

Dreamspinner Press Presents

DAYDREAMS



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“Could you just die?”

Kit Gleason looked up from the application he was processing as Belman Stokes pirouetted into the nearly deserted office space. “Hi, Bel,” Kit said, unflustered by the receptionist’s dramatic entrance and exuberant exclamation. “Why should I just die?”

Sweeping the drift of carefully waved and tinted bangs from his eyes, Belman leaned over Kit’s desk. “Oh, please, I know you’re not that blasé.”

“No idea what you’re talking about.” Kit pointedly returned his attention to the pile of papers. He was already annoyed that he’d been stuck with the task of winnowing through the applicants for the job of in-house courier, translation: go-fer, and the indignity was compounded by the fact that the mailroom was still using hard copies. This would go so much faster if he could just call it up on his monitor.

“Well, it is kind of a secret,” Bel broke into Kit’s thoughts.

“Then you shouldn’t tell me.”

“You’re the most exasperating man I know, Christopher Michael Gleason.”

“Thank you.”

“I just wish you weren’t so yummy.”

Kit looked up again. Bel was perched on the edge of his desk, or maybe posed would be the more accurate word, his long narrow frame hung with a typically offbeat Bel original ensemble. “Nice jorts,” Kit

said, eyeing the receptionist's lean-muscled legs. "Only you could make denim cut-offs work in the office."

"Everyone can clearly see that they're meant to go with the Yankees jersey," Bel preened. "And the cap, of course."

Kit glanced at the sequined baseball cap with the bill turned to the back. "Sporty. So where'd you get the jersey? The infant-wear department?"

Bel stretched, showing off a flat as a washboard stomach. "You could wear something like this and not embarrass yourself."

"Not my style."

"I didn't mean the outfit. Just that you could wear clothes that showed off your assets a little better. It's not like there's a dress code around here."

"But there are fashion police."

Bel laughed. "Speaking as the judge, I'm holding you in contempt. I'd like to be holding you in my apartment's secret dungeon room, but for now..."

"Seriously, Bel. You know how much I love it when you visit, but I'm almost two hours into overtime already." Kit paused. "Hey. What are you still doing here this late?"

"I tried to tell you."

Kit sighed. "Am I going to have to coax it out of you now?"

"You know me well. Maybe that's why you won't date me. There's no mystery."

“No, it’s because I don’t date people that work in the same building. Or live in the same building.”

“Or on the same planet. Face it, Kit. You’re practically a monk. I think that’s what really attracts me to you. It’s not your All-American boy-next-door good looks with your bright blue eyes and your bright white smile and that little saddle of freckles over your nose that I just want to lick until I lick them off and...”

“I get it,” Kit interrupted. “You only want me ‘cause you can’t have me.”

“You are awfully cute though, like Tom Sawyer in an oxford shirt. Oh, what the hell. I’m just going to tell you. There’s no way I can hold it in much longer anyway.”

“I’m waiting.”

“Couldn’t you throw me one bone?” Bel leered.

Kit bounced in his seat. “Oh please, please, please, tell me!”

“I can’t resist a man who begs. Okay,” Bel leaned in close. “You’ll never guess who’s coming in after hours to be interviewed for the August issue.”

“Then I won’t bother trying.”

“Mason Radford.” Bel sat back and waited for Kit’s reaction.

“Whoa, that is big news! An actor! Coming here! To be interviewed!”

“Your sarcasm is transparent.”

“Well, we here at Arbiter do consider it an entertainment magazine.”

“Yes, but... Mason Radford! Sex-on-two-legs Mason Radford. Did you not see *Monsoon House*? That scene in the rain where his clothes were glued to him? He’s packing major meat.”

“That must be why the critics like him so much.”

“Come on. Admit you think he’s sexy.”

Kit smiled. “Yeah, he is. He really is. I just like teasing you.”

“And I adore being teased.” Bel fluttered his fringe of extravagant lashes. “So... do you think it’s all him?”

Kit didn’t pretend to misunderstand. “He’s had roughly the same bulge in all his films, so either he has the same wardrobe assistant for all his roles, or what you see is what you get. Personally, I don’t care one way or the other.”

“Same bulge in all his films?” Bel repeated. “Sounds like you’re a fan to me. Come on. Drop the cool act and drool with me.”

