brought Marcus the latte, perching on the edge of the desk to check his emails.

"Twelve hundred? For this d-- small a place?" Marcus shook his head. "Well, I couldn't charge you that. Let's say two hundred and fifty, plus half the utilities, groceries and whatnot."

Jim blinked. Two fifty? Shit. He could relax a little, work on his novel. Think. Breathe. He could pay Marcus for a year, up front. He could...

Wait.

Stop.

Breathe.

"I should think about it." He should talk to the shrink about it. He should make some logical decisions.

"You like me. I like you. You could have your own bedroom and we'll convert the den into your office." Marcus looked around. "You have to admit, my place is nicer."

"I... My shrink says not to make spontaneous decisions, that I'm in a bad place for it."

"All right. You can tell me your answer tomorrow."

"Tomorrow." He nodded, relieved. Tomorrow would work. "How do you like my chair?"

"It's great. It would fit next to the couch in the living room. It even fits the color scheme."

"Then I wouldn't have anywhere to sleep, to work." It was a great visual, though -- all the heavy leather furniture working together.

"This is your bed?" Marcus frowned. "The guest bedroom has a bed. Besides," Marcus gave him a knowing grin. "While it's not a condition, I would like you to share mine."

"It's my bed."

Marcus held out one hand and Jim went, settling gingerly on the strong thighs. "I like your bed better."

"I like my bed better with you in it."

Marcus wrapped an arm around his waist. "How's your tattoo? Did you manage to get any cream on it?"

"No. I was going to get your help." Warm. Marcus was so warm.

"I would love to rub cream on you."

He chuckled, pressed close. "I was hoping you'd say that." Was he flirting?

"Oh, you were, were you?" Marcus laughed and tugged him down for a kiss, mouth hot against his lips.

He moaned, laughed into Marcus' kiss, happier right now than he'd been in years. Marcus' hand found his ass and squeezed. Yesterday's burn was now just a bare tingle and he found he missed the burn, the ache. Weird.

"Mmm... I should put you back over my knee, baby."

"I haven't done anything wrong."

"No, I was thinking more just because we both like it."  
Marcus rubbed his skin.

Jim felt his cheeks burning and he couldn't look at  
Marcus.

"It's okay, baby, you don't need to have to ask for it. You eventually will." Marcus took another kiss and then encouraged him to shift, to lie over Marcus' knees.

"I don't... I don't know if..." His heart was slamming in his chest.

"Sure you do." Marcus' hand brushed against his cock as his pants were undone, and then Marcus tugged them down his hips.

"This. I." He shook a little, trying to catch his breath.

Marcus' hand slid over his naked ass, so hot. "Less talk." Then Marcus smacked him. Hard.

He cried out, jerking, legs kicking violently.

"Count them." Another hit landed on his ass.

"What?" He groaned, teeth sinking into his bottom lip.

"Count. You know, one, two, three." On three Marcus' hand came down again.



"Three." This was fucking ridiculous.

"Mmm..." Marcus rubbed his stinging butt cheeks. "Good baby." Then another hit landed.

"F...four. This is embarrassing. Counting." Embarrassing and so hot.

"Uh-huh. Keep doing it." Another hit, harder, hotter.

"Five. Why?" Why did Marcus do this? Why did he need it? Why was it so hot?

"It's about focus."

The next smack burned against his upper thighs. He groaned, whispering out the 'six'. He didn't understand.

"It's about giving you what you need. Louder." Another smack landed, this one the hardest yet.

"Ow!" He jerked, pulling away, ass burning.

"I didn't hear you." Another hit landed in exactly the same spot.

"S...seven. Stop. Stop. It burns." His cock was *so* hard.

"You missed one. This is nine." Another hit landed, his whole body jerking, his cock rubbing against Marcus' jeans.

"Nine. Stop." He reached back, trying to protect his ass.

"We're going to twelve." Marcus smacked him again.

"No." He tried to grab Marcus' hands, crying out when Marcus grabbed his wrists.

Hot. So fucking hot.

"That's not a number. If you don't count them, they don't count." Then came the next spanking.

It was better, with Marcus holding his arms, and his cock was hard, leaking. "Ten."

Was it ten?

"Good boy." It must have been ten. Making this next one eleven.

He fought the word, pushing it out of his throat. He wanted off. Now.

"Last one." Marcus hit him hardest this time; he could feel the outline of each finger against his ass.

"Twelve!" He screamed, jerking, tears building in his eyes.

"Good, baby. So good." Marcus' hand rubbed at his ass, making his nerves scream.

"Fuck. Fuck, stop. I." He arched, feet kicking.

Marcus squeezed his ass and then gathered him up and held him close, his ass burning, exposed to the air. He couldn't think, couldn't catch his breath.

"Look at this." Marcus' hand found his erection and wrapped around it, stroking him.

Jim groaned, kept his eyes squeezed closed.

"Should I stop?" Marcus slowed his hand.

"No. No, don't stop." God, no. He wanted to come. Now.

"I won't."

And Marcus didn't. What he did do, though, was put a band of leather around the base of Jim's cock, pulling it tight before snapping it closed.

"Fuck! Where in the *hell* did you get that?"

"Had it in my pocket." Marcus' fingers slid across the head of his prick gathering the liquid leaking there and spreading it around.

"You're fucking diabolical."

"And you love it." It wasn't even a question -- Marcus *knew*. He moaned, pushed up into the touches, bucking up, fighting to come. "You get to come when we get home."

"I..." *When we get home*. The words made him whimper.

"Uh-huh. So you'd better get your things together."  
Marcus swatted his ass lightly.

He groaned and then those fingers brushed against his bare skin.

"This could be yours every day," murmured Marcus, nuzzling their cheeks together.

"Every day. Fuck. Don't, Marcus. Please. Don't tempt me."

"I will tempt you. I want you, Jim. You want a change. The timing is perfect. And we fit together so well."

"I want you, too. This isn't about change."

"Sure it is. It's about taking your life back from that little bitch and her sorority friends."

Jim thought about that for a minute, then stood, pulled his jeans up. That didn't work for him. He was an asshole. A bastard with a temper and a fucked up life and a lot of books. But he wasn't one to take advantage.

"Do you want another cup of coffee, Marcus?"

"No, I want you to come home with me."

"I can't. I can't do that right now. It wouldn't be fair to you." Or to him.

"What are you talking about?" Marcus growled and glowered.

"Well, if this is just me trying to get over something, then I can't... I don't want to take advantage. It's wrong, you know?"

"It's not just you getting over something, Jim. That's just a side benefit. You're coming because I want you and you want me."

"But you just said that you didn't think that."

"What are you talking about? I said it was about change, but that doesn't mean it isn't also about us wanting each other. I *know* I said I wanted you."

"Yes, but I don't want this to be about me needing to get over that woman and her shit. I want this to be just you and me, if there's a you and me." He headed over, poured himself a cup of coffee.

"It *is* about that, Jim. Most things don't happen in a vacuum, though." Marcus sighed and patted his lap.

"I'm sorry." He gulped half the cup, letting it burn all the way down, ashamed of himself.

"Come sit."

He found himself moving, heading to his chair, to Marcus. His ass was still burning, but Marcus helped him find a way to sit that didn't aggravate it too much.

"Look, the truth is I want you. I want to wake up with you every morning and spank that sweet ass. I want to

break for lunch and have it with you. I want to take you out to supper and show you off."

"I just. I want to be. I want. I." He was beginning to jitter.

"Shh. Tell me what you want."

"I want to be normal. I want to have a partner and a friend and I want out of here."

"Then let's go, baby."

"I can't just go, can I?"

"Why not? You said your lease was up." Marcus just kept knocking away all of his objections.

"Because... I don't know why not. I want to."

"I can't think of a reason why not, either. So let's do it. Let's go."

"I. You'll let me bring my coffeemaker? My books?"

Marcus nodded. "It's a big house, Jim. I have the room."

"Okay. I'm not easy to live with. I work a lot."

"I think I know how to get noticed." Marcus gave him a wink and pinched his butt.

"Maybe." He dared to smile back, hand sliding over Marcus' head.

"Mmm..." Marcus' eyes closed and he nuzzled into the touch, making a sound an awful lot like a cat purring.

Maybe this could work. For a few days. Long enough to get his bearings.

Maybe.

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Marcus mentally kicked himself the entire drive home.

He hadn't been honest with Jim.

Instead of just laying it out there that he wanted Jim, that he was halfway in love and trusting his gut which said Jim was his, he tried to spin the offer to move in with him to what he thought would convince Jim.

Sure, moving in with him would be a change, would be easier financially because shit, he wasn't going to charge the man twelve hundred dollars like Jim was paying for that tiny little apartment, but none of that really had anything to do with why he wanted Jim.

At least Jim had agreed to come for a few days. He had a couple changes of clothes, his laptop and a boxful of books.

It was a start.

And Marcus wouldn't pussyfoot around about the whys and wherefores anymore, either. Jim had trusted him with a lot in the few days they'd known each other. It was time

to prove that went both ways. He pulled up at his place and gave Jim, who was sitting a little gingerly, a smile. "Here we are. Home sweet home. I'll help you get your stuff inside."

"Okay." Jim nodded, grabbing the laptop case, briefcase and a box of books. Marcus watched a minute. Jim was strong, muscles straining under the pale skin. They could work out together at the gym next to the Hammer.

He shook his head and grabbed the little suitcase that had Jim's change of clothes and the bag of extra books that Jim had wanted, but that hadn't fit in the box.

"We can just stick these in the living room next to my bookshelves for now." They'd have to go bookcase shopping when Jim agreed to move in. And clothes shopping sooner than later -- the man didn't own a single pair of jeans. Crazy.

Jim's body was made for that casual strength. For decoration and admiration. For something visceral and physical to balance out that quick, sharp mind.

"You want to do something about that," he nodded to where Jim's bound prick strained against his pants, "before we set you up and both get to work?"

To his surprise -- or maybe not -- Jim shook his head. "No. No, it feels good, wanting."

"Then I'll show you where you can set up for work." He nodded, smiled, and swatted Jim's ass.



Jim rumbled softly, cheeks heating.

He chuckled and led Jim to his tiny office. He had a desk with a computer on it, but there was enough room for Jim's laptop. His file cabinet held all his orders, and a nearly empty bookcase was next to it. This was just for his records and his billing. His workspace was in the room where he kept his leather goods. "Feel free to use the bookcase."

When Jim agreed to stay they could get him new furniture -- set the room up the way Jim wanted.

"Thank you." Jim surprised him with a soft kiss on the cheek, a hug.

"You're welcome. There's snacks in the kitchen and we can make supper together. Say around five?" Eventually supper would be Jim's job, part of his service, but he had to teach the man how to cook, first.

"That sounds good." Jim nodded and started digging out cords and books.

"I'm just down the hall -- shout if you need anything."

Jim waved, smiled, but didn't really pay attention, focused on a sheaf of papers. Well at least he wasn't going to have to worry about Jim being too distracted by him to work.

Contemplating whether or not that was a plus, he slowly made his way to his workroom and started buffing a custom vest he was doing for Oliver. He worked on the

detail on the Oliver vest for most of the afternoon, cutting lengths of leather for floggers whenever he needed a break.

It was almost five when he was done for the day, and he put everything away, cleaning up his workspace and sweeping the floor. Then he went looking for Jim. He hadn't heard a peep from the man all afternoon, so he started with the office.

Jim was on the floor, typing furiously, a dozen books open at different places around him. Marcus knocked gently on the doorjamb, not wanting to startle the man. "Jim?"

"Hmm?" Jim didn't look up, fingers still moving. "You okay?"

"I'm fine. It's almost five." He wondered if Jim would be happier with one of those weird chairs from IKEA than a new desk.

"Yeah? Doesn't seem like it. The day flew." Jesus, look at Jim type.

"You've been busy. Are you going to stop for the day?"

"I probably shouldn't, but I need to hit the bathroom, I guess."

Yeah, there was an empty mug, goodness knew how much coffee Jim had made through the day.

"I imagine you might want to do something about that erection now, too," he suggested. They could play before they cooked. Or they could get stuff cooking and they play while they waited. He was not going to let Jim work eighteen hour days.

"Oh, it's faded away." Jim smiled at him. "Articles about neo-Marxism in literature aren't sexy."

"No, I imagine not. We'll have to see what we can do to bring it back. I'm sure I can think of something." He held his hand out to Jim to help the man up.

The creaking and cracking as Jim stood made him chuckle, the long line of body he saw as Jim stretched made him moan.

"You smell good, Marcus. How was your work?"

"It went well. I've nearly finished a commissioned piece for some friends. I'll have to introduce you when they come to pick it up. You might want to speak to Jack about the lifestyle, about being a sub."

"I'm not sure I am one. I read about it a little online. I'm not sure it suits me."

Marcus just smiled and smacked Jim's bottom. So cute.

"Ow." The complaint was token, Jim's ass pressed back into his touch. "Let me hit the head and I'll come make another pot of coffee and help with food."

"No more coffee, but yes, I'd like your help making supper." Marcus rubbed Jim's ass and then gave the man another swat to get him on his way.

He headed for the kitchen and started pulling stuff out of the fridge.

Jim must have gone through five pots of coffee during the day -- the canister was half empty and it had been full. There was an apple missing, too. He shook his head. He was going to have to lay down the rules soon. One pot of coffee a day was more than enough for one man. Eventually, it would be none.

Jim came back in, face washed, all tucked and put together. "What can I do?"

"We're going to have a stir fry -- it's very easy, just a bit of prep time. You can slice the veggies."

He got out a pot and filled it with water for the rice noodles, setting it on the back burner.

"Okay." Jim washed his hands, rinsed out the coffee maker, whistling away.

"Would you like some music on?"

"Sure. What do you like?"

"Classic rock and classical if I'm in the mood. What about you?" He flicked on the radio. It was tuned to a classic rock station, but he was willing to compromise.

"I like everything, pretty much. I'm not picky." Another pot of coffee went on, and then Jim grabbed a knife. "Cut the peppers into squares or strips?"

"Strips. And no more coffee." He turned it off. "There, it's all ready for you tomorrow."

"I... it's only five, Marcus."

"Yes, and we don't need coffee for what I have planned for after supper."

"Sleeping?" Jim started slicing the peppers, the pieces mismatched and uneven.

"No, although it does involve a bed." He started slicing the chicken breast into long, thin strips, telling himself Jim would get better with practice.

Jim watched him for a minute or two, and then tried again, these cuts much more even, stable. Right. Jim was a student at heart.

"That's great. I'm going to guess that you've never stir-fried before?"

"No. I don't cook." But Jim had asked for Oriental food on their first dinner together.

"Stir-frying is a great dish to begin with. It's easy." He pointed to the cupboard by the refrigerator. "There's spices in there. There's one labeled Thai peanut sauce and another labeled Chinese five spice. Pick one."

"I love peanut sauce." Jim headed to the cabinet, searching around, unscrewing and smelling. Curious boy. He was going to be an excellent cook with that curiosity and willingness to learn.

"So do I."

The peanut sauce was handed over, and then the spices reorganized. "What now?"

"Turn on the pot of water; it needs to boil. And then a couple tablespoons of oil goes into the wok and we fry up the chicken first."

Jim did that and cut up mushrooms and baby corn, water chestnuts and green onions. They talked together -- he discovered that Jim knew a little bit about almost everything, sometimes just enough to be real trouble. In no time at all they had a stir-fry sitting in front of them, glasses of water to go with their dinner.

"It smells good. We work well together."

"It does." Jim was vibrating a little bit -- not from nervousness, Marcus didn't think, but from caffeine and stress and possibly excitement.

He'd love it all out of the man after supper. He was looking forward to it. "So work's going well?"

"It is. I can't believe I missed two nights in a row, I have this very balanced schedule, you know? Today was supposed to be a coffee and muffin day."

"You're going to have to readjust your schedule, baby. To include me."

Jim's eyes met his, that green bright and sharp. "I'll try. I'm very much a creature of habit. My ex hated it."

"I'm not asking you to stop having habits. Just make new ones." He chuckled. A schedule worked very well in his world. "We'll make it work, baby."

"You sound very sure." Jim twirled the noodles around his fork, eating happily.

"Yes. I'm a very sure type of person."

"I'm not. I mean, I am about some things and when I'm angry, I'm *very* sure, but normally, I worry."

"I'd like to take that worry from you. Give you other stuff to focus on."

"It doesn't work that way, does it? I mean, if life was that easy..." Jim crunched a water chestnut, humming happily. "Oh, I love those."

"Making it that easy is something to work toward. I love watching you eat."

That earned him a blush. "Me? Why?"

"Because you enjoy it. You make it an experience. Many people don't."

"It's good." Jim sighed, scooted a little closer. "So tell me. Why does the whole bondage thing work for you?"

"Oh, that's simple and complicated at the same time." He reached out and stroked Jim's arm. "I like giving people what they need. I like spanking you -- it turns me on. Everything from the sound, to the way my hand gets sore, to the way your ass heats."

"So is this a... you and me thing or something that you want with anybody?" Jim looked at him. "I'm not playing the crazy possessive card or anything, I just need to know."

"I have done scenes for people in the past. But those were just... business. This with you... It's just a you and me thing, Jim and I *am* playing the crazy possessive card and I think it would be sexy if you did, too." There. If it was going to scare Jim off, now would be the time.

"I just... I don't want. I don't want what we've done to be with anyone else. I don't think it's the experience. I think it's you."

He reached for Jim's hand. "I feel the same way, baby."

Jim held on for a second. "This is a little weird, huh? Having supper together like this."

"Weird? How?" He thought it was rather nice.

"Well, it's the first time I've really sat at a table in a house for supper since I lost everything. And we cooked. And my ass is still warm."



He leaned in and whispered, "Get used to it. Especially that last one."

"I... I don't... I don't know."

He could smell Jim's arousal. "I do." He bit at Jim's earlobe.

"Marcus!" Jim turned, faced him.

"Yes?" He smiled, looking into those pretty eyes.

"I. How's your tattoo?"

"See for yourself." Smiling, he leaned back enough to strip off his shirt.

Jim leaned forward, looked closely. "It doesn't look infected. How does it feel?"

"The skin's a little tight. Probably needs to be creamed again. How's yours?"

"Tender, but okay." Jim ate another bite of noodles.

"Good." He had a few more bites of his own. "How's your ass?"

"What?"

"How's your ass feeling? You know, the one I spanked thoroughly."

"I... I don't know how to answer that. We shouldn't talk about it, should we?"

"Does it make you uncomfortable to talk about it?" he asked.

"Yes." Those cheeks were red, pulse quickening, but Marcus would bet Jim was hard.

"You realize that means I'm going to want to talk about it all the time."

"Why?" Jim's question made him smile.

"Because it's partly about pushing boundaries, discovering things about yourself."

Jim was going to turn purple when they started talking about the rules.

"What about you?" Jim shifted, eyes on his noodles.

"I'm discovering things about myself, too. But I like talking about it." In a large part because it did push Jim.

"What could you possibly learn about yourself from me?"

"So far I've learned that my instincts are good and I should trust them."

He did love that blush. "Should we save the other half for tomorrow?"

Marcus frowned. "The other half of what?"

"The food." He looked. Jim had eaten exactly half.

"No. No, I want you to finish it." It wasn't like they'd made more than two healthy portions.

"I can't. I ate half." Jim said it like he should understand.

"That's... aren't you still hungry?" Of course they could have dessert. He hoped.

"Yes, but."

"But what? If you're still hungry, eat." It wasn't rocket science.

"I can't. I don't need anymore."

"We have more than enough food for you to eat a full portion, Jim."

"I know." Jim looked confused, a little worried. "It doesn't matter, huh? Just drop it."

"Well, we can. I'm curious, though."

"Why?"

"Because it's unusual, baby."

"Yeah. It's a routine thing. I like my routine."

"Maybe it's one of the ones that we'll change, hmm?" He rubbed Jim's leg with his foot beneath the table.

"Do you have a list?" Jim hummed, moved closer.

"I do have one forming. There are a number of things we should talk about. Starting with a safeword."

"A what? I love words."

"Safeword. A word that you can say and I'll stop whatever it is I'm doing."

Jim tilted his head. "I don't... I've asked you to stop before."

"Yes, but you didn't mean it. You were hard and enjoying it. Having a safeword means you can scream and shout and yell stop as much as you like, as much as you want to, and I'll know that it's okay to keep going because you haven't been pushed past your limits."

He knew it was a hard concept to grasp, the difference between saying stop and using a safeword, the concept of yelling stop being part of the turn on. "And if I do overstep, it'll let me know."

"That... That seems like a weird distinction. I wanted you to stop."

"Not deep down you didn't," he insisted.

"How do you know? How am I supposed to know?" It suited him, the honest way Jim was asking questions.

He thought back to his time as sub, as he learned what the lifestyle was, what it meant. "You'll know. You'll yell stop and no and when it truly is more than you can take, you'll remember your safeword."

"I don't know if I understand, Marcus. I'm sorry."

"Will you pick a word anyway? Something you're not likely to use by accident." It was entirely possible Jim would simply have to learn by doing.

"Okay." Jim closed his eyes, thought hard. "How about Perseus?"

"That sounds perfect." He nodded at Jim's plate. "If you're finished with that, let's have dessert."

"Dessert?" Jim nodded, stood and gathered the plates. "Do you have plastic wrap?"

"Yeah, it's in the bottom drawer."

He went to the fridge and found the leftover cheesecake he'd known was in there.

"Thanks." Jim carefully wrapped up his half-eaten supper. Then the man started cleaning up, that happy whistling starting again.

Guessing that Jim would only eat half the cheesecake, he cut the man a huge piece before taking his own and setting them on the table.

"You want some caramel sauce warmed up and added?"

"No thank you."

Jim smiled at him, nodded. "I like tart and sweet together."

"Yeah? What else do you like?" They would need to go grocery shopping soon.

"Food wise? Oh, muffins. Grapes. Coffee. Ice cream. Oh, noodles. Tomato soup."

"Steak, chicken, seafood, vegetables, bread?" Muffins, grapes and coffee... The man needed a balanced diet.

"When I can get them, sure, but I eat half a muffin for breakfast. Grapes for lunch. Something for supper." Jim washed the dishes easily, quickly, looking peaceful at the work.

"How are you not hungry all the time?"

"Coffee."

He rolled his eyes. "You drink far too much coffee."

Jim's laugh made him grin. "You have a lot of opinions."

"I do. You'll have to get used to it." Because he wasn't going to stop.

"I do, too, sort of." The dishes were done, the cabinets cleaned. "Dessert time?"

He nodded and pointed to the plates on the table. "We need to buy whipped cream spray cans so we can eat dessert off each other."

Jim nodded, headed for the table. "It smells *good*."

He smiled, already anticipating watching his sensual man eat the sweet.

Jim dug in, eating four bites before coming up for air, the moan sexual, sensual. "Oh, man. We need coffee."

"No, no, I was thinking more that we need a bed." He licked his lips and managed to remember to have a bite of his own. It was good, but nothing could beat how Jim looked and sounded eating it.

Jim moaned, licking his fork clean, savoring each bite. Oh, God. Marcus' prick began to fill. That mouth was... Oh. Oh, he hadn't had it all day. He pushed away from the table, legs spreading. "Jim..."

"Hmm?" Jim licked his lips clean, pretty, green eyes on him. Then they traveled down his belly to his crotch. Yes.

He spread his legs wider. "You haven't had a taste of me yet today."

"I haven't..." Jim moved, eyes focused, lips already open.

That eagerness was almost as good as the blowjob that was coming. Almost. He popped the top button of his jeans, but left the zipper for Jim.

Jim's fingers eased the zipper down, tongue nudging the tip of his cock. "You don't have underwear on. So naughty."

He grinned. "For you." His legs spread wider.

"For me?" Jim slowly teased his prick, lips tugging the head.

Groaning, he nodded, hand moving to slid through Jim's hair. "For only you."

Jim stilled, and then a deep, hungry moan vibrated through his cock, that mouth taking him in. He managed not to thrust deeper, letting Jim take the lead.

"Good."

Jim enjoyed sucking, enjoyed having a cock in his mouth -- Marcus could tell. Some subs sucked cock to get something, some because they had to. Some because they loved it. He was lucky Jim fell into that later category. Jim sucked a little harder and he groaned again. Very lucky.

That mouth worked him, up and down, up and down. Then Jim started working him like a popsicle, pulling hard with each upstroke. Fuck, the man was a quick learner.

He saw Jim's hand move, rubbing himself through the khaki pants.



"No," he growled, leaning to tap at Jim's arm. "That's mine."

Jim groaned, eyes flashing up to his.

"No touching. I'll take care of you later, baby."

He could see the argument building, but then his cock throbbed and caught Jim's attention, that sweet suction starting again. Moaning, he let Jim hear his pleasure, hear how good it was for him. The motion dragged, up and down his prick, Jim swallowing around the tip.

"Fuck. Soon." It wasn't going to take much more of the eager pulling.

Jim groaned, the sound vibrating through his cock, down to his balls.

"Yes!" His hands landed on Jim's head, his hips snapping as he came, shooting down Jim's throat.

Jim moaned and sucked, pulling at him, drinking him down. He shuddered, his cock pulsing a time or two more from Jim's ministrations, and then he sat back, petting Jim's head. Jim's cheek was wet, hot against his thigh.

"Baby? You okay?"

"Mmm. Yeah." His thigh was kissed, Jim nodding.

"Mmm... it's your turn now. I can't decide whether or not I want to make you come without touching your cock." He could see how Jim took to the flogger, or just

manipulate that sore ass, Jim's cock caught between his legs, until his baby came.

Jim groaned, hand sliding down to cup those bound balls.

"No touching, baby. I told you those were mine." He hauled Jim up onto his lap, touching Jim through his pants.

"I... I thought you meant not to jack off while I was... mmm..."

"New rule. No touching yourself without my permission." It was time to start making rules, start them down the path that would bring them both the most pleasure, both in the bedroom and out of it.

"That's impossible, Marcus. I have to wash myself, function, scratch." Jim nuzzled in, lips on his throat.

Oh, Jim was going to keep him on his toes. The challenge gave him a little thrill. "You're right. Let me amend that. No touching yourself sexually without my permission. And I don't just mean your cock, I'm talking about all of you."

"For how long? Who's defining sexual?" The questions weren't asked defiantly, but more like Jim needed to understand.

"Until I change the rules, and surely any touch that's meant to arouse you or to satisfy urges is sexual?"

Jim tilted his head. "What about sleeping? I mean, I don't *mean* to do it, then."

"I won't count sleeping, though if it happens a lot I'll have to cuff your arms to the top of the bed, or make you wear mittens or something."

Oh, look at that flush. Jim was focused, staring right at him. "Okay. I can try. What... what happens if I break the rules? If I don't?"

"You get punished if you break the rules, you get rewarded if you don't." Of course there would be a fine line between punishment and reward...

"What does that mean?"

"It means if you touch yourself sexually I'll punish you. Most likely get you up and put you in the cock-ring, not let you come. Reward could be coming, spanking, sucking me..."

"You have an odd universe, spanking as a reward." Jim's hands started sliding over his body, touching him.

He chuckled. "That's because you like it so much. It can't be a punishment." He touched Jim back, enjoying the sensuality of the man.

"Shh." Jim pressed closer, fingers dipping into his navel.

"It's true, baby." Marcus reached down and squeezed Jim's ass through his pants.

Jim's asscheeks clenched, a soft cry pushing against his neck.

"Mmm... yeah, we like that, don't we?" It made his own cock twitch every time Jim reacted to the spanking.

"I. I want you." He could tell; Jim's cock was full, hot as a brand on his belly.

"Let's go upstairs and make love." His cock was rapidly coming back to life, Jim arousing him just by being himself.

"Okay." His arms were empty while Jim put the remaining cheesecake away, then one hand slipped into his. They headed up the stairs hand in hand, Jim's leather bound cock hard, his own getting that way, the whole evening in front of them to explore each other. He could get used to this. Hell, he might already be addicted to it.

They drew the sheets down together and then he pulled Jim close, opening the button and pulling down the zipper on the man's pants. "We need to go shopping tomorrow. You need jeans and sweats. Then you could go commando as well."

"I don't wear jeans."

Yeah, but Jim *should*. "Your skin can't breathe in those dress pants." He pushed the dress pants in question down, fingers sliding along Jim's skin.

"Is that important?"

His fingers caught on the little red hairs on Jim's thighs. The man's pubes were growing back in, just a little

"It is. Breathing is good for your skin. Besides, I want you to be able to go without underwear. You'd look fantastic in leather, as well." He could just see Jim in tight, leather pants, hard cock outlined, back covered in tattoos, nipples pierced... Oh, he could get that pretty cock pierced, plug that tight ass. Teach Jim to fly...

Moaning, he pressed his mouth to Jim's, kissing his baby hard. Jim gasped, jerked in his hands, the kiss going wild, deep. He worked off his own pants with one hand, the other sliding on Jim's back, teasing toward, but not touching that hot ass. Jim rocked, pushed against him, driving that hard cock against him.

"Bed," he growled, pushing Jim.

"Uh-huh." Jim stepped back, falling onto the mattress, cock and balls framed obscenely by the leather.

"You're stunning, baby." Fucking beautiful. Jim spread a little, cock dripping on that flat belly. Groaning, he climbed onto the bed, gaze ranging from Jim's cock to Jim's face and back again. His baby blushed dark, head ducking, hands dropping to cover that swollen cock.

He tsked and slapped Jim's hands away. "I was *looking* at that. Admiring the pale skin against the black leather. Admiring the dark red tip, the way it's leaking."

"Marcus! I don't... people shouldn't look at me!"

"I am not people."

"You are people. A person."

He laughed, fingers reaching, sliding over the silky, swollen flesh. "But I *should* look at you."

"I. Oh." Jim arched for him, bucked up underneath his touch.

"See? Good things happen when I look at you." Leaning up, he licked at Jim's right nipple, his fingers still idly tracing the hot flesh of Jim's cock.

That little bit of flesh drew up tight, wrinkling and responding to him. He hummed, biting at it, giving it a nice little sting that he soothed with the flat of his tongue. Jim groaned, fingers digging into his scalp, rubbing. He licked his way over to the other nipple, gnawing on it.

"Marcus. Stings." Uh-huh. And look at that pretty nipple tighten up, pout, reach for his mouth.

He bit again, harder this time, his finger pushing into Jim's slit at the same time. Jim stopped, caught in between the sensations. He did it again, watching Jim's face.

"I. Marcus." Jim looked stunned, amazed. Lost.

"Right here, baby. Right here." He bit and pinched and pushed into Jim's slit, playing with the head of Jim's cock.

He grabbed hold of Jim's nipple, tugging. Jim's hands held on tight, the motions of the lean body getting desperate. Without warning, he undid the cock ring, twisting Jim's nipple hard as he did so.

Heat shot up over Jim's belly, the orgasm immediate, sharp.

"Mmm... yes." He rubbed Jim's come into his belly, as he covered Jim's lips in a soft kiss.

Jim opened up, hands sliding down his back. He let Jim take his weight, his cock pressed between them. Jim moaned, licking at his lips, eyes heavy-lidded.

He shifted, his cock nudging at Jim's balls and then slipping down to slide between his thighs. "Legs closed tight, baby."

"Mmmhmm." Jim nodded, squeezing his prick tight.

"Yeah, like that." He took another kiss, humping hard.

Jim's hand was on his hand, encouraging him to move, encouraging him to hump, up and down. He moved faster, his balls pulling up against his body. His lover was right with him, watching, focused. He looked into Jim's eyes and came, the pleasure flowing through his veins and spilling out his cock.

"So fine." Jim whispered the words against his lips.

"Mmm..." He opened Jim's lips, his tongue sliding between them. The flavor of Jim -- spicy and male and

needy -- was addictive. "I'm keeping you." The words popped out of his mouth before he could think about them.

"Are you?" That wasn't a no.

He nodded. "I am, Jim." Whether not he'd meant to say it now, it was the truth and he wouldn't deny it.

"Is that a good thing? Keeping me?"

"Uh-huh. The best."

Jim smiled, shook his head. "I don't know if you understand what you're getting into."

"You. I'm getting into you."

Those bright green eyes twinkled. "Onto me, is more like it."

"Maybe both." He kissed Jim hard and curled up next to his baby, pulling the covers up.

"Maybe."

"Better have a rest, baby. I'm going to wake you up and have my wicked way with you in awhile."

"Okay. I can have a nap. If I'm not here, I'll be in the office, working."



He rolled his eyes, but let it go. Marcus would figure out what Jim needed to keep him in bed, wear him out. He didn't need to get it all figured out today.

His hands slid over to hold Jim's hip. His.

## *Chapter Nine*

Jim made a pot of coffee, laptop on the counter as he waited. He checked his email, checked his Bloglines. Updated two of his pro blogs and started researching for an article on Chinese embroidery.

He drank the first pot standing in the kitchen and then poured his first cup from pot two and took it to the office before dawn. He worked on his book for an hour, letting himself sink into the fantasy world he'd been creating for years -- the warriors and demons and monsters.

The knock on the office door sounded like a shot.

Jim jumped, tipping his empty cup over. "Oh! Hey! Morning." Damn, that had startled him. His heart was going ninety to nothing.

"Sorry, didn't mean to startle you that badly." Marcus stared down at him on the floor. "So you don't like the desk?"

"I do. I move. My ass gets... Well, tired." Sore. Tender.

"Well, I'm not going to stop spanking you. How about I buy you a cushion?" Marcus looked like he was serious.

"I..." His mouth opened and closed, over and over.

"Coffee?"

"No changing the subject." Marcus held a hand out to him.

He took the hand, let himself be dragged up. "Good morning."

"Mmm... good morning." Marcus' mouth met his, the man chuckling after their kiss. "You taste like coffee. A lot."

"Mmmhmm." He pushed closer, rubbing a little.

"You're feeling good this morning." Marcus hit his ass.

"I've been..." He jerked, gasped. "B...busy."

"Why am I getting the feeling I'm going to have to tie you to my bed to keep you there?" Marcus' laughed, dragging him along to the living room.

"I can't just stay in bed." His ass got another hard swat. "Ow!"

"New rule. You'll get a swat every time you say the word 'can't'." Marcus sat in the big chair, tugging him down onto the big lap.

"I'll never be able to remember that."

"Oh, I think you will. Eventually." Marcus grinned and took another kiss.

He hummed, settling. "How many rules are there going to be?" Not that he was ready for them right now.

"As many as we need."

"What does that mean?"

"It means we'll make them up as we go and who knows how many there will be. Two? Ten? A hundred? I don't know."

He thought about that, really thought. "I'm not sure it's fair to change the rules in the middle of the game. I mean, there ought to be rules about making rules."

"Like punishing you for doing something you haven't been told you aren't allowed to do yet." Marcus looked at him and nodded. "I can agree with that."

"Okay." Wait. Wait, did he just agree to this? Had he lost his mind?

"New Rule. We start every morning with kisses and a spanking."

"I like kisses."

"You like spankings, too."

It was a kiss that Marcus gave him now, though, mouth on his, tongue slipping and sliding. He groaned, arms

wrapping around Marcus' shoulder as he rubbed against that hard, bare belly.

"I love how sensual you are, Jim. I love that this sex kitten was hiding in you, waiting for me to find you."

"A sex kitten? Me?" That was laughable. Literally. Definitely.

"Yes, you. You're a hedonist. So sensual." Diving in for another kiss, Marcus didn't give him a chance to deny it.

That worked for him, those kisses made his head swim, made him gasp and let the rest of the world go.

"Do you want to come now, or while I'm spanking you?" Marcus asked him, hand sliding down to grope him through his borrowed sweats.

"Mmm. Feels good, but..." He shook his head, cheeks flaming. The spanking would feel better if he was hard, if he came.

"Yes, I know. I wanted to make sure you did, too." Marcus' fingers pulled at his sweats, began to work them off his ass.

"I don't know if this is a good idea." His cock ached, balls drawing up tight.

"Yes, you do." Marcus helped him stand, stripped the sweats the rest of the way off. A warm hand wrapped around his hard cock, pumped it a couple of times. "You know it's a very good idea."

"I don't understand this." Marcus eased him over those muscled thighs, and Jim's heart started fluttering.

"You don't need to, to know you like it. To know you need it." Marcus rubbed his ass, still tender from yesterday. "Ten today, not hard, just to freshen things up. You count them and you can come on ten."

"I... Is it just that easy?"

"If you want it to be." Then Marcus' hand lifted away from his ass and he could almost hear it as it came down toward him. Smack. Right across the middle.

"Oh!" He jerked, his breath lost for a second. "One. That's one."

"Mmmhmm." The next hit came, this one to the tops of his thighs, which weren't very sore. Yet.

The sting was sweet, hot, and he caught his breath again. "Two."

"Yes. That was a good one." Marcus' hand came down again in the same spot.

He managed to get out the "three", his hips starting to rock, looking for that friction on his cock. Marcus knew, legs closing, the soft sweats almost but not quite harsh against his skin. The next smack was in the middle of his right ass cheek and it was hard, really hard.

"Ow! Marcus!" Fuck. Fuck, that stung.

"Remember, if you don't number them, it doesn't count."

"No. No, that was four." He reached back, rubbed his ass.  
"Enough."

"We're doing ten, remember?" Marcus' hand came down on his left ass cheek, just as hard as it had the right.

"Five. I can't do this. I need." He couldn't *think*.

"There will be an extra one for saying 'can't'." Another hit landed.

"NO! I can't think. Marcus. I need you." He needed it to stop, just for a second, just a bit. Just enough to think.

"That's two more and you still haven't counted me five." Marcus' hand came down again, in the same spot.

"Please!" He jerked away, dizzy as hell. "Five. Five. Marcus! Listen to me!"

"Spanking first." And again Marcus' hand came down on the tops of his thighs.

"Six. I'm going to be sick. Too much coffee." Those blows were easier to take, not so huge.

Marcus didn't say anything, just spanked him across the ass again. He closed his eyes, focused on his breathing, on not shaking apart.

"I can't year you," Marcus said as another smack hit his ass.

"Ei...eight."

"No, that one was seven. This one is eight."

"No. It was eight." He could be stubborn.

"I said if you didn't give me the number, it didn't count. This one is eight." This hit was really hard, burning across his ass.

"No!" He screamed, the sound ringing out, filling the air.

"Just give me the count so we can move on from eight, baby." Marcus' hand landed on him again.

"Eight." The scream left him wiped out, limp.

"Mmm... good. We can go on." The next spank was almost gentle.

"Nine." He let himself relax, the next blow felt good -- warming him and making him moan. "Oh. Ten."

"And two more for the can'ts. You should count these, too." They came quickly, one after the other as he counted them and then Marcus said, "Come."

He groaned, body jerking, trying to make the heat inside him release. "Help me?"

One of Marcus' hands slid over his ass, the other rolled his balls. "Always."

He spread, toes curling as Marcus' touch eased him right over the edge, easy as pie.

"Mmm... you smell wonderful." Marcus' hands stopped moving, but still held him.

He didn't know whether to apologize or say thank you or ask to be held. Marcus had that covered, though, and after a moment of them staying as they were, both panting, Marcus tugged him up, sitting him gingerly on the big lap and cuddling him into the broad chest.

"Good." He held on tight, Marcus comforting him, soothing him.

Easing him right into a peaceful, deep sleep.

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Marcus chuckled and laid his head against the back of his chair. This was why he'd spanked Jim in this chair. So he could stay where he was comfortably should Jim fall asleep. God knew what time the man had woken up and gone to work, but he was glad Jim could sleep now. Marcus dozed off himself, warm and content.

He woke mid-morning, stomach growling, starving. Jim was still sleeping, fingers petting his belly, his hip. He stretched as best he could, arms up, legs out. His stomach growled again, prompting more petting from Jim.

He pressed a kiss to the top of Jim's head. "Time to get up, baby."



"Mmm. 'Kay. Sorry." Jim's eyes blinked open.

"Sorry for what?"

"Freaking out. Falling asleep. Possibly drooling on you."

"Nothing to apologize for, baby. Things happen." He kissed the top of Jim's head again. "We should make breakfast."

"I'll buy muffins, if you want."

"We should *make* breakfast," he repeated. He was going to turn Jim into a cook even if it took forever.

"Okay." He had to admit Jim was a willing student, though, happy enough to follow directions and try.

"We have to go grocery shopping, but we have stuff to make oatmeal, eggs of some sort, or toast with Nutella. Oh, and I think there's some fruit left as well." Marcus stood and set Jim on his feet, admiring the naked form until Jim pulled the sweats back on. They needed to do more than just grocery shopping today. Jim needed a whole new wardrobe.

"Toast is good for me. I don't like hot cereals. They stick to your throat."

"Good to know. We have peanut butter or honey that could go on the toast, too, if you'd prefer." He grabbed the pad of paper and little pen off the fridge and set them down on the table so he'd remember to make a grocery list with Jim while they ate.

"Oh, I'll have a peanut butter sandwich, then. Where's your toaster?"

"In the cupboard under the coffeemaker -- I don't like the counters getting too cluttered." He pulled down the peanut butter for Jim and the Nutella for himself, setting them out along with a pair of plates and knives so Jim could make the sandwiches once the toast popped.

Two pieces of bread went into the toaster and Jim started making a sandwich with another piece. "Is there jelly?"

"There might be some in the fridge." He sat at the table and grabbed the pen. "What kind do you like? I'll put it on the list."

"Strawberry. Blackberry. Grape. Apricot. Raspberry. You name it." Jim dug in the fridge, finding an old jar of grape.

"That makes it easy. We're going shopping this morning - - what do you want on the list?"

"Uh... shampoo and not-mint flavored toothpaste. Coffee. Milk."

He made notes. "Juice, soft drinks?"

"I like Diet Coke. Tomato juice is good. I'm not horribly picky. Do you like a lot of Nutella or a little?"

"Just a little. What about food? I know you like Asian stuff, what else?" He was looking forward to teaching Jim how to get along in the kitchen.

"I order a lot of pizza. I'm not big on fast food stuff."

"What about steak and roast and chicken? Fish, seafood. Salads?" Jim definitely needed his food horizons expanded.

Jim gave him four pieces of toast and went to eat a half-sandwich, the other half waiting as Jim poured two cups of coffee. "Sure. I mean, I don't have anything against them. In fact, a nice roast is yummy. You just can't find it anywhere."

"Yes, you *can*, if you make it yourself. I did mention I'm going to teach you to cook, didn't I?"

He put roast beef, carrots, potatoes, assorted vegetables, chicken, shrimp and sausage down on his list.

"Mmmhmm." Jim finished the half sandwich and the coffee, and then looked at the other half, almost studying it.

"What fruits and snack foods do you like?" He kept his voice casual and tried not to stare as he waited to see what Jim would do with the half sandwich.

"Grapes. Apples. Bananas. Peaches. Oranges. You name it." Marcus was noticing a marked lack of protein in Jim's diet.

Add that to the massive amounts of caffeine... He shook his head and bit his lip to keep from asking if Jim was going to eat the rest of his sandwich. Finally Jim went over, cut the half in half and ate it.

Marcus took it as a victory.

He wrote a few more things down. "We need to talk about your coffee habit."

"Okay." Jim came over to him, sat -- carefully.

"I think one pot a day should be sufficient." He knew this was going to be difficult.

"I. Only one pot? Marcus. I don't think I can..."

Jim hadn't said "I can't". Marcus beamed at him. "I think you can. You can have water and Diet Coke instead. Tea, iced tea, the odd chocolate bar, slowly whittle your caffeine consumption down."

"But I enjoy my coffee. I need it. Why does it bother you?" Jim didn't say no, either.

"It's not the coffee so much as the caffeine -- that's a mood altering substance, baby."

"Mmmhmm. You won't like me when I'm uncaffeinated." The Hulk impression made him laugh.

"I won't make you go cold turkey. Hopefully that'll keep you from becoming a monster, hmm?" He reached out and stroked Jim's hand. "That last quarter of your sandwich is languishing. We're going to have pancakes and sausages for breakfast tomorrow, so you might as well finish it today."

"Oh. I love breakfast sausage. I haven't had it in forever."  
Jim leaned over, took a kiss. "Your toast is okay?"

"My toast is great, thank you." He gave Jim another kiss.  
"So what else do you love that you haven't had in  
forever?"

"Food-wise?" Jim grabbed the rest of the sandwich,  
eating it absently. "Cajun food. Homemade mashed  
potatoes. Oh. Cornbread."

He jotted a few things down. "What do you think about  
making menus a week ahead, for suppers at least. So we  
know what to buy and what recipes to find and stuff?"

"I... Okay. I usually do the same things. I know it's odd,  
but it works for me."

"Oh, we can set up a schedule for you, but I like variety  
in my meals."

He could see a little worry in Jim's eyes. "I'm okay. I  
work, go to the bookstore. Easy-peasy."

He reached out and held onto Jim's hand. "Move in with  
me, Jim. Please. I want you to live with me."

"I. Why? Why me? We don't know if I'm going to be  
good at this."

"Jim, you're *already* good at this. And why you? Because  
I want you. Because my gut says you're the man for me."  
He wasn't going to make the same mistake twice. Just the  
truth.

Jim moved closer, eyes on him, tongue sliding on his lips. "I want you to be right."

He looked into Jim's eyes. "I am. You just need to stick around to see that I am."

"We'll have to see." Jim kissed him again. "After one more cup of coffee."

"When that pot is finished you're cut off for the rest of the day." Jim had just said he'd stay, hadn't he? In a round about way? He could see Jim's mind working, hard. He reached out and touched Jim's cheek. "What are you thinking?"

"Lots of things. Am I going to make the coffee last? Why am I not running like you have a chainsaw? Why did I let you spank me? Why didn't you stop when I asked? What next?"

"Next is we both get dressed and go shopping. Groceries and some new clothes for you."

"New clothes?"

"Jeans and sweats. I'm sorry, Jim, but I hate your pants."

"My pants?" Jim looked a little like he'd swallowed a goldfish.

"They're... they're..." He shrugged. "Your skin can't breathe in them, they're unflattering..."

"My father was a preacher. He didn't allow blue jeans."

"Your father's not here -- you can wear what you want."

"I know. I know that. It's just... I never have." Think of all the things Jim may never have done.

"I think you're going to like the change, baby."

"If I don't. I'll tell you."

"I bet you will like it, though. I mean, you like wearing my sweats, don't you?"

"I do."

"Well there you go." He smiled and nodded at Jim's empty plate. "And you ate a whole sandwich. Both halves."

"I'm sorry. I was so hungry."

"No, don't apologize! I'm glad you did. Baby, if you're hungry you eat, okay? It doesn't matter if it's mealtime or not, just eat."

"I'll get fat."

"I'd like you to come to the gym with me, so no, you won't."

Jim stared at him, cheeks heating.

"What?"

"I..." Jim was turning purple. "That's like a big turn-on, yeah? Like one of those weird-assed typical fantasies, huh? Stupid, I know, but... It's hot. It's where I met my last two boyfriends before... at the gym on campus."

"Oh..." His prick jerked. "I would be pleased to be your fantasy, Jim."

"Yeah? I promise not to drool on you too much."

"Maybe I like that." He gave Jim a wink and wriggled in his chair.

He loved that laugh, got off on it. He grabbed hold of Jim's neck and brought their mouths together, kissing Jim hard. Jim groaned, pushed close, the chair nearly upending. He dragged Jim the rest of the way into his lap, fingers digging into that abused ass.

"That's so good." His sweet little pain slut.

"You want more?" He slid his hand over and squeezed a fresh patch of ass.

"Uh-huh. I need."

Marcus grabbed Jim's ass in both hands and stood up, carrying him out to the living room.

"Marcus?"

"More comfortable in here." He lowered Jim down onto the couch, getting them both naked before he pounced.



Jim arched up against him, cock rubbing against his belly. He pressed back, his cock pushing alongside Jim's. Jim moved under him, eager and wanton, the kiss wild. He slid one hand between them, tweaking one of Jim's nipples, pinching it hard.

Jim groaned, whispering "fuck" into his lips.

"Uh-huh." He moved faster, humping madly.

Jim bit his lips, one leg wrapped around his hip. They moved together, bodies straining, working for the finish line. Jim shot a moment before he did, crying out into his mouth. His own hips snapped, his cock throbbing as pleasure poured out of him.

No one had ever gotten to him like Jim did. He let Jim take his weight, panting, nuzzling Jim's neck and breathing Jim in.

"Mmm. Morning. Again." Jim's smile tickled his neck.

He chuckled and nodded. "It's a good one -- worth doing twice."

"It has been." Jim cuddled in. "Today's a day off, huh? Work-wise?"

"I wouldn't say that -- you were up when I woke at six. How many hours have you already put in?"

"Three? Three and a half? I had three pots of coffee."

Good God. A pot an hour. Jim's stomach had to be made of cast iron. "Well there you go. Tomorrow we'll set up a schedule for our days."

"Today is shopping, hmm? We're almost out of coffee."

"It's on the list. You're switching to one pot a day, remember?"

"Yeah, yeah, yeah. I'll have to take up smoking or something..."

He pinched Jim's ass.

"Ow!"

Laughing, he did it again, just to feel Jim's prick jerk between their bodies.

Jim bit his collarbone. "Quit it, you turkey."

"I would, if you didn't like it so much."

"I never said I did."

"You keep saying that. Don't forget that I can read your body and it tells me far more than your mouth ever does." He nipped at Jim's collarbone, near where it met Jim's neck. He began to worry up a mark, intent on leaving a hickey for all to see while they were out shopping.

Jim's muscles rippled against him, fingers sliding over his mostly-healed ink. "You're marking me."

"Uh-huh. Mine." He tried not to growl the word too much.

"Mmm." Jim's chin lifted, offering him more.

Oh, fuck him, that was what he wanted, needed, Jim's eager participation. He did growl now as he moved his mouth and found a sweet spot on Jim's neck, teeth scraping before he set to sucking up another mark. This one was going to be darker, more noticeable.

"Marcus..."

Yeah. Yeah, baby. Mine. All fucking mine. He sucked a little bit longer and pulled back, looking at the mark and smiling when he realized just how dark it was. "Now everyone will see and know."

"I. It bothers me, when people look at me." Still, Jim didn't pull away, even pushed into his touch as he slid his fingers over the dark mark.

"They're going to look at you anyway, baby. This way when they do, they know you're taken. Mine." He stroked Jim's fingers, pressed them down against the mark.

Jim's lips parted, and he took the kiss, plundering Jim's mouth, leaving them both gasping.

He backed away, holding Jim's gaze as his prick made an unbelievable and valiant effort to fill again. "We need to get this done today." The sooner they set up a schedule for Jim, the better. He knew instinctively that if he took

Jim from his work too many days in a row, Jim would decide living here wasn't working out.

"Okay." Jim reached for him. "Let's get dressed."

He took Jim's hands and tugged the man up off the couch, touching for a moment before stopping himself -- Jim's skin seemed to call to his fingers.

Jim headed for the bedroom and he saw the tattoo - his ink.

His.

On his man.

He couldn't wait for there to be more.

## *Chapter Ten*

Creating the shopping list had been an adventure all of its own, so it was bound to be interesting to see how that actually translated to shopping. Marcus grabbed a cart from outside the store and passed it to Jim to push while he pulled out the list they'd created.

"When's the last time you were in a grocery store?" Given the way the man ate, he didn't figure it had been anytime in the recent past.

"I don't cook. I buy muffins and noodles." Jim looked like a fish out of water.

"You'll learn." He'd teach Jim and they'd cook together. Eventually Jim would be comfortable in the kitchen on his own.

"I don't know. I... What do you want?"

"I want to go up the aisles one by one. That way you'll learn where everything is." He pointed to the first aisle on their left when they went in.

"All we really need is the bakery and the coffee aisle."

"We just might skip both those aisles altogether. We have a list." He waved it. And though he was more than willing to add to it, there were basics on the list that they would absolutely be getting.

Like protein.

"I need coffee." They walked through the produce, Jim's eyes caught by grapes and apples.

"Why don't you pick a half dozen apples and I'll get some grapes."

"Okay. Red or green?"

"I like the red ones better, but you can get half and half if you prefer green ones."

"I don't care, as long as they're sweet." Oh, yes. Protein. Protein would be good. It was all on the list.

Some peaches and a few pears were added to the basket, too.

He approved, nodding his head and smiling at Jim.  
"Good job. We should pick up some vegetables while we're here, too."

"They're expensive and don't fill you up like the apples."

"They're good for you and round out meals. Are there any that you like?"

"Vegetables? I like snow peas."

Oh, yes, Asian flavors. "We can get some of those. And some bean sprouts. I like asparagus, broccoli and Brussels sprouts -- the green ones."

"I won't eat Brussels sprouts." Well, that was definite.

"Why not?"

"They're nasty." Jim's nose wrinkled, drew up.

He tried not to chuckle at the cute look of disgust. "Have you ever had them fried in butter and brown sugar?"

"Sugar? Brussels sprouts? No..."

Marcus did chuckle then. "All right, we'll pass on the Brussels sprouts. This time around. We can get salad fixings, though."

"I like salad. Mushrooms. Carrots." Jim moved from case to case, looking here and there, unfocused, wandering.

"Okay. I want you to get two different kinds of lettuce, mushrooms, carrots, and cucumbers. I'll get the rest of the things we need from this section." He could give out specific tasks if that's what Jim needed.

"Which different kinds of lettuce? Is spinach lettuce?"

"Yes, spinach is a lettuce. And you can buy three different kinds of lettuce, which we'll mix together. You choose them."

Spinach and iceberg and romaine were dumped into the cart. Plop. Plop. Plop. He added asparagus and broccoli.

At the top of the produce aisle was the freshly baked bread and he stopped for a moment to breathe it in.

"Mmm... can you smell that?"

"God yes. I could just live in a bakery."

"Yeah, I know you like baked goods. Why don't you pick something out for dessert tonight? I'm going to get some bread."

"We need muffins." Jim wandered off again, humming, looking at the cakes and pies and cookies.

He frowned. "No, baby. No muffins. We'll find some other baked goods you like." Something that didn't have a history of things being half eaten.

"No muffins?" Jim actually looked shocked. Deeply, honestly horrified.

Marcus reached out and touched Jim's arm, squeezed gently. "It'll be okay, baby. Trust me."

"I eat half a muffin for breakfast with my coffee." Jim shrugged. "It's a thing. A schedule. Coping, you know?"

"I know. We're giving you a more healthy diet now, though, okay?"

"There's nothing unhealthy about muffins." Jim headed back toward the desserts, rumbling quietly.

No, but Jim's dependency on them, on the half eaten baked goods, was.

Marcus picked up a loaf of walnut bread and another of pumpernickel and waited to see what Jim had decided on. Cupcakes. Cupcakes and a package of four cream horns. Well at least the cream horns didn't look like muffins.

"Okay, protein aisle is next. Steaks, chicken and beef for stir fries."

Jim followed him, avoiding the other shoppers, getting distracted in the magazine aisle and the cereal aisle.

"No Lucky Charms or Froot Loops for you. We'll stick to oats and Cheerios. Wheaties."

Jim stopped. Stared at him. "How did you know about the Froot Loops?"



"I told you I know you, baby." It had been a guess. A good one -- all that sugar would make a great quick energy high.

"I like Froot Loops." How come he wasn't surprised that Jim liked the high sugar Fruit Loops even though he claimed not to like cereal?

"Too much sugar, baby. We can have them as a treat now and then." He pulled the Wheaties down off the shelf and tossed them into the basket.

"This is very weird." Jim grabbed some Pop Tarts and a box of cereal bars.

"What's that, baby?" He grabbed the Pop Tarts and put them back. "We're going for real meals here, Jim."

"Pop Tarts are meals. They have fruit."

The cereal bars actually looked like a decent snack, so he kept those. "I disagree." He kept them moving down the aisle.

"I don't think you can disagree with facts. There *is* fruit."

"I didn't disagree with the fruit part, just the meal part." He gave Jim a wink and, after giving the aisle a quick check, smacked Jim's bottom lightly.

"Don't! People might see." Jim bumped into a stack of syrup, the bottles toppling all around him. "Oh. Oh, God. Fuck."

"Okay, baby. Back away from the syrup." He waited until Jim had done as he'd asked and then quickly picked the syrup bottles up and put them on the shelf. "I checked to make sure no one would see before I did it, baby. You have to learn to trust me."

"I'm. There's a bathroom in here, right? I'll be right back." Jim looked panicked, mortified, starting to be pissed off.

"Jim!" He reached out and took Jim's arm, looking into the man's eyes. "Focus right here."

"I. I." Jim shook a bit, and Marcus could see the anger, the embarrassment, right under the surface, threatening to bubble over.

"Forget where we are, forget everything else. I was only playing, baby. I wouldn't embarrass you." It wasn't his kink, nor Jim's.

Jim stared at him and actually started to relax. "No. No, you haven't ever. I embarrassed me. What... What's next?"

"The meats. We sort of skipped past them. And juice, ice cream and then we're done."

He stroked Jim's arms, trying to soothe and keep his baby's focus.

"You forgot the coffee aisle." Jim walked with him, little tremors moving the muscles under his hands.

"Are you sure?" he teased gently.

He actually got a smile. "Pretty sure. Caffeine addicts are like heroin users."

"We'll wean you down to something less... all consuming."

"I'm not sure I want to be weaned. Oh, look. The cookie aisle."

Marcus shook his head. Caffeine and sugar. Jim would be much happier without quite so much of either.

He followed. "One bag of cookies, baby. Just one."

"What kind do you like?"

"White chocolate macadamia nut."

"Then let's get that kind, huh?"

He beamed, pleased Jim had chosen to go with his favorites instead of Jim's own. "Do you like that kind?"

"I do. I like Oreos the best, but I like cookies."

"We'll get those next time."

"Okay." A package of cookies went into the buggy. "I'm hungry, being surrounded by all this food."

"There's a little deli around the corner. We can go there once we've finished with our shopping." Get some meat into Jim. And no coffee.

"That sounds good. I could eat a sandwich."

He took it as another victory that Jim didn't say 'half a sandwich'. "It's a plan, then."

"Cool."

"Jim? Jim Upton? Is that you?"

Jim went stiff, turned. "Alexa. Yes."

An icy blond in impossibly high heels walked up. "I thought you would be long gone after the scandal. You're only what? Fifteen miles from campus."

Marcus growled. "Excuse me. I don't know who you are, but Jim didn't do anything wrong and he doesn't have to answer to you."

"Of course he didn't. Still, after everything, I can't believe you're here." Alexa didn't even look at him, focusing only on Jim.

"I'm sorry, Alexa. I'll have to email you. I have an appointment."

"He's here because this is his local grocery store and he has as much right to be here as you do." He looked down his nose at her. He could do snooty as well as the next person. "Now if you'll excuse us."

"Christ. You haven't gotten any more pleasant." She turned on her heel and stomped away.

"Fuck off, Alexa. You got your promotion and your pound of flesh."

She whirled around, pointing her finger, mouth opening and then snapping shut. "You're not worth arguing with."

Marcus snorted. "Neither are you." And if she didn't go now he was not going to be responsible for what he said or did.

"We're... we're supposed to get our meat next." Jim looked... diminished.

"Meat. Right." He nodded and headed them in the right direction. "That kind of thing happen often?"

"Sometimes. Let's go."

"It's not right. And you're better than those people."

"Whatever. Come on."

"Not whatever, baby. Your feelings are important. *You* are important."

He grabbed a couple packages of steak and some chicken, throwing them into their cart. Jim followed behind, chewing his lips, fretting.

He pushed the cart to the cash register, moving to the one with the shortest line. "Talk to me, Jim."

"About what?"

"About how you deserve to be here, shopping with your lover."

"I. I can't. I don't. This isn't..."

"No, this isn't the place. But you can talk about it and you can stand tall and proud."

"I'm going to run across to grab us some coffees. I have cash for that and supper."

"No coffees. We'll go to the deli as soon as we've paid for our groceries." No running away from things.

"I want a coffee. I'll be right back."

"You can wait five minutes, Jim."

Those thin lips went tight. "I don't want to fight with you."

"No, I don't want to fight either, baby. So let's take a few deep breaths, pay for our groceries and move on to the deli. Together." If he'd learned anything in the last few days, it was that his baby responded well to reason.

"Okay. What do I owe you?"

The cashier totaled up the groceries and he quoted Jim half the amount. "You can pay for the stuff at the deli, though, and then give me the balance if it doesn't match your half of the groceries."

"Okay. Okay, I can do that."

He handed over the receipt so Jim could calculate it down to the penny if he felt the need. Today was not the day to try and change that particular behavior. They each grabbed a couple of bags and headed for the car.

"What would you like from the deli?" Jim asked him.

"A roast beef sandwich with horseradish. What about you?"

"Turkey and avocado and a triple espresso."

"How about we try that without the caffeine overload?" He opened the trunk and they tossed the groceries in. They'd get their sandwiches to go.

"If I'm still stressed out when we get home, can I make a pot? I'm anxious."

"How about half a pot if making love doesn't relieve the anxiety?" He was more than willing to barter sex for no coffee.

"I. That's fair."

His baby made him so fucking proud. "It is. Come on, we'd better get to the deli before I give in and kiss you like I want to."

"You make it very difficult to be angry." Jim nodded, actually smiled at him. "Very difficult."

"That's a good thing, baby." He smiled back at Jim, that pride swelling in his chest.

"Yeah. Yeah, it's not bad at all. Come on. Deli."

He nodded and fell into step with Jim, letting the backs of their hands brush together as they walked.

All in all, it was turning out to be a good outing.

## *Chapter Eleven*

Jim walked to his apartment, Dr. Thomas' voice in his head. "Are you sure moving into this stranger's home is a good idea, Jim? You aren't getting yourself into danger again, are you? Have you discussed this with anyone else? Perhaps you should reconsider before you give up your apartment."

He hadn't even been at Marcus' two weeks, really, full-time. They'd been settling nicely. He went to sleep when Marcus did, got up around four a.m. and started working until the man woke at seven. Then after their morning... ritual... he went back to work until six or seven, depending on how busy he was. Marcus was rumbling about new rules, but he thought the situation was working for him.

Especially once he'd discovered Excedrin Migraine and iced tea together in large amounts killed the headache.



He'd been to the post office and to the bookstore, the coffee shop, and his intentions were to just grab a suitcase, fill it with some books. Head home.

To Marcus' house.

Jesus.

Marcus was waiting for him in the little lobby of the apartment building, bald head shining in the overhead lights.

"Marcus." He smiled, hands reaching for his friend, his lover. "I didn't expect you to come."

"I thought you might need some help packing things up. And I missed you. I know, I know, it's only been half a day, but it's felt like forever. I couldn't concentrate on anything. So I came."

