

HEX ON THE EX

Playing With Magic, Book I

GABRINA GARZA



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BY

GABRINA GARZA

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AN AMBER QUILL PRESS BOOK

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CHAPTER 1

Jory looked at the invitation one last time and took a deep breath.

*Costumes optional, but if you ain't someone else,
prepare to come as you were born.*

“Jake, you’re an ass,” he muttered, wondering if anyone had taken his buddy’s advice and shown up naked. Now *that* would be a party to remember, possibly through a haze if the night went well and Pierce made his famous Italian Stallions, which was really just a margarita with Italian soda added. Drinking, naked men, and dancing definitely spelled party.

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Somewhere, a dead nun from his grade school days was rolling over in her grave, her peaceful rest to sainthood destroyed by this party.

Not only was it a Fat Tuesday party in Ohio, which just didn't seem right, but it was a gay Fat Tuesday party taking place in the middle of July, with strapping men running around in weather-appropriate costumes.

What a glorious party place hell was going to be when he arrived, courtesy of Pierce and Jake and their parties.

He'd been sitting across the street from the new two-story house for at least fifteen minutes when his Honda Accord shook as though an earthquake trembled the earth around his car. The invitation slipped from his fingers as he jerked his head up, the mask he'd been unwilling to wear until he actually walked inside sliding from his grasp.

The car door swung open and a masked stranger with a red cape slung over his bare shoulders chuckled. He looked like a cross between a Spartan and a bandit from silent films.

"Boo."

Jory cleared his throat and swiped his mask from the passenger seat where it had landed. By the broad shoulders and muscular arms, he already knew Jake had come out to greet him.

"Sorry I'm late."

"Well, you would have been early if you'd come right in." Ouch, busted by the host. "Nice costume, Jor."

He knew sarcasm, especially from Jake. It wasn't like it was his fault he couldn't find a brilliant mask in the middle of

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July. Party stores had cheap pieces of cardboard, and he couldn't justify going into an adult store to pick something up for a costume party.

"Well, it was either this or—" He waved the invitation.

"I think I like the second one better." Jake waggled his eyebrows and gave another smile behind his Mardi Gras mask. God, he would have made the perfect guy to fall in love with, but that was strictly off-limits. They were friends, best friends, really, and Jory didn't want to screw that up. He'd depended on Jake for everything from being the person he'd confided in when he first came out, to the guy who'd made a drunken promise in college to sneak into his house and remove all the porn if he died unexpectedly, saving his family from the horror and discomfort of burying their dead, horny relative. Friends like that didn't come around often enough.

"The naked one?"

Jake issued a tight smile. "As long as you were adhering to invitation policies, it's all good, friend."

Jory played with the elastic of his mask and followed Jake across the street where throngs of costume-clad visitors mingled in the backyard and on the patio where colorful lanterns hung on strings above their heads. A piñata shaped like a giant penis hung from the nearest tree, just low enough so no one could see it from over the fence.

"I'm so glad we didn't close on the house in February like planned. June was a much better month to move in and get the place in order. Can you imagine doing this in the spring?"

Jake began to babble as he closed the gate and pointed at

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the in-ground pool, the hot tub, the grill, and all of the other blatantly obvious fixtures around the yard.

Jory ran his hands over his hair, thinking he should get a haircut soon. His office wasn't uptight about stuff like that, given it was filled with graphic artists and the creative sort, but he wasn't one for longer hair, at least not on himself.

"It's hard to imagine you and Pierce closing on a house together."

Jake frowned. "Is this weird? I hope it isn't weird? You know, I went back and forth trying to decide if I should invite you tonight and I ran with it. Shit, I just made it weird, didn't I?"

"It's cool," he answered absently.

"Are you sure? I know it hasn't been a year yet."

"It's been over a year," he answered.

"Good. Then it's officially over and you both have clearly moved on. Thank God, because I was worried it was going to be weird."

It was weird. Painfully weird in a way Jory didn't want to talk about since there really wasn't a tactful way to express the horror, grief, and anger he'd felt once he'd broken up with Pierce. It wasn't like he expected Jake to pick between the two of them, not after their years of friendship, but he also hadn't expected Jake and Pierce to go buddy-buddy and buy a house. Purely for the financial investments, of course. They were masterminds in that sense, buying properties and selling them after they were fixed up, though this was the first time they'd actually moved in to one of the houses.

