



AT  
LONG  
LAST

SHAWN LANE

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by

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At Long Last  
An Amber Quill Press Book

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**Also by Shawn Lane**

*It's Only Make-Believe*  
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*The Squire*

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# Chapter 1

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The right wall of Preston Reynolds's office vibrated and shook the framed awards and diplomas hanging there. Loud bass and percussion warbled from the direction of the room next door.

Across from his desk sat a little old lady with perfectly coiffed gray hair, twisting her gnarled hands and casting glances at the moving wall. Biting her lip, Mrs. Windham shifted in the chair.

Preston cleared his throat and attempted his best reassuring smile. "Sorry about that, Mrs. Windham. Now, then, you needn't be concerned about your grandson. I'll go and see him in lockup this afternoon. Everything will be okay."

She nodded. "I've been told Trask and Reynolds is the best at what they do. My grandson is completely innocent, but naturally our family is concerned. So many get railroaded by the courts."

"I'll make sure he gets the best defense possible, Mrs. Windham."

The wall jumped with a particularly loud blast of bass. Mrs. Windham's startled gaze went once more toward the room next door.

Preston stood and approached her chair, helping her up. "I'll be in touch as soon as I've been to see him. You can call me anytime with that number on the card I gave you."

Mrs. Windham allowed herself to be ushered out of his office and down the hall to the reception area.

"Wendy, see that Mrs. Windham's parking charges are waived," Preston said to the pretty, African American receptionist.

"No problem, Mr. Reynolds."

The double glass doors of the front office opened and Preston's law partner and best friend, Jack Trask, walked in. The tall blond man dressed in a pinstriped navy suit similar to his own smiled warmly at Mrs. Windham.

"Good Morning. Good morning, Preston, Wendy."

Wendy murmured, "Good morning." She cast her eyes down at the parking ticket Mrs. Windham had handed to her, but not before Preston noticed the sparkle in her dark eyes when her gaze briefly met Jack's.

"I'll talk to you later, Mrs. Windham," Preston said, then walked toward his office. He took a few steps farther and stood outside the closed door of the office blaring rock music.

"Hey, what's up?" Jack came down the hall, removing his suit jacket. "Something wrong?" He nodded to the closed door.

"This is your brother's first day and already he's a pain in the ass."

"Yeah, I know it's going to be an adjustment. Dad insisted we give the kid a chance."

Kenneth Trask was the third partner in the law firm, but he was semi-retired now. He'd been the one to hire Scott, Jack's little brother, as a private investigator and accountant for the firm. Preston had been somewhat surprised as Ken seemed to feel his youngest son was something of a flake.

"You want me to talk to him?" Jack asked.

"No, I'll handle it." Preston reached for the door handle. "Um, something going on between you and Wendy?"

"Why would you ask that?" Jack raised a blond brow.

"Office romances are never a good idea, Jack."

"Duly noted, but nothing is going on." Jack rolled his eyes and headed for his own office.

Shrugging, Preston tapped on the door. After a few moments of silence he figured it was unlikely Scott even heard him. He pounded his fist.

"Yo."

Preston supposed that was Scott's version of "come in." He twisted the handle.

Scott Trask was flung across the desk in the room on his stomach, his jean-clad ass sticking up, the tops of his cheeks clearly visible. The white T-shirt he wore had bunched up underneath him. His head was missing.

"What the hell?" Preston walked to the stereo on a small table against the wall their offices shared and pushed the off button. Silence at last.

Scott's head shot up from the other side of the desk, by the chair. His face was bright red and he held a box of paper clips in his hand.

"Oh, hi, Pres." Scott lifted himself on his two muscular arms, then scooted down the desk, his ass prominently displayed. His feet touched the ground and he turned to face Preston.

"Mind telling me what you were doing?" Preston asked, ignoring the way his mouth went dry at the display. He was not going to analyze the absurd way he reacted to Scott. *No way.*

Scott grinned. "I dropped a box of paper clips."

"Wouldn't it have been easier...never mind." Preston shook his head. His gaze raked over Jack's little brother. It had been years since he'd seen Scott. In fact, the kid was nineteen to his thirty when last he'd been in town. Six years later he was back and now Ken had given him the job.

Sure, Ken had talked to Preston about it. He could hardly refuse to allow Scott to be hired. Ken had given Preston his own shot there at the firm. But he didn't have to like it.

Shorter than either his brother or his father, Scott stood maybe an inch shorter than Preston's own six feet. Scott's hair was a darker shade of blond than Jack's, too. He had the same violet blue eyes as the rest of the Trasks.

For some reason Preston had never thought about too carefully, he found Scott to be just about the best looking man he'd ever seen. Six years ago, he'd even had a few inappropriate dreams about Scott. Wet dreams. Scott was gay, but Preston wasn't so there was absolutely no reason to be dreaming of Scott that way. And yet...Preston appreciated the way Scott's biceps bulged under his thin T-shirt.

"We wear business attire here," Preston said, indicating Scott's casual clothing.

"Yeah, yeah. I know. Dad told me. I'm going suit shopping later today."

"I see. Listen, could you keep the music way down from now on? I had a client in my office this morning."

Scott tilted his head to the right and hit his left ear.

"What are you doing now?"

"I think I got water in my ear when I showered this morning." Scott straightened. "Wow, it's been a while, huh? Two, three years?"

"Six."

Scott nodded. "Hmm. You shouldn't be such a stranger, Pres."

"You've been the one living in New York, not me."

He grinned, showing two dimples. "Oh yeah. Well, anyway, I'm starved. Where are you buying me breakfast?"

"Breakfast? I'm not buying you breakfast. I just came in here to tell you keep it down."

"Yeah, you are. There's a diner down the street. I saw it on the way here. We'll go there." Scott approached him and pushed him toward the still open door of his office. "You do want me to help prove Mrs. Windham's grandson innocent, don't you?"

\* \* \* \*

Scotty kept one eye fixed on the plastic menu the waitress had handed him, but his other he used to focus on Preston. Man, the guy was hotter than he was six years ago. Was that *even* possible? Oh yeah, he was hungry all right. For the straight man sitting across from him in the booth.

Dark curly hair, brown soulful eyes. Full, sensuous mouth. Perfect chiseled jaw. *Oh fuck*. He was getting hard.

Scotty cleared his throat, shifted on the bench. "What are you going to have?"

"Hmm. Pancakes, I suppose." Preston set his menu down and reached for his coffee. "You?"

"I'm pretty hungry. I'm going to have eggs, bacon, sausage, potatoes and toast."

"I'm not feeding you all week. Just breakfast."

Scotty grinned. He loved the way the corners of Preston's mouth quirked up. "I'm still growing."

"You're twenty-five. You aren't still growing. Not to mention that stuff is terrible for you."

"Whatever. Here comes the waitress." Scotty rattled off his order and then Preston gave his. She hurried away.

"What are you really doing at Trask and Reynolds, Scott?"

Scotty dipped his tea bag in the lukewarm water the waitress had brought him. "Working, just like you. I needed a job. Dad suggested I work for you guys doing the accounting and investigating. What's so strange about that?"

"I've never known you to be serious about anything."

Scotty frowned, trying to push aside the annoyance Preston's words caused. "You knew me when I was nineteen, Pres. I've changed since then."

Preston rolled his eyes. "Sure you have. For the record my name is Preston, not Pres. If you've changed so much, what was that this morning?"

"What was what?"

"The blaring rock music coming from your office. You rattled my damn teeth."

"I think it does you some good to be rattled occasionally, Pres." Scotty tossed aside his tea bag and added milk and sugar to the cup. He didn't want to be treated like a kid by Preston and his brother. He decided to change the subject before he got too mad. "How's your family?"

The waitress interrupted by placing their plates of food on the table in front of them, but not before Scotty noticed Preston stiffen.

Scotty forked a bite of egg. "Well?"

"I'm divorced now." Preston's tone was clipped.

"Sorry. Do you get to see the kids?" Scotty knew Preston had a son and daughter. He thought Preston's son was ten and the daughter six or seven.

Preston shrugged, averting his gaze. "When I can. They're living up north now. I saw them at the holidays."

"That really sucks."

"Yeah."

They fell silent, each eating their breakfasts. Scotty wanted to ask Preston if he had a girlfriend but didn't know how to ask without sounding rude. What really *sucked*, Scotty supposed, was being in love with your brother's straight best friend. Oh sure, he'd only thought of Pres maybe one hundred times a day in those six years. All those years away should have cured the infatuation. It hadn't. Not even a tiny bit.

"What about you? Did you bring a boyfriend home with you, Scott?" Preston asked, breaking the heavy silence.

"Nah. I had one about a year ago. We broke up because of jealousy issues." Scotty decided it was a good time to ask. "You meet anyone new?"

Preston shook his head. "No. I'm enjoying the single life for the moment."

"Hmm." Scotty glanced out the window at the street. In a perfect world with both of them single they'd be free to explore the possibility of a relationship. Only the world wasn't anywhere perfect. "Why don't you tell me about Mrs. Windham's grandson?"

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# Chapter 2

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Preston glanced at his watch.

9:30.

Not a peep came from Scott's office. Was he even in yet? He hadn't seen Scott since they'd gone to breakfast the morning before. Preston had been in the office for more than an hour, had seen Jack come in forty-five minutes ago, but he never saw or heard Scott.

Had Scott been out late last night? Picking up strangers in a bar or something? Preston grimaced. What a fucking judgmental prick he'd become. If Scott had been out with some new lover it was not Preston's business. It had absolutely nothing to do with him.

Still...his chest ached just a bit thinking about it. *Stupid.*

His hand rose of its own accord and rapped lightly on the door.

"Come in," Scott's deep voice came from the other side.

Startled, Preston didn't move for several heartbeats. Then he twisted the knob and opened the door.

Scott sat behind the mahogany desk dressed in a charcoal gray suit jacket molded to his body. Underneath the jacket he wore a crisp lighter gray pinstriped dress shirt and a pale pink silk tie. Tucked into the pocket of the jacket was a matching pale pink handkerchief. His dark sandy blond hair had been expertly combed without a strand out of place. The only sign that Scott was still in there was the stubble covering his face.

Preston stared, knowing his jaw was hanging open but unable to close it. "Holy crap."

Scott glanced up from the papers in front of him on his desk. He smiled slow and easy. Something pooled in Preston's stomach that masqueraded as desire.

"Good morning, Pres."

Preston couldn't make his mouth work just yet. Couldn't wrap his mind around the plain fact his cock was now straining against his briefs. He was *hard*, damn it.

"Pres?"

"Uh, morning," Preston finally managed to mutter. He had to get out of this office and fast. He did *not* want Scott to notice his erection and mistake it for...ah, *fuck*.

"Something wrong?" Scott asked, frowning.

"No. No. No." Christ, now he was babbling. "I didn't realize you were in the office yet. Nice job on the suit. Did your dad help you pick it out?"

Scott grinned and shrugged. "He helped a bit. But honestly I think what helped more was watching that show *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* before."

"Well, you look great...er...good. Serious. You look very serious." His cheeks flamed.

"I'm always serious when I'm going over numbers, Pres," Scott said, indicating the papers. "Client billings."

"Right." Preston blew out a breath carefully. "You're a CPA, I hear."

"Yep. I'm not just all looks."

Preston blinked, realized he still held onto the door knob and he was squeezing it so tightly he was surprised it didn't come off in his hand. "So, I'll see you around, Scott."

Scott raised an eyebrow, then shrugged. "Okay. I'll let you know as soon as I have anything on Mrs. Windham's grandson."

"Good." Preston stepped out into the hall and closed the door of Scott's office. He was actually shaking. He leaned against the wall a moment.

*You've just been without sex for too long. No need to panic.*

Preston nodded. That really was all there was to it. Sure, he'd had some mild fantasies about Scott before. All men were curious about other men. Weren't they? It was perfectly natural to check out other guys.

He straightened from the wall and headed back to his own office door. He had to think of something to make his raging hard-on go away before his next appointment. His ex-wife maybe. Surely she could deflate any man.

\* \* \* \*

Scotty typed the last number into his spreadsheet just as the door to his office opened again. According to the computer clock it was just past noon. He turned around.

"Hey, kid," his brother said. Jack closed the door behind him and took the chair in front of Scotty's desk. "Looking sharp."

"Thanks." Scotty wondered if he would ever be anything but *kid* to his brother. He was an accountant and a licensed private investigator, but to Jack he was kid. "What's up?"

"Nothing. Just checking, making sure everything's okay. You know with Dad only coming in part-time I just want to be sure you're settling in."

"No problems so far." Not work related anyway. He wasn't about to tell Jack he was lovesick over Preston.

"Great. Things might get busier soon. We're thinking of hiring another attorney with Dad only working limited hours. Works still piling in," Jack said. "Hey, you want to grab some lunch?"

"No time. I have a few more bills to go over and then later this afternoon I need to do some legwork. Maybe later in the week?" Scotty suggested.

"Sure. How are you getting along with Preston? I know he wasn't happy about the music yesterday."

"Yeah. Still a pain in the ass." Scotty grinned. "I promise to keep it down and use my iPod more often. But you know, Jack, honestly, I think I make Preston uncomfortable."