"My shrink thinks I'm making a mistake." He took Marcus' hand and led the man upstairs.

"That's not surprising, is it? He doesn't live the lifestyle, he doesn't understand. And frankly, he doesn't know you."

"How do you know?" He unlocked the door, wincing at the musty smell.

"Because if he did, he would know that just the very fact that you're willing to do it, that you're willing to veer from your careful routine, means that moving in with me feels right on a very deep level."

They'd picked up his chair a couple days ago, along with his boxes of personal things that simply needed to be stored. All that was left was the coffee maker, the stereo, and books.

Marcus waved at the piles of books. "I have extra boxes in my car. Do you want to see if we can't get it all moved today?"

"If that means I never have to come back, yes." He'd always hated this apartment.

"All right. Come here."

Marcus grabbed him by the waist and tugged him close, mouth closing over his. Predictably, one of Marcus' hands smacked his ass and squeezed.

He gasped, hips bucking toward Marcus, his ass tingling. "What was that for?"

"For fun. To make you hard."

"It's difficult to pack boxes with a boner, you know."

"We'll manage, I'm sure." Marcus rubbed his ass and then his crotch before nibbling at his earlobe and adding softly. "I enjoy the way you walk with a hard-on."

He moaned, body eager, responding easily to Marcus' words, touch.

One big hand pushed into the jeans he wore, his whole wardrobe new. His prick was fondled and then the jeans

were opened and Marcus was wrapping leather around the base of his prick and his balls.

"Marcus!" He had a love-hate relationship with the rings -- more love than hate, if he was honest. He hated how they made his cock look in his clothes, obvious and hard, pushed out and evident. He loved the sensation, though, the deep, warm pressure.

Marcus looked down at him, eyes twinkling, making the ring good and tight. It pinched at his half-way grown back pubes. "You're in desperate need of a shave down here. New Rule. You'll keep yourself bare down here unless I say otherwise. I would be more than happy to be the one doing the shaving, though you may also do it yourself."

"I. I liked it when you did it." Okay. He could handle that rule. He could.

"I liked it when I did it, too." Marcus' voice had gone all husky, the look in his eyes hot.

Jim groaned, hand sliding down, cupping his cock to slip the jeans back on, cover himself up. Marcus helped, the man taking every opportunity to touch him. He stepped close, letting the strong arms wrap around him. That warm mouth came down on his, the kiss lingering and long.

Finally, Marcus stepped back and smacked his ass again. "Let's get to work and bring you home."

"Ow." He rolled his eyes, going through his stacks, fingers on the book covers, sort of flipping through each one.

"You're supposed to be packing, not looking." Marcus was power-packing, boxing up big handfuls of books.

"I am packing." He plucked another Excedrin out of his pocket, took it with a swig of iced tea and wandered to the next stack.

Marcus raised an eyebrow at him and went back to filling boxes quickly.

He found a little box, thrown behind a stack of books. His rings. He picked the box up -- knowing what was in there. Two matching gold rings, an old class ring with a garnet in it, a single diamond earring.

Marcus came over when he just stood there. "What's that?"

"Nothing." He slipped the box into his pocket. "Old stuff." Bad memories.

Marcus' hand slid over his back. "Nothing good by the look on your face."

"Nope. Another life. Maybe another couple of lives." He leaned back into the touch, eyes closing for a second.

"If you want to talk about it, I'm here, baby." That hand kept circling, soothing.

"It's my jewelry. Class ring. An earring from when I had mine pierced in college. Our commitment rings. He left it when he moved. I wore mine for a year, hoping he'd come back." Of course, if his ex came back now, it wouldn't matter.

"I'd say I'm sorry, but if he had... well, we wouldn't have this." Marcus kissed the top of his head.

He looked up at Marcus, thinking. "I don't know about that. I never... I would have come to you, I think. Regardless."

Marcus kissed him, hard and deep. The world shorted out a little, his worry fading, easing just like that. His ass was squeezed, and then his hard-on, and then Marcus stepped away, breathing heavily.

"Let's get this done, baby. I want to take you home."

"Kay. We'll just leave the keys and lock the door behind us."

"Sounds good. We've got it almost done." Marcus went back to shoving books into boxes.

He looked around. "Don't forget the coffeemaker. It's nicer than yours."

Marcus laughed, the sound rich and lovely. "You mean it makes four more cups worth than mine."

"Yep, and it makes espresso." More bang per cup.

"I don't think espresso's a very good idea..." Marcus shook his head. "Bring it. We can discuss where espresso fits into the rules."

"You and your rules." He chuckled and hauled the machine off the little counter. "Got it."

"All right, let's see if we can get it all into one load." Marcus grabbed a couple of boxes and headed out.

They managed to get everything shoved in, with one box of books under his feet.

"Are you going to miss it at all?" Marcus asked as they pulled out into traffic.

"That place? No. No, I hate it."

"Well, it's history. We should celebrate." Marcus gave him a wicked grin and detoured to the right.

"Huh?" Why did that sound like trouble?

"We need to mark the occasion. You moving in with me? This is something special."

"It is. You... you don't think I'm being too impulsive, do you?"

"I know you're doing the right thing, baby. And what's more, so do you."

Marcus' hand landed on his thigh, stroking for a moment before returning to the wheel as Marcus pulled into a

parking spot about three doors down from Permanent Ink, the tattoo shop.

"Marcus?" He didn't need another tattoo. He really didn't. Not yet.

"Yeah, baby?"

"I... My first one's just healed."

"Your first one... Oh!" Marcus shook his head. "You're not getting another tat. Yet." They were definitely headed for the tattoo shop, though, Marcus opening the door for him.

"I... Marcus?" He followed along, heart starting to speed.

"Yes, baby?" Marcus settled one hip against the counter and rang the little bell sitting there.

"What are we doing here?"

The long-haired tattoo artist came out. "Marcus! How nice to see you? And Jim, was it?"

"Hi, Killian. Yes, it's Jim." Marcus' hand slid over his back to his waist.

"Excellent. What can I do for you?"

"We're here for a piercing." Marcus beamed at him.

"What?" He stepped back, blinked.

"Ah, you'll need Treat, then. Hold on."

"Thank you." Marcus took his hand. "You mentioned having a pierced ear earlier."

"A long time ago, yes." Oh. Okay. A pierced ear. Okay.

"Which ear was pierced?" Marcus peered at his earlobes, but the hole had closed up years ago.

"The right."

"Mmm..." Marcus' hand moved from his right shoulder down to chest, palm pressing against his nipple through his shirt. "Excellent."

He leaned in, letting Marcus touch him. "Do they do ears here?"

"Oh, we're not getting your ears done, baby." Marcus's hand patted.

"What?" He looked down at Marcus' hand. "Marcus? No. No, I can't. I can't do that."

"That's two spanks. I'll wait until they take us in back before administering them."

"You're not listening to me."

Killian looked in, smiled. "Treat says come on back, Marcus."



"Thank you." Marcus took his hand and led him to the back. "We'll talk about this in back"

He followed, feeling a little sick, a little dizzy.

"Hi, Treat." Marcus shook the man's hand. "Can you give us two minutes, please?"

"Sure thing. Just gimme a shout when you're ready."

The room didn't look terrible, even though there were needles and rings and things everywhere.

Marcus sat and patted his lap. "Assume the position, we'll do your spanking first."

"Here?" Oh, God. Oh, God.

"Yes. Treat won't be back until we call for him and you may leave your jeans on."

He thought about arguing, but he had a feeling he needed to save those, so he moved, leaned over Marcus' lap.

"Count them." And the first smack landed right where his ass was the most sore from this morning's spanking.

"Fuck. One." He tensed, shaking a little, rumbling inside.

The next smack came down in the same spot.

"God *damn* it! Two. Two. Fuck, that hurts."

"Remember that the next time you go to say 'I can't'. Because you can, Jim. You can *anything*."

"Fucking semantics."

"It's not semantics at all." Marcus helped him up and moved him to the chair.

"I don't want to have body piercings, Marcus. They get infected, they get caught on things. People will notice. It'll hurt."

"They're not going to get infected because you're going to take care of them. You'll need to be careful with them, sure. And yes, people will notice and yes, it'll hurt." Marcus' fingers grabbed his nipple and pinched. Hard.

"I don't want to." He jerked, legs kicking. "Them?"

"Uh-huh. Treat? We're ready for you."

"Marcus!"

The long, lean man came in, shutting the door behind him. "Is he a screamer like Paul?"

"We'll have to see." Marcus gave him a smile, the look full of heat and pride.

"Marcus, I don't..." He swallowed hard, shaking.

Marcus pushed up his shirt, exposing his nipples, the little buds hard. One of Marcus' thumbs flicked across the right one. Jim stared at his lover, shaking, throat dry.

"Do you want both done together, Marcus?"

Marcus' hand slipped up to his cheek, stroking it. The man's gaze held his. "Just the right one this time. We'll save the other one for the next milestone."

"I don't want to..." He was going to pass out. Throw up. Scream.

"You want to get his tit ready?" Treat asked.

"Yes." Marcus took the alcohol swab from Treat. "I'd like an emerald on the ring. To match Jim's eyes."

"We'll have to order one for you."

"Marcus. I'm right here." Listening. Right here.

Marcus met his eyes, finger stroking over his nipple. "I know, baby."

"Why won't you listen to me?"

"I'm listening, Jim. With my ears and my gut and my heart."

Marcus wiped his right nipple with the alcohol swab, the touch cold, leaving him gasping. His skin felt too tight, his heart trying to pound out of his chest. Marcus' hand landed on his shoulder, holding on tight as Marcus moved out of the way so Treat could do his thing.

The forceps were colder than the alcohol swab had been. "Take a deep breath and let it out on three." The needle

was pressed against the side of his nipple and he just stared, gasping.

"One, two, three." The needle pushed in and he groaned, eyes rolling back in his head.

Marcus' hand squeezed. "Beautiful. Just beautiful, baby."

"Very nice. And not a screamer. I was sure you would be." Treat pushed the ring in and pulled out the needle.

Jim closed his eyes, refusing to acknowledge this, refusing to see.

"There you go. You let me know what kind of emerald bead you want on it and I'll get it ordered for you."

"Thank you." Marcus shook Treat's hand and the man left.

He was going home. He was going to put his shirt on and get a cab and...

Go home.

"Look at me, Jim."

"No."

"Why not? Why are you so pissed off?"

"You didn't listen to me. You didn't let me decide. Wouldn't you be pissed?"

"But you wanted it." Marcus looked honestly confused.

"I... I'm going for a walk. I don't want you to follow me. I need to... I need to..." He was going to shake apart.

"No." Marcus gathered him close, mouth landing on his, the kiss hard, demanding his response, his attention.

His eyes flew open, the kiss burning him down to the bone, the world stopping still. Marcus pulled him up tight, his prick snug against the man's thigh, Marcus' cock hard and hot against his hip. Jim cried out, shifting as Marcus started moving him, rocking him.

One big hand popped open the top button of his jeans before pushing in to grab hold of him. His eyes rolled, hips jerking, pushing up into the touch. Marcus wrapped one arm around him, bending him back over it as he was jacked, the motions jerky and harsh.

"Please." Don't stop. Don't let me fall. Help me.

Marcus didn't let him fall, the hand around his prick not stopping, moving faster, squeezing him harder. The cock ring pressed him, but it couldn't stop his orgasm, the heat shooting out of him, pouring over Marcus' hand and leaving him blinking and lost.

Another kiss landed on his lips, this one slow and sweet. "Let's go home, baby. Our home."

"Home." He moaned, staring at Marcus. "You derailed me."

Marcus cleaned him up and did his jeans back up, kissed him lightly. "I was here to catch you."

"Mmmhmm." He nodded, allowed Marcus to lead him out of the room. Lead him out of the shop. Lead him home.

They'd fight about all this later.

## *Chapter Twelve*

Jim cleared and Marcus put the dishes into the dishwasher, humming softly. Jim was home. It put a spring in his step. "What do you want to do this evening?"

"What are your plans?" Jim was still off-balance about the nipple ring; Marcus had caught him staring at it a few times.

"Honestly? I'd like to make love to you, be inside you."

He got a look, stunned and shocked. "You would?"

"I've wanted to since the beginning." He didn't think it should have been that surprising.

"I haven't ever bottomed. I don't know if I'd like it."

"You liked being penetrated by my tongue and finger." Jim had gotten off on it big time. He stepped into Jim's space, hands landing on the bare waist, stroking Jim's

skin. He was going to make it a rule that the man went topless whenever they were home alone.

"Aren't we supposed to be arguing about this afternoon?" Jim didn't sound like he wanted to argue.

"This isn't the first time I've pushed your boundaries. It won't be the last." If Jim needed to talk about it, though...

"I still needed to say it was okay. It was important."

"Why is this different than my spanking you?"

"This is a piercing! This is in me! This isn't you."

"But... you didn't safeword, baby."

"I." Jim stopped, blinked at him. "What?"

"Perseus. You never said it..." He'd waited to hear it, had thought he would at one point, but then Jim hadn't.

"I didn't think to."

"Oh." He thought about it for a moment. "Baby, you have to use it if you need to."

"I just... it never even crossed my mind. This is very new to me."

"And it never crossed my mind that you wouldn't use it if you truly didn't want the nipple ring."

"I don't know if I want it. I didn't know then, you know? I was scared."

"Come here." He wrapped Jim in a hug. "You've trusted me to know you want the spankings, the cock-ring, and all that. Why not trust me for this, too?"

"I thought I was going to pass out." Jim leaned into him, cheek on his shoulder.

"You're never going to survive the Prince Albert."

"The what?"

He reached down and grabbed Jim's prick. "It goes here."

"No." That look was pure horror. "God, can you imagine the infections?"

He chuckled. "We'll work you up to it slowly."

"I... I don't understand. Why?"

"Why the piercings and tattoos? They're badges of honor, they're marks for important events. They're ways to enhance your beauty." He wished he could play with the nipple ring already. "Because they feel good."

"It doesn't feel very good right now." No, that little nipple was angry and they needed to lube it up, move the ointment through so it felt better.



"Come on upstairs and let me take care of it for you. Maybe we'll shave you while we're there. It's been a couple days."

"Okay." Jim looked at him, face so serious. "I don't understand some of this between us, Marcus. I don't understand why I came so hard when I wasn't excited."

"Because your body and your mind aren't always on the same page. Your body knows what it needs, what it wants. Your mind... well sometimes we all think too much." He walked them toward the stairs.

"I wasn't excited, though. I was honestly scared."

"Fear, pain, excitement, orgasm. They're all connected. I don't understand why you were scared, though." Surely Jim knew he wouldn't do anything to damage the man?

"Needles. Rings. Blood."

"I didn't know you were scared of needles and blood -- you should have said so, baby."

"I just. I need time to think. You never gave me a chance to think."

"Well, no, of course I didn't give you a chance to think." Jim could talk himself out of anything.

"What? Why not?"

"Because you think too much, baby. You have to let go and just go with things every now and then."

"I'm not sure if I should be insulted or not."

"It wasn't an insult, Jim."

"Okay." That trust was there. Building.

He drew Jim into the bathroom and found the ointment. "Treat didn't go over the proper care of a nipple piercing with you because he knew I had all that information. We should do this every day until the swelling goes down." He squeezed the ointment out onto the ring and slowly moved it through Jim's flesh.

Jim whimpered, watching him with parted lips.

"The ointment is going to keep it from getting infected. It should numb the pain a little, too." He leaned in to whisper in Jim's ear. "It's going to be so good once it's healed. He moved it again, so carefully, and Jim's cock started to fill. He added a bit more ointment and slid the ring around a bit more.

"Marcus." His name was whispered.

"I know, baby. I've got you." He tilted Jim's head and took a kiss.

Jim kissed him back, moaning into his lips, tongue fucking his mouth. He groaned, Jim's eagerness lighting his own fire. He lifted Jim a little, sitting his baby on the bathroom counter. Pinching Jim's other nipple, he pressed their cocks together, denim rubbing. Jim pushed closer, nipple hard, pressed against his fingers. Such a needy pain slut.

He tugged and twisted on the un-ringed nipple, spreading Jim's mouth wide. Jim wrapped around him, bucking up, crotch nudging his belly. He slid one hand down to push beneath Jim's ass, squeezing, tugging Jim up closer. Maybe he could wait to clean up the bright red pubes. Maybe he could get into that amazing ass.

He got his other hand beneath Jim as well and lifted his baby away from the counter, began to carry Jim to the bedroom. Jim's moan pushed into his lips, warm and horny, those green eyes staring at him.

"Gonna love you, baby." He was going to send Jim to the moon.

Jim moaned, kissing the corner of his mouth. "You're so strong."

"All the better to carry you with."

Jim chuckled. "My big bad wolf."

He put Jim on the bed and followed the man down. Jim's hand wrapped around his nape, keeping him close. He rolled his hips, rubbing them together as he ground Jim into the mattress. Jim pushed back up, body rolling, fucking against him.

"Don't come in your jeans," he warned. Jim could wait 'til they got them off.

Jim muttered something -- he wasn't sure if it was argument or agreement.

He grabbed Jim's arms and pulled them up over Jim's head. He got both wrists in one hand, holding Jim tight as his free hand slid down to work on the top button of Jim's jeans, then the zipper. He moved slowly, though, making Jim work hard to keep from coming.

That pretty little ring kept catching his attention, the lamplight glinting off it, the flesh tight and heated around it. He couldn't wait to play with it, to drive Jim absolutely crazy with it. For now he just admired it, knowing that Jim would come to love it. He tugged down Jim's zipper and began to work the jeans off.

Jim's hips lifted, the denim sliding off. His baby looked wanton and wild, addictive. Bending, he took the bare nipple into his mouth, biting on the hard little bit of flesh as his hands wandered over the compact body.

"Want."

Yes. Yes, he knew. He cupped Jim's balls, rolling and squeezing them.

Jim spread, one leg drawing up, knee bending, showing him everything. Groaning at the offer, the trust, he slid his hand back, rubbing the soft, sensitive flesh behind Jim's balls.

"Oh." That sound was so needy, so hungry.

His thumb slid farther back, rubbing at Jim's hole. Jim had already taken his thumb and a finger. Today it would be three fingers and his cock. One day it would be his fist. He kissed Jim hard, tongue fucking Jim's mouth

eagerly. Jim groaned, body moving naturally, easily, rubbing back against his finger. Such an eager, sweet slut. When Jim didn't think, when he let his body take over, it was beautiful and wanton.

Not only that, it was all his.

Marcus reached up for the lube, getting some on his fingers and sliding them along Jim's crack. Jim tensed, but only for a single breath. Jim knew this, wanted it. Welcomed it. Sucking on Jim's tongue, Marcus teased the tip of one finger into the tight little hole. It slipped in easily, sliding into that heat.

It felt like sinking his finger into heated silk. Moaning, he moved it around, getting Jim used to the invasion. Jim rocked, taking more, begging for him. Kissing his way down Jim's neck, he pushed a second finger into Jim's heat. He wriggled the two of them while he sucked up a mark on Jim's neck.

"Yours." Oh.

Oh, fuck, yes. His. "That's right," he growled. "Every single inch." He pushed a third finger in as he said it, stretching Jim wide.

"Marcus. Marcus, easy. That burns."

"Just go with it, baby, it'll ease in a minute." He pushed deeper, finding Jim's gland.

He got a whimper, Jim shifting, trying to find a comfortable place. He took Jim's unadorned nipple into

his mouth again, worrying the hard bit of flesh with his teeth as his fingers pushed in and out, slowly working Jim's gland.

"Fuck." Jim jerked a little, ass rippling around his fingers.

"Still burning?"

"A bit. It's better."

"Mmmhmm... just wait." He pegged Jim's gland again, timing it with another bite to the sweet little nipple. That earned him a gasp, the tight ring of muscles squeezing and then relaxing for him. "Yes." He did it again, stimulating Jim with hands and mouth.

Again, he got the squeeze, the release, the gasp.

"Told you." He couldn't help but feel smug, knowing he was making Jim feel amazing.

Jim groaned, muttering softly under his breath. He brought their mouths back together, fingers pushing deep again and again. Those pretty green eyes were open, watching him, the look making his heart beat faster in his chest.

"Are you ready?" he asked, breaking their kiss and panting heavily.

"I don't know."

He took the lube and pushed a bunch out into Jim's hand.  
"Slick me up, baby."

"I. Okay." Jim's hand found his cock, moved up and down his shaft. They'd talked about condoms and whether or not they needed to use them, had shown each other their all clear tests. Marcus knew that had needed to be done outside of the heat of the moment and so they had.

"Mmm..." He swallowed and gritted his teeth, the need settling in his balls, making them ache.

"Yeah." Jim focused on him, on making him need.

"Spread your legs for me, baby." He moved between Jim's legs as they opened, knees pushing up against Jim's thighs.

Jim nodded, staring at him, eyes serious.

"This is supposed to feel good, baby." He thought maybe Jim needed the reminder.

Jim blinked, then looked at him, grinned. "Yeah. I bet it'll be easier next time. Trying new things, huh?"

"It'll be good this time, too." He leaned in to lick Jim's lips. "Gonna make you fly."

"Swear it." Jim hummed, kissing him back.

"I will. I swear." He rubbed the head of his prick along Jim's crack.

"Okay." Jim nodded, relaxing under him, lips clinging against his.

He pushed in, only far enough to just barely spread Jim, and then he backed off again.

"You're warm." Jim shifted, following his cock.

"I'm hot for you." It sounded cheesy, but it was the truth. He pushed in a tiny bit farther this time.

Jim's chuckle broke into a soft cry.

"Shh. Shh. We'll take all the time we need." He nudged in again, then again.

Jim nodded, taking him in, beginning to move with him, rock up and push against his cock.

"Oh, God, yes." He nodded as they found a rhythm. His progress slow enough to nearly kill him.

Jim moaned, eyes fluttering closed, throat working.  
"Lover."

"Yeah, baby, I'm right here." He pushed in a little farther.  
"Right *here*."

"Yes." Jim nodded, pushed right back. "Here."

"Yeah, here." He rubbed their cheeks together, their noses, their lips.

Jim's hand landed on his hip, encouraging him to move.



"You're amazing, baby." He moved a little faster, pushing in harder.

"More."

He'd known that Jim would be a natural. He pushed in deeper, hips working to move in a little more on each thrust. It wasn't long before he was all the way in, hips pushing against Jim's hot ass.

"Oh. Oh, tell me..." He got a wild, wicked smile. "Tell me next time is even better."

He laughed, the sound a little wild even to his own ears. "It is. Lots." He moved faster, pushed harder.

"Oh, God." Jim nodded, gasping against his lips.

"Yes. Yes." They rocked together, Jim eager, meeting his thrusts.

"Touch me. Please. Touch me."

He slid his hand along Jim's chest, down toward his baby's belly. Jim nodded, hips rolling, body working his cock. He circled Jim's navel, teasing and staying away from that needy cock.

"Marcus..."

He chuckled, loving how Jim needed. "Yeah, baby?" He shifted, pushing in and getting Jim's gland.

"Fuck!" Jim's shoulders left the mattress.

Right there. He hit the spot again, his hand finally wrapping around Jim's cock, too.

"Marcus. Marcus." Jim sang his name, over and over.

"Baby. Mine." He pushed harder, and pulled faster on Jim's cock.

"Uh-huh. Uh-huh..." Jim's body was like a fist around him, rippling around his cock.

"Take it, baby. Take what you need." His hips were jerking now, punching as he got close.

"Need you." Jim groaned, muscles going tight, squeezing him hard.

"Got me, baby." Jim so had him.

Come poured over his hand, splashing over Jim's belly. He kept thrusting, hips jerking until he was coming, filling Jim in long pulses.

"I feel you." Jim's head was thrown back, throat working.

He nuzzled in, lips and teeth biting at Jim's neck. Jim sighed softly, chin lifting, letting him in.

"Love you, baby," he murmured, sinking into the smell of Jim.

"Yeah?" Jim nodded, melted for him.

"Uh-huh." He slipped out of Jim's body and curled around the man. "Mine."

"Uh-huh." Jim shivered and pressed closer.

He pulled up the covers, and threw one leg over Jim's. "I've got you."

"You'll have to keep me." Those fingers splayed over his ink.

"That's the plan, baby." It had been the plan from the start.

### *Chapter Thirteen*

He sat at the coffee shop, going through his mail, drinking his second triple espresso. Hate mail, hate mail, bill, check, check, hate mail, hate mail. Honestly, he needed to get downtown more than twice a week.

Jim checked his watch; twenty minutes until the bus ran. He should go pick up some books. When he got outside of the coffee shop, he found Marcus outside the bookstore, just hanging around.

"Marcus?" He put his good mail in his pocket and looked for a trash can for the rest.

Marcus looked up and grinned. "Hey. I had to run to the post office with some orders and I figured I could pick you up while I was downtown."

"Yeah? Cool." He smiled, nodded. "Are you done? I just need to find a trashcan."

"You throwing out mail, baby?" Marcus reached for the envelopes in his hand.

He nodded, stepped away. "It's just bullshit."

One of Marcus' eyebrows went up. "More letters from her friends?"

"Yeah. Oh, there's a can." He headed over, eager to trash the hate.

"Wait. You've got like four there. Since Tuesday. These girls are harassing you. Give me the letters and I'll hold them for you as evidence." Marcus held out his hand.

"I just want them gone." He scratched the curls at the base of his neck. He needed a hair cut.

"What does your lawyer say?"

"That I'm lucky it wasn't worse." The fact was, these girls came from money and he was a queer, freelancing man who needed his contacts.

"What? You were falsely accused and now they're harassing you and you should be happy that's it? That's what your lawyer says?" Marcus was growling, taking his arm and leading him toward the car parked a few spots up.

"I didn't throw them away..."

"I know a guy in the community, baby. A good lawyer. I think we should have a couple of these to show him. See what he says."

"I don't want to start things up again." He was finally happy, mostly. He liked his life.

"There should at the very least be a cease and desist letter going out to these girls, baby. I bet you don't even have to have anything to do with it. Watson'll take care of it all." Marcus opened the car door for him, always taking care of him.

"But I don't want them to..." Marcus put his seatbelt on. "I don't want them to get worse. This is harmless."

"Harmless? A dozen nasty letters a week and you call it harmless? Maybe you should turn them over to the post office..."

"It's dying down now." Slowly but surely. At the beginning he got hundreds from all over the country.

"It can't hurt to at least talk to Watson." Marcus didn't seem inclined to just let it go.

"Did you want to get lunch? I got a check in." See him. See him change the subject.

Marcus gave him a look that said the man knew exactly what he was up to. "You've never been to the Hammer, have you?"

"The who?"

"The Hammer. It's a club. Food's pretty good." Marcus turned at the corner and headed in the direction of the tattoo shop.

"Oh, okay. No, I haven't." He didn't get out much, or hadn't.

"It's a BDSM club, though there won't be any shows going on this time of day."

They pulled into a spot on the same street as the tattoo shop.

"A... you're not serious. Those aren't real..." Were they?

"I take it you've never been to one before."

"I mean, that's like a fantasy thing. I'm not even a hundred percent sure that's legal..."

"Consenting adults, baby. Just like you and me. It's legal." Marcus opened the car door for him, as always, and led him to a fairly innocuous looking storefront.

Marcus pulled out a key card, slid it through, the door opening up. "It's a private club. They've got doormen on the busy nights, but lunches all you need's a keycard."

The place was cool and pleasant inside, a bar along one wall and two steps down from there into a large dining area with several dozen tables and a currently darkened stage.

"There aren't any windows. It's unusual."

A tall, lean man waved from the bar. "Hey, Marcus."

"The activities in here don't lend themselves toward outsiders looking in." Marcus grinned at him and then waved at the man at the bar. "Hey, Xavier."

"Pick a seat, man. I'll bring you your usual?"

"Yes, make it two. Thank you." Marcus led him down the stairs. "It's not very busy today -- where would you like to sit?"

"I doesn't matter, does it?" He picked a table out of the way.

"This is fine." Marcus pulled out his chair for him and then sat across from him, taking his hand and stroking his knuckles. "So, did you have a good morning?"

"I did. I had espressos. I got checks in the mail. I wrote a little on my novel."

"Oh, tell me about your novel?"

"It's just something I've been working on a few years. It's a fantasy novel."

"Will you let me read it?" Marcus' eyes were on him, putting him squarely in Marcus' focus.

"I..." He blinked. Stared. "No one's ever asked before."

"Surely your man did, when you were still together." Marcus looked honestly surprised.

"No." No, he had his own projects, his own life.

"Well, I'd like to read it, baby. I would."

"I'll think about it. It's not finished." What if it sucked?  
What if Marcus hated it? What if Marcus loved it?

"I'm not asking just to be nice. It's something you're creating, Jim. I want to read it." Marcus squeezed his hand and then sat back as a waiter arrived with two beers and a pair of plates.

"We have fried fish and chips, sir."

Oh. Oh, yum.

"Malt vinegar?" Marcus asked hopefully.

Their waiter nodded and the little glass container was put between them. "There's also tartar sauce for the fish."

"It smells delicious." He hadn't eaten yet and it smelled amazing. "Ever since we started at the gym, I'm always hungry."

"All those pretty muscles need to be fed."

Marcus gave him a wink.

"I don't have muscles, dork." He flexed playfully, blinking as his shirt seams creaked.

"You were saying..."



"Hush." He blushed, grabbing the beer and smelling it before drinking deep. Oh. Cold. Bitter. Good.

"Stud," murmured Marcus, beginning to eat.

Jim snorted, choking a little on the beer before digging into the fish. The food was really good, hot and crispy, and it was hard to feel anything but good with the way Marcus kept looking at him.

As they were finishing up, Marcus smiled at someone behind him and waved. "Watson! Come on over, man."

Watson? He wasn't sure he was ready to meet Marcus' friends. Of course, they'd been together for a few weeks, maybe it was time.

Watson was short, with a shock of bright red hair and glasses. He wore a suit with the tie pulled loose, his top two shirt buttons undone. "Marcus! Rumor had it you were off the market."

"I am. Watson this is my Jim. Jim, Watson."

"Hello, there." He stood up, held out one hand.

Watson shook it and then ran both hands through his own hair, making it stand up.

"Please," murmured Marcus, "have a seat."

"Why do I think this isn't just a desire to catch up, Goodfellow?"

Marcus ducked his head a moment. "You're the best lawyer I know, Watson."

"I'm the best lawyer anyone knows, Goodfellow. What's up?"

He looked at Marcus, feeling set up. "Do you eat lunch here often?"

"When I can. What's up?" Watson offered a neutral smile.

Marcus nodded to him. "Jim here needs a bit of advice."

His lips went tight, his cheeks heating. "I'd be happy to take your card, make an appointment."

"Jim..."

He looked at Marcus, heading from embarrassed into angry. "Yes, Marcus?"

"We're here now. Watson can give us advice on what to do about the letters, baby."

"Letters?" Watson looked from him to Marcus and back again.

He gritted his teeth, almost about to scream. "Marcus seems to feel that my current lawyer isn't giving me effective advice about certain letters I've been receiving from a disgruntled party."

"It never hurts to get a second opinion. Why don't you tell me about it?"

He told the story -- from the accusations to the letters, becoming more and more angry as he did. He wrapped himself in Dr. Upton, refusing to allow any emotion out, refusing to be anything but clinical.

"What have you done about the letters?"

"I've been ignoring them and they've been trickling down to only a few a week."

"Have you been saving them?"

"No." He wasn't going to start, either.

"Without the letters..." Watson shrugged apologetically.

"But these girls are harassing him!" Marcus growled.

"Can't you issue a cease and desist or something?"

"Not without proof, Marcus."

He wasn't going to apologize, damn it.

"What if he saves any new letters. We've got three or four in the car."

"Save them. We'll try and build a case. Does your current counsel have copies of any?"

"I have no idea."

"If Jim switches to you, he can have the file transferred to you, right?"

Watson nodded. "Yes, he can."

Goodie. Jim sat, counted silently, forcing himself to stay calm.

"Did you want to make an appointment?" Watson asked him. "Or should I get Timothy to send you the paperwork?"

"If you have a card, I'll call. I need to speak to my current counsel first." His hand wasn't shaking a bit when he took the card.

"Baby, do you think your current lawyer's going to tell you to go with a new lawyer?"

"I haven't the foggiest idea." Goddamn it, he was angry.

Watson took out his card and handed it over. "Give me a call anytime, Jim." Watson stood. "It was nice to meet you. And Marcus. It shouldn't be so long next time."

Jim shook Watson's hand. "I don't suppose you could point me to the washroom?"

"Sure thing -- across the room and to the right of the stage." Watson nodded to him and Marcus and headed toward the bar.

"Thanks." Okay. Across the room. To the right of the stage. Walking. Walking.

He got into the (surprisingly) clean bathroom and washed his face, trying to think. To focus on what he needed to do next. He still hadn't figured it out when Marcus poked his head around the door.

"Baby? You okay?"

"Yeah. Just washing my face. You ready to go?"

"You don't want dessert?"

"I don't, no. Did you know he was going to be here?"

"Watson? I knew there was a chance we'd run into him."

"Did you consider the fact, even once, that I told you I didn't want to deal with this anymore?"

Marcus blinked at him. "But you are dealing with it. Every time you get your mail there it is."

"Yes. Every time I get my mail I throw it away. I told you no. I meant it. I don't want to deal with it and I do not intend to."

"And what happens when they decide to start things up again? I just want you to be protected, Jim."

"Don't try to be reasonable with me." He could feel his fury, building up and threatening to crash over him.

Marcus frowned. "I think we should have this discussion at home."

"I do, too." He nodded, frowning back.

Marcus turned and headed out, leading him back to the car without another word. He followed, vibrating, so fucking caught in his own thoughts that he couldn't *breathe*.

Marcus got him in the car, his belt done up, and they were on their way. Marcus' hand landed on his thigh as they headed home. "It's going to be okay, Jim."

He looked down, looked at Marcus' hand and then he reached for it, holding on. "It is."

Pissed off didn't mean the end of anything. It just meant pissed off. The trip home seemed longer than usual, the lack of chit chat noticeable.

They held onto each other the entire way, though.

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Marcus followed Jim inside and closed the door. Then he waited for it to hit.

"It was unfair for you to put me on the spot like that."

"I'm trying to help." Jim was being treated unfairly, and his lawyer was letting it happen.

"It's not your job to help with this. It was all before you."

"I'm your lover -- I *want* to help you and it doesn't matter if it's with stuff from before. It's still affecting you."

"No, it's not. I'm not going to deal with it."

Marcus stared. "You're just going to pretend it's not happening?"

"Yes."

He rubbed his face and tried not to growl and order Jim to deal with it. "Will you at least have your file transferred to Watson and send him any new letters you get?" That way at least they'd be able to act if they needed to.

"Are you going to apologize for bringing him in without my say so?"

He pursed his lips trying to decide if he'd done something wrong. He truly thought Jim needed a lawyer he could trust, and Marcus didn't trust the one Jim had now. Not if his advice was just ignore the unpleasantness. "I am sorry if you feel steamrollered. That was not my intension." He was not going to apologize for caring or wanting the best for his baby, though.

"I did. You have to understand -- she's ruined my life. I can't deal with this anymore."

"You don't want to fight back? Make her pay for what she's done?" He wanted to crush her, to make her feel every second of Jim's pain.

"No. I just want it to go away. I lost my home, my partner, my job, my career. I'm *tired*."

"Come here, baby." He opened his arms.

Jim blinked at him, looking confused, then hurried over, cuddling into him. He held on, hand sliding along Jim's back, offering comfort, offering his strength.

"Are we done fighting?"

"I'd like to be. You've got Watson's card. I'd feel better if you ignored it with *him* holding your files. But I won't push you to be proactive about the letters." Much as he wanted to.

He felt Jim relax, lean into him. "Okay."

"Okay." He slid his hand down to Jim's ass and squeezed the right cheek, which had borne the brunt of his spanking this morning.

"I think it's time you felt the kiss of my leather, baby."

"I don't know that I'm in a place for sex, Marcus. I'm still... stressed out."

"You being stressed out is exactly why you need the flogger." Jim needed to be taken out of himself, let free.

"I don't feel sexy, Marcus. I'm angry."

"Angry and you want to scream and shout and maybe hit something?" He led Jim toward his workroom. He knew just the flogger he wanted. Medium weight, it would thud loudly, but wouldn't sting too badly, wouldn't break Jim's skin. He could imagine Jim cuffed over the bench in the



basement, bare assed naked, screaming every time the leather hit, letting it all out.

"Yes. Angry, frustrated. Pissed off. Grouchy." Jim followed him, watching him.

He opened a drawer and drew out a pair of leather cuffs, handing them to Jim. They matched the leather bracelet he'd given Jim after their first time together. Then he opened another drawer and pulled out the flogger he wanted, the whips suede, soft under fingertips.

"You're not listening to me."

"I am, baby. This time you aren't hearing *me*." This wasn't about sex. It was about Jim needing an outlet for his anger and frustration. He could see Jim ramping himself up again, lips tight, shaking a little. "Hey." He held Jim's face and looked into those eyes. "Trust me."

"I..." Jim stared at him, lips opening and closing. "I do."

"Well, then. Come on." He took Jim's hand and led his baby to the door to downstairs. "You haven't seen the basement yet, have you?"

"No. What is there to see?" Ah, that curiosity. Jim's weakness.

"A sound proofed room." He turned on the light and led the way. "The stairs aren't too steep."

"A sound proofed room? Why?" He could feel Jim's heart speeding up.

"So that the neighbors can't hear the screaming, the shouting. The sound a whip makes." He opened the door to his dungeon, so to speak, and let Jim in, turning the light on.

It was a fairly plain room with some shelves on one side containing anything they might need, a padded bench sat in the middle of the room with rings for cuffs at either end and on the ground on both sides.

Jim stood in the doorway, blinking. Staring. "I. Okay, this is a little scary."

"I imagine it is, but I'm right here with you." He put his hand on Jim's back and rubbed it in slow circles. He thought this time it would be best to lay out to Jim what he was going to do. "I'm going to strip you, lie you over the bench and cuff your wrists to the floor. Then I'm going to use the flogger on you. I want you to scream and shout and yell, and let everything out. All of it."

"I don't know. I'm not sure about this." Jim stared at the table. "I'm scared."

He stood behind Jim, letting the man lean against his strength as he started stripping Jim down, fingers dragging on his baby's skin as he pulled the T-shirt off. "Your safeword is Perseus. Only use it if you absolutely cannot take it another second." He spoke quietly, right at Jim's ear.

Jim swallowed, nodded, shaking against him.

"And I'm right here, Jim. Right here."

Once Jim was naked, he put the leather cuffs on -- one wrapped around each of Jim's wrists. Jim didn't say a word, just panted, cock soft, stomach trembling. He led Jim over to the bench and helped his baby kneel, leaning over the quivering body to attach the cuffs to the rings on the floor.

"I want you to sink into the sensations, Jim. Let them carry you away. Scream, shout, whatever you need to do." He rubbed Jim's back, fingers on the long spine, the red ass.

"Marcus, let me up. I don't want to do this right now." Jim pulled at the cuffs and he could see the panic.

"You need it. You need to lose yourself in it." He stepped back and, before Jim could think about it anymore, he let first strike hit hard on Jim's back. Jim stilled, stopped breathing for a few seconds, purely shocked. "Try and separate the strands of pain and fire. Focus on each one." Then he let his arm swing again, the thud of the leather landing on skin sounding loud.

Jim shuddered, tugging at the cuffs. "Stop. Stop, let me up."

He didn't answer, only hit Jim again, watching the way the flogger left behind streaks of pale skin before they went rose again.

"Let me go! I'm so fucking tired of all this shit!"

Yes, that was it. Jim was tired. Poor man thought he was letting it go, but had been holding it all in, trying to hide it away. "That's right, baby. Let it all out."

Jim tugged harder, screaming at him. "I don't know what to do and you're pissing me off! You keep taking things away from me!"

"What things?" He let the flogger fly, finding a slow, steady rhythm that would allow Jim to breathe between strokes.

"My coffee. I can't masturbate. My pants." Jim panted, cheeks red. "You hit me. I don't want this. I don't want you to make me... lazy."

Lazy. Jesus.

"What else are you tired of?"

"Everything! I don't work enough and I hate getting those letters and I don't understand why I'm letting you do this to me!"

"You work all the time," he pointed out.

Welts began to form on Jim's back, the skin turning a dark rose. There would be deep bruises when he was done, the ache would be a reminder for days.

"I do not! You keep me busy!" He kept Jim happy, well-fucked, settled. "I don't know how to DO THIS!"

"You're doing just fine." Better than fine. Jim was eating and sleeping, going to the gym. Marcus moved the flogger down to strike twice across the top of Jim's thighs.

"Stop it! Stop it!" Jim started fighting, panicking, pulling hard. This he understood -- when Jim'd gotten the piercing, the man had shut down, fallen in. This, though? This was healing.

He didn't say anything, just continued to use the flogger, changing the location of each landing to keep from breaking the skin.

"Fuck you! I don't want to do this anymore! I'm tired! I'm SCARED!"

"Good. That's good." His poor sweet baby. Holding all this in, holding it so tight.

"What?" Jim jerked, eyes looking up at him.

"Tell me everything, Jim. All of it. Let it all out." He smiled, ran the fingers of his free hand over Jim's cheek.

"I don't want to. It hurts."

"And it'll keep hurting. Come on, baby." He let the flogger fly hard over Jim's shoulder.

"Fuck!" Jim arched, bruised back rippling, feet kicking furiously. "Stop it! I'm done! I don't want to play anyMORE!"

"We're not playing."

"I can't do this, Marcus. I don't know how to do this with you."

"You're doing it." He hit below Jim's ass again.

"NO!" Jim gasped, fighting for breath. "Perseus. Perseus. Please."

He tossed the flogger down and pressed his face against Jim's. "Yes. Yes, baby. Good. So good."

"Help me. Help me, Marcus. Please."

"Shh. I'm here. I'm here." He licked Jim's lips, pressed their lips together and breathed into Jim's mouth. His fingers slid down Jim's arms, finding the quick release on the cuffs.

Jim ended in his lap, sobbing, holding on. "I'm so worried about how much I need you."

"It's okay to need, baby. It's okay." He rocked with Jim, pressing kisses on his baby's head. "I'm here. I'm with you."

"It's not. It's not okay. You keep making rules and I *do* them."

"There's nothing wrong with that. It works for us, baby. That's all that matters." He rubbed Jim's belly.

"It's weak. It's fucked up. I'm fucked up." Jim started relaxing for him, the tension melting away.

"Weak?" Marcus laughed. "You have no idea how strong you are, do you?"

"I'm not. I need a plan. I need help. I need my headache pills and a Xanax." Jim clung to him, breath slowing.

"All you need to do is breathe, baby. I've got you." He kept stroking Jim's belly, kept touching and soothing.

Jim's eyes closed. "We can't just sit here, can we?"

"Why not, baby?" Jim needed to learn he didn't need to fill every single second with busy-ness.

"I don't know." Jim leaned harder. "I'm sorry. I'm so tired."

"Then sleep, baby." Jim could sleep deep and good, get some rest.

Heal.

Jim held on, falling asleep easily.

He sighed and lay back against the bench. He'd take Jim upstairs to bed eventually, but for now, he' just hold on.

## *Chapter Fourteen*

Jim woke up stiff, sore, wrapped in warm arms. Oh, God. What time was it? Did he need to get up? Work?

He tried to move and Marcus held on.

"I have to work."

"No, you don't."

"I do." He wiggled again and those arms held him. Kept him close to that heat.

"You don't have to, you know? You work too hard."

"I have a schedule." Marcus was so warm, so fine against him.

"You need a new schedule."

"Who's going to give me that?"

"Me."

He caught himself nodding. What was wrong with him? What was wrong that he craved this?

"We've been taking it slowly. I think we should speed things up. Do a full schedule for you instead of a gradual change."

"I don't understand. I probably need to call my shrink."  
He cuddled in, moaning as his back complained.



"You've made more progress toward health and happiness in the last few weeks with me than you had with him in years."

"You make it sound so easy." It was true. He was happy here, if a little lost, confused.

"That's because it is." Marcus' mouth slid against his.

He opened to the kiss, letting Marcus in, letting Marcus love on him. One of Marcus' hands slid along his back, just above his skin.

His eyes flew open, his nerves tingling. "Don't touch."

"I'm not touching." Marcus eyes shone down into his, full of... something hot and bright.

"We should get you in a tub with witch hazel."

"We should?" He reached out, needing Marcus close. Right now. With him.

"It'll take the heat from your back." Marcus didn't seem inclined to move, though, mouth wandering slowly over his face.

"Okay. Come with me? I need."

"I know." Marcus stood and helped him get up, hands holding onto his, keeping him close.

"I'm sorry. I just..."

"What are you sorry for?" Marcus moved them slowly, leading him up the stairs.

"Being so needy. So whiny." So weak.

"The need goes both ways, Jim."

He stopped suddenly, stared at Marcus. "You're getting what you need here? From me?"

"I am, Jim. Your strength is astounding. Wonderful."

"You keep saying that." He didn't see how it could be true.

"And I'll keep saying it until you believe it." They crossed the living room, heading for the stairs to the upper level.

"I don't understand. Do you want a coffee with our bath?" He did. He craved it.

Marcus laughed softly. "No, baby. No coffee." Once they were in the bathroom, Marcus started the water running in the huge tub.

He looked at himself in the mirror. Bruises. Deep, dark bruises. "Oh, God." He was insane.

"It's beautiful." Marcus' hands did that not quite touching him thing again.

"This isn't normal." He whimpered, cock trying to fill.

"Oh, baby, this is so much better than 'normal'." Marcus' lips pressed gently against his shoulder.

Tears sprang to his eyes, his heart rejoicing, his head screaming that he was losing it. One of Marcus' hands slid down his belly toward his prick, eyes watching him in the mirror.

"I don't know what to do." His prick ached, throbbed, reached for Marcus' touch.

"You let me love you." Marcus' hand finally wrapped around his cock, stroking him slowly.

"Oh." He leaned back, moaning as his back touched Marcus' chest and ached.

Marcus didn't pull him tighter, just let him lean, big hand working his cock.

"Marcus." That hand moved, slow and easy, up his prick and down again, making his toes curl.

"Right here, baby. I'm not going anywhere."

"Promise?" He leaned back, just a little harder, the ache making him go up on tiptoe.

"I promise." Marcus' prick pushed against his ass.

"I want." Marcus was giving him what he wanted.

"I know." Those hot hands rubbed along his ass and tugged on his prick, thumb sweeping across the top.

Jim moaned, eyes dropping closed as his balls drew up.

"God, you're sexy. You make me need so much." Marcus' prick left a trail of pre-come along his ass, his crack.

The words were like another touch -- hot enough to make him push a little harder.

Marcus' free hand pinched the nipple without the ring, moved down to cup his balls while the slow jacking continued. There was so much sensation, all merging into pleasure. Sounds started slipping out of him, heat flooding him.

Groaning, Marcus pushed his feet apart, the thick heat of Marcus' cock sliding along his crack, over his hole.

"Need you. Want you. Baby."

He nodded, his body spreading as he leaned forward. He caught sight of himself in the mirror, muscles defined, nipple ring shining, hair curling around his ears. He looked different. Marcus' eyes met his in the mirror, hot and needy as the thick, leaking prick pushed at his hole.

His moan echoed, hands tightening on the vanity.

"Love."

"Yes. Yes, Jim." Marcus kissed his shoulders, light, gentle kisses that made his skin ache.

The hand around his prick moved faster as Marcus began to slowly, so damn slowly, push into him. He could do this forever -- feel Marcus stretch him while that hand stroked him, slow and easy.

"So good, baby." Marcus murmured and praised him, voice blending with the sensation of being stretched.

"Yeah. Yeah, so good." His head fell forward, throat working.

Marcus finally pushed the last of the way in, cock nudging that place inside him that felt so unbelievably good. His mouth opened, his gasp sudden and loud.

"Mmm..." Marcus' moan echoed along behind his gasp. The hand around his prick kept moving, even as Marcus stood still, waiting for him to adjust to the wide cock inside him.

"Feels good." He was starting to crave this -- the heat, the pressure. Marcus.

"It does. God, there's nowhere I'd rather be." With another groan, Marcus began to move, pulling out, pushing back in, hips hitting his ass gently.

"Stings." It was so good, deep inside him, making him moan with it.

"Yeah. Yeah, stings so good." Marcus squeezed his balls gently, hips moving a little faster now, pushing strong hip bones against his ass.

"Yes." It didn't matter, right now, if this was right or wrong. This was what he needed.

Marcus moved faster, hips slapping his ass with every thrust. Low groans and sweet moans came from the man,

brushing hot breath against his skin. He started pushing back, toes curled, rolled against the tile floor.

"Oh, fuck, yes." Marcus tightened the hand around his prick, body rocking, meeting his.

Oh. Oh, please. "More." He squeezed, body pushing harder.

Marcus gave him more, fucking him harder, faster, slamming into his ass and making it ache deep in his muscles. Everything went fuzzy, his only focus on his cock and ass and how good he felt.

He had no idea how long it went on, only that he didn't want it to stop, but then Marcus leaned hard against him, making his back catch on fire. "Come for me, baby."

"You. You too." His balls ached, cock bobbing as he shot, heat pouring over Marcus' fingers.

"Yes!" Marcus rocked into him, cock shooting heat into his ass.

They slumped together, panting hard, his muscles starting to scream. "Bath?"

"Yes. Yes." Marcus pulled out gently and he could feel the evidence of Marcus' pleasure dripping between his thighs. Marcus got the bath going and poured in half a bottle of witch hazel. "It isn't cold, but it isn't hot either -- it should feel good on your back."

"Are you coming in?" He whimpered as he sank into the water, head clunking against the back of the tub.

Marcus tsked and tilted his head up, putting a bath pillow behind his head. "Would you like me to join you?"

"I would."

Marcus looked pleased at his answer and slipped into the tub, facing him.

"Hey." They got their legs settled, got comfortable and he smiled over. "This is nice."

"It is. You're feeling better?"

"I think I am, yeah. There's a lot I probably need to think about, but..." He shrugged a little, water dripping from his fingers. "This feels good."

"You did so well with your first flogging. I'm very proud of you."

"I'm not sure that I understand what I did right."

"You let go, you threw everything out there and when you couldn't take anymore you said enough."

"Oh." He wasn't sure he really got it, but he liked the praise. "Things are so different now."

"They couldn't go on the way they were. *You* couldn't go on the way you were." Marcus grabbed one of his feet and began to massage it.

"Oh..." That felt so good, thumbs pushing in, easing him.

Marcus chuckled softly. "No one's ever taken care of you properly, have they?"

"God helps those that help themselves, huh?"

"There's nothing wrong with leaning on people who want you to, hmm?" His other foot was gathered up, massaged.

"You don't think that shows a... a lack of character?"

"Nope. I think it's actually harder for a man to accept help, to lean on others, than it is for him to muddle on through on his own."

"But don't you get tired of it?" Won't you get tired of me?

"Get tired of what? Touching you? Loving you?" Marcus shook his head. "Not going to happen."

"Taking care of me." Helping me.

"That's all part of loving you, baby. Feels so good, touching you like this."

He found himself nodding. "It does."

"The way you respond to me makes me happy deep inside. Every time you make that surprised, aroused and happy sound..."

"What?" Was that what he did?



"It touches me, hmm?" Marcus patted his own chest, over where his heart was.

"Oh." He reached out, hand sliding up Marcus' leg. "I want to stay with you. Even if Dr. Thomas thinks it's a bad idea."

"I want that, too, baby. I want to get a J tattooed. Want you to have an M."

Jim nodded. He could do that. "Where?"

"I want your heart, baby."

"Okay." He had the terrible fear that it was already Marcus'.

"Where should I put my 'J', baby? Heart? Cock? Ass?" Marcus grinned at him.

"No. On your wrist. Near your hand."

"My right one?" Marcus raised it up for him. The hand Marcus spanked him with.

His words dried up, but he nodded. Yeah. Yeah, that one.

Marcus beamed at him. "Yeah, good call."

He looked back, smiling. "Well, that's one decision down today."

"We'll go get them done in a couple days, when your back's not so tender." Marcus' hands slid up along his calf.

"I don't know if I want to be downstairs again for a while. It was hard."

"We'll go down there again when you need it."

"How will you know?"

"Instinct. You'll tell me -- not in so many words, but I'll know." Marcus picked up his other leg and rubbed his calf.

He closed his eyes again, letting Marcus touch him.  
"What's next?"

"You mean for us?" The touches turned into kisses.

"Yes..." He could feel his balls draw up, the water lapping against his hole.

"We set up a new schedule for you."

"What does that mean?"

"Exactly what it sounds like. I've been trying to slowly make changes with you, but I think we just need to go whole hog." More kisses landed on his leg.

"I don't know what you..." He reached down, cupped his balls a little.

Marcus snorted. "You keep telling me I'm messing with your schedule -- you know damn well what I mean." There was a bit of teeth in Marcus' kisses.

"I can make my own, though..." Sting. Oh, damn. He tugged a little.

"No, we'll make it together." Marcus looked up at him. "You're touching yourself. Tell me what you're doing. Be specific." Another sharp nip hit his calf.

"What do you mean? My balls ache; that helps."

"Are you needing again, baby? You want?"

"The water's touching my hole. It's distracting."

Marcus shifted and slipped a little and the next thing he knew, the man's toes were joining the water in distracting him.

"Marcus!" He jerked away, stunned. "Marcus, that's your foot."

A low chuckle echoed along the tiles. "It's not like I was shoving it up there." Marcus shifted again, foot pressing his cock against his belly.

"No." Thank God. The water was odd enough.

Marcus rubbed his cock a moment longer and then that foot slid away, touched his ass again.

"Stop that." He shifted away, chuckling softly.

Marcus was almost giggling as it was done again, that big toe wriggling against him. He grabbed Marcus' foot, started tickling.

"Oh!" Marcus' foot jerked out of his hand, the water splashing.

Yes! He kept tickling, both of them laughing.

Marcus finally managed to get his foot away, their laughter slowly fading. Staring right at him, Marcus smiled.

He smiled back.

Happy. He was so happy.

Marcus relaxed back against the tub, looking as happy as he felt.

Looking good and right.

## *Chapter Fifteen*

He headed for the dumbbells, intending to get those reps done first. His arms were aching, muscles burning from yesterday's workout where he'd added ten pounds to everything and, damn, he felt it.

Felt it deep.

Still, Jim knew that he had to work through it. He'd done this over the first few weeks. Those first few weeks where he was hard, all the time, from all the sweating, working men. Now he was used to it. Mostly.

He grabbed the dumbbells and faced the mirror, refusing to look at Marcus, who seemed to insist on following him, being beautiful and hot around him. Asshole.

"I didn't realize you'd added more weight -- you're doing great, Jim. The hard work is showing, too."

He looked over, nodded once. "It's still too sore to care about that, I think."

"Make sure you don't push too hard, baby. Slow and steady, hmm?"

"I know." He leaned over the bench, pumping the weight in his left hand, over and over.

He'd hit the treadmill after this.

"I'm really pleased with how well you've taken to working out. It's good for you, it's something we can do together, it releases endorphins."

He looked up, intending to snap at Marcus that he had been a fucking professor -- he knew that. He wasn't stupid. However, Marcus had a wicked, sexy smile going on, face sheened with sweat, six-pack ripped.

Bastard.

"Uh-huh."

Marcus leaned in and spoke quietly, that smile become even more wicked. "Not to mention you look hot in that outfit, baby."

"Stop it." He was in little shorts and a muscle shirt. He was *not* being hot. Not to mention that if he got even the tiniest hint of a stiffie, he was fucked.

"I just call 'em like I see 'em." Marcus' eyes were seeing, all right, looking him up and down.

"Stop." He looked away, trying desperately to focus on the weight, the ache, the burn in his ass from his spanking this morning, Marcus making him come twice from a slow, seductive session that had him melted and...

No.

Nope.

Stop it.

Reps.

One.

Two.

Three.

Marcus pouted. "I've done my reps. I'm going to move on to the treadmill."

The treadmills were right behind the weights. If he looked into the mirror he'd be able to see Marcus' ass behind him. If he turned and faced the other way, he'd be facing that ass head on. Jim closed his eyes, doing his reps, trying to imagine ugly, awful things, trying to forget that beautiful body, working behind him.

"Hello, Marcus! Nice to see you."

"Well, hello there. Long time no see."

He looked over, a beautiful, buff, dark-skinned man standing alongside Marcus, hand on his lover's hip. "You don't come in at night to work out anymore."

"No, no, we're scheduled to work out at noon now." Marcus looked back and met his eyes, smiling warmly.

"We? You have a we, now?"

Jim growled a little. Yes, indeed. Marcus most definitely had a 'we'.

"I do." Marcus' smile widened. "Jim? Come on over and meet Darren."

He put the dumbbell down and stood, nodding and wiping his hands off as he headed over. "Hey, Darren."

"Hi there. Jim did you say?" Darren waited for the nod from Marcus and then grinned and took his hand. "We'll all be sad to know Marcus is off the market."

"Not all of us." Jim chuckled. "I'm very pleased."

Darren chuckled and Marcus laughed. "Well put, baby."

Jim pinked and then headed over to the next treadmill. No sense in getting cooled down.

"Maybe we can go out for a drink or something after your work-out?" Darren looked hopeful.

Marcus shook his head. "We have plans, but thank you."

He felt like he ought to interrupt, say no, you go or we can, no problem. It wasn't true, though. They were going out to lunch and then to the book store.

Then home to... play, Marcus had said. Play hard as a reward for this morning. Like this morning hadn't been its own reward.

"That's too bad. Maybe some other time?"

"Maybe." Marcus didn't make any move to set a time or take Darren's number or anything, though. "It was nice to see you."

"Nice to meet you." Jim pushed the treadmill a little faster, focusing on his legs, his rhythm, not on the man beside him.

Darren lingered a moment longer, but Marcus had also gone back to his running and the guy eventually drifted off.

"He was hot. Have you known him long?" Not that he was jealous.



Marcus shrugged. "I've seen him often enough at the gym and we've been out a few times for drinks. With a group. I knew he was interested in more, but I never was."

"No? Why?"

"He's pretty enough, but he's not the serious type." Marcus chuckled. "And he thinks he's into the lifestyle, but he's only playing at that, too."

"How do you know?" Marcus seemed to have this radar thing about that.

"For one thing, I've never seen him at the Hammer."

"Is that important?" He'd never been there when Marcus had chosen him.

"Well, it confirms my instincts about him."

"But I hadn't. Been there. I mean, I didn't even know about us. About our life." The angle went up again and he started panting, hitting his limit.

"My gut was screaming at me over you, baby."

Jim looked over, stumbling a little, the need in those words enough to make him whimper.

Marcus' eyes were on him, heated. "You about ready to go?"

"I... You? I have another two miles, but..." He was getting harder and harder.

"I can wait if I have to." Marcus winked and continued running on his treadmill.

"I. Marcus. I'll get. I have to. Fuck." He closed his eyes, focusing hard.

"You sound all flustered, baby." Marcus' throaty words were *not* helping.

"Hush. No talking." Even Marcus' damn chuckles were sexy. "Stop it. I'll get hard, Marcus." He hissed the words out.

"A lot of guys get hard at the gym, baby."

"I'm in little shorts. Don't talk."

"I'm not talking dirty or anything, Jim."

"You don't have to." He looked over, grinned. "Really."

Marcus' grin was smug. "I knew you'd love the gym, baby."

"Shut up." He stuck his tongue out, and they both laughed.

His treadmill beeped and Marcus turned them both off, grinning widely. "I'm not sure how we're supposed to wait until we get home."

"Cold showers." He dared to reach out, nudge Marcus' wrist.

"Very cold," growled Marcus.

"Uh-huh." He headed for the locker rooms, not looking at anyone. He could feel Marcus' eyes on his ass as he walked. He thumped his cock, hard, sighing as it went down.

"Ow, baby. Be nice to yourself." Marcus' hand ghosted across his ass as they turned a corner in the locker room and found themselves alone.

He headed right for the showers, the cold water.

Marcus took the stall next to his. "Better?" Marcus asked as soon as the cold water came on.

"Uh. Uh-huh." He legs muscles started cramping and he gasped, knees buckling a little.

"Jim? Are you all right?" Marcus looked over the top of the stall.

"Y...yeah." Fuck.

Fuck.

Ow.

Ow.

Cold.

Frowning, Marcus came around, turned off the water and supported him. "Cramp?"

He nodded, panting through it, the muscles like rocks in his legs. Bending, Marcus began to massage his legs, fingers digging into the hard muscles.

"Oh. Oh, God. Damn."

"No more cold showers right after exercising, baby." Marcus kept working on his legs.

"Okay. Okay. I promise." Anything. Just make it better.

"Come on, baby. Relax."

"I don't know *how*!" His voice was loud, surprising him, and he jerked away. One foot went out from underneath him, and he slammed to the floor of shower, his breath huffing out of him.

"Baby." Marcus sat and tugged him into his lover's lap, fingers still working on his poor muscles.

"Ow." He could just die.

"It'll ease, baby."

"Uh-huh." His head was pounding from where it cracked on the floor, his butt was stinging. On the good side, his legs were better. Okay. Okay, up off the floor. Quick. Before someone came in.

"Whoa, where's the fire?" Marcus steadied him as he stood.

"Someone could come in."

"We weren't doing anything wrong." Marcus wrapped a towel around his waist.

"I was in your lap. Naked."

"You were hurt." Marcus grabbed a towel of his own.

"Yeah." He stopped, turned to Marcus. "Thank you for the help. That really sucked."

"You're welcome. It put a bit of a damper on our visit, hmm?"

"Kept me from getting hard, though." He got dressed, smiling over. "I have a knot on my head."

Marcus snorted. "We're all men here, baby. No one's going to get upset over a hard-on."

"It's just... I don't like to, not in public." It was wrong.

"I know you don't, but we weren't hurting anyone." Marcus snorted. "We weren't even trying to do anything sexual, baby, so don't worry about it."

"Yeah. Yeah, okay." He got dressed, nodded. "You know, it's your fault."

One of Marcus' eyebrows rose up toward that beautiful, bald head. "What's my fault?"

"You make me all..." He shrugged. "You are incredibly sexy. It's impossible to ignore."

"Good. I don't want you to ignore me or your reactions to my being near." Marcus looked around and then leaned in and pressed a soft kiss to his lips. "Now let's get home. We have plans."

He couldn't help his smile, his eager nod. He was becoming a fan of Marcus' plans.