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“There are a lot of people here,” Jake said in his rambling way.

That’s how they’d first met, actually, as strangers in Prague during a college trip. One moment Jory had been standing in front of a pub struggling to read the menu with a girl he’d been seeing, when Jake walked up and told him there was a McDonald’s a few blocks away. From that moment on, trekking through Europe had become an adventure rather than a duty. He’d even helped Jory break the news to April that she wasn’t exactly his type.

“Do I know anyone?” Jory asked before Jake disappeared into the crowd. “Besides you and Pierce?”

“Mingle and find out.”

* * *

Jory hated mingling, mostly because he wasn’t good at it. An invisible, fine line existed between the guest who was annoying as all hell and life of the party. If he actually knew all of the people behind the masks he could have at least walked up to a group of friends, sat down, and made casual conversations. There were way too many people jammed inside the house, and outside had turned into little groups of two or three, numbers he didn’t feel like intruding upon since the masked people looked comfortable.

Drink in hand, he watched a couple of guys in matching black masks play bean bags. The house throbbed with music courtesy of indoor/outdoor speakers strategically placed around the pool and patio. The beats worked their way into his

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muscles and he began tapping his index finger against his glass. From the corner of his eye he watched shadows move in the upstairs window as two bodies jerked to the fast, pounding beats.

His interest in bean bags faded and he casually turned, attempting to act as though he were looking for someone in the crowd. He stole a glance, seeing two very male figures dancing together, back to front. They flowed together, bumping and grinding like choreographed dancers. He looked away, staring at the penis piñata for a moment as it swayed in the breeze, a throbbing cock dangling on a string. It seemed a little too Freudian, and he looked away, finding the two dancers again.

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God, they'd had great sex together. Every day with Pierce was like Christmas for a hornball. Perfect for all occasions, ready whenever needed, Pierce had been open and adventurous.

"Jory?" a distinctly feminine voice with a hint of a Southern accent asked.

Startled, he turned, elbowing a woman with a mask like the Wicked Witch from the *Wizard of Oz*, in the chest.

He looked around, then at her, wondering if she'd caught him staring. "Yeah. And you are?"

"The Great Gidget, darlin'," she said, giving a curtsy in what looked like her prom dress from sixteen years ago. "Or at least that's what Jake renamed me."

"Damn, he should have given me a new name, too."

"That man doesn't need any more power than this party has already given him," she answered.

"You must really know him, then."

"We used to bartend together back in college. That's the story he told me to use."

"So he conned you into serving tonight?"

She blew a raspberry behind her mask. "He only wishes, honey." She reached between her boobs and thumbed through a ragged deck of cards. "Tonight the Great Gidget is tellin' fortunes and makin' wishes come true. More the first, since it's not really my type of crowd when it comes to the wishin' part. Most of 'em look like they're doin' fine on their lonesome."

Jory cracked a smile. "So you're telling people what they

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want to hear?”

“I’m reading Tarot cards, sugar,” she answered. “It’s not like a fortune cookie where it’s all good. The Great Gidget knows all, not just the boring, feel-good crap.”

He eyed the deck as she shuffled cards like a Las Vegas dealer. “So you’re going to shuffle those cards around and tell me I’m going to slip on the deck by the pool and die instantly?”

“Cynical much?”

“I’m just asking.”

“You,” she said, grabbing him by the wrist, “need me to make you a better drink and read your cards.”

* * *

“I’ve got a table set up with candles and a real skull,” Gidget said as she led Jory through the house.

“How did you get a real skull?”

“From a flea market in Tulsa.” She plopped down on a beanbag chair in the corner of what appeared to be the office. With a wave of her hand, she motioned for him to do the same and sit on the floor across from her. “It’s supposed to be from a werewolf, but I think it’s probably a coyote that got hit by a car or something. It’s just one girl’s opinion, but I’m not sold on werewolves just yet.”

“So I should believe in your Tarot reading because you have a coyote skull?”

“No, of course not, darlin’. You should believe because I’m the Great Gidget and we’re perfect for one another.”

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Jory's eyes widened and she burst out laughing. "Alright, now that I've got you terrified this should be a piece of cake. Make a wish."

I wish I weren't here.

Gidget turned her head to the side. "Now make a different wish since I don't like that one."

Jory took a deep breath and pressed the tips of his fingers together. *I'd like to see if a bucket of water would make her melt.*

Gidget sat up straighter. "You have one last chance to make a serious wish before I put a spell on you. Final Gidget warnin'."