Jack frowned. "Uncomfortable? Why?"

Scotty toyed with a paperclip, trying to pretend it was no big deal. That it didn't bother him. "Just vibes. I think it bothers him that I'm gay or something."

"Well, he's never struck me as being homophobic, Scotty. You sure?"

"Nah, feelings mostly. I'm guessing maybe you shouldn't have put my office so close to his." Scotty swallowed. "It's probably all right since I'll be doing fieldwork and everything. I just wanted to bring it up in case it becomes a problem."

Jack's frown deepened. "You want me to talk to him?"

"Hell, no." Scotty couldn't quite put his finger on it, but something was definitely freaking Preston out when he'd been in Scotty's office earlier. But the last thing he needed or wanted was his big brother making waves and escalating the issue. If Preston really didn't like him because of his sexual preferences, Jack talking to him wouldn't change that anyway. "Don't say anything. Please?"

"If you're sure."

"Totally." Scotty searched for something to change the subject. "Speaking of, how long have you and Wendy been at it?"

Jack lost a shade of color and then two dark red spots appeared on his cheeks. "What? Me and Wendy?"

"Yeah, you and Wendy."

"Have you been talking to Preston?"

Scotty grimaced. Like Preston shared anything with him. "No. I'm not stupid, Jack. When you two look at each other there's so much fire you could incinerate the damn building. Don't play coy."

Jack shifted in his chair. "Okay, yes. Wendy and I have been seeing each other for a few months."

"Cool. So is it serious or are you just messing around?"

His brother scowled. "It's serious. In fact, we're moving in together."

Scotty grinned. "Well, hot damn. That's great. So why is it some big secret then?"

Jack sighed and rose, running his hand through his blond hair. "I don't know. I guess I don't think I'm ready to force the folks on her."

"Geez, why not? Come on, Jack, if they can handle their baby boy being gay, do you really think they'll have a problem with Wendy being black?"

"Maybe," he acknowledged. "I just want to be cautious. They didn't react well at first to your being gay. They accepted in gradually. You know Dad can be a prick. He's not the easiest guy to please. Wendy's already freaked about her own family. I don't want to stress her out, Scotty."

Scotty nodded. "I understand. It's cool. But you know if you're living together you'll eventually have to spill your guts."

Jack smiled. "I know. And thanks. You sure there's nothing else you need?"

"A raise?"

"Funny. You know you could have shaved."

"Uh-huh," Scotty said. "But you know I like the sexy scruffy look. It's attracted a lot of men to me."

"You're a punk. Anyone ever tell you that?"

Scotty laughed. "Yeah, you used to call me that all the time when we were young."

Jack went to the door. "You're still young. And you're still a punk. Don't work too hard."

\* \* \* \*

Scotty unlocked the door to the outer office of Trask and Reynolds. It was 8:30 and all sane people had long since gone home.

*Perfect.*

He relocked the door and pocketed the keys. There was a single overhead light on in the reception area. Scotty knew they always left it on.

The hallway had recessed lighting. Something his father and brother had done to upgrade the office. One or two of those lights were still lit as well.

Scotty opened his office door and flicked on the lights. He didn't bother to close the door either. He loved working in an empty office. He was hot and tired and maybe even a little hungry, but he wasn't sleepy. He didn't want to go home to his parents' house. They always asked too many questions. And until he could find a place of his own he was stuck.

He walked to the stereo and punched the button. Instantly loud rock music blared from the speakers. Scotty smiled. Just the way he liked it. He didn't know why. He just liked loud music. Always had. His mom told him that was why he was already hard of hearing at twenty-five.

He realized how blazing hot it was in his office then. Still wearing the suit. Man, he hated that part of the job. Really, he would much rather have found a job away from the family business. Scotty wanted no handouts. But his dad had asked, said that with him cutting back his own hours, they needed the help.

Scotty went to his desk and sat on the edge, kicking off his shoes. Figured he might as well get comfortable. No one around to tell him he wasn't toeing the company line.

Thoughts of Preston entered his mind, unbidden. He was supposed to be getting work done, not daydreaming about the unattainable. But damn, he'd been thinking about Pres all day. Life sure sucked some times.

He let his thoughts drift to his favorite fantasy. Scotty would be sitting behind his desk, his slacks undone, stroking his cock. His eyes closed, he wouldn't hear Preston come into his office until he stood right next to Scotty. Then Preston would offer to take over the stroking of Scotty's cock.

Shit, he was getting hard.

Scotty leaned back his head, closing his eyes. The tie and collar suddenly choked him and he reached up to loosen them.

"God, it's hot," he said aloud.

"Yeah, it is."

Scotty's eyelids flew open, his heart hammering in his chest. Preston stood only a few feet away. His chocolate brown eyes were focused on Scotty with what he could have sworn was lust. Scotty licked his dry lips. He had to be imagining Preston. No one else was in the office. And he sure as hell did not see desire in Preston's gaze.

"Preston?" His own voice sounded coarse to his ears. "I...I didn't think anyone else was here."

Preston didn't answer. He took a couple of steps closer to Scotty, stopping to stand just within Scotty's parted legs.

"Uh." Scotty couldn't say anything else. His mouth closed, tongue frozen. Tangible desire thrummed through his veins. He didn't want to act too rashly. Didn't want to read something he wanted desperately to be there when it wasn't. Couldn't be.

Preston reached out and ran his thumb along Scotty's bottom lip. A shiver went up Scotty's spine.

Preston leaned forward, his breath caressing Scotty's skin. He lowered his lips, grazing Scotty's mouth. "What the hell are you doing to me?" Preston asked in the barest of whispers.

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# Chapter 3

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*I'm kissing a guy.*

Preston's mind wrapped around that simple fact as his lips pressed against Scott's and Scott's tongue slipped inside his mouth. His own tongue automatically reacted and tangled with the other man's.

Scott moaned low, the sound coming out almost like a whimper, and it went straight to Preston's cock. The pounding sound of the bass blaring from Scott's stereo matched the pulsing of his erection pushing against his briefs.

It was absolutely insane, but he wanted to fuck Scott right there on the desk. And even more insane was that kissing a guy was hot.

Suddenly Scott pulled back, removing his tongue from Preston's mouth and pushing at Preston's shoulders. Preston felt the loss of the other man's lips like a punch in the gut.

Scott, his face bright red, ran his hand through his blond hair and then scrubbed it over his shadowed chin. "Um, sorry, man. Lost my head there for a moment."

Preston stared for a second or two, wondering if perhaps he'd made a mistake coming into Scott's office after all. When he'd heard the thundering music from his office he'd been surprised. Scott had left hours earlier and Preston hadn't expected him back that night. No one else should have been in the office. Hell, he shouldn't be there himself, but he'd felt such a sense of restlessness he couldn't combat, and he hadn't wanted to go home to his lonely, empty house.

He'd first heard footsteps outside his office and almost thought a burglar had broken in until he heard the eardrum-shattering rock music coming from Scott's office. Preston knew it had to be Scott and he'd been unable to resist coming over. Then to see Scott sitting on his desk, leaning his head back, eyes closed--

Preston was hardly the impulsive sort. Never had been and never would be probably. But he didn't think he wanted to simply pretend *Scott* kissed him and then simply walk away.

It would have been easier and would even make more sense, Preston supposed.

"No, I...wait." Preston stepped close to Scott once more, until there was no space between them and Scott's thighs pressed into his legs. He placed his hand on the back of Scott's head, feeling the softness of his hair, and titled it up at the same time he lowered his.

The kiss was slow but without the earlier hesitation. Scott's lips softened under his. Preston slipped his tongue past the slight opening of the other man's lips, grazing his teeth, searching for the warmth of Scott's tongue.

The same sexy growl from before rose in Scott's throat and he reached around to grasp Preston's ass cheeks, his strong fingers pressing in, gripping through the material.

Preston's cock was so hard he thought for just a moment it really would rip through his briefs. He needed relief. Had to have it. Grabbing the hands kneading his ass, he brought them to the crotch of his pants, and urged Scott to squeeze him.

Scott obliged, cupping him there, but then his fingers moved to the zipper of Preston's slacks. With aching, agonizing slowness, Scott slid down the zipper. Preston shook with need, his mouth continuing to plunder Scott's.

Scott slipped his hand inside Preston's pants, then inched the briefs out of the way. He pulled Preston's dick, until it poked out from the opening in his slacks.

Preston gasped when Scott's hand closed around his shaft. Their lips broke apart and Scott's violet eyes darkened, his gaze fixed on Preston's erection. A drop of pre-cum glistened on the head. Scott traced his fingertip over it, then brought the finger to his mouth, sucking it. Preston couldn't take his eyes off the younger man.

Giving Preston a sexy and seductive smile, Scott rose from the desk and pushed Preston just slightly. Scott knelt before him, his mouth now level with Preston's straining cock. Preston's knees nearly buckled from anticipation.

"I want to taste you," Scott said, his voice raspy. "May I?"

*Oh, God.*

"Yes. Yes, now," Preston heard himself beg.

Transfixed, he watched Scott's lips part next to the tip of his cock. Scott's tongue ran along the slit, then swirled the head. His gaze on Preston, Scott's mouth closed around his cock, sucking it in deep and fast.

Preston nearly exploded right then. Geez, how long had it been since anyone had touched his dick but him? As for sucking him? It had quite literally been years since a woman had taken him in her mouth. And never a guy. Until Scott.

It should freak him out. In a way, it did, but also he was more aroused than he thought possible. He pushed himself deeper into Scott's mouth, thrilled when Scott took it without protest, without gagging. Scott squeezed his balls, causing jolts of pure, aching lust to flow through his body. He wanted to come, he wanted to fuck, he wanted to scream. All those things. With the man kneeling in front of him working his cock in out and of his mouth.

Preston's fingers threaded through Scott's blond hair, urging him closer still. He thrust over and over into the other man's mouth. Shit, Scott knew how to suck cock.

He could easily spend hours fucking Scott's sweet mouth. Well, maybe not hours, but for a long time. It was that incredible. The problem was, he also wanted Scott lying on the desk, his ass in the air while Preston fucked him.

He didn't know why he would want that. He wasn't even gay. But Jesus, he did.

"Enough," he gasped, pulling his leaking cock out from between the other man's lips.

Scott stared at him, his lips plump and swollen and wet from sucking Preston. He blinked in apparent confusion.

Preston hauled him to his feet and grabbed Scott's necktie. He crushed his lips to his lover's. He didn't want any doubts in Scott's mind. Not now.

He pushed Scott down on the desk, yanking the tie off, and throwing it across the room. Next Preston reached for the buttons on Scott's dress shirt.

But...shit. He didn't have any condoms. Well, why would he at the office anyway? Preston swallowed the sudden lump forming in his throat. He didn't want to stop, but what to do? He broke the kiss, searching Scott's gaze.

"What?"

"Condoms?" Preston managed to ask.

Scott nodded, leaned all the way back on the desk and, reaching into the top drawer in a rather awkward position, pulled out a foil packet which he tossed at Preston.

"Wait." Preston stared at the packet. "You keep condoms in your desk drawer?"

Scott shrugged. "You never know when they might come in handy."

*Try not to over think this, Preston.*

Preston shrugged out of his suit coat, undid his own tie and disposed of both. Then he reached toward Scott and finished unbuttoning the man's shirt.

Scott bit his bottom lip, a hint of uncertainty in his gaze. Probably doing the same thing he was.

"Don't over think this," he suggested to Scott just as he had suggested to himself. He pulled the dress shirt off his lover and then pointed to Scott's undershirt. "Off."

Scott complied in mere seconds and reached for his belt.

Preston watched, fascinated by Scott's six-pack abs, the smattering of dark gold hair on his chest. The man was gorgeous really. His hand moved to Scott's chest, his thumb grazing across Scott's nipple.

"Ah," Scott moaned, trembling.

"Sensitive?" Preston stroked the nipple in earnest now.

"Uh-huh." Scott undid his slacks and pushed them down his hips.

Preston decided to speed things up and yanked the pants the rest of the way down, then pulled them off. Scott was nude except for his charcoal gray socks. Preston admired the rest of his body. Great, muscular thighs on athletic legs. A long, thick hard cock. Scott was a little shorter lengthwise than he was, but he appeared to be bigger around.

Preston frowned. He didn't have any experience with either getting fucked or fucking someone else in the ass, but there was something he'd heard. "Um. Lube?"

"Pre-lubed condom," Scott said breathlessly. "Plus you could..."

"What?" Preston asked when Scott stopped. Scott's face had turned a slight shade of pink.

Scott closed his eyes for a moment, and then sort of shrugged. "Have you heard of rimming?"

*Oh, God.* Yeah, he had, but well, he hadn't *thought* of doing it. On the other hand, he didn't want to hurt Scott either emotionally or physically by refusing to do it. Besides, he wasn't opposed to it entirely. What the hell? Things had been different since Scott walked back into his life anyway.

"You don't have to," Scott said, his voice soft.



Shoving the condom packet into the pocket of his trousers, Preston dropped to his knees and scooted Scott's ass to the very edge of the desk, pushing his legs apart.