## *Chapter Sixteen*

Marcus sat at the computer, Jim in his lap, cuddled close. They were looking at office furniture. He figured it would be quicker to order it online and have it delivered. And this way if they got distracted by each other, they wouldn't get arrested for lewd behavior in public. "Oh, look at that desk, it's beautiful."

"It is. It's awfully big, though. Do you think there's room?"

"Well, with the hutch there'll be place for books and papers and stuff. And we'll get you a soft cushion for when it's tender to sit." He wanted Jim's working environment to be comfortable and beautiful, somewhere where it was a good place to be.

Jim's cheeks went pink and that pretty ass wiggled against him. "I like that big chair with the high back."

"It'll go well with the desk, too." He started clicking, adding items to their shopping cart. "You want a paper shredder, baby?"

"I don't think so. There are other things I can spend a hundred dollars on."

"Anything else? We've chosen the big ticket items..."

"No. I have my stereo, my equipment. I should probably buy a clock."

"Oh, yes. An alarm clock."

They were going to set up a schedule when they were done shopping and Marcus didn't want to start hearing, "I lost track of time," as an excuse.

"I was thinking more one for the wall."

"You could have both."

He clicked on a little travel alarm clock and then searched for wall clocks. "You like any of these?"

Jim looked, resting hard against him. "I like the square one. It's attractive, the numbers are big enough, and it will look good on the wall."

"Yeah, I like that one." He added it to their basket, too, and then hit the page for the lamps.

"I need to check my bank account. I'm going to need bookshelves."

"Most of this stuff was needed for the office, anyway, so we can split the costs."

Jim nodded, "I can handle that."

"Good. Then I like that lamp." The lamp in question was black and silver; very modern, it almost looked like some ancient torture device and it amused him.

"Yeah? It's very sexy." Jim's fingers traced the outline.

"Mmmhmm." He slid his hand along Jim's side

"I think everything looks good. I think it will be workable."

"Yeah. We'll get the bookshelves that match the desk. Then we can talk about extra bookshelves for the living room." He kissed Jim's neck, patting one hip.

It didn't take long to go through the checkout process.  
"Coming Tuesday next week. Excellent."

"That's not bad. I'll be able to get quite a bit more accomplished."

"And in less time." He nibbled Jim's neck. "So that's done. Only one thing left to do."

"What's that?"

"Make your schedule." He had a feeling they'd be butting heads a little more over this than they had over the furniture.

"I'm capable of doing that for myself. I did it for years."



"That was before you became involved with me, with the lifestyle." He was very proud of himself for not pointing out how Jim's self-schedule saw him overworked, underfed and, frankly, miserable.

"I..." Jim took a deep breath, getting what Marcus thought of as Jim's 'let's be reasonable' face. "Let's discuss it, then."

"Why don't you tell me what you think is reasonable and we'll work from that?" He wasn't sure if that or simply imposing a schedule was going to work better for Jim, but he suspected either way the man was going to complain and fight him on it.

"Well, right now I'm getting up at four, working until seven. Then eight to five or six unless you're busy."

"You need more sleep than you're getting. Up at seven. Spanking. Making love and breakfast should take us to nine."

"But that leaves me making up those hours when you're awake..."

"I was thinking more along the lines of you cutting back." This was going to go over well, he could tell.

"I can't. I need to keep my fingers in things. I have to keep busy. Working is important."

"Why?" He held up his hand. "I mean why is working important, aside from keeping busy?" Because he had plenty to keep Jim busy with.

"I... Money? Societal expectations? Ethics? It's what you *do*?"

"What you do is work nine to five like everyone else. *That* is the societal expectation."

"I can't get everything done and write my novel in that time."

"You could work from nine until one on work-work, and then one to five on your novel."

"That's only four hours of work... twenty-eight hours of work a week."

Oh, like he was going to approve of seven days a week.

"Twenty, baby. And then twenty a week on your novel. You have to stop thinking that the novel isn't work." He looked right into Jim's eyes so his baby knew he was serious.

"I... What will I do with the rest of my time? What about money?"

"I have plans for the rest of your time, baby. And we'll check out your income, work on a budget, but you're paying less now in rent. I'm pretty sure that's not going to be a problem."

"That's not fair to you."

"Nonsense. It's fair."

"You didn't. What plans?" Jim met his eyes. "What plans do you have?"

"Teaching you to cook. Tying you up. More spanking. Making love. Training you." He kept Jim's gaze, waiting for the man's response.

One eyebrow went up. "Training me? For what?"

He figured in for a penny, in for a pound. "To be my sub."

"I. I don't know what that means." He could feel Jim beginning to panic, just as he'd expected.

"Shh. Shh. It means we keep doing what we're doing, only on a more formal basis." He stroked Jim's back, pressing hard enough to make the bruises from the flogging ache.

"That doesn't make sense to me." Jim moaned, relaxing against him immediately.

"The words might not, but the acts do." He kissed the top of Jim's head. "You love what we do together, that's enough."

Jim hummed. "Most of it. I don't get enough coffee and I don't know that I can stay in bed until seven."

"You wake me when you can't go back to sleep and I'll fuck you back into oblivion. And you'll be over the caffeine addiction soon enough." If Jim stopped finding every excuse to have more than that one pot...

"Eventually you're going to get tired of me."

"No. No, I'm not." He had a hunch this particular truth was one that only time would prove.

Jim shrugged, fingers tangled in the slowly lengthening curls. "I need a haircut."

He took Jim's hands and put them both in one of his, holding Jim's wrists tight. "No, I want to see it long."

Jim blinked, frowned at him. "No. It's curly. Freakish. Girly."

"Girly." Marcus snorted. "Baby, you are all man."

"You've got my hands." Jim tugged, lips going stubborn. Fuck, that was hot.

"I do. I'm not giving them back yet, either."

"Why not?" Jim was getting hard, fighting back a little.

"Because I like it when you try to get away. I like the way you smell when you sweat and get hard."

"We were trying to have an intellectual discussion." Jim tugged, belly rippling for him.

"You don't need your hands for that."

He could see Jim working out an argument. "You don't know that. I might need to move for my brain to be at its most effective."

"You're the smartest man I know, Jim. We both know your hands having nothing to do with that."

"I want you to let go."

He didn't believe that, not for a second. "We can have this discussion without me letting go." He wasn't letting go.

"Are you going to make more rules?"

"Yes, I am." They both liked the rules, but for Jim they were necessary.

"Why? What are you going to do?"

"You mean in this relationship?"

"Yes. In this relationship. With the rules. With us. I need to know."

"I'm the one who makes the rules. I know what you need and I'll make sure you get it. I'm the one who... I'm the one who loves you."

Jim's hand pressed against his chest. "How do you know? How do you know for sure?"

"I just do, baby. I just... I do." Deep inside, he knew. All through him, he knew.

"You'll have to help me. I don't know what you need me to do."

"I've helped you so far, haven't I?" He'd give Jim everything the man needed, everything he could.

"I think so." Those green eyes met his, twinkling.  
"Except for the whole rules thing."

## *Chapter Seventeen*

Five o'clock.

Jim blinked at the clock and stumbled out of bed, heading for the kitchen and the coffeepot. He needed to check his mail and get that horrible article about metamorphism in Russian literature edited. Then there were two text books to look at and a quick run to the post office and the coffees shop and Borders. He really needed a closer store.

He got the pot started and grabbed his mug, heading into the office to grab his laptop.

Marcus met him at the door. "We should return that clock."

He frowned over, confused. "Huh?"

"It obviously doesn't work. I mean it says five am, and yet you're up and working, so it *must* be after nine."

"I... What?" Marcus was obviously way more awake than he was. "I haven't had my coffee yet." There. That would explain it.

"Baby. You're supposed to wake me if it's before seven, remember?"

"But you were sleeping." And looked so good, so right there in the bed.

"Hence the *waking* me part. It's a rule. If you wake up before seven you wake me and I love you back to sleep. Come on." Marcus linked their fingers together and headed for the stairs.

"But..." He yawned, following right along. His coffee wasn't done yet.

"No buts. It's a rule. And now there's a spanking for disobeying it."

"No way. I didn't disobey. I just forgot. Besides, you were sleeping!" He growled a little, head suddenly pounding. "That counts as being *decent*."

"The rules says you *wake* me." Marcus chuckled.  
"Besides, it's not like you don't like the punishment."

"Don't laugh at me." He rubbed his temples.

"I'm not." Marcus kissed his knuckles.

"My head hurts."

"I'll take care of it, baby." Marcus sat on the bed and patted his lap.

"I don't want you to spank me." It was too early for this shit.

"Jim." Marcus' voice did that crack like a whip thing.  
"Over my lap. Now."

He took a step forward and then forced himself to stop.  
"I'm not just some robot that follows orders!" God, he hated mornings.

"I'm going to add one for every refusal. You're up to twelve. Would you like to make it thirteen or would you like to assume the position?"

"Fuck you." He started shaking, feeling completely lost and a little betrayed.

"Jim!" Marcus sounded shocked.

"I'm sorry. I just..." He held his hands out, shaking harder.

Marcus took his hands and tugged him into the big lap.  
"It's been several days, baby. You know you aren't supposed to get up until seven and then we start the day with a spanking. Now I have to spank you for not following the rules."

"This is all screwed up. This isn't normal."

"Normal is for other people." Marcus kissed Jim's forehead and tugged him down, encouraging him to assume the position.



"I don't like this." He was crazy. He was crazy to let this happen. He didn't want to do this.

"We both know you do." Marcus' hand slid over his ass, rubbing, finger teasing along his crease.

"I don't. I have a headache and it's too early." He sobbed quietly. "Why didn't you just stay asleep? I wasn't hurting anything."

"You broke the rules, baby. Count, please." And then Marcus' hand came down on his ass.

"They're stupid fucking rules! They don't make sense!" Asshole. Bastard.

"You have to number the spanks or they don't count." Marcus spanked him again.

"One. Stop it! I am not doing this! You aren't making SENSE!"

Marcus didn't say anything, just hit him again.

He screamed and fought, counting each of the first eight blows, then he felt something let go in his throat, he tasted blood and went silent. He jerked, hands grabbing Marcus' leg in pure agony.

"Jim? Baby?" Marcus tugged him up.

He stared, holding his throat, lips moving, but no sound coming out.

"Christ, baby. I think you tore your chords."

He could feel his eyes go wide, feel the panic flooding him, taking his good sense. Marcus' hand rested over his throat, the pressure warm and solid.

"All right, baby. It's okay. I've seen this before. Subs sometimes blow a vocal chord shouting and screaming. Look at me. It's okay."

He groaned, reaching for Marcus. "H..." Oh. Oh, ow.

"Shh. Don't try to talk, baby. That'll aggravate it." Marcus held his gaze, hand warm and soothing over his throat. "It's like a sprain, baby. It just needs to heal."

He held on, mind whirring. Oh, God. Oh, God. What was going on? What was this?

Marcus rocked him, hands petting. "Lots of fluids, plenty of rest and as little talking as possible and you'll be better in no time, I promise."

The tears started, everything in him overwhelmed, exhausted.

"Okay, baby. Okay." Marcus kept holding him, rocking him. As they rocked, Marcus shifted, moving them to lie down on the bed.

"I'm sorry." The words were cracked and broken.

"It's okay, Jim. You needed to get it all out and your vocal chords just weren't up to the job. Ironically, the more you scream, the stronger they'll become."

"I don't." He swallowed hard, winced. He didn't know what was wrong with him.

"Shh. Shh. You're adjusting, physically and mentally." Marcus kissed the top of his head.

He curled in, arms wrapping around Marcus' waist. He'd figure it out.

Soon.

Later.

After he closed his eyes.

## *Chapter Eighteen*

Marcus waited until he was sure that Jim was asleep and then slipped out of the bed. He grabbed the phone and dialed Doc Manning, sitting at the top of the stairs so he could hear if Jim woke.

"Lo?" He could hear the weights clanking, knew Doc was at the gym.

"Hey, Doc. Marcus Goodfellow. I'm sorry to call you so early."

"No problem, Marcus. Where've you been? We haven't seen you in weeks. Are you okay?"

"I'm good, Doc. Great in fact. Well." He rolled his eyes at himself. "I've found my sub, Doc. So things are good. But we've run into a bit of a medical problem."

"Yeah? What's up?"

"I think he's torn a vocal chord." And he was trying to convince himself it wasn't his fault. He hadn't pushed Jim any harder than he usually did, though.

"Doing what? Screaming? Is he ill, otherwise?"

"Yeah, screaming. He's run down. He doesn't eat right, doesn't sleep enough, drinks too much coffee. I'm working on it, but we've only just really begun."

"Well, you know the drill. Liquids. Silence. Rest. Watch the coffee -- it won't help. I can give him a steroid shot if he needs it. Honestly, though, I'd watch him. I've found, if a sub strains his vocal chords, he's coming down with something else."

"A cold or flu's not going to help his vocal chords at all." Marcus growled, feeling helpless.

"Nope. But at least you can keep him quiet, still, and let him heal."

"Yeah, I can do that." He sighed and nodded, even though Doc couldn't see it. "If he's not doing better in a couple days can I prevail on you for a house call?"

"Absolutely. If he runs a fever over 102, if he breathes and it's raspy, call. I'll run over."

"Thanks, Doc. I appreciate it." It was good having a doctor in the community, someone who understood the lifestyle. "How's your Les?"

"He's good. Busy as always." Doc's voice went warm, fond.

"Glad to hear it. Well, I'll let you get back to your workout." He wanted to get back to Jim.

"Good luck, man. Keep him quiet and resting. Juice, water, soup." The line went dead.

Yeah, he knew that. He'd just needed someone else to confirm it. Marcus turned the phone off and went back to Jim's side, looking down at his baby. Poor love, screaming himself into pain. Of course, now that he looked, Jim had big, dark circles under those coppery eyelashes, a hint of pink in the cheeks. Maybe something deeper than a lack of sleep.

He slid back into the bed, wrapping himself around Jim and holding on. He dozed off, waking after nine to hear Jim sniffing and coughing a bit, tossing in his sleep.

He stroked Jim's back. "Shh, baby. Relax. I'm here."

Jim eased, cuddling into him without any hesitation.

"Mmm... good, baby." He pressed a kiss to Jim's forehead.

Jim was warm, running a fever. Doc was right.

Damn. He wished he'd noticed, but the symptoms were only showing now and he didn't see how he could have known. It would explain Jim's out of character behavior as well. He sighed and made a mental list of things he needed to pick up, including cold medicine and lots of juice.

Jim's eyes popped open. "Mar..." Oh, that poor raw voice.

He stroked Jim's throat, meeting the scared eyes. "Don't try to talk. You've hurt your vocal chords and you're getting a bad cold. I spoke with my doctor and he said plenty of rest and fluids."

"Sorry." Jim pulled away. "Don' get close. You'll get it." That was not being silent.

"Baby -- *no talking*. Don't make me get out a gag." He was only joking. Mostly.

Jim's lips parted and he pressed one finger against them.

"No talking means no talking. I'll get you a pad of paper and a pen, hmm? And you can nod or shake your head."

"S that a rule?" Someone was going to get swatted.

"Yes, baby, it is. Starting this second, and if I hear you say one more word I'm going to start spanking you." No matter whether or not that was how this had started in the first place.

Jim rolled those eyes, but cuddled back in, wrapping around him.

"There you go." He grinned against Jim's cheek. "Now you have to cut the caffeine and sleep more -- your body's working with me."

Those eyes popped open, wide.

He chuckled, hands sliding on Jim's cheeks. "Seriously. The doctor said caffeine would aggravate your throat. You need lots of liquids, lots of sleep. I get to keep you in my bed."

Those lips moved, the 'I don't believe this' easy to read.

"Hey, it's not all wine and roses for me, either. I don't get any blowjobs until you're better." He gave Jim an exaggerated pout.

Jim blinked at him and then started shaking with laughter, only stopping when it turned to harsh coughs.

Grinning, he rubbed Jim's back. "Oh, now. That sounds painful. Would you like a glass of water, or some juice?"

Jim nodded, sitting up like he was going to get out of bed.

Marcus snorted. "Lie down, baby. You are relegated to bed. You need anything -- I can get it for you."

The look he got would have been amusing if it wasn't so sad. Hadn't anyone ever taken *care* of Jim?

He suspected not.

Marcus rummaged around in the side table drawer, coming up with a pad of paper and an old pencil that wasn't terribly sharp, but which still wrote. "You write down what you want and I'll go get it along with a glass of juice for your throat." And some ibuprofen, too. And if Jim asked for his laptop and current workbooks Marcus might just spank the man.

Jim nodded and scribbled. "Do we have rice? I'd love some rice with milk and sugar."

"If we don't have it, I'll go get it for you, baby. Anything else?" Good man, something soft and obviously comforting.

More scribbling. "I'd say work, but my head's deadly. Do you want to sit on the sofa and watch movies?"

"I'd love to sit and watch movies with you!" Marcus was very pleased Jim had come up with an alternative to work himself, less pleased that his head was bothering him. "Come on. I'll get you settled on the couch and then I can gather stuff for you."

Jim kissed his cheek, the whispered, "Thank you" brushing against his skin.

"It's my pleasure, Jim." He helped Jim up and found the man a pair of sweats and one of his own T-shirts, helping Jim to get dressed. He was happy Jim was letting him help -- that was a big step for his baby.



Jim headed for the bathroom and Marcus went downstairs to the kitchen. By the time Jim made it into the kitchen, he'd thrown out the coffee in the maker and all the coffee grounds, started a pot of water for the rice and poured a huge glass of orange juice. Jim was pale, shivering, red-cheeked.

"Oh, let's get you settled on the couch with a quilt." God, his poor baby.

He grabbed the juice and wrapped his other arm around Jim, leading his baby back to the living room. Jim followed easily, leaning into him, letting him wrap his baby up and get Jim settled. Then Marcus grabbed the bottle of pills and shook out two, offering them over along with the orange juice. "This should help with the pain, baby."

Jim drank deep, wincing at first, then drinking deeper. He rubbed Jim's back, waiting for his baby to finish the glass so he could refill it. Between the throat and the cold, Jim was going to need a lot of fluids.

"Mmm." Jim drank the whole glass, nodding.

"You look better already." He gave Jim a wink as he took the glass. "I'm going to refill this and check on the rice. Why don't you choose a movie or two?"

Jim smiled and grabbed the case they kept the movies in. Suddenly Marcus could see Jim as a younger man -- happy to relax and play, excited for a day off, an excuse to skip out.

He couldn't turn back time, but he could bring Jim back to that happiness again. He was determined that he would. He knew the things Jim needed -- the schedule, the spankings, the loving.

The rice set to simmering, and Marcus refilled the orange juice, filling a glass for himself as well before wandering back out to sit next to his baby. "So what have you chosen for us?"

Jim had pulled out a handful of movies -- Star Wars and the Matrix, Raiders of the Lost Ark and The Mummy.

"Oh, we should do all the movies in each series." They could do a series a day, keep Jim's ass firmly planted on the couch.

"Yeah?" Jim winced again. "Sorry."

He handed Jim his notepad and a pencil. "You've got to stick to non-verbal communication, baby."

Jim nodded, writing. "It's hard to remember."

"Yeah, I know. It'll become habit soon enough. Who knows, maybe we'll make it a rule, alternate days are no speaking days or something." He gave Jim a wink.

Jim stuck his tongue out, that laughter coming again.

Laughing himself, he held up the movies. "Which one first?"

He got Star Wars and Jim got the orange juice, drinking this one slower. He set the movie up, grabbing the remote and settling in, cuddling with his baby. With any luck, Jim would doze off.

Jim stayed awake long enough to eat two bowls of rice and drink another glass of juice, then he found himself with an armful of sleeping lover, relaxed and easy in his arms.

He hoped they'd get a lot more days like this, only without the torn vocal chords and impending cold.

For now, he'd take what he had.

## *Chapter Nineteen*

If he didn't get to talk soon, he was going to scream.

Loudly.

Jim looked at the clock. Marcus had threatened to be grumpy if he worked more than four hours. Weirdo. He had forty-five minutes. Jim put his head down and got to editing, muttering under his breath and humming along with the radio.

The phone rang. And rang and rang.

Finally he rolled his eyes and answered it, "He...he...hello?" He sounded like a crow.

"Marcus? Is that you? You sound sick."

"No. No. 'S Jim. Marcus is..." He cleared his throat.  
Where was Marcus? "Working."

"Are you supposed to be talking? I'm sorry, that wasn't quite as rude as it sounded -- this is Doc. Don't say anything, just let Marcus know I called, please. Take care of yourself."

"O...okay." He blinked at the dead line. Doc. Okay. He made a note and headed back to work.

Marcus suddenly appeared in the doorway. "Did I hear the phone?"

He nodded. "It was D..." He cleared his throat again, shook his head and handed over the paper.

"You *answered* the phone? Baby, we have an answering machine!" Marcus grumbled, frowning at the paper in his hand.

"Kept ringing."

Marcus' eyes narrowed. "They would have hung up and tried again. You aren't supposed to be talking."

He rolled his eyes, shook his head. He couldn't be quiet forever.

"It's quitting time, isn't it?" Marcus looked pointedly at the clock.

Was it? He looked, blinked. Man, that last few minutes had gone fast. He took the pad. "It went fast."

"You were no doubt working hard, hmm?" Marcus held open his arms. "Now it's my time."

Jim chuckled and headed over. He'd complain, but it felt good, the way Marcus enjoyed him, liked being with him.

"Mmm..." Marcus hugged him tight and then kissed him, tongue slipping into his mouth.

He hummed happily, stretching up against Marcus, enjoying the long, warm body.

Marcus' hands landed on his ass, squeezing. "Mmm... we need to get back to our morning spankings."

He wasn't so sure about that, although he might be able to... Then Marcus' hands left his ass, one of them coming back in a hard smack.

Jim groaned, nipping Marcus' bottom lip. "What was that for?"

"To make sure I remember how... This one's for practice. The next one will be for talking." Marcus smacked him twice more.

Jim arched, that heat welcome, warming him right up.

"God, yes. It's been too long." Marcus began to walk him back toward the living room.

He hummed, cock threatening to fill for the first time in days.

"Just a few smacks to put us back in practice. No counting, no screaming, just a few smacks and then a little something, hmm?"

He met Marcus' eyes, blushing as he nodded. Yeah. Yeah, just a little heat. A little pleasure. Marcus' eyes were alight. He wasn't the only one looking forward to this.

Marcus sat in his big chair and patted his thighs. "Take off the sweats first, baby. I want skin."

His fingers were shaking as he pushed his sweats off, his briefs. Marcus reached out, fingers sliding on his skin.

"Marcus." His cock jerked, his throat ached, and man, he wanted.

Marcus shook his head. "I'm only going to do this if you don't speak or shout or make any noises." His ass was caressed.

He swallowed hard, nodded. He wanted.

"Then assume the position, baby." Marcus' voice was thick with need.

Jim looked at Marcus, making his feet move, making himself drape over the strong thighs. Marcus rubbed his ass, letting the anticipation build. He lifted his head, throat working, wanting to beg, to stop the waiting.

Marcus nodded, smiled. "Good boy."

And then the spanking began. It wasn't harsh, was a steady, warm sensation that made him hard, not panicked. This was sting and pleasure and he pushed back, riding it.

"Missed this, baby. Missed loving on you like this."

Yeah. Yeah, he knew. Jim nodded, hand sliding on Marcus' leg, loving back.

"Mmm..." Two more smacks hit his ass, his prick rubbing against Marcus' thigh.

He groaned, balls drawing up. Fuck. Fuck, please.

"You want to come like this, baby?" More hits landed, Marcus' hand spreading fire.

He spread, nodding, moaning, bucking up into the touch.

"Good." Marcus growled the word. "Come when you're ready."

The hits were steady, working one ass cheek and then the other, then the tops of his thighs.

It wasn't going to take long -- he was tired and it had been a few days -- but it felt good. He humped, rubbing hard, driving himself to orgasm, Marcus' hand helping.

"Yes. So sexy. That's it, baby. Show me how good it is."

"Love." He groaned the word, heat spraying from his cock.

"God, I can smell you, baby." Marcus' hand slid across his ass, rubbing him.

He spread wider, offering Marcus everything. Groaning, Marcus found his crack, fingers playing over his hole. His toes curled and he pushed back, offering himself to that touch.

"I want you to ride me. Are you up to that?" Marcus' finger pushed against his hole.

"Yeah," he croaked.

Marcus moaned, finger pushing into him, stretching him. He pushed himself up, ass tingling, wanting Marcus fucking bad.

A second finger worked its way into him, Marcus telling him how hot he was, how good.

"Mar." He cleared his throat. "Marcus."

"Shh, baby. Just let me love you."

Oh. Oh, God. Yes. He nodded, lips parted, thighs jerking.

"So tight. Hot." Marcus opened and stretched him, and then found his gland, making lightning shoot up his spine.

Jim jerked, crying out, hips moving faster.



"Oh, I think you're ready. Straddle me, baby." Marcus' fingers disappeared.

He stood up, swaying a little as the blood rushed from his head. Marcus' hands were there, steadying him, guiding him back onto the chair, across the thick thighs. That cock spread him, pushing in, the head popping inside him. Hands on his waist, Marcus kept moving him down onto the fat prick. His hands landed on Marcus' shoulders, his mouth open, working. Marcus brought him down for a kiss, muffling any sound he might have made.

The moan he made must have echoed all through him.

"No noise," murmured Marcus, hands tightening on his hips, tugging him up and down.

His lips moved as he tried to fight it.

"So good. You feel so good." Marcus brought their mouths together again, licking and sucking on his tongue.

He bounced, rode that thick cock until his breath caught, until his cock started to rise again. As soon as it did, Marcus' hand wrapped around it, tugging and pulling on it as he rode. He met those wonderful eyes, staring, so in love it hurt. Marcus' free hand slid down to grab his ass, the sting warm.

He whispered, "Love."

Marcus moaned, both hands squeezing. "Yes. Love."

His body went tight, heart just pounding. He needed.

Marcus knew -- he always knew. "You may come."

His hand dropped to Marcus', the extra pressure enough to let him shoot again.

"Baby!" Marcus shouted for him, bucking into him and filing him with spunk.

He slumped down, let Marcus hold him up as he melted. Marcus rumbled, the sound deep and happy.

Oh, he could just stay.

Right here.

Right at home.

And he thought maybe Marcus would let him.

## *Chapter Twenty*

Every morning he gave Jim a spanking, Just because.

It worked for them.

And now that Jim was better, he got to hear the shouts, feel Jim struggling, begging him to stop and meaning please don't.

"Is that coffee I smell?" he asked, making his way to the kitchen for breakfast.

"Yep." The laptop was on the kitchen counter, the pot was a quarter empty, the eggs almost looking good on the plate. Breakfast was now Jim's responsibility, supper would come eventually. "You want a cup?"

"No." He'd hoped they'd put the coffee away for good, but Jim wasn't giving it up. At all. "I think we should cut you back from a full pot to half a pot a day."

"Why? I'm better." Two glasses of juice were put on the table. "Do you want English muffins or toast?" Jim didn't sound angry, just curious.

"Toast, please. Because the caffeine isn't good for you. You sleep better without it." Jim had been sleeping like a lamb, warm and cuddled up in his arms.

"How about half caffeine and half decaf or something?"

"I'd like for you to get out of the habit altogether, baby, but you can start by slowly switching to decaf. Half and half will work for now." He was willing to compromise, move slowly when needed.

"Okay." He got a nod, a smile. "We need to go to the store at some point, too."

"Groceries? Have you made a list?" He waited for Jim to sit before he dug into the food.

"Started one. You'll have to add to it, but we're out of eggs, and juice, and I want Cheetos."

"Cheetos? I'm a popcorn man myself." He waved his fork at his food. "This is delicious, Jim."

"Thank you." He got a sweet, slow grin.

"You're welcome. Tomorrow you should add bacon to the mix."

"Maybe. I didn't like cooking the bacon."

"Why not?" Jim was getting better at telling Marcus things, saying what he needed.

"It popped on me."

"Well, I could buy you an apron, baby. I *love* bacon." He liked sausage, too, but not as much as bacon. Of course neither were particularly good for you -- vegetable omelets would be good for them.

"I'm not wearing an apron, that would look silly."

"I don't think it would." In fact he knew someone who did custom work who could make one that said "spank the cook" or something like that. "We'll get two and I can wear one as well."

"I want a waffle iron."

Marcus blinked, hid his grin. That might have been the first bald, easy request he'd gotten.

"Let's make a non-grocery list. Put that on it. Now, the real argument will be syrup -- regular or the real deal?"

"I like the butter-flavored fake stuff, but I like honey, too."

"I like fruit and whipped cream," he admitted with a smile.

He loved that Jim was wanting to try new things, that he was getting more adventurous.

Jim finished most of his breakfast, and then moved over, settling in Marcus' lap. "What else?"

He looped his free arm around Jim automatically. "We could maybe get a Crockpot – it might make learning to cook supper easier?"

"I don't like gooey food." Jim wrinkled his nose, shook his head.

"What's wrong with gooey food?" Most of the best desserts were sticky and gooey and good.

"It's... gooey?"

Marcus put his head back and laughed. Jim did just tickle his funny bone sometimes. He got a quick kiss to his throat, Jim nuzzling.

"I have a new rule I'd like to impose." He stroked Jim's spine.

"What's that?" Jim blinked up, curious.

"I'd like you to call me 'sir'." It was an important component of the lifestyle.

"What? When?"

"When you talk to me, when you answer questions. And especially when we're making love, spanking, etc."

Jim looked uncomfortable, uncertain. "And what are you going to call me?"

"Baby, Jim. Mine."

"I'm not sure what to think about that, Marcus."

"It's a part of the lifestyle." He grinned. "You could use Master instead."

"I don't think so." Jim shrugged. "I can try, but it's not natural for me. It feels... I don't know how I feel."

"You'll come to love it. To need it. It means... that I'm yours and you're mine and we have something special between us. Every time you call me 'sir' or 'master' it'll remind you that you have my heart, my mind, my focus."

"I. I don't know. I... " Jim sighed, frowned a little. "I feel... Unnerved."

"That's perfectly natural, Jim. You're new to this world, unused to it. But I think what unnerves you the most is how much you crave the things I do to you, the things I make you do."

"I feel like I ought to be ashamed, like I shouldn't." That nod made him proud -- that Jim was listening, communicating, *talking* to him.

"There's no reason to be ashamed. A man who can embrace his needs, who knows himself and accepts those needs is nothing to be ashamed of." He hugged Jim tight. "It's healthy. And it makes us both happy."

"Mmm. That feels good."

"You're such a sensual man. It's one of the things I love about you."

"Thank you."

He nuzzled Jim's cheek. "That's 'Thank you, *sir*'."

"I... Okay."

He chuckled softly, nibbling Jim's neck now. "Why don't you give the word a test drive, baby?"

He barely heard the whisper, "Th...thank you, sir."

Still, quiet as it was, it made his cock jerk and begin to fill. He groaned softly, his fingers sliding to Jim's belly. "So fine." His sub. "I think you'll be starting your work late today," Marcus growled, shifting Jim just a bit, enough to stand and hold his baby against him as he headed for the stairs.

"Yes." Jim arched, rubbing against his belly. "Yes, sir."

That had his cock firming the rest of the way up. "I do like the way that sounds, baby."

Jim's lips wrapped around one earlobe, sucking, teeth teasing. He swore he could feel his cock throbbing with each suck, and he grunted, arms tightening around Jim as he moved them into the bedroom.

The games they were going to be able to play...

He eased Jim to the floor, that nipple ring catching on his skin. He reached up and tugged at it, watching Jim's face. His other hand was busy pushing off Jim's sweats.

Jim's eyes closed, lips parting. He twisted it, his fingers finding Jim's balls and rolling them.

"Marcus!" Jim went up on tiptoe, pretty muscles rippling.

"I told you you'd like it." It was hard not to feel smug. "You're going to like the one down here even better." He slid his fingers beyond Jim's balls and pressed against the smooth skin where the guiche would go.

"They don't put jewelry there."

Marcus snorted. "Baby, they put jewelry *everywhere*. We can go trolling the body-mod sites on the internet later." He leaned in and bit at Jim's earlobe and then murmured, "I'll show you everything I plan to do to you."

The Prince Albert was going to freak Jim out, but when it finally happened it was going to be amazing.



"You're not done?" Jim's cock was full, hard, leaking for him.

"Oh, baby, I've hardly even started." He got a hold of Jim's ass and tugged Jim in close, rubbing their middles together. He loved the feeling of Jim's hard cock pressed between them, rolling against his skin.

"Want." Jim moaned, licking at his lips.

"You can have. Eventually." He nipped at Jim's tongue and then spanked him. "Go get the cock ring from the bedside drawer."

He loved how Jim enjoyed the cock ring, how his baby responded to that need. There wasn't even an attempt at a complaint, just Jim doing as he'd been told. Marcus admired Jim's ass, stripping his own clothes off quickly. Of course, Jim didn't touch the plugs, the clamps, the little paddle in that same drawer.

He thought Jim was becoming a master of ignoring the things he didn't want to see. He'd let Jim suck him off and then it was time to play, to use at least two of the three types of items. The only question would be whether or not he made Jim choose which two.

When Jim came back with the black leather cock ring, he slowly slid it over the hard flesh of Jim's cock. Jim arched, legs spreading. "Please."

"Please, sir." He let the cock ring sit at the base of Jim's cock, waiting to be closed.

Jim met his eyes, cheeks hot. "I. Marcus. It's hard."

He gave Jim's cock a stroke. "Very hard." He gave Jim a soft kiss. "Just two little words, baby."

"Please, sir." Oh, so difficult.

He groaned, letting Jim hear how much he liked the way Jim said it. "Good." He got the cock ring around Jim's cock and balls, loving the way it separated them. Jim was nice and smooth -- they'd kept up the shaving.

Jim relaxed, moving easily under his touch.

He stroked the smooth skin once the ring was on, and then tweaked the nipple ring again. "I want you to suck me, baby."

"You know I love that." Jim knelt down, cheek sliding on his cock.

"I know." He sighed happily at the feeling of Jim's skin on him. "You know I love it, too."

"I know." Jim took him in, lips moving, sliding up and down on his prick, working him eagerly.

A low moan was pulled out of him by Jim's mouth, and he slid his hands through the increasingly longer curls, holding on. He could see his ink, bright on the pale skin, those muscles starting to show. Another groan left him, his hips starting to move -- not hard, not fast, just little motions that he couldn't control, sliding him on Jim's tongue.

In this, Jim was eager, wanton, the act one of love and hunger, those eyes smiling up at him. He smiled back, letting all his pleasure and his love show in his eyes. Jim rolled his balls, fingers stroking the strip of skin behind.

"Baby, won't be long." Not long at all, Jim was too good at this. The soft moan vibrated all along his prick, Jim taking him in to the root. "Jim!" He cried out, body shuddering as he came, shooting hard down Jim's throat.

Jim pulled hard, drinking him down, then cleaning his prick.

Humming, he petted Jim's head. "So good, baby. So good."

"Mmm." Jim kissed the tip of his cock.

"Thank you, baby." He tugged Jim up and took a kiss flavored by his own come. Then he turned Jim and swatted his baby toward the drawer. "Pick two things were going to use on you, baby."

"I already picked the ring..."

One of his eyebrows went up. "Would you like me to choose?"

"I... Yes." Jim nodded. "Yes."

He smiled and patted Jim's arm. "That's good. Telling me what you need is good. Maybe next time you'll say 'yes, sir'." He winked and patted Jim's arm again before going over and pulling open the drawer.

Jim followed him, the flat belly curling against his back, hands sliding on his skin.

He reached back, hand finding Jim's hip. "I don't want to have to choose, so I'm taking a nipple clamp for your free nipple, a little plug for your ass, and the paddle. He took them out, tossing them on the bed for easy access.

Jim's lips slid down, brushing his ear. "I haven't had anything in me but you, Marcus. Sir. Will it hurt?"

"No. It'll feel full. You'll walk differently. If I get it sitting just right, it'll hit your gland while I paddle you."

That moan was low, deep, Jim's lips on his jaw. He turned his face enough to take Jim's lips, opening them with his tongue as he took the kiss deep. Jim shifted around, straddling his lap, pushing in close.

He hummed and tugged Jim closer, so their groins met, Jim's ringed cock hard and hot against him, encouraging his own prick to perk back up. He started playing with Jim's nipples, tugging on the ring and teasing the bare one, getting it ready to take the clamp. Eager and responsive, Jim's body just warmed for him, bucking and rolling in his lap.

"Sexy," he murmured, knowing Jim loved the praise. "So eager. Love it."

Markus was about ready to put on the clamp and he reached back for it, searching blindly next to him on the bed. Of course, Jim kissed him and he got distracted, again. His fingers closed idly over it as Jim's tongue

played with his, and when the teeth bit into his thumb, he remembered why he was holding it.

"Ready, baby?" It was the only warning he gave Jim before attaching the clamp to that naked little nipple.

"Oh!" Jim jerked, cock leaking on his belly.

He met Jim's gaze. "Bites, doesn't it?"

"Yes. Yes, sir."

Good boy. He gave Jim a broad smile and flicked the clamp, knowing it would increase the sting for a moment.

"Plug next. Over my knees, baby."

"I... Okay." Jim moved carefully, stiffly, obviously nervous.

"I've chosen a fairly small one, baby. It's not going to hurt." No, it was going to make Jim crazy, was going to nudge his gland every time the paddle hit the base of it.

"They make big ones?" His words had Jim relaxing.

"Big ones, small ones, fat ones, thin ones. Huge ones. Ones that vibrate, ones that get hot or cold. Normal shapes, weird shapes." He chuckled, hand sliding on Jim's ass as the man lay over his knees. "If you can think of it, I bet it's out there."

"Amazing." Jim relaxed for his touch, legs parting a little more.

"Yes. Yes, it is." He chuckled.

He slicked up his fingers and slid them along Jim's crack.

Resting one cheek on his folded arms, Jim moaned softly.  
"What're you thinking?"

"That you're gorgeous. That you're going to look even better with a plug in you, that paddle working your sweet cheeks." He pushed one finger into Jim.

"What... what good is the plug?"

"It's going to fill you, keep you stretched." He pushed a second finger in and found Jim's gland, pegging it. "It's going to hit that spot as I paddle you."

Jim's head came up, throat working.

"Yeah, it's going to make you crazy." He pegged Jim's gland again, glad they'd put the ring on.

"Mmm. Damn. Please. Please, sir."

"Yes, baby." As a reward for that 'sir', he pegged Jim's gland a couple more times.

Jim bucked and spread, riding the waves of pleasure.

"You're ready for the plug now." His fingers slid away and he lubed up the plug, placing the head at Jim's hole.

Jim stilled, but that little ring of muscles spread, let the invader in. He pushed just the tip in, and then pulled it out, fucking Jim with an inch of silicone.

"Feels weird."

"Hard and ungiving, hmm? Not like my cock."

Jim nodded. "It's cooler, too."

"Oh, your body will warm it up soon enough." He pushed it in a little farther.

That got him a groan, an arched back. Jim's ass was a pretty, pale pink, nice and warmed. He rubbed Jim's ass and pushed the plug deeper, feeding three quarters of it in.

"Oh. Full."

"There's more coming." He kept sliding the plug in and out, and then finally pushed it all the way in, angling it to nudge Jim's gland.

Jim cried out and he could see that ass working the plug, squeezing and moving it.

"Beautiful, baby." He pulled the plug almost out and then pushed it back in again, fucking Jim with it.

"Marcus!" Jim shifted, almost coming off his lap.

He smoothed Jim back down. "Yes, baby?"

"I. I. That's... Damn."

Chuckling, he pushed the plug back in, let it bump Jim's gland as he seated it properly. The flat base rested against Jim's ass cheeks and would be easy to catch with the paddle, to jerk the plug inside Jim's body. He could feel Jim, hard and hot against his thighs. He stopped playing with the plug, knowing Jim's body would keep working it, that the paddle would do its job.

Rubbing Jim's ass, he closed his legs, holding the leaking cock between them. "You ready, baby?"

"I don't know. I don't... I think..."

"No thinking, Jim." He chuckled. Thinking always got Jim into trouble. He grabbed the paddle and rubbed it against Jim's ass.

"Yes, sir." Jim arched, shifting just a little.

"Yes. Yes, very good." He gave Jim's right cheek an experimental tap with the paddle.

Jim hummed, the paddle not even marking the skin. Marcus rubbed Jim's ass and then hit him again, a little harder this time, but still avoiding the plug.

"That's not as nice as your hand."

"I can do it for longer, though." His hand wouldn't get tired as quickly as it got sore. It was good to know, though, filling and hitting both, Jim preferred him to toys.



He started a quick, light rhythm, spreading the hits over both cheeks and then finally hitting in the middle to jostle the plug. That didn't make Jim cry out, but the lean hips started rocking, that cock fucking his thighs.

"Mmm..." He increased the speed and strength of his swats.

The little drops of liquid wet his thighs, making the way slick for Jim's cock.

"Sexy, baby." He began to alternate hitting Jim with the paddle and with his hand.

"Marcus. Marcus..."

He stopped and rubbed Jim's ass. "Yes, baby?"

"The clamp. It *hurts*."

"Good boy for telling me, baby." He reached around, fingers on the clamp. "It's going to be overwhelming when I undo it."

"Okay. Okay, it really hurts." The little clamp had twisted, the teeth digging into his nipple.

"I'm taking it off now, baby." He opened the clamp and removed it, tossing it toward the side table. Thumb rubbing, he tried to ease the abused flesh as the blood rushed back into it.

"Fuck! Fuck!" Jim pushed closer, shaking. "Help me."

"Shh. Shh. It'll ease, baby." He kept rubbing the nipple, and jostled the plug with his other hand, nudging Jim's gland.

"Oh. Oh, okay. Thank you, sir."

His prick jerked at that 'sir'. It was going to be quite the turn-on. He kept playing with the plug, giving Jim something else to focus on, marrying the pain to the pleasure.

"I... I want... Marcus, love."

"You want me." He growled and moved Jim off his lap.  
"Hands and knees, baby, and I will have you."

"I do. I need you." Jim moved to hands and knees, ass in the air and eager, spreading for him.

He settled behind Jim, playing with the plug, pulling it out and shoving it back in.

"Marcus." Oh, that was almost desperate. He approved.

He did the plug thing a few more times, and then he pulled it right out, rubbing the head of his cock on that empty little hole.

"Please. Please, I need it to be you, Marcus."

"I know, baby. You've got me." He pushed in all the way with a single thrust.

Jim's cry filled the air, body tight and hot around his cock. He rubbed Jim's ass, his hips making little grinding motions.

"Good." Jim pushed back into him, onto him, humping back on his cock.

Yeah, it was good, Jim so tight around his cock, so eager. He began to thrust, fingers sliding on Jim's prick, spreading the liquid down from the tip. They moved faster and faster, bodies slapping together.

"You need to come, baby?" His voice was a low, needy growl, his fingers ready to slide around and remove the ring.

"Yes. Yes, sir. Yes, please."

He'd been thinking of making Jim wait, but that answer deserved a reward. He reached around and undid the leather cock ring.

"Love!" The word echoed, heat splashing on his hand.

Jim's body squeezed him tight, and Marcus shouted, his cock jerking, filling Jim's ass.

They slumped forward on the bed together, laughing, moaning.

"Love you, baby."

"Love." The word sounded hoarse; Jim needed to take it easy, voice-wise.

He kissed Jim's ear. "Shh, now, love. Rest, float."

He got a nod, the sound happy.

About as happy as he felt.

They were lucky men.

## *Chapter Twenty One*

Marcus watched Jim take his Xanax with his orange juice, and frowned.

"Baby, did you talk to your shrink about going off the Xanax?" Jim had other coping mechanisms now, support. They were doing so well.

"No. I need them."

"You only think you need them. You should be able to cut back slowly and eventually go off them." He wished Jim could see his own strength.

"My nerves get jangly without them, you know? I hate being that way, out of control." Jim went for the coffeepot, pouring his second cup.

"You realize that the caffeine is counteracting the Xanax, right? It makes your nerves jangle and so you take the Xanax to bring yourself back down. Baby, now that you're eating more protein, working out, now that you're healthier, you don't need the Xanax anymore."

"I don't want to talk about it anymore. I've got a prescription. That means I can take it, right?"

"But it doesn't mean that you *should* keep taking it. It's not meant to be a permanent solution, baby. It's supposed to tide you over the bad stuff." He reached out and slid his hand along the back of Jim's fingers. "You've moved in to the good stuff, haven't you?"

Jim's eyes were on his hand. "I have. This is good, this between us."

"It is. Wouldn't you like to try it without the drugs?"

"I don't think I can." Jim was getting incredibly good at avoiding 'can't'.

"Why not? That's not what your shrink is telling you, is it?"

"He says this is a crutch. That it's a mistake." Jim sighed and met his eyes. "I'm not sure what to do next."

Marcus growled. "He would rather keep you doped up and miserable than happy and alive? That's not right, baby."

"No. No, Alan says that I'm allowing you to abuse me, that I'm not entering a healthy relationship."

Marcus tried not to growl, he really did. "The lifestyle is *not* abuse."

"I know. I know. I just... That's why I." Jim sighed, drank deep. "We need to get to work."

"I think we need to clear this up first, hmm? If you know the lifestyle isn't abuse and you know it's working for your anxiety, why not try giving up the pills?" Jim always responded well to logic, he hoped in this case, too.

"I. It's hard, because you and Alan are saying two different things." Jim looked confused and worried. "It's only easy when you're touching me."

"Then I should keep touching you, hmm?" He linked their hands, fingers curling with Jim's. He reached with his other hand and stroked Jim's cheek. "Touching you is the easiest thing in the world."

"We can't do it all the time, though." Jim hummed, leaned right into his touch.

"We *can*." He winked, thumb rubbing across Jim's lower lip.

Jim ducked his head, started sucking his thumb, fellating him just like it was his cock. It had him groaning, his prick jerking and beginning to fill. Teeth scraped across the pad of his thumb, dragging. Tingling. "Baby..." It occurred to him that Jim was changing the subject, but doing it so well.

"Hmm?" Those green eyes met his, so smart, so wicked.

"How about every time you want to pop a Xanax, I pop you instead?"

"Does that mean I get one for every spank?"

"I mean instead of, baby. Not as well as."

"That doesn't seem fair, does it?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well, you're going to spank me for wanting a pill, then... Wait. I'm confused..."

He chuckled. "Yeah, me, too. You like the spankings, right?"

Jim blushed dark, lips parting as he waited. This was so hard, so difficult for his baby.

"You like it when I put you over my lap and heat up your ass."

"I. I don't. I." Jim turned toward the coffee maker.

"Baby. Look at me. Right here. You can tell me anything."

"I don't want to like it. I shouldn't like it."

"That's bullshit. There's nothing wrong with the lifestyle. Nothing. We're the lucky ones, baby. We've figured out what gets us off, what makes us happy." They had nothing to be ashamed of. Either of them.

Jim stared at him, searching his eyes. "I don't know if I can do this. I don't know how to live in my skin like you do. I'll never be able to."

"Yes, you will." Jim just needed a little confidence. And to forget about the rest of the world. He was getting there, but he needed to be able to do it without the Xanax there whenever he got worried. Because Jim wasn't really there if he had to take Xanax to get there.

"How do you *know*?"

"Because I can see how much you love it, need it, crave it. You're a sensual, sexy man, Jim."

"What do you want me to do?"

"I want you to live in the moment and enjoy your body."

"I don't know how." Jim sighed, coffee cup slamming to the counter hard enough that the handle broke off.

He got up and pressed himself against Jim's back, arms wrapping around his baby. "You're learning. Rome wasn't built in a day, hmm?"

"I want to scream or cry or something."

"I can make you scream, baby." He so could.

"Okay." Everything seemed to stop, just like that, and Marcus knew he'd fucking remember this forever. Jim, asking for him. Needing what he could give.



"Come downstairs with me." He took Jim's hand.

Jim nodded, swallowing hard. "Okay."

He kept hold of Jim's hand as they went downstairs to the room with the special bench, the cuffs. The whips. Jim shook against him, not saying a word, just watching him.

"You can scream as loud as you like down here. You know no one can hear you."

"I'm. I feel tied up inside and that's with the drugs. I feel like I'm going to shake apart."

"Lie down over the bench, baby." Jim could wriggle and scream as much as he wanted.

"What are you going to do?" Jim moved, stiff and shivering, sweat pants riding down.

"I'm going to take the riding crop and beat you with it." His made to sure to touch as much of Jim as possible as he guided the man into the cuffs.

"Why is everything about beating?" He got a tremulous grin.

"Because that's what makes you scream."

"I'm angry."

He nodded. And Jim felt safe now, cuffed in place.

"What are you angry about, baby?"

"I'm angry because this is all so hard. Because you keep making rules. Because I keep letting you."

"Are you sure you aren't angry because this," he smacked Jim's ass, "is so easy?"

"I. No. No, that's part of it. I don't want to do this. I want to be normal."

"Normal is relative, baby." He picked up the riding crop.

"I don't want to do this. I changed my mind. I can't do this." Jim pulled at the cuffs and he knew they were getting closer to something that scared Jim.

He let the crop fall across Jim's red ass. "You *can* do this. You are doing it."

"No! I CAN'T!" Jim jerked, pulling harder. "I need out! I'm so fucking mad!"

"What are you mad about?" He placed the next hit between Jim's shoulders.

"DON'T!" Jim's scream rang out. "I won't do this!"

"You are doing it. You are." He laid the crop down a couple more times.

Jim groaned, closing his eyes tight, lips pursed. "No."

"Yes." He found his rhythm, bringing the crop down over Jim's back.

Jim stilled, trying to fight him, trying to hide from him, from the pain.

"Why are you angry?"

He got a soft growl, muscles tightening.

"Tell me, baby." Jim's back was a study of pinking stripes.

"I can't. I don't know how."

"Just say it."

"I want this. The rules excite me. I hate it. It pisses me off so *bad*."

"You hate it because you've been told it's wrong."

"It is wrong."

"No, it isn't." He took a breath, making sure he didn't lay the next hit down in anger at that statement.

"I don't want it to be. I don't think I'll be able to stop, now that I've found you."

"You don't have to stop, Jim. This is about you and me and what we want, what we need. It's nobody else's business."

"I'm scared. I could..." Jim groaned, body twisting again.

"Could what, baby? Let it out." He worked a criss-cross pattern into Jim's skin, careful not to break the skin.

"Lose myself to you. Give you too much." Too much.

He wanted it all, everything. "It's about give *and* take, baby. You have me as much as I have you."

"I want you. I want you to be mine."

"Yes, Jim. This is about what you want. What you need. This is about me giving it to you. I say you're mine, but it does work both ways and I am yours, too."

"What am I giving you?" He laid down another blow, this one almost gentle, and Jim moaned happily.

"Yourself."

That got him another moan, another happy sound. He continued to work Jim's back, ass and thighs, the hits easy, rhythmic, designed to leave Jim rosy and aching, but not hurting. Jim relaxed into the bonds, beginning to move, just barely, almost dancing.

"So beautiful, baby." Jim was. In fact, he was stunning. Marcus' dick began to fill at the sight.

"It feels good. Why does it feel good?"

"Because you're a sensual man, Jim. Because the pain lets you know you're alive. Because you can't focus on anything but your body." His voice was thick with his

arousal, the sound of each new hit enough to make him moan.

Jim's hips began to rock, looking for all the world like he was fucking the air. He opened his pants, stroking himself as he watched, as he kept using the crop. In a moment he'd take Jim, fuck his beautiful baby until they both came.

"Stings. Marcus. It fucking stings."

"Yeah, feels good, doesn't it, baby? I'm going to fuck you now." He put aside the crop and grabbed a tube of lube.

"Fuck yes. Please." Jim nodded, eyes bright, shining, staring at him.

He slicked himself up and then pushed two fingers into Jim, sending them deep. The cry he got was perfect, then he found Jim's gland and the cry became a scream.

"That's it." He kept pushing, pegging it over and over.

"Marcus!"

Fuck him, that sounded so fucking fine. He used his free hand to slick up his cock and then he tugged his fingers out and lined up. "You ready for me, baby?"

"Ready. Ready. Come *on*." Demanding little bottom.

Utterly delighted, he smacked Jim's ass, making his baby howl. Then he pushed right in, giving Jim what Jim needed.

"Fuck!" Jim bit the word out, that tight ass squeezing him so tight his breath caught in his chest.

He stroked Jim's back, hands just barely ghosting over the welts.

"Yes. It's good." Jim's ass was working him like nothing else ever.

Markus had to agree. "So fucking good."

He got a rhythm going, pushing into Jim with long strokes. His hips slapped Jim's ass, over and over, the skin hot as fire. Sliding his hand around, he found Jim's prick. Hard, hot and leaking, it felt fantastic in his hand.

"God, yes. Please. I need it."

He could listen to that soft voice beg for hours.

"You wait until I say you can come." He jacked Jim a little faster, hitting his baby's gland as he thrust in.

"Fuck. Fuck. Marcus." Jim bucked under him, almost snarling with his need.

He couldn't reply, his breath stolen, so he just kept pounding into Jim, moaning. He felt Jim, heard the desperation in the little sounds.

"Okay, baby. Together. Come with me now."

"Yes..." Jim moaned, heat pouring over his hand, just like that.

His own come pushed deep into Jim's body, the pleasure coursing through him. Jim's skin was hot against his chest, hot and damp, smooth under him. He pressed a kiss to the top of one of the welts on Jim's shoulder. "You're something else, Jim. Special."

"Good." He heard Jim hum, the sound peaceful. Happy.

"Yes, it is."

He gave Jim another kiss and then withdrew, groaning as Jim's body seemed to cling to his cock, as if trying to keep him buried deep inside.

Jim whimpered, shivering a little.

"I know, baby. I'll get you undone in a second and we can go snuggle on the couch." He loved holding Jim.

"Promise? Are we... is today going to be a day off?"

He nodded. "Yeah. We can do that, baby." They could enjoy each other, love on each other.

"I'd like that. Just one day."

"It's yours, baby." He undid the cuffs, fingers working Jim's wrists, rubbing them. Jim leaned hard, relaxed, almost asleep. "Come on, baby." He helped Jim up the stairs and they made it to the couch where he lounged, Jim tucked in along his side.

"Thank you." Jim's breath brushed against his jaw.

"You're welcome, baby. And see how good it is between us?" He was going to keep pushing on the Xanax, he wasn't taking a day off of that. "What we have is better than any drug."

"We'll see. I'll try. Maybe. Maybe I could try for you."

"I'd like that. Especially if you tried for yourself as well, hmm? For us?"

"Right now, I'll try for you. Someday, I'll work at trying for me."

"Okay, baby. I can live with that."

"Cool." Jim closed his eyes, melting into him.

He let his eyes close, too, enjoying the peace and quiet they'd built together.

Right before he dozed off, he felt Jim's fingers, twining with his.

## ***Chapter Twenty Two***

It was four in the afternoon when he couldn't bear it anymore and Jim headed to the kitchen, hunting for his Xanax. He'd done well, all yesterday and all day today, but... There were emails and he needed more coffee. He was feeling ridiculous and unprofessional, his head hurt, and he kept thinking about his ass.



It was ridiculous.

Of course, more ridiculous was the fact that his bottle of meds was gone.

Gone.

Jim dug through the cabinets, then poured another cup of coffee and headed for the bathroom. It had to be somewhere.

"Baby? Everything okay? You seem restless."

"I'm looking for my pills. They were in the kitchen."

Marcus took his hand and drew him close. "Do you feel like you need one?"

"Yes. Yes, that's why I'm *looking* for them."

"You're supposed to come to me, hmm? I'll help you."

"I need them. I'm having a hard day. I need one." The coffee splashed on his hand and he hissed, jerking, causing more coffee to spill. "FUCK!"

"Okay. Okay, baby." Marcus took the coffee and put it on one of the hall tables before taking him to the bathroom and putting his hand under the cold water. "Let's get this taken care of and then we'll go into the bedroom and see if we can't get you back in the zone, hmm?"

"Marcus. Marcus, I have work to do. Lots of work." He wasn't in the mood to be reasonable. Submissive. Nice. Any of those things.

"You can take an hour out of the day so that we can deal with how you're feeling." Marcus dried his hand and then led him toward the bedroom.

"I am trying to deal. See me? See me trying?"

"I can see that, baby." Marcus took him over to the bed and started stripping him.

"What are you *doing*?"

"Getting you naked so I can make love to you."

"I'm not horny. I'm aggravated."

"I know." Marcus' hands landed on his shoulder, rubbing.

"Why do I get the feeling you're not listening to me?"

"I'm listening, baby. You're busy, you're trying to deal, and you're aggravated." Marcus kept massaging his shoulders.

"Yes." Exactly.

"It doesn't sound like you're enjoying yourself very much. I'm just trying to help with that."

"I don't. Wait. I. You're confusing me." He wanted his pills. Right?

"I'm trying to make you feel better."

"Don't you have to work? I do."

"All I'm asking for is an hour, baby."

Well, he couldn't really complain about that, could he?

"That's better." Marcus leaned in and brushed their lips together.

He blinked, staring at Marcus' lips, stealing another kiss. Marcus' fingers slid along his neck, warming his skin as a third kiss was shared between them. He stepped closer, wrapping his hands around Marcus' waist. Marcus increased the pressure of their lips, tongue slipping into his mouth.

He wasn't horny.

He wasn't.

It did feel good, though.

The massage continued, turning into half massage, half caresses, and Marcus' tongue tickled along his own. Jim found himself breathing with Marcus, humming as they swayed. Marcus' fingers slid down his back, nails lightly scoring his skin. He shivered, trying to decide whether to push closer or pull away.

Marcus rubbed their cheeks together. "Relax, baby. Just let everything go for awhile."

"You smell good." Marcus made him want things. Need them.

"Come a little closer and smell me some more."

The husky words made him smile and he stepped closer, cheek on Marcus' as he inhaled. Yeah. Yeah, good.

"Mmm..." Marcus' hands slid down from his shoulders, moving slowly along his back.

Oh, that was... He was... He wasn't sure what to do, how to ask for more. Marcus' hands didn't stop until they reached his ass, fingers digging in and making the underlying ache burn.

"Marcus." Fuck, yes. Please. He loved this, loved the sting.

"Right here." Marcus let go, hand coming back to smack his ass.

"Hey. I haven't done anything..."

"You saying you don't want me to make your ass burn?"

"It already stings." He couldn't say that. It wasn't true.

"I know. I'm going to make it sting more." Marcus hit his ass again.

"Why?" He moaned, lips on Marcus' jaw, ass pushing back into the touch.

"Because you love it. Because you need it."

He didn't have anything to say to that. Nothing at all.

The next smack ended with another squeeze, Marcus' gaze on his.

"Don't..." He wanted to just bend over, spread, let that hand make him fly.

Marcus did it again.

"Marcus!" He tugged away, ass muscle tight.

"I think you should bend over, baby."

His groan echoed, his cock throbbing in his jeans. "Oh, fuck."

"Eventually. Now pull down your jeans and bend over. Hands on the bed. Come on."

"Marcus. Marcus, I..." He couldn't. He just. Fuck.

Marcus' hands moved to his arms and turned him around.

These sounds pushed out of him, and Marcus put his hands on his own fly, encouraging him, helping him. Together they pulled down his pants to his knees, the air cool against his already warm ass.

"I don't... I don't know if... Help me."

"You're doing fine, baby. Just fine." One of Marcus' hands landed on his belly, the other on his back, bending him down into position.

"I need my pills. This makes me scared." It made him hard.

"You need *this*." He felt the air move against his ass and then Marcus' hand landed. Hard.

His head slammed back, a sharp, short scream filling the air. Fuck. Fuck.

"That's it, baby. Let it all out." Marcus struck his ass again.

"It HURTS!" Don't stop. Don't stop, please.

"I'm sure it does." Two more hits landed, then another.

"Why are you doing this to me?" Why did he need it so badly? The questions were slowly becoming less important, the sensation taking precedent.

"Because I care about you." Marcus rubbed his ass before the next smack. He moaned, chin ducking at the caress.

"Stunning, baby. You're absolutely stunning." Each word was accompanied by a smack to the tops of his thighs.

He spread a little more, his thighs burning, his muscles tight as bowstrings.

"Mmm... yes, perfect." Marcus began to rub his ass and then hit, the mix of the slow burning touches and the quick stings remarkable.

"Good. So good." He relaxed finally, the tension and worry melting under Marcus' touches.

"I know. You need this, Jim. Nothing but this and me."

"Need." His eyes closed, his breath coming slower, his body feeling more and more solid and warm and right.

Marcus kept spanking him, hand coming down on his ass in a sweet rhythm. "Want you."

"Yes." He needed that -- the heat, the pressure. Marcus and Marcus' fat cock.

One of Marcus' fingers pushed against his hole and then right in, slick and wet, opening him.

He jerked, head slamming back, a short cry leaving him. "More!"

Marcus gave him more, pushing another finger in with the first and stretching them both, spreading his hole wide. Yes. Yes. He could hear his cries, ringing out, echoing in their bedroom. A third finger pushed into him, Marcus finger fucking him hard.

"Please." He pushed right back, the sounds escaping him so loud.

"Easy, baby, easy." Marcus' fingers slid out of him, hand rubbing against his abused ass, making it burn and ache until Marcus' prick pushed against him.

"Oh. Oh, Marcus. Deep."

"Yes, baby." Marcus pushed in until he could feel Marcus' hips pressed hard against his ass.

The sobs that wanted out surprised him, the need that cock filled in him. Then Marcus started to move, thrusting into him with long rocking motions. The pleasure surged inside him, the stupid fucking sobs forced from him.

"Let it all out, baby. Let it out -- I'll fill you again."

"I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I don't mean to."

"No apologies, Jim. I'm proud of you. Let it all out."

"I need you." His shoulders shook, breath hitching.

"I know, baby. It goes both ways. I need you, too."

Marcus moved faster, thrusting into him, hips smacking his ass cheeks. He started pushing back, riding harder and harder, begging for it. Marcus' hands landed on his shoulders, tugging him back into the thrusts, encouraging his movements. He ended up in Marcus' lap, bouncing, his burning ass rubbing furiously on those strong thighs.

"Come on, baby. Let me feel you come on my cock."



"Yes. Fuck, yes." He squeezed tight, cock jerking as ropes of spunk poured from him.

"Baby!" Marcus shouted, hips pushing the thick cock into him again and again until Marcus froze, heat pushing into him.

His own spent cock jerked, wanting to come again, even though he couldn't

"Mmm... baby." Soft kisses pressed over his face, Marcus' hands hot on his skin. "You still need that Xanax?"

"Uh-uh. Good." He was. Melty. Easy in his skin. Hot. "Thank you."