"Alright," he said. *I want one more night with Pierce.*

She shrugged. "Much better. Now shuffle this deck of cards and place eight of them on the floor in front of you."

CHAPTER 2

“Now what?” he asked as he placed the leftover cards on his knee and sat back.

“Now we wait.”

“For what?”

The Wicked Witch shot him a warning glance. “Hush.”

With no other choice, he sat across from her and joined his hands together. He didn’t really expect anything to happen, but a Tarot card reading from a woman in a prom dress had a level of intrigue.

She leaned forward and swept her hands across his neat rows of cards and began turning them over in no particular order before she waved her hands over the mess and closed

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her eyes.

With a sigh, she stopped and lowered her hands, gathering the cards. "There's nothing to read."

"What?"

"I said there's nothing to read."

"But I pulled out eight cards like you said."

"Yeah, but they aren't the eight cards that belong to you."

"What?"

She looked over the cards one by one before shoving them back with the original deck. Chin tilted down, she glared at him. "You didn't do it right."

"How is there a wrong way to select eight cards from a deck?"

"Here. Do it again, but don't look at them."

With a sigh of aggravation, he snatched the cards from her and placed eight more facedown on the floor.

She eyed him, then lifted the corner of one card after the other.

"Unbelievable," she said, sounding as though he'd once again made a mistake. "It's still wrong."

"What's wrong? How can a parlor game be done wrong?"

"It's more than a parlor game." With the cards nestled between her breasts, she began flicking her fingers at him. "I didn't know there was a wrong way until you showed up."

Jory clenched his teeth. "What are you doing?"

"Cleansing the air around me."

"This is insane."

"There are people who believe, people who don't believe,

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and then there's you."

"Great," he said, making no attempt to hide his sarcasm. "A metaphysical category all my own."

"That's exactly what I'm talking about."

He paused, mentally rewinding. "What is?"

"You. That's why you picked the wrong cards. You've got so much blockage it isn't even funny." Gidget pulled at her mask and grunted in frustration. "And if I weren't wearing this atrocity, I would have seen that in the first place."

Even if he didn't want to believe her, blockage seemed like a bad thing. "What am I supposed to do about this blockage?"

"Find a healthy way to release it." She winked at him. "Do I need to elaborate?"

"Not really."

"Well, look at the bright side. There are plenty of people here tonight. Think of all of them as pipe cleaners and you've got it made."

He stared blankly at her a moment. Had the Wicked Witch of the West just told him to get laid?

She pushed on his knee. "I'll even help you."

"That's all right." He could do it on his own, literally.

"Look, you're going to need all the help you can get. Just tell me what—"

She paused in midsentence as the door opened, and before Jory could turn, he heard a familiar laugh. Without thinking he whipped around, seeing Pierce enter the room, a bare-chested dark angel in tight-fitting leather pants. Black wings bobbed as he walked, reminding Jory of how his former lover had stalked

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around the bedroom, his cock nestled in a thick carpeting of black hair between perfect, muscular thighs.

Occupied with showing Zorro and the Phantom of the Opera the house, Pierce didn't notice Jory sitting on the floor. He closed the door, which seemed ironic and appropriate, and went on to the next room.

"That's your blockage," Gidget said. "Damn, I can see why you're definitely out of order. I think I might be a little clogged just lookin' at that dark angel."

She had no idea what that dark angel could do.

The image in his mind kept him distracted long enough to miss half of what the fortune-teller told him. Damn, he wanted to run his tongue along those flat, pebbled nipples one last time, curl his fingers into that gorgeous man's wavy, blond hair and watch as Pierce's icy blue eyes struggled to stay open.

He'd loved that most of all, having power over such a divine creature. Not that Pierce gave up control often. He liked to be the man in charge in and out of the bedroom. Fiery hot at times, a pain in the ass when it came to their real lives. But this wasn't the place for real life to intervene. This was a Fat Tuesday party in July, for Christ's sake. At this point, just about anything seemed possible.

"So you want him back?"

Jory tried to ignore her. "I want a lot of things," he mumbled.

"And they all have to do with him, don't they?"

"It doesn't matter, now does it? I'm in need of psychic

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Drano according to you.”

“Or a spell.”

He grunted. “Both sound about equally tangible.”

“Well, one can lead to the other.”

