

*Dreamspinner Press Presents*

# NAP-SIZE DREAMS



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Mark walked along the sidewalk in front of the *Laredo*. The steady thrum of bass vibrated out into the cool fall air. Several men, alone and in groups, leaned against the brick wall, chatting and smoking. Sam, a friend from the University, had recommended the *Laredo* as a 'gay friendly' bar without being a pick-up joint. Sam had actually met his partner there, so Mark wasn't sure if it was a reliable endorsement or not, but he was lonely, alone in a new town and inclined to take a chance.

A tall redhead near the door caught Mark's gaze and smiled. Mark returned the greeting, careful not to prolong the eye contact and imply an interest in anything more. Pushing open the scarred wooden door, he was swamped by the increased volume of the music. He paused just inside, letting his eyes and ears adjust to the interior of the bar.

A live band played from a small corner stage, surrounded by an even smaller dance floor. A raised platform in the far corner housed the DJ equipment that obviously filled the time between sets. A long bar covered the back wall, with booths and small tables scattered through the rest of the space. The crowd was mostly men with a handful of women tossed in. A few suggestive dancers and a couple of murky corner-dwellers were the only obviously sexual activity in evidence, which eased a few of Mark's fears.

Strata of smoke hung in the air and Mark took a deep breath, inhaling the familiar scent deep into his lungs. He'd given up smoking for New Year's almost a year ago, but he still missed it. A part of him contemplated buying a pack as he pushed his way to the bar. He could feel the eyes following him. He had been the definition of 'late bloomer', but now, in his early thirties, he'd gotten used to turning heads. The angles and height that had made him gangly and awkward as a teenager

had matured into striking features and a muscular body with broad shoulders and narrow hips. He wiped his sweaty palms down over his thighs, drying them on his jeans as he took a seat at the bar. Tucking his shoulder-length hair behind his ear, he signaled the bartender, ordering a beer and looking around.

With a smile, the bartender flipped a coaster onto the mahogany bar, setting the bottle on top of it. “Nice choice.” He nodded at the imported beer Mark had requested. “Don’t get much call for that one in here.”

Mark’s mouth curved into a genuine reflection of the bartender’s approval. “My dad was born and raised in Europe. He never had much use for American beer.”

“Don’t blame him a bit. Let me know when I can get you another.” The gray-haired man nodded and moved back up the bar, collecting empty glasses and chatting with the other patrons.

Mark’s eyes scanned the length of the bar, stopping with a clang when they reached the slender brunette nursing a beer at the opposite end. Mark shook his head, thinking to clear the image he was certain had to be a hallucination. When the olive-skinned Ganymede remained, Mark had to consider that after fifteen years, fate had brought him face to face with his first crush.

Dylan Miley.

“Fuck,” Mark swore softly, allowing himself to examine every detail of Dylan’s appearance. His former high school classmate hadn’t exceeded the six foot height that he’d been their senior year. His willowy frame had filled out with more mature muscles that implied a fairly rigorous workout regime. Dylan had never been overtly masculine, however. Lithe was a better description. Dark hair spiked out in random directions, defying the short cut that had unsuccessfully attempted to

tame the natural curls. One hand partially hid his face as he stared down at the bar, rolling a drink coaster nervously with his fingers.

Mark motioned to the bartender. "What do you know about the guy at the end of the bar?" he asked, attempting a casual tone.

The bartender looked thoughtfully at Dylan for a minute, shifting his gaze to Mark as he seemed to weigh his response. Finally, he shrugged. "Most of the time, he's easy-going and fun. Name's Dylan. As long as he's drinking beer, he's okay. Buy him a drink. Ask him to dance. Just stay away from him if he's doin' tequila shots."

Mark tilted his head, raising an eyebrow to encourage the man to continue. "Oh?"

"There's a guy. Don't think he's 'out' if you know what I mean. Shows up here sometimes and they're... *together*. The next few nights, Dylan's shooting tequila. I feel bad for him. He doesn't deserve that shit, but who am I to judge."

Mark nodded, knowing the scenario. He'd seen enough of his friends play it out, but he agreed with the bartender. Dylan deserved better.

He considered his options. He could sit here all night and just watch him, maybe learn more about the man Dylan had become. He certainly wouldn't have pegged the star receiver of their high school football team as gay back then. Dylan wasn't likely to recognize him as the geeky guy from high school, but watching wouldn't get him a chance at what he'd always wanted – a chance to really get to know Dylan Miley.

Looking up at the bartender, Mark pointed down the bar. "Send him a beer from me."

"You got it. I'd like to see him smile."

“Me, too,” Mark agreed, waiting for the other man to turn away before adding, “He has a beautiful smile.”

Dylan looked up as the bartender set a fresh beer in front of him. Mark couldn’t hear the exchange, but Dylan looked in his direction, raising the bottle in a salute of thanks. Mark’d bought enough drinks to know that the acceptance of the drink was an understood invitation to come join him, but instead, he smiled in return, swiveling to watch the band. He hadn’t come out tonight looking for a meaningless hook-up and that hadn’t changed. If he had any chance with Dylan, he needed to take things slow.

The band was good, playing a line between country, rock and blues, with the occasional high energy dance song, that kept everybody happy. His eyes repeatedly drifted to the opposite end of the bar, frequently catching Dylan watching him. When his beer was almost empty, a fresh one appeared at his elbow. Lifting it to his lips, he noticed writing across the coaster. *I don’t bite.*

Mark laughed out loud, causing several curious stares. With an imaginary tip of his hat, he silently thanked Dylan for the drink, penning his own response on the reverse side of the square of cardboard. *Call it habit. I was never good enough to sit next to you.*

The bartender delivered his message with a silly grin. If nothing else, the two of them were providing some entertainment for the night. Mark turned back to the band, leaning his elbows back on the bar.