"It was my pleasure, baby. I just want you to remember this the next time you need something."

"Need you." He needed more than just something.

Marcus nodded. "That runs both ways, baby. You're not in this alone."

"Good. I don't... I don't want to be alone." Not anymore.

"You aren't." Marcus pushed up, prick moving inside him. "Does this feel alone?"

"No." Jim smiled a little, moaned a little. "It feels not alone at all."

"That's right. Not alone at all." Marcus shifted, thrust inside him again.

He gasped, eyes rolling a little bit. "You're still hard."

"Yes. You have that effect on me."

Marcus thrust up into him again.

"I can't..." There was no way he'd get it up again. No way. It was so good.

Marcus' hand slapped his ass, making the burn suddenly sharp and strong. "You don't have to get hard again, baby, but you know I hate that word."

"Fuck. Fuck. I forgot. Sorry. I'm sorry."

"Sh. Sh. It's okay, baby. I never asked you to be perfect." Marcus rubbed where he'd smacked, the ache dulling, spreading.

"Oh. Oh, God. That feels..." He couldn't quite catch his breath, couldn't think.

"I won't stop, then." Marcus kept rubbing and thrusting, stimulating him almost unbearably.

"It's big. Big. Marcus..."

Marcus waggled his eyebrows. "I know."

"Butthead." He laughed, actually laughed, tickled down deep.

"I try." Marcus' circled his hips and thrust again, fingers digging into his hips.

"Uh. Uh-huh. Fuck." He was going to have a fit.

Marcus' lips silenced his words, tongue pushing between his lips. Things slowed down -- the kiss meaning something. Something more than fucking. Something more than sex or even need. It went on and on, soft and sure, hot, wet. He wrapped his hands around Marcus' shoulders, fingers rubbing circles, just touching.

"I could do this forever," murmured Marcus, mouth sliding along his jaw.

"You've got a deal."

Marcus smiled, the look absolutely blissful. He grinned, licking Marcus' lips.

"Hold this moment, baby. Hold onto it."

"I'm busy holding onto you."

"Mmm... that works." Marcus pushed forward again, cock nudging inside him.

"Uh. Uh-huh. Do that again."

"This?" Marcus did it again, cockhead skating across his gland.

"Yes." His cock actually jerked, trying to fill.

Marcus kept it up, making minute movements inside him with big, huge results. His prick got harder and harder, the blood filling it, making it swell.

"That's it, baby. Feel me."

The entire fucking world got tiny, just him and Marcus, breathing, touching, making love. Hands and mouth and cock on him and in him, Marcus was everywhere and he didn't know anymore where Marcus ended and he began

"Love you." The words slipped out of him before he could stop them.

Marcus groaned, hips snapping, pushing deep. "Baby, yes. Love."

"Yes..." His head fell back, throat working.

This was what he'd needed. Just this. Marcus kept moving, kept kissing, hands on his skin -- smooth and sweet on his back, stinging where he'd been spanked. He rode a little faster, feeling the need shoot up his spine.

"That's it. Like that." Marcus' gaze held his, eyes intense.

"Tell me this is real." That he wasn't making this up.

"It doesn't get any realer than this, baby." Marcus pushed up hard, prick nailing his gland.

The sound he made came out of nowhere, ringing out of him almost painfully.

"Yes." Marcus shifted, rolling them on the bed so that he was beneath the strong, solid body.

The cock slammed in deeper and deeper, rocking him hard. "Marcus."

"Jim. Mine."

He couldn't answer; he nodded instead, throat working, cock so hard it ached. Marcus' hand wrapped around his prick, stroking him hard and fast, matching the thrusts now penetrating him.

"Gonna. Again. Gonna. Please." The words just poured out of him, bubbling up from his chest.

"Give it to me, baby. Together."

"Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Together. Toge..." He shot so hard the room went gray.

The only thing that was solid was Marcus' cock, shooting deep inside him.

It was all that he really needed.

### *Chapter Twenty Three*

He looked at the slimy pile of pale, wet, gooey, raw chicken. It sat there, shining in the light. Laughing at him. Marcus had finally put his foot down about Jim cooking supper and... well... Two days ago he'd burned

hamburgers and set every smoke alarm in the house off. Yesterday he'd not even tried, ordering Chinese delivery and plopping it on the table with a growl.

His ass still hurt. A lot.

So, here he was -- with this slimy, nasty, wet, pink, raw chicken sitting on the counter, daring him to do something with it. He'd gone out earlier, bought microwave rice and canned green beans. Now all he had to do was cook the chicken with some butter and lemon.

He could do this. He turned the stove on and put butter in the pan, the hard log of fat bubbling furiously. Okay. Now the lemon? Or the chicken?

Damn it.

"There's a reason God created take out." Jim tossed the chicken in, backing up from the sputtering and sizzling.

Something solid and firm stopped his backward motion. "God created take-out for when there's no time to cook. You know it wouldn't sizzle quite so much if you didn't turn it on high."

"Don't be condescending. I'm *trying* to figure this shit out." He hated doing things he wasn't good at, too.

"I'm not being condescending, baby. I'm trying to offer advice." Marcus popped his ass.

"Stop it." He was a little embarrassed. A little sore. Tired. Grumpy.

"You can ask for help, you know. I don't expect you to be able to know how to cook just like that."

"I have to turn the slimy things over and put lemon on them." He was trying, damn it.

"Let's do it together, hmmm?" Marcus leaned past him and turned the heat down on the element.

"I got us canned beans and microwave rice, so I can't fuck that part up."

"You're not fucking the chicken up either, Jim. Look." Marcus took a pair of tongs out of the utensil drawer and turned the chicken over revealing a nicely browned breast.

"Oh." He stopped, looked at it. "Cool. Lemon now?"

"I think so, baby." Marcus took out one of the lemons he had. "I know a trick for getting more juice out of these." Marcus rolled the lemon along the counter, palms pressing it down.

"I read that you could microwave them for ten seconds, too. If they're hard." See? He was trying. Really.

"Cool. Why don't you try that with this one and then we'll know which method works better for next time." Marcus tossed him a second lemon.

Jim caught it, staring over at Marcus for a second. "Okay. Okay."

That made him crazy -- the way Marcus just eased him right out of his snits. The lemon went in the microwave for ten seconds. Marcus cut the lemon he'd softened by rolling and then waited, watching him as the microwave counted down.

"What?" He grabbed the lemon, brought it over.

"Do you want to measure it scientifically or just eyeball it?"

"Just eyeball it. There's no guarantee the lemons have the same amount of juice in them anyway." Dork.

He found himself relaxing, actually smiling as they cut their lemons in half.

Marcus grinned and bumped hips with him. "Okay. Let's do this."

They squeezed the lemons, both giving up a good amount of juice, the smell sudden and acrid and absolutely wonderful as it hit the skillet.

"Oh, that's nice." Marcus leaned over the steam coming off the skillet and breathed in.

"It is. Be careful. Should I put in mushrooms? Did you know they have these little energy shot things? Three dollars for a tiny little bottle."

One of Marcus' eyebrows went up. "A tiny little bottle of *what* exactly? And sure, I like mushrooms."



"Me, too. I bought a can." He popped the top of the mushroom and drained them. "I think there's herbs and stuff. They said 'proprietary blend'."

"I think you should stay away from stuff like that, Jim. Eating right, exercising, and getting enough sleep will give you plenty of energy."

He nodded. "I really like my coffee, more. I just thought it was weird -- three bucks for something and they won't tell you what's in it. What if you're allergic?" The mushrooms went in with a plop and he stirred a little. Then he went for the can of beans.

"I think it's a scam and they won't tell you what's in it because it's easy to buy, cheap ingredients." Marcus began to set the table.

"I can see that. I was looking at it -- it promises five hours of energy. If you're awake for eighteen hours a day, you'd drink three. That's ten bucks. A *day*." The rice was easy and dinner looked really good.

Marcus shook his head. "Like I said -- eating right, exercising, and getting the sleep you need will give you plenty of energy." Marcus sniffed over the stove again. "This smells really good, baby."

"Yeah. I didn't say I wanted to try the energy shots, you know. I said it was a lot of money."

Marcus stopped and smiled, nodded. "That's true, you did. I'm sorry I made assumptions, baby."

"No problem." And it wasn't. It would have been, even a month ago, but right now, it simply was fine.

"Let's eat. I'm starving and tomorrow's your night to cook."

Laughing, Marcus dug the rice out of the microwave and put it on the table, leaving him to plate his lemon chicken and mushroom. "I thought we'd do pizza tomorrow night."

"Oh, no fucking way. Not unless I get to spank you. My ass *still* hurts from yesterday."

One of Marcus' eyebrows went up. "I didn't say we should *order* pizza tomorrow, baby."

"You know how to make pizza? For real? Can we have sausage and olives and double cheese?" He sat, waiting for Marcus to pick up his fork before digging in, so hungry. They'd had a great morning at the gym -- weights and running -- and his pot pie from lunch was *gone*.

"I even know how to make the dough from scratch, though I can't throw it into the air to save my life. We'll have to go shopping to pick up the toppings we want, but that shouldn't be a problem." Marcus cut into the chicken and made a humming noise as it hit his mouth. "This is wonderful, Jim."

"You helped." It was good and he ate heartily, pouring them both extra glasses of milk about halfway through.

"You just need to get more confidence in your abilities. That'll come with practice."

"I'm not very good at it. I know that." He tried. He was getting better, at least with some things.

"No, you weren't very good at it when you started, but you're already much better. We'll be having five star gourmet dishes in no time."

"Not unless I make enough to hire a cook." Now that would be something. "You know... if I put in an extra ten hours a week..."

"Baby." Marcus growled a little. "You work more than hard enough already, and I want *you* to learn how to cook."

"I only work part time on the paying stuff."

"Which is more than enough to pay for your half of our bills. You need the rest of your time to work on your novel and us." Marcus finished his plate of food and sat back, patting his belly.

"Yeah." He actually smiled a little bit. The novel was going well -- he actually was beginning to believe that he might finish it.

"Well, tonight's effort was definitely a success. And you had a starch, a vegetable and a protein. Good effort, baby. I'm proud of you."

"Thanks." He blushed dark, unaccountably pleased with the praise.

"I think we still have ice-cream in the freezer. You could cut a few peaches into a bowl and top them with the ice-cream.

"I thought we could have mocha milkshakes." Because, dude, coffee. Ice cream.

"You know how to make those?" Marcus sounded impressed.

"Coffee. Ice cream. Milk. It's like magic."

"Then we can break the one pot rule to make it tonight." Marcus nodded at his plate. "As long as you finish your chicken."

"I..." There was half of it, sitting there. waiting for him.  
"I thought I'd have it for lunch tomorrow."

"No, if we're going shopping we'll have lunch at the deli tomorrow."

"Oh... Turkey and avocado sandwiches." He picked up his fork, looked at the food. He wanted it. He was hungry. It was good. He just didn't think he could.

"Exercising, getting enough sleep, and eating right, remember? Two out of three doesn't work, so why don't you finish up, hmm?"

"I..." He sighed, poking at it. "It's hard. I know it's stupid. It's just... Weird."

Marcus leaned over and squeezed his hand. "Why?"  
Marcus hadn't really pushed on this before.

"It... The shrink taught it to me. It's about control."

Marcus growled a little. "At this point, baby, it's controlling *you*."

"But if I can control how much I eat, I can control my panic."

"I think your shrink is an idiot, baby."

Jim just sat there. Stared. He didn't have a thing to say. Well, maybe he did. "He doesn't like you, either."

Marcus snorted. "Of course he doesn't. I think you should stop seeing him. I believe you're a good person who doesn't need drugs or therapy or to starve yourself in order to be healthy and happy." Marcus was getting agitated. "How does starving yourself by only eating half your meal give you control, anyway? And how is it supposed to be control if you now *have* to save half of everything you eat? That isn't control at all!"

Alan had told him Marcus would say that, would want him to stop therapy. That Marcus was trying to control everything. All of his life. And that that was wrong.

Jim stood, took the chicken and dumped it in the trash, scraping his plate clean. "How big of a milkshake do you want?" He didn't have to ask permission.

"A small one." Marcus began to clear the table, not saying a word about him throwing out the food.

He nodded and grabbed the iced coffee from the fridge, the ice cream from the freezer. It only took a minute to make the milkshakes and put the stuff away. "I think I'm going to do some reading." Some research.

"I've got a new mystery I wanted to dig into myself. How about we take our milkshakes into the living room and curl up together on the couch with our books?"

"Mine's on my laptop." He really wanted to surf, try to figure things out.

"Good thing you have a lap then, hmm?" Marcus chuckled and had a sip of his milkshake. "Oh, this is nice, baby. Really nice."

"Thank you. I like them." He drank deep, heart thrumming in his chest.

Marcus' arm slid around his shoulders, walking them out to the couch. "Go get your laptop, baby. I'll keep the seat next to me warm."

"Kay." God. God, what if he... What if this was all fucked up? What if... God.

## *Chapter Twenty Four*

Marcus got everything ready to make the pizza dough before going to Jim's office and knocking on the door.

"Hey, baby."

"Hey. Hey, I'm writing." Jim sounded... stressed out.

He frowned and went in, hands landing on Jim's shoulders, kneading the tight muscles. "I'm about to make the pizza dough. I thought you might like to learn how."

"I. I." Jesus, Jim's shoulders were as tight as bow strings.

"What's wrong, baby? You're all tense." He worked the muscles harder, fingers digging in as he tried to ease his baby.

"It's been a hard day, is all."

"Why don't you tell me about it?" There was a reason it had been a hard day and had made Jim this tense.

"I can't. I'm sorry." Jim's head fell forward.

"Of course you can, baby." He kept rubbing.

"I'm scared, Marcus. The doctor... my shrink says we're building something unhealthy. That this is fucked up. That you'll tell me he's wrong. It's... It's making me a little crazy."

Marcus managed not to growl -- he didn't want to stress Jim out more than his baby already was, but this was getting ridiculous. "I think you need to find a new shrink."

"He said you'd say that."

He did growl. "So anything I say is automatically discounted? Let me ask you this -- does he believe being gay is a sickness you need to be cured from?"

Jim went gray - honestly, truly gray. "No. No. I don't want to fight with you."

"Baby. You need to answer that question. Please, tell me this man is gay friendly or at least gay neutral."

"He's queer. He's been on my side since the arrest."

He took a deep breath, relieved about that. "He has a problem with the lifestyle, though. Do you know why he's so against it?"

"It's abusive. He says it's not helping me learn to control my panic, that I'm using you as a crutch."

"And yet you've had better control over your panic since we met than ever before. You've gone off the Xanax, you're eating right, working out..."

Jim nodded, chewing his bottom lip hard enough it was bleeding. "I know. It's so confusing."



He leaned his cheek on Jim's head. "What does your gut say?"

"My gut says I fucking love you and this is home. My head says I'm an idiot."

"You need to trust your gut, baby. It doesn't have me telling you one thing and the shrink telling you another. Besides, if you think about it logically, you *know* that our lifestyle helps you be happy, easier in your skin." He kept working Jim's muscles, making his fingers work gently.

He could feel his baby relaxing, slowly, easing under his hands, breathing slower.

"Do you want me to come in to see the shrink with you, baby? Meet his concerns head on?"

"Would you? He might say things you don't like."

"Oh, I imagine he's going to say a lot of things I don't like. I'm not going to just sit there and listen, though, baby. I'm going to say things, too, things he's not going to like. Is that okay?"

"It's fair. That's only fair to us. If we're going to truly be an us, we have to be honest."

"Okay, then, I'll come with you to talk to your shrink about our lifestyle." And how it wasn't perverted or wrong or a crutch. As if anything that made Jim as happy as their life did could be wrong.

"He's going to tell you I'm sick, that I need coping mechanisms." Of course Jim did. Everyone did. Everyone needed support.

"And I'm going to tell him that our coping mechanisms are working better than anything he's done with you." He slid his hands up and down Jim's back. "I believe in you, baby."

"Thank you. That feels good, hmm? Really." Jim reached out, stretched over his desk, giving him better access.

"You were so tight." He pushed Jim's T-shirt up out of the way and started running his hands up and down his baby's back, spreading his fingers wide to get more coverage.

"I've been worried. Thinking."

"You should have come and talked to me, baby."

"I... I wasn't sure. I didn't know if I could."

"You can come to me about anything, baby. I will always do my best to listen and advise as I can."

"I. I don't know if I *need* advice. I just didn't know who to believe. What to believe."

He found a knot in the small of Jim's back and he worked hard. "I still say listen to your gut, baby. And believe in yourself."

"Oh. Oh, Marcus. There." Right there.

"I've got you, baby." He'd like to see that idiot shrink doing this. The man was happy to spout nonsense once a week, but was he there for Jim day to day? He wasn't.

"Please. My back hurts so much."

It made him want to growl again, but instead he focused on working on each and every knot. Jim stretched out, moaning happily, his baby rubbing against his hands. Such a sensual creature. Why was he the only one to see how much Jim needed touch and love?

"Oh. Oh, would you. I. Could we. Damn..."

"What do you need, baby?"

"You. I need you. I need to get out of this room for a while."

"Of course, baby." He took a step back, giving Jim room to get up, and held his hands out.

It felt amazing -- fucking amazing -- when Jim reached out for him, fingers twining with his.

He walked backward into the living room, leading Jim to the couch. "Let's get the kinks out, and then we can go make pizza together."

"Olives and sausage." Jim nodded, stomach rumbling.

"I'm looking forward to the heirloom tomatoes and that buffalo mozzarella. Yum." He took a kiss.

"Mmmhmm." Jim pushed into the kiss like a desperate man, tongue pushing and sliding against his furiously.

He opened Jim's mouth wide, fucking it with his tongue. Jim's fingers squeezed his upper arms, his baby demanding and begging, all at once. His own hands reached for their favorite perch -- Jim's ass. The lean muscles clenched and shifted under his touch.

"Mmm..." He slapped Jim's ass, hard. "This isn't abuse, baby. It's something you need, crave."

"I do. I don't know why, but it's good. Hot." Not punishment at all, either. It was just a sweet focus, a release.

"Focus. Sensation. Touch." He rubbed their hips together.

"Love." That word sounded amazing in Jim's mouth.

"Yes. Yes, baby." He took another kiss, bending Jim back onto the couch.

Jim went, moving easily, spreading for him, for his touch. He pushed up Jim's T-shirt and opened Jim's jeans, tugging them down.

"Marcus? We're getting naked here?"

"You need to come. Something to relieve your tension, hmm?" Just a little orgasm to loosen Jim up.

Jim nodded. "I'm not really horny. I'm more... caught up. Is that okay?"

"It's fine, baby. I just want to uncatch you." He wrapped a hand around Jim's cock and began to pull.

Jim chuckled, pushed closer. "I like being caught by you."

"Oh, good. That's good." Bending, he nuzzled Jim's balls, his fingers stroking, tugging.

"Marcus..." Jim moaned, cock beginning to fill for him, legs parting.

"Right here, baby." He took one of Jim's balls into his mouth, sucking on it.

Careful fingers brushed his scalp, Jim stretching for him, back popping. His hand kept working as he let Jim's ball go, took the other one into his mouth. His free hand slid along the soft, hot skin beyond.

"Oh..." Someone was focused, working with him. Happy. Marcus wished the shrink could see this - see Jim settled and joyful, getting what they both needed.

He slid his thumb across the tip of Jim's cock, pushing into the slit just a little, giving his baby that little zing.

"Yes." He chuckled, loving the way Jim groaned, reached for that jolt. He did it again, scratching a fingernail against Jim's hole at the same time. Jim arched, relaxation turning to arousal, just like that. He hummed, nodded. "Beautiful, baby."

"So good. Please, Marcus. Sir. Don't stop. I need..."

"I know what you need, baby. And I always give it to you, don't I?" He stroked harder, faster.

"Yes. Yes, always. Always..." Jim started shifting, fucking his hand, head rolling.

"Remember that, baby." He took Jim's mouth, thumb pushing into Jim's slit as it went by.

Hungry sounds pushed into his lips, Jim getting closer, dancing under him. He bit at Jim's lower lip, tugging on it, teeth scraping along the side of it. Those beautiful, bright green eyes flashed open, staring at him. Look. Look at that. He bit down hard.

Heat sprayed over his hands, the deep cry echoing through the house.

"There you go. There you go, baby."

"Uh-huh. Oh. Oh, god. Thank you."

He chuckled. "Better, hmm?"

"Yeah. Yeah, much."

"Good." He kissed Jim one more time. "You ready to go make pizza now?"

"Yeah. Yeah, I'm starving." And, if he knew his baby, curious about making something new.

"Excellent. Come on." He held out his hand, pulling Jim up against him.

He was rewarded with a soft, sweet kiss. "Thank you."

"Mmm... anytime, baby. You can always come to me."

"And you can come to me. You know that, right?"

He smiled and nodded. "I know that."

"Okay. Cool." He got another smile, and they headed into the kitchen to make their pizza.

### *Chapter Twenty Five*

"I don't want to do this. I'm going to get angry and yell." Jim's heart was slamming in his chest, foot tapping as they waited in Dr. Thomas' waiting room, magazine pages flipping randomly.

"There's nothing wrong with getting angry and yelling."

"Of course there is." Wasn't there? Jim looked over at Marcus -- his lover looked amazing, solid and strong and crisp.

"You are allowed to be angry, baby. You're allowed to express that anger."

"No. You have to control yourself." He needed to not lose control.

"Men who never lose control die of heart attacks, baby." Marcus put down the magazine he'd been glancing at.

"Anyway, there's a difference between losing control and causing chaos, and losing control and yelling."

"Don't you think I yell enough?" After all, that's what had gotten him Marcus' attention to begin with.

"I didn't say you should be angry all the time, baby. Just that once in awhile it's not going to kill you. Especially if you've got a reason to be angry. The day we met -- that sales clerk didn't deserve to be screamed at."

"I was stressed out." That really wasn't a huge problem for him anymore.

"I know, baby. Let's just see how this goes, hmm?"

"Yeah. Yeah, I just... We could just go home. Find something to occupy our..."

His name was called, Alan looking over at him. "Come on in."

"We're up, baby." Marcus patted his knee. "It'll be all right."

"I know." He did know that.

He did.

"Hey Alan. This is Marcus Goodfellow. Marcus, this is Dr. Alan Thomas."

Marcus shook Alan's hand, nodding. "Doctor."



They headed back into the office -- the simple, dark paneling familiar, the long sofa and comfy chairs just where they belonged. Alan settled behind his desk and Jim nodded toward the chairs. Marcus sat in one and simply waited.

Jim watched them watch each other, tension ratcheting higher and higher. "I. I wanted you to meet Marcus, Alan. So you could get to know him."

Marcus smiled at him. "I came for Jim."

"Excellent. I'm sure Jim told you we've been working together for a few years, trying to overcome his anxiety."

"Yep. You've tried a lot of different things to limited success." Marcus didn't look the least bit intimidated by Alan.

"He's made exceptional progress. I'm very happy with him."

Jim sighed, yeah. Except for the whole Marcus thing.

"He's made better progress since coming to live with me and I am so *proud* of him."

"This is really strange." He stood up, started pacing.

"Are you uncomfortable, Jim?" Alan asked.

"Are you kidding? Do I *look* comfortable?"

"No, baby, you don't. Come sit, hmm?" Marcus reached out a hand to him.

"He's not a child. He's a grown man and I'm not convinced that treating him as less than he is helps him." Alan's voice was firm, strong, and it made him stop, made him blush. Ashamed.

Marcus turned to Alan, sitting very still. "I do not treat Jim as *anything* less than a man. If anyone treats him as less than he is, it is you with your drugs and your attempts to make him feel ashamed of the way he chooses to live his life."

"Nonsense. The medications are there for a reason, to control his anxiety." Alan looked at him, directly at him. "How do you feel about the anti-anxiety medications, Jim? Do they help you?"

"Yes. Yes, they calm me down." Of course he hadn't taken any in a while now. He didn't even know where the bottle had disappeared to...

"And do you feel like you are in control of your relationship with Marcus, or is he?"

"I..." He stopped, thought about it. Thought long enough that Alan cleared his throat. "I am."

Alan's eyes went wide, but it was true. He was in control. He could say no. He could safeword. He could leave.

He had more free cash than he had in over a year. He knew people at the gym, at the bookstore. He could leave

any time. He could make this all stop. He didn't and he wasn't sure what that *meant* about him, but he knew that it was him who was in control of what they were doing.

Marcus looked so proud of him. "That's absolutely right."

"Jim. Jim, listen to yourself. He's created rules for you. He's treating you like a child."

Jim chuckled, shook his head. "No. No, there are things going on, but that's not part of it. This isn't about children." Not any of it.

"He calls you 'baby', Jim."

"Yeah. I know."

Marcus snorted. "It's called a term of endearment, Dr. Thomas. Surely you know what that is?"

"It's unhealthy and diminutive."

"It's loving and affectionate," countered Marcus.

"This is stupid. It's time to go." Jim smiled at Alan, nodded. "It really is. I have your number, if I need you."

Marcus stood and smiled at him. "It's your call."

"I'm ready to go. I want lunch."

"Sounds good to me. Goodbye, Dr. Thomas."

"Jim. Jim, wait." Alan stood, but Jim just took Marcus' hand.

No. No, he didn't think he needed to wait.

Not right now.

"He'll call you if he needs to, Dr. Thomas. Because he's in charge in your relationship as well." Marcus squeezed his hand and walked him out.

The sunshine was pouring down as they hit the sidewalk and Jim felt good.

Damned good.

Marcus opened the passenger side door for him. "You feeling better about things?"

"Yeah. Yeah, I am. You?"

"Yeah, I am, actually. I'm glad we went. And now how about that lunch?"

"I'm starving." He slid in, nodded. "In fact, I could eat a water buffalo."

"I don't know, baby. That might be little tough to find."

"Hell, it would be a little tough to chew."

Laughing, Marcus pulled out into traffic.

"I. I'm sorry you had to come. I know it wasn't fun."

Marcus reached over and squeezed his thigh. "I would do anything for you, baby. And it was more than worth it to hear you say that you are in charge of whether you stay or go, whether you participate or not. I'm proud of you for coming to that realization."

He didn't have anything to say to that. He simply didn't.

Marcus' hand stayed where it was as they drove, keeping them together.

## *Chapter Twenty Six*

Jim hummed softly, typing away, letting his hero have the sword fight that had been building for three chapters. Every so often the new nipple piercing would twinge and he'd twist it, soothing the weird itch.

Marcus had been right. Number two was much easier.

Focus.

Work.

Work, work, work.

He drank the rest of his water and got to it, fingers flying. He finally focused so well that Marcus' knock on his door had him literally jumping in his seat.

"Whoa, baby, are you okay?"

"Yeah. Man. I'm..." He waved to the computer. "It's going good."

"Your novel?" Marcus looked pleased, coming to sit on the edge of his desk.

"Yeah." He nodded, reached out to touch Marcus.  
"How're you?"

Marcus hummed as his hand slid along one strong thigh. "I've had a day, actually. Two orders cancelled, a return, and I managed to get myself." Marcus raised his hand, a bandage wrapped around his palm.

"Marcus! Lover!" He stood up, story forgotten, reaching for that poor hand. "How bad? Do you need a doctor? Let me see!"

Marcus looked at his hand. "It's not too bad. I used tape to close it up."

"Tape? Is that hygienic?" Tape. Gross.

"More than crazy-glue." Marcus gave him a wink and offered over his hand.

He looked, unwrapping a little and tussling over the cut. It didn't look too bad. Really. "Let me get the peroxide and some bandages."

Marcus chuckled. "You taking care of me, baby?"

"Of course I am. We're lovers. Sit. Stay." He headed for the bathroom, digging around for medicine and such.

"What are you looking for?" Marcus had not sat and stayed.

"You are not being a good patient. Peroxide and band... oh, here. Come on, under the sink."

"I'm not sick, baby, it's just a little cut."

"Uh-huh. Put your hand out." Stubborn bastard.

Marcus leaned against the counter and offered his hand over again.

"Thank you." He unwrapped the band and carefully washed it, then cleaned it with the peroxide, murmuring a little. He slathered on antibiotic cream, and then wrapped it up. "There. Is that better?"

Marcus nodded, good hand sliding along his cheek and then through his hair. "It is. Thank you."

"Good." He kissed Marcus' cheek. "Are you hungry?"

"Yes, I am." Marcus' good hand slid down to his ass, squeezing and tugging him close.

He cuddled in, humming a little. "What do you want?" He was getting better at food things. Sort of.

"Something different, something new."

"I... There's only so much I know how to cook, Marcus..."

"There are recipe books..." Always pushing.

"There are, but I haven't bought any." He wasn't a chef.

"There's stuff for salad and chicken. I could order us a pizza..."

"I have recipe books, baby. Why don't we find something in one for chicken. I'll supervise."

"Okay. You're wounded. I'll humor you."

Marcus' lips twitched. "I'll take it -- if you throw a 'sir' or two in."

"I don't know about that..." He teased back, winking over. "I'll take it under advisement."

Growling softly, Marcus tugged him in close and bit at his lower lip, hard, before sucking on it.

"Oh." His back arched, toes curling on the floor. That heat flooded him, made him buck.

"Say it."

He groaned, pressed closer. "I want you. Sir."

"Yes. Supper can wait." Marcus took his mouth again, fingers digging into his ass.

"Careful. Careful of your hand."



"It's fine, baby." Marcus slid the knuckles of the bandaged hand along his cheek, the other hand swatted his ass.

"I just worry." He turned his head, kissed Marcus' hand.

"Sweet baby. I'll be fine." Marcus' thumb slid along his lower lip, then pushed into his mouth.

Jim groaned low, lips wrapping around the digit and sucking furiously. Marcus groaned and jerked against him, prick long and hard inside those jeans. He loved that, making Marcus need, making Marcus want him.

"Bed," growled Marcus, eyes hot as they watched his mouth on Marcus' thumb.

No. This was the bathroom. The bed was in the other room. He pulled harder, tongue sliding around the tip of Marcus' thumb. Groaning again, almost growling, Marcus shifted them and pushed him up against the bathroom wall, hips grinding into his.

Hot! So fucking hot! Jim whimpered, one leg hooking around Marcus' hip.

"Want." The single syllable was growled, Marcus humping him.

"Yes." Marcus'. All of him.

Marcus' mouth closed over his, the kiss as fierce as the rest of his lover, tongue pushing in. Marcus stole his

breath, left him clinging and gasping, rubbing against all those muscles.

"Too many clothes." Marcus tugged at his shirt.

He nodded, and kept holding on, licking at Marcus' lips. His balls ached, the sudden flush of passion riding him hard. Marcus tore at their clothing with his good hand, getting them undressed enough that their pricks slid and rubbed together.

"Want. Love." He reached down, stroking both of their cocks with one hand.

"Yes." Marcus' hand came down on his thigh, smacking him.

He groaned and jerked. "Marcus!"

"Yeah, baby. Give you what you need."

Heat sprayed out of him, pouring between them.

"Fuck." Marcus jerked and humped furiously against him.

"Yeah. Yeah, love. You next." He worked harder, hand moving fast.

Marcus nodded, mouth coming down on his, the kiss trying to steal his breath. His knees went weak, buckling a little from the pure passion in Marcus' kiss. The kiss broke off abruptly, Marcus gasping as heat spilled up over his hand.

"Oh. Oh..." He watched every second of it.

Marcus' eyes drifted closed when he was done, mouth touching his so lightly.

"Better?" He stroked Marcus' scalp.

Marcus nuzzled into his touch, big body still holding him against the wall. "You make everything better, baby."

"Good." He held on, just breathing with his lover.

"Good, *sir*." Marcus' smile was warm against his lips.

He chuckled. "Good, sir. So good. Let me order us pizza, Marcus? I'd very much like to spend the evening curled up on the sofa with you."

"That sounds just about perfect. No onions on the pizza, baby."

"That's fine with me." He kissed the corner of Marcus' mouth. "Thank you, sir."

"Mmm... you're welcome, baby." Marcus swatted his ass. "Go on. Take care of supper and I'll go get the couch warmed up."

"Cool. You want a beer or Coke?"

"Let's go with soft drinks. I'm feeling pretty mellow already."

He nodded, settled deep in his bones. "Works for me."

"This life works for you." Marcus looked blissful.

"You work for me."

Marcus stopped and cupped his cheek. "And you work for me, baby."

"Well, then." He leaned, just for a second. "We're lucky then."

"We are."

They were. Damn.

## *Chapter Twenty Seven*

Marcus loved their routine. From the spanking first thing in the morning to making love just before bed, and everything in between. It was all good. And Jim was responding beautifully, getting more settled and happier every day. It made him happy and had him humming.

He scratched behind his ear, frowning at the length of the stubble on his scalp; it had been too long since he'd shaved it. He was going to have to do something about that.

Jim looked over from where he was reading, legs curled beneath him. "You're restless tonight."

"I need a shave," he admitted, running his hand over his head.

"You want me to do it?"

He looked over at Jim in surprise and then slowly smiled, nodded. "I think I'd like that a lot."

"Yeah?" Jim put his bookmark in, put the book down.  
"Come on. I always enjoyed shaving the ex. It is such an intimate thing."

"It certainly can be." He looked significantly at Jim's crotch. He usually shaved his baby every other day.

Jim chuckled, eyes rolling. "Perv."

Jim was in a fabulous mood, grinning for him, touching him easily as they headed upstairs. He wished Jim could always be this comfortable in his own skin, but Marcus would take the moments when he could get them, especially as they were coming more and more often.

"Where do you want to do this? Where's most comfortable?"

"Bathroom's fine. I can sit on the edge of the tub."

"Okay. I'll grab towels." Jim grabbed a handful of towels.

He stripped as his baby put one of the towels down on the tub's edge, and then sat, finding himself surprisingly eager to have Jim do this. Jim seemed... oddly pleased, taking out razors and cream, filling the sink basin with hot water.

"We could make this a regular thing if it works out tonight."

"Okay. I won't hurt you. I'm really good at this."

"I trust you, baby."

"Good." One hot, damp towel was placed on his head, steaming him.

He closed his eyes, enjoying being pampered by his lover.

"Mmm. You look good." The towel was removed, the shaving gel carefully applied.

"Thank you, baby." The gel was cold after the heat of the towel.

The shaving started then, Jim careful, gentle, humming as he was shaved, fingers touching him everywhere. It was sexy as hell. He hummed softly, tilting his head this way and that at Jim's behest.

It took a long time and no time at all. By the time Jim was done, they were breathing in sync and his scalp almost felt as though it was vibrating.

"Mmm. All smooth." Jim cleaned him gently, fingers caressing his head.

"Feels good, baby." He nuzzled into the touches, still sort of floating.

"Mmmhmm. Do you want a bath now?"

"If you'll share it with me."

"I'd love to." Jim nodded and grabbed more towels, turned on soft, peaceful music as the tub filled.

He slipped into the tub, sliding to the end and leaning there, legs spread, a place made for his baby. Jim disappeared for a minute, and then came back, naked, with two beers and a bowl of grapes.

"Beer and grapes?" Marcus was tickled by the combination.

"It won't matter if they get wet."

He laughed and nodded. "Always thinking, that's my baby."

"Some men like smart guys, you know." Jim winked, sliding into the tub with him.

He curled his arms around Jim's middle. "I happen to be one of those men."

"That's good." Jim settled in with a happy, satisfied sound.

He grabbed one of the grapes and rubbed it along Jim's lips. Lips parting, Jim snapped it up, both of them laughing, Together. The water was warm, buoying them, and he turned Jim's face to take a kiss. Jim opened up to him, those pretty green eyes warming, shining at him. He

ran his fingers through Jim's curls, letting them get tangled so he could tilt Jim's head back and take the kiss a little deeper.

"Mmm." That pretty cock started to fill, just a little.

"Hey." Jim's fingers slid over his bare scalp.

He shivered at the touch, the newly shaved skin sensitive, and his own prick began to slowly perk up. "Hey, yourself."

"Love you, Marcus."

He smiled, warm all through. "I love you, too."

"I know."

"Good."

He passed Jim one of the beer bottles and then took his own, drinking deep and relaxing back against the tub.

This was the life.

\*\*\*

Jim sat at the table in the diner, drinking cup after cup of coffee, reading one book, then another.

He'd had a screaming fight with Marcus this morning -- over something stupid. He'd had a wicked evil nightmare about his father and Marcus and had growled, Marcus had snapped and then... BOOM.



Screaming match.

Marcus had been gone when he finally came out of the bathroom. Just a note: *Gone to the gym. We'll talk. M.*

He snorted and finished coffee number five. Sure they would. Later. When he was fucking ready to. Yeah. Damn it.

Jim looked at the unopened pack of cigarettes on the table and considered going out and having one or two, but he didn't want to lose his table. His cell phone rang before he'd entirely made up his mind.

Marcus.

Fuck.

He considered not answering, but that would be mean, so he flipped the phone open. "Lo?"

"Hey, baby. I was surprised you weren't home when I got back."

"I was mad. I went to the bookstore. I left a note."

"Where did you leave it?"

"Taped to the TV." He finished his drink. "Didn't you see it?" Mad, not mean.

"I see it now, but I didn't before, no." Marcus sighed.  
"Where are you now, baby? You can't still be at the bookstore."

"I'm pouting, reading, fuming, drinking coffee."

"Come home, baby." There was a growl in Marcus' voice.

"Are we going to fight more? Because I'm not interested. We were both just in shitty moods."

"No, we're going to talk. To start with."

"Okay. Do you need me to pick anything up?"

"I just need you home, baby."

"All right. I'll be there in twenty."

He hung up and cleaned up, gathering his books and beginning the short walk home. By the time he walked up the steps, he was feeling... almost normal.

Marcus was sitting in the kitchen, eating a cheese sandwich and drinking milk. Waiting for him.

"Hey." He put the bag of muffins he'd bought on the counter.

"Hey. Have you eaten?"

"Sort of. I had a muffin and coffee. I'm sorry about snarling this morning." Now it was Marcus' turn to apologize.

Instead, Marcus frowned. "Coffee? At this time of day and after your full pot at home?"

"That's what you drink at a coffee shop." Damn it.

"That's against the rules, baby."

"I know. I was angry."

"That's not a very good reason for breaking the rules. I'm going to have to punish you."

"It's an exceptional reason." He met Marcus' eyes. "I didn't smoke, although I wanted to. I didn't scream at strangers. I needed to do something."

"You could have joined me at the gym. I find it's an excellent stress-reliever. And," Marcus looked right at him. "It doesn't get you punished."

"Going to the gym was where you were and we would have fought more." He didn't *want* to fight more.

"Not necessarily. But it was your choice. We'll go downstairs for your punishment. I think the hundred-tailed flogger. You obviously need the sensation."

"So, what? I come home, apologize, and you go 'great, I'm going to beat you.' Man, that's incentive."

"Oh, I think you've been itching for this *all* day. I think deep down inside you're eager."

"I think you ought to apologize, too. You weren't a bed of fucking roses either." Asshole.

Marcus nodded. "I'm sorry I screamed at you, baby. But that's not going to get you out of being flogged." Marcus stood. "Let's go."

He stared for a second. "No." At Marcus' look he shrugged. "I won't go downstairs and do this until we're... solid."

"You don't think we're solid?" Marcus sounded honestly surprised.

"Well, I mean..." Jim sighed. "I need a hug, Marcus. Contact. Reconciliation before the beatings, perhaps?"

"Oh! Of course." Marcus opened his arms, just like that.

He walked right into the embrace. Sometimes Marcus could be... weird about relationship matters.

Marcus hugged him tight. "I love you, baby. A little argument's not going to change that. A huge argument's not going to change that."

He nodded, arms around Marcus' waist. "I know. Sometimes it's nice to hear it."

Marcus tilted his head, lips pressing against his. "I love you. Even when we fight."

"I had a terrible dream about you last night. I hate that." The kisses continued, easing the dull frustration inside him.

"You should have told me when you woke up, baby. We might have avoided the lousy day, hmm?"

"Yeah. Just like if you'd wake up less growly we might have." He grinned, kissing Marcus playfully.

"Growly, your ass." Marcus swatted the ass in question.

"My ass is very rarely growly."

Marcus chuckled, rubbed where he'd hit, squeezed. "It's a good ass."

He leaned, cheek on Marcus' shoulder. "I brought you lemon muffins."

"Mmm.... Let's save them for after."

He nodded, swallowed hard. "I don't want to go downstairs, Marcus."

"Why not?"

"Because it's going to hurt."

"That's not going to get you out of your punishment, baby. Besides, you like the hurt."

"No. I needed the coffee." He could feel it, jittering inside him.

Marcus snorted. "The last thing you needed was coffee." His hand was taken and Marcus started them toward the door to the basement.

"No, I needed it. I was upset." He didn't want to go.

"You need this, not coffee. I think it's why you had the coffee. At least subconsciously." They kept moving, going inexorably down the stairs.

"No..." He squeezed Marcus' hand. "I don't like floggers."

"Which is why it's your punishment, baby."

"I needed the coffee. I was upset." He tried to slow them down, tried to ease them off.

"We're working on other coping mechanisms, baby. You don't need that coffee, you just think you do."

"I. I don't. I don't think. I." Fuck. Fuck him.

"No, there's no thinking to this." Marcus led him to the room with the bench. "No cuffs today."

"It was just coffee. I didn't smoke the cigarettes..."

Marcus chuckled. "I would have used the cane if you'd smoked the cigarettes, baby."

"You're assuming I'd be dumb enough to tell you..." He hadn't though. The pack was unopened in his pocket.

"No, I'm assuming you'd want to be honest enough to tell me."

His clothes began to disappear under Marcus' ministrations. Marcus found the unopened pack of

cigarettes, the lighter, and his wallet. They were placed on the small table with his clothes and then Marcus returned, fingertips running over his skin, exploring him.

"I love your hands." Marcus walked him over to the bench, easing him over.

"They love touching you, baby." Marcus' fingers were making the skin of his back so sensitive.

"I don't want you to be angry with me."

"I'm not angry. I wouldn't be doing this if I was angry. That's dangerous."

Jim nodded, relaxing a bit. "Oh. I needed you... I needed to hear that. I knew it, but..." Sometimes it needed to be said out loud.

"I'll never hit you in anger, baby. Ever." Marcus leaned over him and whispered in his ear. "Never."

"Marcus." His entire body came alive, buzzing and aware.

"Stay still. Hold onto the bench if you need to."

Marcus trailed the flogger over his shoulders and down along his spine, what felt like hundreds of tiny little strings of leather dancing on his skin. He pressed his lips together, fingers digging into the padding of the chair.

"How many cups of coffee did you have at the diner?"

"I don't remember. Five? Six? I don't really know. I was reading. Thinking."

"We'll go with six then. I want you to count each one."

"I needed something, Marcus. I was angry. I wanted to... Fuck! One!" The sting was huge.

"Coffee doesn't help in the long run, baby." Marcus flogged him again.

"I didn't want it to help. Two. Two."

"No?" The next hit landed, hundreds of little bites covering his back.

"Fuck. Three. No." No, he wanted to be bad. To break the rules. To push. He wanted to.

"You did it because you need this, Jim." Marcus seemed to be hitting him harder each time.

"Four. Five. Stop it. No, I didn't. I don't want this." But he did. So badly. He needed.

"Deny it as much as you want, I know the truth." The last hit landed across his shoulders, biting hard.

"Six! Master, please!" He needed something else, now. Hands, something with less sting, more thud. Something to settle him. Something.

Marcus' hands slid over his back, the touch firm, but not what he was looking for. "What do you need, baby?"



"Marcus..." He twisted, arching. "I need. Please. Don't make me ask."

Marcus met his eyes, looking into him. "You don't have to ask, baby."

Their lips met, the kiss hard and quick, and then Marcus went to the shelves and pulled out a thick, leather paddle.

He made a low, needy sound, hips canting up, begging for it. "Please."

"For you, baby."

That was all the warning he got before Marcus began to hit him with the paddle, the leather landing on his ass.

Unlike the flogger, these blows were steady and thudding, less painful than heating him, bone-deep. Jim lost track of time, of his own body, of everything but the overwhelming sensation. At one point, Marcus' free hand slid around his body, fingers curling around his cock.

"Master. Master, I need. Let me come. I needed this. You. I needed to know you would help me." Words just poured out of him, like Marcus had opened a vein.

"I'll always give you what you need, baby. I love you." Marcus' hand squeezed him tightly. "Come for me now."

His entire body responded, spunk shooting from him in a rush, leaving him sore and empty and gasping. Marcus' hand continued to hold him, the other hand sliding over his abused flesh.

Tears slid from his eyes, mostly unnoticed, the stress draining away. "I don't know... I don't know what to do now."

Marcus sat and tugged him off the bench into Marcus' lap. "Now you let me hold you."

He cuddled in, breath slowing as he let himself be comforted. Marcus rocked with him, hands sliding over his skin, so hot against his back and ass.

"Thank you." That seemed so much better than 'I'm sorry.'

"You're welcome, baby. You're so welcome."

Jim kissed Marcus' shoulder, settled.

"You ready to go upstairs, baby? It's Zombie Night on that movie channel you like."

"Yes. Yes, can..." Jim took a deep breath, closed his eyes.

"Can I sit with you upstairs? Like this?"

"I would like that a lot." A soft kiss brushed his forehead.

"And I'm so proud of you for asking, baby."

"Thank you." They headed upstairs, leaving his clothes, his wallet, the pack of cigarettes behind. He knew that the wallet would end up on his desk, the clothes in the laundry, the cigarettes never to be found again.

That was okay with him.

More than okay.

## *Chapter Twenty Eight*

Jim was truly settling in better than Marcus had expected. It seemed that a schedule really did help Jim to deal. The visit to the shrink hadn't hurt anything, either. Marcus had been so proud, so happy when he'd heard Jim tell Alan that Jim himself was in charge. It was something most outsiders didn't realize. Both the Dom and the sub had power, but it was the sub who ultimately controlled the relationship.

It was perhaps time for another mark: tattoo or piercing. He thought maybe the Prince Albert or guiche should come next.

He could hear Jim talking in the office, the sound buzzing and low, angry. Rough. "...think that since someone tried to blackmail me that you can get away with not paying me? I don't fucking think so."

Marcus frowned and made his way to Jim's office, leaning against the door jamb.

Jim was pacing, hands waving, cheeks bright red as he fussed and snarled, threatening lawsuits and action. It was interesting. He didn't interfere, didn't try to interrupt, he just watched. Finally the phone went flying, shattering against the wall, and then Jim went to the window, forehead resting against the glass.

He went over to Jim and began to rub his lover's shoulders.

"You want to tell me about it?"

"No. Yes. I don't know. Yes. This editor is stealing my work, saying I didn't do the work, when I did."

Marcus growled. "You want me to go beat him into the ground, baby?"

"Yes." Jim nodded, beginning to relax under his touch.

"Should we have dinner first?"

"I don't know if I can focus enough to cook, love, but I'll try."

"I was just teasing, baby. I think a good fuck would do you more good than a meal." He turned Jim and looked into the green eyes. "I will go pound him if you want. Or we can talk to Watson."

"I. We? Together?" Oh, yes. Good baby. Jim was getting better and better at allowing him in, at sharing with him.

"Yes. I won't interfere, but I'll be there to support you, hmm?"

"Okay. I'll think about it."

"You do that. And in the meantime..." He reached around and squeezed Jim's ass, knowing it would still be a little tender from the spanking he'd given Jim earlier.

"Ow." Jim looked like he couldn't decide whether to push closer or pull away.

Chuckling, Marcus squeezed again. "I want to tell you about the two new piercings and then I'm going to make you scream."

"What two new piercings? I'm done piercing."

He did love that stubborn set of chin.

"Come to bed and I'll show you..."

"I..." Jim looked like he couldn't decide what to do. "I'm not sure if I'm in a good mood, Marcus."

"You might not be right now, but you will be before I'm done."

Jim turned to face him, looking up at him. "Part of me wants to be a brat. Part of me just wants to let you help me."

"I'll take you either way, baby. Either way."

"Okay. I'll be a brat tomorrow. I'm pissed off and my head hurts and I need you right now."

"Let's get you some aspirin and take a shower." He took Jim's hand and headed toward the stairs.

Jim followed, lips on his shoulder. "Thank you, sir."

"Mmm... you're welcome, baby." It still put heat in his belly, every time Jim called him 'sir.'

In the bathroom, he filled the cup with cold water and handed Jim a couple of pain killers before starting the shower. Jim took the pills without question or demands for something stronger, then started stripping them down.

Without him even asking.

Jim had come a long way. They both had.

Once they were both naked, he drew Jim into the shower.

Jim pushed into his arms, hands wrapping around his waist. "I hate that she's still around, still affecting my life. I hate that people think they can take advantage of me."

He bit back his growl. "Me, too, baby. It makes me want to crack heads together."

He got a nod, Jim pushing closer. "Do you think it's me?"

"No, I think people are assholes."

"Because I worry, that there's something wrong with me..."

He did growl this time. "You have poor taste in lawyers, baby, but aside from that there's not a fucking thing wrong with you."

"But I let you... and I like it." Those cheeks were bright red.

"Being in touch with who you are, with what gets you off doesn't make you wrong. Just the opposite." He wanted to kick some asses. A lot of asses. Jim might know he was in charge, but he obviously still believed there was something wrong with him for what they did.

"You. Me. This thing we have. It's good, Marcus. I'm happy here with you."

Oh, his baby deserved a kiss for that. He gave it, pushing his tongue deep into Jim's mouth. "It is good, baby."

"Yeah. Yeah." Jim's eyes were heavy-lidded, body relaxed and warm against him, under the water.

Marcus rubbed Jim's shoulders and then slid his hands down along Jim's spine. Bending, he licked at Jim's collarbone, drank the water from it.

"Mmm. Your tongue is hot." Jim stretched up a little, muscles rippling and bunching.

"All the better to lick you with." He looked up at Jim's face.

Jim laughed for him, pretty eyes warm and fond. Happy for him. He kept licking, moving toward one of Jim's ringed nipples. Once there, he flicked the little gold ring with his tongue.

"Mmm." Yeah. Yeah, someone had learned the pleasure in those rings. His baby had come around there.

He flicked it up and down and then pushed his tongue through it, tugging hard. Jim went up on tiptoe, head falling back into the spray of the water. Those pretty curls were getting heavier, longer everyday. He moved to the other nipple, toying with the ring as his hand worked on Jim's cock.

That pretty prick filled, swelling and throbbing in his hand, even as Jim moaned, that dark little nipple going hard for him. He played with the glans, played with Jim's slit, about where the piercing would go.

"Marcus. Love." Jim's hands were on his head, holding on. "So good, sir."

"Yeah, yeah, baby." He kept playing with that spot on Jim's cock, loving his baby's reaction.

"Want you. Want..." Jim's hips jerked, eyes rolling back as his baby's cock throbbed.

"I want, too, baby. I want to put a ring right here." He pinched and squeezed.

"Wh...what?" Drops of come slipped from Jim, slicking his fingers.

"Your next piercing. Right here."

"Marcus. Marcus, I can't." There was that word again.

He let go of Jim's prick and took hold of one of those nipple rings, twisted it. "You couldn't do this, either."



"That's different." Jim whimpered, arching for him.

"No, it's not." It wasn't different at all. It was just another boundary to push through, and something Jim would love as much as he did the nipple rings.

"Yes, it is."

"Tell me how."

"It's my *cock*. I pee through it. If my nipples rotted off, I'd be okay. I need my prick."

Marcus managed not to laugh. "Baby. Your nipples *didn't* rot off. Neither will your prick." He pressed against the spot where the piercing would go again. "It will feel amazing. It will look gorgeous."

"I don't want a stranger touching me there."

"Treat isn't a stranger -- he's done both of your nipples. And you know he'll be professional. Like a doctor examining you, hmm?"

"Cocks and nipples aren't the same."

"But they are all *you*, baby." He let his fingers slide down past Jim's balls to rub the soft skin behind them. "The other one will go here."

"Marcus..." Jim looked at him like he was crazed. "I couldn't sit down."

"Of course you could." He leaned in and whispered.  
"Trust me, baby."

"Marcus..." He felt Jim's entire body ripple, that soft, little cry pure sex.

"Yeah. Yeah, baby." He pushed his thumb against the skin behind Jim's balls. "It'll feel so good. It'll look unbelievable."

"It'll hurt. They hurt." Those lips brushed his ear. "I don't want someone else touching me. I'm yours."

"Yes, you're mine. But baby, he's not going to be touching you sexually. It'll be all business." He licked Jim's ear. "It won't hurt long. Besides, you like the pain."

"I don't." Liar.

"No, of course you don't." He chuckled, smacking Jim's ass.

"Fuck." Jim jerked, cock nudging his thigh.

"Yes. Yes, I think that's a good idea."

The water coursed down over them, and he took Jim's mouth again, tongue pushing in. Jim reached up, clinging to him, those muscles rippling as they pushed together. He pinched Jim's ass, his own hips moving, rocking against his sweet baby. Jim bit his bottom lip, tugging at him, stinging a bit.

Groaning, he returned the bite, teeth scraping along the sensitive flesh on the inside of Jim's lip. It was so good, so necessary. He reached down, fingers playing with that tight hole, teasing Jim, the way slick with the water.

"We haven't done it up against the shower wall yet."

"Are you sure? I've ridden you in the tub..."

"Mmmhmm. And up against the wall by the door. And over the counter. But not against the tile in the shower." He took hold of Jim's hips and turned his baby.

That pretty ass was right there, all his. He still had so much to show Jim... He grabbed the body cream and slicked up his fingers, pushing two into Jim's hole. Jim gasped, spread and arched for him. Oh, he wanted to show Jim the shower head attachments, he wanted to fill that pretty hole with his fist, with plugs, but first, he needed in. He needed to feel Jim all around him.

He pushed his fingers deep, finding Jim's gland and making his baby jerk. Good enough. His fingers slid away and he rubbed the head of his prick along Jim's crack.

"Please, sir. Love me."

Heat shot through him and, with a groan, he sank into Jim's body. Jim stretched, arms reaching up as they moved together. His hands on Jim's hips, he began to move, sliding into that perfect heat, finding a hot rhythm. Jim met each thrust, rolling against him, moaning low.

"Sexy. Mine." He muttered as he thrust, loving Jim with his words as well as his body.

"Yes." Jim squeezed him, nodded.

His teeth sank into Jim's shoulder, his hips moving harder.

"Love. Love you. Fuck." Jim jerked, hips bucking.

"Yes. Love." Their bodies slapped together, the pleasure starting to pour through him.

Jim's head leaned back against his shoulder, throat working, soft cries filling the air. He slid his mouth along the line of Jim's neck.

"Yours." Yes. He'd have ink put right here. Right where his lips went.

He slid one of his hands around to Jim's cock, fingers wrapping around it and squeezing. Jim's ass squeezed back, hugging his cock. "Baby." He ground his hips into Jim's ass, his thumb sliding back and forth across the slit of his baby's cock.

"Uh-huh." He could imagine, with a ring right there, how those needy sounds would change, be more desperate, hungrier.

He kept rubbing that spot, his hips picking up the rhythm again, slapping hard and fast into Jim. "Come on, baby. Show me how you need."

"Yes. Yes, sir." Jim went tight, body holding on tight enough that it ached.

Groaning, Marcus shifted a tiny bit, changing his angle as he nudged forward, pressing against Jim's gland. Heat sprayed over his fingers, his name ringing out, echoing against the tiles.

"Yes." He bit the word out, his hips snapping one last time as he came deep inside Jim's body.

They slumped together under the water, breathing hard.

Marcus slowly let go of Jim's cock, his fingers sliding down to rub at the smooth flesh between balls and anus. "We could go tonight to get the ring here done..."

His answer was a tiny whimper, a shiver. He knew he had to press his advantage, that the lack of outright refusal should be capitalized on.

"We should go now." While Jim was still relaxed.

"Now? But we haven't eaten and we're wet." Still not a no.

"We can dry off, get dressed, and pick up something to eat after." He turned off the water and grabbed a towel.

Jim followed him, sated, relaxed, almost dozy. "Are you sure? I'm not..."

"You're not what, baby?" He wouldn't steamroller Jim into this, but he was more than ready to insist. Jim was going to love both piercings when they were done.

"Sure. I'm scared."

He took Jim's face into his hands and looked steadily into his baby's worried eyes. "I have pushed your boundaries now many times past where you believed them to be and you have taken joy and found love in it all. Trust me to still know what you need. Be scared. Be unsure. But trust that I am not scared and I am sure."

"You'll take me for Thai food after?" Those eyes were sparkling, shimmering.

He nodded slowly. "I'll take you for Thai food after. The Hanging Garden." It was a little longer to get to, but it was Jim's favorite.

"Okay..." Jim squeezed his fingers, shaking hard.

He beamed at Jim. "Okay. I'm so proud of you, baby."

"Is it going to be worse than the nipple piercing?"

"About the same and a little worse, but the guiche'll be fine as long as we take care of it. The PA will heal much faster than your nipples." He led Jim to the bedroom and took out some soft sweats for the man to wear, a pair of jeans for himself.

"What if Treat's too busy?"

"He won't be." Treat would clear a spot for them.

Jim's hands were shaking violently -- his baby dropped the sweatpants twice. He took Jim's hands in his and held onto them as his mouth closed over Jim's. He kissed his baby hard and deep, demanding Jim's focus. Jim moaned, opening for him, body jerking against him. Yes. Yes, baby. Focus right here.

Marcus broke the kiss long enough to pull the sweats up around Jim's hips. "It's going to be good, baby."

"Promise?"

"Yes." He sealed it with a kiss, his tongue pushing in deep.

Jim melted into him, let him hold on. Good, baby. So good.

"Keep that kiss in mind, baby."

Smiling, he took Jim's hand and led him down the stairs.

## *Chapter Twenty Nine*

He sat in the car, staring, shaking. "I'm not hungry, Marcus. I'm queasy."

He just wanted to go home and... cry? Scream? Look? He wasn't sure.

His cock was pierced.

His.

Cock.

Was.

Pierced.

And the skin behind his balls, too. A guiche Marcus had called it.

Treat had numbed the skin, hands careful, almost gentle. It had hurt, but it hadn't been terrible and, Marcus had been right, once he was up there, some stranger shaving his ASSHOLE, how much worse could it get?

Still, now, he just wanted to be alone, think. Recover.

Something.

"How about we pick up some Pho to go?" Marcus had landed on his thigh, squeezing.

"I'm not hungry, but I know you are, and I might be later." Right now he wanted to throw up, or have a beer.

"I know you'll want some later." They stopped at a red light and Marcus smiled at him, eyes heated. "I just want to get you home and strip you down."

"I don't know that I'll ever get it up again." Treat assured him that he'd be totally healed in four weeks, if he drank



a lot of water and was careful. Of course, he had told Marcus that Jim couldn't fuck for four to six weeks and Marcus had chuckled. He didn't think that was really a big issue.

The light turned green and they continued on, Marcus grabbing his cell phone and calling in their order. When he was done, that hand returned to his thigh. "How are you feeling?"

"Queasy, a little. They hurt." Treat had said by tomorrow morning the worst of the tenderness would be over. "I don't know."

"I'm so proud of you, baby. And I can't wait to take a good, proper look."

"I can't decide if I want to look or not." The bandage between his thighs felt huge.

Marcus gave a husky chuckle, the sound almost a caress. "They're in *your* body. I can't imagine you not looking."

"I just... I feel funny, huh? I just let someone pierce my cock." Just because Marcus had asked.

"The someone who pierced it isn't important. That you did it for me, for us, is."

"For you." He tried to shift, winced a little.

"For us." Marcus squeezed his thigh and pulled into the parking lot of the Hanging Garden. "I'll go get our Pho. You relax."

"Okay." He leaned the seat back carefully, spread his legs. He'd actually dozed off when the door opened again.

The scent of Thai spices flooded the car as Marcus got in.

"Mmm. Smells good." He didn't move. He was scared to jostle anything.

"Yeah, I'd forgotten how hungry I was until I walked in there and smelled everything. Marcus put the food on the back seat and smiled at him. "You doing okay?"

"I think so?" He smiled back, that unnerved, sick feeling in the pit of his stomach finally easing.

"Good. You want some music for the ride home?" Marcus started the car, flipped the radio on, and headed them home.

"What happened to Treat and Killian? You said before they were mourning their... lover?"

Marcus nodded. "Peter was their sub. They adored and loved him. A perfect Triad. He died of cancer."

"Oh. Are... are they both dominants?" How on earth did that work without major snarls?

"They are. They used to do the most amazing shows with Peter at the club. Elaborate set ups with tattooing and piercing in tandem with whips and paddles."

"How do they... cope now?"

Marcus shook his head. "I don't know, baby. They were pretty devastated." Marcus reached over and took his hand, squeezing his fingers.

"That's terrible." He couldn't imagine -- he knew all about losing his own life, but he hadn't lost someone like that.

"Yeah." Marcus' hold on his hand tightened. "I think everyone in the community was pretty shaken up. The three of them were very well-known."

He nodded. "I... I hope that one day I'll be able to meet people again."

"You will. I can't wait to take you back to the Hammer in the evening and introduce you to everyone." Marcus smiled over at him. "They'll like you."

"No one likes me, Marcus. I'm not friendly."

Marcus snorted. "Right."

He shrugged, completely unwilling to get into it. He knew his limitations. He knew that even Marcus, who loved him, would not be his friend.

"We could have a couple over one night for supper. Doc Manning and Les, perhaps."

"Someday." He wasn't ready for people not to like him yet.

"How am I going to prove my friends will like you if you won't meet them, baby?"

"I don't mind if you go see them. Treat invited you to something next Wednesday."

"We can discuss it later." Marcus pulled the car into the driveway.

"Okay." He could just sleep in the car.

Marcus got out and grabbed their food. "Come on, baby. Let's go look at your new jewelry."

"I'm not sure I can walk." He moved carefully, walking like he had jock itch.

Marcus came around, putting all the food in one hand and wrapping an arm around his waist. "Lean on me, baby."

"You're warm." He leaned in, hand sliding around Marcus' waist.

"You feeling cold, baby?" Marcus pulled him a little closer, not letting him go to open the door, making it a little awkward, but cozy, warm.

"A little. I'm feeling... raw. A little lost. Melancholy. I imagine it's the release of all the adrenaline."

"Yeah, and you're probably starting to hurt, too. Let's get some painkillers into you and do a little visual recon."

"Yeah. Yeah, I... I'm a little shaky." He wanted to just let Marcus help him cope.

"Of course you are, baby." Marcus dumped their food on the kitchen table and then led him to the stairs. "Let's do this in bed, hmm?"

"I don't know if I'm ready to see." He followed though, clinging to Marcus' hand.