“If I believed in any of this, I’d do whatever it took and be all over him like a rat on a Cheeto.”

Gidget cocked her head to the side, her mask drooping from her forehead. She pushed it back into place and smiled. “Well, if you don’t believe in magic, then what’s the harm? Play around for the hell of it and see what happens. What else are you going to do? Hope the peep show is still on?”

He paused a little too long, unable to come up with any sort of believable answer, especially after downing two of her special concoctions. If she’d been a male bartender he might have forgotten about Pierce, at least for a while.

“Don’t worry about it. I was watching them, too.”

He could definitely see why she was friends with Jake, but Jake seemed to be friends with everyone in the county.

“So,” she said, leaning back in her bean bag chair. “Why don’t you tell me about the dark angel? It’ll help me conjure up my faux spell.”

“How exactly could I follow that up with words?”

“True. The body did the talking both in and out of the room.” She leaned forward and grabbed hold of his hands. “Now I want you to close your eyes and think about him. It can be sweet, it can be raunchy, just as long as he’s on your mind.”

Now that wouldn’t be a problem. He could fantasize about

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Pierce all day and all night, draw him up in his mind and paint him with vivid, sexual flesh tones. He could already see his perfectly tanned body, every inch of him bronzed, his chest hard and dusted with hair leading down to his belly.

“Are you thinking of him?” Gidget asked.

“Yeah,” he answered, his eyes tightly shut as though the vision would disappear if he didn’t.

Outside, Jake had started karaoke, much to the delight of the crowd and most likely his new neighbors, who were in for a wild treat. A terrible version of a Kylie Minogue song started playing and over it, Jake started his dedication to the crowd. Any moment now the drag queens would show up, all of them impersonating the Australian singer, and take over the party.

“Still thinking about him?” the Witch asked. “I think I know the perfect spell.”

He struggled for a moment to clear his mind and focus on Pierce. Back to where he left off. Ah, right there, his hard, flat belly and hips that made Jory salivate. The bite marks he’d left on their last encounter had undoubtedly faded, but he still remembered putting them there, how Pierce had grunted and sighed, begging for more. He could almost taste his ex’s salty flesh. Almost...

“This song goes out to my best friend in the world, Jory Peterson whom I hope to God is getting laid. Has anyone seen Jory? It’s been hours, folks. Is that a good sign or what?”

Jory’s eyelids popped open, flashes of lights disrupting his vision. For a moment he thought he might be falling, but he

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remembered he was already on the floor.

“Whoa,” he said.

The lights came from outside, possibly some sort of stage set up on the patio. Jory didn’t even want to think about how much money Jake had put into this party, but he knew Jake always went all-out when it came to entertainment.

“Mahi, mahi, bring him back; mahi, mahi, bring him back,” Gidget chanted. She made sounds like his last computer right before it crashed and never came back up, and he stared at her, thinking she put on a pretty damn good show. She looked entranced, her eyes rolled back in her head, which was creepy considering she had on a green mask and a pink party dress. “The man in your mind now in your bed; the man in your mind, now in your bed. So be it.”

“Mahi-mahi,” he said. Great, a chant for a type of fish he’d had for dinner several nights ago in a lemon butter sauce. That had to work magic, and if it didn’t there was always tuna, tuna and McDonald’s Filet-O-Fish.

She snapped her fingers twice and her body wrenched as though she went into some sort of spasm. Eyes opened, she smiled and took a deep breath. “I think it worked.”

Jory cocked a brow. Like some pathetic display would change his mind and make him believe. “And why do you think that?”

“Because he’s behind you.”

CHAPTER 3

Jory fought to stifle a shiver and twisted his spine to see his dark angel enter the room with two women wearing pink, sparkly masks. This time Pierce saw him sitting on the floor and he paused. Immediately Jory recognized the once familiar look on Pierce's face, the expression that had once made his heart stutter. The slight smile, the deepening of killer dimples, the shift of weight, all meant he had Pierce's attention, just as he wanted.

"I'll be damned," he said under his breath.

The longer Pierce stared at him, the more Jory felt his stomach twist. He felt vulnerable despite their distance and his casual wear. If anyone were to feel exposed, it should have

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been Pierce in his tight leather pants, which showed off his package—as if there were any doubt a man built like Adonis hadn't been blessed with a long, thick cock and a heavy sac perfect for licking and sucking.

Pierce managed to tell the girls to see the rest of the house on their own before he entered the room, one hand clinging to the door knob.