“I can’t possibly know you. You aren’t that forgettable,” Dylan said, sliding onto to the stool beside him. “Jim assures me that you are lucid and appear sane.” He nodded his thanks to the grinning bartender as a new beer appeared at his elbow.

“Apparently I *am* forgettable as you seem to have forgotten me,” Mark disagreed. “Some of us change a lot as we grow older. You, on the other hand, are still as beautiful as ever.”

Dylan stared at Mark’s face, straining for some clue to his identity. Eye widening, he whispered, “So I must know you from when I was younger. I know your eyes... not blue... not gray. They look like you possess a secret. They’ve always looked that way...”

“They probably have. Admitting that it’s the guys in gym class that turn you on and not the girls isn’t something easy to share. I got beat up enough in high school, thank you very much. I didn’t need to give them more ammunition—”

“Mark, right?” Dylan guessed correctly. “You disappeared sometime during senior year.”

“Yeah, my folks moved to upstate New York. I just moved back into the state a few months ago. What are you doing in the big city? I assumed that you’d take over your dad’s business.”

Dylan nodded, relaxing slightly as the conversation took a familiar path. “I did. Still run the original store in Wrightsville. When Dad passed away, I expanded. We’ve got six stores now, including one up here. I’ve got an apartment here in the city and a house back home. It’s only about an hour commute, but... there are *advantages* to the city.”

Mark took another swallow of his beer. “I’m sure there are.”

Jim nudged Mark’s shoulder as he passed by with a bus tray. “I just cleaned off a booth if you two want to snag it.”

Mark raised an eyebrow in query, his heart racing as Dylan stood, accepting his offer. Walking behind him to the table, he couldn’t keep his eyes from sweeping down the elegant line of Dylan’s body from the dark

hair, over the thin t-shirt stretched across his back to the way his worn jeans clung obscenely to his gorgeous ass. Oh, he was in such trouble.

Surprisingly, the conversation didn't stall. Picking right back up with Mark's job teaching creative writing and poetry at the local university, it ranged from casual to personal and from political to religious. Mark had no idea how much time had passed, but a small collection of bottles had grown in the center of their table. Dylan had signaled Jim for another several minutes ago, but the bar had gotten busier as the night wore on. He tried to catch the bartender's eye unsuccessfully, licking his dry lips.

Mark slid his only partially empty beer across the table. "Here. I'll share."

"Really?" Dylan asked, surprised.

"Yeah, I kinda like the idea actually," Mark responded, watching as Dylan raised the bottle to his lips, sealing his mouth over the rim.

"You gotta thing for backwash?" Dylan teased, returning the bottle to a spot equidistant between them.

Mark knew he should keep his mouth shut, but apparently that message didn't make it from his brain to his mouth. "No. I like the idea of your lips where mine have so recently been," he rasped, his fingers circling the dark glass bottle, his thumb stroking it sensually. He watched Dylan's body shiver in response to his words, the nubs of his nipples rising to peaks beneath the cotton of his shirt. His own body hardened in reaction... and anticipation. Being able to affect Dylan so intimately was a strong aphrodisiac. Keeping his eyes locked with Dylan's, he lifted the bottle to his mouth, the tip of his tongue touching the edge before his mouth sealed over the opening.

Dylan's tongue wet his lips, remembering the feel of the cool, smooth glass and strong yeast of the beer. "Are you sure that you're the same Mark I knew in high school?" he asked, shifting on the vinyl seat.

Laughing, Mark smiled as Jim set another round in front of them. "Yeah, same guy. Several inches taller and a few pounds heavier. But still the same bookworm that loved poetry and English literature. I even have several degrees to prove it. Want to go back to my office and check them out?"

"Why, Professor Granger... I do believe you have just invited me up to see your etchings," Dylan drawled, batting his eyelashes coyly. "Apparently poetry wasn't the only thing you studied in college. You didn't have that look in high school," he added, dropping the theatrics.

"What look?" Mark teased, the heat in his eyes increasing until Dylan squirmed again.

"That one! The one that feels like your hands are on my body instead of just your eyes."

Mark leaned forward, tilting his head just slightly until their mouths were only separated by inches. Dylan's lips parted, expecting a kiss. "I promise, Dylan, when my hands touch your body, you won't mistake them for anything else."

When. Not if. There was no doubt in Mark's mind where this was heading. He just had to keep the pace slow enough that Dylan would fall in love with him and not mistake it for whatever he seemed to have with the guy Jim had mentioned earlier. Mark wanted many things from Dylan – a one night stand was not among them.

A soft pleading sound escaped from Dylan's throat. "I think maybe we need to get out of here so you can make good on that promise."



Mark lifted his hand, cupping Dylan's cheek, his thumb brushing the full bottom lip. "I'd like that, but I've got an early class and it's already two in the morning. I need more time than that. Will you meet me somewhere tomorrow night around nine?"

Dylan's eyes dimmed with disappointment. "I'd settle for the time you've got," he offered, reluctant to let Mark go. His hand settled on Mark's thigh, stroking the hard muscles through the soft denim.

"I won't." Mark hooked Dylan's neck, pulling him closer until his face was buried in dark curls and his lips grazed soft skin. "I intend to make love to you all night long..." Dylan shivered against him. "And I'm not sure that will be enough. We might need a full weekend. I've fantasized about you for sixteen years. I've got a lot of catching up to do."

This time the sound that escaped from Dylan was a full whimper. His fingers clenched, digging into Mark's thigh. He slid them higher, barely grazing Mark's obvious erection. "Are you sure I can't persuade you?"