“I like Radford’s films. Except for a couple of his first ones, he’s made good choices. He never lets his beauty get in the way of a performance.”

“You should be a critic,” Bel said for about the millionth time since befriending Kit. “And you should have your own column in *Arbiter*.”

“Why don’t you wave your magic wand and make it so?”

“Watch what you say. You betrayed your geek roots again. You’re writing for a big city mag now, my huckleberry friend and you need to smarten up your image a little.”

“So you keep telling me.”

“You’ve got what it takes, sugar,” Bel said. “You just need to get noticed. And around here that means being a little fashion forward.”

“What time does Radford get here?” Kit changed the subject.

“He could be arriving any time. My plan is to float around the building pretending like I’m doing something until I detect the presence of a superstar. If I can just get close enough, I know he’ll fall for my fabulousness.”

“You’re assuming he’s gay.”

“Of course, he’s gay. He’s just not open about it. Anyway, when I meet him, I’ll be able to tell in a second.”

“Good luck then. I’ll be here for hours.”

“Poor baby. If you’d just stand up for yourself, they wouldn’t dump all the work that no one else wants on you.”

“Easier said than done. Come back and tell me how it went, okay?”

“If it goes well, you won’t see me for a while, honey.”

Kit chuckled as Bel slid down from his desk. “Then I hope I don’t see you for a while.”

“You really are a sweet boy.” Bel paused halfway across the office. “And Monday after work, I’m taking you shopping.”

“We’ll see,” Kit said as Bel made a sweeping exit, leaving the door wide open. As soon as his friend was gone, Kit missed the distraction. Doggedly, he plowed through another few applications before the repetition made him want to wad up the entire stack and use it as tinder. “Dumb ass flunky,” he said bitterly.

“Should I come back later?”

Startled, Kit rolled his chair back so he could see through the doorway. A frown furrowed his smooth brow as he took in the shabby, bearded figure waiting meekly for his attention. Dark hair badly in need of a brush hung in shaggy sheaves to the shoulders of a stained and threadbare trench coat. Kit checked automatically and was relieved to see that the man wore trousers, even if they were several sizes too large and belted with a nylon dog leash. “Sorry,” he said. “We’re not interviewing yet.”

“Yeah, okay. I understand,” the man said in a voice so diffident, so broken that Kit instantly felt sorry for him.

“Look, you didn’t do anything wrong by coming in. We’re just not ready for this stage of the process yet.”

The man nodded. “Where do you want me to wait?”

Kit sighed. “Are you really here about the job, or just getting out of the weather?”

“You caught me,” the man said, his look of surprise becoming a sheepish grin. “I was just cold and wandered in here. Didn’t expect to see anybody.”

“Are you hungry?”

“It shows, huh?”

“Maybe a little. I was just going to take a break and have something to eat. You want to join me?” Kit smiled. “I hate to eat alone.”

The stranger returned the smile. “I’m Adam Eden, and I’ve heard all the jokes about my name.”

“Have a seat, Adam. Hope you like chicken salad and bar-b-q potato chips.”

Adam sat and watched Kit pull an insulated lunch box from the bottom drawer of his desk. When Kit offered a sandwich wrapped in plastic, Adam nodded his thanks before tearing into it. After a few bites, Adam slowed down and took a few sips of the bottled water Kit handed him.

“It’s good. Thank you.”

“No big deal.”

“What made you offer, if you don’t mind me asking?”

“I don’t know.” Kit shrugged and glanced away from the scrutiny of Adam’s large dark eyes. “I might’ve felt a little sorry for you. Even if you were here about the job, I doubt the magazine would hire you. No offense, but they have an image to maintain, as I’m reminded on a daily basis.”

“I guess you’re a little too Ivy League for them, huh?”

“I look Ivy League to you?” Kit exclaimed incredulously.

“You’re a little bit preppie.” Adam paused. “And I’m a little bit down and out.”

“Could happen to anybody these days.”

“You haven’t lived in New York very long, have you?”

Kit bristled a little at the implications of the question. “Less than a year, and I’ve had plenty of people point out that I’m just plain too nice for this town, that I’ll never get anywhere unless I toughen up. Well, if

that means I have to be a son-of-a-bitch to be successful, I'd just as soon stay where I am."

"Good for you. Personally, I think it takes more strength to be true to yourself than to run roughshod over anyone in your way."