“Hey, Jory,” he said in his deep, thunderous voice.

“Hey,” he said casually.

“Jake mentioned you were stopping by. He didn't say when.”

“Yeah, I was in the neighborhood,” he answered. Conversation wasn't their strong point. Ripping off each other's clothes and pleasuring one another was their thing.

“Did you move closer? Last I heard you were in Carroll County.”

“Yeah, I'm still there.” Well, that was dumb. He lived half an hour from Jake and Pierce, which was not exactly in the neighborhood. “I just, uh, shop over here.”

“Really?”

“Yeah, brand new grocery store down the street.”

“Groceries, eh?”

Jory felt the back of his neck start to burn. Pierce still had a way of making him flustered, not to mention hot and bothered.

“It's, uh, pretty nice. They have a lot of organic...stuff.”

Even better, a lame answer barely covered by an even lamer lie. That fucking spell could start working any minute

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now...

"Well, I'm glad you could make it to our party." He gave a genuine smile, though his dimples were hidden behind his mask. He looked around the room. "With us just getting situated here, Jake said it might be a little weird."

"I don't know what he's talking about." Jory stood and shoved his hands in his pockets. "It's not weird. We're both adults, we had a relationship, and things happen. It's completely normal."

Pierce frowned. "He meant for the neighborhood. We weren't sure how the neighbors would handle our summer gay and bi fest a week after we held a cocktail party here. I wasn't talking about you and me."

"Well, I was. There. It's officially weird."

Another killer smile like the ones he gave when he was up to no good. "At least we got to the weird part early in the night."

Jake finished his song and moved on to Meatloaf's *Anything for Love*, which, for whatever reason, had become his song. Jory had always guessed that it was because it went on forever and had lots of cheesy, dramatic moments, which opened up lots of opportunities to sell it to the crowd.

Pierce moved closer and motioned for Jory to stand. He looked away from Pierce and started to ask Gidget for a moment alone with his ex. Before he could speak, he realized she'd slipped out of the room unnoticed. He couldn't decide if he was grateful to have Pierce all to himself, or if he wanted another moment of distraction.

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“It’s good to see real estate has worked for you and Jake,” Jory said.

“We talk about you all the time and how you should have gone into business with us. The three of us could have had some great times.”

Jory nodded. He wanted their great times to continue right here, right now. “Do you ever think about—”

“Yeah, I do.”

Their connection sprang to life in a heartbeat, and Jory felt himself gravitating closer and closer, like a shark circling its prey. How long would a man like Pierce tide him over until the next time, he wondered? This was hardly a little nibble. This was a whole feast, one he wanted to sink his teeth into and get his fill of for the rest of the night.

His heart beat hard and fast against his chest, surprising him when he thought all the blood in his body would rush to his groin. He saw the way Pierce looked at him, that familiar gleam in his eyes like he knew exactly what he was starting. The air buzzed with static and sex, and the ache in Jory’s pants quickly increased.

He needed to touch and be touched, to lick, bite, and scratch his way across Pierce’s body, leaving graffiti with his nails that said *this man is mine...for now*.

“Thinking isn’t enough.”

“No,” Pierce answered, his voice low and hoarse. “It isn’t.”

Heat radiated from Pierce’s bare chest, and Jory risked everything and reached out, his palm flat against hard muscles.

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It surprised him when sparks didn't fly up from their joined bodies and he sighed, wanting so badly to have him back.

In darkness he felt his way along his lover's familiar but foreign body, gradually remembering how it truly felt to explore Pierce. He circled his nipples, carefully tracing both flat disks. *Hold back, pace yourself.* If he could wait and enjoy it, he could have Pierce to himself all night long.

But it had been over a year since they'd last been together, and he needed to refuel off the key source missing from his life.

Jory ached with separate needs, wanting to tell Pierce how much he'd craved him while at the same time needing him more than he could put into words.

Long, broad hands cupped the back of his head and drew him close. Jory swallowed hard and parted his lips, feeling Pierce's breath on his face. Icy blue eyes glinted in the dark and held him, paralyzed him. He knew the moment he looked into Pierce's eyes that he was to follow the rules, just as he had in the past.

Taking the initiative, Pierce pulled him close and thrust his tongue deep into Jory's mouth. The familiar taste caught him by surprise, sweet like he'd always been, tangy like whatever he'd been drinking.