"I'm sure you could," Mark answered honestly, "but I really don't want to rush this. I want to give you the attention you deserve." He could see Dylan getting ready to argue and raised a finger to Dylan's mouth. "Don't. You do deserve it and I won't treat you any other way. Will you meet me tomorrow?"

"Yeah." Dylan nodded slowly. "May as well be here. I'm here most evenings anyway. My apartment is a little quiet and I don't much like TV." He collapsed back in the booth when Mark rose to leave.

"I'll see you tomorrow night," Mark promised, leaning down and brushing his lips over Dylan's in the lightest of kisses. He couldn't resist

just one taste. Dylan's lips clung to his mouth as he pulled away. Turning away, he clenched his hands, determined not to turn back.

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Mark showed up the next night right at nine, slipping onto the same bar stool he'd claimed the night before and waving at Jim.

The bartender looked exactly the same: long gray hair secured with a plain rubber band, tight black t-shirt and worn jeans. The sleeves were a little shorter, revealing the bottom portion of a colorful tattoo. "So, back again. I don't suppose it's coincidence that Dylan's been staring at the door since he arrived?"

"He has?" Mark asked, pleased.

"Yeah. Came in 'bout an hour ago. A little earlier than usual. Said something about not wanting to go home and then come back out, but he's been practically vibrating in his seat. I think he's been looking forward to seeing you all day. I do so love it when I'm right about people." Jim leaned his elbows on the bar, grinning.

"You're gonna take credit for this, are you?"

"Damn straight. So what'll it be tonight?"

Mark looked around the bar, his answer distracted. "Beer. Same as last night. Where is he?"

Jim straightened, rubbing the bar with the towel in his hand and then draping it over his shoulder. "He's in the restroom. You could join him. I won't tell. I could even whip you up an 'Out of Order' sign." He winked playfully.

Laughing, Mark turned back to the bar. “Nah, I think I can wait that long.”

“Suit yourself. One beer comin’ up.”

Before Jim came back with the beer, Mark felt arms wrap around his waist and a warm body press against his back. “You’re late.”

Turning in Dylan’s arms, Mark pulled him between his legs and caught his lips for a slow kiss. “Am not. You were early,” he mumbled, reluctantly parting their lips.

“You should have been so anxious to see me that you let your students out early. They wouldn’t have cared,” Dylan pouted.

Mark laughed. “Probably not, but as I don’t intend to read their papers this weekend and they are going to have to wait until Wednesday for their grades, I thought I’d better not short them tonight.”

“Oh....” Dylan drawled, tilting his head playfully. “Any particular reason you won’t be reading their papers this weekend?”

“I was hoping I might lure you away. I’ve decided that I definitely need a whole weekend to explore...” Mark dropped a kiss on the exposed neck. “Every. Single. Inch. Of. You.” Every word was punctuated by a string of kisses from Dylan’s chin to his ear. He hadn’t been able to think about anything but Dylan all day. By six o’clock, he’d given up taking things slow and reworked his plan to include concentrated quality time instead of quantity of time.

“Explore me. Please.” Dylan shivered, pressing closer to Mark’s radiant warmth.

Mark chuckled, his chest vibrating under Dylan’s hand. “I intend to, but right now I think you should tell Jim what you’re drinking.” He

motioned over Dylan's shoulder at the bartender standing watching them with a grin.

Dylan turned his head, glaring. "Fuck off, Jim."

The bartender threw back his head and laughed. "So the usual then, huh?"

Dylan glared even harder as Mark joined in the laughter, pushing against his shoulder and trying to shrug away.

"Oh, no...." Mark grinned, holding Dylan close until his struggles ceased. Nuzzling his neck, he placed a soft kiss just below Dylan's ear. "One drink," he promised. "One drink and then maybe we can go back to my place and spend some time alone."

Dylan relaxed into the secure embrace. "Thank God. After last night ... I was beginning to think you might not want to ... to ..."

Mark turned Dylan's face, cradling it between his palms and tilting it up so their eyes could meet. The insecurity in the dark gaze wasn't something he ever expected to see from Dylan. Something or someone had eroded the easy confidence of the star running back. Silently, he cursed the unknown lover. "Believe me; I want to. You've haunted my dreams for decades. I'm just not sure I trust myself alone with you."

The honest admission returned the smile to Dylan's face. Winding his arms around Mark's neck, he molded his body to Mark's. "Why don't you let me be the judge of your behavior?"

Stifling a groan, Mark's hands gripped Dylan's hips, intending to place some distance between them. Instead, they held the slender body locked against him. "I think that's like putting the wolf on watch over the chicken yard."

Dylan's lips grazed Mark's jaw, dropping a trail of open mouthed kisses down his neck. "Are you calling me a wolf?" he purred.

"No, I'm calling myself a chicken," Mark laughed.

"What are you afraid of?" Dylan asked, becoming serious.

"Messing this up," Mark replied honestly. "Going too far, too fast and scaring you off." *You breaking my heart ... again*, he added silently.

"I'll tell you if you go too fast, but I'm more likely to whine because you're going too slow."

"How about if we meet halfway? Let's go claim the booth we had last night, have a couple drinks and then I'll let you drive me home. I walked over from the university after class."

"I get you all to myself all weekend, right?" Dylan asked.

Mark pledged, "I promise to leave all my inhibitions at home."

"Since we are going back to your place tonight, I think I'd rather you left your inhibitions somewhere else. Now tell me where you are taking me this weekend." Dylan practically bounced on the way over to the booth while Mark followed with an indulgent smile on his face. He could get addicted to making Dylan smile.