"Pres?"

"Shh," he murmured, his breath fanning the tiny hairs around Scott's asshole. His fingers braced on either side of it, Preston stuck his tongue into the hole, darting it in slowly, unsure what it would be like. Taste like.

"Oh my God," Scott groaned.

Not bad. Not at all, Preston decided. He jabbed his tongue in farther. This close to Scott's sac, he did the only thing he could do, he cupped it and squeezed.

"Pres." Scott's ass rose.

Damn punk. He'd already told him his name was *Preston*. He tongued Scott's hole, thrusting in, licking around it, enjoying the moans and breathless gasps coming from the man. Definitely not bad at all.

"Now, please," Scott begged.

"Now what?"

"I want you to fuck me, Pres. Please."

Preston stood and pulled the packet out of his trouser pocket. He tore it open and rolled it over his cock. He undid the button of his pants and shoved them and his briefs down.

His fingers parted Scott's ass, his cock pressing eagerly at the entrance. Preston pushed in and encountered a bit of resistance at the tight ring of muscle.

"Please," Scott pleaded again.

Preston gritted his teeth. The other man's begging was going to make him come before he even got his cock all the way in. He pressed forward past the muscle and slid all the way forward, balls-deep.

His world tilted on its axis. He closed his eyes, reveling in the feel of being inside Scott. Didn't move. Just let the sensation of Scott's ass clenching around his cock flow through him. He found he wanted to remember this moment, this instant, ingrain it forever in his experiences, his memories.

"Move," Scott urged.

Laughter, rich and unexpected, bubbled up and out of Preston. It felt good and so did his cock in Scott's ass. He pulled out and pushed back in, slowly, purposefully, searching for that particular spot he'd heard could be great.

"Preston," Scott yelled.

He grinned. Right on target. Now that he found it, he made it his goal to hit it every time he slammed into Scott's ass. Pushing, probing, thrusting. His panting, Scott's desperate moans, his balls slapping against bare skin, and the incessant annoying bass of Scott's music were the only sounds in the room.

On and on he thrust. Again and again. Unable or unwilling to get enough of Scott. Making up for time missed from when he'd wanted Scott six years ago? Preston couldn't say. He just knew that fucking this man was the most gratifying sexual experience he'd had in his life.

"Pres, I'm going to come."

"Do it," Preston growled, slamming faster.

Scott tensed beneath him, his ass clenching Preston's cock. With a soft sigh, he shook and the smell of semen filled the air.

Preston stared for a moment, taking in the sight of the creamy cum lying across Scott's abs. Then, unable to hold back the tingle, the thrill of his own orgasm, he closed his eyes and with a groan of his own let the wracking release overcome him.

He collapsed on Scott, feeling the sticky wetness of his lover's cum against his bare skin. He kept his eyes closed for the time being, allowing the feel of Scott's arms embracing him to comfort him.

Eventually he withdrew and discarded the condom in a nearby trash basket. He looked down at Scott. The man had a beautiful satisfied smile on his face.

"Pleased with yourself?"

Scott shook his head, sat up. "No. With you."

"Yeah, that was...wow."

Scott nodded. "I'll say. I'm starving. Want to go get something to eat?"

Preston shook his head. "I've got a better idea. My house isn't far. Let's go to my house and I'll make us omelets."

Scott grinned. "Sounds great. Now where the hell are my clothes?"

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# Chapter 4

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Scotty stood in the front hall of Preston's house and glanced around. He was immediately struck by the hominess. Mail had been tossed on a nearby table. Preston threw his suit coat on a bar stool.

He'd not been in this house. Six years ago Preston had lived in another home with his now ex-wife. Marilyn had decorated that one. It was the picture of clean grace and sterile beauty. The few times Scotty had been there he'd felt out of place and uncomfortable.

Of course, Marilyn had hated his guts. There was that. And she certainly never pretended otherwise. Scotty figured she just didn't like homosexuals. Whatever the reason, he made sure his visits to their shared home had been rare.

"Come on in," Preston said, looking back over his shoulder at him. "No need to stand in the hallway."

Scotty admitted he was hesitant. Just a short time ago he'd had sex with Preston.

*Preston, for God's sake.*

Just the man Scott had been lusting after ever since Jack had introduced his best friend to his family. A straight man. Or Scotty thought so. But geez, what had that all been about at the office and why had Preston invited him over?

Scotty followed Preston into what was obviously the living room. A big screen television took up a good portion of one wall.

"I'll bet games are great on that," Scotty said.

Preston grinned. "Oh, yeah. That's why I got it."

The other pieces of furniture in the room were an oversized brown leather couch, an easy chair, and an end table placed between the couch and chair.

"Sit wherever you like. I'll start the omelets." Preston headed through an arched doorway into the kitchen.

Scotty sat in the easy chair and undid the first few buttons of his dress shirt. He had left his coat and tie in his car when he'd parked out in front of Preston's house.

A simple bungalow-style house from the looks of it. Probably the typical three bedrooms, one bathroom houses built so prevalently in the 1950s and 1960s. In the Los Angeles suburb Preston lived in, Glendale, such homes were the usual structures found in middle-class neighborhoods.

Preston appeared in the archway. He'd rolled up the shirtsleeves. "What do you like in your omelet? I have avocados, tomatoes, American cheese, onions, and bacon."

"All of those, yes."

"Okay." Preston nodded. "Want a beer?"

"Sure."

"You can put on the television if you want. I'll bring the food in here when I'm done." He disappeared again.

Scotty reached for the remote and wondered why Preston was being so nice. Also why he hadn't brought up what they'd done in the office.

Not all that surprising, Scotty guessed. No doubt Preston purposely avoided the subject. Which had started to bother Scotty.

Would Preston just pretend he hadn't just had Scotty splayed out on his desk, fucking him to within an inch of his life?

He clicked on the big screen television, not really wanting to watch anything. The truth was he wanted to find out if Preston intended to continue this...relationship...or whatever it was. A one-night stand? A one-hour stand?

Scotty shifted in the chair.

*Get it together, Scotty. You're just being oversensitive.*

Preston came in and handed him an open bottle of beer. He glanced at the television screen. "What are you watching?"

Scotty's gaze shifted to the screen. He had no idea what was on. He hadn't even changed the channel. "Nothing yet. Just turned it on."

"You okay?"

Scotty took a long swallow of the beer. "Sure. Um, you know, I'm just wondering if we're going to talk about what happened I guess."

"Talk?" Preston frowned. "About what?"

"We just had sex, Preston."

Preston gave him a funny look, then headed into the kitchen.

Scotty sighed and leaned back in the chair. He surfed the channels, just clicking through, not really even looking at what shows he passed.

A few minutes later, Preston returned carrying two heaping plates of omelets and fried potatoes. He handed one to Scotty and then sat on the leather couch.

Scotty inhaled the scent of bacon and cheese. "God, this smells great. I'm starved. You cook?"

"Had to when my wife left me. Or else starve." Preston shrugged.

Scotty tried a bite. "It's heavenly," he declared around a mouthful. He chewed and swallowed. "So, um, Marilyn left you?"

"Yeah."

"Sorry."

"We hadn't had a real marriage for a while. It wasn't a surprise."

Scotty nodded and took several more bites of the omelet and potatoes. He didn't really know what else to say. Preston didn't exactly encourage deep discussion and if he questioned him more it would definitely be prying.

"I know by the way," Preston said after a lengthy silence.

"What?"

He smiled a little. "That we had sex. I was there."

"Oh. Well, yeah, I guess you were." Scotty took a couple more bites, then set his plate down on the end table. "Look, I can understand if you don't want to talk about it."

"Good. I don't." Preston stood and picked up Scotty's plate. "You done?"

"Yeah, thanks."

When Preston disappeared into the kitchen again, Scotty stood. He figured he might as well make his way home for some sleep. His parents' home, that is. He had a lot to do tomorrow and lack of sleep wouldn't help.

Scotty walked over to the kitchen doorway. Preston had already rinsed the plates and was bent over placing them in the dishwasher.

"Hey, if you don't need my help cleaning up or anything, I'm going to take off."

Preston froze and straightened. "You're leaving?"

Scotty's stomach fluttered. "Um, yeah. I figured that's what you'd want."

Preston didn't say anything at first. He closed the dishwasher and then turned to Scotty. "No."

"What?"

"That's not what I want, Scott." Preston took the few steps that would put him directly in front of Scotty. He slipped two fingers in the waistband of Scotty's pants and tugged him against his obvious erection. "That give you a pretty good idea of what I want, Scott?"

Scotty swallowed. His cock grew half-hard when Preston pulled him close. It filled up all the way with Preston's low, gruff words. Not trusting any coherent words to come out just then, Scotty merely nodded.

Preston bent his head and pressed his lips to Scotty's. He opened his mouth at the assault and let Preston's tongue slide in. Damn, the man could kiss.

His lover's hands went to Scotty's ass, kneading the cheeks.

Scotty moaned and reached up to encircle Preston's neck, returning the kiss with total abandon.

He guessed they would eventually make their way out of the kitchen and down the hall to Preston's bedroom, but to his surprise, Preston broke the kiss, lifted him up off the floor and set him on the kitchen counter. Preston's crotch was now level with Scotty's ass.

"The-the bedroom?" Scotty asked.

"Later. This first." Preston yanked off Scotty's shoes, and then he reached to unfasten his slacks. "Lift up your hips."

Scotty did as ordered, and Preston slid them down and off. He pulled off Scotty's briefs next. Preston reached into his own pants pocket and pulled out one of the pre-lubed condom packets.

Scotty's eyes widened. "Where did you get that?"

"I grabbed it from your desk drawer." Preston undid and lowered his own slacks and briefs. Now they were both wearing only their shirts. He pushed both Scotty's dress shirt and undershirt up to expose his bare stomach.

Scotty watched eagerly as Preston rolled the condom on his cock. He reached for his own erection and started stroking it. A drop of pre-cum leaked from his slit. He rubbed it in, groaning.

"Scoot forward a little," Preston said.

Scotty inched down on the counter until his ass was partially hanging over the edge. He bit his lip when he saw Preston sucking on two fingers.

Holding his breath, Scotty watched the other man insert his slicked fingers into his hole, stretching as he pushed.

"Oh, God," Scotty moaned, closing his eyes.

Preston worked his fingers in and out, pressing past the rim of muscle, probing for Scotty's prostate. He curved his fingers.

"*Preston.*" Scotty's hips rose, his balls tightened. Damn, he was going to come without Preston's cock inside him if this kept up. "Fuck me, please."

His lover's fingers withdrew and he felt the tip of Preston's cock press at his entrance. He pushed in, past the muscle, taking his time as before when he'd entered Scotty in his office. He pushed himself down on Preston's cock, urging him to complete the joining faster.

Preston groaned and obliged, thrusting in balls-deep. Scotty wrapped his legs snug around Preston's waist, pulling him closer, deeper still.

Preston grabbed the counter on either side of Scotty, driving into his ass again and again, plunging harder and deeper each time.

He reached down and tugged on his straining cock, squeezing his balls at the same time. He'd already been close to coming when Preston had fingered his hole, now he was on the edge of a powerful orgasm.

If Scotty had actually thought sex with Preston would ever have happened, which he hadn't, he wouldn't have imagined it would be the most mind-blowing sex he'd ever experienced. But it was. It was just...so much more than he'd ever dreamed. Sure, he'd had his fantasies. They paled compared to the actual man pounding his cock in his ass.

His release hit him then, powerfully. He cried out, stripping his throat as cum splashed over his stomach and onto Preston.

After several more hard thrusts, Preston stiffened and grunted, finding his own release. Panting short, heavy breaths, he withdrew and discarded the condom. Then he reached for Scotty and hoisted Scotty to the ground, kissing him deeply.

His legs weak and barely able to support him, Scotty clung to his lover as they kissed. Truthfully he felt a little vulnerable. Too vulnerable. His heart was thoroughly engaged. Always had been really. But Preston...he knew didn't feel the same way.

The kiss ended and Preston leaned his forehead against Scotty's. "Now the bedroom."

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# Chapter 5

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Scotty juggled a Styrofoam cup of coffee and a cheese pastry in one hand and a thick file in the other and stared at Preston's closed office door the next morning. He considered knocking, or rather shoving his weight against the door since he didn't have a free hand, but didn't know if he should stay out.

Last night after sex in Preston's bed, Scotty had gone home to sleep. Preston wanted him to stay, but he'd told him he didn't have any clothes with him. Next time, if there were a next time, he'd be better prepared. Even as he walked out the door, Scotty knew Preston hadn't been happy with his decision.

Still, Scotty thought maybe it was smart to leave. Having time to think about what occurred between them was probably a good thing for both of them. He was taking a chance Preston would turn tail and run, but Scotty thought that might happen anyway.

He made the choice to bypass barging into Preston's office and instead walked down the hall to his own door. He had a lot of work to do, accounting and investigative. He didn't need the distraction of Preston telling him to get lost. If that was what Preston intended to say.

He entered his office and clicked the door closed. First he dumped the heavy file on a nearby chair and then went to his desk to set down his coffee and breakfast. He gazed briefly at the pastry. He'd have to run ten miles on the treadmill in penance for it.