A hard kiss turned into a soft nibble, and before Jory knew what had happened they were standing inches apart.

"You still taste the same, Jory," Pierce said. He licked his lips, his gaze turned greedy as it slid down Jory's quivering body.

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If he hadn't been aroused before, he sure as hell was ready to go now. He shifted his weight and adjusted his throbbing dick, wishing it was Pierce's hand pulling his cock free.

"We're not done here," Pierce said, moving around the room like a panther.

They should never have been done, but Jory didn't want to be the only person wanting more.

"I've got a long drive home."

"What makes you think you're going home tonight?"

His dick twitched, hands clenched in anticipation of being Pierce's prey. He liked the moment of pulling back just enough to make his partner reel him in, claim him with sheer male force. "So that's your invitation?"

Pierce gave a crooked grin. "Are you saying no?"

"I'm thinking it over."

Pierce walked up behind him and nuzzled the back of Jory's neck, his breath hot and welcomed, his left hand gliding down the length of Jory's torso. He'd always been lean since his track days back in school, but this year he'd joined the company's co-ed softball league. He didn't want to appear lame and out of shape, so he'd started lifting weights and had gained bulk. His legs were solid and his stomach rippled with definition.

Now his former lover discovered what he'd been missing and nodded in approval.

"We could definitely have some fun if you're up to it." As if he needed proof, Pierce slid his fingers just past the waistband and caressed the head of Jory's engorged cock,

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leaving him completely breathless. He wanted that large, male hand wrapped around the length of his prick, pumping him so hard and so fast the lines between pleasure and pain blurred.

“You can’t leave like that,” he said in Jory’s ear, circling around the tip with his fingers. He rubbed hard against the slit, lubricating Jory with his own sticky arousal. “Not without letting me play with you first. God, Jory, I miss the way you taste.”

He distracted him just long enough to slip cold metal around his wrist. With a click, the handcuff snapped into place and he smiled. Now just where in the hell had he hidden *those*.

“I guess I just made up your mind for you.”

CHAPTER 4

There was really no way to hide his cuffed wrist, at least not in shorts and a T-shirt. Jory exited the darkened office and followed close behind Pierce, who led him into the master bedroom and shut the door.

He planted his hands on his hips, the handcuffs dangling at his side, and quickly surveyed the room. Pierce had always been the fashionable type, his bedroom outfitted in dark blue with a nautical theme and clean, white linens. Everything appeared neat and tidy, no change scattered across the top of a dresser or ticket stubs from sporting events or concerts laying around, which reminded Jory of why things hadn't worked. Sometimes it had seemed as though Pierce made organization

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into an extreme sport.

He eyed the chest at the end of the bed and wondered if it was still a treasure chest of restraints, dongs, vibrating dildos, and other various toys. It looked innocent enough topped with a white and navy blue quilt but, just like the rest of the room, he knew neat and orderly could turn steamy hot and downright dirty in a heartbeat. *Please, for the love of all things holy, let it be the next heartbeat...*

Pierce gave a grunt. "Been a long time, hasn't it?"

"For us?" he asked casually.

His ex nodded. "We were good together, better than anyone else I've been with this past year."

The room fell oddly quiet as he considered Pierce being with another man—or possibly a woman since he never really committed to one team or the other. He liked to keep his options open, he said, which was fine as long as Jory remained one of those options.

"Have you found someone else?" Pierce asked. His wings tilted to the side as he shifted his weight and looked Jory over, a hint of jealousy in his gaze.

Jory couldn't tell if Pierce sounded worried. He allowed a moment to pass and realized it was damn quiet in the bedroom. He could no longer hear Jake singing, but he could hardly concentrate on anything other than Pierce standing before him, his wide mouth tipped in a seductive smile. No one could replace him, and Jory hadn't put much effort into trying.

"I've never found anyone like you," he answered at last.

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Pierce's gaze blazed with lust. As if the last year apart hadn't existed, he put his hands on Jory's shoulders and kissed him softly, drawing him in, drawing him home where he belonged.

Strong, manly arms housed him, comforted him as their kiss deepened. Jory allowed his hands to explore Pierce's back, running up his lover's spine where the harness connected his wings. His fingers caressed the soft, dark feathers. They reminded him of riding crops, the feathered ends tickling along the inside of his thighs.

"Do you still have our collection?" Jory asked, his voice gravelly and deep.