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More than an hour passed quickly, Dylan distracted by the colorful stories Mark shared from the years he'd lived in New York and traveled around Europe and South America. An extended yawn from Mark finally cued him to look at his watch. "Damn, it's almost eleven o'clock. Still want me to take you home?"

“You don’t have to if you don’t want to. It’s not that far,” Mark said, starting to slide out of the booth.

Dylan followed him. “Oh, no. You aren’t getting out of your promise that easily.”

Mark extended his hand, waiting for Dylan to take it and then threading their fingers together and leading him towards the door. “I guess I’ll just have to suffer through,” he sighed, smiling as Jim winked at him from behind the bar.

“Asshole.” Dylan poked him with his free hand, breaking into run across the parking lot and using the momentum to swing Mark against his car and press suggestively against him. Their eyes locked, Dylan’s mouth moving steadily closer. “Kiss me,” he whispered, stopping just short of joining their lips and waiting for Mark to finish closing the distance.

Mark surged forward, their mouths colliding in a crash of need. Dylan whimpered, his body bowing against Mark. A deep growl rumbled up from Mark’s chest, his hands dropping to cup Dylan’s ass and pull him up firmly against him. “Fuck,” Mark cursed, swapping their positions and pushing Dylan back into the car to gain more friction.

“Yes, please.” One of Dylan’s legs pressed between Mark’s, his hands clenching in the soft fabric of Mark’s shirt.

Opening his stance, Mark rocked forward as Dylan’s thigh pressed up between his legs. “We’ve got to—” A small cry escaped as Dylan’s mouth closed over a hard nipple, biting down through the layer of fabric. “Oh, fuck... we should stop....”

“Why?” Dylan asked, his words muffled as his mouth continued to explore Mark’s chest and shoulder.

“Gonna come if we keep this up.” Mark’s hands lifted Dylan higher, until one leg lifted from the ground, wrapping around Mark’s hip.

“And that would be bad?” Dylan asked, his body matching Mark’s thrust for thrust. His hands sank into Mark’s long, dark hair, guiding their mouths back together.

“That ... that would ....” Mark dragged his lips away, sucking in a deep breath. “That would be inevitable,” he sighed, his lips seeking Dylan’s again.

Dylan hummed as their motions intensified and grew erratic. “Oh fuck! Mark. Mark!” he cried as his body shook and trembled, his climax leaving his knees weak.

The sound of Dylan screaming his name set off Mark’s climax, each press of his hips ratcheting his pleasure higher until it came close to crossing the line into pain. Collapsing forward, Mark’s weight kept Dylan pinned to the side of the car as they shuddered through the aftershocks.

“Damn,” Mark swore as he finally regained enough breath to speak.

“Yeah,” Dylan agreed, trembling in his arms.

They stood wrapped around each other for several minutes. “If that’s your idea of a kiss, I may need to take out some extra insurance before driving you home.”

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Falling through the front door of the two-story townhouse, Dylan gasped as Mark’s fingers slid under his shirt, finding an aching nipple and twisting it mercilessly. “Fuck!” he swore, his head clunking back against

the wall. They'd promised to keep their hands to themselves on the ride home.

But had failed miserably – leaving both of them wound up and frustrated at the limited access to each other's bodies.

"So sensitive," Mark whispered, his fingers working Dylan's belt free while his hand stroked the bulge of his erection through the denim. "I can't wait to watch you come...."

Dylan shuddered, his knees threatening to give out. "You watched me come less than ten minutes ago."

Mark brushed their bodies together in the lightest of touches, scattering kissed down Dylan's neck. "Pressed up against a car in a dark parking lot doesn't count. I couldn't properly appreciate the experience."

"Hell, using that criteria, I'm practically a virgin," Dylan chuckled, his hands grasping at Mark's hips, trying to pull him closer.

An indulgent smile spread across Mark's face. "I'm going to love you so thoroughly you won't remember what you're comparing it to," he promised, cradling Dylan's cheek. "Bedroom?" he suggested.

"God, yes," Dylan answered, his hands continuing to roam as they stumbled down the hall.

Pushing him towards the bed, Mark gently laid his body on top of Dylan's, acting like he was planning on doing nothing but kissing him until dawn. The thorough exploration continued as Mark's lips moved from Dylan's mouth, along his jaw, down his neck and up behind his ears.

Dylan panted, obviously trying to control his reaction to the intimate exploration. When sharp teeth grazed his collarbone, he cried



out, thrusting up, his fingers clenching at Mark's ass. "Please, Mark," he gasped.

Mark didn't reply but moved lower on Dylan's body, pushing the sides of his shirt out of the way and lavishing the same attention on his chest that he had paid to his face. When his mouth finally settled over the erect nipple he'd been teasing earlier, Dylan groaned. Mark's lips curved into a smile against the smooth skin. Capturing the nub with his teeth, he bit gently, soothing the sting with his tongue and then sucking it back into his mouth. Moving to the opposite nipple he repeated the pattern.

With every suck, Dylan thrust. "Holy fuck, you've got to stop that... oh God, on second thought, don't stop," he begged.

Mark could feel the urgency in Dylan's erratic movements. "Not going to, but I do want you out of these jeans."

"Fuck, yeah." Dylan struggled to rid himself of his clothes while Mark continued to tease the hard ridge of his erection through the denim. Even through layers of cloth, the stimulation was almost too much. "Gonna come," he warned, incapable of stopping his hips from pushing into Mark's touch.

"Do it," Mark mumbled, managing to push the jeans open. His mouth closed over the head of Dylan's cock and he sucked the shaft deep, his hands slipping inside the loose denim and kneading the clenching ass.