"I'll look first." Marcus offered him support as he tried to climb the stairs with his legs apart.

Then it was into the bedroom, Marcus tugging his T-shirt up over his head. His nipples were hard, the new rings in them joined by a thin , pretty chain.

"God, look at you." Groaning, Marcus reached for his right nipple, fingertips rubbing back and forth across it.

"They're shiny." Oh, that felt so good. So fucking good.

"They're pretty. They look awesome. So does this." Big fingers wrapped around the delicate chain and tugged.

He gasped softly, his nipples tingling. "Thank you, sir."

"Mmm..." Marcus' eyes met his; it turned Marcus on when he said 'sir'.

It still made him shiver inside, made him ache.

"All right, baby. Here we go." Marcus began carefully working the sweats down over his hips.

"I..." His fucking briefs were packed in cotton -- above and below. Bleeding. There might be bleeding.

Once the sweats were off, Marcus helped him sit carefully on the bed. "Okay, now lie down."

"What if they're ugly?"

"They aren't." Marcus helped him lie back, tugged on the nipple chain, and then began to very carefully work his underwear down over his hips.

He closed his eyes, hands clenched at his sides. "Are they bleeding still?"

The air felt cool against his skin, against his cock and perineum. "No, they're looking pretty good, actually. Just a little swollen." He could hear a note of arousal in Marcus' voice. "They already look amazing.

"Really? They're not... obscene?"

"They're a lot of things, baby, but they're not obscene."

"Do you... do you think I'll be able to get it up again?" It was a stupid question -- he *knew* it was, but there it was.

"I know you will." Marcus popped up suddenly. "Don't go anywhere." And with that Marcus disappeared out the door.

He opened his eyes, going up on one elbow, staring down at the thick, gold ring in his cock. How was he going to

pee? How was he going to come? How was he going to walk around like that?

Before he could begin to panic too much, Marcus returned with his laptop, the bottle of painkillers, and a bottle of water.

"Okay, pills first."

"Are we going to work?" He couldn't stop staring.

"No, I'm going to show you some pictures."

"Oh?" He nodded, took the pills from Marcus, and took them. He liked pictures.

"You asked if you'd be able to get it up again. I thought maybe some pictures might reassure you on that point." Marcus typed a few keywords into the search engine and pulled up a site.

Jesus. That man had more metal in his cock than he could imagine. "Did he get attacked by a nail gun?"

Marcus laughed. "It has a beauty of its own, doesn't it? Here's some with just the PA, though."

"They look happy." His legs wiggled, the piercing behind his balls aching a bit.

"Yes, they do, don't they? Ah, here are the ones where they're hard. See?"

"Uh-huh." He pressed closer to Marcus, not pointing out that he was worrying about *his* cock.

"Does that set your mind at ease?" Marcus' arm went around him, hand rubbing his hip.

"I... Somewhat." There that wasn't a lie.

Marcus set the laptop on the side table. "You don't sound very sure." He was taken into Marcus' arms.

"I'm worried. You know me. I worry. I fret. I." He cuddled in. "God, you feel good, sir."

"Then that's what I want you to focus on, hmm? On me and how good I feel." Marcus' fingers stroked over his back, along his spine. "We're going to take care of the piercings and in no time they'll be healed and I'm going to make you fly with them."

"I didn't freak out this time." In fact, he thought he'd been quite brave. Quite.

"You didn't at all. Have I told you yet how proud I am of you?"

"You might have, but I could hear it again."

Marcus tipped his head back and looked into his eyes. "I am so proud of you, Jim. I'm proud of the way you took those piercings. I'm proud of the way you didn't shoot the idea down in the first place. Living with you is beyond my expectations, baby."



"Thank you. Thank you, sir." He pushed close, moaning softly as his cock touched Marcus' body and tried to fill.

"Thank you, Jim. My life was missing you." Marcus' words ended against his mouth, the kiss sweet.

The kiss warmed him, his hands cupped Marcus' cheeks. Marcus' tongue spread his lips, pushing into him. It wasn't desperate, just deep, filling him. Moaning, he melted, letting Marcus in, offering Marcus all he was. He could feel Marcus' love in that kiss, feel it all the way through him. One hand cupped his cock, holding him, not stroking, but just touching him.

Marcus slowly lowered them both onto the bed, still holding him. He went easily, caught in a web of Marcus' making. The kisses continued, long and slow. It felt like Marcus was cherishing him. His world spun slowly, everything but Marcus gone fuzzy and distant. Soft kisses were pressed over his face, Marcus' mouth warm, his tongue even hotter.

"Love." His cock filled, slow and easy, the act stinging and his prick aching at the tip.

"I love you, Jim." Marcus' eyes held his, so warm and just for him.

"I know." He chuckled a little, moaning against Marcus' lips. "I'm getting hard."

"Imagine that." Marcus winked, hand sliding down to cup his balls.

"I was worried." That ring behind his balls shifted a little, making him cry out.

"I wouldn't ask you to do anything that would keep you from pleasure." Marcus reached behind his balls, fingers not touching. "I can feel the heat of you."

"It aches." It made him want and, God, wasn't that a little sick.

"Mmm... hurts so good, doesn't it, baby?"

"Yes. Yes, sir." He nodded, cheeks flaming.

Marcus kissed him again, and there was no judgment in Marcus' eyes, only pleasure and heat.

They shifted, rocking together a little, the little pain mingling with the pleasure. Marcus' kisses increased in pressure, lips pressing hard against his, tongue shoving in. Everything started ramping up, the warmth becoming fire.

"How does it feel?" growled Marcus.

"Hot. I'm hot all over."

"Mmm... hot and sexy." Marcus bit at his earlobe. "I want to fuck you."

"Marcus." His hips moved instinctively at the words.

"We'll take it nice and long and slow."

"Did you like it? Watching the piercing?" He groaned as Marcus tugged the chain between his nipples.

"It made me hard, baby. It made me want you so badly."

"What else do you want?" He reached for Marcus, needing to touch.

"Everything, baby. Your heart, your soul, that sharp mind. Your body."

"Yes." He nodded, agreeing wholeheartedly. "Yes, please. Love me. I need you."

Marcus' mouth closed over his, hands sliding on his body. Fuck. Fuck, yes. He spread, letting Marcus in, letting Marcus touch. One hand went to his ass, teasing along his crack, the other slid over his belly. Marcus' thumb rubbed the skin near his ring and he groaned, toes curling.

"It's going to be like magic, baby." Marcus' mouth slid to his neck and began to work up a mark.

"No one will... no one will ever see it but you. Never again."

"Mmmhmm... mine."

"Yes." He agreed with everything he was.

Marcus' fingers pushed against his lips. "Suck."

He wrapped his lips around the thick digits, pulling hard, the sensation tugging at the pit of his belly. Rubbing against him, Marcus slid his cock up and down along his ass. His body tightened, the little shocks of pain arousing the hell out of him. Marcus pulled and his fingers slid out of his mouth with a pop.

He groaned, lips reaching for that touch. Marcus replaced his fingers with his mouth, tongue pushing between his lips. Meanwhile, those wet fingers played with his hole, pushing into him, just to the first knuckle. Oh, more. More, love. Please.

Marcus either heard his silent plea, or knew him, those fingers pushing deeper, nudging up against his gland. He grunted and rocked up, his cock bouncing off his belly.

"God, you're something special, Jim."

"Yours. Just yours. Fuck."

"Yes, mine." Marcus pegged his gland hard, making him jump.

"Please. Please, sir. Again." The little ring behind his balls ached.

Marcus gave it to him again, and again, working his gland. His heart slammed in his chest and he started struggling, trying to breathe. Marcus' mouth covered his, breathing into him.

Oh.

Oh, better.

The panic stopped, along with the speeding of the world. The kiss deepened, Marcus continuing to work his ass. Things went white-hot, his entire focus snapping to Marcus and staying there. Marcus' thumb slid along his perineum and touched the ring there.

This sound poured out of him, raw and loud.

"God. Fuck." Marcus pushed him onto his side and nudged against his hole, head of the thick cock pushing in.

"Please. Please, Marcus. Sir. Master." The word shocked him, surprised him.

"Yeah, baby. Right here. Right fucking here."

Marcus pushed until the thick cock was all the way in, spreading him.

"Yes..." He nodded, home. Right there.

Marcus' hand pressed against his belly, pulling him tight against Marcus' chest. He could feel Marcus' heart against him, pounding. His home. With a low, husky moan, Marcus began to move, thrusting into him. He reached down, cupped his cock, trying to keep the ring from bumping anything.

"Gonna twist those, baby. When they're healed. I'm going to make you scream."

He nodded, wanting that, wanting to feel. He clenched his ass, holding Marcus' cock tight.

"Fuck, baby. So tight."

"For you."

"Yeah. Yeah." Marcus nodded and thrust again, filling him with thick heat.

It couldn't last -- not the heat, not the need, not the pleasure, but Jim held on for every second.

"Come for me," whispered Marcus.

"Yes, sir." Heat poured from him, his pierced cock stinging, just enough to make him gasp.

"Yes!" Marcus' hips snapped, driving the thick prick in deep.

He could feel it, Marcus' spunk pouring inside him. Filling him up. Marcus relaxed behind him, keeping him close. His eyes closed and he let Marcus hold him.

Love him.

Keep him.

### *Chapter Thirty*

Marcus was good. He didn't go to get Jim out of his office until two minutes after one. It had been four weeks since the double piercing and he couldn't wait to play. Oh, he'd touched both the PA and guiche piercings, but only just barely. Now they were healed enough he could *really* touch them.

"Time to put away the work, baby."

Those amazing, green eyes lifted to him and he got a smile. "Already? Today's gone fast."

"Not fast enough." He held out his hand, eager to get Jim upstairs, to drive his baby wild.

Jim stood, fingers twining with his. "You look happy. Excited. Good day?"

"It's about to be." Grinning, he tugged Jim in close.

"What?" Jim fit perfectly against him, the soft jeans suiting his baby to the bone. Now, if only that ugly button up shirt was gone.

"New rule," he murmured. "No more dress shirts. You have a drawer full of T-shirts. Or you can go topless."

"You don't like them?"

"No, baby, I don't." Surely he'd mentioned it a time or two hundred.

"Oh. They're very businesslike."

"They're ugly." He pushed his hands into the back pockets of Jim's jeans. "T-shirts or nothing."

"I..." Jim blinked, staring at him. "Okay. I mean, unless I'm going out, right?"

"What's wrong with your T-shirts for going out?"

"They're so casual and..." Jim leaned forward, whispering a little. "People will see the rings."

"Oh, yes, they will. That's not a deterrent, baby." Not in the least.

"Marcus..." Jim's cock was hard, his baby aroused whether Jim wanted to be or not.

"Come on upstairs." He started walking backward, bringing Jim along with him. "It's been four weeks."

"Okay. Four weeks since what? Oh, oh, I got an email today from my ex. He wants to come visit for Halloween. I told him no. I don't want to see him. I don't see the point."

"Thank you, baby, I really don't want him as a birthday present." He winked and started up the stairs. "And I can't believe you don't remember what happened four weeks ago," he teased.

"Things happen all the time." Jim leaned up, kissed his jaw. "I bet there was a spanking involved."



Laughing, he smacked Jim's ass. "There's *always* a spanking involved."

"See, excellent guess on my part." They made it to the bedroom, Jim's muscles looking amazing, his baby built and strong now.

He kissed Jim's nose and started stripping his baby down immediately. "But four weeks ago we were also given a deadline."

"A deadline? For work?" The damned button down shirts were too small anyway.

He all but ripped this one off. "Not work, baby." He chuckled, surprised Jim hadn't twigged immediately."

His hand dropped to Jim's jeans and he rubbed the front, rubbed that long prick.

"Oh..." Jim's eyes went wide. "Is it healed enough?"

"Should be. We've been taking good care of them both. And now we can take care of you, if you know what I mean." He waggled his eyebrows.

Jim whimpered, those pretty, pierced nipples hard for him. He reached out to play with the rings, starting gentle and increasing the pressure, twisting them. His baby started moving, almost dancing under his touch.

"So beautiful." He started working Jim's jeans off with one hand.

"Yours. I want you."

"Mine. Head to toes." He got Jim's jeans undone and tugged down, that ringed prick leaping right out into his hand.

The mass of curls shook. "You're right on the head part. I need a hair cut, love."

"No, I want to you to grow it out." He slid his fingers through those curls, tugging and playing with them.

"I'm going to look like a freak." Jim chuckled, leaned into his hands.

"No, you're not. I love it long."

"I've never had it this long." Jim was blossoming, so much more healthy and happy now.

"It looks beautiful. *You* look beautiful." He kissed Jim, his pleasure in his lover, his excitement in what they were going to do in that kiss.

Jim's cock rubbed against him, that ring warm and slick, exciting.

He reached for the ring and fingered it gently. "I bought some accessories for the PA and the guiche."

"Accessories?"

"Yeah, baby. I'll show you later. After we've given them both a test run."

"Oh, that's a tease." He didn't think Jim cared, really, not with that hard prick rubbing against him.

"I think you'll forgive the tease. Lie down and spread 'em, baby. I want to play."

He got a good look at that sweet, pink ass as Jim crawled on the bed, the tiny ring glinting as it caught the light. Groaning, he made short work of his clothes, tossing them over his shoulder before he climbed up onto the bed after Jim. On his back, Jim spread for him, one finger tracing the ring in the slit of that pretty cock.

"Don't touch." That was his. He wrapped his hand around Jim's cock, thumb moving the ring side to side. "Mine."

Jim moaned, hips bucking up for him, heels digging into the sheets. With his other hand, he touched the other ring, the one behind Jim's balls. Fuck, it was hot, the little moan and jerk, the way Jim's skin moved for him.

Spreading Jim's legs farther apart, he licked at the ring, teasing it with his tongue. The scent of Jim's body surrounded him, made him groan and his mouth water. Jim whimpered, the skin over the metal stretched and smooth, the little bump fascinating him. He rubbed Jim's skin with his tongue, and moved the ring up and down, before taking it between his lips and tugging.

"Marcus..." That sounded like a fucking prayer.

He tugged a little harder, his hand sliding along Jim's prick, finding the ring and tugging it as well. Jim bucked,

almost knocking him off the bed. Groaning, he did it again.

"Marcus! Sir!"

Oh, fuck him. Yes. He had to wait a moment and stop grinning before he could do it yet again, but he did wait and he did tug, reveling in each noise and jerk. Jim twisted, pulling away, cock dripping and hard. He looked up the lean, muscled body until he met Jim's eyes.

Bright green looked down at him. "You're making me crazy."

He grinned and twisted the PA. "I certainly hope so."

"Fuck." Jim's legs drew up, ball sac tight.

He dove back in, wondering if he could make Jim come just from manipulating the two rings. He was going to find out. The PA was slick and thick, heavy in that pretty cock, while the other ring was tiny, the captive bead as green as Jim's eyes. He twisted and tugged on them both, working the one behind Jim's balls a little harder. One of Jim's hands nudged his, Jim reaching for that prick.

"No touching, baby." He slapped Jim's hand away. "All mine."

"It aches."

"Uh-huh." He just bet it did. He bet it ached so good, Jim was going nuts from it. He slid his tongue up along Jim's

prick until he reached the ring, and then he sucked on it and the flesh it was attached to.

"Oh. Oh, fuck. Marcus. Sir. *Master*, please!"

"You can come." He flicked the ring, pushed his tongue through it and tugged.

Heat splashed on his face, Jim bucking and jerking and wild under him.

"Fuck, yes, baby. So sexy." Damn, Jim made him hard, that responsive sensuality the biggest turn on. He tugged a time or two more, loving the way Jim writhed.

"Yours. So good." Jim's cock stayed hard for him, never flagged.

He slid his face against Jim's belly, rubbing the come on it into Jim's skin. His fingers found the ring behind Jim's balls again, and he explored, just touching, turning it within Jim's flesh. His baby shifted, legs moving restlessly, the moans quiet and constant.

"I'm going to fuck you, baby. I'm going to go inside you and play with all those rings and make you come so hard."

"Yes. Yes, please. I want you."

"Get the lube and get yourself ready. I want to watch." He loved that blush, the way Jim closed those green eyes. His baby was so reluctant to be seen, to be watched. He

tugged on the guiche ring. "Come on, baby. I want to see."

"I..." Jim moaned, legs drawing up. "I'm..."

"Beautiful. Sexy. Mine. If you don't do it, I'll tie up your cock and not let you come again until tomorrow."

"Marcus..." Jim whimpered, stared at him, cheeks blazing. Oh. Oh, someone wanted to play. No one loved being bound and hard like his Jim.

"You're refusing, baby? I'm going to have to punish you." He leaned up over Jim, his prick dragging along Jim's body, and opened the little drawer on the side table, rummaging around for the leather ring that would lift and separate Jim's balls as well.

"I'm not... I didn't refuse. I just... I like. I... Marcus."

He leaned in and bit at Jim's earlobe. "I know, baby. And if you keep refusing we just might have to do other things you like."

Jim groaned, arching under him. "Oh. Oh, good. Please."

He nodded, smiled -- both at the desire to please him and at the relief, the hunger, how Jim was learning to express that huge well of need.

He began to work the cock ring around Jim's cock and balls, taking his time, teasing as he did it. Those muscled legs spread, a soft cry ringing out as Jim focused on him. He drew the leather tight, Jim's balls separated from his

cock and pushed out. They'd shaved Jim just last night, and the whole package was sexy as hell, highlighted by the black leather and the two rings.

"Oh. Oh, fuck. Thank you, sir."

His prick jerked as Jim called him sir. "Mmm... You look amazing, baby."

"I feel amazing."

"Good." He handed over the lube. Now I want to watch you get yourself ready for my cock."

"You know that's not fair, don't you?" Jim took the lube, slicked his fingers. The cock ring made his baby slinky and sexual, made Jim push.

He let one eyebrow go up, loving Jim like this. "What's not fair?"

Jim's fingers slid down, nudging that little ring. "You tell me not to touch, you tell me to touch... I... Oh."

"Oh, that." Marcus grinned. "You can touch, but only if I tell you to -- see? Fair." He licked his lips, eyes on Jim's fingers as they got nearer to the little hole.

"Uh-huh. Right." Jim chuckled, fingertips sliding in circles, dipping inside that tight little hole.

Marcus groaned. "Deeper, baby. Push it deeper."

Two fingers pushed to the second knuckle, slow and easy.

"Oh yeah, baby. That's it. Give me a show."

"Marcus!" Jim stilled, blushing dark, going stiff.

He chuckled, hand sliding along Jim's leg. "You're stunning, baby. I want a show."

"I... It's hard, having you watch."

"It's me, baby. I love you. And it makes *me* hard, watching you." He reached out and tugged on Jim's prick. "You're still hard, too."

"I am." He stroked the thick, metal ring and Jim started moving again, fucking that little hole.

"Fuck, Jim." He reached down and started stroking himself, enjoying the heat that watching Jim generated. Jim watched him, staring and licking the parted lips. "Put in another finger, baby. Let me see you stretch yourself."

Jim whimpered, ass clenching tight around those fingers.

"So fucking sexy." He stroked himself loosely, not enough to bring himself off, just enjoying the pleasure watching Jim brought.

"Marcus. Please."

"Please what, baby?"



"You promised. You said that was for me."

Ah... "Don't worry, baby. I'm going to fuck you."

Jim nodded, staring at him, watching him. "I need you."

"You've got me, baby. You do." He moved up in between Jim's legs and gently pulled Jim's fingers from the sweet ass.

That hole was his. No one had stretched it, fucked it, taken it before him. No one else ever would. He put his hands on Jim's thighs, spreading them wider as his cock nudged at Jim's little hole. He was going to fuck his baby, and then he was going to plug Jim with a heavy plug, let the man feel it all goddamn night.

He pushed right in, not teasing, giving Jim his whole length in a single thrust. Jim groaned, reached for his arms and held on tight, fingers squeezing him.

"God, you're tight." Jim's body squeezed him and he started to move, little pulls and pushes.

"Yours. So full."

"Mine. Yes." He said it again, loving the way it made Jim's body go tight around him. Jim nodded, hands worshipping his body, tracing his muscles and skin.

He began to make bigger movements, thrusting harder, giving his hips a little twist as he pushed in.

"More. More, love. Right there."

"Like this?" he asked, though he knew he was hitting exactly the right spot and making Jim fly.

"Yes! Yes, sir!" Jim went wild, bucking and rubbing, riding him.

His pubic bone hit the little guiche piercing each time he pushed in and he grabbed hold of Jim's cock, tugging and twisting the thicker ring.

"Love you." Jim was fucking beautiful, muscles rippling.

"Yes. Yes, baby." He shifted a little bit, just enough to start hitting Jim's gland, making the tight passage around his cock go even tighter.

Jim screamed, entire body jerking with the need to come. Another thrust and he was coming himself, the tight body demanding his pleasure. He cried out, his body jerking as he shoot. Jim twisted, body jerking violently on his cock, trying to find release. He stayed buried, fingers sliding along Jim's sides, working to bring him down.

"Master..." The strong muscles worked him, Jim fighting to come.

"I'm going to plug you. Keep me inside you overnight."

"Oh, God. Marcus. Please..."

"Uh-huh. Hold that thought."

With a groan, he slipped from Jim's body.

Jim's hands slid over his own body, rubbing down the sides. He kissed each nipple ring and found the plug they kept in the side table, slicking it up quickly.

"I need. Master. Master, please."

"No, you can wait, baby." He pushed the dildo against Jim's hole and watched Jim's body suck it right up.

Jim started moving, riding the dildo, asshole dragging along the vinyl.

"Tsk, tsk, tsk. Naughty boy. Did I say you could do that?"

"Do... do what?" Jim's lips were open, the man panting.

"Fuck yourself on the dildo."

He pushed it in all the way, making sure it was secure before pulling his hand away. Now Jim could squeeze around it, but wasn't going to be able to fuck himself on it.

"Marcus!" Those naughty, naughty hands reached for that bound cock.

He grabbed them, holding them trapped in his own. "No touching, baby." He was going to have to get the cuffs at this rate. Jim twisted, hips bucking into the air. That wild, wanton need was so sexy.

Marcus managed to get the cuffs out of the drawer without losing his grip on Jim's wrists. He got them

cuffed and attached them loosely to the headboard. It stretched Jim out and he moaned, tracing the curves of Jim's belly.

"Oh, God. Marcus. Love." Yeah. Yeah, baby.

He settled on the bed at Jim's back, bringing the stretched body into the curve of his own. It let him hold Jim and gave his hand free reign over all that lovely skin.

"You wanna hear about the accessories for these?" He touched the PA and then the guiche piercings.

"Yes. Yes, please." Jim cuddled in slowly, body moving restlessly.

"I bought a pretty chain. It runs from here," he tugged on the PA, "to here," he flicked the guiche back and forth. "And there's a lock."

"A lock? Why?"

"So you can't get hard and come." He played with the ring in Jim's cock, turning it.

"Fuck. No way. No fucking fair."

"It's a punishment. For touching without permission."

Jim moaned low, twisting in the chains. "More rules."

"Yes. No touching any of your piercings without permission."

"What? They're in me. I can feel them."

"No touching them with your *hands*."

Jim moaned. "You and your rules."

"Yes." He bit Jim's earlobe. "You love them." Thrived on them. Relaxed and found joy in life through them. Jim needed this just as badly as he did

"What else?" Jim relaxed under his touches, stretching out as the tension eased.

"What else? You mean rules? We've added the must not wear those awful shirts and no touching yourself today..."

"We have, although you have an unreasoning prejudice against my shirts."

"They're ugly, baby. And they can't be nearly as comfortable as a T-shirt. Your skin certainly can't breathe in them. New rule -- your skin must be allowed to breathe." He found Jim's ribs as he teased.

"I'm going to breathe." Jim's laugh rang out, his baby just cackling.

God, Jim's laugh sounded great, the man's happiness fueling his own. Jim turned his head, begging a kiss, those eyes just dancing. He brought their mouths together, tasting Jim's happiness. His fingers stopped tickling and started sliding, exploring Jim's body. Again. He loved the angles and planes, the muscles under warm skin.

Jim moaned, relaxing against him, that pretty bound cock right there. He touched the ring, fucking fascinated by the metal, by how it made Jim's cock look.

"Mmm." Jim shifted again, moaning for him.

"You like it, hmm?" He twisted the ring slightly.

"I do. I didn't think I would, but I do."

"It's sexy as hell, Jim. It makes you a stud."

"Thank you."

Jim smiled, cuddling in happily. "There aren't any more, are there? Piercings?"

Marcus started to laugh. "I'll see if I can come up with something." There was always the possibility of another guiche, a piercing for Jim's ball sac, ladders...

"No. No, no thinking..."

"How about a diamond stud for your earlobe?"

Jim stilled. "Okay, but...I don't want to use the ones from my box. I'd want one from you."

Marcus smiled and got up. "Hold that thought."

He went over to the dresser and opened his sock drawer, feeling around at the back of it for the little jewelry box. Then he came back and snuggled up against Jim's back again.

"What's up?"

"You remember I told you about how I learned the lifestyle from the ground up -- how I was a sub?"

"I do. You told me that you needed to learn how to feel what I feel, first."

"That's right. Well, when I graduated, I went out and bought these. I told myself that one day I'd have someone to wear the second one. The funny thing is, I'd pretty much forgotten about them until now." He opened the box for Jim, showing the two little diamond stud earrings.

"Oh." Jim's eyes got watery, that look... awed.

"They're not fancy or anything. I couldn't afford more than just a couple of little diamonds in a simple setting when I bought them. But they've been here, waiting on you."

"On us."

He kissed Jim's earlobe. "Yeah, baby. On us. So what do you say -- will you wear my earring?"

"Yes." That agreement was immediate, sure.

He turned Jim's face to him, kissing his baby hard. "We'll go tomorrow morning and see Treat."

"Okay." Jim moaned, nodded, agreeing immediately.

"Good."

Maybe Jim was more ready for his collar than he thought.

Maybe he'd find out soon.

### *Chapter Thirty One*

He read his last chapter, humming low, chewing on his bottom lip as he edited away. He still wasn't sure if Malor was a good name for a villain or not. He sort of thought no, but that was the man's *name* somehow.

Damn it.

He tried Malon. Nalor. Manor. No, that was a real word...

"Baby, what are you doing?"

"Working. Trying to figure out a character's name."  
Sanom. Janom. Janor. Oh, Janor looked nice.

"With your hand down your pants?"

"What?" He looked down, his fingers working the ring idly. "Oh. It must itch." He thought he'd go with Janor.

"I said no touching it, Jim. It's a *rule*."

"It wasn't on purpose. I was working. What do you think of the name Janor?"



"I think you're changing the subject." Marcus crossed his arms and stood there, looking serious.

"No. I can't decide whether to change the name. I can't go any further until I know."

"You're still going to be punished. And what's wrong with Malor? Wasn't that what you'd called him?"

"Yes." He looked over at Marcus, just beaming. "You remembered. Do you like that name? It isn't stupid?"

"It's not stupid. The book is good, baby."

"Thank you." He saved the file, feeling better about the story than he had in weeks.

"You're welcome. Now can we talk about what I caught you doing?"

"No. Because 'caught' sort of intimates that I was doing something wrong on purpose and I wasn't. I wasn't actively breaking the rules."

"But you were still breaking them."

"No... I mean, I wasn't being defiant." That ought to count for something.

"Still, you obviously need a lesson, something that'll help you remember not to accidentally break the rules again."

"I... Are you angry with me?" He wasn't sure he could deal with that right now.

Marcus tilted his head, pursed his lips. "No, no, I'm not angry with you. I believe you didn't mean to break the rules. But we'll put the chain in for a few hours, to remind you not to do it again."

He looked at Marcus, brain working overtime. He was beginning to get things, starting to understand that what Marcus really wanted was his focus. All the time. "Okay. Okay, Marcus."

"I'll go get it and meet you in the bathroom. We'll take a shower together."

He nodded, feeling nervous, worried, shivery. "I didn't mean to."

"I know. I'm not mad, baby. You just need to remember, hmm?" Marcus held out a hand to him.

"Focus, huh?" He reached out, let Marcus pull him close.

"That's right, baby." Marcus tilted his head and pressed their lips together.

He opened up, letting Marcus in, offering himself totally. Groaning, Marcus slid his tongue in, the kiss deep. He reached for Marcus, hands stuttering over those amazing muscles.

"You trying to distract me, baby? Get in one last orgasm before the chain goes on?"

"No. I'm trying to love you." They always loved on each other at six o'clock before supper and it was... "Wait. It's only four. Is everything okay?"

"It's fine, baby. You were playing with your PA, remember?"

"Not really. If I had, I would have enjoyed it more and you are usually in your workroom at four."

"I missed you. Come on. Let's go make love."

"Yes, Marcus." He nodded, fingers twining with Marcus'.  
"Please."

They went to the bedroom, Marcus undressing him slowly, touching his skin as it was revealed. He felt cherished. Loved. Easy and settled in his skin.

"I want you to suck me, baby."

"Yes, sir." He nodded, fingers stripping Marcus down. He loved the feel of Marcus' cock, sliding on his tongue.

"Mmm... yeah, baby. Love it when you suck me."

His moan rang out and he knelt, lips open, hungry. Marcus took that thick cock and rubbed it against his lips before feeding in the head. Jim wrapped his lips around the tip, sucking hard, eyes falling closed. Marcus' groan was sweet music to his ears, the big hands landing on his shoulders and holding on. He let himself focus, let himself sink into the whole act of loving Marcus, tasting the man.

Marcus let him know he was doing it right, that Marcus was taking pleasure from it. "Yeah, baby, like that."

His hands slid up Marcus' thighs, fingers massaging the strong, solid muscles. Moans and groans met each move he made, Marcus' hips beginning to thrust, just a little, moving the hard cock along his tongue. Relaxing his throat, Jim let Marcus in, begging the man to take him.

"Yes, baby!" Marcus' hands slid into his curls, holding his head in place as Marcus began to thrust in earnest, cock hitting the back of his throat.

He swallowed on each thrust, groaning softly, the power of his lover enough to make him soar.

"Jim. Yes. Good." The words were little more than grunts, and he could feel Marcus' prick swell in his mouth.

He sucked hard, throat working as he begged for his Master's pleasure. A low, heartfelt moan came first, and then Marcus stiffened, come spraying down Jim's throat as Marcus came. Jim whimpered, swallowing hard, hips bucking as his need grew.

Marcus kept hold of his head, thrusting gently into his mouth a moment or two longer, and then that prick slid away. "Mmm... thank you, baby."

His response was a long, soft moan. He needed.

"On the bed, baby."

"Yes, sir." His cock was so hard it hurt, his entire body vibrating.

Marcus' fingers slid up along his legs, starting at his ankles and traveling along the soft inner skin, spreading his legs more the higher those strong fingers moved. Sounds escaped him -- not words, but simple, desperate sounds begging Marcus not to stop.

Marcus' fingers reached his guiche, Marcus toying with it, turning it through his skin, tugging on it.

"Sir. Master. Love." His hips bucked, hands reaching up for the headboard.

Marcus growled, fingers sliding to cup his balls. "Yes. Mine."

"Yes. Yes, yours." Please.

Another growl sounded and then Marcus' mouth moved over his cock, taking the tip in. Marcus' tongue played with the ring. He arched, head thrown back as heat suffused him. Marcus hummed around the head of his cock, fingers playing with the guiche and the nipple rings.

He came, just like that, easy as pie, Marcus making him fly. Marcus continued to suck, tugging waves of pleasure out of his cock.

"Love you. Oh, Master. So good." He was melted, just limp and sated.

"Mmm..." Marcus kissed a trail up Jim's body and then smiled down at him. "Love you." The kiss was soft and deep.

He wrapped his arms around Marcus' shoulders, holding on. So good. So fucking right.

Marcus nuzzled and licked and sucked on his skin a moment or two, and then Marcus reached over into the side table drawer, bringing out the small length of chain with the lock on it.

"It won't hurt, will it?"

"It'll keep you from getting hard, but it shouldn't be painful." Marcus petted his belly.

"Okay." He watched as the chain slid in through the PA, his cock throbbing at the sensation, trying to fill. He wasn't sure about the not-hard part.

Marcus gave his prick a little tap. "Hey, Mr. Eager Beaver, the chain's not going to let it go anymore than semi."

"Not my fault. There's all these nerves right there."

Marcus chuckled and slid the chain through his guiche as well, closing it with a tiny lock. "Now there's only a little wiggle room."

"Oh, God." He shifted, hands automatically going to explore, the ring tugging at his cock head.

Marcus' hands grabbed his. "Did I say you could do that?"

"No. I just... It tugs." And that tugging made his cock ache and try to swell. "Marcus, it tugs."

Marcus nodded. "You won't forget it's there, will you? You won't accidentally play with it." Marcus kissed his knuckles. "I give you permission to touch for the next five minutes."

He groaned, fingers exploring, which just made it worse, made the tug and the ache worse. Made the need worse. "Marcus, take it off? Please? It aches."

"No, it stays on for an hour." Marcus kissed his ear. "If you're good, I'll fuck you blind afterward."

"Marcus..." He moaned and pushed closer, the ache in the pit of his stomach maddening.

"I'll stay with you, baby. And how about a book? Or we could go start supper."

"I have something in the slow cooker dealie. Uh... a lime chicken deal. I looked up a recipe." He'd let Marcus convince him not all Crockpot food was slimy or gooey.

"Is that what I've been smelling on and off all day? Good job, baby." Marcus' fingers slid over his belly, distracting him from the tug and ache.

"I thought it sounded good. I thought maybe we could go have coffee and cake somewhere after."

"That sounds really nice, baby." Marcus kissed his neck, tongue licking at a mark.

"I thought it did. We've been in the house a long time." He was starting to get braver, to want to explore the world with Marcus.

"We have." The kisses and touches kept coming. "I can't think of anyone I'd rather be in the house with." Marcus' eyes twinkled at him.

"I understand that." He was starting to relax, starting to breathe.

"Good." Marcus pressed close, body warm against his.

He started to doze off, cuddling in, fingers twined with Marcus'.

"Love you," whispered across his skin.

"Mmm. My love." He nodded and drifted away, right where he belonged.

## *Chapter Thirty Two*

Marcus did love the smell of leather. He was wearing his best leather pants and a green, silk shirt, the material soft and cool against his skin. He'd dressed Jim in jeans and a tight T-shirt, showing off what had become an awesome body. His baby had six-pack abs.



They pulled up into a parking spot down the street from the Hammer and he turned to Jim, smiled. "You ready, baby?"

"It's only supper, right? I don't have to... do anything unusual?"

"No, baby. I'm not going to put you on display. People will be looking at you, though, at this handsome man with me." He was so proud to have Jim on his arm.

"Me?" Jim looked shocked. "Marcus. Look at you. I mean, *look* at you."

He beamed at Jim. "You're good for my ego. But yes, of course they'll be looking at you. Just wait until we've finished your back tattoo -- you'll have to go topless then so everyone can see."

"In a restaurant? Isn't that illegal?" Like the Hammer wasn't private.

"It's a private club, baby. Besides, you don't have to worry about that today." He leaned over and kissed Jim's nose. "Come on."

Jim nodded, following him in. Thursdays were fairly busy, new members coming in. He'd called ahead, though, and there was a table reserved for them with a good view of the stage. Their waiter introduced himself as Kris in a soft voice. Jim sat as close to the wall as he could, hiding away.

He reached out and slid his hand along Jim's arm.  
"Everyone is friends here, baby."

"Your friends, huh?" Jim offered him a grin.

"Our friends, Jim. Everyone is going to love you."

"I wish." Those words were soft, full of worry and a little pain.

"Baby..." He cupped one of Jim's cheeks. "Don't worry about it. You'll see."

"Marcus? Well, I'll be damned! Marcus!" Tony walked up, his two bound subs in leather hoods and on leashes.  
"You've been absent from us!"

"I have been busy with Jim." He nodded to his lover. "I'd like to introduce Jim. Jim, this is Tony, and his subs are Micah and Jason."

"H...hello." Jim scooted closer.

Tony's laugh boomed out, hearty and happy. "Now, now, little one. I won't hurt you."

Marcus put his arm around Jim's shoulders and murmured, "I've got you, baby."

"He's lovely, Marcus. Beautiful hair and skin." One of Tony's hands pumped Micha back to full erection.

"Thank you, Tony. Your boys are beautiful as always. Are the three of you the show tonight?"

"No. No, the lads are in heavy submission for the weekend. It's been a hard week."

"My sympathies." He grinned. "Enjoy your weekend."

"Oh, I definitely will. They might not." Tony winked and Jim looked... aghast.

Marcus waved as they headed to their own table and he squeezed Jim's shoulder. "Do you enjoy your punishments, baby?"

"I... sometimes. Not if you're angry and not if... No." Jim looked at him. "I enjoy the things we do and sometimes I need you to... do what you do, but I don't like that."

"But you need it. As do Micha and Jason. I imagine that's why they acted out this week. And you must tell me if anything you see here bothers you, or excites you. I want to know where your head is."

"On my shoulders." Jim stared at him. "I don't think I could do the hood thing. That makes me a little sick to my stomach."

"It's very isolating. I think that's the last thing you need. Have you decided what you'd like for dinner?"

"No. What's good? Do they have noodles?" Someone was nervous, Marcus could tell. Jim always reverted to heavy carbs.

"There's a stir fry on tonight." He rubbed his hand along Jim's back.

"A stir fry? I like those. I... This is a little weird, but nice. It's been a long time. Will there be dancing?"

"I imagine there will be after the show. Do you dance, baby?"

"That's a loaded question. I like to dance; I'm not very good at it."

"I think dancing is one of those things where enjoyment is far more important than ability."

"I concur. It's just nice, to rub against each other, to let yourself go."

He had to admit, Jim had a point.

"Do you? Dance, I mean."

"A little. I can remember, a long time ago, my father trying to teach me to waltz."

Jim winced. "My father believes dancing is evil."

"That's pretty harsh." Jim had never spoken of his family before. Of course Marcus hadn't asked either.

"You have no idea."

"Tell me about it."

"Here? I. I don't know if I can. It makes me... uncomfortable."

He reached over and took Jim's hand, squeezing. "That's understandable, baby. We can talk about it at home."

Jim smiled at him, relaxing. "Thank you. Here comes the waiter."

He was proud of Jim for communicating with him, letting him know where his baby's head was at. When Kris asked if they were ready to order, he nodded. "Yes, we'll have two orders of the shrimp stir fry, please, with house salads."

"What would you like to drink?" Kris never looked at Jim, expecting Marcus to answer.

"The house white will do nicely, thank you."

"No coffee?" Jim's tease made him laugh. They had Jim down to three cups a day, sometimes four.

"Who knows, baby, maybe with dessert."

"Oh, that sounds good." Jim actually chilled out enough to look around, be curious.

There was plenty to see, some of it would be classified as 'weird' anywhere else, but there were plenty of 'normal' diners, couples who you wouldn't know just from a casual glance that they were part of the lifestyle.

"So you came here a lot before me?" Doc came in, as Jim spoke, his boy on one arm, followed by Ollie.

"I'd usually come in on Dom night if nothing else. There wasn't anyone at home to keep me there." He chuckled a little. "Which sounds like I'm throwing a pity party -- I'm not."

"Do you miss it? Coming on Dom night?"

"Hmm... yes and no. I'd like to see my friends more often and Dom night is a lovely indulgence. But I wouldn't give you up for it."

"I wouldn't be angry if you went."

He reached out and touched Jim's cheek. "Thank you, baby. So far, I haven't wanted to go without you. It's very intense, this thing we have between us."

"It is." Jim turned to kiss his palm. "I can't stop thinking about you, about what we do together."

He nodded, in the same space as Jim as far as that went. "It's a good thing, baby. Binding us together."

Jim squeezed his fingers, both of them smiling like idiots at each other.

Their wine and salads came, their waiter bringing them and disappearing quietly. They were good at the Hammer, knew when to be discreet.

Jim sipped the wine, smiling. "Oh, that's nice."

"Yeah, you like it?" He gave his sensual baby a warm smile. "Wait 'til you test the food."

"I do like it." Jim hummed softly, eyes twinkling, wicked. "I should buy some for the house."

"You should talk to Xavier. I think he knows all about this kind of thing -- what wines go well with what foods." Jim could take a wine-tasting course if he wanted to add a little something to their meals.

"I... Okay. I wasn't thinking about meals."

"No? You were thinking about getting me drunk in the middle of the day and having your wicked way with me?"

"No!" Jim's cheeks just burned.

He reached out and rubbed one of those red cheeks. "I was teasing, baby."

"I was thinking that it would taste good around..." Jim leaned close, whispered in his ear. "Around your cock."

His eyes widened and his prick began to fill. "Baby..." He sounded hoarse, his voice was so thick.

"Yeah. I should buy a bottle, huh?"

"Yes. Yes, you should." He nodded eagerly.

His wicked, sexy baby. Jim's smile heated him up -- down to the bones.

They were still staring at each other when their waiter came back with their entrees. "Is there anything wrong with your salads, sir?"

"Oh, no, they're fine. We just decided to wait and have them with our main dishes." He gave Jim a wink.

"It smells wonderful. Thanks." Jim ducked his head, unwrapping the silverware.

"It does. I do love shrimp. Thanks, Kris."

Kris gave them a little bow and headed off.

"We should eat before the show begins and we get distracted."

"Okay." Jim nodded, finishing the glass of wine and pouring more.

He held his glass over for more as well, and then dug into his stir fry, humming at the shrimp and spices. Jim didn't eat well, nervous, leaving half of the food and drinking double the wine. He speared one of the shrimp from Jim's plate and held it up to the man's mouth. "What's the matter, baby?" It had been a while since Jim had eaten just half of anything.

"Nothing. Nothing." Jim took the shrimp, eating it eagerly. He knew Jim was hungry. They'd worked out hard this morning.



"Good." He wrapped some noodles around his fork and speared another shrimp with it, offering the bite over as well.

"That's yours, love." Still, Jim ate it, relaxing visibly.

He ate a few of his shrimp and some of his salad, keeping an eye on Jim; if his baby didn't keep eating on his own, Marcus was more than happy to keep feeding the man; there was something sensual to it.

Jim picked, eating a pea pod, but there was very little going in. So he grabbed another forkful off Jim's plate and fed his baby.

"I..." Jim opened, lips hungry. "You don't have to..." No, but Jim was getting off on it, on letting him take care.

"I'm not doing anything I don't want to do, baby."

"What else do you want?"

"I want us to finish our meal and then have something absolutely decadent from dessert. I'd like to eat it out of your mouth."

Jim gasped, reaching for the wine bottle again.

He took the wine bottle away from Jim. "I don't think there's any left, baby."

"Did I drink that much?"

"You were a little nervous I think, hmm?"

"I was. I want to fit in to this part of your life, so badly."

Marcus stroked Jim's cheeks again. "All you need to do is be yourself."

"And if being myself is a little weird and nervy?"

"You're not alone in that, I can assure you." He leaned in and took a soft kiss. "And it's somewhat endearing."

"I just... I need you for so much." The words were whispered against his lips.

"And I need that, baby. You're mine. All mine." He pushed his answer into Jim's mouth and took a long kiss.

Jim was stiff, staring at him. "Marcus. Marcus, people will see."

"Baby, they're too busy with each other to worry about us."

"I worry about people watching me. It scares me." Jim pushed closer.

"I can understand that, given what you've been through. But nobody here is out to get you. It's a private club."

Jim nodded, lips offered up to him again. "Okay. I like private."

"I know you do." He closed the distance between their lips and once again gave Jim a kiss.

This time Jim opened for him, let him in to taste. That was his baby. Groaning, he swept his tongue through Jim's mouth. Jim whimpered, moaning into his lips, tongue sliding against his. He slid his hand along Jim's thigh, headed toward the jean-clad crotch. Jim went still again, eyes wide. He held that gaze as he brushed Jim's cock with the tips of his fingers.

"Marcus..."

Yes, baby. He licked Jim's lips and dove in for another kiss, his hand pressing up against Jim's covered cock. Jim moaned for him, hips rocking up into his touch. That was it, just what he wanted from his baby, what Jim needed. He pressed a little harder, shifting his hand up and down.

"You'll make me leak, Marcus."

"Maybe I'm going for more than that."

"Marcus!" Oh, that was adorable.

He gave Jim a wink as Kris came back and asked what they wanted for dessert. "Whatever's today's special. But just the one. We're going to feed each other."

Kris nodded, eyes twinkling. "Yes, sir."

"You forgot the coffee." Jim chewed on his bottom lip, those white teeth just visible.

"No, I think we'll skip the coffee. We'll have a dessert wine instead."

"You'll make me giddy."

He nodded. "And pliable."

"Do you want me pliable?"

"Sometimes. Right now. I want to pliable you right across my knees and show everyone how beautifully your ass takes my hand."

Jim's pretty, green eyes were huge, staring at him. "Oh, my God."

He held Jim's gaze, his fingers toying with the bulge in Jim's crotch. "You're imagining it now."

"You don't know that."

"I can see it in your eyes, baby. In the way your prick got even harder."

Jim moaned, lips parting. "I don't want you to."

"I think you do. But I do believe I promised you I wouldn't make you do anything this evening."

"You did." Was that disappointment? Relief? Both?

He traced Jim's lips with his forefinger. "We'll be back another day."

Jim's tongue flicked out, tasting his skin and making his cock ache.

"You make me want, baby." So damn much. He didn't think he was going to make it to the stage show.

"Can we go home after dessert? Please, sir?"

"Yes, baby, we most certainly can." The only reason he didn't ditch the dessert altogether, or get it to go, was because he really ought to have more discipline than this.

"Thank you."

"So, are you going to introduce your friend, my dear boy, or am I going to have to admire from afar?" Oliver smiled warmly at him, those eyes shining.

"Oliver!" Marcus stood and offered the man a warm hug. "This is my lover, Jim. Jim, this is Oliver, my... mentor."

"Hello." Jim stood, offered one hand. "It's nice to meet you."

Oliver beamed and shook Jim's hand. "You're quite lovely; look at that hair."

Jim ducked his head, blushing dark. Marcus beamed and nodded. Jim looked amazing with the long curls. He just had to be convinced of it.

Oliver smiled at him, the approval evident. "I'm having a dinner party next Saturday night, my dear. I'd love if you two would attend. Nothing fancy, just food and drinks and perhaps a dip in the pool."

"Thank you, Oliver. I believe we're available that Saturday. What time?" It was perfect, a way for Jim to meet some of his friends in a more intimate environment than the club.

"Cocktails at seven. Bring your bathing suits and be casual." Oliver winked at Jim. "I detest being unnecessarily uncomfortable, don't you?"

"I..." Jim gaped, stared.

Marcus rubbed his hand along Jim's leg, attempting to soothe.

"Marcus likes me to wear jeans and T-shirts."

Oliver nodded. "It suits you. You're quite lovely."

"He is, isn't he? And all mine." He couldn't help the possessive note that came into his voice.

Oliver nodded, hand patting his shoulder.

"Congratulations, my friend. You have my blessing."

"Thank you, Ollie. That means a lot to me."

Oliver nodded and smiled. "There's your dessert, lads. Enjoy."

"See you on Saturday!" He waited until their dessert had come, and the waiter gone again, before turning to Jim.

"A party -- this'll be fun, baby."

"Are you sure?" Jim watched as the wine was poured, chewing the full bottom lip.

"I'm sure. It'll be a few of Ollie's friends, a relaxed and easy atmosphere. He says dinner party, but he means barbeque out by the pool."

"Oh. That sounds fun." Jim nodded, smiled for him.  
"What's dessert?"

"Some sort of chocolate concoction with lots of sauce and whipping cream. I'll feed you." This time it wasn't about making sure Jim ate the food, this time it was about sensuality and pleasure.

"Mmm." Jim scooted closer, almost in his lap.

He pushed back a little from the table and patted his thighs. If Jim wanted to sit in his lap, that was just fine by him.

"It's okay?" Jim moved before waiting for his answer, pushing close.

"You know I wouldn't have offered if it wasn't, baby." He let his hand curl around Jim's ass, the other grabbing a fork and spearing some of the decadent dessert.

"Do you want a drink of your wine?" Jim's lips opened like a baby bird's.

"In a moment." He fed Jim the sweet, and then put the fork down, grabbing his glass.

He took a drink and then another, holding this one in his mouth as he pressed his lips to Jim's. Jim's eyes went wide, lips opening to him. He could see Jim's need, the sudden, sharp, fierce desire. He poured the wine into Jim's mouth, his free hand sliding along Jim's leg, up between Jim's thighs. His baby was hot, spread and hard and willing for him.

He reached Jim's prick, rubbing it through the denim.

"Marcus. Love." Jim arched, pushing against his hand.

Groaning, he molded his hand to Jim's need, rubbing and pushing against the hard flesh. He could feel the ring, piercing the broad head. He spread his hand wide, little finger searching for the other ring behind Jim's balls, pressing against it.

"Master." Jim whimpered, eyes rolling. "Dessert. Oh. Oh, Marcus..."

"Do you want more?"

"I... I need. I need something."

He nuzzled Jim's ear. "You can come as you need to, baby."

"I can't. I can't relax enough here." Two can'ts. He hadn't heard those in a while.

"Shh, baby. Shh. You forgot where we were long enough to sit in my lap and get hard."



Jim nodded, eyes clinging to his. "You. The wine is amazing, from your lips."

"Mmm... we can do that again." He took another mouthful of his wine and again brought their lips together, pouring it into Jim's mouth.

Jim's tongue explored his mouth, the most amazing sounds escaping his baby. He cupped Jim's prick again, rubbing and kneading the hot flesh. It only took a second before Jim was rocking, pushing rhythmically against his hand. He kept Jim's focus on him, biting and tugging on Jim's lips.

He didn't give Jim a chance to think, to speak, to do anything but rock and shift and come for him. When the lovely body bucked and jerked against him, he swore he could smell the sweet scent of Jim's come through his jeans.

Jim's eyes were wide, shocked, ashamed. "Marcus... Oh, God."

"My beautiful, lovely man." He kissed Jim's lips, his cheeks. "That was amazing. Wonderful. And look. No one is watching us, baby. All eyes are on the stage. Pity for them, they missed the best show in the house."

"You're not angry? It's okay?" Jim relaxed, leaning into him.

"I told you earlier you could come as you needed to, baby -- of course I'm not angry."

"I should... Is there a bathroom?"

"Yeah, come on, baby. They've got wipes in there and everything."

He stood and held out his hand for Jim.

Jim took it, holding his eyes, leaving the dessert and wine behind.

### *Chapter Thirty Three*

Jim itched.

He couldn't write.

He couldn't read.

He couldn't think.

He had to get the hell out of Dodge.

"I'm going out, Marcus. I'll be back." He hollered down into the basement. He couldn't stay here another second.

Marcus called back up. "What?"

He could hear Marcus' footsteps on the stairs. "What was that, baby?"

"I'm going out. I need..." Something. Out. Air. Coffee.

Oh, God. Coffee.

"If you needed, you should have come and seen me sooner, baby." Marcus smiled at him. "I've got what you need."

"I need to go for a walk. I'm all itchy and grumpy. You don't want to deal with me."

One of Marcus' eyebrows went up. "I don't only want to be with you when you're in a good mood, baby. Now what's up?"

"Nothing. I'm in a bad mood. I need to shop for your birthday." Even if it was still weeks away. He needed something.

"But *why* are you in a bad mood?" Marcus herded him toward the stairs up to their bedroom.

"Wait. I was going out. You were working..."

"I was working, but you need, baby. That takes precedence."

"I was going outside to walk. I want a cup of good coffee. I..." He stopped on the stairs, frowning. "Are you listening to me?"

"Of course I'm listening, but I'm looking for the underlying reason why you're so out of sorts and wanting coffee."

"There isn't any reason." There wasn't. And if there was he didn't want to talk about it.

"Are you sure?" They were still going upstairs, moving toward the bedroom.

"I am. I. My head hurts. I want a coffee. I itch. I..." He shook his head, chewing on his bottom lip. "I'm going for a walk, Marcus."

"All right, but no coffee. You've had your cups this morning."

"I want coffee." He wanted to throw something. He wanted to just scream.

"No. The rules are one pot of coffee a day. Period."

"I. Want Coffee." He shivered, hands clenched.

"No. And if you keep up this petulant attitude, I will have to beat it out of you."

He closed his eyes, counted to twenty. "I'm not trying to be petulant, Marcus. I'm trying to let you know that I'm not in a good mood. That I'm frustrated and angry and pissed off and I don't feel like being submissive right now."

"And I'm telling you that it's not a feeling you get to put on and take off like a coat. it's who you are. A scene could help your mood immensely. And whether or not you want to be submissive, the rule is *no* coffee."

"Marcus. I fucking *need* something." He sighed, heading for the bathroom, for a handful of aspirin or a shower or something.

Marcus grabbed his arm and spun him, pulling him up against the strong body. "That's what I'm telling you. I *know*." Marcus rolled his eyes. "I should show, not tell."

He was pushed up against the wall, Marcus' body there, hard and sure.

He couldn't catch a full breath, couldn't stop fighting, struggling, using his body against Marcus. He'd wanted this since the gym this morning. "Tell me this is okay."

"What? This?" Marcus hand came down on his upper thigh. "This is okay." Marcus' mouth pressed against his, the kiss hard, intense. "This is okay, too."

He bit at Marcus' lips, fighting hard, needing this. Growling, Marcus shoved up hard against him, cock hard as nails against his belly.

He snarled, his breath huffing out of him. "Damn it."

"You wanna tell me or fuck first?"

"I don't want to tell."

"You will." Marcus growled and grabbed his hands, pulling them up over his head and stretching him out as their lips met again with another hard kiss.

No. No, he wouldn't. Right now he wanted those kisses, though. And Marcus gave them to him, one after another. Strong hips pushed into him, grinding him against the wall. He pushed back, fighting hard, telling himself he *wasn't* a pussy, he wasn't weak and stupid. He wasn't. The harder he fought, the harder Marcus pushed back, their bodies coming together hard and furious.

He started to tire, started to lose himself to the touches and kisses. Marcus let go of his hands and grabbed his ass, lifting him off the floor and carrying him to the bedroom. The kisses never stopped.

"I'm angry." He didn't want to... But he did. His cock ached.

Marcus laughed. "Baby -- now you want to talk?"

"Don't laugh at me. I don't want anybody fucking laughing at me."

"I'm not laughing *at* you, baby. I promise." He was tossed onto the bed, Marcus following him down.

"They did." He growled low and pushed into the kiss, furious and angry and snarly as hell.

Marcus returned his kiss, hands wrapping around his head, holding him still. When the kiss was over, Marcus was growling. "Who did?"

"I... I don't want to talk about it. I'm just pissed. And I'm not weak."

"I have never called you weak. Not once."

"No. No, you haven't. You haven't." He was never going to the gym again. They watched him. They saw him.

"That's because you aren't." Marcus growled again, and then they were kissing and humping.

He let Marcus distract him, let the heat and growl soothe him. Marcus' pushed and pulled at his clothes, tearing them off him.

"Fuck me." He turned over as soon as he was naked, offering Marcus his ass.

"Oh, yeah, baby." Marcus grabbed his ass, spreading his cheeks.

"Now. Come on. I need you."

Both of Marcus' thumbs pushed into him, stretching him open. He pushed back, demanding, wanting to be taken, overwhelmed.

Marcus' breath was hot on his skin and then his left ass cheek was bitten. A moment later, the thick, blunt heat of Marcus' cock pushed at his hole.

"Please." He nodded, pushed back against that heat.

Marcus surged into him, hips slamming up against his ass.

"Master!" He screamed, entire body waking up in a rush.  
"Please!"

"Yes. Yes, Jim. Mine." Marcus began a hard, fast rhythm.

The burn and pressure pushed all the rest of the shit away, leaving him gasping and nodding, slamming back to meet every thrust. Marcus kept the pace strong and fast, the two of them wrapped together, working toward pleasure. His orgasm came fast and hard, his body not even relaxing as he shot.

Marcus kept thrusting, not letting him catch his breath. He shifted, trying to keep his balance, his center.

One of Marcus' hands slid along his spine. "Love you, baby."

He gasped, trying to breath. "I know."

"Good." Moaning, Marcus began to jerk into him, crying out.

He did his best to squeeze Marcus tight, to help, but he couldn't quite manage. Several more thrusts and Marcus was coming, pumping hot come into him. His arms buckled and he fell forward, collapsing.

Marcus came down with him, strong arms keeping Marcus from crushing him. "Mmm... feel better, baby?"

He nodded, closing his eyes. Yeah. Yeah, he did. Much.



A soft kiss landed on his neck. "You wanna tell me what had you all riled up?"

He shook his head, holding Marcus' hand tight.

"You'll feel better if you do, baby."

"They laughed at me. I was changing and they saw my ass. I'm not going back there." He didn't feel better at all.

Marcus growled. "They were assholes, baby. Don't give them the victory."

"I'm not going back. I'm not a pussy and I'm not going to let anyone else touch me, either."

"Who touched you?"

"It doesn't matter. It's never going to happen again."

Marcus growled and rolled them, looking into his eyes, staring into him. "Tell me what happened."

"It doesn't matter. It wasn't anything. It just made me angry."

"Tell me. Tell *me*."

Marcus looked at him and he started talking. He told Marcus about ripping his shorts on a barbell and running in to change. About the group of five men laughing at his still-reddened ass, about them bumping him and pushing him around a bit. About the way they laughed and the

one that slapped his ass. "That's something special between us and it's ruined now."

"No, it's not, baby. Not if we don't let it be." Marcus growled. His lips were tight, the lines around his eyes angry. "Did you report them to the management?"

"No. No, I don't want anyone to know." He didn't even want Marcus to know.

"You have to stand up to bullies like that, Jim. This is like that girl, all over again."

"I said no." He wasn't discussing this anymore.

"So that's it? Just like that you're going to leave the gym because of them?"

"Yeah. For now." He shrugged, uncomfortable and a little sick to his stomach about the whole thing.

Marcus growled. "For now. We haven't finished with this, baby."

He nodded. He was finished with it. Really. He wanted to just hide for a while. Maybe more than a while.

"All right, baby." Marcus' mouth slid over the skin of his neck. "I'm gonna plug you, baby. And put on the cock ring. Then we're going to have a cocktail, relax."

Jim found himself agreeing, chin lifting, trusting in that mouth, in his lover.

"Yeah, that's it. Love you, baby."

"Oh. I love you. I'm sorry, Marcus, about all this." He let Marcus love on him, let those hands warm him.

"You aren't responsible for what those assholes said and did, baby." Marcus touched him and filled him with a plug, stroked him back to hardness and put on the ring. "All right, baby. It's just you and me and we're going to have a great evening."

It was easy to believe with Marcus loving on him.

### *Chapter Thirty Four*

Marcus woke up, a plugged and cock-ringed Jim snuggled up against him. They'd had a relaxing, lovely evening. And it looked like Jim had had a good night's sleep. It would soon be time to wake his baby up and let his hand fly. The question would be whether or not Jim would be able to put those assholes out of his mind and enjoy it as he always did.

Marcus growled. He wanted to bang some heads together. And he was talking to Cedric. Not strictly a queer gym, the place was right next to the Hammer and did a huge business with members in the community. Even if that was changing, the kind of attitude Jim had encountered just wasn't right.

He stroked his hand along Jim's back, calming himself. It wasn't Jim he was mad at.

Jim hummed, cuddling into him. "Master."

He loved that, loved how Jim submitted when he wasn't thinking about it. "Yeah, baby. I'm right here."

"Good." That was a satisfied sound, a peaceful one.

He chuckled, fingers exploring Jim's spine, finding each vertebrae.

"Mmm." Jim nuzzled his chest, lips open, tongue teasing him.

"Waking up with you is one of the best things, baby."

Jim nodded, lips finding his nipple and sucking, the pressure steady and sweet. He groaned softly, his prick going from hard to very hard as Jim played. Jim moved down, lips tracing his abs, heading for his cock. He loved their mornings -- his blowjob, Jim's spanking, and then breakfast.

His fingers slid through Jim's curls, the hair like silk. His hungry lover took his cock in, disappearing under the covers and adoring him. The light was pale, coming through the windows; the fall was here, keeping it cooler in the mornings, keeping them cuddled in the bed.

He spread his legs, Jim fitting perfectly in the space it created. That hot mouth began to work him, sending pleasure through him. Jim knew exactly how to love him, how to make him buck and cry out. He spread a little wider, keeping himself from thrusting and hurrying to the

finish. Jim's fingers worked his balls, touching him, pushing him higher, faster.

"Baby." He moaned, fingers wrapping around Jim's head, holding Jim in place as the need overtook everything and he started to fuck his baby's mouth. Jim opened to him, throat working, taking him in to the root. "Baby!" He thrust a couple more times and poured his pleasure down Jim's throat.

Jim whimpered, swallowing around him, drinking him down.

He loosened his hold on Jim's head, once again stroking the soft curls. "Mmm... oh, baby, you get better at that every single day."

Jim cleaned his cock, tongue soft and gentle, so careful. He tugged on Jim's arm, wanting a kiss, wanting to taste himself in his baby's mouth. Moving easily, Jim scooted up, pressed against him, hips moving in lazy little circles.

He would take that ring off before he started today's spanking. He'd let Jim rub off between his legs as he tanned that pretty little ass. He knew that Jim craved the connection, the heat, the little bursts of pain. There was no humiliation here, just both of them together, flesh meeting flesh.

Marcus kissed Jim long and hard, tasting himself, tasting his lover. It was a heady combination.

Jim's cock started dripping, leaking against his belly.

"It's time to release you from the ring, baby." He sat up, bringing Jim up with him. Sitting on the edge of the bed, he patted his thighs. "Assume the position."

Those pretty, green eyes met his, worry creeping in. "Will it still..."

He growled. "Baby, this is ours and no one can take it from us. No one." He patted his legs again. "You can rub off between my legs."

Jim moved, plugged ass right there over his lap. He could feel Jim's tension -- it made him fucking proud and infuriated him, all at once. He hated that someone had upset Jim, but still, Jim was right there, spread over his lap.

"Good boy," he murmured, hand sliding on Jim's ass.

He reached beneath his baby with his other hand, releasing the bound cock just as he laid the first smack down.

"Marcus." That wasn't a cry -- it was need. Pure need.

"I know, baby." He moved right away into a quick, hard rhythm, peppering Jim's ass.

"Stings!" Jim arched and bucked, cock leaking.

"Yeah. And this?" He caught the plug on his next smack.

"Fuck!" Jim actually pulled away a bit. "Marcus. Sir."