"Of course I do. It's like a sex museum around here," Pierce answered. His sweet smile turned devilish and he pushed on Jory's chest, sending him flying backward and onto the bed.

Pierce immediately crawled over him and secured his handcuffed wrist to the bedpost. Suddenly their game turned real and raw, no longer just fantasies about being together again.

Jory swallowed hard, tasting Pierce on his tongue while he lay sprawled on the mattress, his legs dangling off the side of the bed. His breath had turned harsh, his heart pounding against his ribcage while his lover unbuttoned his shorts and pulled the zipper down with a slow, enticing rasp of metal.

"Here," Pierce said, sliding Jory's shorts down his hips and neatly folding them. He smoothed his hand over the fabric and set them aside at the end of the bed, then surveyed his prize.

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Jory watched Pierce's expression, his dick straining against his briefs, aching for even the slightest touch. With his free hand he grabbed a fistful of Pierce's short hair and dragged him forward until his lover collapsed on top of him in a heap of muscle and warm, smooth leather.

The smell of sweat and sex permeated the air, mingling with Pierce's brand new pants. Jory inhaled deeply, undecided as to whether the leather or the man pressed against him turned him on more.

"You're feeling feisty tonight, aren't you?" Pierce asked, his head bent, lips against Jory's throat.

"I want you," he rasped, his voice trembling.

"I decide what you have and when."

The thunder in his voice left Jory weak and wanting. Exactly how they'd come to the conclusion that Pierce was dominant and he was submissive he had no idea, but for the moment it didn't matter. Being needy had its advantages, especially when it came to Pierce.

"Of course," he answered.

Pierce issued a razor sharp glare and Jory gave a sullen nod.

"Of course, Pierce," he corrected himself.

"Good. You remember." The dark angel began his descent down Jory's body, smelling him through his shirt. Once he reached the hem, he pulled it up until the bunched fabric rested just above his hardened nipples.

Jory stroked his fingers through Pierce's hair and along the nape of his partner's neck. His eyes closed, his lips parted for

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each labored breath. Sensations rippled through him, starting with soft, damp lips against his stomach and a hot, wet tongue prodding his belly button. He'd forgotten what a sensitive spot his navel could be, almost as responsive as the length of his cock at times.

"You feel too damn good," he said, feeling cool air on his hips as Pierce reached for his briefs and slipped his fingers beneath the waistband. His back arched, hips angled up to meet Pierce's touch, knowing a hand job would not cure the ache he felt inside.

Wide fingers trailed down the length of his dick and into the tangle of thick, dark brown hair between Jory's legs. He glanced down and watched, thankful his mask had stayed in place so he could see the bulge of his package, and Pierce fondling him inside his briefs.

"I can't wait to taste you," Pierce murmured, ceremoniously unwrapping Jory like a present he'd been waiting to receive.

"Oh, fuck," Jory said under his breath, watching as Pierce brushed his thumb over his ruddy sac and massaged the base of his cock. Pre-cum dripped from the head and left a damp spot on Jory's stomach in a glistening patch of dark hair.

Almost immediately Pierce noticed and smiled. He buried his face between Jory's legs and kissed his way up from his balls to the head of his throbbing penis, taking care to lick and suck every inch of him until he reached the most sensitive spot of all.

Breathing became nearly impossible. The plum-colored head of his dick glistened, begging for attention, but Pierce

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purposely lifted Jory's penis and lapped away the dewy moisture left behind, groaning as he tasted his lover.

"Turn onto your side," Pierce instructed.

The words didn't immediately register and Pierce stood, walking to the end of the bed. He didn't look directly at Jory, but he still watched him. The smile on his lips told Jory how much Pierce enjoyed his dominant role, how he savored every obeyed command.

He adjusted his cock through his leather pants before kneeling down in front of the chest and pulling the quilt back. Brass hinges creaked as the lid opened and Pierce produced a riding crop with ticklers at one end and short, thick leather fringe at the other. He held the crop in one hand and reached for something else, though the lid was in the way and Jory only guessed what other goodies Pierce had in store for him.

"You're not on your side," Pierce said. He moved across the floor quickly and gave Jory a hard swat across his stomach that made him wince.

"I was looking at you. It's hard to concentrate when you have a dark angel in the room."

Pierce cocked his head to the side. "Flattery isn't going to work here, Jory. Turn onto your side. Now."