Scotty always worked better with music, so next he punched the on button of the stereo. His usual heavy metal station had been replaced by classical music blaring over the airwaves. And the volume had been lowered. He grinned and changed the channel.

*Not so fast, Pres.*

He turned the volume up and smiled at the loud pounding music. Now he could work properly.

Scotty went back to his desk and started his computer. There next to his keyboard was a green apple. For a moment, he simply stared at it. His throat clogged, knowing very well it came from Preston. The gesture, though a bit autocratic, touched him to his soul.

*Get a grip, Scotty. It's just an apple, not a ring.*

A couple of hours later a loud knock sounded on his door.

"Yeah, come in."

The door opened and Preston stood there dressed in a perfectly tailored charcoal suit, crisp white shirt, and a pale blue tie. He made Scotty's mouth water.

"Sorry, is the music bothering you?" Scotty asked.

Preston stepped into the office. "Well, actually, yes. But that's not what I came in here for."

Scotty swallowed and offered a hesitant smile. "Oh? What's up? A case?"

"No." Preston closed the door and leaned against it. "I wondered if you'd like to come over tonight for dinner."



His heartbeat raced at that. For just the tiniest second Scotty had feared he was about to get the brush-off. Relief flowed through him.

"You gonna cook for me again?" He couldn't believe how appealing the idea actually was.

"Someone has to make sure you have something healthy to eat."

Scotty's cheeks heated with his blush. "Uh, yeah, thanks for the apple." He grinned. "It went well with the pastry."

Preston's lips curved in a small smile. "I'll bet. Anyway, you're welcome. Say about seven o'clock. Plan to stay over."

It was on the tip of his tongue to blurt out that maybe they should talk about this. About them. About the fact Preston wasn't supposed to like men but had been all over Scotty last night. He really wanted to know where Preston intended to take this. But he didn't miss the guarded expression on the other man's face. He had a feeling if he insisted on talking about it right now Preston really would give him the brush-off.

"Sounds great," Scotty said.

Preston nodded. "Good. And...do me a favor, okay?"

"Sure."

"Don't mention anything about this to anyone, all right?"

It took a great deal of effort to manage, but Scotty didn't let the disappointment show. Or at least he was pretty sure he didn't. But it nearly choked him. He regretted agreeing to dinner and staying over. He didn't like hiding who he was.

"Scotty?" Preston frowned.

He opened his mouth to say the words, *oh forget it*, when he caught the naked vulnerability in Preston's eyes. This was new for him. He was still completely unsure of himself. There was no need for Scotty to be a jerk about it.

Scotty smiled easily. "No problem. See you later."

\* \* \* \*

Preston took the salad bowl out of the cabinet and set it on the counter next to the romaine. He glanced at the clock on the microwave for the fifth time. It was already fifteen minutes past seven and no sign of Scott.

He prided himself on being punctual. Unfortunately, Scott did not have the same ethics. Inhaling deeply, Preston tried to squash his annoyance. He was simply anxious because he just didn't know what the hell he was doing.

Last evening and night he'd had sex with Scott. A *lot* of sex. And it had been amazing. He could no longer pretend he didn't want Scott. He definitely did.

But what the hell did it all mean? Did it mean he was gay? Hell, Preston didn't know. He supposed wanting another guy was the definition of being gay. Except he'd been married and had never had sex with another guy before Scott.

Preston tore off leaves of the romaine and tossed it in the bowl. His glance went once more to the clock and he cursed. Twenty minutes late.

Then a horrible thought occurred to him. What if Scott had changed his mind? What if he was being stood up? Scott could be with some other guy laughing at stupid Preston right now.

Or maybe Scott had been in an accident on the way over? He should have given him a ride. Scott had never been a great driver.

His stomach now twisted in knots, Preston wondered if he should check his cell phone to see if Scott had called.

The door bell rang and he closed his eyes in ridiculous relief. He set down the romaine and went to answer his front door.

"You're late," he growled when he opened the door to Scott standing there looking far too sexy. He'd changed into faded jeans and a tight, thin white T-shirt. His jaw was covered in stubble. Preston's cock, which had already been half-erect thinking of Scott, now rose full to press against his slacks.

Scott grinned unrepentantly and pushed Preston aside to come in. "Yeah, sorry. You know how unpredictable traffic can be." He held an overnight bag in one hand and a navy suit in the other. "Where can I put this stuff?"

"Come with me." Preston closed and locked the door and headed down the hall to his bedroom. He knew without looking that Scott followed behind him. His mind had shifted from dinner to getting Scott naked. Stopping just inside the doorway of his bedroom, he said, "You can set your bag down anywhere. And hang your suit in the closet."

He watched Scott cross the room to the closet, his gaze glued to the man's ass. His mouth watered.

"What are we having?" Scott asked, reaching into the closet to hang his suit.

"Having?"

Scott turned and gave him a quizzical smile. "For dinner."

"Oh." Preston stared at Scott's lips. Maybe if he didn't kiss Scott it would mean he wasn't really gay. It had been a while since he'd had sex, so maybe that was what was feeding this strange frenzied need to fuck Scott.

"Hey, Pres?" Scott frowned and came to stand within just inches of him. He waved his hand in front of Preston's face. "Earth to Preston."

"Fish and salad," he forced himself to say. Almost of its own free will his hand went to the back of Scott's neck, pulling him closer.

Scott's violet blue eyes widened ever-so-slightly. His tongue darted out and traced Scott's lips. Preston brushed his thumb across the moistened lips, parting them, then he touched the tip of Scott's tongue with the pad of his thumb.

Forgetting his thoughts about not kissing Scott, he grasped Scott's chin in his hand and crushed his mouth under his.

Scott gasped and mumbled, "Dinner?"

"Later," Preston insisted. He reached for the hem of Scott's thin, white T-shirt and pulled it up off his abs. He grazed his fingertips over the bare skin.

He pushed Scott toward the bed, yanking the shirt from his body and tossing it in the air. Scott fell on the bed and Preston grabbed his legs. He tugged off his sneakers and then reached for the snap of Scott's jeans.

"Whoa, whoa, what the hell?" Scott lifted his ass a little so Preston could remove his jeans and briefs. "What's the rush?"

"Now," Preston growled. He knelt next to the bed and, grabbing hold of Scott's legs, scooted him to the end so he had easy access to Scott's ass. Before the other man could protest further or say another word, he stabbed his tongue into Scott's hole.

"Jesus," Scott breathed, shuddering.

Preston thrust his tongue in over and over, his hand grasping Scott's erection. He knew he was a little crazed, but he couldn't seem to control himself. He slipped in a wet finger, and then another, spreading Scott's ass. He wanted to fuck Scott now.

*Condom.*

He needed to get one. Gritting his teeth, he released his grip on Scott's cock, and stood.

Scott blinked, staring at him. "What?"

"I have to get the condom." Preston dashed to the bathroom and opened the medicine cabinet. He pulled out a couple of packets and on his way out of the bathroom started shrugging out of his own clothes. When he'd come home from work he had changed out of his suit into black sweats and a red T-shirt. He quickly disposed of them, tore open the packet and made short work of rolling the latex over his hard aching cock.

He knelt on the bed, trapping Scott with the weight of body. He scorched his lips over Scott's, and then flipped his lover on to his stomach.

Preston rose above him, his fingers parting the other man's cheeks. Poising his cock at Scott's entrance, he pushed inside. With a deep groan, Preston thrust in balls-deep. He closed his eyes, letting the sensation of being inside the other man fill him. He was so damn tight.

"Scotty," he moaned. He started moving with long, deep strokes.

Scott's fingers gripped the blankets and sheets on the bed, his ass rising with Preston's pumps. He pushed back aggressively against Preston, his muscles clenching around Preston's cock.

His orgasm was coming fast, he'd wanted to keep it going, but he was too turned on, too hot to prevent it. Later, after he'd fed them, he would take his time.

Unable to keep from coming, he bucked and rocked inside Scott, screaming his release hoarsely.

"Oh, God," Scott gasped, tensing and shooting into the sheets.

The smell of sex and sweat permeated the air. He pulled out of Scott and lay flat on his back, holding the other man close to his side. He closed his eyes, willing his heartbeat to return to normal. Willing himself to return to the way he was before. Before Scott. He feared it was too late. In fact, he was scared shitless.

Scott stirred and rose slightly to stare down at Preston. "Um, not that I'm complaining or anything, because that was really hot. But, I'm really hungry."

Preston laughed. "Yeah, sorry. I sort of had only one thing on my mind."

Scott smiled. "Apparently. But I haven't eaten since like one o'clock this afternoon." His gaze went to the digital clock on the nightstand next to the bed. "It's now almost eight."

"Well," Preston said, sitting up. "You *were* late."

"Yeah, yeah."

"Okay, get dressed. I'll go start the fish." Preston rose and found his own discarded clothes. He paused while pulling on his T-shirt. "I'm really glad you came tonight."

Scott nodded. "Me, too. Pres?"

"Hmm?"

Scotty bit his lip, and then looked away. "It's nothing. I think I'm going to take a quick shower. Okay?"

Something was bothering Scotty and Preston had a good idea what it was. He wanted to talk about their having sex. Problem was, Preston just wasn't ready for that. And he didn't want to say anything to send Scott away. The younger man looked ready to bolt. He couldn't explain to himself this absurd reaction he had to Scott, let alone explain it to Scott.

"Sure. There are towels under the sink."

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# Chapter 6

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Scotty woke up facing the window with the sun streaking in through partially open mini-blinds. He was spooned against Preston and the other man's arm rested across his middle. The sheets were tangled between his legs. He glanced at the clock next to the bed. Seven o'clock already. Normally he would be up and showered by then.

He gently pushed at Preston's arm and struggled to sit up. Preston murmured in his sleep, then turned over to lay on his stomach. His dark hair stood on end. He was adorable and for several minutes Scotty just watched him sleep.

Preston was a damn fine cook. The halibut had been full of flavor and cooked perfectly. He was also damn fine in bed. Scotty grimaced a little at how sore he was.

He found it a little strange to be waking up in someone's bed. He couldn't remember sleeping over at a lover's house any time recently. He wasn't a slut, but he also didn't allow such intimacies with many lovers.

He swung his legs out and onto the floor and walked over to the window to peek out. A gloriously sunny day. No one in their right mind would want to go in the office on such a day. Which had him thinking.

Turning back to face the bed, he called out, "Hey, Pres, wake up."

Preston stirred, but didn't open his eyes. Scotty walked back to the bed and sat next to him. He shook him further awake.

"What?" Preston grumbled.

"Let's play hooky from work today. It's Friday. You could call in sick and I can say I'm out in the field all day doing investigative stuff. We can drive up the coast to Morro Bay and make a weekend of it." Morro Bay in Central California was Scotty's favorite location in the world. Someday he hoped to live there. He loved the idea of going there with Preston.

Preston rubbed his eyes with his fists and then sat up. He frowned. "What the hell? What are you talking about? Play hooky?"

"Yeah. Come on." Scotty grinned.

"You want to go away together? Like a...a couple?"

The incredulous, nearly panicked tone of Preston's voice threw ice water all over Scotty's enthusiasm. What had he been thinking? They weren't a couple. He was an idiot.

"Never mind," Scotty said quickly. He glanced down at his own naked body and his vulnerable state hit him hard. He yanked a corner of the crisp white sheet over his lap and tried to make his voice casual. "Bad idea. I'll go shower and get ready for work."

He stood up when Preston's hand closed over his wrist and tugged him back down.

"Wait," Preston said, his mouth twisted in a grimace. "I didn't say I wouldn't."

"It's okay, Preston. It was a stupid thought. It's just a beautiful day and I got carried away. No need to freak out." He spoke lightly, hoping to make Preston smile. It didn't work.

Preston shook his head. "I'm not freaking out, Scotty."

Scotty sighed. Somewhere between last night when Preston was pounding him into the mattress and this morning he'd gone back to being Scott instead of Scotty. Distancing himself.

"Look, it's no big deal," Scotty said.

"Where would we go?"

"Well, I thought Morro Bay."

Preston exhaled deeply. "Um, okay."

"Okay?"

"Yeah." Preston nodded. "Okay. Let's go."

Scotty threw himself at Preston. "Oh, cool. You won't regret it. We'll have the best time. I swear."

Preston gave him just a hint of a smile. "Then I guess I better call work."

\* \* \* \*

The drive up the coast had been pleasant. They'd purposely not discussed anything too personal, though. The conversation kept to sports, politics, the business, his time in New York, and Preston's kids.

Now Scotty pulled his sedan into the parking lot of a cute little seaside motel and parked not too far from the office. The early afternoon sun shined warm with a light breeze coming off the ocean. Overhead gulls flew by, trying to spy if any person had food for them.

"Hey, wait," Preston said when Scotty went to open the car door.

"What?"

"We should get separate rooms." Preston tried to smile, like what he was saying was no big deal, but it didn't fool Scotty. It was forced.

"Why should we get separate rooms, Pres?"

Preston shifted in the passenger seat. "Well, you know."