"Is that why you're on the street?"

Adam smiled, his teeth gleaming in the frame of his dark scruffy beard and Kit felt a peculiar tightening in his lower belly. It had been so long since the last time he'd felt it that it was a moment before Kit realized what it was. He was attracted to Adam. No, that wasn't quite accurate. He wanted to rip off his clothes and go for it right here on the desk. The sudden surge of desire surprised him, but he reminded himself of how very long it had been since he'd had sex. He was only human and allowed to fantasize.

"I'd like to repay your kindness somehow," Adam said, as if reading Kit's mind.

Kit swallowed nervously, hoping he wasn't blushing. "That's not necessary," he said. "I had an extra sandwich and you're welcome to it. No strings."

Adam's eyes opened wide. "Did you think I meant...? That I was offering to trade, um, sexual favors for food?"

Certain now that his cheeks were bright red, Kit stammered an answer. "Of course not. That's... that's... sleazy."

"Oh. Sorry you feel that way. I had the hots for you as soon as I saw you."

"This isn't funny."

"Maybe not, but it could be fun."

“Are you a friend of Belman Stokes’ by any chance?”

“Who?” Adam’s consternation seemed genuine to Kit.

“This isn’t a practical joke?”

“Not that I’m aware of,” Adam replied. “Look, I’m sorry I offended you, okay? Thanks a lot for the sandwich... and the company. I’ll get out of your...”

“Wait! I’m not offended. I thought I offended you.”

Adam shook his shaggy head. “Tell you the truth, I’m more lonely than hungry. It’s not that hard to cadge a meal, but it’s damn near impossible to get anyone to look you in the eye, much less hold a conversation with you like you’re a human being. That’s the hardest part: when they act like what you’ve got will rub off on them.”

“Come home with me.” Kit clapped a hand over his mouth, but it was too late. The words had tumbled out on their own before he could think about them.

“I’d really like that, but if you want to take back the offer, I’ll understand. I’m a total stranger, after all.”

“You don’t seem all that strange.” Kit recovered some of his aplomb. “I’ll be honest with you. I’m a little nervous about this, but it feels like the right thing to do. If you’d like a bed for the night, a bath, whatever, with no catches, the offer stands.”

A little over an hour later, Kit was sitting in his modest apartment, listening to the shower running, feeling a little guilty about shirking, wondering if he’d done a monumentally stupid thing in inviting a stranger into his home, and drinking a rare shot of booze in hopes it would calm the stirrings south of his belly button. Several torrid images had flashed through his mind on the train ride as he sat next to Adam. Up close, Adam exuded a definite body odor, but the pungent musk didn’t put Kit off, if

anything, it added to the attraction. Adam didn't smell of soap, or cologne; he smelled like a man. In fact, he smelled like the men Kit had grown up around, men who worked outdoors all day and never wore anything fancier than Old Spice aftershave.

The shower stopped and Kit gulped the rest of his drink as he heard the bathroom door open. He was glad for the distraction of his burning throat as Adam appeared wearing nothing but the towel riding low on his hips. Kit couldn't keep his eyes from dwelling on the graceful curves of hipbones disappearing under the terrycloth.

"Whoa, you're in really good shape," he said. "Check out those abs!"

"I see, because I'm a bum, I should be flabby, right?"

"I was just..."

"People without jobs don't take pride in their appearance; is that what you're trying to say?"

"No! I'm trying to tell you how beautiful you are."

"Well, you didn't have to sound so surprised." Adam rolled his eyes. "Do I have 'LOW SELF ESTEEM' tattooed on my forehead?"

"Are we about to get into a really deep conversation?"

"God, I hope not." Adam took two steps and was suddenly inside Kit's personal space. "I'd rather just fuck you right up against this counter."

Kit moved back a little to look into Adam's eyes. "Really?"

Adam pressed close, aligning his groin to Kit's, and Kit raised his eyebrows. "That's pretty convincing," he said.

“I’m trying to make this easy for you,” Adam said. “I can see you don’t take sex lightly.”

“I’ve picked up guys before.”

“Were they both nice?”

Kit smiled. “You’re funny and you’re making this easier for me just by taking charge. I appreciate that.”

“It’s still your choice.”

“Hm,” Kit stalled. “What are my choices again?”