"Yes, baby. Show me how good it is." He went back to peppering all over Jim's ass, very occasionally getting the plug.

"I don't... Oh, fuck. Don't stop. I'm sorry, but I need this."

"I know you do. No apologies." Jim didn't have anything to apologize for, certainly not his needs, his desires. "We both need it, baby."

"Why. Why do you need this?" Jim whimpered, started humping his leg. "Why do I?"

"Stop thinking and just enjoy it, Jim." He squeezed his legs together, Jim's prick moving within the tight tunnel they created.

"I can't. I mean... fuck."

"You need this because it makes you feel, makes you focus. You need this because right now, nothing else matters but you and me." He kept spanking Jim, making that sweet ass dark red.

"Yes. Yes, please. Please, love. I need more. My *heart* hurts." No work for them today.

"Your heart is mine, baby." He began to tan the top of Jim's thighs.

"Are you sure?" Jim spread, feet kicking.

"Absolutely." In this he didn't have a single doubt. His hand was beginning to burn and still he kept bringing it down on Jim's ass.

"Stop. Stop. It's too much."

He got to decide that, not Jim. "Come for me."

"I... Help me?"

"Always, baby." All Jim ever had to do was ask.

He slid his free hand between his legs, grabbing that hard, leaking prick and squeezed, his fingers pushing against the little slit.

"Yes." Heat sprayed over his fingers, wet and slick, Jim's ass jerking around the plug.

"Yeah, baby." He rubbed his burning hand over Jim's just as hot ass, his other hand working that prick, pulling every bit of spunk from it.

Jim moaned, relaxing against him.

"Mmm... yeah, baby." He turned Jim, drawing his baby up into his arms.

Jim rested against him, sighing softly. "Do you want me to make coffee and breakfast?"

"No coffee today, baby. And only a very light breakfast." Today would be a day for new things.



"You...you're not going to the gym before work?"

"No gym today and no work today. We're not having a day off -- we're having a day for *us*."

"For us? What's light? Toast? Eggs?"

"Juice and toast, actually. We'll drink green tea throughout the day. Tonight will be something special."

"I... What? Is toast enough for you? What kind of juice?"

"I believe we have cranberry juice in the fridge. And yes, it will be enough." Just wait until his baby found out about the chain, the cuffs, and the fisting at the end of the day.

"I... No coffee?" Jim wrapped around him, the together part obviously working for his baby.

"Nope." He kissed the top of Jim's head. "Tell me one thing you've heard of or seen in the lifestyle that you either are scared of or can't believe or really want to try."

"Those are three different things. I didn't like the hood. It scared me."

"I don't like the hood either -- I like seeing your face."

Jim nodded, "I like seeing yours. I like knowing we're together."

"You don't need to see my face to know that, baby." He rubbed Jim's ass and winked. "All right, how about can't believe and really want to try."

"I... I don't know, Marcus. I just... I honestly can't think of anything."

"No? That's okay. I know plenty of things we haven't done yet."

"Why am I not surprised?" Jim laughed, cheek on his shoulder.

"Because I have a very wicked mind."

"You do. What's the most extreme thing you've ever done?"

"I participated in a whipping that left the sub bloody and begging for more." Marcus shook his head. "I hated every second of it, but it was a valuable lesson. It showed me where my limits are."

"I don't want that -- for you or me. I don't want this to be about hate or ugliness."

"No, that's not what we're about at all, baby. We're about love and focus and making each other feel."

"Yes. About good things and being home." Jim sighed a little. "What's the best thing you've done?"

"The first time I rimmed you." He smiled, fingers finding Jim's little hole. "The sounds you made were amazing."

As the plug shifted, Jim whimpered. "It was amazing. You made me fly."

"The first of many times." Making Jim fly was a bit of a specialty of his.

"Yes, and I make you... happy?"

"Happier than I have ever been. Ever."

"Good." Jim's hands starting exploring him, moving over his back, his shoulders.

"Mmm... we should get you all trussed up, baby."

"Hmm?" Jim was humming now, moving against him.

"You're going to spend the day in chains. Gonna look so pretty." He leaned into Jim.

He loved that little shiver, the way Jim's heart beat a little faster.

"We'll need your chains -- the one that goes from your PA to your guiche, and one that goes between your nipple rings. And the one that attaches between the two." That one was new and he waited for Jim's curiosity to kick in.

"What? What do you mean?"

He tugged open the side table drawer and pulled out a bunch of delicate chains.

"The chain tugs my cock, Marcus." Those long fingers touched the chain.

"Yes." That was the point. It would make Jim think, reflect.

"I haven't touched the rings."

"I know, baby. But wearing them all day, along with cuffs on your wrists will put you in the right frame of mind."

Jim blinked at him. "How will I do anything?"

"I'll cuff your hands in front of you -- you'll be able to read, eat, drink." More or less.

"I..." Jim pushed closer, moaning softly. His baby was getting hard again, getting excited.

"A hard-core sub day for you. It's what you need." He slid his hand down to tap at Jim's ass. They'd get Jim off again first.

"All day, but what if I'm not good at it?"

Not good at it. His Jim. Right. "Baby. You're a natural. Have a little faith in the both of us, hmm?"

"I have a lot of faith in you, love."

"And I know that you can do it, so I suppose that's good enough." He stroked Jim's cock, thumb sliding back and forth across the little slit, pushing against it. "I'm going to

put a larger plug in as well. And then a larger one later on."

Jim groaned, cock going fully hard. "Yes. Yes, sir, but I'll have the chain."

"Yes. When we begin our pleasure late this afternoon I'll remove the chain. But today is for quiet and stillness and sinking into yourself."

"You'll stay with me?"

Somehow he thought a day of no work and stillness alone scared Jim more than anything.

"I will, baby." There'd come a time when Jim could do it by himself, would do it just because he'd asked the man to. But not today.

Jim lifted his face, begging a kiss. "Thank you, sir."

"You're welcome, baby." He licked Jim's lips, slowly outlining them with the point of his tongue, and then he pressed his lips to Jim's, the kiss light. The movement of his fingers on Jim's cock matched the kiss, soft and gentle, barely there.

Soft little sounds slipped into his lips, almost little breaths. He swallowed them up with hums and murmurs of his own, slowly deepening the kisses, knowing how much Jim liked the contact, needed it.

Jim melted for him, all the tension fading away and leaving him with a warm, blissed out man. He took his

time, not upping the stakes to bring Jim quickly to orgasm. Instead he let his kisses linger, his hand slow and speed randomly as he loved on his baby.

They ended up side-by-side on the bed, Jim feeding him kisses and sweet, lingering touches. He put his leg over Jim's, bringing them together, their cocks rubbing. He could feel the ring in Jim's sliding against his cock.

"I love you." Jim reached down, wrapped one hand around their cocks, adding to the friction.

"Mmm... Mine."

His fingers found Jim's nipple rings and he turned them through the little bits of flesh, watching the reaction in Jim's face.

"M...Marcus. Can I... let me touch this one?" Jim nodded toward his cock.

"No. Tonight. After our day."

Jim's hand kept moving, almost touching it, over and over. "N...no fair."

"Just think -- it'll be that much better when you finally get to touch."

"Yes. Yes, sir." Those long curls bobbed as Jim nodded.

"Master. Today, all day, baby."

"I.. " Jim shuddered, eyes rolling back in his head. "I'll try."

"I know you can do it." He wrapped his hand around Jim's, jacking their pricks harder.

"Oh. Oh, love." Jim arched, moaning low, pushing against him, against his touch.

He kept stroking, watching Jim, feeling his own pleasure building. Steady and sure, the heat between them flared, their cocks leaking, slicking the way. He pressed their mouths together, this kiss harder, matched by his grip on their cocks. He heard Jim's cry, felt those muscles go tight.

"That's it, baby. Show me." His own orgasm was gathering in his balls.

"Love you." Jim arched, fingers squeezing tight as heat sprayed.

"Yes!" His own hips bucked, pushing his prick along Jim's, his come joining Jim's.

His baby moaned, eyes closing as they came down together. He kept touching, hands sliding on the skin he loved so much.

"Are you ready, baby?"

"Yes. Yes, sir."

"Master," he whispered, tweaking one of Jim's nipple rings.

"M...master. It's so hard, I want... I want to do it, but I shouldn't."

"You shouldn't? Why not? Says who?"

"Everyone." Those pretty eyes met his, shimmering.

"Men aren't submissive. Men *are* the masters. Even the Bible says so."

"I don't think it's wrong. And I don't believe you do, either. Not in your heart."

"I..." Jim pushed closer. "If it is wrong, I still need it. I need this. You."

He wrapped his arms around Jim. "There's nothing wrong with taking what you need, baby."

"I need you, Master. Please. I need you."

"You have me, baby. You *have* me." He tilted Jim's face and kissed his baby hard, bringing that focus back on them.

He got it, Jim relaxing again, more easily each time.

"I want you to focus on your body and your submission today. You don't have anything else to worry about, to think about. Just lose yourself in it."

"That's going to be different for me."



"It's going to be glorious." He kissed Jim's forehead and sat up. Grabbing the chains, he began to loop them through Jim's piercings.

Jim moaned, cock jerking weakly. He petted it gently, and quickly had it trussed up. Then those pretty nipples had a chain strung through the rings.

He attached the two chains together with a third.  
"Mmm... look at that. Look at you."

Jim shifted, hands on the chains, exploring them. "They tug."

"Yes. You won't be able to forget they're there, hmm?"  
He touched them himself, using the middle one to pull on the other two.

"Don't!" Jim curled in, moaning low.

"Shh. Shh. Easy, baby." He stroked Jim's back.

"They're big. The feelings."

"I know. Which is why we're going to have a quiet day."

"Come on, let's get dressed and have that juice and toast. Start our day."

"Dressed? In what?"

"I have a silk robe for you. Very easy, very sensual. I also have a leather flogger and every time you forget to

call me Master today, I'm going to give you a single flog."

"I. I need clarification, then. Because I don't use your name with every sentence." So literal, his baby.

"When you ask a question or anytime you would use my name or sir."

"Okay. I can do that, I think." Jim rubbed his forehead. "I need to make breakfast."

"You're going to have your hands cuffed, remember? I'll make breakfast today. You just need to stay close."

He got up and went to the wardrobe, pulling out the emerald green, silk robe he'd bought for Jim.

"Are you sure we can't have coffee, M...master?" Jim let him slide the robe on, humming softly as the silk touched the soft, shaved skin.

"I'm absolutely one hundred percent sure."

Jim pouted a bit, even as he pushed close and cuddled.

"You have an unreasonable prejudice again coffee, you know?"

He chuckled, holding Jim close, kissing the top of his baby's head. "It's not the coffee so much as the caffeine and your dependence on it."

"Caffeine is a wonderful thing." Jim wrapped around him, hugging him tight.

"You don't need the high. Spanking does a much better job." He gave Jim a wink and a smack on that abused ass.

"Ow. I like the high. Don't you?" Jim followed him out of the room, clinging.

"It gives me a jolt to wake up. Frankly, I prefer an orgasm to do the same task."

They headed down for the kitchen, and he stopped first in his workroom, picking up some lined, leather cuffs.

"Hands together in front, baby."

Jim looked at the cuffs, and then nodded, hands held out, fingers opening and closing restlessly. He wrapped them around Jim's wrists and then hooked them together, not leaving any play. Admiring, he stroked the skin next to the cuffs, enjoying the contrast between the leather and Jim's skin.

"I... this is hard."

"Yes. It will take patience and will and focus." He looped his arm around Jim's waist and led him to the kitchen.

"What do you like best about this? About us?" Jim asked.

"Having you close, having your focus."

Jim sat carefully, reminding him that he hadn't switched plugs yet, hadn't started stretching his baby wide enough for his hand. By the evening, Jim was going to be ready.

He hummed and pulled down a couple of glasses for their juice. "What about you -- what do you like best about us, baby?"

"Having things make sense. Being where I belong, with you."

He put the glasses on the table and cupped Jim's chin, tilting it up. "Good for you, for recognizing that."

Jim's cheeks went pink. "I... thank you, s...Master."

"Mmm... I like the sound of that."

Bending, he took Jim's mouth in a sweet kiss. Jim opened, tongue sliding against his so carefully. He coaxed Jim's tongue into his mouth and then began sucking on it. Jim's whimper filled his lips as Jim shifted on the chair. He kept the suction gentle, kept the kiss from going too deep.

The bound hands twisted in his robe, holding tight.

He slowly broke off the kiss, his hands wrapping around Jim's. "Okay, food, bigger plug and the rest of our day."

"No more kisses like that, please. My cock aches. They're so wonderful."

"I'm the one who decides what kind of kisses you get." He rubbed their noses together and then went to get the juice, put some bread into the toaster.

"I said please. I wasn't trying to be bitchy."

"Okay, baby. I was just reminding you." He poured them each a glass of cranberry juice and then buttered the toast after it popped.

"It smells good." Jim was beginning to shift and fidget.

He put Jim's toast in front of him and then slid his hand along his baby's back. Jim looked at his bound hand, then reached for the glass, very carefully.

"If you need help, all you have to do is ask."

"I... I wasn't sure if you wanted me to."

"Always ask if you aren't sure, baby."

"There's a lot I'm not sure about, Marcus. So much."

"Master, not Marcus. I'll go get the flogger in a moment. And I don't care how much you aren't sure about -- talk to me, ask me. I want to hear it."

"I don't want you to think I'm stupid."

"Stop that, Jim. I know you're smart as a whip."

Jim stopped and looked at him, then grinned. "I am. I'm very smart, but I can be... very lost in it, you know?"

"Which is why you need to remember to ask questions. Now stay there for a moment -- I need to get the flogger."

"Okay. I'll eat my toast?"

"Okay, baby."

He made short work of going to his workroom and choosing a flogger. He chose a soft suede, wanting to sensitize Jim's skin more than abrade it. Heading back, he pondered how best to encourage Jim to ask his questions.

Jim was sitting, tearing the toast into pieces, nibbling. He put the flogger in the middle of the table and sat next to Jim, stealing a piece of toast.

"Oh. That one's pretty..." Jim reached out, still working out what to do with the cuffs.

"You like? When you're done eating you can see how it feels kissing your skin."

"It's soft. Suede?"

"Very good! It'll feel amazing against your skin."

"I bet it will."

He blinked, surprised at Jim's words. "You do?"

"I do. It's soft, wide enough to thud, not sting." Some one had been researching.

"Clever baby."

He picked up the flogger and ran it over Jim's shoulders through the silk of the robe. Jim leaned forward a little, eyes closing.

"Such a hedonist..." He tugged the robe away, letting the suede touch Jim's skin.

"Yours. Oh, it's soft..."

He moved the flogger to flow across Jim's chest, dragging against the chains.

Jim arched, gasping as the chains tugged. "No fair."

"All's fair in love and war, baby."

"This isn't war."

"No, but it is love." He opened the robe farther, dragging the flogger across Jim's cock and balls.

"Please." The sweet, trapped cock tried to fill.

"Please what, baby?"

"It tugs."

"That's kind of the point."

"It scares me. What if it yanks the ring out?"

He stopped immediately. "Have you looked that up online as well?"

"I looked. There are stories, but mostly about ear piercings. There are a lot of stories, Marcus, lots and lots of information."

"Lots of contradictory information, hmm? We aren't going to let anything like that happen, baby. "

"I didn't think you would, not on purpose. I just... There's some things that I saw..."

"I'm not going to let anything terrible happen, baby. And I haven't gagged you or told you that you can't speak, so if the pressure gets to be too much, you tell me. You use your safeword if you think I'm not paying attention. All right?"

How long had Jim been worrying about this without saying anything? Possibly since the first day he'd gotten it...

"I know. I *know* I just... You know."

"Well, I do now that you've told me."

Jim looked at him, utterly confused. "You lost me."

"Well, I didn't know you were concerned until you told me. So now that you have, yes, I do know."

"I... I didn't want to seem silly. I mean, I'm an adult."

"I'll keep telling you until you believe it that I know you're smart and nothing you ask will change my mind."

"If I'm so smart, why..." Jim closed his eyes, visibly counting, calming himself.

"Why what, baby?"



"Nothing." Jim's chin set in that stubborn way that he was so familiar with.

"Baby..." He flogged Jim's shoulders.

"Nothing, sir."

"It's Master today," he said, giving Jim another flog.

"And you're going to tell me."

"Master. This isn't about you. This isn't your problem."

"We share our lives, Jim. If it affects you, it affects me."

"How did this happen? Both of us getting so tense?"

"You're hiding something from me, baby..."

"I am not. I mean, I'm not telling you what I think, but I'm not *hiding* anything."

"You started to say something and then held back. I don't want you to hold back -- I want to hear it all."

"Why? These are my issues, my head, my brain, my failures. Not yours."

"I'm not allowed to help you? We're partners." He'd thought they were getting somewhere with this kind of thing.

"We are, but... Damn it, Marcus, I love you. I want you to respect me, and you can't if I share every stupid little

bullshit thing in my brain!" Jim's bound hands slammed on the table.

"Baby!" He grabbed Jim's hands and held onto them, looking into Jim's eyes. "I want to hear every little thing and I don't think any of it is stupid."

"You don't know my brain, man. You don't know how stupid I can be. You weren't there when everything fell apart, when I went crazy. I mean, my family told the police I'd done it."

"Baby, you're gay -- of course you didn't do it. Your family are the ones who sound stupid." He rubbed his thumbs over Jim's knuckles.

"They are. They're hateful, evil motherfuckers."

"I'm sorry, baby."

"Don't be. I need a shower and stuff. My schedule's all horked."

"Baby. There's no schedule today. It's a full on submission day." He kissed the top of Jim's head. "Come on. I'm going to bend you over the couch and change your plug out and we're going to find a nice quiet center."

"I need my schedule, Marcus. You know that." Jim shivered, throat working a little.

"Not today. Today is for sub space. I'll help you focus, stay calm, clear."

He slid his hand over Jim's burning ass, giving it a little smack.

"It makes me anxious. It shouldn't, I know, but it does." And when Jim got anxious, Jim got strident.

"Come on, baby." Marcus took Jim's hands and tugged his baby up, bracing so as Jim came up he could lean until he had his balance.

Marcus all but dragged Jim into the living room and bent him over the back of the couch, hands in front of him, resting on the seat cushion. The robe framed Jim's pretty ass, pulled tight. He rubbed his hands over it, humming, feeling the heat through the soft, cool silk of the robe.

He could feel Jim moaning a little, vibrating. He slowly slid the silk up until that sweet, abused ass was exposed.

Leaning over Jim, he let his prick, hidden behind his own robe, rub. "Don't move."

"Yes, sir." He swatted that pretty ass, hard. "Master! Yes, master!"

"Better."

He gave it another gentle tap and then strode off to his workroom, quickly searching for, and finding, a slightly larger plug than the one Jim already wore. He had three more, the last one thick and heavy, metal and slick. He brought them all, along with a tube of lube. He spread the dildos out on the coffee table where Jim could see them.

He heard Jim's gasp.

"One after the other, baby. We're going to get you ready to take my hand."

"What?" Jim stood, spun to look at him. "You're not serious."

"Of course I am."

"No. No, you won't fit. It's not possible. I just..."

"Don't tell me you haven't looked fisting up online?"  
He'd figured Jim had checked *everything* out.

"I did. It can't be real. I mean, I. It can't be real, can it?"

"It can and it is. It is one of the most intense things two people can do together." He stepped close and rubbed Jim's skin, slowly encouraging Jim to bend over the couch again. "I'm not going to hurt you, baby, I promise."

"How can it not hurt?" Jim moved, tense, scared.

"Because you'll be stretched and prepared and ready and because you'll trust me not to hurt you." He kept his hands moving on Jim's fine skin.

"I don't know what to do next."

"Baby, you don't need to. The point to today is to let me guide you, be your Master, hmm?"

"You say it like it's easy. I know what to do in our lives, Mar...Master. I know the rules."

"It will be easy one day, baby." He brought their foreheads together and held Jim's eyes. "Today is about more than just rules. It's about focusing inward and finding yourself. It's about letting everything go and finding peace."

"Will you be okay if I fuck it up?"

"What makes you think you're going to fuck it up?"

"I don't know how to let everything go." The words were so earnest, so worried.

"But you're going to try, right? That's what matters."

"Yes. Yes, I will. I want to do it right, Marcus. I do."

"Then everything is going to be just fine." He took Jim's chin in his fingers and looked into those worried eyes.

"I love you. I want to please you, to make you proud."

"You do, Jim. Every single day. Now shh. Let's find that quiet center together, hmm?"

Before the day got away from them.

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Jim hadn't spent such a quiet, still day in... well, forever. They hadn't turned on the television, the computers. It

was harder work than he expected -- periodically this rage would build up inside him, this need to move or do or something and Marcus would work him through it until he could breathe again.

He was sitting in Marcus' lap, head on the broad shoulder, breathing, cheeks streaked with unexpected tears. He hadn't known that he could feel so many emotions. Marcus' hands slid over his back, drawing soothing circles as soft murmurs filled the air. He breathed slow and easy, in time with the beats of Marcus' heart.

A soft kiss pressed against the side of his head. "I'm so proud of you, baby. So very proud."

"Thank you, Master. Can I have a drink please? I'm so dry."

"You can." Marcus shifted and stretched and then a tall glass of water was held to his lips.

"Thank you, Master." He drank deep, then settled again, relaxing. "If I said I felt empty, would you understand that I didn't mean it in a bad way?"

"Absolutely. This is what we were working toward -- you letting go."

He nodded, eyes closed. "I want to have this again, Master. Even if it's hard."

"Then we'll add it to your schedule." Marcus held him close, voice quiet, calm.

They stayed together, breathing, until the restlessness started again, his muscles starting to jerk.

"Come upstairs with me, baby. We'll take out that plug and take the next step."

He was beginning to learn, so he nodded, trusting, needing to trust. "Yes, Master. Please."

Marcus took his face between the big -- huge -- hands and kissed him, taking his breath. Jim shook, hands twisting in Marcus' clothes, holding on tight. Marcus stood and slowly lowered him down to the ground, holding him until he had his feet under him.

"Upstairs to the bedroom?"

"Yeah." Marcus' arm slid around his shoulders, tugging him in close as they made their way upstairs.

He felt almost like he'd been fighting all day -- his muscles were sore, his mind empty and blank.

Once upstairs, Marcus led him to the bathroom.

"Are we going to take a shower?" He thought that sounded wonderful, actually.

"Yes. We're going to take off the chains first. A nice hot shower and we can clean you inside and out."

"I'd like a shower, please." And the chains off, as well. The tip of his prick ached, itched.

Marcus put the lid down and sat on the toilet seat, settling him between the strong thighs. The big fingers worked the little fasteners, removing all three chains.

His cock throbbed and he took a deep breath, stretching. "Thank you, Master. Thank you."

"Mmm... you're welcome, baby." Reaching out, Marcus pushed the ring in his prick through the skin, circling it, thumb rubbing the tip of his cock.

His head fell back, throat working as his nerves screamed. "Oh."

Then Marcus bent and licked.

"Master..." He went up on tiptoe, hips bucking.

A low chuckle blew air across the top of his prick. "You've been very good today, baby. I think you deserve a reward." With no more warning than that, Marcus' mouth swallowed his prick right up.

"Oh. Oh, Master. Love..." His bound hands curled around Marcus' head, petting. Heat flooded him, his cock aching as Marcus' mouth surrounded him.

The suction was strong, sure, Marcus' tongue sliding across the tip of his cock, teasing and playing. His balls drew up, his cock leaking as Marcus moved the ring, that incredible burn making him fly. Marcus grabbed his ass, squeezing, fingers digging in hard.



"Master!" Come poured out of him, the orgasm intense, sharp, the pleasure deep in his bones.

Marcus sucked him until he'd shuddered through several aftershocks, humming softly around his flesh.

"So good..." He swayed, blinking slowly, his entire world a little fuzzy.

"Bend over my shoulder, baby." Marcus' hands slid over him, guiding him into position.

He went easily, melted, bone-deep. His Master smelled so good, so male. Marcus' fingers slid to his crack, nudging the plug before grabbing the base and tugging it out of him slowly.

Jim groaned as it spread him, stretching him so wide. "So big, Master. So *big*."

"You've done so well, holding it inside you."

"F...for you." He gasped as the widest part stretched his hole. "Help me."

"I have you, baby." Marcus' free hand grabbed his left cheek, distracting him with the sudden zing of pain, and then the plug was out.

He gasped, panting, ass suddenly empty, body feeling almost shocked.

"I have you," Marcus said again, one fingers sliding up and down his crack, rubbing his hole.

"Master. Master, please." He wanted that heavy cock.

"What do you need, baby?"

"I need you. I'm so empty."

"I'm going to fill you, baby. After the shower, I'm going to fill you so big."

He pushed into Marcus' arms, cuddling close, rubbing against the smooth, heated skin.

Marcus sort of danced him to the shower, refusing to let go of him as they slid over the tile. Then they were in the shower, water pouring down over them as Marcus continued to hold him.

He hummed, the hot water pounding down on him, melting him.

Soaping up those amazing hands, Marcus began to wash him, hands digging in and almost massaging him, melting him further.

"So good." He could die, just like this.

"Mmm..." Marcus' hands wandered, one sliding along his ass, soapy fingers teasing his hole.

He couldn't even tense up, he just nodded and moaned softly.

One of those fingers slid into him. "Gonna wash you inside now, baby."

"Hmm?" The pressure was sweet, not enough.

A second finger followed, both slicker than soapy now.  
"I'm going to clean you inside, baby. Get you ready."

"Clean me..." Those fingers pushed deep, spreading him.

"Mmmhmm... you've never been cleaned inside before have you?"

"What?" He really didn't want to learn anything new.

"Just relax, baby, I'll take care of everything." Marcus nuzzled against him, mouth sliding slowly over his.

He moaned, lips parting. Relax. He could do that. Just relax and go with it.

"Good boy," murmured Marcus before deepening the kiss, tongue sliding into his mouth.

The words pleased him, deep down, and he avoided thinking about the whys of that. He didn't even realize that Marcus had moved him, until his master was reaching outside the shower, one hand still touching him.

"Master?" He blinked a little, trying to get his brain working.

"Shh, baby. Just relax. I'm going to fill you with warm water. It'll be a little uncomfortable, but it won't hurt and it's only for a few minutes."

"What?" Fill him? Wait. Wait. Something was off about that.

"I have to clean you inside, baby. It's something we haven't done yet, but will do again." Marcus' fingers came back to his ass, one of them pushing in.

"Why?" He pushed back, riding the touch easily.

"Because I'm going to have my hand inside you. And we'll do it again because it's a good way to get you into sub space, a ritual."

Something very much not a finger pressed against him.

"Master?" He stilled, belly going tight.

"It's just the tubing. No thicker than any of my fingers." Marcus dropped kisses over his face.

"I don't think I want to do this." He chased those lips, loving the kisses.

"We need to do it so you're clean inside for my hand, baby." Marcus' finger slid out of his body, leaving only the tubing.

"I don't know what to do." He hated being confused.

"I'm going to start the water flow now. All you have to do is hold it in until I say release, and then you let go." Marcus stroked his belly gently.

"Here? In the shower? It'll be nasty, Marcus. I don't think I can. I. Oh..." The water started, pushing into him, into his belly.

"Shh. Shh. Stop thinking baby and trust me." Marcus hand kept moving on his stomach. "The shower will take everything away and then I'll wash you again. It's going to be just fine."

"I don't want to. I don't want to be dirty." He could feel his heart slamming in his chest.

"You wont be, baby. That's kind of the point."

He buried his face in Marcus' shoulder, trembling. He didn't want to do this. Not at all.

"There you go, baby. It's a slow flow."

Slow or not, he could feel the water pushing inside him, starting to fill him up. "Marcus. Master. Please. Please don't do this."

"We're almost done. Just a little bit more." Marcus' hand slid along his back, stroking his skin.

He whimpered, shaking against Marcus as his stomach cramped.

"Okay, baby. It's okay, I've got you." Marcus started stroking his stomach, finger pushing into his muscles, working the cramps away.

"Don't make me do this..." He sobbed softly, undone, frightened and ashamed and lost.

"The water has stopped." Marcus took his face between those big hands and turned him up to look into those eyes. "Baby. This isn't to hurt you."

"I... I'm scared."

"Of what, baby?"

"I don't know. Of this. Of disgusting you. Of being foul."

"Baby, you aren't going to disgust me. But if it would make it easier, you can go sit on the toilet and then come back after..."

"Please." He nodded, clinging. "Oh, please. Yes."

"Okay, baby." Marcus kissed the top of his head. "This isn't meant to scare you or upset you. I'm going to take the tubing out now. You need to bear down and hold it until you get to the toilet, okay?"

"Okay. Okay. I'm sorry, Master. I am. I just..." The tubing slipped out and he gasped, eyes rolling.

"Shh. Shh. It's okay, baby." Marcus kept an arm around him, holding and helping him as they dripped all the way to the toilet.

He sat hard, the water rushing from him, the sound loud and embarrassing and he reached for Marcus, undone.

Marcus took his hands and held his gaze. "Baby. There's no reason to be embarrassed. It's only you and me here, and I love you."

"I love you. I'm sorry." He held on tight, shaking.

"I love you, too. No apologies, baby. You're doing great, just great." Marcus was warm, his touch soothing.

"Great? You promise?"

"I promise, baby. Now come on back to the shower and we'll finish up, yeah?"

He wiped and flushed, shaking so hard that he couldn't walk straight, couldn't think. Marcus' arm went around his shoulders, supporting him as they moved back to the shower where Marcus turned the hot water on a little higher.

"Here we are, baby."

"Don't let go, Master. Please." He could breathe now, finally.

"I won't, baby." Marcus soaped him up again, fingers sliding on his skin.

He hummed, eyes dropping closed. So warm. So good. One of Marcus' fingers slip-slided across his hole.

"Master." So hot.

Marcus groaned. "I love how that sounds, baby."

His belly heated, hips rolling a bit.

"Mmm... you're almost ready now, aren't you?"

"I don't know. I can't think any more."

"Excellent." Marcus pushed a single finger into him.

"You do your best work when you're not thinking about it."

"Do I? Is this work?"

"You know what I mean, baby." Marcus turned off the water and wrapped him in a towel.

"I do. I love you. Are we okay?"

"We're great, baby. I'm so proud of you. So pleased."

"Thank you." He lifted his face for a kiss.

"Mmm... my sexy baby." Marcus' mouth covered his, the kiss making everything else fade away, just like it always did.

Marcus moved them from the bathroom, those hands rubbing over his skin, the kisses going on and on. They reached the bedroom, Marcus pushing him down onto the mattress and following him down. He wrapped his legs around Marcus, encouraging the touches of that long, strong body.

"Want you, baby. Want to fill you up."



"I'm yours. Yours, master."

"Yes. Mine." Marcus stared at him for a long moment and then smacked his thigh. "On your back, pillow under your ass, legs spread, baby."

He moved slowly, blinking and propping himself on a pillow. "It's a little awkward."

Marcus touched him, easing his muscles. "We could do this with you on your hands and knees, but I was hoping to see your face."

"I want that. I want to know you're with me." Enjoying him.

"Then we'll do it this way." Marcus bent and kissed his nose, his lips, his breastbone, his navel, and then the tip of his cock, eyes on him the entire time, smiling up at him.

"What are you thinking?"

"That you're beautiful now, but that you'll be even more beautiful when I'm holding you in my hand."

"Have you ever done this before?"

"I've never wanted to."

"Why do you want to now?"

"Because I believe it's one of the most intimate things two people can do. I want that with you."

He nodded, somehow relaxed, easy in his bones.

"I'm going to start by rimming you, baby."

His eyes rolled back in his head, legs drawing up.

"Master..." Oh, God. That was like heaven.

"Mmm..." Marcus started as his ankle, mouth slowly working up along the inside of his leg. It was a long, giant tease that ended when Marcus' tongue finally slid across his hole.

"Master..." He whimpered softly, the heat flooding him.

"Love how that sounds, baby." Marcus hummed, the sound vibrating along his tongue and making Jim jerk at the sensation.

"I didn't think I could... Didn't think I could mean it."

"But you do. I can hear it in your voice every time you say it."

"Yes. Yes, Master. I do." He whimpered, whispering the truth.

"Good." Marcus' tongue pushed deeply into his hole.

He began to move, riding Marcus' tongue. More hums and growls vibrated through him.

"You need me, baby?"

"Always. Always, Master. I need."

"Good." One of Marcus' fingers slid back and forth over him. Over and over.

He pushed back, humming low.

"Here comes my finger, baby. The first of five, yeah?" Marcus' finger slowly pushed into him, barely stretching him.

"Maybe three." He winked, loving it when both of them laughed.

"There will definitely be three." Marcus was still chuckling, finger sinking in deep. "You're soft inside, baby. Feels good."

"Mmm. It does. It feels good."

"Good." He could see Marcus' eyes, see the warmth in them, the need. They didn't do it like this very often; he was usually on his hands and knees. Jim let himself relax, let himself spread and open for Marcus.

"Beautiful, baby." Marcus pushed a second finger into him, twisting them, finding his gland and poking it.

"Master." He arched, trying to get that touch again.

"Mmm... do you remember how hesitant you were for me to touch you here when we first met?" Marcus' fingertips slid against that spot again.

"I was scared. I couldn't get it up, either."

Marcus chuckled softly. "That didn't last very long. I knew what your body needed. What your head and your heart needed."

"You loved me."

"I still do, baby. More than anything." A third finger pushed into him, stretching him wide.

"Mmm. Master. Master, please."

"You need more, don't you, baby?"

"I..." His cheeks heated, but he nodded. "A little more, yeah."

"I know, baby. I know." Marcus' eyes held his as the fingers inside him disappeared, Marcus adding more lube to them.

He groaned, spreading wider. "I don't know if I can take your hand."

"But I know you can." Marcus bent to kiss him. "I'll take it slowly, baby." Then Marcus' fingers, four of them curled together, began to push into him.

He groaned, the touch bigger than he was used to, spreading him.

"I've got you, baby." Marcus pressed kisses on his inner thigh, free hand sliding along his belly.

"It's full. I'm full." He moaned, hands sliding down his belly.

"Not too full yet, though. Trust me, baby. I'm going to make you fly."

"I trust you. I do. I love you..." His body was trying to tense.

"I love you, too, baby. Now just relax. Let it happen." Marcus' fingers tugged on the ring in his cock.

He nodded, caught in a place between fear and pleasure.

Marcus shifted, moving so those eyes were staring right down into his. "Right here, baby. Focus on me."

"Focus." He took a deep breath, holding Marcus' eyes. "I'll try. I promise."

"I know you can do it, baby." Those eyes stared into him, seeing right through him.

"Why me? Why did you choose me, Master?"

"I knew that you were mine."

"You knew?" He started to moan, moving nice and easy, eyes rolling.

"I knew, baby. I knew. I could feel it inside me." Marcus' hand moved with him, slowly pushing in deeper.

"I can feel you. Master. Master, I can feel you." His body was stretching impossibly wide.

"Good. Good. You'll feel me all night, baby." That hand kept pushing forward and then all of a sudden his body snapped closed around Marcus' wrist.

"Master!" His shoulders left the bed and he gasped, the pressure suddenly changed.

"Right here, baby. Right here." Marcus gave him a small smile, one he'd never seen before. "Holding you in my hand."

"Ho...holding. Love." He couldn't breathe.

"Yes." Marcus moved his hand, just a little, but it felt so huge.

"I..." He moaned, shoulders lifting again.

"Are you ready, baby? Ready for me to move?"

"Please. Something. I need something."

"I know exactly what you need." Marcus bent and kissed the tip of his prick, and Marcus' hand began to move.

"Master. Master. Master, please!" He whimpered, eyes rolling back into his head.

Marcus took his prick into that hot mouth, fist moving inside him. Things when white hot, still, the pleasure too much for his brain to understand. Mouth and hand both

insistent, Marcus continued to suck and push and pull, everything becoming more and more intense.

He sobbed, lost. Full. "Help me."

Marcus' fingers rubbed against his gland just as his Master's tongue tugged on the ring in his prick. He came so hard the world went gray, the only word in his head 'master'.

He floated there for a long time, and when the world slowly came back into focus, Marcus was licking him gently, hand still and solid inside him.

"M... Master. In me."

"Yeah, baby. My hand is inside you." Marcus rubbed a cheek against his inner thigh, looking up at him.

He moaned, stretched, muscles rippling around Marcus' touch.

"Can you shift up a little and see?" Marcus' hand went around his bicep, encouraging him to shift up a little.

"I... Oh, God. Oh, my God." His eyes rolled back in his head.

"Shh. Shh. It's a beautiful thing. *You* are beautiful like this."

"You're inside me."

"I am. I so very much am, baby." Marcus moaned, the sound low and raw.

"Please. Please, it's so big."

"Let me come out, baby. Just relax your body for me."

"But... I. Master."

Marcus stilled, eyes focusing on his. "But what?"

"I don't know. I want you. I don't want you to leave."

"I'm not going anywhere, baby. I'm going to make love to you when I've got my hand out."

He couldn't think; he couldn't breathe. "Please."

Soft kisses pressed over him as Marcus' hand slowly began to pull out.

"So big. So wide." He whimpered softly, twisting.

"Shh. Relax, baby. Just relax." Marcus' other hand slid over him in long, slow strokes.

"I don't know how. I don't remember..."

"Yes, you do, baby. Just take one breath after another." He could feel Marcus' hand spreading him wide again.

"Please. It burns." His Master added more lube, easing the stretch, the burn. And then suddenly Marcus' hand was gone, leaving him emptier than he'd ever been.



"Master. Master, help me."

"I'm here, baby. Right here." Marcus moved between his legs, cock pushing against his hole.

"Please." He reached for Marcus, bearing down, taking Marcus in. Marcus kept pushing, sinking in and in until his hips were pushed up hard against Jim's abused ass.

"Harder. Harder, please." He reached out, grabbed Marcus' arms.

"Harder, baby." Marcus grunted and sped up, slamming into him.

"Yes. Yes. Master. Yours!" He nodded, the pleasure immense, perfect.

"Mine. My love. My baby. Mine." Marcus groaned, body jerking hard.

"Yours. Yours. Master."

"Yes!" Marcus shouted and filled him with long pulses.

His own orgasm was faint, distant. Almost unnoticeable.

Marcus' weight slowly came down to rest on him, his Master's breathing slowing.

"Love." He whimpered, holding on tight.

"My love." Marcus brought their lips together, the kiss deep and right and touching the core of him.

He nodded, humming softly, almost asleep.

"So proud of you, baby." The whispered words followed him into his dreams.

### *Chapter Thirty Five*

Marcus tugged on his white T-shirt and did up the string on his blue and green patterned board shorts. He had a pair of jeans to change into once it got dark and the temperature cooled.

He was looking forward to Ollie's party. There would be maybe a dozen people there, six couples. He thought it would make an excellent environment for Jim to get to know some of his friends.

"You ready yet, baby? Let me see what you're wearing."

"I... I'm not sure I can go. I think I have a headache."

"We have plenty of Tylenol, baby." He'd been waiting for the excuses to begin and credited them not starting before now to their day of submission.

"It's a really bad headache. I need some coffee."

"Baby, come here."

Jim came down the stairs, wearing a pair of jeans and carrying a button down shirt in one hand.

"Love, it's a pool party. Where are your swimming trunks? And I know you have T-shirts." He met Jim at the foot of the stairs and wrapped his baby in a hug.

"These are friends who are in the lifestyle, baby. You don't need to be nervous."

"What if they hate me?"

"They aren't going to hate you. You've met Ollie already -- you remember how very pleased he was to meet you?"

"I don't... I don't." Jim chewed his bottom lip, sighing.

"I'm worried. People don't like me."

He frowned. "What do you mean by that? I mean, I know you were a miserable ass before we met, but that was due to circumstances. Which have changed."

"I'm not friendly. I'm growly. I'm too smart for my own good."

Ridiculous. "So you've never had friends? How did you meet your ex?"

"That's none of your business." The fury was sudden, unexpected, and it looked like it surprised Jim as much as it did him.

He slid his hand across Jim's lower back. "Baby? There something you need to talk about?"

"I. Not now. No. Not right now."

"Okay, baby. But there's something you need to hear." He looked Jim in the eye. "There's all sorts in the lifestyle, and many of my friends are smart -- almost as smart as you. Just be yourself, be the man I know and you'll get along just fine with them."

"I just... I don't want your friends to hate me."

"I can't see how they would unless you start going around spitting in their faces or something." He kissed Jim softly. "You're beautiful and smart and mine."

"I promise, no spitting." Jim rolled his eyes, waving the button-down shirt. "You don't think this works?"

"You know I hate those stiff shirts, baby. And this is a casual party. Wear that dark green T-shirt and the red board shorts and bring your swimming trunks along." Jim was going to be way overdressed if he insisted on the stuffy clothes.

"Yes. Yes, sir. I... I ordered fancy brownies from the bakery down the road."

"You did? And you say you aren't friendly."

"I did. I thought... Polite, you know? Brownies and wine?"

"Very nice. It's a good thing you didn't tell me before now or I would have eaten them up."

Jim smiled, "There might be some extra for you."

"Oh, baby, you're good to me." He took Jim's mouth -- how could this amazing man think Marcus' friends weren't going to like him?

Jim dropped the ugly shirt, pressing into him, begging more kisses.

"Mmm..." He gave them, took them, kissed his baby, fingers sliding through the lovely curls.

"Need a hair cut."

"No, we're going to let it grow out to your waist. Then we'll talk about a hair cut." He tugged on Jim's hair, smiling down.

"No way. I'll look like a girl." Jim was smiling back, eyes warm, happy.

He snorted. "You could never look like a girl, baby. Even if you tried. Now go get changed and let's go." He smacked that fine ass hard.

Jim whimpered, shivering against him for a minute.

"You need another spanking before we go, baby? Something to keep you sitting on the edge of your seat at Ollie's?"

"No. No. They'll know..." Jim's body pushed against him, jerking hard.

"What will they know, baby? That your master loves you and takes care of you?" He smacked Jim's ass again. He couldn't help himself -- it was right there.

"You do. So good, Marcus."

"Yeah. Come on, baby. We'll both go upstairs." He drew Jim along.

Jim followed, eyes searching his, needing him. Trusting him.

"Okay, baby. Off with the clothes." He sat on the bed, watching.

"I... Master. Marcus." Jim started stripping.

"Yes, you, baby. And once you're naked you can assume the position." He rubbed his thighs.

"Marcus..." Jim's cock was filling.

"Yes, baby." He met Jim's eyes, his own cock hard in his shorts.

"Will you let me come?" Oh. Oh, fuck. So hot.

He had to swallow before he could answer. "Yes."

"Thank you." Jim leaned in, lips on his ear. "Sir."

Groaning, he dragged Jim's mouth to his, taking a hard kiss. "Over my lap, baby."

Jim nodded, leaning easily, offering himself without shame. Fuck, he was proud.

"So damn sexy, baby. So good." He let fly with his hand, peppering Jim's ass.

Jim moaned softly, ass moving like he was dancing.

"So proud of you, baby. So very proud."

"Thank you. Thank you, Master. So good. Please." Sweet little slut.

He reached between his legs and found Jim's prick. Wrapping his hand around it, he jacked a few times, thumb working the ring. Jim's cry rang out, his baby fucking his hand, pushing back toward his slaps.

"That's it, baby. Love you like this. Love you."

"Need. Need you, Master."

"Yours, baby. Your Master. Always." He increased the strength of his smacks, letting Jim really feel it.

"Yours." Jim moaned low. "Mine. Soon, Master."

"Yes, baby. Come for me. Come now." He squeezed Jim's cock tight.

Heat sprayed and Jim grunted, his baby coming for him, just like that.

"That's my baby." He rubbed Jim's ass, the heat there amazing.

"Love you." Jim sounded so fucking happy.

"Love you, too, baby." More than he'd ever dreamed it possible to love anyone.

They stayed as they were for a moment or two, enjoying the pleasure, the emotion. Then he smacked Jim lightly.

"Come on, baby. We've got a party to go to."

"Yeah. Yeah, Marcus. Do... do you need?"

"Mmm, you know I do, baby. Spanking you always arouses me."

"How do you want me?" So eager.

"Your mouth, baby." It was one of his favorite pleasures.

"Yes, sir." Jim laughed happily, scooting back so that hungry mouth could reach his cock. "Your shorts."

He raised his ass just enough to tug them down, his prick practically leaping toward Jim's mouth as he released it.

"Love your cock." He almost missed the words, they were so softly whispered.

Marcus stroked Jim's hair from his face, nodding. "I love your mouth, baby."



The tip of his cock was licked and laved, Jim so focused on him. He stroked Jim's head, tracing his baby's skull. Jim moaned, tongue moving faster, fingers on his balls, stroking them.

"So good, baby."

"Mmm." He groaned as Jim hummed, the sound vibrating around his cock.

"Won't be long, baby. Not with you doing that."

Jim groaned softly, head bobbing faster, throat working the tip of his cock. Moaning, he grabbed hold of Jim's head and held on, hips pumping up. Then he was coming down Jim's throat. His baby drank him down, not missing a drop, swallowing around his cock.

"You're almost too good at that now, baby."

"Can you be too good at that?"

He chuckled. "No, I don't think so." Fingers under Jim's chin, he tilted his baby's face up and took a long, slow kiss.

"I love you." Those lips were soft, swollen, well-kissed.

"Good." He stroked his thumb across Jim's lower lip. "Come on, baby. I think you're ready now to face the pool party."

"Okay. Okay, Master. After I get dressed."

He smacked that abused ass, the heat wonderful against his palm. "Get to it, then, baby. I don't want to miss the amazing hamburgers of joy."

"Hamburgers of joy. Dude." Jim chuckled, going to the dresser to grab a T-shirt.

"Seriously. I've never tasted better than at Ollie's barbeques." He watched his baby's fine body move, get covered. Jim didn't even know how good he looked.

"Well, should I have bought beer instead of wine?"

"Wine is fine, baby. Let's get going so you can stop stressing over it." He went over to Jim and gave his baby a hug. "You look amazing, you're bringing wonderful treats, and everyone is going to love you."

"I hope so." Jim nodded, let him lead the way down to the car.

He flipped on the radio and headed for the highway. Ollie lived on the other side of town, his house up in the hills, a big, rambling place with a pool and a beautiful, terraced back yard.

Jim gasped as they parked, blinking a little. "What does Oliver do?"

"Oliver plays the stock market. Quite successfully at that." He chuckled and went around to open Jim's door for him. "It's quite something, isn't it?"

"What does his partner do?"

"Jack's a photojournalist. He's just back from Iraq at the moment."

"Oh, wow." Jim followed him up to the door. "That sounds fascinating. I love the idea of reporting using images. It's so visceral."

The door opened and Jack's face appeared as Jim stopped speaking. "Oh, oh, man. You're the writer. Come in. Come in. Marcus. Brother, *so* good to see you!"

"It's been awhile, hasn't it?" He gave Jack a hug, giving the little ass a pinch and making Jack yelp and then laugh.

"It has. We've missed you, so much." Jack kissed his cheek, and then went to Jim. "I'm Jack. You're Jim. I'm *so* glad to meet you. Come on. Are those brownies? You so fucking rock!"

"Jack!" Ollie's voice snapped out.

"Oops." Jack chuckled, tugging Jim away. "Go, little Tippy Man. See Ollie."

Marcus raised an eyebrow. "Little? Someone needs a spanking." It was hard to keep the laughter inside.

Jackie laughed, dragging Jim into the house.

Oliver shook his head, grinned and headed over. "You did make it. Good afternoon, my friend."

Opening his arms, he gave Oliver a strong hug.

"Afternoon, Ollie. I see Jack is in fine form. You must have made him scream all day."

"You know it. He's got some post-job stress built up. Nightmares. We're working it out. How's your boy?"

"He's good. Very good. I think he needed this -- thank you for inviting us." Jack would do Jim a world of good, Marcus was sure.

"You know that I'm tickled you have him. How's his training going?"

"Very well. He's a natural even if he doesn't believe it himself." He followed Ollie out to the pool, smiling as he saw Doc and Les.

Doc waved, Les bound and quiet beside him, head on Doc's lap.

Ollie nodded. "Good to hear. I hope you don't mind there are a few couples in scenes."

"Not at all. It might be good for Jim to see." Or his baby would freak out and he'd have to do some damage control. Either worked. "Who?"

"Les is silent tonight, Dan's on a leash. Oh. Yves is here with Isaac. Isaac, unfortunately, had a serious relapse when Yves went away on business." Oh, man. Isaac was a cutter -- an incredibly talented artist and a wonderful man, but the man was... less than stable. Oliver pointed

around the way, Isaac's black hair shaved clean away, the man blindfolded, gagged, and bound.

It was a nice small group, small enough Jim could get to know the others.

He glanced over to where Jack was talking animatedly, wondering how his baby was faring. Jim was talking back, then Jack grabbed Jim's hand, leading him back in. Oh, man. Jack was going to take Jim to see the pictures.

It wasn't easy, not to follow them, to keep an eye on his baby, but he made himself relax. "So how're things, old man?"

"Stressful. Some of the pictures Jack brought back were brutal." Oliver shrugged. "The temptation to forbid him to go back is huge."

"You won't do that, though." Jack needed his photography. "Of course if he came to that decision on his own..."

"That's my hope. This death and destruction plays havoc on his psyche."

He clapped his hand along Ollie's shoulder. "Hey, I'm just a phone call away if you need to talk."

"I know, my dear friend. I know how busy you are with your training."

"Never so busy I can't lend my old mentor an ear, hmm?" He kept his hand on Ollie's shoulder. "You'll help him find his center again, I'm sure."

"I will." Oliver nodded, offered him a smile.

"So... Jack made burgers?"

"I made them." Ollie chuckled, swatted his ass playfully. "Come and have one."

Laughing, he headed for the barbeque. "As long as you used Jack's recipe, they're worth as many of those swats as you're going to give."

He smiled and nodded at his friends, the subs going in and out of the house when they could, meeting Jim. He hoped today would put Jim's foolish notion that Jim couldn't be friendly to rest. He had two burgers in quick succession, groaning happily.

Oliver popped the top off a beer for him, settling next to him. "Mmm. It's a lovely evening, my friend."

"It is. Thank you for inviting us." He was looking forward to playing in the pool with Jim.

"Are you going to have a party for your birthday?"

"I haven't decided yet." He chuckled. It was coming up in just over a month, he'd have to decide soon.

"Well, perhaps you'd like to borrow the beach house for the weekend? There's a fully stocked room for scenes."

"Oh, Ollie, that's a lovely offer. Thank you."

"Happy birthday, my friend." Oliver smiled, chin lifting, pointing at the house. "They're dancing."

He looked over, the little group in the house moving, Jim in the corner, watching. Jack headed over, grabbed Jim's hands and dragged his baby into the group. Oh, he needed to buy Jack a nice welcome home present for that. As Jim was welcomed into the group, he amended that to a very nice welcome home present.

"Jack likes him already. That's excellent. Jack needs friends."

Marcus laughed. "So does Jim." He clinked his beer with Ollie's and leaned back in his chair, watching the subs dancing, having fun, his baby right there in the middle of it.

"He'll be wired, then crash tomorrow, hmm?" Doc smiled over, winked. "Do you have something planned for him?"

"Oh, I have many things planned for him." He felt his prick start to fill and tore his eyes away from his baby.

The guys chuckled, all of them starting to watch, the dancing getting a little sultrier, Ollie's Jack teasing them all. Damn, that was sexy. He gave up any pretense of being cool and just tried not to drool too hard over Jim. Jim looked a little nervous, uncomfortable, and it made him feel good when Jack eased off, made Jim laugh a little.

He drank his beer, chatting idly with his friends, and watching his beautiful baby.

They'd needed this.

He'd needed this.

"So what's new with everyone?"

"Things are basically the same. Xavier's running things at the club, memberships are closed for the year. We're plotting the holiday bash.

Marcus chuckled. "There going to be a St. Nick handing out spankings again?" That had been a big hit the year before.

"The current vote is for him to hand out paddles."

"They've got some lovely ones at the shop down on fourth. All sorts of bumps and spikes and stuff. You could have a wide variety to give out." He'd picked up a nice one for Jim last week that they hadn't used yet.

"I think we're going to have to vote in the next officers meeting how much we want to spend. Also, Xavier's wanting to close the club between Christmas and New Years, take a vacation. That's going to be deadly on the kitchen staff and servers." Doc's voice sounded rougher than usual, a bit tired.

"Perhaps there's someone who could take over from Xavier for the week." He turned to Doc. "How are you doing, Drummond?"



"Recovering from a vicious cold, thank you for asking. We're just coming back out into the world of the living."

"Well, I'm glad you made it. It's so good to see you." It was good to see all of them. And he could only hope Jim would think so as well.

"Master!" Jack came barreling down into the pool area. "It is time to swim?"

Oliver chuckled. "Eat first."

Jack pouted, but Jim was behind him and he looked hungry. "Marcus talked up the burgers."

"They smell delicious." Jim's eyes were fastened to him, clinging.

He held out a hand for Jim, tugging his baby close when Jim came over.

"Marcus." Jim stood close, vibrating just a bit.

"Having a good time, baby?"

"Yes. I saw some amazing photographs. Jack did the photos for a book I edited a few months ago."

"Really? It's a small world, isn't it?"

"Yes. Yes, he's amazingly talented..."

Jack brought Jim a plate with a burger and some coleslaw on it. "Can I get you another plate, Marcus?"

"Yes, please, Jack." He'd been going to say no, but they were too good to pass up another.

"Thank you." Jim stood there, looking uncomfortable.

Marcus patted his thigh. "Come sit by me, baby."

"Yeah? Okay. Thank you." Jim looked around. "Should I get another chair?"

"If you wish. Or you can sit at my knees."

"I..." There was the panicked, worried look again.

"Sit, baby." He took Jim's arm and tugged him down.

"These are the hamburgers of great joy and you don't want to miss out on them." He let his fingers linger on Jim's skin.

Oliver nodded in approval, and Jim leaned into his touch.

"They were dancing upstairs."

"I know. It looked like fun and you were the loveliest of them all." He kept touching, grounding Jim.

Jim snorted a bit, but smiled, cheeks heating. "It was fun."

"Good." He leaned in and nuzzled Jim's cheek, breathing his baby in. "And you *were* the loveliest, baby. I could tell from the way you moved that you could feel your ass with every step you took, every shift, every moment."

"Marcus..." Jim gasped, pulled back to stare at him for a second.

He stared back, giving Jim his whole attention. "Yes, baby?"

"We're... we're not. This is..." Jim leaned in, whispered. "There are people here."

"I know, baby. And all they can see is two lovers talking, hmm?"

"I. Yeah. I'm not very good at being public, hmm?"

"You need to worry less about others and what goes on around us and focus on me." One day Jim would be able to do anything for him. Anything at all.

"It's hard; you know that I don't do well, having people look at me."

"Look into my eyes, Jim. Put your focus right here." His baby had the prettiest green eyes he'd ever seen. He could look into them forever. "Nothing else matters except you and I and what's right here between us."

"That's so hard for me."

He could hear soft voices around them, gentle and friendly. "I know, baby. But these are my friends, and your friends as well if you'll let them be. They aren't going to judge you, or me. They want us to be happy." He stroked Jim's face.

Jim blushed, leaned into him, toward his touch. He leaned in the rest of the way, touching his lips to Jim's. Jim stiffened, but didn't pull away.

"That's my baby." He let his lips linger, tongue sliding into Jim's mouth.

"Oh, look how pretty..." Jack's words were soft, needy, and he could hear Isaac moaning,

His beautiful baby. And everyone saw it. Everyone but Jim.

"Love," he whispered, deepening the kiss slowly.

Jim whimpered, hands sliding around his waist, stroking him through his shirt. His prick leapt, Jim's touch arousing as always. Even more so knowing how hard it was for Jim. He could hear sounds of the others, touching and kissing, the soft laughter and little moans.

He pulled Jim closer, stroking one hand across the front of Jim's T-shirt, catching one of the nipple rings on the way by.

"Master..." The word was gasped into his lips.

"I've got you, baby. I've got you." He wrapped his hand around Jim's hip, tugging Jim up between his legs.

Jim's cock was trying to fill, the muscular body not losing its form, even though Jim still refused to return to the gym.

"Sexy baby," he murmured before tugging on Jim's lower lip, teeth scraping.

"Marcus..." Jim pushed closer, moaning low, shuddering for him.

He swallowed that moan, teasing Jim's tongue into his mouth and sucking on it as his hand slid down to caress Jim's ass. He could feel the heat from the last spanking, even through Jim's jeans. His baby started rocking, hips rolling back against him. He encouraged the movements, free hand slipping between them to cup Jim's cock, give his baby some friction.

"Master. I mean, Marcus. I can't."

"You were doing fine just a moment ago. And Master was exactly right, baby." He loved that mixture of pleasure and nerves, the way Jim's submission reached out for him.

He squeezed Jim's ass, letting his baby feel the burn, the things they shared. The kisses grew longer, more and more needy. He slipped his hand back to Jim's crotch, rubbing the hard bulge.

Jim moaned, tongue sliding in, fucking his lips. *That's it, baby, show me how much you want it.*

He could hear the moans of others, everyone loving their subs, sharing their joy, their love. Jim's eyes rolled, a desperate little sound pushing into his lips.

"Love you, baby." He popped the top button of Jim's jeans and worked down the zipper, fingers brushing against Jim's cock.

"Master. Master, I... There are people here."

"They can't see what we're doing between my legs, baby." He wrapped his fingers around Jim's prick, his thumb working the ring.

"Oh. Oh. Please." That ring was hot, slick.

He tugged on it, twisted it, holding that hard prick as it jerked. He could feel Jim's need in the throbbing of the heavy cock in his hand, in the way the head swelled around the ring.

"Show me." He kept his voice quiet, for Jim's ears only.  
"Come for me, baby."

"Master." Jim's hips shifted, heat pouring onto his fingers, his baby burning for him.

There was no one as wonderful as his baby. No one.

"Yes, love." He kissed Jim's face all over, still slowly moving his hand.

Jim pushed close, shivering a bit, moaning for him.

"Good boy. So good." He brought his hand up to Jim's mouth, began to lick the come off as he held his baby's eyes.

Jim's eyes looked stunned, shocked, aroused as hell. It was pure fucking magic.

"Do you want your reward?" Cleaned, he slid his hand down to his own prick, rubbing it through his shorts.

"I. Yes. Yes, Marcus."

He undid the knot and tugged the shorts down, his prick hard and wet-tipped for Jim.

"What... what do you need?"

He slid his hand behind Jim's head, stroking his lover's skull, keeping that focus on him and not the sounds of love and sex all around them "Suck me, baby."

"I... I'm not sure... I want you. I want to, but... I. You promise no one will... That it won't... Help me..." He almost burst with pride -- his baby might be panicking, but that panic, the fear, was being handed to him.

Leaning in, he kissed Jim hard. "Baby, no one's looking and no one will think you're less of a man. They're all busy, baby." He stroked Jim's cheeks and hair, keeping those eyes on his.

"I can smell you. I want you, your cock."

"Take it -- it's yours and no one else's."

Jim slid down, shaking visibly, staring at him the entire time.

"So proud of you, baby." He kept touching, showing Jim how much he loved his baby. "Take what you want. What you need."

"You. I need you." Jim's lips were like fire around his cock and his ass almost left the lounge chair. Jim's eyes closed, bright red curls bobbing, bouncing.

Marcus heard Oliver's chuckle, Jack undulating in the older man's lap as their eyes met, Oliver mouthing, "Very nicely done."

He managed a quick grin and nod, and then his focus was back on the man in his lap, on the way Jim's mouth pulled at his prick. "Baby..." He groaned, hips beginning to move.

Jim was hungry for him, tongue and lips working his shaft, his cock. No one else had ever loved doing this to him like Jim did. No one else had ever been as good at it. Fingers slid around his balls, the weight of them cradled on Jim's palm.

"Oh, baby. Yes..." He nodded, fingers sliding through Jim's soft curls.

Jim took him in to the root, throat swallowing around the tip of his cock.

"Baby!" He cried out, hips bucking as he came, his spunk pouring down Jim's throat.

Jim cleaned him, tongue caressing his cock before his baby pulled off.



"Mmm... thank you, baby." He stroked Jim's cheek, grinning as Jack began to shout.

"Yes! Master!" cried Jack.

Jim's eyes went wide, that look of panic back. "Marcus?"

"They're simply enjoying each other as we did, baby."

He rubbed his nose against Jim's. "Just ignore them, baby. Or watch if you want. They don't care."

Most of the other couples were done, snuggling and cuddling. Jim pushed into his arms, face in his shoulder, arms around his waist. He stroked Jim's back, fingers tickling across that sweet ass. Jim shifted, moaning softly. Jack finished with a scream, collapsing against Ollie. Marcus slapped Jim's ass gently to keep that focus on him instead of Jack and Ollie.

"He... he's loud." The words were whispered in his ear, so softly. "Can we swim together soon? We never have before."

"He is -- it's a part of what they enjoy together. And yes, if you're not hungry for any more of that burger, we could go swim now. I'm sure..." He trailed off, chuckling at the sound of splashes.

"I... It was a good burger. Should I get your suit?"

"Thank you, baby, that would be lovely." He cupped Jim's cheek and looked into his baby's eyes. "I am very proud of you, Jim."

"I... I'm trying. I'm trying to do this right, Marcus."

"I know, baby. You're doing a fabulous job." He truly was proud.

Jim kissed him, lips swollen and soft. "Do you want to come in and get changed?"

"Sure, baby." He didn't mind; it was no more than changing in the locker room at the gym, but he knew Jim would be shy about it and they'd already given that boundary a very good stretch.

He stood, holding his hand out for his kneeling lover. Jim took his hand, followed him easily, eyes focused only on him.

Their bag was in one of the guest bedrooms on the main floor. "Oliver has loaned us the use of his cabin for my birthday."

"Oh? Is it up in the mountains or down on the beach?"

"It's on the beach and completely private."

Jim grinned, looking suddenly young, excited. "Really? Oh, that's too cool."

"It is. We can go for a week, relax, play."

"That sounds amazing. I'd love that. I'd love to spend your birthday on the ocean."

"Then that's what we'll do, baby." He wrapped Jim in a hug and then gave his baby a spank. "Come on, I want to swim."

"I do, too. I miss..." Jim shook his head, grabbed the trunks. "Here are yours."

He stopped Jim and lifted that chin. "What do you miss?"

"Nothing. I... Nothing important."

"Baby..." He let his voice growl a little.

"I miss working out. I miss using my body, watching you use yours." Oh. Good boy. So good.

"Then we should go back together, baby."