His fingers tightened around the steering wheel while he told himself to be patient. "We're not going to see these people again, Pres. What does it matter if they think we're a couple?"

Preston looked away, out the window, refusing to meet Scotty's gaze. His cheeks were red. "I just...just think it would be easier."

"So you want your own room? To stay in there by yourself?" Scotty pushed. He knew he shouldn't, but, damn it, if Preston insisted on paying for separate rooms then they would have separate rooms.

"No."

Scotty scrubbed his hand over his face. "Look, it doesn't make sense from a purely monetary sense to pay for an extra room if we aren't going to use it. If it will make you feel better you can stay in the car and I'll get the room and they never even have to see you."

For just a second, Scotty hoped Preston wouldn't take him up on it. Would insist he go in with Scotty and not try to hide anything. But even before Preston turned back to face him, relief so obvious on his handsome face, Scotty knew that wasn't going to happen. He'd known as soon as he'd offered.

"Okay, that's cool," Preston agreed. He twisted in the seat and reached for his wallet in the back pocket of his jeans. "Let me give you some money."

Scotty waved it away. "Forget it. I'll get the room."

"Why should you pay for it all?"

"Because it was my idea. I'll be right back," Scotty said, quickly getting out of the car before Preston could argue. He was already feeling less happy about the trip, he didn't want an argument to spoil it further.

Scotty told himself he should just be happy Preston had agreed to come at all. It wasn't like the stuffed shirt to skip work and certainly not for something as frivolous as a weekend away. He very much suspected Preston's standoffish ways and work ethic hadn't help his marriage.

He smiled as the breeze hit his face. God, he loved this place.

*Some day.*

He opened the office door and was greeted instantly by a fresh-faced young woman of probably no more than twenty-two. She stared at him with a definite predatory glint in her eyes.

Smiling warmly, she said, "Good afternoon, sir. How can I help you today?"

"The sign out front says you have a vacancy. Have you got any king-bed rooms with an ocean view?"

"Let me check for you, sir." She punched a keyboard, and then coyly glanced at him. "How long do you and your wife plan to stay?"

"I'm not married, but for two nights, I think."

"Oh." She smiled. "We do have a room for you."

Scotty handed over his credit card.

"Scott Trask," she read aloud. "Are you here for pleasure, Mr. Trask?"

"Hope so." He glanced back through the glass door toward his car. He could just make out Preston.

She handed him a brochure with a red circle around a room number. "This is the room, second floor, just go down this way." She showed him on the motel map, and then slid him a plastic keycard. "Here's a key."

"I'll need two, thanks."

"Oh." She frowned a little and then keyed him another card. "There you are, then. We have continental breakfast in the lobby here at seven and wine and cheese in the evenings from four to six."

"Great, thanks." He checked her name badge. "Kimberly."

Her smile widened. "If there's anything you need, Mr. Trask, just let me know."

"I'll do that."

He stopped to pick up a few leaflets of local attractions and then headed back to the car.

"All set?" Preston asked when he got in to start the car to drive closer to their room.

"Yep. Let's get settled in and then we can do some walking around the embarcadero."

\* \* \* \*

Scotty had to admit the day was going better than he'd hoped. They were having a great time. Well, he was and, judging by his smiles, so was Preston.

They'd had a lunch of fish and chips and beer. Then they'd been cruising the shops on the embarcadero ever since. The afternoon was gloriously sunny, but not too warm. A day like this was exactly why he planned on living in Morro Bay some day.

"So, how often do you come here?" Preston asked as they exited a shop of colorful kites and flags.

"It's been a while, actually. But before I left for New York I used to come pretty often. Three or four times a year."

Preston glanced up at the sky, his expression nonchalant. "With somebody?"

Scotty smiled a little. "Once with a guy, yeah. And twice with a female friend. But most of the time just me. I love it here."

Preston grinned. "I can tell. You're very enthusiastic."

He felt his cheeks heat a little and knew he was blushing. But, damn, he could be a geek. And he hated that about himself.

Covering his embarrassment, Scotty headed into the next gift shop. It was filled with statues of whales and dolphins and even a few paintings of sea life. At the back of the shop stood a very tall, thin dark haired woman talking with a couple. He guessed her to be the proprietor.

He walked over to a painting hanging on the wall. Scotty recognized it as the work of a famous sea life artist. The price tag had been placed on a card at the corner of the painting.

Preston came up behind him. "Nice. Thinking of buying it?"

"I don't know. I like it, but it's pretty expensive. I don't even have a place yet to hang it." Scotty grabbed Preston's hand and pulled him along to the painting next to it. Without even really thinking about it, he threaded his fingers through Preston's. "What about this one? I like this one, too. It's about fifty bucks less."

"Hmm."

"Hello there." A woman's voice sounded from just a few feet away.

Scotty turned to greet the tall dark haired woman he'd seen earlier. "Hi."



"Can I help you...two?" She paused just a bit before adding "two," her gaze darting to their entwined hands.

Preston shrank back a step and wrenched his hand out of Scotty's hard enough to sting. He looked like a deer caught in the headlights. He backed even farther away from Scotty, putting more distance between them and pretending to be studying a display of postcards.

For a moment Scotty felt physically ill. His stomach twisted, sunk. Tears pricked his eyes unexpectedly at the snub.

The woman's eyes widened, obviously catching Preston's odd reaction. "Would you like me to show you all the paintings we have of that artist?" she asked, politely.

His knees wobbled a little. He didn't even want to look in Preston's direction. He knew he was probably being unfair. But fuck, he did not want to go down the road of hiding who he was again.

"Um, no, thank you. I'm only looking," Scotty croaked out hoarsely. He didn't want to be rude, but he didn't want the woman to see him cry. He smiled, or at least he hoped it was a smile, and turned away. He had to get out of the shop. Without looking around to see where Preston had wandered off to, Scotty walked out of the shop and halfway down the street before he stopped.

He took a deep, fortifying breath and glanced around at the shoppers around him. No one paid any attention to him. He sat down on a nearby bench to wait for Preston.

Okay, so maybe he was overreacting. It wouldn't be the first time. Some of his friends back in high school called him a drama queen even. But he couldn't shake the despair looming over him at the moment. Deep inside, he knew. Preston wasn't going to accept being gay. And he sure would never accept Scotty as his boyfriend.

"Hey, you okay?" Preston asked, approaching him. His hands were shoved in the pockets of his jeans. Probably afraid Scotty would try to hold his hand again.

Scotty looked away. "I have a headache."

Preston sat down. "Oh? I'm sorry. When did you get a headache?"

"Just a few minutes ago. It's pretty bad. I think I'm going to go back to the room and lay down." He stood up and turned in the direction of the motel.

"All right. I'll come with you."

"No," Scotty said quickly. "I don't want to spoil the day for you. You stay here. I'll--I'll see you later."

He practically ran away. Cowardly, maybe. But he hurried to the motel, never even looking back. When he got there, he saw that it was a little after four. Instead of heading to the room, Scotty went into the lobby and grabbed a plastic glass of white wine and sat down at a little bistro table.

He wondered if he should go to the front desk and tell them they were leaving in the morning instead of staying a second night. He definitely had lost all enthusiasm for being there. So much for the stupid dream of maybe living there with the man he loved. Preston would never love him. Not ever.

"Hi, Mr. Trask."

"Hi, Kimberly. You can call me Scotty."

She smiled and sat at the empty chair at the table. "I'm on a short break."

"Join me in a glass?"

"Can't. The staff isn't allowed to drink the free wine. Where's your girlfriend?"

Scotty took a large swallow of wine. "I don't have a girlfriend." He paused. "I'm here with a man."

"Oh." Kimberly nodded, and then, to his relief, grinned. "Oh. Okay. Boy, that old cliché is right though."

"Cliché?"

"The cute ones are either married or gay." Kimberly laughed.

Scotty laughed, too.

"So, then, where's your boyfriend?"

"He's not really my boyfriend, but we had something of a fight. I sort of left him down by the shops."

"Ah, lovers spat? Shouldn't have one of those on such a beautiful day."

"Probably not." He drained the rest of his wine. "Anyway, I think it was probably a mistake to come here with him."

"He doesn't like the beach?" Kimberly wrinkled her nose.

"Doesn't like me."

Kimberly stood up. "Well, then he's got bad taste, that's all I can say. Want another one of those?"

"Yeah."

About an hour or so later, Scotty finally forced himself to head back down to the embarcadero area. He knew he wasn't being fair to Preston. It was so new to him. And he didn't want to be gay, that much was obvious to Scotty. Anyway, he should be more understanding. It hurt, no doubt about it, but not everything was about him.

He found Preston sitting on an old wooden bench between shop buildings looking out to sea. The breeze blew his dark hair. Scotty's heart skipped a beat. The man was beautiful.

He sat down and smiled at Preston. "Hi."

Preston stared at him warily. "Hi. Feeling better?"

"Yeah. A couple of glasses of chardonnay did wonders."

Preston's mouth curved. "For a headache?"

"Something like that. You hungry? I know a great restaurant on the top of the hill there." Scotty gestured with his shoulder behind him. "Great views, fabulous food. Been there for years. It's my favorite place. Want to have dinner with me?"

Preston's gaze met his and held it for several seconds. "Scotty--"

His heart thumping wildly, Scotty said, "Yeah?"

"Never mind." Preston shook his head. "I'd love to have dinner with you."

They stood up and headed back up the hill to the restaurant. Scotty didn't miss at all that they walked several feet apart.

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# Chapter 7

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Scott sighed and stretched dramatically when they returned to the motel room. "Boy, am I bushed. Think I'll go to bed."

Preston frowned, watching him head into the bathroom and close the door. The younger man was holding back. At dinner he'd been ridiculously reserved. Not at all the usual Scott.

He'd hurt him. Preston knew that. Knew it as soon as he practically ran from the gift shop. He hadn't meant to hurt Scott. The woman coming upon them holding hands had startled him. Hell, he hadn't held hands with his wife since they'd dated.

Preston blew out a breath and removed the disgusting motel bedspread and stuffed it in the corner of the closet.

The truth was he just wasn't like Scott. He could never be. In fact, he'd decided after Scott had gone back to the motel earlier that this crazy attraction to the other man would end and soon. While he wandered the town by himself he'd seen happy little families made up of a man, woman, and children. That's what he wanted. What he had wanted since he was just a kid. He wasn't going to suddenly change.

After coming to the realization he would have to tell Scott things were over when he saw him, Preston had sat on the bench and played over and over in his head how the conversation would go. He figured it was similar to the conversation one had when breaking up with a woman. *Let's just be friends*, he would say. Maybe going away with Scott had been a good idea because it got the whole wanting Scott out of his system.

*The hell it did.*

The minute Scott had sat next to him on the bench, his soft violet blue eyes puppy-dog sad, vulnerability and sensuality screaming off him, Preston couldn't end it. Couldn't make himself say the words, *I don't want to be with you. I'm not gay. Sorry.*

Over dinner, Preston had been transfixed by every move Scott made. Every time his mouth opened to speak, Preston stared at his full, too kissable lips. His cock sat stiff and erect under the restaurant table.

Preston sat on the edge of the bed and removed his athletic shoes and socks. Scott was not out of his system at all. He wanted him. Now. Tonight. Only it seemed like Scott wanted to push him away.

He stood and unfastened his jeans, pulling them off and neatly folding them to place in his overnight bag.

The bathroom door opened and Scott emerged dressed in a thin red T-shirt and what looked like flannel pajama bottoms.

*Not so fast, Scott.*

Preston yanked off his shirt and turned to face the other man wearing only his charcoal gray briefs, his erection jutting forward. Scott noticed, too. His eyes went wide, his cheeks pinked, and he looked away quickly.

"Bathroom's yours if you want it," Scott said, not looking at him. "I'm going to get some sleep."

He watched Scott pull back the sheet and blanket and climb into bed. Preston grimaced and went into the bathroom to brush his teeth.

When Preston came back out wearing only his briefs, Scott's back was to him and he was clearly trying to pretend to be asleep.

Preston gritted his teeth and walked to the side of the bed Scott lay on and sat on the edge. "Scott, I want to talk to you."

Scott's eyes remained closed. Little punk.

Preston shook his shoulders. "I know you're awake. No one can fall asleep that fast."

With obvious reluctance, Scott opened his eyes. "Okay, what do you want? I'm really--"

"Tired. Yeah, I know. You've said it plenty of times. Twice on the walk back from the restaurant and twice since we returned to the room." Preston ran his fingers through his hair. "Look, I'm sorry."

"Sorry?"

"About earlier today. I didn't mean to hurt you. Can you just forget it and forgive me?"

Scott just stared at him with those puppy-dog eyes and, for a fractured breath, Preston was pretty sure he would say no. Then he smiled a really sweet smile. "Okay. I forgive you."

Preston swallowed back his relief and leaned down to place a quick kiss on Scott's lips. "Good. You have too many clothes on. Take them off."

Scott raised an eyebrow. "You know motel sex isn't really all that great. It's totally overrated. The beds are loud and uncomfortable and you always worry about making too much noise so your neighbors know exactly what's going on."