“Top or bottom?”

Kit took a deep breath and bravely spoke his desire. “I want you to cum inside me.” He paused and spoke again. “I have condoms.”

Adam’s towel hit the floor on the last word.

Kit whistled as the treasure at the end of the trail was unveiled. “Well, you sure showed me yours,” he said, eyes lingering on Adam’s arousal as he unbuckled his belt.

“Let me do that.” Adam gently took Kit’s wrist and moved his hand out of the way.

Kit leaned back against the counter, trembling with the heady mix of emotions that flooded him, as a near stranger deftly unzipped his trousers. He felt cool air on his skin as the corduroys slid down his legs to pool around his feet. Adam knelt and helped Kit to lift each foot in turn until he was free of the garment. Kit gasped as Adam’s hands slid up the insides of his thighs to frame his crotch, fingertips burrowing into his bush.

Kit pulled Adam to his feet. “Not yet,” he said as he leaned in for a kiss.

Adam wrapped his arms around Kit’s back and pulled him forward until their crotches were as firmly fused together as their lips. The kiss deepened, their tongues sliding over one another as their hips rocked, rolling their hard cocks over each other.

“Wow,” Kit gasped as their lips parted. “You’re a good kisser.”

“I like kissing,” Adam said as he peeled Kit’s T-shirt up to his armpits. “And those are some sweet pink nips. I’m going to kiss them next. Why don’t you hop up on the counter and make it easier for me?”

Kit bent his neck for another kiss as Adam ran his palms down Kit’s shoulders to his chest, brushing the furred nipples a few times before pinching them firmly. Kit moaned loudly, sucking hard on Adam’s tongue before releasing it to nip at his lower lip. Adam’s breathing deepened as Kit reached boldly between them to take hold of a cock with each hand. Grabbing a bottle of cooking oil front the counter, Kit used it to slick his palms as he stroked the hard shafts to the same tempo. Adam pulled Kit’s head down, taking his mouth hungrily, groaning as Kit thumbed the sensitive head of his cock. Pulsing his hips, Adam thrust into Kit’s fist, rubbing the underside of his arousal against the other man’s. With his free hand, Adam reached for the oil and let some run over his fingers. Kit sighed as Adam ran a slick finger along his crack, rubbing lightly at his entrance.

“Ready?”

Kit’s breath was commandeered in a gasp of pleasure as Adam eased a slippery finger into him and found his prostate. Adam curled his finger in a come hither gesture and stroked the resilient bump again. Kit’s legs began to tremble as Adam added a second finger, twisting into the tight passage, probing, sliding, and teasing in short, darting jabs interspersed with long moments spent rubbing against every surface of the velvet sheath.

“I love the look on your face,” Adam said. “You look like an angel.”

The only answer Kit could manage was a deep groan that ended in a needy whimper. Abruptly unable to wait another second, Adam pulled his fingers from the tight heat and reached for the bottle of oil again. Slicking his length, he lifted one of Kit’s legs to rest against his chest. Kit was bent almost double, his knee nearly touching the cabinet above his head, but he didn’t complain as Adam yanked his ass a little farther forward and seated the head of his cock. Kit moaned and the small soft sound of need sent a bolt of heat lightning through Adam’s groin. His excitement was mounting so rapidly that he was afraid he was going to shoot off before the main event.

“I want you now,” Adam said, his voice dropping a half-octave. “Is that okay?”

A shiver ran through Kit, leaving him breathless. He met Adam’s eyes in tacit invitation, biting his lip as the hot hardness pressed insistently against his entrance.

“Ah, man, that’s so damn good,” Adam groaned as he pushed through the reluctantly yielding port into the tight heat beyond.

Adam looked up from point where his shaft was disappearing in the world’s oldest magic trick. Kit’s gaze had gone liquid, glowing softly as the lights of home, raising a lump in Adam’s throat. Kit’s eyes were locked on Adam’s, mesmerized by the feelings that ambushed him. Being this close to another human being, naked and open, was more than a physical release. It was a kind of communion that involved every fiber of Kit’s being. All inhibitions were lost in this state of mingled surrender and glory as Adam’s hard flesh sank into him by degrees. As naturally as a flower turning to the sun, Kit covered Adam’s mouth with his and drank deep of this intoxicating new flavor.