Dylan was coming within seconds, his hips thrusting helplessly. He whimpered as Mark used his tongue to gently clean the quivering flesh, baring his lover completely in the process. Dylan gasped as Mark's naked body stretched out beside him. "Damn, when did you do that?" he asked, still a little dazed from his climax.

“Doesn’t take long to strip when you have this kind of motivation,” Mark said, nuzzling the sensitive spot behind Dylan’s ear. “How do you want to do this?”

Dylan turned, rubbing his body against the soft hair that covered Mark’s chest and legs. His chest rumbled with a sound resembling a deep purr as their legs slid together, tangling and pulling each other closer. “I want you to fuck me,” he requested, cuddling in the strong arms. “Deep and slow.”

“I think I can manage that... though the slow might be a strain eventually,” Mark teased lovingly.

“Pretty sure I won’t mind as long as you’re inside me,” Dylan murmured, still not completely down from his post-orgasmic high.

Mark chuckled as Dylan continued to rub against him, his mouth attaching to whatever patch of skin was closest. “Ok... but you get to do at least *some* of the work next time.”

Mark rolled Dylan over onto his back, settling between his legs. “I still want to see you.”

Dylan nodded, grinning impishly. “I understand it doesn’t count otherwise.”

“Of course, that would mean we’d have to do it again...”

“Nothing to keep up from doing it again even if it does count,” Dylan shot back, his eyes rolling back as Mark’s fingers started to explore him. “Fu-uck,” he hissed, his hips pulling off the bed.

When the fingertip brushed his entrance, he moaned, “Want you inside me so badly I ache.”

Mark's head fell to Dylan's shoulder, his body trembling. Carefully he breeched the tight ring of muscle, finger circling... stroking. With every brush of his fingers, the sated cock lying against Dylan's belly began to swell and fill. When Dylan was writhing underneath him, fucking himself on three of Mark's fingers, he finally relented, quickly donning a condom and positioning himself at the glistening opening. "Open your eyes, Dylan," he requested, holding himself still, poised to actually fulfill a cherished fantasy. He had to know that Dylan was with him.

Dark lashes fluttered up only to close again in a long blink as Mark sunk deep inside his body. With great effort, Dylan forced his eyes open, watching the expressions on Mark's face as he pushed deeper. Biting his lip, Mark attempted to keep his promise, setting a slow and steady pace, each thrust into the hot, clinging velvet of Dylan's body threatening to spill him over the edge into a freefall.

"God, I'm gonna come again," Dylan moaned, wrapping his legs tightly around Mark's hips and pulling him close for a kiss.

Mark reached his own climax a half a breath before Dylan, the slow rhythm of his thrusts faltering and slowing to a gentle rocking deep inside his lover as their bodies cascaded through a series of peaks. "Damn."

"Yeah. So that qualify as *real* in your book?"

"Oh, yeah." Mark shifted slightly, hissing as he slid from Dylan's body. Dylan groaned in protest, clutching at Mark's hips reflexively. Without losing an inch of contact, Mark rolled to the side, pulling Dylan with him. Dylan hummed his contentment, settling against Mark's chest and pulling a leg over his hip to wrap himself in his lover.

Mark pressed a kiss into the mussed hair. "Want me to get a towel to clean us up?" he offered, not moving to follow through on his suggestion.

Dylan shook his head, burrowing deeper into Mark's embrace. "Nope, happy right here. I can live with being a little sticky."

Mark held the man in his arms a little tighter. He'd told himself for years that the fantasies he'd harbored about Dylan were blown out of proportion by the wild emotional rollercoaster of youth.

He was wrong.

The reality of the man in his arms and their chemistry together had just eclipsed every dream he'd ever had. Now he had to work on Dylan feeling the same way about him.

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Mark swung himself over a stool and Jim made a beeline from the opposite end of the bar. "You should call Dylan and arrange to meet him somewhere else tonight," the bartender started without preamble.

Mark shook his head, confused. "What? Why?"

"Just trust me. You don't—"

Jim broke off as Dylan walked in the door. Mark smiled and started to stand to go meet him when he caught a glimpse of familiar face out of the corner of his eye.

Paul. Paul Fuckin' Garcia.

Mark shook his head. Was he never going to be rid of his adolescent nemesis?

The captain of their high school football team. Paul hadn't lost an inch of the muscular six foot four frame he'd had at eighteen. If anything,

his biceps appeared even bigger, Mark noticed with a sense of surreal detachment as one strong arm reached out and curled around Dylan's waist, stopping his progress towards the bar.

Dylan hadn't noticed Mark sitting in his usual place – hadn't even looked over. Mark'd been early and Dylan wouldn't even be expecting him to be there yet. Dylan looked bemused as his back was pulled against Paul's chest. Paul dipped his head, whispering in Dylan's ear.

Inside Mark screamed, *Tell him to go to hell. Tell him you're here to meet me.*

But Dylan did no such thing. Paul continued to whisper and Dylan's face softened, his mouth parted, the emotion in his eyes hidden by lowered lashes. Mark watched as Paul guided Dylan out of the bar, the pain in his chest making it impossible to breathe. Time seemed to dissolve and he was sixteen again, standing in the hallway outside the English III classroom, watching as Dylan walked away with his teammates, laughing about acing his poetry project... the project Dylan and Mark had worked on together for six weeks.

An arm thrown casually around Dylan's neck, teenaged Paul had asked who his geek partner was and Dylan had replied, "I can't remember his name. Does it really matter? I passed."

Jim's voice snapped Mark back to the present. "Let me buy you a beer."

"Tequila. Straight."

Jim turned away, shaking his head. "I was afraid you were going to say that."