"Well, I think I'd like to find out for myself." He tossed the condom packet he'd brought out of the bathroom on the nightstand next to the bed. "Scoot over."

"Scoot over? Go to your own side of the bed."

Preston laughed and shook his head. "Nope." He pushed at Scott to make room, but when he didn't, he lay on top of the other man and kissed him, his fingers grabbing onto the hems of Scott's shirt. "Take it off."

"Mmpf," Scott said against his lips. He pushed a little at Preston's shoulders, and then reached for his own shirt. Preston helped.

"Now the bottoms, Scotty," he said, nipping the other man's bottom lip. He could now feel Scott's erection pushing through his pajamas. His pulse leaped in anticipation.

Preston helped remove the bottoms which ended up being pushed to the bottom of the bed. His hand covered Scott's right thigh, inching closer to his cock.

"Pres," Scott gasped, his hips already lifting to give Preston access to his ass.

He couldn't say what it was about Scott that made him want him so much. The man was good looking. Sure. But so was his best friend and Scott's brother, Jack. He didn't want to fuck Jack. He'd wanted the

young man even before he'd left for six years. He'd tried to pretend otherwise. Did it mean Preston was gay? Hell, he didn't know. Bisexual maybe. He didn't care to analyze it.

He sucked on two fingers and slipped them between Scotty's legs, probing for his entrance. His fingers slid in easily.

"Oh, God, Scotty," he murmured. "Get the condom."

Scott bit his lip and stretched his arm over for the packet. He tore it open using his teeth.

Preston snatched the condom out of his hands and straightened just enough to roll it over his erection. Instead of going straight for what he wanted though, Preston dove down and pulled Scott's hard cock into his mouth.

"Ah, geez." Scott leaned back and pushed himself farther into Preston's mouth.

He'd never had a guy's cock in his mouth before. And this wasn't just any guy, either. It was Scotty. Which somehow made it far more important. In the last few days he'd done a lot of things with Scott he hadn't done with anyone else. His tongue had been in the other man's ass, it shouldn't be all that shocking for his mouth to now be wrapped around Scott long, thick cock. And strangest of all, he wanted to make the other man come in his mouth.

Preston just did what he liked when his own cock was sucked. Scotty was a guy, so it had to feel pretty much the same to him. He worked up and down the shaft for a while before temporarily pulling it out so he could tug Scott's balls into his mouth.

"Oh, my God," Scott moaned, bucking against him.

Preston returned to Scott's cock, running his tongue along the slit and around the tip, before swallowing it farther down. He re-inserted two fingers in Scott's ass. His own cock was painfully hard and pushed against the bed.

"Pres, I'm going to come." Scott tensed and groaned, warm cum hitting the back of Preston's throat. He started to gag, and he quickly released Scott's cock.

Scott grabbed the pillow and buried his face in it, his body shaking. Preston stared at the beauty of his orgasm, watching the other man's skin flush. He couldn't stay still long though; his cock twitched, reminding him he needed release himself.

He lifted Scotty's legs and slowly pushed in to his entrance. It wasn't going to take long. He'd almost come just from the other man's orgasm. He pulled the pillow out of Scott's hands so he could look at him while he fucked him.

The plain truth was sex with Scott was the best he'd ever had. The idea he might prefer men just a little had begun to form in the back of his mind. He wouldn't let it fully out. He couldn't wrap his mind around it just yet. But he knew he very much liked being with this man here.

He slammed into Scotty, pounding him, going as deep as possible. The way his ass muscles squeezed Preston's cock was mind-blowing. He wished he could thrust into him all night, experiencing the thrill of their being joined like this, but his cock would not be denied. The orgasm couldn't be held back no matter how much he might like to make it last longer.

"Yes," he ground out, his balls tightening and his cock twitching as he came, his fingers digging perhaps just a bit too hard in Scott's flesh.

When at last the waves of excruciating pleasure had subsided, Preston withdrew and discarded the condom. He pulled Scott close to him, pushing the man's head down on his chest.

"Sorry," Scott murmured.

"For what?"

"Coming in your mouth. Should have warned you sooner."

Preston shook his head. "I wanted you to. I'm just not used to it. Just need to practice."

"Not now. I'm too--"

"Tired. Yes, I know. Go to sleep."

\* \* \* \*

Sunday morning came far too soon for Scotty. Saturday spent with Preston had been an amazing day. One of the best he'd ever had.

By silent mutual agreement they didn't discuss what happened Friday afternoon. Saturday they went sailing, went to see Hearst Castle, and fed wildlife. Just spent the day having fun and relaxing.

Preston still refused to show any affection in public, but Scotty was okay with that. He didn't expect to kiss publicly or anything himself, so if Preston didn't want to hold hands, he could accept it. He'd had too good a time to make a big deal out of it.

They finished paying their breakfast bill at a local restaurant and went to walk outside.

"Hey, I'm going to make a quick bathroom stop," Preston said.

"Okay, I'll wait outside." Scotty walked out and pulled out his cell phone. The morning was cool and overcast with traces of misty fog still hanging around parts of the city. He'd had his cell off most of the weekend, but decided to check his messages. He'd just about finished the last one when his cell rang. He glanced at the number and sighed.

"Good morning, Jack."

"Where the hell have you been?" his brother's voice barked. "I've been calling all weekend. And don't tell me you're at Mom and Dad's because I know you've been gone the whole time."

"I told Mom I would be."

"Well, you didn't tell her where you were going. Where are you?"

Scotty glanced back at the restaurant. "I'm around."

"Why don't we meet for lunch then?"

"Uh, can't. I'm out of the area."

There was a long pause. "Oh. Do we have a new boyfriend?"

Scotty gritted his teeth. "No."

Jack chuckled. "Yeah, you do. Who is he? When do we get to meet him?"

"Never. There's no one to meet. I don't have a new boyfriend."

"So you're just fucking?"

Scotty rolled his eyes. "Just drop it."

"I'm glad you're okay. I was getting worried. You could have just told me you wanted to spend some quality time with a new man."

"Jack."

"Anyway, Friday was quiet. Preston called in sick. He must really be sick, too, because he hasn't been answering his phone or anything."

The restaurant door behind him opened and Scotty knew without looking it was Preston.

"I don't know anything about that. He barely even talks to me," Scotty said quickly, hoping the panic in his voice didn't give him away.

"I didn't think you did," Jack said. "Just mentioning it."

"Oh, okay, Ben, I'll be right there." Scotty shifted his cell to his other ear and turned away from Preston's stare.

"Ben, huh?" Jack chuckled. "I'll let you go. Wendy's calling me from the other room anyway. Bye."

"Bye." He closed his cell and pocketed it. He turned and smiled at Preston. "All set?"

"Yeah. Who was that?"

"Jack, being a pain in the ass as usual. Forget it." He turned to head for the car.

"Wait." Preston briefly touched his arm.

"What is it?"

"We need to make a quick stop in a shop."

Scotty frowned. "Okay. Lead the way."

They walked past the restaurant and down a few doors to the shop that had the paintings. Preston entered through the door. Scotty followed.

The tall, thin dark-haired woman smiled from behind the counter. "There you are, Mr. Reynolds. I'll go and get it."

Scotty watched her go through a door in the back. "Get what?"

Preston just smiled.

The woman returned holding a large frame wrapped in brown paper. She handed it over to Preston. "Thank you again. I am sure you will be very pleased with it. It's a beautiful painting."

"I'm sure. Thanks." Preston nodded toward the door and Scotty opened it for him.

When they were out on the sidewalk again, Scotty said, "You bought a painting?"



Preston grinned. "Yeah, for you."

Scotty froze. "For me?"

"Uh-huh. The one you admired Friday. Come on, this is heavy." Preston started walking toward the car and Scotty automatically walked after him.

"What? But, that's...that's too much. That was expensive. I can't accept that."

It was Preston's turn to stop. He turned and stared at Scotty with a huge frown. "Look, I have the money and I wanted to buy it for you. Please, don't spoil it."

Scotty felt like a giant ass and was instantly remorseful. What an ingrate. He exhaled, and then smiled as bright as he could make it. "Okay. I'm sorry. Thank you. It's great. I love it."

Preston nodded. "Much better."

"Hmm. I don't know where I'll put it though. And if I show up with that to my parents' house my dad will throw a fit. He'll accuse me of being irresponsible with my money."

"We'll keep it at my house for now," Preston said.

They put it in the trunk of his car. It barely fit with their bags. Scotty wanted to ask if his painting being at Preston's house meant they had some sort of relationship, but didn't want to spoil the weekend or the present by springing the question.

He went to get in the driver's side. "Oh, I've been meaning to tell you there may be a problem with your case for Mrs. Windham's grandson."

"Problem?"

"Yeah. He's guilty."

Preston sighed. "It's my job to prove he's innocent."

Scotty smiled. "Then you *definitely* have a problem."

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# Chapter 8

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Two Saturday evenings later, Preston hung up after speaking to his children. He didn't get to see them nearly enough, but at least he kept in touch with them by phone several times a week.

He was expecting Scott at any time. They'd seen each frequently over the last couple of weeks, all the while striving for discretion at all times. Which suited Preston well.

He'd begun to accept the possible truth that he might prefer men. It couldn't be that Scott was that incredibly attractive that he was the only man who tempted Preston. Scott did, of course, but he couldn't really kid himself into believing Scott would be the only man he would ever find attractive.

The knowledge that he was most likely gay did not sit well with him, however. More than once Preston had wondered if maybe he should see a psychiatrist. It couldn't be normal to be attracted to men. It just...couldn't. Such a thing went against everything he'd ever been taught, how he was raised, how he'd developed every relationship he'd ever had. And it wasn't as though he couldn't get an erection with women. He definitely had no problems there.

Once he'd even taken out the phone book and looked up mental health professionals. He hadn't gotten up the nerve to actually call one, though.

He'd considered that his attraction to men could be just a phase. He dismissed that though when he remembered that before Scott left for New York six years ago Preston had wanted him. It hadn't just happened. And he didn't think he could ignore it either. Two minutes around Scott and he was jumping him.

So, Preston had come to a decision. He was going to accept, at least for now, that he was gay and having a relationship with his best friend's brother. He would allow the relationship to continue, but on his terms. He was pretty sure Scott would accept the terms, too. They were pretty much the same stuff they'd already been doing.

His doorbell rang and he went to let Scott inside. His heart skipped a beat when the young man brushed past him. He closed the door and locked it and turned to face the man he couldn't seem to keep his hands off of nor his mind from straying.

Being Saturday and warm, Scott had dressed casually in shorts, a T-shirt, and flip-flops. He had just enough sexy stubble covering his chin and his sandy blond hair had been windblown. He grinned and held out the paper sack he'd carried in with him.

"Are you hungry? I brought fried chicken," Scott announced.

Preston frowned at the grease spot on the bag. "Uh, where did you get that?"

"From a place down the street from my parents' house. I swear they've been using the same oil for the last five years." His grin widened and he headed into the kitchen with the bag of chicken.

"You say that like it's a good thing."

Scott shrugged. "I guess some people might get squeamish about that sort of thing. But they did get their rating up since they were closed down by the health department."

"I hope you are kidding about that." Preston cleared his throat. "But anyway, I'd like to talk to you."

"Talk? I'm kind of surprised I got all the way to the kitchen without you bending me over."

"I--" Preston felt his face heat and he looked away.

"I *am* kidding about that. Geez, Pres, you're so serious." Scott leaned toward him and kissed him full on the lips. He grabbed Preston's hand and threaded his fingers through them. "Sure, we can talk. Any time you want. In the bedroom?"

"No, we won't get any talking done then. In the living room. I want to talk about us."

Scott looked instantly wary and Preston could have sworn he backed up a step, but whether he imagined that or not, Scott nodded and pulled him toward the living room.

They sat next to each other on the loveseat. Scott stared into Preston's eyes for several seconds, looking almost sad, and then he said, "Okay. What about us?"

Preston was suddenly nervous and he wondered if maybe this wasn't such a good idea after all. "Well, I know you've wanted to talk about our...well, whatever we are."

"Yes."

"I've accepted that I might be attracted to men"

Scott blinked. "Might be?"

Preston shifted uncomfortably. "Okay, that I am." He swallowed. "I have to admit I'm not entirely sure what that means. Obviously I have been attracted to women in the past as is, you know, normal."

Scott inhaled sharply and went completely rigid. "What did you just say?"

He shook his head. "Scott, being ga...attracted to the same sex is not normal."

"Gay, Preston. Being gay. Jesus, you can't even say the damn word, can you?" Scott looked away quickly, but not before Preston saw a hint of moisture in the other man's eyes.

"Scotty, I don't want to fight with you. That's not what this is about." Preston rubbed his temples in frustration. "I wanted to tell you that I want to be with you."

He thought that would make Scott happy. That he would suddenly turn to Preston with his heartbreakingly beautiful smile and throw his arms around him and say how glad he was. That's the scenario he'd played in his mind. Trouble was, Scotty never did what Preston expected.

Scott continued to look away from him and he closed his eyes. "What does that mean to you, Pres?" he asked softly.

He nodded. "It means I want to go on seeing you, being with you. I think--I think what we have these past few weeks has worked really well."