“Incredible,” Adam groaned against Kit’s lips. “I could go right now.” Kit bore down on the shaft that stretched him and Adam sagged forward at the exquisite sensation. “Okay,” he gasped out. “Game on.”

Adam began to flex his buttocks, shifting his arousal subtly in the tight channel, backing out until only half his length was sheathed. Wrapping an arm around Kit’s thigh, he took hold of Kit’s hard cock with his other hand, and thrust in short, rolling strokes. Kit moaned and panted, his taut belly trembling at each shallow stroke that dragged over his most susceptible spot, retaliating by squeezing and releasing the rod that rubbed him so right. Adam countered by thrusting deeper and faster until they were rocking against one another in a wild sprint to the finish line. As the sweet tension in their balls escalated, the power of Adam’s thrusts chafed Kit’s ass against the Formica, producing a loud squeaking noise. The two young men looked at one another and chuckled until Kit’s laughter ended in a yelp of ecstasy as he spilled hot thick cum over Adam’s knuckles. Adam continued to stroke the spurting cock, smearing viscous fluid down the shaft and over the empty sack as he buried his erupting shaft in the quaking quicksand. He put his fingers to Kit’s lips, groaning in bliss as they were sucked clean, while his seed unfurled. They clung together as afterglow bloomed outward from the point where they joined, oblivious to the world for a short charmed time.

“I hate to move, but I really need to,” Kit said.

Adam raised his head from Kit’s shoulder and Kit uncoiled, relaxing one muscle at a time. Adam slowly withdrew, snagging a towel off the sink and offering it to Kit.

“Thanks,” Kit said, his voice grainy and sated. “For everything.”

“A genuine pleasure, but I should be thanking you.”

“Let’s say we’re both grateful and leave it at that.”

“Works for me,” Adam said. “Hey, listen, if you want me to go now...”

“What?” Kit roused himself from the lethargy of really good sex.

“I just meant that if this is awkward for you...”

“Of course it’s awkward,” Kit said. “A little. So what? Some people do this every night and manage to survive it. Maybe I am a hick and a little too trusting, but I don’t want to go through life thinking everybody’s out to get me.”

“I’m out to get you,” Adam leered. “At least once more, I hope.”

Kit smiled at the other man’s attempt to lighten the mood. “Just let me catch my breath,” he replied. “And I’d really like it if you stayed the night.”

“How can I refuse?” Adam said, moving between Kit’s thighs, reaching up to touch Kit’s cheek in a tender gesture. “If I go, I might never know what you’re like as a top.”

Kit laughed softly and it struck him that he was completely relaxed for the first time since he’d come to the big city. Something about this homeless man made him feel at home.

“What’s so funny?” Adam asked, brushing his scruff against Kit’s neck. “Let me in on the joke.”

“It’s no joke,” Kit grinned. “You just make me happy, that’s all.”

“You think you’re happy now?” Adam grinned back, eyebrows at a devilish slant. “Just wait. I’ll show you happy.” And he did until they fell into an exhausted sleep.

Kit woke to the familiar sound of his alarm clock and automatically turned it off. He got up right away, as he always did, but something was different this morning. Kit was halfway to the bathroom when he remembered Adam and the incredible night they’d spent together.

He called out, but he knew he wouldn't get an answer. The apartment had that indefinable but undeniable feeling of emptiness.

It was impossible not to think about Adam as Kit went through his morning routine, had breakfast, got dressed and went to meet the train. He spent a half-hour walking around the station, his heart rising up each time he caught sight of a tall, dark-haired man in a shabby coat. It wasn't until the clock chimed the hour that Kit realized he was going to be late for work. For the first time in his life, he didn't care. Instead of hurrying, he trudged along the three-block walk, looking into every alleyway he passed. When he almost walked right by his building, he got a grip. He told himself not to make a one night stand more than it was. Adam had found a way to repay a favor; that was all that had happened. He should look on the bright side. He'd done a good deed and he'd had the best sex of his life. Now it was time to get back to reality.

Belman Stokes stopped short at Kit's desk and stared at him. "There's something different about you today," he said, tilting his head to one side.

"I'm wearing a turtleneck."

"Yes, you are. A black turtleneck, very cat burglar chic. Mama likes."

"So how'd it go with Mason Radford?"

"Oh my goodness, honey! You didn't hear?"