After five shots – or was it six? – Mark's vision was getting blurry around the edges. The gyrating bodies on the dance floor seemed to

blend into each other as they moved and he found himself swaying along with their motion until he started to feel sick. Unfortunately, the image of Paul and Dylan – ever the pair, quarterback and receiver – was still crystal clear. Turning back to the bar gingerly, he signaled Wendy for another shot. The last shot Jim had poured, Mark could see that the older man was about to cut him off. A part of him craved the fight, but he didn't really want to fight with Jim so he'd started slipping orders to Wendy. A college student, she wasn't about to say no to the bill he slipped her with each order, telling her to 'keep the change'.

"Hey. You look like you're having a rough night."

The deep baritone came from over Mark's shoulder and it was an effort to turn around and see who it was attached to. When Mark finally got his eyes focused, he realized it was the tall redhead that had smiled at him outside the door on the very first night he'd come into the *Laredo*. "Hi. Yeah, I've had better."

"I'm Scott," the man introduced, extending his hand. "We could get out of here. I could make it better."

"I don't think I'd be very scintillating company tonight."

"I really didn't approach you for conversation. You don't have to talk to fuck."

Mark narrowed his eyes on the lanky redhead. He was everything that Dylan wasn't - or more rightly Dylan was everything Scott wasn't. The man had a point. Fucking some stranger through the mattress at a local hotel sure as hell beat the night of self-pity and severe alcohol abuse he had planned. "Sure. Why not?"

Scott squeezed Mark's shoulder. "I'll drive, but I gotta piss before we go."

"Probably would be best," Mark conceded, his mind not making it farther than, 'I'll drive.' He turned back to the bar and swallowed the rest of his drink.

Jim's hand reached out and caught his before the empty glass hit the bar. "Two wrongs don't make a right."

Mark glared at him. "So I should just go home and drink 'til I pass out, trying to get the image of them out of my head? A meaningless fuck sounds like a lot more fun."

"Suit yourself. Just ask yourself which is going to make you feel worse in the morning," Jim suggested, moving away to pour a beer.

Fuck. Mark took a deep breath, forcing his eyes to focus on his hand where it lay on the bar. He poked at a bead of water, watching it follow his finger as he painted a circuitous trail on the lacquered mahogany.

"Call me a cab," Mark said, voice flat, when the bartender returned. "I'll meet it outside. Tell Scott I'm sorry. I had to go." Rising to his feet, he stumbled, weaving his way towards the door.

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Mark woke, head pounding, an incessant ringing in his ears. "Fuck," he cursed, burying his head under his pillow, trying to block out the noise. "It can *not* be fuckin' morning already."

As sleep (or drunken stupor) receded, he realized that the pounding, like the ringing, was coming from an outside source, not his head. Tentatively he probed his temples with his fingers. His head felt tender, almost bruised. Combined with the queasy feeling in his stomach and the dead, furry animal in his mouth, he definitely had the beginnings

of a first rate hang over. Turning his head gingerly, he peeked out from under the pillow, searching for the red glow of his alarm clock.

Three in the morning.

What the fuck?

Slowly, Mark swung his legs over the side of the bed, lifting himself into a vertical position. Waiting for the room to quit spinning, he braced himself on the side of the mattress. Maybe whoever was pounding on his door in the middle of the night would give up and he could just go back to sleep.

A fresh chorus of knocking disabused him of that notion. Reaching for the water on his nightstand, he swallowed four aspirin and chased them with a handful of saltines that he'd had the foresight to leave within easy reach. Taking slow and careful breaths, he waited to see if the crackers were going to stay down before attempting to stand. He'd have called out, 'Hold your horses. I'm coming.' But he could feel the words reverberating in his brain just from thinking them. He didn't need to yell them to know that his headache wouldn't withstand the volume.

Making his way down the hall, one hand on the wall for balance, Mark briefly considered that Scott might have followed him home. That was ludicrous, of course, considering the red-head had no idea where he lived. It had to be Dylan, but why would he be here... in the middle of the night... after leaving with Paul?

The pounding ceased when Mark snapped on the porch lights. Flipping the locks, he opened the door, squinting into the yellow light that streamed into the dark foyer.

He was right.



Dylan stood on the other side of the door.

He looked like shit. His normally tan skin was pale and his eyes looked haunted. His hair and clothes were disheveled, like he'd been sleeping in them. He stared at Mark. "Now that I'm here, I don't know what to say," he said, his voice soft and sad. His fingers ran through his hair, giving Mark a clue as to how it got in its present state.

"Why are you here, Dylan?"

"You weren't supposed to be there. He wasn't supposed to be there. I thought I could... and then I got back and you were gone. Jim was fuckin' pissed at me—"

Trying to follow the flood of words was making Mark's head hurt. Holding up a hand to stop the disjointed flow, he said, "Stop. Just stop, okay? I need coffee... or another drink. Come inside."

Neither man spoke as Mark moved carefully around the kitchen, starting a pot of coffee and fishing more saltines out of the pantry.

Dylan finally broke the silence. "You need protein."

"What?"

"You need protein... for the hangover. Tequila, right? Trust me. I have some experience. Just sit." Dylan motioned to the table. Efficiently, he set about searching Mark's refrigerator, selecting the ingredients for a simple cheese omelet, pouring a cup of coffee when it was ready and setting it in front of Mark without saying a word. Lifting the pan from the burner, he slipped the omelet onto a plate, adding two slices of bread from the toaster and setting that in front of Mark as well. Pulling out the chair opposite, he sat, lifting his own cup of coffee to his lips and blowing off the steam.

Mark watched as Dylan took over his kitchen, wondering if he was actually having an incredibly vivid, tequila-induced dream. Deciding that either way the omelet smelled good, he lifted his fork, not putting it down until the plate was empty. He was about to ask again what Dylan was doing here when Dylan spoke first.