Jim needed to take this back.

"I don't know... Let's go swim, hmm?"

"Yes, let's." He changed quickly, Jim doing the same. He stopped Jim just before they went back out. "But we'll revisit this discussion in the morning."

"Yes, sir." They had a few discussions to deal with tomorrow; tonight was for them.

The pool beckoned, and he took Jim's hand, heading back to the party and their friends. There were a few couples in the pool, the others around the outdoor fireplace, chatting and drinking. The pool was heated, comfortable.

He slid into the water, dunking himself completely before popping back up.

Jim got in and began swimming, body slicing through the water. Marcus just stood there for a moment, watching, admiring.

"He's lovely." Manning chuckled, floating by.  
"Congratulations."

He beamed. "Thank you, Manning."

Manning nodded as his sub came by, tempting the man away. Smiling, happy, Marcus swam after Jim. Jim moved quickly, not frantic, but fast, muscles working. Marcus caught up to him and paced him, muscles working to keep up with Jim.

Jim looked over, breathing hard, eyes twinkling. "Hey."

"Hey, baby."

God, Jim looked good, healthy and sexy.

"This feels good."

"Looks good, too." He winked, shifting to his back, arms and legs working.

Jim chuckled, rolled his eyes.

"Stop that. It's true -- you're beautiful."

"I... Thank you?"

He chuckled. "You're welcome, baby."

Look at that smile.

"Wanna race, baby?"

"What do I get when I win?"

"Oh, ho!" He loved that confidence. "What do you want?"

Jim's strokes stuttered, those cheeks going almost purple.  
"I. I want... I want a day. Like we had before."

Oh, his sweet baby. "A day of submission?"

"Yes. Yes, please."

"Done. *If* you win." He was so proud of Jim for asking for this.

"I'll win. I love to swim."

"Prove it." Grinning, he started to put on the speed.

Jim pushed harder, pacing him for a little bit, and then passing him.

He worked hard, trying to increase his speed and catch up -- he was not going to just give this to Jim, no matter how much he wanted his baby to claim this particular prize. Jim fought him, pushing harder and faster, beating him handily, the guys all applauded.

He laughed, clapping Jim on the back. "Congratulations, baby! Well done!"

Jim grinned, bowed awkwardly in the water. He hugged Jim hard, giving his baby a kiss, earning them another cheer.

"Marcus!" Jim laughed, and then kissed him back.

He grabbed that beautiful ass, squeezing as he deepened the kiss. Jim wiggled, rubbed against him, chuckling into his lips. This happiness was addictive, arousing.

"I love you, baby."

"Love you. I won." He loved that grin.

"You did! You can collect your prize in the morning."

Jim hummed, pressed close for a moment. "Thank you, Marcus."

"You deserve it, baby. I didn't realize you were such a good swimmer. We should see if there's a pool we can join." Jim would still have to face his demons at the gym, but once that was done, they could add swimming to the mix.

The other subs all clustered around them, patting Jim on the back, offering their congratulations.

Even Ollie got into the pool and someone grabbed a volleyball, the game on, the whole group -- barring Isaac, who floated in Yves arms -- getting in on the game.

There was lots of shouting and splashing and some semblance of a real game as they played. He discovered that Jim was a team player, easily fielding balls, but allowing others to play. Jack bumped into him, squealing a bit.

"Tell me he's coming back. He's a dollbaby."

That had him chuckling. "You like my Jim, do you?" Marcus had known Jim would fit in with these men, people who would understand and share their predilections, who would see Jim for who he really was. "I'm sure we can be enticed to return to the land of hamburgers of joy and large, outdoor pools."

"Good. I missed you. So did Oliver."

He gave Jack a hug. "Jim needed me." Still, now that Jim could see he was accepted, they could be a little more social.

"Yeah. Yeah, I know about that." Jack kissed his cheek and then pounced Jim.

Marcus laughed as the two of them went down under the water, moving to stand next to Ollie at the edge of the pool as the volleyball game turned into a free for all.

Light blue eyes smiled at him. "Having fun?"

"I am, old man. And so are you, I can tell." Ollie's cheeks were bright from the sun and fresh air.

"I am. Jack's doing better every day. Looks like he's made a friend, as well."

"We should have you over sometime for supper and movies. Jim still feels somewhat like a freak for what he likes. Hanging out with Jack would alleviate that, I believe."

"After what he was put through before, I'm surprised he's as healthy as he is."

He blinked. Oliver knew?

"How did you know?"

"I was doing consulting work when it happened. It was... a witch hunt."

"That's what I gather. It didn't matter that he was gay and didn't do it." His hands curled into fists and he growled. The whole situation still made him very angry.

"No. It didn't matter at all. His family... Do you know them?"

"I've never met them. Apparently they disowned him."

"They hated him. His father went into the chapel at the university, preached against him."

He growled, tense, pissed off. "Animals."

"Yes." Oliver nodded, holding his eyes. "You must be so proud of him, his trust in you."



"I am. He has given himself over to his needs, to me."

"Good. You are exceptional."

"If I am, it's because of you, old man."

"Absolutely, my dear boy."

Chuckling, he patted Oliver's shoulder. "You've got quite the legacy, my friend."

"I do." Oliver laughed as Jack climbed up on Jim's shoulders, waving and hooting.

"What do you say, old man? Want to climb on my shoulders and we'll show our boys how it's done?"

"Are you mad?" Oliver's smile was wicked.

"Possibly." Grinning, he sank down into the water, backing up into Oliver. "Come on."

Oliver climbed up, the lean, strong legs sliding over his shoulders.

Laughing, he stood back up, the water buoying him as he headed for Jim and Jack, and several other subs who'd turned into two-men teams.

"Chicken fight!" He didn't hear who called it first, but the game was on.

Marcus charged right in, him and Oliver giving as good as they got. Two by two, the teams dropped into the water until it was just Jim and Jack against him and Ollie.

Jim's eyes shone at him. "Just us, Marcus."

"Would you like to wager for another day, baby?"

"Two days... I... Would that be if you won?"

"No. If you win it's two days. If I win, it's the original day and we go to the gym tomorrow." Which would make it win-win for both of them.

Jim's eyes looked worried. "I..."

"Baby." He leaned in and kissed Jim, listening to Jack and Ollie breathe, but otherwise stay quiet.

"Okay. Okay, sure. I can do that."

"Good boy." He looked up at Ollie. "You ready, old man?"

"Bring it on, dear boy. I have a sub to topple."

He gave a war yell and bumped chests with Jim. Jim stumbled back, then pushed forward, their skin slapping together. Laughing, he bumped Jim again, the two of them trading back and forth.

Jack reached for Ollie, Oliver almost toppling him as they grappled. He bumped into Jim by accident this time, trying to keep his footing.

Jim grabbed his arms, holding on. "Careful. I have you."

There was so much love there. He wrapped his own hands around Jim's biceps. "And I have you, baby."

Jim smiled at him, nodded. "Yes, sir."

Ollie and Jack suddenly took a dive, toppling into the water together with a huge splash.

Jim looked at them. "We won."

He burst out laughing as Jack and Ollie came up gasping. Arm going around Jim's shoulders, he nodded. "We sure did, baby."

Jim leaned into him, resting hard. "Been a good day, Marcus."

"It has. I'm glad we came."

"I am, too. Jack is a good man." Jim nodded, both of them floating together.

He reached out and took Jim's hand, happy, at peace.

### *Chapter Thirty Six*

They'd stayed late at Ollie's, enjoying the pool and their friends and each other. It was no surprise that they slept in and it was nearly eight before he woke up.

Marcus spent a moment or two watching Jim sleep. He was so proud of his baby for asking for this day of submission as the prize. Jim was not only recognizing what he needed, he was asking for it, and not being ashamed of needing it.

It was going to be a good day -- he would do everything he could to put Jim into full out sub space. Beginning, of course, with a spanking. He did enjoy their morning spankings, the way it set the day for Jim. Tugging the covers off his baby, he smacked one ass cheek lazily. "Rise and shine, baby."

Jim hummed, stretching out long and lazy. "Mmm. Good morning."

"It is a good morning." He stroked his hand over Jim's ass and then hit it again.

Jim arched a little, the motion relaxed and easy, the little undulation sexy as fuck. Look at that. God, he loved that. Loved Jim.

Groaning, his morning wood beginning to ache, he let another few smacks hit. His baby slid closer, bare skin rubbing against his.

"Mmm..." He didn't often spank Jim in this position, but it certainly had its advantages.

"Yeah. Morning. Love you." Jim humped his thigh, moving slowly and steadily.

"Love you, baby." He moved with Jim, his baby's rhythm matching the fall of his hand, the blows beginning to sting his palm.

Jim nodded, gasped, eyes happy as they clung to him.

"You can come while I do this, baby." But then the ring was going on, and Jim wouldn't come again until this evening.

"Yes. Yes, love..." Jim groaned, pushing back into the blows, hips jerking.

He curled his fingers, flicking them into Jim's crease on the next smack. Heat sprayed between them, Jim shooting hard. God, he loved that smell. He rubbed Jim's ass, humming happily. Jim kissed him, lips clinging, tongue sliding into his lips. He sucked on it, giving Jim one last smack. Warm fingers wrapped around his cock, stroking firmly, touching him just the way he liked it. He moaned, hips moving, working with Jim's hand.

"So pretty." It wasn't just lip service; Jim looked fascinated, hungry.

His balls drew up, his body moving eagerly. Jim pulled away, lips dropping over his cock, the suction fast and fierce, joining with the touch of those fingers.

"Baby!" He cried out, his hands sliding through Jim's curls, holding his baby's head in place as his hips jerked. He pushed his prick into Jim's mouth, the pleasure huge.

Jim took him in to the root, sucking hard, pulling hard. His hips snapped and he came, buried deep in Jim's throat, spunk pouring out of him. Jim licked and sucked, keeping him hard, cleaning him off.

Groaning, he slid his fingers through Jim's curls. They felt like silk.

"Need a haircut, hmm?" Soft kisses peppered the length of his cock.

He chuckled. "No, I want it longer. I want to see it flowing down your back."

"I'll look funny, love."

"No, you'll look sexy. You'll see."

Jim hummed, stretching under his touch. "Would you like coffee and eggs this morning? Waffles?"

"I think pancakes, though I'll have to make them."

His baby looked completely confused. "Why?"

"Because we'll be cuffing you, baby." All day long. A plug, too. Tonight he'd break out the sounds.

"I... Oh." Jim blushed, chewed his bottom lip. "Today, huh?"

"That's right, baby. Just like you asked for." He slid his finger along that poor lower lip.

Jim nodded, kissing his finger, cuddling close. "Thank you."

"You can ask for special days any time, you know."

"We have work, things to do..."

"The work we do together is important, baby."

"Why? Why is it important to you?"

"Because *you* are important to me, baby." He'd keep saying it until Jim believed it.

"Thank you." Jim kissed him, the touch lingering, sweet.

"All right, let's get you plugged and cuffed, hmm?" He reached down, stroking the skin around Jim's prick. "I think you need a shave today, too."

Jim shifted, cock throbbing a bit, starting to swell.

"Oh yes, the ring as well." Jim would come when they played with the sounds, and it would be wonderful. The moan he heard sounded Jim's approval.

"Go pick a plug, a ring, and a pair of cuffs from the drawer and bring them back to me." He gave Jim a smack on the ass to get his baby going.

"Does... Does it matter which ones?"

"The choice is entirely up to you." And he imagined it would matter to Jim whether he wore a huge plug, or a little one.

"I... Can I ask you a question?"

"Of course!"

"I don't know if I can wear a big plug all day, but... I want." Jim closed his eyes, took a deep breath. "It was good, last time. When things changed and got bigger."

"Mmm... you'd like to start small and work your way up. Good choice, baby. Very good choice." He tilted that face so he could look into Jim's eyes. "And I'm so proud of you for asking for what you need."

"I... Thank you. I... Thank you."

"You're welcome, baby. Now go get the stuff."

Jim nodded, headed off, pretty ass bright red for him.

He swung his feet out of bed, sitting on the edge as he watched Jim move. Jim chose a ring, then four plugs, and the heavy, wide, fur-lined, leather cuffs. Oh yes, his baby liked *knowing* he was wearing cuffs.

Marcus grabbed the lube from the floor beside the bed and then patted his thighs. Jim blushed, cock filling a little bit more.

"We'll do the plug first." That way that sweet prick would be fully hard when they put on the ring.



"Okay. Okay, Marcus." Jim was excited, focused.

He stroked that red ass as Jim sat across his legs. His fingers lingered on Jim's crack, teasing the lovely hole.

"Are...are there new rules for today?"

"Hmm..." He watched Jim's face. Oh yes, he thought there should be new rules for today.

Those green eyes were fastened to him, watching him.

"I think it's time for you to go shirtless. We keep the place warm enough. No more tops."

"I... Today?"

"Yes." He waited a beat. "And from now on."

"But... I..." Jim blinked, stared at him.

"But you what?"

"I don't know if I can work without my shirt..."

He raised an eyebrow. "Too distracting?" As he said the words, he tugged on one of Jim's nipple rings.

"Dis... distracting. Weird. Hard. I..."

"We'll do it because I said you would. It's a new rule."

Jim shuddered, nodded, looking a bit panicked.

He tweaked the nipple ring again, and then moved to rub Jim's ass, one finger dragging along the hot crack.

Distraction was the key with his sweet baby. Jim did best when he followed his body's dictates without thinking too hard. Not only that, but Jim needed to stretch. Jim needed structure and rules and direction so that he could blossom, enjoy his life. He teased Jim's hole mercilessly, dipping only a fingertip in, and then going to the first knuckle but no further.

"What... what will we do today?" Jim was shifting, trying to get more.

Sudden inspiration hit him. "I'm going to wax you all over, baby."

Jim went stock-still. "Oh, God."

"Your skin will be *very* sensitive."

"I... I don't. Marcus. I. I." Oh, now. He hadn't gotten full out panic in days. It was adorable.

"You don't need to know, baby. I do." With his words, he pushed two fingers all the way inside Jim.

"Master..." Jim's head came up, lips parting.

"Yeah, baby?" He twisted his fingers, finding Jim's gland.

Jim groaned, eyes rolling, hips bucking and rolling.  
"Please."

"Yeah, baby." He chuckled, fucking Jim with his fingers, pushing them in hard.

Jim started moaning, begging for his touch. He spent some time with just his fingers in Jim's ass, moving from two to three, twisting and scissoring them, hitting Jim's gland.

"Master. Master. So good."

"Mmm... good." The tight heat of Jim's body grasped at his fingers as he finally pulled them out. Jim whimpered, complaining, body arching for him. "First plug. This one is just little." It was short and not too thick, and the perfect start to the day.

He got a groan, a needy sound. "Please. Marcus. Master."

"Shh. I know what you need, baby." He teased the tip of the plug against Jim's entrance and then pushed it right in.

Jim groaned, hips fucking the air a bit, needing more. He kept hold of the base and fucked Jim a few times with it.

"Fuck. I..." Jim was beginning to leak against him again, the drops hot on his thighs.

"No coming, baby." He'd put the ring on in a moment, for now he wanted Jim to find the control to keep from coming.

"Yes. Yes, sir. Feels so good."

"You look amazing. Your ass is red from my hand, your hole stretching around the plug." He wriggled the plug around on the next push in, nudging Jim's gland.

"Master!" Jim went tight, head coming back.

He touched that spot once more before settling the plug. "Okay, baby, good job. Flip over."

Jim was panting, cock full and red-tipped, swollen for him. Groaning, he bent and wrapped his lips around the head, taking a quick suck. His tongue slid across the slit, picking up the drop of pre-come waiting there for him.

"Marcus!" No. No, that wasn't right.

He came off Jim's prick and raised an eyebrow. "What was that?"

"What was what?"

He gave Jim's nipple ring a tug. "What did you call me?"

"Mmm.... I don't... I called you by your name, didn't I?"

"Yes, baby. And today, of all days should be 'Master'." He tweaked that nipple again, harder this time.

"Oh. Oh, I'm sorry. I was... Your mouth. I was all. I. You make me crazy."

He chuckled. "I do try, baby." He slid his fingers down along Jim's belly, stroking the sweet six-pack. "Shall we try that again?"

Leaning in, he wrapped his mouth around Jim's cock and licked the tip again. Jim moaned, hands fisting in the sheets. He took one last suck and then grabbed the leather cock ring, getting Jim's balls where he wanted them before he wound the leather around both them and Jim's hard prick.

"Oh. Oh, please..." Jim humped the air, ecstatic.

"God, baby, you're absolutely stunning."

"Thank you. Love needing."

He smiled at Jim's words. His baby was blossoming and it really was beautiful. He stroked the hard, bound prick, watching Jim's face. Jim arched, humping up into his touch, completely lost in sensation. His baby was going to be amazing when he used the sounds later in the evening. He stroked a few more times, and then stopped, giving the tight balls a soft stroke.

"Please." Spreading for him, Jim gave him quite the show.

He touched the base of the plug, giving it a little jostle.

"Master." Jim's hands slid down his sides, pushing in deep.

"Very good." He took one of Jim's hands and kissed the palm, the fingertips.

"Good." Jim touched him like he was something magical.

He couldn't do anything but return that touch, make Jim feel special, too. Jim ended up in his lap, wrapped around him, both of them kissing and touching, hands sliding over each other. His own prick was hard again, rubbing against Jim's ass as he sucked on Jim's tongue.

"Love you." Jim's hair tickled his face, his jaw.

"God, yes. Love you, baby. So much."

"I know." Jim's fingers slid over his shoulders, down his back.

He groaned, fighting the temptation to leave Jim's hands unbound. This wasn't for him, though, it was for Jim.

"Give me your hands, baby."

"Hmm?" Jim hummed, tongue sliding over his neck.

"Your hands. Give them to me." His prick ached; he needed.

"I want you, more than anything." Jim's fingers twined with his, lips pulling up a mark. "My love."

He gasped, his hips bucking, sliding his prick along Jim's ass. "Mine," he growled, holding tight to Jim's fingers. "*Mine.*"

"Yes. Yours. Master."

He took the cuffs and began to wrap one around Jim's wrist. They were stiff and heavy, keeping Jim's wrists immobile, keeping his baby reliant on him.

He wrapped both wrists and then attached them together, smiling down into Jim's eyes. "Lovely."

"They're heavy." Jim tugged a little. "Strong. Like you."

"Mmm... you like that, don't you, baby?"

"Yes." Jim nodded, cheeks pinking.

He tugged on Jim's lower lip, letting his baby stay in his lap. "You want to talk about anything, baby?"

"No." Jim leaned in, resting hard.

"Do you *need* to talk about anything?" He knew Jim did. And he had all day to worm it out.

"I... I don't think so. I'm comfortable."

"Which makes this the perfect time and place to talk about things that might not be comfortable."

"Aren't you hungry?"

"I think we should talk first." Oh, Jim was going to duck this any way he could. Which made him all the more determined to make Jim talk.

"Talk about what?" Jim leaned into him, cuddling hard.

"There are a number of topics, actually, but I'd like you to bring them up." He didn't want Jim hiding from stuff. That didn't solve anything.

"How can I, if I don't know what they are? Is this about the gym?"

"That's one thing I'd like to talk about, yes." He stroked Jim's back, attempting to soothe his baby.

"What do you want me to say?"

"Well, I want us to go back. Together. Tomorrow."

"I don't want to go. I don't want to get fucked with."

"You have to stand up to the people who 'fucked with you', baby. And then they'll stop." He knew Jim didn't do well with bullies; had he been bullied from an early age? Marcus' guess was yes.

"No they won't. They'll just push harder and harder until something drastic happens."

"Baby, you either tell them to fuck off or you tell the manager on duty. Bullies don't respond well to people sticking up for themselves."

Marcus sincerely doubted the guys at the gym were after more than a few laughs at someone else's expense, and once Jim proved he wasn't going to put up with it, they'd leave his baby be.

Jim sighed. "I'm not interested in going back."

Now that was a lie.



"No. You're not interested in standing up to the bullies. You don't like confrontation. I get that. But sometimes you've got to do it. You love going to the gym and you're going to let them take that from you just like you let that girl take your job you loved so much."

Jim went stiff, still, then jerked out of his arms, heading for the bathroom without a single word.

He shook his head and sighed for Jim's pain. They were going to work through it, though. Marcus followed, moving after Jim. "Did I say you could get up and go?"

"I didn't ask." Jim looked at him, eyes icy cold. "Take the cuffs off me."

He folded his arms. "No."

"Take them off."

"No. Come back to the bedroom. We haven't finished our discussion."

"As a matter of fact, Marcus, as far as I'm concerned, the conversation is over. Now, take the cuffs off. I will not participate in this with a person who does not respect me." Jim's hands were held out to him, those eyes not wavering a bit.

"Excuse me? Since when do I not respect you? If I didn't respect you, you wouldn't be here!"

"Take the motherfucking cuffs off me. Now."

"That's not how this works and you know it. I think it's time to refocus." He took Jim's hands.

"No. Perseus. Listen to me. Take the cuffs off. Now."

His mouth dropped open. "All right, Jim. I'll take them off." He couldn't believe Jim had safeworded.

Unsure exactly where he'd managed to step quite so wrong, and knowing Jim needed to talk about this, he nonetheless undid the cuffs, taking them off and leaving them on the counter. "Are you going to tell me what's wrong? You can't truly believe I don't respect you."

Jim went to the dresser, pulled out clothes and starting dressing. "I lost everything during the inquiry. Everything. I fought police, media, administration. You have no idea what I lived through, how hard I fought. You don't get to throw my situation around like you understand what happened." Jim found his runners, a hat.

"All right, baby. I apologize if I misjudged you. All I can go by is your refusal to do anything about these girls who keep harassing you." He put his hand on Jim's shoulder. "Baby. Don't just run away. Not from me."

"I'm going to take a walk around the block, Marcus. I'm not a child. I won't run away, but the fact is, if you honestly believe that about me? Then it's bigger than a bad judgment call." Jim sighed, rubbed the back of his neck. "I'll be back."

"You're leaving the conversation, Jim."

"Yes. Yes, I am. I'm angry at you and I'm hurt. I need some time to think."

"I'd rather you stayed and we worked this out, Jim."

"Right now, there's nothing to say. You believed -- you honestly believed that I would walk away from my lover, my life, a career that I had worked for my whole life. What am I supposed to say to that?"

"I'm not a psychic, Jim. I can only judge you by what I've seen, what you've told me. All I know is that you lost everything. That you've given up fighting."

Jim looked suddenly smaller, suddenly gray. "So, tell me, Marcus. Is it the fact that I was broken that caught your eye or the idea that I wasn't man enough to fight any more? I suppose that's a great quality to have in a sub." With that, Jim just turned and left the room.

"Jim!" Damn it, he was still naked. He grabbed some sweats, tugging them on as he headed down the hall.

He could hear Jim's footsteps on the stairs, hear the sound of the front door opening. "I'm going to take a walk, Marcus. I'll be back."

"Damn it, Jim! You can't believe any of that. You *know* how I feel about you." Tugging his sweats the rest of the way up, he took the stairs at breakneck speed.

"No. I know how you feel about who you think I am."

"Christ." He tripped down the last few stairs, landing hard on his ass on the floor at the bottom of them.

"Jesus." Jim's hands were on his shoulders. "Easy. Easy. What hurts?"

"I'm okay. My ass." He looked up into Jim's eyes. "My heart."

"Come on. I'll help you get to the sofa."

He let Jim help him up, discovering his hip hurt more than he'd been expecting. He sighed as Jim helped him get to the couch. "Baby, I'm sorry if I hurt you. You know I'd never do that on purpose."

"I know. Just... Let me get you the heating pad."

He nodded. He wouldn't say no.

"Okay. Just lie down." Jim headed to the bathroom, then got him set up with a towel and a hot pad before disappearing into the kitchen. In a few minutes, he could smell sausage.

This was not at all how today was supposed to go.

He dozed off, when he woke up, there was a plate of food, a cup of coffee and a glass of juice. There was a bottle of Tylenol and the TV remote. In the background he could hear the sound of Jim's keyboard clacking.

"Jim? Baby?" He didn't want to eat alone. He wanted Jim with him. Always.

The door to the office opened, Jim looking out. "What do you need, Marcus?"

"You. Did you eat?"

"Yeah. I had half a bacon sandwich and my coffee."

A half a bacon sandwich. Damn, they were back to that. He patted the sofa. "Come sit."

"For a minute. I'm working. How's your hip?" Jim sat carefully, obviously trying not to move him.

"I think I'll live." He looked into Jim's face. "How are you?"

"I'm okay. I took a Xanax, cooked. Got to work. You should eat and take a Tylenol."

He shook his head. He'd thought he'd hidden those better. Jim hadn't had one in ages. "I'll be fine. It was a little slip."

"It looked like it hurt."

"I wasn't paying attention to where I was putting my feet." He reached out and took Jim's hand, squeezing it. "I'll eat, and then we should talk."

"I don't know if that's a good idea. I don't want to have a fight."

"I don't want to fight either, baby. But if you won't talk to me, I'll just make the same mistakes over again."

"I. You need to eat."

He picked up his fork. "I do. It looks delicious."

"Thank you." Jim stood up, wandering, cleaning idly.

"Sit, baby. Have some of this toast."

"I'm not hungry."

"Then just sit and keep me company."

The eggs were just like he liked them, and he made short work of them.

Jim sat, legs curled up, watching him quietly. He hated the tension between them, there just under the surface. He hated that he felt unsure how to proceed. It wasn't a comfortable spot for him. Jim took his plate and cup when he was done, then headed out into the kitchen. Marcus hauled himself up, ignoring the twinge in his hip -- he was sure walking would help it -- and followed.

Jim met him on the way, two cups of coffee in hand.  
"Marcus."

"Jim." He cupped Jim's cheeks, careful of the coffee.  
"The whole submission day. It's supposed to make you feel wanted and safe. Loved."

"Maybe it just wasn't the right day, huh? I poured more coffee."

"We should be able to do it any day, baby." He gave Jim a soft kiss and then let his baby go, turned around and headed back for the living room. "This is still the first pot, right?"

"Yeah. The end of it."

"Good." He sat on the couch and pulled Jim down into his lap as soon as the cups were on the coffee table. "Tell me how you're feeling."

"Tired. The Xanax makes me tired."

He kissed Jim's forehead and stroked his hand along Jim's back. "I'm sorry, baby."

"I don't know what to say to that." Jim sighed, staring into his eyes.

"You accept my apology and we go on."

"Okay. I accept your apology. I don't know if that makes it better, though. I don't know if... I'm not a weakling. I have problems, but I'm not weak."

"I have never believed you were weak, baby. I've never said that." He frowned, fingers finding Jim's wrists, tracing the curves and angles there. "In fact I think you're one of the strongest people I know."

Jim looked back toward the coffee, then at him. "I never gave up fighting, not until I had no choice. Chris left me. They burned my house. My professional reputation was destroyed. I fought and it made no difference at all."

"I didn't know, baby." Jim never talked about it. He hadn't known just how bad it had been.

"It wasn't about you, but I would have thought, after knowing me, you'd know that I wasn't just...giving up."

"I didn't mean to make you feel little with my assumptions. I just know how smart you are, how wonderful, and it pains me to see you giving up things you love because of bullies." He kept touching Jim, keeping their connection right there.

"I'm not weak. I just... It's not as easy as it used to be."

"I know. But you're stronger than even you know and the gym is something I know you take a lot of joy out of."

"This isn't about the gym."

"Then tell me what it's about." *Talk to me, baby.*

"This is about how you see me. About why you want me."

"I see you as a beautiful, sensual man, who has hidden his inner hedonist. I don't think you're weak, baby. I think you're tired. I think you've lost yourself."

"I am tired and I don't like fighting." Jim's hands twisted in his a bit. "But, damn it, I need you to understand that I learned a hard lesson. A vicious lesson."

"What lesson is that?" He slid his hand over Jim's, rubbing them.



"That sometimes you can be right and still lose everything."

He made a soft sound and wrapped Jim in his arms, holding his lover tight. "I wish you'd never had to learn that lesson, baby."

"So do I, but it was important."

"Most life lessons are."

"Yeah." Jim kissed his cheek. "You want your coffee?"

"No. I'd like to see if we can't rescue the day, hmm?" He shifted his hands to Jim's ass. "After all, you're wearing a ring and plug..."

Jim stared at him, eyes wide. "I'd forgotten."

"I think then, that it's time to put in a bigger plug, hmm?" He found Jim's crack and nudged the plug through the man's jeans.

"I... I don't know if it's a good idea, Marcus. I don't know if..." Jim sighed, leaning into his touch.

"If what, baby?" He squeezed Jim's ass, reminding his baby of the sting. "You know I want to hear your thoughts."

"What if this isn't healthy? What if I'm making a mistake? What if you want me because you want someone I'm not?"

"First of all, there's nothing wrong with what we do. It isn't unhealthy or sick or wrong. And in the end, it all comes down to trust." That's what everything was about. And he'd repeat it as many times as Jim needed to hear it. "We have to trust ourselves and each other."

"How can you trust me?"

"Because you've used your safeword." There was more to it than that, but that alone spoke volumes.

Jim looked at him, really looked at him. "I needed you to hear me."

"And I did, baby. That's how you can trust me."

"I don't know if I can get back into a good place right now."

"Let's see if we can't find that space again, baby. It's right here, waiting for us." He leaned in and pressed their mouths together.

Jim tasted like tears, bitter like coffee. He slid his fingers along Jim's spine, tongue teasing Jim's back into his own mouth. Jim settled into his arms, shivering a little bit, but letting him hold on. He pressed kisses across Jim's face. "Love you, baby," he murmured. His hands slid automatically to Jim's ass, squeezing.

"Yeah? You're sure?"

He met Jim's eyes. "Yeah, baby. I'm deep down sure."

"Good." Jim nodded, licked his lips.

He hummed softly, tugging Jim closer and pulling off Jim's shirt. Jim nodded, making a happy noise as their skin met. Groaning, he opened Jim's lips with his mouth, pushing his tongue in for a long, deep kiss. If he hadn't believed that this would work, he knew now. Knew Jim loved him and would work things out.

Marcus leaned back against the couch, taking Jim with him, hands moving over his baby's smooth skin.

"Is your back okay?"

"The couch is supporting it -- I'll be fine." The way he cared for Jim always came back to him the same way.

"Kay." Jim leaned down, kissed him again, staring into his eyes.

He cupped Jim's face with one hand, fingers sliding to move through the silky curls. His other hand slid toward Jim's pretty little nipples with their gold rings. Jim went still, waiting, watching. Wanting. God, Jim made him happy. He reached the ring and simply flicked it with a finger, making it flip up.

"Marcus." No. No thinking. Not today. He wasn't going to lose their good day.

Bending, he took that nipple ring into his mouth, sliding his tongue through it and tugging.

"Good." Jim shivered a little, arched for him.

"Yeah, baby." He reached for the other ring, fingers playing with it as he licked and tugged on the other one. Jim started relaxing into the touches, cock beginning to fill. He opened Jim's jeans and slipped his hand inside, making sure that the cock ring was where it was supposed to be and wouldn't pinch. Oh, good thing he'd checked. That poor cock was going to be in trouble. He undid the leather binding, rubbing the base of Jim's cock and gently rolling the heavy balls. He'd reattach things once Jim was fully hard.

"Mmm. I. I don't stay hard when I'm angry." Of course, that pretty prick was filling now.

"Some people get off on it -- being angry, I mean. I know you don't." No, Jim had plenty of other stuff he got off on, though, now didn't he?

"No. I get off on other things." Jim nuzzled his jaw.

"I know, baby." He took Jim's Prince Albert ring between his fingers and twisted it gently.

"Mmm. Marcus."

He teased Jim's slit with his thumb and then stroked Jim a few times, encouraging his baby's prick to continue to grow.

"Marcus..." Jim started pushing up, fucking his hand, sweet and slow.

"Mmm. Yeah." He slid his other hand around to Jim's ass, pushing at the base of the plug.

"Oh. Oh, I feel that..."

"I hope so, baby. We should trade out the plug for a bigger one soon." He nudged it again, tugging on the ring in Jim's cock as he did.

"I... Yes. Yes, Mar... Mas... I..." He smiled, licking at Jim's lips.

"You chose four altogether, remember? Each one bigger than the last. The final one... baby, it's going to fill you up so good."

"Yes. Please. I don't want to fight, love. I want to love each other and have my day."

"I feel the same way, baby." He stroked Jim's prick a few more times, his thumb dragging hard across the tip, spreading the pre-come once it began to drip. "Do you know what I have planned for this evening?"

"No..." He watched Jim's throat work, the swollen lips parted.

"Do you know what a sound is, baby?" He kept his hand moving lightly.

"Is this a trick question?"

Chuckling, he shook his head. "Not a trick question."

"Sound is..." Jim grinned and ululated, sounding like a wild man for a second.

He threw his head back and laughed. "Oh, do it again."

God, that was an amazing, weird sound and he couldn't help but applaud. He was still laughing as he pressed another kiss on Jim, sharing the sound between them. Jim's smile tasted like sex and magic and... He grinned. The man made him silly.

He ended their kiss with a rub of noses and a soft "Love you, baby." Then he grinned. "Now. Do you know what a sexual sound is? It's sometimes called a penis wand."

"A... You're not serious."

"I am. You have an idea then what I'm talking about?" He slid the cock ring back around Jim's balls and prick.

"I. Yeah? I don't... I don't think anything'll fit. Not with the ring."

"They'll fit, baby. You can even buy ones that attach to a Prince Albert. We'll have to go shopping for some." He pressed his thumb into Jim's slit again.

"Oh. Oh, God. No. No, I don't know..."

"Shh, shh, baby." He nudged the plug again.

"Yes. Yes, love. Master."

"I'm gonna make you fly, baby. You remember what we did last time? With my hand?"

Jim nodded, flushed dark. "I felt you for days. Felt like I could do anything."

"This will be like that. Well, different, but similar." He bit at Jim's lower lip, smiling into those worried eyes.

"I'm yours, Marcus."

"You are. Through and through."

He made sure the cock ring was snug, but not painfully so, and then slapped Jim's ass. "Go get me the next plug, baby."

"Mmm. It's upstairs." Jim slipped off of him, grabbed the coffee cup and headed upstairs, discarded shirt in hand.

Leaning back against the couch, he closed his eyes. His body was thrumming with heat, desire. He could hear Jim, humming softly, wandering upstairs. He let his hand run down into his sweats, rubbing his prick as he imagined Jim with the first of five sounds in his cock.

If they spent time on them today, they could use the tiny sound and one that stretched that slit, one that Jim would feel, deep down. Groaning, he rubbed himself a little harder. It would blow Jim's mind. He could see Jim -- waxed and bare, ass filled with a plug, a slick, thick, metal sound sliding into that pretty prick, his tongue touching the slit where it spread and kissed the metal.

He shoved his sweats down, wrapping his fingers around his cock and stroking, really getting into it now, the images in his mind so hot. He was going to make Jim

scream, going to erase anything but him from that brilliant mind.

"Baby..." He groaned, hand working himself harder, faster.

"Uh-huh." Jim was standing there, watching him, cock hanging out of his jeans, one hand on the heavy balls.

"Oh. Baby." He reached for Jim with his free hand.  
"Come suck me."

"Yeah..." Jim came stumbling over, dropping the plug on the coffee table. Jim hit his knees, mouth dropping over Marcus' cock, the suction curling his toes.

"Fuck!" Marcus spread his legs wider, hands dropping to Jim's head, holding his baby in place. "Like that, baby. Yes."

Jim's hips were moving, fucking the air as Jim took him down to the root. His. His baby. Fuck. Jim swallowed around him and he cried out, shooting hard. That mouth kept sucking, pulling, driving him crazy.

He groaned, fingers sliding through Jim's curls, rubbing Jim's scalp. "Gonna keep me hard..." The suction deepened, pulling him back into Jim's throat. Shit, yes, Jim was going to keep him hard. "I was imagining you with the sounds in your cock, baby." Jim moaned, the vibration shaking his prick. "It's gonna be so big, so hot and sexy. You. Are. Sexy."



Jim hummed, hands sliding up his legs, fingers digging in.

"Yeah, baby." Groaning, he dropped his head back. He was panting, balls aching.

Jim's lips popped off the end of his cock, moving down to circle his balls, drawing them into that amazing mouth. He could feel that down to his toes and they curled into the carpet. He could see Jim's arm moving, nudging that heavy, full cock.

"That's *mine*," he growled.

Jim moaned, not stopping, the sound vibrating around his balls.

"Baby, you can't touch yourself."

Those beautiful, green eyes stared up at him, shining, needy.

"I know what you need, but you'll have to wait 'til this evening, baby. And no touching. It's..." he gasped as Jim's tongue played with the head of his cock. "It's a rule."

"Rules are made to be broken, Marcus." The words were moaned around his prick.

He chuckled, the sound turning into another moan. "Only if you want a punishment."

"Want you." His cock slid deep again, Jim blowing his mind.

"I know. Gonna have me tonight." He could hardly wait.

Jim pulled harder, making his eyes cross. He couldn't believe he was going to come again. But Jim's mouth was so fucking good. That tongue slapped his cock and his balls drew up. Fuck him. His hips started punching forward, a low sound coming from him.

Jim took him in, swallowing hard around the tip of his cock. He let go, the pleasure going through him like a shot, his prick jerking. It felt like he came forever, the sensations rolling over him in a wave, encouraged by Jim's mouth. Jim took him in, sucked him dry, left him gasping and groaning. His fingers were actually shaking as he stroked Jim's head.

"I need to come." Jim nipped his thigh.

"Come sit by me, baby." He wanted to touch, to make Jim crazy.

Jim crawled up into his arms, hard cock slapping his leg.

"Mmm... sexy baby." His hands found Jim's ass, wrapping around it, squeezing.

"Need you." Jim humped against him, hips driving, over and over.

He shook his head. "Not yet, baby." He pushed Jim down onto the couch, fingers touching, teasing.

"Marcus!" Jim fought him a bit, arching off the sofa.

"Let me touch you, baby." His fingertips danced on Jim's sweet belly.

"I need you..." That pretty skin was warm, soft against his fingers.

"You've got me, baby. Right here." He teased the head of Jim's cock with his tongue-tip.

"Fuck!" Jim reached down, cupped his own balls.

"No touching." He repeated the motion.

"I have to." Jim's fingers stroked the ring.

"I said no." He growled, taking Jim's hands in his own and stretching them up over his baby's head. He should have had Jim bring the cuffs downstairs.

"Keep them up here." He pushed Jim's hands into the couch for emphasis.

"Marcus. Marcus, I need."

"I know, baby. I'm going to make you need all day long." He got a soft, raw sound, Jim arching up, pushing him.

His baby was so beautiful like this. He pressed their mouths together, taking a hard kiss. Jim kissed him deep, hands sliding over his shoulders, holding on.

He broke off the kiss immediately. "Baby. I said keep them over your head."

"I. Sorry. Sorry. I just. I..." Jim looked stunned, dazed.

"You forgot. It's okay, we all forget. But if you forget again, I'll have you go get the cuffs." He pushed Jim's arms back up and began kissing Jim's neck.

"I like the cuffs. I like the pressure, the weight..."

He bit at Jim's skin and then backed off. "Then go get them, baby."

"I can't. I'll jack off. I'm sorry, Marcus. You'll have to wait a minute."

"Master. I'm sorry, Master," he corrected.

"M...master. I'm sorry. Please."

"Better." He bit at Jim's lower lip, tugging it, teeth working the soft skin. "Thank you for telling me. We'll have to find something else."

He grabbed Jim's shirt from where it had been discarded on the ground and wound it around his baby's wrists. Jim started panting, eyes rolling back, the smell of need strong. He reached down and fondled the swollen, trapped balls, groaning at the heat he found there.

"Oh, fuck. So good." He'd never heard Jim curse so viciously.

He took one of Jim's nipple rings into his mouth, tugging hard, his fingers moving beyond Jim's balls, rubbing the hot, smooth flesh behind them.

"Please..." He loved how Jim pulled at the bonds, tried to get more and more sensation.

"This what you're begging for, baby?" He nudged the plug, fingers pushing it deeper.

"Yes. Fuck me. I need..."

He tugged the plug partway out and slammed it back in, letting Jim have it.

"Master! More. Please. More..." Jim twisted, one leg propped on the back of the sofa.

He got a good hold of the base and started fucking Jim with hard, sure pushes. His cock gave a little jerk, but he was spent. He found the bigger plug with his free hand, switching suddenly, Jim's cry ringing out. He watched Jim, utterly fascinated by the way his baby moved and the noises Jim made.

"Master. Master, please..."

"You want to come, don't you, baby?" He plugged Jim faster, really giving it to his baby with the big plug.

"Yes. Yes." He could see the dull flush on Jim's stomach, knew the ring wasn't going to hold his baby much longer.

"All right, baby." He opened the ring with one hand, slamming the dildo in with his other. "You can come."

Heat poured over Jim's belly, his baby screaming himself hoarse and ending, quiet and still on the sofa.

He seated the plug in properly and then petted Jim's cock and balls, stroking the soft skin gently. Jim moaned, the sound soft, sated.

"Mmm... my beautiful baby." He nuzzled and licked at Jim's neck.

Jim tried to reach for him, arms caught in the shirt.

He chuckled. "You're bound, baby." He slid his fingers in the come on Jim's belly, rubbing it in.

"I forgot." Jim sighed, shifting after his touch.

"I know." Marcus pressed a kiss to Jim's mouth, then to his chin, and then his breastbone.

Jim settled, spread and open for him, relaxed and his.

Now they could have the day they'd both been hoping for.

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Jim was going crazy.

Absolutely nuts.

His hands were bound, his legs were bound. He couldn't move.

And Marcus looked pleased as fuck.

At least he was warm in Marcus' arms, strong hands moving on him. Although that made him more crazy.

"I need to get up and walk."

"You can't possibly walk with those cuffs on your ankles, baby."

"I know." They were thick, heavy, binding him firmly.

"Then that's settled." Marcus' grin got wider and those hands toyed with the ring in his cock.

"Marcus!" The chains from the cuffs rattled as he jerked.

"Mmm... so sexy." Even Marcus' gaze was like a touch.

"I can't just lie here." The swat was sharp, firm and immediate. Right. Right. No 'can't'.

"You're not just lying there, you're being touched, you're talking." Marcus' eyes twinkled. "Breathing."

He rolled his eyes. "I'm not touching. I'm not moving. I'm not typing."

"You *are* breathing." Marcus chuckled, fingers tweaking his right nipple ring.

He arched, fighting the bonds, pulling hard.

"You are *so* moving." God, Marcus was in a *good* mood.

"You're driving me crazy."

"Oh, good -- it's working." A slap landed on his ass.

"Marcus!" Another slap landed and he arched. "Master. Master."

"Very good, baby. You make me so proud." That hand slid over his ass, patting, stroking.

"Why?" It was an honest question, one he needed to know the answer to.

Marcus didn't even hesitate. "Because no matter how hard it is, you do it. Because you want so much and you're reaching for what you want, not letting it out of your grasp."

"I don't feel brave."

"No? How do you feel, then?" The crazy-making touches gentled, became more soothing.

"I feel a little nervous. My drugs are wearing off. My heart is pounding."

"Nervous? Because of the drugs wearing off? We've been here before, baby."



"I know. I know. I shouldn't have taken the pills, but sometimes I still need them." Sometimes he needed to find a quiet space inside him.

"There will come a time when you don't need them at all, baby."

"I just need quiet inside sometimes, you know?"

"Don't we find that quiet together sometimes? When nothing else exists but my hand, or the lash..."

"Or when you had me on our last day like this. Things came out of my soul."

Marcus nodded. "That's right, baby. You just need to trust enough to let go."

"It's not trusting you. I just... there are things inside me I don't want to say."

"Those are probably the things that you need most to get off your chest."

He shrugged, eyes closing. Maybe.

"Tell me one." The words were simple, but in that tone that cut straight to him.

"I. I. I don't... I'm not..." Oh, God. He didn't know what to say.

"Just let it go, baby. I know you can. Look into my eyes. Do it."

Jim forced his eyes open, forced himself to look. "I met Chris at a psychiatric hospital my parents put me in." Cool Water Inn. A dingy, dark hole of a place where they took teens that needed cleansing. Needed convincing that they weren't gay.

Marcus blinked and he could see the flash of anger in Marcus, quickly hidden. "Your parents put you in a psychiatric hospital? Why?"

"It doesn't matter." Because he was sick. Filthy. Foul.

"I think it does, baby."

"They. I. I don't want to talk about it."

"It was important enough that you brought it up in the first place, baby. I think you should talk about it." Marcus' hands moved over him. "You're safe here. They can't hurt you."

"They can. He can." He shook, pushing toward Marcus. "He's a minister. People believe in him, in the things he says, even when he lies." He wanted the cuffs off. He wanted to run. He couldn't run.

Marcus held him close. "Your father? I won't let him near you, baby."

"I know. I need the cuffs off. I need to go for a walk." His heart was slamming in his chest.

Marcus brought their foreheads together. "You need to face this, Jim. Just the once. I'm right here with you. I've got you."

"Take the cuffs off, please?" He moved harder, but Marcus' arms were like iron bands.

"No, baby. Please trust me. This is the way to do this. You're safe here. So safe."

"What do you want?" He couldn't breathe. He couldn't.

"I want you to tell me what happened. Why your parents sent you there. Why your ex was there. What happened after you met. I want it all, baby. And you need to tell me."

"It was called Cool Water, like the fucking cologne. I hate the smell of that shit. I hate it. They caught me... They caught me in the summer before my senior year. I was gone by the morning." He could remember the look on his father's face, the way the Bible came down on his hand, his shoulder, his face, the blood spattering over the cover.

"They caught you with another man, you mean. This place was a..." Marcus pursed his lips, obviously looking for the right words.

"Hospital. There were doctors. Pills. Treatment. We were there for four months." Chris had been so pretty, so fine. So much stronger than he was.

"So you were in a hospital that was supposed to 'fix' you and you met your lover there? Did you fake being straight in order to get out?"

"He was... he was my mentor. He was cured, they said. He was supposed to make sure I didn't fall when I was released."

"I have to admit, baby, the whole idea of forcing people into hospitals to 'cure' them of being gay makes me very, very angry."

"I know. It makes me sick, the things they did." He'd left the program forty pounds lighter than he'd entered it, bald and bruised and unable to sleep.

"I'm so sorry you had to go through that. I'm glad you had someone there who cared about you, though. Even if he didn't stay true later." Those big hands soothed and comforted, warming his skin as they spoke.

"He wanted out. When the media came... all the people came out of the woodwork."

"I can't imagine, baby. It must have been horrible. Especially if no one was there in your corner."

"I was fine. I coped. It wasn't his fault. He asked me not to get into academia." He'd begged for Jim to stay in the country. To stay quiet. Hidden.

"But you needed to use your brain." Marcus held him tight and kissed him softly. "It's not fair what happened to you, baby."

"It was punishment." His lips snapped shut.

"Punishment for what exactly?"

He shook his head. Marcus wouldn't understand.

"Baby..." He knew that tone of voice; Marcus was not going to let it drop.

He closed his eyes, squeezed them closed. No.

"I'm hoping you don't mean for being gay, Jim."

"I'm not answering. You can't make me. I don't want to talk about this."

"I know you don't want to talk about it, but you need to tell me what you could have possibly done to deserve what happened to you as punishment."

"I can't." He started fighting the bonds, panicking.

Marcus' held him tight, eyes staring right into his own.

"Right here, baby. Look at me. I love you. I'm not going to judge you."

"He told me, God would make me pay. I didn't believe him." He didn't want to believe it now.

"Your father." Marcus growled and shook his head. "That wasn't God's work, baby."

"You can't know that. I can't know that. No one can. They called me filthy. I don't want to talk about this!"

"Baby, I didn't know just how much your family compounded what happened to you. I think it was important you told me. And I refuse to believe you were punished for being gay. I don't think you're filthy, I don't think it's wrong."

"I'm weak. I couldn't stop falling in love with Chris. I couldn't stop falling in love with you." Stop needing what they did together.

"You've got it wrong, baby. You were strong enough to follow your heart, even though your family was telling you how wrong it was."

"You don't *know* that!" Was he screaming?

"I don't know *what*?"

"I DON'T KNOW! YOU DON'T KNOW I'M STRONG!" He was screaming. He couldn't stop.

"I do so know you're strong!" Marcus wasn't shouting, but he was speaking loudly. "It takes someone very strong to submit."

He screamed, short, sharp bursts, over and over, until his throat hurt. Marcus just held him, fingers on his skin. Finally he couldn't scream anymore, so he stopped, shaking, sweating.

"Shh, shh, baby." Soft kisses pressed across his face.

"Help me."

"You're mine, baby. I will always help you."

Tears leaked from his eyes, his heart pounding in his chest. Marcus kissed them away, tongue sliding on his skin.

"Love." He needed to get out. To move. To... Marcus' fingers kept moving, loving on him.

His lower lip was sucked in, Marcus' teeth scraping lightly. The touch was echoed by Marcus' fingers on his ass, nails lightly brushing his skin..

Jim blinked up, staring. "I'm sorry."

"Sh, baby. Just let me love you."

He nodded, swallowing hard, relaxing into the mattress. Marcus adored him with mouth, lips and tongue, and hands, fingertips and pads. He caught his breath, his tension just fading away.

"That's it, baby. Love you. Love my beautiful baby."

"Y...yours." He let the cuffs hold him, let Marcus hold him.

"Yes. Mine." Marcus' tongue circled his navel and then dipped in.

He chuckled a little, floating. He could feel Marcus' smile against his skin. Then Marcus nipped his way over to one hip, and then the other.

"I don't know what to do now."

"Lie there and let me love on you." Marcus' teeth scraped down to his thigh.

"I didn't mean to scream at you." He couldn't spread his legs.

"You needed to scream." His balls were nuzzled.

"I did. I'm so angry." He blinked at himself, at his words.

"You are." Marcus licked from the base of his cock to the tip. "Who are you angry at, baby?"

"Me. I'm angry at me."

"Why?"

"Because I can't stop fucking up. Because I need you to touch me and I need this..."

"You're angry at yourself because of what we do together?"

"No. I'm angry because they hurt me and hurt me and I didn't fight them."

"It's hard to fight your parents, to fight everyone."

"Yes. And I don't fight you like I should."

"I'm the only one who cares about you, who gives you what you need, why should you fight me?"



"I... I don't know." He blinked up at Marcus, feeling confused, lost. "I should, shouldn't I? Want to? Shouldn't I be mad that there are rules and spankings and commands, Marcus?"

"Why? Why should you be mad that you're getting the things that you need?"

"I... I'm not. I'm not. I need you."

"I'm glad you know that. And you're not the only one. I need you, too. We're in this together, baby."

"I know. I just... It's hard, to figure out what I need to do." His brain and his heart told him different things, so many times.

"I think you know what to do, baby. Your body knows exactly what you need. It's up to you to trust in yourself and me." Marcus gave him a kiss. "And baby? We're not hurting anyone and we're making ourselves happy -- there's nothing wrong with that. At all."

"There are people who think we're evil." He felt like he could breathe deep, for the first time in days.

"There are. But they can go fuck themselves. You can't live your life trying to make other people happy."

"Just trying to make you happy, hmm?" He dared the tease, humming low in his throat.

"Mmm... If that makes you happy, it works for me."

"I just want..." He arched, stretched in his bonds. "I want you to push me. I want to feel you. I want to be yours and to write my books and know that you're going to help me." The words just poured out of him, his voice rusty.

"All those things are yours, baby. All of them."

"Good." He gasped a little, worn out emotionally. "I feel like I've run a mile."

"Emotions are hard work, but you've done a wonderful job. I'm so proud of you." Those big hands were moving on him again, sliding over his skin, massaging.

Jim moved into the touches, humming and settled, taking deep breaths that made him lightheaded.

"We did a lot of good work today, baby. Let's get that last plug in and then we can have a little fun."

"Fun." He nodded, turned over and curled his knees under him so that Marcus could reach his ass.

He could use a little fun.

### *Chapter Thirty Seven*

Marcus admired Jim.

Jim was laid out on the bed, spread eagle, both wrists and ankles tied to the bedposts, cock hard and bound, leaking

on the ripped abs. There was a blush to Jim's skin, arousal showing in the blood coming to the surface.

Marcus took the little leather kit from behind his back and opened it, turning it so Jim could see the long, silver rods of varying thicknesses.

"Master." The chains rattled, Jim's breath coming faster.

"Yeah, baby. We're just going to use one or two today. The little ones." They'd work up to the largest one in this set, and then he'd show Jim the set with ten sounds instead of five.

"T...two?" Jim's cock jerked violently, his baby shuddering.

"Two." He took the first one out, the silver catching the light.

"I... I need. I don't know."

"That's all right, baby. *I* know what you need." Smiling, he sat at Jim's hip and rubbed the leather cock ring that bound his baby's cock and balls. "We'll take this off after we've lubed up your slit."

Jim's answer was a whimper, a little gasp, cock leaking for him.

"Of course I may not need that much lube, your cock certainly knows what it wants." He played with the slit, fingers pushing, stretching it a little.

"Master." He loved that sound, that word from Jim's lips.

He dragged the battered tube of lube out from the drawer. It should be enough. Holding Jim's gaze, he pushed a large glob of the slick onto his fingers. Jim was pulling and tugging at the cuffs, fighting the bonds, eyes fastened to his fingers. He turned his attention to Jim's cock, watching as he pushed the glob of lube into the little hole.

"I. Is it going to hurt? That stings."

"It might hurt a little. But it will be worth it." He pushed more lube into the little hole.

"I don't. I don't want to have metal in my cock."

"Yes, you do. You can't wait for me to put it in, to see what it feels like."

"No." Jim was panting, skin damp. "I don't want to know."

"You will, though." He picked up the sound in one hand and held Jim's cock with the other, squeezing it to make the slit go round.

"Please. Please don't. I'm scared." Jim squeezed his eyes closed, body going stiff and still.

"Shh, shh, baby. This is just a little one. All you need to do take a deep breath and let it out when I tell you to."

Jim nodded, hands twisting in the cuffs.

"Okay, breathe in." As Jim did, he slid the tip of the sound into Jim's cock.

"Master..." Jim gasped, inhaling sharply.

He let the sound drop the rest of the way, gravity pulling it right in, the little ball at the top stopping it.

Jim cried out. "Marcus! Master! It's in me! Get it out!"

"Oh, not yet." He undid the cock ring, slowly sliding the leather away.

"Please. Please, Master..." Jim relaxed, even as he begged, the sting easing.

He pulled the sound partway out, moving slowly, and then let it drop back in again. Jim thrashed, fighting him, fighting the cuffs.

He took Jim's balls in his free hand, rolling and cupping them. "Just let it happen, baby."

"Help me. Help me, master, please." Of course, even as Jim spoke, he relaxed a little.

"I am helping you, baby." He turned the little ball on top of the sound in a circle.

"H...how. How is this helping?"

"I'm helping you find pleasure, baby, helping you focus." He lifted the sound an inch or so and then dropped it in again. "Focus right here."

"Focus." Jim moved toward his touch, stretching out.

"Mmm... yes. Good boy." Jim made him so proud.  
Aroused him, too.

That flat belly tensed, went hard. Humming, he bent forward and teased the steel ball with his tongue.

"Please. Please, don't."

"Don't what, baby? Do this?" He teased it again. "Or this?" This time he took the Prince Albert ring between his teeth and tugged.

"Please." Jim tried to sit up. "I don't want to safeword. I don't want to, but I need you to slow down. Please."

"Okay, baby. Shh. I hear you. I do." He slowly kissed his way up along Jim's chest, bypassing the ringed nipples in favor of nuzzling into Jim's neck.

"Thank you." Jim moaned softly, throat working. "Oh. Oh, thank you, sir. I needed to breathe."

"Breathing is good." He licked a patch of skin on Jim's neck, deciding to put a mark there. "And I'm very proud that you said something. Always ask for what you need, baby."

A soft hum came in answer, Jim breathing with him.

He began to suck up a mark, right there on Jim's neck where anyone would be able to see it. It meant something that Jim never tensed, only tilted that chin to allow him

more access. Moaning, he worked the skin harder, his hips undulating with each suck, rubbing against Jim. Jim's moans came in a steady rhythm, groaning for him.

"Love you, baby," he murmured against Jim's skin, breathing his baby in.

"Yeah. Yes. I know. So good."

"Yeah, it is." He slid his hand down and gently turned the sound inside Jim's body.

This time Jim groaned, let the sensations flood him instead of panicking.

"That's it, baby." He kept licking and nibbling, tugging the sound out a half inch or so and letting it drop back down. He kept encouraging Jim's motions, encouraging his baby to feel. Snagging the Prince Albert between his fingers, he tugged and twisted it.

"Master. I can *hear* that."

"All your senses are engaged. Isn't it wonderful?"

Jim shivered. "It's unnerving, a little."

"Nothing wrong with unnerving, baby." He slid his hand down to roll Jim's balls and then play with the guiche piercing.

"Mmm." Jim rippled, humming happily.

He reached back farther, nudging the big plug stretching Jim's ass. Jim went tight, squeezing hard, ass working the plug. He quickly went back to playing with the sound, letting Jim have the sensations together. He watched as Jim flew, eyes closed, lips parted, looking almost unbearably happy.

Groaning, he slid partway down Jim's body, lips closing over the right nipple and sucking, tongue flicking the little gold ring up and down.

"I. I'm going to come, Master..."

"No, I don't think so." Not as long as the sound was inside his baby.

"I will. God. I can't *not*."

"You can come if you can, baby."

"I have to..." Jim's belly rippled, body trying desperately to climax. His baby turned bright red, orgasm caught inside, unable to ejaculate.

"When I take the sound out you can. It'll be amazing, baby."

"Love you." Jim slumped, panting, eyes rolling a bit.

"Mmm... good, baby. Good." He teased that sweet cock some more. "You ready, baby?"

"Mmm." Jim's moan was sweet as hell.



He looked in Jim's eyes as he grabbed the little ball on top and tugged the sound out of Jim's cock. A tiny bit of semen poured from Jim, most of it still caught inside from his baby coming with the sound in.

"I'm going to fuck you now."

"Please. Please, Master. I need you." Sweet baby.

"Yes." He slid his hand down between Jim's legs, tugging at the base of the plug.

Jim's body fought him, holding onto the plug, squeezing around it.

"Relax for me, baby. Come on, now." He turned and twisted it, and then tugged it again. Jim groaned, took a deep breath, and the plug started moving. "That's it, baby. Let it go and then I'll have you."

"Yes, love. Yes..." Another deep breath and the plug came free.

He could see Jim's hole clench tight, knew his baby had to feel empty, was wanting to be filled.

"Master."

He smiled, his cheeks stretching. "Yours, baby. All yours." He settled between Jim's legs, cock nudging that hot little hole.

"Mine. I need you. Please."

"I know, baby. I know." He pressed in, Jim's body opening right up for him, almost sucking him in. Jim fought to move, to fuck himself. "I've got you, baby." He settled his hips up against Jim's ass, held it for a moment or two and then began to move. Dragging his cock all the way out, he waited for a heartbeat and then plunged it back in.

"I. Please." Jim tossed his head, throat working, cock filling again.

"Good boy." He moved harder, faster, giving Jim everything his baby wanted and more.

When Jim stopped fighting and let him set the pace, he shifted until he found the perfect spot, Jim gasping out his name.

"Yes, baby. Mine. Jim." He kept nailing Jim's gland, sending Jim soaring.

Jim's throat worked, head tossing, entire body moving for him.

"Give it to me, baby. Give me everything."

"Ev...everything." Jim jerked, eyes rolling furiously.

"Everything. All of you. All." Each word came with a thrust.

Heat sprayed from Jim, the sharp, short scream ringing out.

"Baby!" Jim's body squeezed him tight and he groaned, hips jerking as he came deep inside.

"Master."

"Yes. I'm so proud of you, Jim. You had a good day." He pressed kisses over his baby's face.

"Mmm." Jim smiled, following his kisses, the look blissful.

He stretched over Jim, reaching to undo one wrist and then the other. Jim's hands wrapped around him, holding him tight.

"Mmm... love you, baby. So much."

Jim's murmur was something -- an agreement, he thought.

He slid from his baby's body and reached down to undo the leg cuffs before settling their bodies back together.

"Sleep."

Jim's nod was wrapped up in a snore, Jim already sound asleep.

His baby would sleep good and long.

He let himself go, joining Jim in sleep.

## *Chapter Thirty Eight*

Fuck.

Oh, sweet fuck, that was so good.

He moaned, laughing low as Marcus touched him, tugging at the ring in his cock, jacking him off, promising to fuck him, push deep inside him, then fill him with a plug. Keep the man's heat inside him.

Fuck yes.

Jim moaned, hips rolling as he moved faster, the pressure absolutely perfect.

"Baby." Something sharp nipped at his earlobe.

"Mmm. Master..." He jerked, needing to come so bad.

"Wake up, baby." A smack landed on his ass.

His eyes flew open, his hand still moving furiously on his cock. "Huh? Oh. Oh, man. I was dreaming..."

"Yes, baby. And you aren't anymore, so take your hands off your prick before I tie them both behind your back for the day."

"I was dreaming about you." His thumb nudged the ring as he turned to face Marcus. "Want you."

"And you can have me, but you're not supposed to touch without my permission, baby." Marcus' hand found his

and tugged it away from his body, their fingers twining together as their lips met, the kiss warm.

He moaned into the kiss, his hips still moving, rocking.

"Slow down, baby. Spanking first. I want you to tell me about the dream while I do it to you."

"Marcus. Marcus, I'm aching for you."

"Good. Slow down. Enjoy it. Focus on it. Live it."

He groaned, trying to make his body slow. "What time is it?"

"Nearly eight a.m." Marcus shifted him so he was pressed up against Marcus' body, and one hand rubbed his ass, full of promise.

"Slept late..." He moaned, caught right there.

"I expected it. Yesterday was very intense."

He nodded, "I can breathe now, though."

"Mmm... good. Breathing is good." Marcus chuckled and then gave him the first swat, hand landing hard on his ass. "Now tell me about the dream."

"It... It was just a dream. You were touching me. Talking to me." Stung. Fuck, that stung so *good*.

"Sounds like a good dream, baby." Two more spanks hit his ass.

"It was. It was good. You were promising..." Another two blows landed and he jerked, cock throbbing.

"What was I promising, baby?"

"To fuck me. To love me. To..." He blushed, gasped as another blow landed. "Plug me. Master. Marcus. Please."

"You want me to do that when we're through here, baby?" Marcus' hand connected again. "You want me to fuck you and then plug you? Keep me inside you?"