"I was late today."

"Another first!" Bel said dramatically. "You're becoming a real wild man. Beatnik attire and scoffing at workplace rules. Where will it end?"

"No one knows. That's what makes life so interesting, Bel. The mystery."

Bel's eyes narrowed in suspicion. "You got laid," he said accusingly.

"That's for me to know and you to find out. Now tell me the hot gossip."

"I will, but this discussion is far from over, young man." Bel pursed his lips primly as he rested a hip against Kit's desk. "Mr. World Famous Movie Star never showed last night. He blew off an interview with the top writer of America's most influential entertainment publication. Tongues are wagging, darling."

"So is there an office pool yet? I'd like to know if the smart money is on drugs, a hooker, or sheer Hollywood arrogance."

Bel laughed. "I love the way you reduce everything to the essentials. I, myself, suspect a delicious combo of all three."

"So you missed your chance to bag a genuine celebrity."

"Again you manage to put your ink-stained finger on the real tragedy of the situation. Hang on a sec; I've got a text message. Oh, poo! Missy Editor in Chief is in a purple snit today and guess who she's tapped as whipping boy?"

"You told me you love riding crops."

Bel winked. "That all depends on who's wielding it. If Mason Radford showed up in a pair of shiny boots and wanted to tie me to the whipping post, I'd probably cum twice on the spot. However, I don't enjoy having my ass run off because my boss is in a pissy mood. Look," Bel turned around. "Hardly any ass left."

"It's quality, not quantity, remember?"

“You are a very sweet boy.” Bel kissed the top of Kit’s head. “I’d better go soothe the battleaxe’s ego. Mercy! There she is again.” The receptionist read the new message and gave Kit a strange look. “She wants me to bring you too.”

“Why?”

“No idea, but it can’t be good.”

“Craptastic. I skipped out on those applications last night.”

“I doubt Herself would personally ream you for something like that. Well, come on; don’t just sit there. Keeping her waiting won’t make her any sweeter.”

Kit was thankful for Bel’s non-stop stream of color commentary that kept him from dwelling on what lay in store as they traversed the hallways to the chief editor’s suite. In what felt like a land speed record, they arrived in the fiercely stylish foyer of Barbara Ross’s big corner office.

“You’re expected,” said the tall, thin and tawny woman behind the elegant reception desk. “Go right in.”

Bel led the way through the polished mahogany double doors. When he stopped dead in the middle of the room, Kit piled into him. Bel stumbled forward and Kit reached out to steady him. Both men would have gone to the floor if the office’s only occupant hadn’t sprung to his feet to help them.

“Oh my God! I can’t believe it,” Bel squealed, throwing his arms around his rescuer’s neck. “My hero!”

Kit stepped back as his irrepressible friend hugged the staggeringly handsome stranger. But he wasn’t really a stranger. On second glance, Kit was astonished that he hadn’t recognized the man immediately. Surely

no one else in the world had eyes that exact shade, as clear and blue-green as the waters of a tropical island.

“Kit!” Bel let go of the somewhat stunned movie star long enough to look at his friend. “It’s Mason Radford!”

“No kidding,” Kit managed to say. “He looks just like himself.”

“And you look like an angel,” Mason said.

“What!” Kit’s mouth fell open at hearing Adam’s voice from this actor’s lips.

“Yeah, what?” Bel said. “What’s going on here?”

Mason gently disentangled himself from Bel’s embrace. “I owe Kit an apology,” he said.

“I don’t understand,” Kit said. “I thought Miss Ross wanted to see me.”

“Barbara kindly loaned me her office so I could speak with you in private. I need to explain about last night, and I’m really hoping you’ll forgive me, because I really want to get to know you better.”

Bel reeled back, clutching an imaginary string of pearls. “Now I can die,” he declaimed. “I have witnessed the ultimate romantic moment just like in the movies.”

“Could you expire somewhere else?” Kit asked.

“If I say no, can I stay?”

“No,” Adam and Kit said simultaneously.

“Sheesh, no need to get snippy. I can take a hint.” Bel dipped his head to kiss Kit’s cheek as he passed by. “I’m so happy for you,” he whispered loudly, before sashaying out.

“Well, I’m listening,” Kit said as the doors closed behind Bel.