“I owe you an apology.”

Mark tensed. This is where Dylan told him that he loved Paul and was sorry for leading Mark on. At least he’d had the decency to come apologize. All of sudden, the omelet felt like a rock in his throat. He swallowed convulsively in an attempt to keep it down. “It’s okay.” *No, it’s fuckin’ not!* “I understand. You and Paul have been together a long time.” *Why? Why did you let me think—*

Dylan was around the table, on his knees between Mark’s feet so they were eye-level, before Mark could get the rest of his sentence out. “No! No, you don’t understand. I don’t want Paul. I only left with him tonight because I thought I had time. I didn’t think you’d be there that early. I thought I had enough time to tell him we were through and then get back to meet you.”

“But... what...” Mark broke off, his brain struggling to keep up with his half of the conversation.

“He was my first lover. I didn’t want to tell him in the middle of a bar that I’d fallen in love with someone else.”

First lover. Fallen in love. Mark felt like his mind was only processing about every fifth word, but the ‘fallen in love’ got his attention. “You love me?”

Dylan smiled, cradling Mark’s face between his hands, pulling it gently forward for a chaste kiss. “Utterly. If I was the poet, I’d say it better.”

"I guess I'm the poet in this relationship, but I don't think I'm capable of doing any better at the moment."

"The tequila?"

"The shock. You *really* love me?"

Dylan's eyes searched Mark's. "Yeah, and it would really help to hear you love me back. Please tell me I didn't fuck up the first real relationship I've ever had."

"We have a relationship?"

The hopeful look on Dylan's face began to fade. "I thought we did. Was I imagining things?"

Mark's brain finally managed to move past the revelation that Dylan loved him. "No! I love you, too. I just never dreamed you might love me back. I thought you were coming to tell me you couldn't see me anymore because of Paul. Jim told me that first night that you had a long-term lover and when I saw Paul—"

Dylan cut off the rest of the words with his mouth. Mark was thrown back in the chair by the force of the kiss, Dylan pressed tight to his chest. The kiss started almost frantic and Mark let Dylan lead ... take what he wanted ... needed. As the initial intensity started to subside, he gentled the exploration, his fingers sliding deep into Dylan's hair, showing him exactly how much he loved him. Finally he pulled away, staring at the flushed, dazed look on Dylan's face and smiling that he had put it there. "I think I fell in love with you when I was sixteen and it's only gotten deeper even though we were apart."

Dylan's eyes fell, his expression showing his discomfort. "I wish I could tell you that. I was really stupid back then."

Using the fingers still cradling Dylan's head, Mark tipped it up, forcing Dylan to meet his gaze. "Your love now is all I want. I don't care about the past."

"But I was so shitty to you. And Paul—"

"He had you then. I have you now. I'll take that deal."

"Really? I owe you an explanation."

"Jim told me some of it. He didn't know Paul by name, thank God, or I might never have approached you. I think I have a pretty good idea how it worked and unless you want to tell me, I really don't need to know more. I'd much rather go lie down and hold you."

Dylan smiled, his hand running up Mark's chest under his shirt. "Me, too. Think you might feel good enough to do more than sleep?" he asked hopefully.

Resting his forehead against Dylan's, Mark grinned back. "Maaaybe... You love me. It's going to take more than a little tequila to keep me from showing you how completely it's returned."

"So what are we waiting for?" Dylan asked, getting to his feet and pulling Mark up with him.

Mark chuckled, tugging Dylan close for a kiss. "I love you."