"Yeah. Yes, please. Master. Sir. More, please." He rolled his hips, begging for another slap, more heat.

Marcus gave it to him, one smack after another, scattering them across his ass. He rolled, stretching over Marcus' lap, lost in the pure joy and heat and pleasure.

"I will, baby." The sound of Marcus' hand rang through the room over and over. "I'll do that. I'll fuck you until we both come and then I'll plug you."

"Yes. Thank you. Thank you." He was flying, soaring.

"It will be my pleasure, baby." Marcus' hits came faster, harder, the heat between that hand and his ass incredible.

"Need to come. Master. Master, please. Help me..."

"You wait until I give you permission to come, hmm? Wait until my word."

"Master..." He sobbed, the pleasure and wonder that much more, that much better. "Yes, sir. Thank you."

Marcus' hand kept moving and he could feel his Master's whole body in each hit, could feel the love.

He couldn't catch his breath, the world spinning, his entire body on fire.

"Can you feel it, baby?"

He nodded, little screams filling the air.

"Then come for me, baby. Show me."

He gasped, rubbing harder, trying desperately to orgasm. On the next slap, the tips of Marcus' fingers just barely caught the back of his balls. He shot so hard his teeth rattled, the room going gray for a moment.

It was the small slaps on his ass that brought him back to complete consciousness, Marcus patting and rubbing his ass, making it burn.

"Mphm." That was a thank you.

Laughing, Marcus pulled him up into a kiss, tongue sliding into his mouth and filling him with Marcus' taste. He tried to kiss back, just melting. One of Marcus' fingers pushed into his body, spreading him, stretching him. He relaxed, letting Marcus in, eager and happy and sated. One finger quickly became two, Marcus spreading him wider, getting him ready for that thick cock. Jim murmured, moving slowly, trying hard to focus.

"You want it on your hands and knees, baby? Or do you want it on your back?"

"Hands and knees. Hard and deep, sir. Please."

"Mmm... good, baby." Marcus slapped his ass again, making it burn.

He whimpered, hips starting to rock again. Marcus took another kiss, commanding his mouth before slapping his ass and rolling him over. Those large hands slid on his legs, encouraged him to get onto his hands and knees. One of them was so hot it felt like fire against his skin.

"Yours." He spread, hips tilting. "Every inch of me."

"That's right, baby. Every single inch." Two fingers pushed into him, jabbing in quickly, this time wet with lube.

"Yes!" He pushed back, riding the touch, fucking himself, cock filling again.

"So beautiful, baby." A third finger pushed into him with the first two, Marcus stretching them, and then plunging them in deep, nailing his gland.

"Please." He crawled up the headboard, heart pounding, throat working.

Marcus' fingers slid away. Grabbing his hips in a hard hold, Marcus pulled his ass back, cock driving into him.



They found a rhythm, their bodies slapping together, heat flooding his skin.

Each slap made his ass burn, Marcus' fingers digging into his hips. "Baby!"

"Yes. Yes, Master. Fuck."

"Gonna fuck you through the wall, baby." Marcus moved faster, harder, slamming into him.

"Promise. I need you. Need you. More than anything. Harder!"

"I promise. Promise." One of Marcus' hands slid up to grab his shoulder, tugging his whole body back onto the next thrust.

"Fuck. Fuck. Fuck." He started shaking, the action out of his control, so huge. Then Marcus' hand slid around to grab his prick and it all got even bigger. "Help me. Master. Marcus. Help me. So much." He started panicking, gasping for breath.

The hand on his shoulder slid down and grabbed at his right nipple ring, twisting it hard. Jim screamed, simply threw back his head and let everything inside him fly. He had never felt so free.

Marcus kept thrusting through his orgasm, keeping him up there at that peak. Things went white hot and he forgot to think, forgot everything but his lover's heat. He heard Marcus' roar, felt the long, hot pulses inside him.

He slumped, moaning as Marcus caught him, held him. Soft kisses pressed across his shoulders and then Marcus leaned, hand sliding beneath his pillow to tug out a large plug. He let Marcus push him forward, spreading easily. That hot, large cock slid out of him, Marcus pushing the plug in just like that, trapping Marcus' come inside him.

Whimpering softly, Jim just soared. Lost. Found. Something. Marcus gathered him up against the solid body, lips moving over his face.

"Master." What else could he say?

"Yeah, baby. Mine." Marcus sounded like he felt, blissful, floating.

"Yes." He forced his eyes open. "Good?"

"Mmmhmm..." Marcus chuckled. "Very."

"Good." Sleep tugged at him again, dragging him down.

He thought the words "love you" followed him into sleep, but he didn't need to hear them to know it.

### *Chapter Thirty Nine*

Marcus waited until it was one o'clock on the dot before going to Jim's office and knocking on the door.

He smiled in as Jim looked up. "Hey, baby. How did work go today?"

"Good. Good. It's not supper already, is it?"

"You don't work until supper anymore, remember, baby?" One p.m. And then Jim worked on his novel or they worked on things together. "I thought we could go out for lunch after we get a work out." He waited for Jim to argue with him.

"I..." Jim shook his head, swallowing a little. "I'm not going back to the gym."

"You don't have to go back alone, but I want to go, and I want you to come with me." He knew how much Jim loved going to the damn gym. His baby loved the work out, loved the burn and building muscles. He knew that Jim loved to watch him, too, watch his muscles bulge. It was sexy as hell, the way Jim focused. And they were going to get that back for his baby, damn it.

"I don't think I'm ready, Marcus." The laptop was turned off, Jim's fingers sliding into his outstretched hand.

He squeezed gently. "I think you are, baby." Because if they waited until Jim felt ready, it would never happen.

"Maybe next week." They started walking, heading to the front door where he already had a gym bag packed for them, a tank top waiting for Jim, clothes for the Hammer after.

"No, today works for me."

"I... It's raining." Jim started slowing down.

"You're right, it is. Good thing we're driving there." He grabbed the gym bag and his keys, before opening the front door.

"I..."

He just grabbed Jim's arm and pulled, knowing that Jim would follow. "We'll go to the Hammer after. I think today is steak day."

"Marcus..." The rain was pouring down, flattening Jim's hair down against his scalp.

"Come on, baby! Run!" He took off toward the car in the driveway, bringing Jim inexorably with him.

Opening the passenger door, he gave Jim an encouraging push toward the seat and ran around to let himself in on the driver's side. He knew his baby. He knew that Jim would work on autopilot until that brilliant brain caught up.

He turned on the music as he started the car and kept up a soft patter of words. It wasn't what he said that was important, but that he kept talking. Jim chewed on his bottom lip, fretting, worrying, stressing it. Marcus reached over and slid his hand along Jim's thigh, squeezing gently.

"I don't want to see them." Jim wasn't saying he didn't want to work out, though.

"You just point them out to me if you do, baby." He'd have a few choice words for the owner.

"I can fight my own battles..." Jim paled a bit, shivering.  
"I don't want to go in."

"I never said you couldn't. I just want to see what the bullies look like." He squeezed Jim's leg as he pulled into the parking lot behind the gym. Stopping the car, he turned to look at his lover. "We're going to go in there and do something you love, baby."

"I might not love it anymore. I might not be able to. What if it's ruined? What if it's wrong?"

"It's not wrong and we won't let it be ruined. Besides, you'll never know unless we go in and find out, hmm?"  
He didn't let Jim answer, getting out and going around to open the passenger door for his baby.

He didn't allow Jim to argue, didn't flutter or ask, he just lugged Jim inside, the gym still clean and bright and well-equipped.

Cedric waved and smiled, looking honestly pleased to see them. "Jim! Marcus! We've missed you!"

He nodded and waved back, tugging Jim over to say hi.

"Jim. I heard what happened. I'm so sorry, man. Honest. Those assholes have been banned. Me and Andy, we're real committed to the safety of the clients. Honestly. I'm really sorry that you had trouble."

Jim blinked. "You knew?"

"Well, Marcus complained and then two guys overheard them being assholes. Honest, man. I took care of it as *soon* as I figured out who it was."

He slid his hand along Jim's back. "That's good to hear. I told Jim you wouldn't go for that kind of thing here."

"No. No, Marcus. You know me. I don't put up with meanness. I hate that." Cedric sounded so fucking earnest.

He reached out and shook Cedric's hand. "You're a good man. And I'm happy to hear there won't be anymore harassment at those asshole's hands."

"No. No, and Jim, man. Please, if someone harasses you, please tell us. We've got your back."

"Thank you. I'm sorry. I." Jim was blushing, pulling back.

His baby was going to have to learn to trust in people, to believe that he *did* have friends. Sure, Jim could take care of himself, but that didn't mean he had to. Marcus gave Cedric another smile and then put his arm around Jim's waist and led Jim off to the change rooms.

Jim went to their lockers, fingers working the lock.

He watched for a moment and then took Jim's hands and turned his baby. "How are you feeling, baby?"

"Embarrassed."

He rubbed Jim's hands. "Why?"

"Because. Because I freaked out. Because I didn't handle things appropriately. Because I'm an idiot."

"You're not an idiot, baby. With what happened to you at the hands of your parents and then that girl, your reaction and expectations were normal. You've told me that you don't have friends, but you do. More than you know. You need to learn to trust them to have your back. Because they do. I do." He held Jim's eyes. "A lot of people care about you, Jim."

"I... I don't know what to say to that."

"You don't need to say anything." He dropped Jim's hands and grinned. "Come on, baby. Let's go get all sweaty and hot."

Jim pinked, head dipping. "Okay. Let me change."

"Sure." He tugged his sweatshirt off, leaving him in shorts and a T-shirt, and all he had to do was change into his gym shoes. And admire Jim.

Jim shimmied out of his jeans, tugged on a muscle shirt and his shorts, ink obvious, bleeding over the broad shoulders. God, that was sexy. Jim was sexy. He made a little sound, let it out so Jim could hear it.

Jim stopped, looked over at him. "Mast... Marcus?"

"You turn me on, Jim. So sexy." He ran his eyes over Jim's body, made sure Jim knew he was looking.

Not only that, but Jim had almost called him Master. In public. It made him so proud.

He held out his hand. "Come on. Time to go do it."

"Yeah. Yeah, okay. Where do you want to start?"

"Warm ups, and then the weights today."

They made their way out to the gym, the place about a quarter full.

Different people recognized them, waving. Jim smiled and got to work, warming up quickly. Marcus went through his own warm-up routine, keeping a half an eye on Jim, not so much to make sure his baby was okay as to admire the strong body. He could tell Jim was eager, excited, ready to use his body.

They started out with arm curls, working in machines side by side. It felt good, working the muscles, working up a sweat. Jim looked happy, muscles bulging, the weights moving rhythmically. They moved from one machine to the next, taking their time and getting an excellent work out.

He could hear Jim's stomach rumbling, could see his baby wearing down. He stretched after the last machine and smiled over at his baby. "I think that's good for today, don't you?"

"You don't want to hit the track?"

"We'll come earlier next time, do more."



"Kay." Jim looked winded, hungry.

He led the way to the locker rooms, eager now to get Jim over to the Hammer so they could eat.

"That was good." Jim stripped down and stepped into the showers.

"It was." Marcus got naked and followed Jim in, eyes drawn to that amazing body, the rings glinting on his body, Jim's tattoos alive on his back -- they'd added several over the last few months, Killian making his baby a work of art.

Jim washed quickly, hands sliding over that amazing skin. He washed as well, but more slowly, the touch of his hands on his own skin sensual when coupled with the visual.

"I need a haircut."

No. Maybe a shave. Oh. Oh, he'd missed out on waxing his baby. "I'm not ready to lose those long curls yet, baby. You'll have to let it keep growing."

"I have to?" There was a hint of challenge there, just a hint.

He raised an eyebrow. "Yes, baby. Have to."

"There's a hair rule, too?"

He chuckled, his fingers sliding through it. "Yes, baby. It gets cut when I say."

Jim arched into the touch, just a little. "Are you sure?"

"Absolutely." He moved closer, letting Jim feel the heat of his cock as his baby made it fill. "I want to be able to grab hold of it when you're sucking me."

"Oh..." Jim groaned, eyes going heavy-lidded. "We're in the gym."

"I know, baby. I just wanted to make sure you understood the significance of this particular rule." It was a damn good thing it was the Hammer they were having lunch at.

"I understand." Look at his baby glow.

"Good." He gave Jim's hair a bit of a tug and then let go, backing away before he threw good sense to the wind. Jim wasn't quite ready to get interrupted in a public place yet.

Jim turned his spray to cold, shrinking that filling cock, careful not to look at him before heading out. He was less concerned with his own hard on. He didn't care who knew how much Jim turned him on. It wasn't like the Hammer was very far, anyway, just next door.

They waved to Cedric as they went out, leaving the car in the gym parking lot. "I don't know about you, baby, but I've worked up quite the appetite."

"I could eat, absolutely." Jim had pulled his hair back, the tail long enough to lie flat now.

"Good, good." He slipped his membership card across the reader -- it was too early for the bouncers to be working -- and the door opened for them, letting them into the cool, quiet of the club at midday.

There were a few couples scattered about, Xavier waving from the bar. "Marcus."

"Xavier. Can we sit anywhere?" He peered at the occupied tables to see if there was anyone they knew there.

"Absolutely. Louis and Renny are here in the back. They're celebrating. They bought a house."

"Oh, good for them. Send them a bottle of champagne and put it on my tab."

"Will do. Specials today are chicken marsala, baked ziti, and meatloaf with mashed potatoes."

"We'll keep that in mind as we look at the steak on the menu, thank you." He gave Xavier a wink and led Jim to a free table.

Jim sat in the back, leaning back a bit, looking about the club. Warm and safe -- Marcus thought they needed to start coming out a few times a month, expose Jim more to other people, other experiences. He thought his baby was ready for that now, for broadening their horizons in little steps.

"I think you'd enjoy the shows that are put on in the evenings." It would do Jim a lot of good to see how into

the lifestyle other people were. Jim hadn't been paying any attention to the one that they had attended. "They're very sexy, intense. Some of them are just plain fun."

"Do they get paid?" Always so curious, his baby.

"Yes, there's a small stipend, a free meal, but the main incentive is to share themselves, their joys and kinks."

"I don't think I'd want to do that."

"It's not for everyone." Of course there was no harm in building toward something like that...

"I don't like when people watch me. It scares me." Jim quieted as the server came up, asked for their drink order.

"We'll start with water, please. And we'll both have the New York Strip Steak with salads and rice." He ordered for them both, hand sliding on Jim's thigh.

"You know that's very strange, don't you?"

"What is?"

"Ordering for me. What if I wanted a beer?" Jim was relaxed, smiling, playing with him.

"You don't need a beer, baby." He smiled back, softening the words. "Besides, here it would be strange if you ordered for yourself."

Jim chuckled softly, nodded carefully. "It's almost like no one here sees anyone but you. It's nice."

"Oh, baby, they see you -- but they know you're mine."  
He squeezed Jim's leg, his hand lingering near the top of his baby's thigh.

Jim scooted closer. "Are you looking forward to our vacation at the end of the month? I keep dreaming about it."

"I am. And do you? Tell me about the dreams." Jim's mind was such a fascinating place. Of course everything about the man caught his attention.

Jim went dark suddenly, eyes widening for a second.  
"Oh, just the beach, you, me."

He couldn't help but chuckle at Jim's reaction. "And what were we doing on the beach, you and I?"

"Swimming. Relaxing. B...beach things."

"I think I'd like to know specifically what beach things have you blushing and stammering."

"I'm not blushing. Here comes our water and salad."

"You're changing the subject," he pointed out before giving the waiter a smile of thanks.

"Am I?" Jim drank the water, hiding behind the glass.

"Yes, baby. You are." He chuckled, watching Jim put the glass down and trying to look innocent. "I'm not letting it drop. I want to hear what we were doing in your dreams."

"Vacationing." Stubborn baby.

"Were we having sex on the beach?" He could be stubborn, too.

"Sand would get in uncomfortable places." Jim picked at his salad, met his eyes. "We weren't fucking, though. It was... bigger than that."

"Bigger? *Tell* me, baby. *Share*."

"We were just... I mean, they were dreams, you know? I mean, it was you and me and I could hear the water splashing and everything felt good. It wasn't specific. I mean, I didn't dream about dildos or floggers or specific things."

He reached out and stroked Jim's cheek. "It sounds lovely, baby. I hope it lives up to your dreams."

"It will." There wasn't a bit of doubt there.

"Yeah, baby. It will."

He stroked Jim's cheek again. "It will."

Jim nodded, body moving to the piped in music, just swaying a bit. Marcus' prick began to fill, that unconscious grace arousing.

"Is everything all right?"

He smiled at Jim, nodded. "Oh, yes. Very all right." The huskiness of his voice gave away his need.

"Good." Jim scooted a little closer. "Would you like a bite of my tomato? It's very fresh."

"Are you flirting with me, baby?" He waggled his eyebrows and leaned in, opening his mouth like a baby bird.

"Yes, Marcus. I believe I am." The tomato was carefully placed on his tongue.

"Mmm..." He chewed and swallowed, holding Jim's gaze. "Good. Your tomato is good."

"I told you it was." Jim was still moving, humming softly.

"Yeah. But it was even better than you know because you fed it to me."

Jim beamed. "Flatterer."

"Truth, baby. Pure and simple truth." He leaned in and pressed his lips to Jim's, moaning at the heat.

"Marcus..." Jim looked around, nervous but obviously unwilling to stop.

"You taste even better than the food. I want to eat you right up."

"We can't. We're not home."

"Remember when I told you about how they have rooms in the back." He nibbled at Jim's lower lip and licked the corner of Jim's mouth.

"Private rooms?" Jim moved closer, humming softly. He could see the server with their steaks, hovering, trying not to interrupt.

He waved the boy away without looking away from Jim. "In the back. Just you and me and a bed. Or a chair. Or a desk. Anything we want."

"You. I want you."

"Then come with me." He stood up and held out his hand for Jim. Jim stood, took his hand easily, not even looking around.

The first door he tried was locked, but the next one wasn't and turned out to be a small room with a large bed in it and little else. Marcus locked the door behind them.

"You're sure this is okay?" Jim's hands slid down his arms.

"Absolutely." He reached out and cupped Jim's chin. "I want your mouth, baby."

Jim nodded. "Yes, Marcus. Yes."

He took it with his own mouth first, tongue pushing between Jim's lips, spreading them in a mimicry of what he wanted to do with his cock. Jim opened to him, hungry and eager, lips wrapped around his tongue. His



cock jerked in his pants as if reminding him why they were here.

He broke the kiss, both reluctant and eager, and encouraged Jim down onto his knees. His baby's mouth was hot, open, eager, lips moving over his jeans. Groaning, he pushed his hips forward, that eagerness such a turn on.

He buried his hands in Jim's hair, holding his baby's face tight against his crotch.

"Master." Oh, fuck. Look at that. Look at that man.

"Baby..." Stunning. Just fucking... Jim blew his fucking mind. He undid his zipper one-handed, working it down slowly.

"Need you. Please."

"I'm all yours, baby." His cock pushed out as soon as his zipper was undone; he hadn't put on underwear when they'd changed back into their street clothes at the gym.

"Yes. Mine." That mouth dropped over his cock, lips wrapping tight around his shaft.

He moaned, hips pushing his cock deep, the heat of Jim's mouth like coming home. His baby didn't need patience; Jim could just open up, take him into the root. "God, baby." The words pushed out of him, his hands opening and closing in Jim's hair.

His baby knew everything -- where to touch him, how to taste him. Everything. He watched, Jim on his knees, head bobbing, cheeks hollowed out. His balls drew up, his baby's fingers there to touch and tease them. Jim rolled his balls in their sacs, pushing just enough to ache.

"Baby. Please." He began to thrust, pushing deep into Jim's throat.

Those bright green eyes stared him down. Needing him. Desperate for him.

"All yours," he repeated the words, hips pushing hard as he came, pouring his heat down Jim's throat.

His baby sucked him dry, pulling and pulling until he almost screamed with it.

"So good, baby. So very good." He whispered the words, not trusting his voice yet.

"Yours." That look was desperate, needy, happy. Wanting. Willing.

"Oh, yes, you are." He tugged. "Come up here, baby. Let me take care of you."

"Please. Please, Master. I need."

"I know." He took Jim's mouth as soon as his baby stood, tongue pushing in, taking, giving, loving.

His fingers pushed into Jim's jeans, tugging out the hard, needy cock. Jim crawled up his body, hips rolling. His

baby needed so well. Wrapping his hand around Jim's cock, he worked it, wrist twisting, thumb pressing.

"Fuck." That little ring was slick, burning hot.

"Yeah, give it to me, Jim, let me hear every pleasure, every need."

Jim gasped into his lips, tongue moving as furiously as the lean hips. He gave Jim his strength and his hand and mouth, gave Jim his love as he took all that passion and need from his baby. They started moving faster, Jim crying out, twisting in his arms.

He grabbed hold of the ring suddenly, tugging it hard as he jacked Jim's prick. Heat sprayed over his fingers, Jim's head thrown back, throat working. He leaned in and bit at Jim's throat, teeth working a mark up into the flesh, right where everyone would be able to see it.

"Yours."

"Absolutely."

He held on as their mouths met in another kiss, his baby so fine. Jim's stomach growled, making them both laugh.

He tucked Jim carefully back in, and then took care of himself. "Shall we go sate our other hunger now?"

"Yes. Yes, please. Then I think we should go for a walk. Enjoy the day."

"That sounds like a wonderful idea, baby."

He softly kissed the swollen lips, and then took Jim's hand and led his baby back out into the club.

### *Chapter Forty*

Marcus hung up the phone with a happy sigh. He'd spent nearly two hours talking to a client, but it was going to be a very lucrative relationship and had been well worth the extra time spent one on one with the man. Lucrative and interesting and those two didn't always go together.

It was just past five-thirty, so he closed things up for the day, cleaning and putting away his tools. Then he headed for the kitchen to see if Jim wanted any help with supper. Jim met him in the hallway, heading in his direction.

He smiled and opened his arms to hug his baby. "Hey."

Jim came to him, pushed close for a second, then backed away. "M...master?" Those lips were pursed, eyes serious. "Master, I. I was coming to ask. I." Jim sighed softly. "I need you. Please."

He reached out and touched Jim's cheek. To be called master and told he was needed. Jim must need badly, indeed. "What do you need, Jim?"

"It's been a hard day. I need you, your hand. I need to stop thinking and just be yours."

He beamed at Jim, so proud of his baby he just might burst. "It's yours, Jim. Downstairs? Or upstairs?"

"Down. Downstairs."

Oh, it was that kind of need. He took Jim's face between his hands. "I'm so proud of you, baby."

He went to the kitchen first and grabbed a glass of water with some ice. Then it was a soft kiss and he took Jim's hand and led his baby down the stairs, pondering what tool would give Jim the most sensation. Jim was trembling, quiet, but his baby didn't hesitate, didn't hold back. He could feel Jim's excitement, right under the skin.

"We'll use two instruments today. You can choose one, and I will choose one." He went to the shelves, letting Jim look around.

Jim chose the heavy paddle, just like he knew Jim would. The man craved the ache, the heat, the thudding pain. He picked up the cat 'o nine tails. He'd use this one first, hit Jim with the stinging pains first, and then take his baby to heaven with the paddle.

Jim moaned, but didn't complain. Not really. Those eyes rolled a little.

"Time to strip, baby. I'll do you if you do me."

"Okay. I can do that." Jim reached for him, undoing buttons, hands smoothing over his skin.

He returned the favor, slowly undressing Jim, using the time to get into a quiet headspace. Jim was tense, muscles jumping a bit. Someone had had a bad day. He

kissed Jim softly once they were naked. "All right, baby. Over the bench." He was going to use the cuffs so Jim could struggle and scream as much as needed.

"This is okay, right? I don't have to apologize?"

"Are you kidding? I'm so proud of you for asking for this, Jim." He stroked Jim's cheeks. "So very proud."

Jim nodded, leaned into his touch. "Thank you. I need you, this. Us." Then Jim moved, stretching over the bench gracefully.

"Mmm... look at you. So beautiful." He ran his hand over Jim's ass and back. It didn't take long to cuff Jim's wrists and ankles.

"I don't feel beautiful. I feel caught up, all tight inside."

"Let's change that, hmm?" He picked up the cat and ran it over Jim's back so his baby knew what was coming.

"Please." Jim closed his eyes, tensed, waiting.

"I love you." He let the cat fly, the knots landing hard on Jim's back.

Jim hissed, body tensing, the line of skin going white for a second, before pinking.

"Lovely. Absolutely lovely." He did it again, catching Jim's ass this time.

"Fuck." Jim jerked, groaned, pulling at the cuffs. "Fuck, Marcus."

"That comes later, baby." He hit Jim again, feeling the whip in the muscles of his arm.

"Hurts. Hurts. I couldn't write today." Jim whimpered.

"Why not?" He slowed the speed and lessened the strength of his hits, giving Jim more time in between them.

"It just wasn't working. I'm tired. I want to do something else."

"This is something else, all right." He hit again and again, watching the welts come up all over Jim's smooth skin.

"No. No, I don't want to... I'm tired. So fucking tired, Master."

"Then just relax and let the blows come." He did two more hits with the cat.

"I can't. I don't remember how." Jim arched, hips pumping.

"You will." He put down the cat and picked up the heavy paddle Jim had chosen. "You will."

"Promise?"

"I do, baby. We won't stop until you're good."

Then he began with the paddle, not using his full force yet, just peppering Jim's skin with it. Jim started talking to him -- nothing he needed to listen to, he just needed to hear the need, the frustration.

He kept the paddle hitting in different places, tanning Jim's ass and the top of those thighs the most.

"Stop. Stop. I'm sore. Stop. Please." Jim was beginning to pant, shifting in the bonds.

"You're not ready yet for me to stop." He did the sides of Jim's ass, and then the cheeks again.

"I am..." Jim moaned, leaned forward a bit, beginning to relax for him.

"Soon, baby. Soon." His arm was getting tired, the heavy thuds echoing throughout the room.

"Love you." The tears hit, Jim's body letting them go. The storm passed quickly, leaving Jim moaning, horny, relaxed.

He put down the paddle, running his fingers over the abused flesh. "I love you, baby."

"Master." Jim nodded, ass pushing toward his touch. Marcus smacked it gently, just to hear Jim moan. His baby was flying. "Please."

Bending, he licked a line along Jim's ass, tasting sweat and heat. Oh, someone liked that, Jim moaning and



twisting. He nipped at Jim's other ass cheek and then licked it as well.

"Marcus..." He couldn't help chuckling. He blew on Jim's ass, the flesh a deep, dark red.

"Oh. Oh..." He reached out, grabbed a piece of ice from his glass, stroked it over Jim's ass. The squeal was rewarding. Grinning, he held the ice cube at the top of Jim's ass and let it melt, the drops rushing along Jim's crack.

"Fuck! Fuck, Master! Please! Oh, God!" Oh, this was fun.

He drew the ice cube quickly down along Jim's crack, all the way down until he could rub the ice cube over Jim's balls. Jim's legs pounded, tugging violently at the bonds. The cube was getting small, but he had enough left to slide it up along Jim's erection. If Jim had been on his back, Marcus would have slipped the last tiny bit of ice right into Jim's slit.

"Oh, God. Oh, fuck. More. More." Jim was flying.

He grabbed another piece of ice, holding it in his palm. He wrapped his hand around Jim's cock, slowly jacking Jim. Meanwhile he bent back to his task of licking and biting all over Jim's ass. Jim screamed, the sound amazing, making his cock and balls ache.

"God, baby. You're amazing." He worked the ice cube up along Jim's cock, finally rubbing it across the head.

Heat sprayed from Jim, the cry raw and rough. Jim's cock never flagged, never drooped, stayed hard for him. His own was leaking, but he ignored it a while longer, reaching for the last cube left in his glass.

"Ready, baby?" he asked.

"Yes. Yes, Master. Yours. All of me."

"Good." He took the little piece of ice and pushed it into Jim's ass.

The scream echoed, Jim fucking the air furiously, head tossing, completely lost to the sensation. God, Jim was stunning. Absolutely incredible. Bending, he kissed Jim's ass as he slathered lube over his own prick. He wasn't sure Jim even felt it; his baby was so caught up.

He pushed two finger into Jim's ass, spreading lube. Those muscles squeezed him tight, working his fingers, almost demanding.

"I'm coming, baby."

"Please."

He pulled out his fingers and lined up, pressing into the tight, amazing heat. Jim was on fire, blazing around him, so tight and eager and needy. He grabbed hold of the lean hips and began to thrust. They moved together, Jim fighting the cuffs, trying to help. It was wild and hot and it made him crazy in the best way.

"Please. Please, Master. Harder." He wanted to howl with it, knowing how much Jim wanted him.

His fingers dug into Jim's skin, his hips snapping hard.

"Yes. Yes." It was like a prayer, Jim screaming it out for him.

"Come for me, baby. Let me feel you." He didn't touch Jim's cock. He knew he didn't have to.

He felt Jim's answer all around his cock.

"Yes!" He cried out, hips snapping hard as he came deep inside his baby's body.

When he floated back down, they were both melted, still, panting.

He leaned over Jim's back, arms stretching out, fingers hitting the release on the cuffs. Jim barely moved, only a moan answered him. He needed to put a futon down here. Something with a mattress where they could collapse.

"Beautiful." He ran fingers over whatever skin he could reach.

"Yours."

"That's right, baby. All the way through." He circled his hips to emphasize his point.

"Uh... Uh-huh." He kissed the damp nape of Jim's neck.  
"I'm proud of you. For asking for what you needed."

"I did. Thank you. So much better now." Jim sounded drunk, words slurring.

"Wonderful, baby." He slid out of Jim's body, whimpering at the loss of that perfect heat.

His baby was asleep, slumped over the table, sprawled and well-fucked and red-assed. He hated to wake Jim just to get them up to the couch or bed to sleep, but he was going to have to.

Tomorrow they were going out to buy that futon.

### *Chapter Forty One*

Marcus went to the UPS offices to update his account, drop off a few packages, and pick up more boxes and envelopes. He'd timed things so he was home by five-thirty, which should have been enough time for Jim to finish with writing and have supper well under way.

Jim had missed cooking several evenings in a row and mentioning it had earned him growls and sulking.

At first he'd suspected too much coffee, but try as he might, he couldn't find any evidence that Jim was having any more than the one pot in the morning. It was getting to the point where he was going to have to punish Jim for it. It was odd, though, because he could swear Jim wasn't pushing for punishment. It didn't feel like that. Besides, his baby had gotten so much better at asking for it. Could it have something to do with their coming vacation?

He shook his head. With any luck, he'd walk in and Jim would have the table set, supper ready, and be in a great mood.

He grabbed his boxes and envelopes from the back seat and headed in. The house was dark, still and quiet, except for the hum of the air conditioner. He frowned and checked his watch. Just past five thirty. He double checked the kitchen first, but it was dark and the stove was cold, the table unset.

"Baby?"

There wasn't any typing. No lights. No *sound*.

He headed toward Jim's office regardless of the lack of working noises. "Jim!"

He heard a snuffling, then a crash, then a sharp, "Fuck!"

He opened the door, finding Jim, hair mussed, face creased with a pattern of the keyboard on his cheek, a glass of water broken on the floor.

"Good grief. Don't move, I'll get the mop." Jim usually worked barefooted and Marcus didn't want him to wind up with cut feet.

"Sorry. I fell asleep." He heard pieces of glass clinking into the trashcan as he grabbed the mop.

"I told you not to move!" he called out as he came back down the hall. They'd deal with the physical mess and then they'd deal with whatever had Jim's head in an

uproar. Sleeping in the middle of the day, that was not his baby.

"I'm just grabbing the big pieces. How was your day?"

"It was okay. I've been worrying about you." He swept up the glass and the water with the mop, dumping it out into Jim's little trash can.

"Sorry. Here, I'll get the rest." He noticed there wasn't an 'I'm fine' in there.

"No, I don't mind doing it. Just sit there for a moment." He finished cleaning up. "All right, call for Chinese while I put away the mop and meet me in the living room." He was getting to the bottom of this and that was far more important than Jim getting supper done.

"What do you want? I'm not really hungry..."

"Get our usual, if there are leftovers we can be naughty and have them for breakfast."

"Okay." Jim wandered off, leaving him in the office. Everything was incredibly clean, neat, not the mass of books and papers he was used to. The more he saw, the more he was worried. Something was up.

He took care of Jim's garbage and the mop, disposing of the glass safely and stowing the mop in its little cupboard. Then he grabbed a couple of glasses of water and headed for the living room. Jim was there, wandering, sorting through the CDs, stress written in every line of his body.

"Come sit with me, Jim. Please." Marcus didn't want Jim to think he was in trouble.

It helped that Jim came to him easily, no hesitation, sitting close. "Hey."

"Hey, love." He stopped long enough to kiss Jim softly, but thoroughly, his arm settling easily around Jim's shoulders, pulling his baby in close. "Something's been bothering you the last while. You want to talk about it?"

"Bothering me? No, it's not that. I'm not bothered, not really."

Right. "Well, tell me what it is, then."

"What what is?"

"You said no it's not that. So tell me what it is. Whatever it is that's not really bothering you." He was trying very hard not to get frustrated.

"I'm just... something big happened to me this week and I'm trying to... to figure it out, I guess? I don't know."

He frowned. Jim hadn't shared anything out of the ordinary with him in the last few days. "What happened?"

"It's... It's nothing, really. I... I finished it. Monday. About three in the afternoon." Jim looked so serious.

"It?"

"Tiers. The novel. It's done."

"Jim! That's wonderful! Congratulations! I can't wait to read it." He hugged Jim tight and gave his baby a kiss.

Jim grinned, looked at him. "I don't know. I thought I'd be excited. I feel like... Like I've been broken up with or something."

He couldn't help but chuckle. "Your novel broke up with you, hmm?" He gave Jim another hug. "Have you gone through it for editing and stuff? Is it ready to go out?"

"It's done, yeah. I don't... I'm not going to send it out. Not yet."

"Why not? And you're going to let me read the completed manuscript, right?"

"It's not ready. I'm not ready. It's not good enough."

"While I might believe that you're not ready to let it go yet, I can't believe that it's not good enough. What I had read so far was great, Jim. You're a fantastic writer!" He didn't want to have to beat the confidence into his baby.

"You're biased, but thank you. I've read it and read it. I can't do any better." Jim stood and started cleaning.

"Then you need to say it's finished, say it's ready, and start sending it out to be published." He didn't mean to make light of it -- he'd bet sending it out had to be the hardest part of writing.



"Maybe. I don't know. I don't know what I'm going to do."

"And that's what's got you all... discombobulated."

"Yeah. Yes. I'm... lost."

"Come sit, baby." He opened his arms, Jim's random wandering and cleaning making him nuts.

"I. I'm sorry, Marcus. I just need time to think." Jim pushed in close, sliding onto his lap.

"I think you're making yourself crazy with all this thinking." He held Jim and kissed the top of his baby's head. "Have you made a list of the things you could do with the novel now that it's done?"

"No. No, I just keep wondering what to do now. I have all this time and I don't want to start another one and I can't clean anymore."

"Why don't you want to start another one?" He also had plenty of ideas for things they could do together in place of Jim writing.

"I'm not ready. I need a break. I need to breathe." It made him pleased, that Jim was beginning to understand, to communicate. Of course, if this conversation had happened *Monday*, it would be been better.

"But you've got nothing to do in the afternoons." He gave Jim a look, letting his need show through. "I have some ideas for that."

"You're working in the afternoons..." Look at that hunger.

"I'm doing well enough that I can work just in the mornings like you do. Our non-paying time is important, too, baby."

"I... What about..."

He chuckled and tugged Jim into a kiss. Sometimes Jim just needed to *do*. He opened Jim's lips with his tongue, exploring his baby's mouth. His hands were busy, sliding beneath Jim's T-shirt and searching out his baby's sweet spots. Jim moaned, clinging to him suddenly, trembling a little. He rubbed Jim's back and tugged his baby closer.

"The food's coming." Jim moaned the words into his lips.

"Is someone giving it a blowjob?" Marcus teased.

"What?" Jim stopped, stared at him, then started laughing hard. He joined Jim, the sound of his baby's laughter contagious.

The doorbell rang and Jim pushed away, heading to answer it. He watched Jim's ass until it disappeared and then sat back, still chuckling. Only his baby would do something wonderful like finish a novel and end up tied in knots.

He had a warm smile for Jim when his baby came back.  
"Mmm, smells good, baby."

"It does, I guess. Do you think I'm stupid? For worrying?"

"I don't think you're stupid at all. All those brains keep finding new worries for you."

Jim tilted his head. "Are you serious or teasing me?"

"No, I'm being absolutely serious. A stupid man doesn't need to worry." He took the bags of food from Jim and set them out.

His words seemed to ease Jim, who sat down cross-legged in front of the coffee table. "Thank you."

"You're welcome, baby. Now eat. And then we can get started on some of my ideas to fill your time."

Jim picked up his chopsticks, started eating the lo mein. "What kind of ideas?"

"Most of them involve considerably less clothing than we have on now."

"You can't want sex that often, can you?" Jim sucked up a noodle.

"It's not all about sex. It's about control, focus, peace."

"Okay. Are we going to meditate naked?"

"A different kind of peace, baby." He winked.

Jim nodded, eyes curious, hands reaching across to offer him a snow pea. He leaned in and ate it from Jim's chopsticks, letting Jim see his need, his desire for his baby.

"I haven't ever finished a novel before."

"I bet you'll finish many others, though."

Jim looked worried, proud and hopeful, all at once.

"We'll see, I guess."

"We will. Sooner or later you're going to have to celebrate it and be happy about it, baby. I vote you do it sooner."

Jim looked at him. "I could just be bitchy about it forever, you know."

"I'm not going to let that happen." He'd make Jim enjoy it if he had to.

"You really don't have a choice." Oh, was that a challenge?

"I am *not* going to let you turn this into something to be miserable about, baby. I promise you."

Jim looked at him, eyebrows raised. "You don't have that control, Marcus."

"But I know what buttons to press."

Another noodle was snagged by Jim's chopsticks.

"Buttons? I'm not that easy. I'm not that simple."

"There's nothing simple about you." He shook his head.

"This is a good thing, Jim. We celebrate good things."

"What if it's not? What if it sucks? What if I can't do it again? I've been working on that book for years and now it's finished!"

"Yes! It's finished! You completed it. That's an accomplishment. And from what I read, it doesn't suck. At all."

"I hope you're right."

"You're a great writer, Jim. I'm right." He picked up one of the fortune cookies and handed it over. "Go on. Open it."

Jim cracked the cookie, pulled the little piece of paper out. "Your hard work will soon pay off."

"You see!"

He got a quick, tickled grin. "What does yours say?"

Marcus cracked open his cookie and pulled out the slip of paper. "Love always and deeply."

"Deeply, huh? I can definitely support that." Jim crawled around the table, sliding up into his lap. "I put a printed copy of my book on your bedside table."

"Excellent. I can't wait to read it." He squeezed Jim tight.

"Well, I guess I can wait a bit."

"Just for a little while." Jim rested their foreheads together. "Right now, I need you more."

"You have me, Jim. Always." He squeezed Jim's ass.

"Then I'll figure the rest out."

"I know you can. And you don't need to do it alone, hmm?" He brought their mouths together.

And if Jim couldn't figure that out on his own, Marcus was more than happy to show him.

## *Chapter Forty Two*

It didn't matter how often they went to Permanent Ink, it always put Marcus in a good mood. He loved watching Killian and Treat work on his baby, whether it was piercings or tattoos. Today they were going to add to the amazing work in progress on Jim's back.

"Come on, baby. It's time to go. Killian's expecting us."

"But..." Jim was fluttering, one shirt in each hand.

"Baby, the shirt doesn't matter -- you're going to be taking it off as soon as we get there."

He turned Jim around, fingers tracing the tattoos already on his baby's back: the original sun, the bird of paradise in the sky, the tree of life beneath the sun... Killian was a master and each session made Jim glow.

"Yes, but the ink will get on the fabric and this lighter one is old, but the darker one is new and..." Like Jim would need a shirt after.

"Trust me, baby. It doesn't matter." He took the older one and held it out for Jim to put both arms in. "This one is softer."

Jim slipped it on, muscles tense and rolling.

He hugged Jim from behind, rubbing his eager cock against Jim's ass. "You know once it starts you're going to be on the moon."

"I know." Jim nodded, rubbing back. "It's nuts."

"You said nuts," Marcus teased, reaching down to cup Jim's through his jeans. Jim was hard as a rock, cock heated against his wrist. He might be nervous, but Jim was also looking forward to it, incredibly. "Come on, baby. It's going to be an incredible afternoon."

"You just want to go talk to Killian."

"If all I wanted to do was talk to Killian, I'd pick up the phone. I want to go watch the man work on your back, add to that beautiful ink."

He grabbed Jim's prick and gave it a quick squeeze before stepping back and taking Jim's hand.

Killian's place was busy -- they'd hired two new artists and the place was rocking, even in the afternoon. Killian looked up as they came in, beaming. "Is it time already? Wonderful!"

"It is and we're excited to be here." He gave Jim a wink, knowing his baby was still as hard as he was.

"Excellent. Come on back and get settled. Are you still having fun with the piercings? We have some amazing chains and weights..."

"Oh, we'll have a look at those. After the tattoo." When Jim was flying and more interested in the new sensations than in being embarrassed.

"I'm thinking a tiger today -- something slinking down around the lower back, perhaps with a jeweled collar." Killian got Jim moving, spread and stretched over the chair, half-naked.

"That sounds amazing, Killian. What do you think, Jim? A sexy, sensual tiger."

Jim nodded, eyes a little wild. "Okay. That works."

He nodded and grinned at Killian. "We're in your wonderful hands, Killian." Sitting in a chair by Jim's head, he took his baby's hand. "It's going to be even more amazing."



"It's going to sting. I'm sensitive down there."

Killian's chuckle was soft. "Oh, Jim. I just tattooed a ball sac and cock -- the *whole* thing. Talk about sensitive."

"Oh, wow. That sounds incredible." He waited for Jim's reaction.

Jim looked a little sick. "The whole thing? Why?"

"He wanted it to be covered in snake skin. It was striking." Killian snapped on the latex.

"Did you take pictures? I'd love to see how it turned out." Marcus squeezed Jim's hand.

"They're up there on the mirror. See the rainbow? It's two over. I'm going to freehand, Jim. Just stay still and let Marcus know when you need a break."

He loved it when Killian freehanded -- the man was a brilliant artist. "Jim and I will look later." He knew he was needed here, focused on his baby until Jim began to fly.

"I." Jim looked panicked, eyes rolling a bit. It was always like this -- always panic and worry and stress until the sting became a buzz and Jim started letting go, giving in to it.

Leaning in, he brought their lips together and breathed into Jim's mouth. "Let it happen, baby."

Killian understood this, understood them, and went quiet, let this be something between them, something intense and sensual and sexual. "Marcus. Sir."

"You're going to look amazing with a tiger on your back, slinking along over your muscles..."

Jim blushed. "Shh..."

Killian's eyes met his over Jim's shoulder, the look knowing and amusing. Killian mouthed, "such a sweet boy" and went back to work.

"Are you getting hard?" he asked quietly.

"No!" Little liar.

"No? I'm hard. I've been hard since we left the house, but now my balls ache. It turns me on so fucking much, baby, seeing you like this."

"Marcus. Don't. We're not alone. Don't." Jim's cheeks were flushed, lips parted, tongue flicking out to wet them.

"Killian's busy, baby. He doesn't care what we do." His own tongue followed the path Jim's had taken.

That wasn't entirely true. Killian loved the reluctance, the need, knowing that things were getting heated. Even more, the man loved having a canvas to work on.

"You're beginning to glow, baby." They all loved that.

"Me?" Jim panted quietly, eyes rolling a little, flushed and focused.

"There's no one else I have eyes for, baby."

"I... Mmm... Oh, fuck." Jim's eyes went wide, Killian hitting a sensitive spot.

Marcus groaned. "God, you're something else, baby."

"I want... I want to go home." Oh, no. No. They weren't going anywhere.

"Not until you're done, baby." He pressed another kiss on Jim's lips, tongue slipping into that sweet mouth for a moment.

Jim's cry tasted salty, just a touch bitter, a bit sweet.

"Give in to it, baby. Let it take you. I'm right here with you."

Jim moaned, holding his gaze, melting against the chair.

"Good deal." Killian's words were almost whispered, the buzz of the needle loud.

It made him groan again and he rested his forehead against Jim's. "How does it feel, baby? Are you flying yet?"

"Fuck. Fuck, lover. I... I want. I want you."

"Mmm... good. You'll have to wait until we're home. And we can't leave before Killian is finished with your tiger."

He licked Jim's lips. "It's going to move when I fuck you from behind. It'll look amazing, baby."

"This is going to burn, Jim," Killian said. "You have to stay still, huh?"

"My eyes, baby. Focus on me."

"Marcus..." Jim was moaning now, steadily.

"My eyes. Let me see it all in you."

"All... Oh, God. It burns." And Jim was loving it.

"Is it better than a spanking, baby?"

"Different."

Killian started chuckling.

Marcus waved at him. "Hush. We're having a moment."

"Uh-huh. You're trying to get him to compare apples and oranges."

Marcus grinned. "They're both fruit."

"Yes, but one is smooth, one's bumpy. One's daily and one's permanent." Killian winked up at him.

"They both make my baby fly. Don't they, Jim?" He smiled into Jim's eyes. Jim wouldn't answer, but those eyes shone. He beamed back, squeezing Jim's hand. "You're doing awesome, baby."

"Thank you. I. I deserve a coffee, after this."

"Oh, baby, what I've got in mind is much, much better than a coffee."

Look at those cheeks heat. He reached out with his free hand and stroked one, holding Jim's gaze.

"Better than... than coffee, huh?"

"Yes. Lots better."

Jim chuckled, which made Killian growl. "If you make him move, Marcus, I'll whip you myself."

"Oops." Marcus gave Jim a wink. Jim's grin widened, those pretty eyes dancing. He chuckled, squeezing Jim's hand again. "No moving, baby."

"No. No moving. How much longer, Killian?"

"Until it's done, Jim. You know that." Killian's voice was calm, sure, brooking no argument.

"We're in his power until he's done, baby. Like always."

"That's right. This is my place. Do you want a Coke or something? The fridge is right there."

"No, I'm good right where I am." All he needed was Jim, those eyes shining, face glowing.

Jim leaned forward, sweat sheening his forehead, eyes gleaming. "Marcus. Talk to me?"

"Shall I tell you what I want to do with you when we're finished here, baby? Is that what you'd like to hear me talk about?"

"Oh, God. Yes. Yes, please." They'd reached the point where Jim didn't care that Killian was there, didn't care about anything but the heat building inside him.

"Killian's going to leave us alone. He's going to pull the curtain closed and you're going to go on your hands and knees." He kissed Jim, licking those lips. "And I'm going to climb up behind you and I'm going to take you, watching that tiger move on your skin."

"No touching, though."

"No touching the tattoo. I'll be touching Jim plenty, though. Holding your ass, Jim, stroking your cock."

Jim's moan echoed, sweet under the angry buzz of the gun.

"I should have put the ring on you, baby. You're not going to last two seconds."

Jim's cheeks went a dark, almost painful red. "I did it."

"Baby..." Marcus shook his head and chuckled. "What am I going to do with you?"

"Keep me." There wasn't an ounce of hesitation there.

"That's a given. You should have talked to me about the ring, baby, rather than put it on yourself. Hmm?"

"We were in a hurry."

He could see Killian, fighting laughter.

"You're still not supposed to touch yourself and I'll have to punish you for it, baby." He grinned. "But that can wait until we get home."

Jim groaned, protesting.

"You know the rules, baby." Besides, he'd make sure Jim enjoyed the punishment.

"I was trying to help." Jim still didn't understand, not really.

"Good intentions or not, you still broke the rule." He kissed Jim. "Let's put it aside for now so you can ride the buzz."

Killian looked at him, eyes warm, fond, a bit sad. He sent a small prayer up that Killian and Treat would find another lover to share their lives with. Then his attention was taken up by Jim again.

Jim's eyes were closed, lips parted, breath panting from his baby. He rubbed their lips together, taking Jim's breath in, offering his own in return. Jim moaned, responding easily, breathing with him. He hummed softly, fingers sliding over Jim's cheek as they breathed.

It took about four hours, two breaks, and one small breakdown toward the end, but finally it was done. Killian sat back, rolling his shoulders.

Marcus stood and looked, gasping when he saw the work. "Baby... Damn."

The tiger was... Stunning. Jeweled emerald eyes stared out, the heavy, golden collar embedded with matching jewels. The animal was muscled and vibrant, feral, lovely. "Mirror, Killian?" He held his hand out and together they got the mirrors set up so Jim could see.

"Oh, God." Jim shuddered, eyes wide. "Killian. It's. Oh, God."

Killian beamed.

Marcus nodded. "It's amazing. It's perfect for Jim. Absolutely perfect."

"Excellent. We'll do more next month, hmm? Something small and detailed." Killian smiled at Jim. "You're an angel to work on, beautiful. Any time."

Jim blushed dark, nodded. "Thanks. Thank you. It's... Thank you."



"It's stunning, Killian. Thank you." Marcus ran his hand over it through the air, feeling the heat from Jim's body rising up to meet his palm.

"No touching. Make sure you watch him -- he can reach it and he'll scratch in his sleep. That'll mar the design."

"We'll think of something, I'm sure." He had those soft cuffs that he could use, keep Jim's hands in front of him.

Jim's groan made them all laugh. Killian got Jim bandaged up with saran wrap, got them ready to go.

"Can you give us some time, Killian?"

"Absolutely. I'm going to go have some lunch with Treat. I'll lock the door behind me."

"Thank you, Killian. For everything." He spoke to Killian, but his eyes were on Jim.

"Anytime, my friend. Anytime." The door closed, Killian giving them their privacy.

"I need you." He was growling, feeling very much like that tiger on Jim's back.

"Please." That desperation was written in every line of Jim's body.

"Hands and knees, baby." He grabbed the hand cream from Killian's counter, slicking up his fingers. Neither of them needed foreplay, this was going to be hard and fast.

"Is the table sturdy enough?"

"I'll bet you the cost to replace it that it is." They weren't going to be on it for very long, anyway.

"Okay." Jim scrambled up, hands white-knuckled on the edges, bound cock leaking.

He tugged Jim's jeans down and off, running his hands over Jim's red ass. His. All his. Every fucking *inch*. He used the hand cream on his fingers and then pushed them into Jim, quickly stretching his baby.

"Yes. Yes, please. I need."

"You're not the only one, baby." He climbed up behind Jim and replaced his fingers with his cock, pushing in with a hard thrust.

"Yes!" Jim's cry rang out, the muscles on the fine back rippling, the tiger seeming to move.

"God, baby." He moved faster, watching the muscles on Jim's back move, watching the tattoos come alive.

"Harder. Harder, love. I *need*." Jim's voice was pure, raw desperation.

He grabbed hold of Jim's hips and started fucking Jim like he wanted, thrusting in hard, putting the strength of his whole body into it. He could feel Jim squeezing, body jerking and rippling around his prick.

Marcus groaned, feeling the movements of Jim's body down to his toes. "Love you, baby."

"Love. Yes. Please... I need to. Please."

"Not yet." He thrust a few more times, hands tight on Jim's ass. When he was ready, then he'd undo the cock ring.

"Master!" Oh, fuck. Yes. Yes.

"Mine. My baby." He thrust harder, so close. Jim nodded, almost sobbing. Reaching around Jim's hip, he grabbed the leather ring, ripping it open. "Now, baby!"

Heat sprayed out, without even a touch to that pretty cock. Jim's body squeezed tight around him, making him shout and shoot deep inside Jim's body.

They just stayed there for a minute, shaking, sweating, trying to breathe. He pressed a kiss to Jim's shoulder and then slowly pulled out, groaning. "You're so sexy, baby."

"I need to go home, Marcus." He imagined Jim did -- sore, coming down, melted. Jim needed to lie on his belly, have some aspirin.

"I know, baby." He helped Jim stand, getting his baby's jeans back up around his waist, done up. "Let's leave the shirt off, hmm?"

Jim was sore enough that he nodded, not complaining.

"Keep riding the buzz, baby. Let the pain move through you."

He slipped five twenties under Killian's ink gun as a tip, knowing there'd be a credit card slip all ready for them up front. Killian and Treat knew how to take care of their customers.

No one bothered them on their way out, everyone allowing Jim to have his buzz, his privacy.

Marcus mouthed "Thank you" to Killian where he sat munching on a sandwich with Treat, signed the credit card receipt and then they were on their way out.

He'd parked right in front of the tattoo parlor, so they didn't have far to go. There was a soft blanket on the back of the seat for Jim to rest against and Jim moaned as he settled, eyes closing.

"We'll be home in no time, baby. I found some new movies at the store the other day. Been saving them for an occasion like this."

"Yeah? That sounds good. It was a long session."

"It was. You were awesome, though. I'm very proud of you. And you've got a great piece of one of a kind art on your back."

"Thank you." Jim was beginning to shudder a little.

He opened the glove compartment, grabbing the bottle of Tylenol and handing it over before he started up the car. "Take two, baby. It'll help take the edge off."

"Okay." Jim smiled at him, took the pills. "I feel queasy, huh? Just a bit."

"We've got ginger ale at home. Don't worry, I'll set you up nicely."

"Yeah." Jim's eyes closed, his baby quiet, still, going with it.

He reached over and put his hand on Jim's knee once they were on the highway. "You were stunning today, baby."

"You were, too. You were turning me on."

"Mmm... was I?" He squeezed Jim's knee.

"You know you were." Jim was blushing, dark red.

He chuckled. "That doesn't mean I don't like hearing it, hmm?"

"I guess so. You do, did, whatever. You make me ache."

"I try, baby. I do try."

"You like the ink, right?"

"It's fucking gorgeous. Killian outdid himself."

Jim nodded. "I think he's enjoying himself."

"He does love his work." He turned onto their street.

He could tell Jim was working himself up, heading for a meltdown, just from the little motions, the soft sounds.

"Come on, baby. Inside." He went around and met Jim at the other side of the car, taking his baby's arm.

"I. I need my shirt." Jim stood, looking around like the neighbors were looking or something.

"It's ten feet, baby, come on." He moved them to the front door.

"Yeah, but..." Jim followed, skin hot, hands balled into fists.

"There we go, we're inside. And now you don't need your shirt."

"I. Would you like some coffee?"

"No, baby. I'd like to set you up on your belly in the living room and pamper you." Jim reached out, squeezed his hand. He pulled Jim up against him. "I love you, baby."

"Yeah? Even when I'm... a total jackass?"

He laughed softly. "Yes, even then." He kissed Jim. "It doesn't happen very often anymore now, though, does it?"

"I don't know. What do you think?"

"I think you're a good man, Jim. And I'm very proud of you."

Marcus helped Jim down onto the floor, onto his belly.  
"Thank you."

"Now what can I get you, baby? Are you hungry? Thirsty?"

"Yes. Yes, please. Both." Jim unfastened his jeans, pushed them down, just a bit.

"Here..." He tugged Jim's jeans right off, grabbing the quilt from the couch, laying it over Jim's lower half.

He handed over the remote. "Food and drink coming up, baby."

"You... Thank you." Jim relaxed, eyes closing. "Thank you."

"My pleasure, baby."

He made short work of getting a large glass of juice and the little cakes he'd bought earlier in the day. Returning to Jim, he sat down next to his baby.

"What are we watching?"

"What sounds good to you?" Jim shifted, leaning against him.

"Whatever sounds good to you." It was Jim's day.

"Mmm. How about The Matrix. I like that one."

"Ah, a comfort movie." He put it on and settled back with Jim, holding his baby's hand.

"Yeah. Yeah, I need that, right now." Jim sounded so sure.

"That was the longest you were under the gun, wasn't it?"

"Yes. It hurt on the spine worst. I could feel myself, getting panicky."

"You made it through, though, baby. Just the one meltdown, hmm? And then you were able to continue. I'm so proud of you." Jim had come so far.

"Yeah. I'm not the most macho person on earth."

Marcus snorted. "You should ask Killian to tell you his stories about the 'macho' men who come to get their tats done."

"Yeah?" Jim smiled over at him, nibbling. "Does he get screamers?"

"Screamers, criers. They've had to scrape more than one off the ceiling from what I understand."

"I never have. I mean, it's intense, but I don't scream."

"No, only I make you scream."



Jim nodded. "I'm good with that. I like that that's yours."

He stroked Jim's shoulder. "Me, too. Me, too." He chuckled. "I like that *you* are mine."

That got him another nod. "I hope so."

He reached back and gave Jim's ass a smack. "Never doubt that."

"Never is a long time." Jim actually arched into the touch a bit.

"It's not long enough." He rubbed where he'd smacked.

"No. No, Marcus. It's not."

He shifted, moving to lie next to Jim, so he could push kisses on Jim's lips. They settled in, the evening starting to fall around them.

It was just right. He was going to be sorry when the tattoo was done.

### ***Chapter Forty Three***

Oliver's cabin was tiny -- a kitchen, a bathroom, and a good-sized bedroom with a dock that headed right out onto the beach. Simple, stark, elegant -- and in five minutes Jim'd explored everything except for a wardrobe in the bedroom that was locked.

It was lovely.

Remote.

Amazing.

"This is a beautiful place, Marcus. Honestly."

"Nothing but the best for Ollie." Marcus grinned over at him from the huge picture window that looked out over the beach.

"Happy birthday."

His lover was just beautiful. Broad and solid, tanned, fine. Marcus beamed at him. "Thank you, baby. I have to say, it's the best one yet."

"Yeah? Is this the first year you've been here for your birthday?"

Marcus' eyes met his, serious as a heart attack. "This is the first year I've had you for my birthday."

"Oh." He stepped forward, hands held out. "I love you."

Marcus took his hands and drew him up against the solid body. "I love you, too, baby."

He rubbed against the long, strong body. "What do you want to do today? Are you hungry?"

One hand landed on his ass with a small smack, stinging as Marcus pulled him up close. "I'm always hungry for you."

It was unnerving, being touched, loved on, somewhere other than their house.

Marcus tilted his chin and pressed their lips together, the kiss growing deeper as Marcus drew him even closer. He could feel Marcus' need, solid and hot against his belly.

Jim pushed into the kiss for a minute, then pulled away.

Marcus growled softly, free hand wrapping in the front of his T-shirt and tugging him back in. "Going somewhere?"

"No. No. I just... It's unusual. To touch somewhere else. You know?"

"I need to take you out more, let you get used to it."

"You know that I need my routine."

"I know, baby. But it's good for you to be shaken up now and then." Marcus bit at his lower lip. The little sting made him go up on tiptoe. "Remember your dream from a few weeks ago, baby. It's going to be great. You and me and the beach, the air off the ocean at night..."

Yes. That's what he'd imagined. What he'd wanted.

"We still have a bit of daylight left -- you want to go out into the water... or stay in?"

"It's your birthday vacation. What do you want?" He was easy.

"I just want to spend the time with you. Let's put on our trunks and go out -- I want to see the sun on your skin."

"Okay. I love the ocean."

"Did you bring those blue swimming trunks I like you in?"

"I did, and I brought your red ones."

"Thank you, baby. We should see if we can get changed into them without getting... distracted."

He chuckled, tickled deep down. "We ought to stay in separate rooms, then."

One of Marcus' eyebrows went up. "I think *that* would be sheer torture." He was hauled back up close against Marcus' body.

"Torture, hmm?" Damn, Marcus was warm.

"Yes. I plan to keep you close and touch you often, baby. No separate room for us. Even if it does distract us all weekend and we wind up never making it to the beach."

"You'd miss the water." He stripped Marcus' shirt off.

"I'd rather miss the water than a second with you, baby." Marcus chuckled softly, winked at him. "I'm going to

lose my reputation as a big bad top if I keep saying sappy stuff."

"Only from people who haven't been over your knee."  
How many people that they met had been there?

"Mmm... I wanted to spank you from the first time I saw you, before we'd even met." Marcus' eyes shone, the strong fingers touching his cheek, his jaw.

"Me? In the bookstore?" Did he *look* like he was spankable?

Spankable.

That was a great word.

"You. In the bookstore. And it was more than just that you deserved it." Marcus chuckled. "My gut was screaming at me, baby."

"What was it screaming?" Leaning forward, Jim licked along Marcus' collarbone.

Marcus moaned for him, head going back, fingers sliding into his hair. "Hold on. Don't let go."

"No. Don't let go. Not yet." Not of him.

"Never, baby." Marcus' hands tightened in his hair.  
"You're mine now."

He nodded, that little sting in his hair making his cock fill.

Marcus hummed, the look in his eyes knowing. "I think it's safe to say we're quite distracted. I want you naked, baby."

"I thought you wanted me in my suit..." He opened Marcus' pants, hands sliding down the thick thighs.

"Yeah, I do. Eventually."

Marcus' prick popped out, the man going commando. Again. He chuckled, fingers moving to wrap around that cock.

"Mmm..." Marcus spread his legs, hands moving over his shoulders, solid and firm.

He knew what Marcus wanted, so he touched and stroked, jacking his lover off, trying to give Marcus the most pleasure.

"You think you deserve a taste of me, baby?"

"Of course I do." Silly Marcus. He was good at what he did.

Marcus chuckled, the sound a little ragged as he dragged his fingers across the head of Marcus' prick. "I think so, too, baby. Take it. It's yours."

"Mmm. Mine. All mine." He was smiling as he dropped to his knees, tongue slip-sliding over the tip.

"Yes, baby. No one else will ever do this for me, Jim."

"Never?" There were so many possibilities, so many things that could go wrong. "I wouldn't ask that from you."

Marcus' fingers stroked across his cheek. "You haven't asked it from me, I'm giving it to you. I love you, Jim. Not for now, forever."

His eyes started stinging and he leaned into Marcus' touch, trying to catch his breath. "Thank you. Thank you, love."

Bending, Marcus pressed their lips together, breathed into his body. He melted into Marcus, flying. Where he belonged. Marcus pushed him back onto the floor, coming down on top of him, the kiss going deep.

He could hear the sea, hear Marcus' heartbeat. Hear the whispers of love and need.

"Mine. My love. My baby." Marcus' eyes stared into him.

"Yours. Yours, sir. Every inch of me." It was an easy thing to give away -- especially when Marcus was what he wanted.

"That's all I want from you, Jim. Just that."

Just everything.

He nodded, caught in that sure, strong gaze. Everything. Forever.

He could handle that.

With Marcus.

He thought maybe he could handle anything.

End