"So, you mean you want nothing to change."

"Yes, exactly."

"I love you, Pres."

"That's--that's wonderful," Preston said, swallowing back the lump in his throat. He didn't like the tone Scott used. It was off. Odd. He forced himself to ask, "Then you agree?"

Scotty shook his head, but didn't say anything.

The lump in his throat dropped to his stomach. "No?"

"You want to keep things as they are, but I can't do that," Scott said hoarsely. "In other words, you don't want anyone to know you're gay. You don't want anyone to know you're seeing me. Sleeping with me. You want to live this secret life."

Preston opened his mouth to say something, but then realized it was true. He couldn't deny that was exactly how he felt.

"The problem is, Pres, everyone already knows I'm gay. I came out several years ago and my family knows I'm seeing someone. Don't worry, they don't know it's you. But they are eventually going to want know who it is." Scotty buried his face in his hands. "What am I supposed to say then? The guy I'm with is too ashamed of me to admit our relationship?"

"Scotty."

"Do you even know what that means? You always keep separate houses, separate expenses, you can never spend holidays together. You're never really together. Never." Scotty removed his hands from his face and finally looked at Preston. There was no mistaking the tears welling in his eyes. "If this were a hundred years...even thirty years ago, I probably would be okay with that. But I've already accepted who and what I am and I can't go back to pretending otherwise."

"You said you love me," Preston pointed out, grasping. "If you do, then why can't you accept that this is the only way it will work for me?"

"I do love you. But I also have something called self-respect, Pres. Too much to be someone's dirty little secret."

"You don't understand." Preston felt a little desperate. This wasn't how this conversation was supposed to go. "I have children. They can't...I can't let them know about me. I can't have them thinking I'm abnormal."

"Like me?"

"Scotty, I--"

"That's why you had the phone book out the other day turned to the listing of psychiatrists, isn't it? You put it away, but I saw it before you did. You think I'm some sort of freak and you hate the fact you might be just like me."

"I don't think you are a freak."

"You think I'm *abnormal*," Scotty said, his voice faltering on the last word. He stood up. "I have to get out of here."

"What? No. Please, it doesn't have to be like this." Preston stood up, too, his hand shooting out to stop Scott from moving.

"You know I both wanted and feared having this conversation. I wanted to have it because I hoped, dreamed really, that you would tell me you loved me and wanted to spend the rest of our lives together

and you didn't care who knew it. But I feared it would go exactly as it has. I should have known. Any dreams I ever have only end up badly."

Scott shook his head, shrugging off Preston's hand from his arm. He walked to the door.

Preston followed. "Don't do this, Scotty. I don't want you to go. I want you to stay."

Scott's hand froze on the doorknob and he turned to face Preston. "Do you love me?"

Preston's tongue stuck to the roof of his mouth. His mind fractured. Men didn't love men. Not romantically.

"Jesus, you should see your face right now. You look like you want to puke, Preston. You can't even *make* yourself say it. Because you don't. You don't love me and you never will. Sure, you like the sex, but so fucking what, huh? You can find some other sucker to be your dirty little secret and he probably won't demand anything else from you, like for you to give a shit about him."

Preston couldn't breathe. He wanted to tell Scott he was so wrong. He tried to speak, but emotion clogged his throat.

Tears streamed down Scotty's cheeks and he shook his head. "I'm sorry. That wasn't nice. I don't know what I'm saying. I'm sorry, Preston. Really. I wish I could just hide the way I feel and be what you want me to be. I can't. Coming out was one of the hardest things I've ever done, but I did it and my family and friends accept me and love me still. I can't go back. Not even for you."

Scott turned his back on him, opened the door and left Preston's house. *His life.*

Preston went to the closed door. "Scotty, please." His hand pressed to the front door, he wanted to go after him. Wanted to beg Scott to give him another chance. He'd try. He would. But he would be lying just to make the other man stay. He couldn't come out. Not ever.

He sunk to the floor with his back against the door, misery and loneliness hanging over him like a thick cloud.

\* \* \* \*

Scotty dropped to a crouch on Preston's front doorstep, burying his face in his hands. The tears flowed freely now.

He couldn't catch his breath. His chest hurt. His head hurt. His stomach hurt. Every part of him ached with near mind-numbing agony. He almost wished he would drop dead right there in front of Preston's house.

Maybe if he started the day over, he could avoid the conversation where Preston had forced him to end it. Refused to talk about it just as Preston had these last few weeks.

But he could dream and wish and hope forever. It would change nothing. It was over and he hated himself for caring so damn much.

He straightened and began walking. He made it to his car, but once inside he just sat there, leaning against the steering wheel letting the wracking sobs out. His vision was too blurred by tears to drive so he just let himself cry it out.

Somewhere in the back of his surely feeble mind he still hoped Preston would come running out from his house, taking what he'd said back. Telling Scotty he was sorry for thinking him *abnormal*. But no matter how hard he stared at the front door, it didn't happen.

"Fucking idiot," he yelled. "You're just a fucking idiot."

He'd done this. He'd allowed himself to ignore all the bothersome signs Preston had been giving him. Allowed the love he had already felt for Preston to deepen further. And now that it was over he had no one to blame but himself.

He was crying like a baby.

Finally exhausted from his tears, he rested his head against the steering wheel for several minutes more. He didn't know how long. Oddly his stomach gurgled, reminding him he'd never had the chance to eat the greasy fried chicken.

Scotty turned the key in the ignition, started the car, and drove away from the man he loved.

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# Chapter 9

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Over the weekend Scotty had decided he would have to quit his job. There was no way he could face Preston every day. Not now. Maybe in another ten years when he'd somehow gotten over him and found a new man to love. Hopefully one who loved Scotty, too.

He stood outside Kenneth Trask's office door absolutely dreading the conversation about to take place. Maybe it wouldn't be as bad as he thought. His father had mellowed over the years and even accepted his being gay. Eventually.

It was just...well, he had a feeling his father hadn't wanted to give him the job in the first place. He'd hated even asking, but he needed someone to give him a chance.

His semi-retired father only worked three days a week now. Monday being one of them. He tapped lightly on the door.

"Come in," a deep authoritative voice called.

Scotty was nine years old again. Afraid to face his father after breaking his trophy in the family den. He twisted the knob and plastered what he hoped was a casual smile on his face.

"Hey, Dad."

"Scotty, I was just thinking about you." His father smiled. Scotty's older brother, Jack, resembled their father more than he did, but there was no getting past the fact the family all looked alike. His father gestured to the big plush chair in front of his desk. Even though he only worked part-time now, his father was impeccably dressed in a black suit with a pale yellow dress shirt and tie.

"Uh, you were thinking about me?"

His father nodded. "I've been going over your accounting and investigative work and I have to say I'm impressed."

"Thanks, Dad." Scotty let himself bask in the feel-good glow of his father's approval. He'd so rarely had it, surely it couldn't be so terrible for him to enjoy a bit of it now and then. "About the job," he said slowly, carefully.

"You're not going to ask me for a raise already, are you?" the old man grinned. He picked up a mug of coffee he'd had on the desk and took a large sip.

"What? Oh, no, sir."

"Now, now, don't dismiss it so easily. We can talk about it."

Scotty swallowed, realizing this was going to be harder than he'd actually thought. And he'd thought it would be hard.

"What kind of money are we talking about?" His father was in business-mode. Negotiating with a cool smile.

"Dad, I don't want a raise," Scotty said. "Actually, I've come to give you my resignation."

His father's smile faded with lightning speed. His blue eyes turned glacial. "Your...resignation?"

Scotty nodded. "I know this is a surprise."

His father laughed a short, barking sound. He wrinkled his nose. "No. It's not a surprise at all. I should have expected this."

He frowned. "Expected it?"

"I told your mother offering you a job at my firm would be a big mistake, but your mother insisted. I knew it in my gut."

Dreading the answer, Scotty forced himself to ask, "Knew?"

"That you were nothing but a worthless screw-up. You always have been. I didn't think you'd be any different now." His father shook his head. "For a minute there when I looked at your work I thought maybe you had changed after all. But you haven't."

His heart rose in his throat and then dropped like lead into his stomach. "Dad, that's not true. I'm not a screw-up."

"Yeah, sure, Scotty. Whatever. You can't handle being a man and working for a living. What's the matter? Had to work too hard?"

"That's not what this is about."

His father arched a blond brow at him. "Really? Then why are you quitting if it isn't because you can't handle a real job?"

Scotty opened his mouth, ready to refute the angry words spoken by his father, but he couldn't tell the truth without outing Preston. He couldn't do that to him. It would crush Preston and, as hurt as he was that Preston didn't love him, Scotty could not turn on the man he loved with such viciousness. He still wanted only the best for Preston.

"I--I guess you're right," Scotty said softly, his heart twisting in his chest. He had the urge to curl into a fetal position at the look of extreme disappointment on his father's face. He'd been so close to having his father's approval, only to have it snatched away.

His father grimaced. "Get out."

"What?"

"I said, get out. Grow the fuck up, Scott. I can't even look at you. You make me sick. Get your things and get out of my firm." His father waved his hand toward the door.

He felt the prick of tears, but angrily forced them away. He would not give his father the satisfaction. Scotty struggled up from the chair, trying to maintain some dignity. His father had turned away and wouldn't even look at him.

Scotty wanted to say something...anything, but he couldn't think of a single thing he could say that would repair the damage. The pain was too raw. He turned and walked out of his father's office.

\* \* \* \*

Preston stared at the computer screen not really seeing anything on it. He'd spent all of Sunday in bed. Grieving he supposed. He couldn't make himself care about anything.



By the time he forced himself out of bed Monday morning, he hadn't made it into the office until after ten o'clock. He put on a suit but hadn't straightened his tie. He hadn't even bothered to shower or shave. What difference did it make anyway?

When he got to the office he hadn't missed the fact Scott's office door was open and the room itself dark. Apparently he hadn't even come in.

He couldn't say why, but he missed the pulse pounding rock music blaring through the office walls.

His heart was shredded. He couldn't deny the way he felt about Scott. Not to himself anyway. Though it wasn't supposed to happen that way, he was completely and thoroughly in love with Scotty. Not that he intended to do anything about it. He couldn't change.

Eventually he would get past the ache, the need for Scott. He simply had to. Scotty didn't want a clandestine affair and he didn't want an open one. They were at cross-purposes.

Love and relationships sometimes just didn't work out. His marriage hadn't. When he proposed to his wife, Preston had thought he loved her. He never would have bothered otherwise. But it was clear almost from the beginning they weren't really compatible. And now, with all that had happened with her and Scotty, Preston decided he had never really loved her like love was supposed to feel. To be fair, Preston didn't think she'd ever loved him either. They had two wonderful children, though, and he wouldn't be sorry for them.

He did love Scotty, but that didn't mean they were any more compatible than he and his wife had been. They wanted different things. Scotty wanted to be openly gay and Preston didn't.

The door burst open and Jack strode in looking ready to spit. "What the fuck did you do to my brother?"

Preston felt the color drain from his face. "What?"

"You heard me, you son of a bitch," Jack snarled. "What did you do to Scotty?"

"I--then you know," Preston whispered, pushing his chair away slightly from the desk.

"Yes, I know. I'm not stupid. I've known for weeks you were fucking my brother."

Preston's gaze shot to the open door. "Keep your voice down."

Jack glared, but went to the door and slammed it shut. "Happy?"

"No. Where is Scott anyway?"

"I have no idea. He quit."

Preston blanched, a pit forming in his stomach. "He did?"

"Is that all you can say? Answer me with questions? Why did you fuck with my brother? Did you break his heart?"

Preston closed his eyes briefly and sighed. "I think we broke each other's hearts. He didn't understand my desire to keep our relationship secret. He broke up with me."

"Well, that's just great. So, then he goes to my dad and quits and the old man kicks the shit out of him."

"He--he what?" Preston's heart raced. *No way.* He'd fucking kill anyone who hurt Scotty, even his dad.

"Not physically," Jack said. "Mentally and emotionally. My dad can be an ass, as you know. He gave it to the kid rough. My mom says Scotty came home, packed his stuff, and left. She tried to talk him out of leaving, but he wouldn't listen. She said she'd never seen him looking so bad."

"Jesus," Preston whispered. He felt like someone had kicked him in the gut. Or the chest. He wanted to do something, but he didn't know what.

Jack sat on the edge of his desk and glared at him. "So, you're a coward, huh? Can't admit you're gay and want my brother? Is that it?"

Preston's cheeks got hot. "You don't understand, Jack."

"Sure." Jack snorted. "Do you think it was easy for Scotty to admit he was gay? Well, it wasn't. He took a lot of shit. My parents accept it now, but they sure as hell didn't then. My mother cried and my dad yelled. They wouldn't talk to Scotty for three days. He lost friends, too. He came to me and he asked me if he'd made a mistake coming out. If he maybe should have hid it from everyone."

"What did you say?" Preston asked, his voice raspy to his own ears.

"I told him the truth. If he hid who he was he would be miserable his whole life. I asked him if he would be rather be miserable for all his years or miserable the way he felt at that moment for whatever time it took for people to accept him. Preston, those who love you will love you anyway, and those who won't accept it, never loved you in the first place."