"Show me."

~~~~~

Mark rocked back, skimming the expanse of smooth tan skin with his fingertips. His thumb circled a dark nipple, then the other. His mouth

followed the invisible trail, settling over a puckered disk and sucking strongly until Dylan squirmed. Pinning him to the bed with his hands, Mark caught the nipple between his teeth.

Dylan's hips bucked up. "Fuck... Oh yeah...."

Straddling the thrashing body, Mark settled across Dylan's legs. "Relax," he murmured, his cheek brushing down the trembling stomach to Dylan's navel, his tongue probing the sensitive opening. "God, you taste good. I'm so hard...."

Trying to catch his breath, Dylan's words came out short and choppy, "So do something about it. Please..."

"I want to watch you come first." Mark reached for a bottle of lube they'd left out the night before.

"I can come with you inside me," Dylan argued.

Mark groaned at the image, clenching his teeth to keep from lifting Dylan's legs to his shoulders and fucking him blue right then. "I hope so, but you're gonna have to be patient."

"I am *not* a patient man."

Rubbing his fingers together to warm the slippery gel, Mark chuckled. "Guess you'll have to learn then."

Dylan look poised to start a new argument as Mark's finger brushed between the cheeks of his ass, circling the opening to his body. "Oh yeah," he sighed, arching into the touch.

"Tell me what you want," Mark said, his voice pitched low.

“Suck me,” Dylan asked, eyes locked on Mark’s. “Suck my cock while your fingers stretch me.”

In spite of the tender feelings Mark felt strengthening with every touch they shared, Dylan’s words made his gut clench. With a half smile, he bowed his head, playfully tonguing the head of Dylan’s cock while his finger rimmed and just barely penetrated the other man’s body.

Dylan tried to curse him, but every time he tried to form the words, Mark’s finger would slip a little deeper. Giving up, he collapsed back onto the pillows, surrendering his body to Mark.

Mark felt the tension leave Dylan’s body and quit teasing, sliding two fingers deep into the flexing passage just as he swallowed, taking all of Dylan’s cock into his throat. With a throaty groan and violent shudder, Dylan came, whimpering as Mark continued to suck him, keeping him partially hard.

“I love you,” Dylan whispered as Mark crawled up his body, claiming his lips in a soul-stealing kiss. His legs came up and circled Mark’s hips, his body arching against his lover’s groin.

Mark sank into the welcoming cradle of Dylan’s legs, feeling for the first time in years that he was exactly where he belonged. The restless stirring in his gut that had kept him moving from city to city quieted, replaced by a warm glow of peaceful contentment. Cupping the beautiful face gently in one hand, Mark’s eyes connected with Dylan’s wide brown ones. He brought up all the love he felt to shine from his eyes.

Dylan gasped, his lips curving into a soft smile. His fingers wound in Mark’s hair, pulling him close for a kiss. His foot rubbed against the back of Mark’s thigh, pulling his body in tight. “Make love to me, Mark,” he whispered, feeling the tremor that flowed through Mark’s body.

"I never thought I'd get to hold you this way," Mark said, nuzzling Dylan's neck.

"Can't change what's meant to be," Dylan breathed as Mark's lips met his. Mark's kiss made him feel treasured ... worshiped. There was no urgent plundering of his mouth, just the thorough, gentle caress of discovery.

Mark's hands mapped every inch of Dylan's body, carefully removing clothing as he went. He touched, teased, and stroked until Dylan was trembling with need. One by one, he acted out each fantasy he'd treasured through the years. He realized now that he'd never completely given up hope – a part of him knew that they were meant to be.

Dylan whimpered and writhed as Mark pleased his body. The experience was so different from the hurried, explosive, furtive sex that he'd shared with Paul that he felt like he was experiencing sex for the first time. The incredible love, belonging, and acceptance he felt in this moment highlighted what had been missing. The feeling of Mark's fingers, moving inside of him, stroking the hidden pleasure zones of his body, brought him to complete hardness again. "Need you," he pleaded, trying to pull Mark closer.

When Dylan was open and ready, Mark slid into him in one smooth stroke, pausing, buried deep inside the tight passage, reveling in the feeling of connectedness. "I don't ever want to be without you again. Think you'd consider moving to the city fulltime?"

Dylan groaned into Mark's mouth. Planting his feet on the bed, he rocked his hips, causing Mark's shaft to slide slowly in his body. "Ahh... fuck yes," he breathed.

Mark caught his hips, pinning them to the bed and starting to move inside him with slow, steady thrusts. Every movement stroked all

the right spots. No one had ever given Dylan pleasure that came anywhere near this.

Mark's eyes were open and filled with such tenderness that Dylan couldn't look away even when a perfectly placed thrust made his eyes roll back and his vision blur. Mark was breathing hard and trembling.

Dylan knew he was close but was holding back, trying to prolong their pleasure. His breath caught in his throat. "Oh, God ... so good ...."

He reached up, catching Mark's head in his hands and pulling their mouths together. Mark moaned into Dylan's mouth and shuddered, but still he held himself back. Dylan pulled his mouth away, tugging softly on Mark's bottom lip. "Come for me, Mark. I want to feel you come inside me."

"With me, Dylan ... want you with me," Mark panted. Mark's hand surrounded Dylan's hard flesh, applying firm, insistent strokes. Dylan felt the familiar rush building in his body. His hands came down and gripped Mark's ass, pulling him even deeper. Mark moaned loudly, his head thrown back, mouth open and eyes clamped shut. His thrusts were fast and irregular.

"I'm close!" Dylan cried. "Open your eyes ... watch me ... watch what you do to me ... only you ... only you make me feel this way." His body stiffened as he came, thrusting repeatedly into Mark's hand. Moans softened into whimpers as his flesh became hypersensitive.

"Ah fuck ... ah ... Dylan!" Mark groaned, spilling himself in his lover's body. His arms gave out and he collapsed, trembling, on top of Dylan.

"Wow," Dylan said when he'd caught his breath. Mark's body was lying heavy against his chest, but he didn't mind. Dylan combed his



fingers through Mark's damp hair, pushing it back from his face. "That was perfect."

Mark lifted his head and looked up, a slow grin spreading across his face. "That was making love," Mark stated simply, sliding to the side to remove the bulk of his weight.

"Never done that before," Dylan answered honestly. "After all this time ... I've been a real idiot."

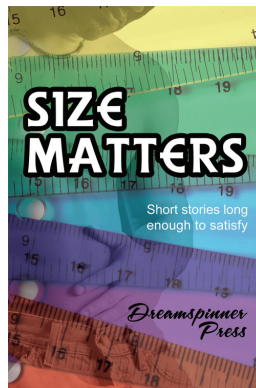
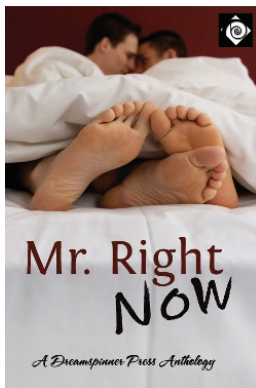
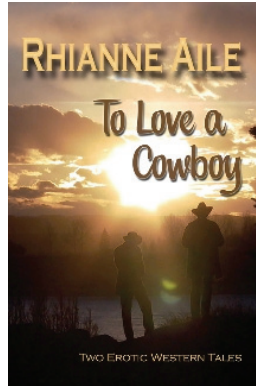
Mark placed a soft kiss on Dylan's mouth to shut him up. Shifting until their bodies fit, he pulled Dylan's leg over his hip. "I love you, Dylan."

"I love you, Mark," Dylan whispered, feeling his heart swell. The last of the emptiness inside of him vanished as Mark's lips met his.

Nuzzling Mark's neck, he whispered, "All of a sudden, I'm looking forward to tomorrow coming."

"I think tomorrow already came," Mark chuckled weakly.

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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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