“More or less from the beginning then: I was supposed to be here last night to do an interview. I just finished filming this movie called *A Knight in Herald Square*. It’s about a group of people that live on the street around the Macy’s... Never mind. That’s not important right now. After we wrapped yesterday, I hung around and watched some raw footage and I got so involved that I lost track of time. I hadn’t even changed out of my costume yet, but I jumped in a limo and scooted on over here.”

“I didn’t recognize you at all.”

“Thanks. That’s a real compliment, but it wasn’t very nice of me to let you think I was someone else. It’s just that... well, you were so cute when you misunderstood my question about the interview, and then you were so kind to me.” Mason paused. “I admit that I get a rush out of acting and that pretending to be Adam Eden in real life was just too tempting for me.”

“Well, you fooled me completely. Your voice sounded different, and... you were wearing brown contacts.”

“Right, and I just got a haircut and a shave this morning. After I left you sleeping. It wasn’t easy.”

“But you managed.”

“I’m sorry. I really am. I started with you on a whim, but... I have to know, Kit. Can you forgive me for deceiving you?”

“Let me ask you something. Is this the kind of character you are? Standing up people for appointments? Taking them for emotional joyrides? So involved in yourself that...”

“Whoa. When you say it like that, I come off as kind of a jerk.”

“Just stating facts.”

“Fair enough. Would you at least give me a second chance?”

“You have to know that I want to. I just need to think for a minute. This is an awful lot to take in all at once.”

“Would it help if I told you that I’m giving Arbiter’s top writer as many hours of my time as she wants and an offer to visit me on the set of my next film? I know what I did was wrong, but the urge to see if I could convince someone off set that I was Adam Eden was just too strong, and once I spoke with you, once I kissed you, I couldn’t stop.”

“I’m that irresistible?”

“To me, you are. I’m so used to people wanting something from me because of who I am, but you wanted to give me something without even knowing my name. That makes you a very special person, whether you know it or not.”

“When you say it like that, I come off as kind of a saint. Which I’m not. I assure you.”

“I wouldn’t want you to be too good to be true.”

“Why don’t you tell me what you do want?”

“I want you to say that you’ll meet me for dinner, or coffee, or anything, so we can get started on knowing each other better.”

“I’ll have dinner with you, and we’ll talk. No promises about anything else.”

“Of course,” Mason hurried to say. “I don’t expect anything else. In fact, I’d like to do another take, if that’s okay. I’d like to say good-bye to Adam Eden and introduce you to Mason Radford. He’s not really such a bad guy once you cut through the bullshit layer.”

Kit held out his hand. “Pleased to meet you, Mr. Radford. I’m a big fan.”

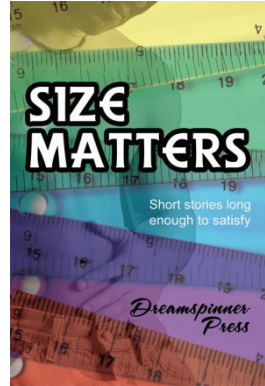
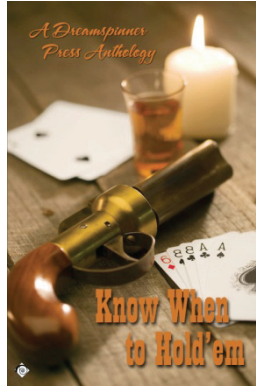
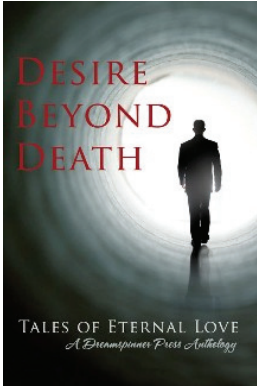
Mason smiled as he took Kit’s hand in his. “Congratulations! You’re the millionth person to say those words and you’ve won dinner with me tonight!”

“Must be my lucky day,” Kit returned Mason’s smile.

“Our lucky day,” Mason corrected as he pulled the other man closer.

Bel moved away from the keyhole and gave the receptionist an arch look. “You can tell Miss Ross that Mr. Radford is going to need her office for a little while longer.”

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Published by
Dreamspinner Press
4760 Preston Road
Suite 244-149
Frisco, TX 75034
<http://www.dreamspinnerpress.com/>

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Released in the United States of America
June, 2008

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