Preston just shook his head. He couldn't even think. His mind was numb.

Jack rose and headed for the door.

"Where are you going?" Preston asked.

"To find Scotty. Someone has to be on his side." Jack smiled a little sadly. "See you."

\* \* \* \*

Scotty stared at the cell phone on the round table as it sprang to life. The only light he'd turned on in the room was a small 60-watt lamp on the table. He picked up the phone and flipped it open.

"Hi, Jack," his voice came out raw and stripped.

"My God, kid, you sound terrible."

Scotty shuddered. "Yeah. I've been better."

"I've been calling you all day and night. Where are you?"

"Nowhere."

"Scotty."

"What do you want, Jack?"

"I talked to Dad. He knows what an asshole he is." There was a slight pause. "He knows everything."

Scotty stared at the phone. "How did you know?"

"Do you think you're the only one with investigative skills? You're my brother. I know."

"I wish you hadn't told Dad. It's none of his business. Yours either." He rubbed his temples. "Now Preston will hate me."

"No, he won't."

"Sure. Anyway, it doesn't change anything. I don't care anymore what Dad thinks."

"That's not true."

"It is. I'm done trying to please him. None of it matters to him. All he cares about is that I'm gay and an embarrassment to him." Scotty sighed, wiping the tears streaming from his eyes. He was a damn cry baby. "I just have to accept that. Lots of people don't get along with their father."

"Where are you, Scotty?" Jack asked again.

"Near the airport."

"The airport? Why?"

"I leave for New York in the morning. I think it's for the best."

Jack sighed. "You can't run away from this."

"I'm not running, Jack. I'm giving up. Surrendering. Whatever you want to call it. I should never have come back. That much is true. The cliché about going home isn't such a cliché."

"I'm sorry about Preston. He's a jerk."

"Nah, it's my fault. I expected too much out of him. I should have just let my fantasy play out and consider it over. I let myself believe there was something more to it."

"So you don't love him?"

Scotty scrubbed his hand over his face and stared out at the dismal little motel room he'd rented.

"Scotty?" Jack prodded.

"I love him. So what? He doesn't love me and that's that. He thinks I am abnormal," Scotty said, his tongue tripping over the hated word.

"I'll beat the crap out of him for you."

Scotty smiled a little. "Yeah, like old times, huh? Defending me from those who bullied me."

"Of course. You're my little brother. I've always got your back."

"I know." He choked on the words and the emotion suffocating him. "I just--I just don't know why he couldn't love me, Jack."

"I don't know why either, kid. Maybe he does, you know, but he's scared. This is all new for him."

Scotty nodded, forgetting his brother couldn't see him, but his throat was too clogged to speak.

"Where are you, Scotty? I want to come and get you."

"No."

"Please. Don't leave. No matter what anyone else does or says to you, I'm your brother and I love you. Let me come get you. You can stay with me and Wendy."

Scotty started sobbing then. He couldn't help it. He felt stupid and weak, but he couldn't stop himself from crying no matter how hard he tried. He finally managed to get out the name of the airport motel he'd checked into.

"Okay, kid, I'm coming to get you. Stay put. I love you."

"Love you," Scotty whispered and closed his phone.

\* \* \* \*

An hour or so later, Scotty poured himself a bad cup of coffee from the in-room coffeemaker. He expected Jack any time. At least he'd stopped crying.

Shit, he hadn't cried this much since he was a little boy. He wasn't the crying type. Geez, he needed to get it together.

If he really were going to stay in Los Angeles, he was going to have to get himself a real job away from working for Kenneth Trask...and Preston Reynolds, that was for sure. He was good at his work and Scotty knew it.

Once he had himself established in a job, he would find a place of his own so Jack and Wendy could have their own privacy. No one wanted a third-wheel around.

And then, Scotty exhaled, he would get over Preston and start dating again. It would take some time. No getting around that. But he would get over Preston. He just would.

There was a strong knock on the door of his room. His brother had arrived.

"Be right there, Jack," he called.

Scotty set the coffee cup down on the dresser and walked over to open the door.

Expecting to see Jack, his world tilted on its axis when instead Preston stood there, looking wiped out and unshaven.

"Hi, Scotty," he whispered. "Can I come in?"

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# Chapter 10

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Scotty just stared at him. He'd gone white around his mouth and his cheeks pinked. His blue eyes were very red from crying.

Without waiting for the other man's agreement, Preston entered the motel room and closed the door behind him.

"How?" Scotty's voice squeaked out.

Preston's lips twisted. "I was with Jack when you were talking to him. I asked him to find out where you were."

Scotty crossed his arms in front of his chest in a protective gesture and backed up against the wall. "Why, Pres? Haven't we said all there is to say?"

"Maybe," Preston admitted, finding it difficult to swallow. All he could think of was kissing Scott. He wanted to kiss away the pain. He took a small step toward his lover and pressed his body into Scotty's. Preston framed his face in his hands and devoured Scott's lips.

Scott whimpered and put his arms around Preston's neck, pulling him closer until their bodies were tight against each other. Preston could feel Scott's erection and knew it likely his lover could feel his.

He really hadn't planned to attack like this. He wanted to have the conversation he knew would be necessary to set things right, if it could be, but the minute he saw how wrecked and beautiful Scotty looked, he couldn't stop himself.

Preston realized he was tugging off Scott's shirt and Scott was helping him with it. They next got rid of his own shirt until they were bare chest to bare chest, their lips never parting. He worked on Scott's jeans next, unzipping them and pushing them down together with his briefs. Somehow between the two of them they managed to get them off completely.

He undid his own pants and pulled them down just enough to expose his throbbing cock. He'd brought pre-lubed condoms with him, hoping after they talked they might get around to this, so he removed one from his pants pocket, tore it open and slipped it on his erection. He lifted the legs of the man and anchored them around his waist.

"Pres," Scotty gasped when he inserted two saliva soaked fingers in Scotty's ass. "Oh my God."

Preston wrapped his other hand around Scott's hard cock, stroking up and down the length. His tongue shoved into Scotty's mouth over and over just as he soon planned to do with his cock in the other man's ass.

"Yes, Preston, fuck me, please."

*Oh, yeah.* How the hell could he resist Scotty begging?

With one long thrust Preston entered him. He slid his fingers in Scott's hair and tugged his mouth even closer, devouring, tasting, hungry for everything he could wrench from him.

He slammed into Scotty's ass again and again, perhaps rougher than he should, but frantic, primal need drove him to take what was his. He wanted to brand the man. Scotty would always be his. He bent his lover in half, pushing closer still, trying to mold their bodies as one.

It was too intense, too emotion driven for him to prolong the orgasm. His balls pulled tight, his cock tingled. He sped up, both his thrusts inside Scott's body and his hand strokes on the other man's cock.

"Preston," Scotty groaned hoarsely, hot cum splashing over Preston's abdomen.

It was what he had been waiting for. Without the need to hold back, he drove in hard and deep, shaking with the explosion of his own release.

Scotty moved in his arms, trying to release his legs from around Preston, but he held him still, kissing him, allowing their bodies to still be merged.

When his lover got firmer with his struggles to disengage them, Preston sighed and released him, withdrawing and gently setting Scotty down to regain his footing.

Scott moved away slightly and Preston leaned against the wall, panting heavily, trying to catch his breath, realign his thoughts to why he was there.

"This doesn't change anything," Scott said softly.

Preston nodded. "I know. But I hope what I have to say will." He turned to look at the other man. His eyes were still red-rimmed from crying earlier and the emotion there was raw, wary. "I need to talk to you, Scotty. Sit down."

"Can I get cleaned up and dressed first?"

"Of course."

He bent down to retrieve his jeans, briefs, and shirt. His lip was twisted between his teeth. Just as he went to walk past Preston to the bathroom, Preston stopped him with a hand on Scott's neck. He touched his lips to Scott's in a brief but heartfelt kiss.

While Scott got cleaned up, Preston refastened his own pants and pulled the motel bedspread off the bed. The sheets didn't look much cleaner from what he could tell.

He turned and poured himself some coffee and took a sip. Grimacing, he tossed it in the waste basket. He knew what he wanted to say, but he was nervous. Afraid it wouldn't matter to Scotty. That it was too late.

Scotty came out of the bathroom fully dressed and looking just as uncertain, as vulnerable. Preston wanted to make things better for him. For them. He still had doubts, but he was trying to work on them.

"There on the bed," he said, pointing. When Scotty sat on the edge of the bed, Preston knelt down on the floor and took hold of both of his lover's hands. After everything, he felt like maybe he should subjugate himself a little bit.

"Why did you come here, Preston?"

"For starters, let me get out the most important thing." Preston blew out a shaky breath, his body trembling. "I love you, Scott."

"I--" His eyes had gone very large.

He stopped whatever startled reply Scotty planned by touching his fingers to the man's lips. "Let me say it all. I don't want to chicken out. I've loved you for a while. I think, maybe, some part of me loved you even before you left for New York. I didn't want to believe it or even think about it. But I remember when you left I felt such emptiness."

"I loved you too," Scott whispered.

Preston swallowed, nodded. "I was attracted to you. To other men also. Not like you, but I would find myself staring and then I'd catch it and force it away. I didn't think it was all that serious except when you were near. Just your scent could drive me nuts. I knew I was in trouble after a pool party we all attended. I couldn't stop staring at your bare chest all day and when I went home that night I masturbated in the shower to images of you."

"Pres."

He bowed his head. "I was ashamed. It wasn't supposed to be like that, you know?"

"I know."

"I was kind of glad and sad at the same time when you left. And when you came back..." Preston shook his head. "It all came back only even stronger. And since I was no longer married I wouldn't be cheating on anyone if I just let it happen. So I did. I thought if we did it just once or whatever that would be enough. It wasn't."

"No," Scott agreed.

"I've been dying inside a little every day. Or at least, the part of me who wanted to deny what I was. I don't want to deny it any longer, Scotty."

Scott inhaled sharply. "What are you saying, Pres?"

"I told my children and my ex-wife."

Scott's grip on Preston's hands tightened. "You--you did? Wow. I--how did it go?"

Preston smiled a little. "Not as bad as I thought. They were a little shocked, I think, but they didn't freak out." He swallowed. "I promised we'd go up and see them next week."

"We?"

"Yeah, if you want to." Preston searched the other man's eyes. "I know I hurt you, Scotty. I'm sorry. But I've decided not to hide it anymore. You're worth it."

"Of course I'll go with you. If that's what you want."

"It is." Preston brought Scotty's hand up to his lips and he kissed his knuckles.

"What about your parents?"

Preston grinned. "Not yet. One step at a time, Scotty. I will. I'm just not ready for that."

"Okay. I can't believe you told your kids."

"It wasn't easy," he admitted. "But I had a talk with Jack and he got me really thinking. I have to tell you there might be times when I trip up."

Scotty nodded. "I'm not very patient, Pres. I know I should have given you more time or space or something. I was pushing too hard."

"If you gave me more time or space I might never have done anything." Preston stood up and sat next to Scott on the bed. "Scotty, move in with me."

The other man bit his lip and immediately started shaking his head. "It's too soon. Isn't it? I mean you didn't even want to come out and now you want me to live with you?"

"Scotty," Preston said, his gut twisting. "I want you with me. I've always liked it when you stayed over. Do you really want to stay with Jack and Wendy when you know you'll move in with me anyway? And your painting's already there." He grinned to lighten it, but his heart raced, hope for the future filling him.

Scotty leaned over and kissed him. "Are you sure?"

"Yes. Very sure."

"It still seems really soon."

"Stop arguing and just say you will."

His lover gave him a beautiful tender smile. "All right, yes, I will."

Preston pulled Scotty against him and kissed him thoroughly. "Thank you. I need you with me, Scotty. I think I'm going to need your strength a lot."

"You've got it."

"About your dad?"

Scotty grimaced. "What about him?"

"I know he's an ass, but he is your dad, and I think Jack has already reamed him for how he treated you."

"I know he's my dad. And I'll forgive him eventually. It's just going to take some time," Scotty said, sighing a little. "I'm not going back to work there though. I'll find something else."

Preston nodded. "Okay. I'll give you a recommendation."

"Hey, whatever happened with Mrs. Windham's grandson?"

Preston smiled. "We took a plea. Something else I owe you for. I love you."

Scotty shook in his arms. "I don't think I'm going to ever grow tired of hearing that. Can you say it a lot?"

He laughed and kissed his lover again. "Yeah, I think I can manage that."

"I love you, too. So much."

They spent several breathless moments kissing, their tongues tangling. Preston knew he was growing hard again.



"Can we get out of here now? I want to make love to you, but I've had enough of motel sex for a while, I think."

Scott laughed. "Told you it was overrated. Yes, I'm ready to leave."

"Great, let's go home."

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# Shawn Lane

Shawn Lane believes love and passion know no boundaries. Shawn writes both erotic love stories involving men in historical or contemporary settings and interracial romances between men and women. Shawn is always looking for new stories and new characters to create while holding down life in California.

\* \* \* \*

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