He rolled, facing toward the bed rather than toward Pierce, just as he'd been instructed. Immediately Pierce knelt on the bed beside him and ran the tickler up the length of Jory's outstretched legs, ending at the crack of his ass. He instinctively clenched his muscles as the feathery soft end trailed around to his front and back down his leg.

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His nerves came alive with the slightest touch, bottle rocket explosions when he needed the whole damn Fourth of July. But if this was all Pierce would offer, he'd take it and savor every pleasurable second of lust and expectation.

Voices murmured outside the bedroom door and he straightened his spine, wondering if the house tours had continued. Once again Pierce cracked him hard, this time on the ass.

"I didn't tell you to move, did I?"

"No, Pierce." His skin radiated with heat and he gritted his teeth, waiting for pain to give way to pleasure.

The tickler soothed him, swirled from his sensitive ass down to the backs of his knees and back again, caressing him like his lover's smooth, warm lips. He closed his eyes and enjoyed the feel of it, groaning softly as the tip brushed between his legs and over his testicles.

Pierce touched him unexpectedly, not with the riding crop but with his hand. Warm and wet, he massaged along Jory's round ass and the backs of his thighs, his touch firm and manly. Oiled fingers delved between his cheeks and rubbed against his anus, teasing but not entering. He smelled of almond oil, the sweet scent of memories lingering, carrying Jory past lust and into his fondest recollections of being in love.

He squirmed, his legs parting like scissors in order to feel more of his lover beside him, inside of him. Frustrated, he licked his lips and groaned while Pierce circled around him, playing a cruel game of pleasure.

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“You’ve got one hand free,” Pierce commented. He leaned over and swept his slick hand over Jory’s rigid cock, lubing him with one stroke. “I want to see you do something with it.”

Jory glanced over his shoulder, which earned him another hard smack on the ass.

“Pretend I’m not here. I want to see exactly how you’d do it if you were alone in my room.”

Jory took a deep breath and nodded. He’d fantasized about jerking off on a satin pillow and having Pierce sleep with it for a week, smelling the scent of his semen every time he went to bed. Just the thought of masturbating onto something that belonged to Pierce had always made him horny.

“May I speak?” he asked.

Pierce issued several harmless taps to Jory’s already sore butt, as though he had to think about it before he could answer. “You may.”

“I need your pillowcase.”

His words were met with agonizing silence. He swallowed hard, wondering if he should have kept his fantasy to himself.

“By all means,” Pierce said, his voice deeper than before. He pulled the pillow from beneath Jory’s head and removed the pillowcase, which he draped over Jory’s hip. “Whatever it takes for you to get off, do it.”

He moved the pillowcase from where Pierce had set it and positioned it alongside his torso. Arousal soaked the tip of his cock and he gripped it just below the head, jerking hard and fast, his eyes closed as he imagined Pierce touching him. He glided easily along the length of his penis from the base to the

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tip, the bed squeaking as he masturbated, completely turned on by the thought of Pierce watching and waiting.

Together they groaned and Jory heard his partner shift his weight. His eyes opened a slit, and he found Pierce's image in the mirror, a dark angel with his leather pants open. *Holy shit, he hadn't worn briefs under his leather pants.* But that wasn't Jory's first concern.

At last he caught sight of that gorgeous, thick cock, the pubic hair around it shaved away, which made it look bigger than ever. Metal glinted from the tip and Jory's eyes widened. He'd had it pierced, a Prince Edward straight through that bulbous head. Now that was new and intriguing, like getting back a car he'd had for years to find it souped up only ten times better. This was something he could ride all night long.

Jory cupped his testicles, feeling them tight and heavy. He slowed his pace, wanting to watch Pierce stroke his own dick. They both used the mirror to watch one another, but neither of them spoke. They were too worked up to bother with words, too turned on for commentary.

Afraid he'd come if he kept stroking his dick, he curled his spine and reached behind his sac, fingering his hole. Pierce had left him perfectly lubed and his index finger penetrated with ease, making him suck in a breath.

"Christ," Pierce said under his breath, watching as Jory continued to play with himself. He bumped against the bed and Jory started to turn, only to be met with another slap to the ass, this one not nearly as hard as the previous ones.

"You want to be inside of me?" he asked, risking another

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glance. He had almost curled into a ball, but he could feel the hardened bulge of his prostate against the pad of his finger.

Pierce's breaths turned ragged and he bit his lip, his fist pumping his dick. He leaned forward, kneeling over Jory, the tip of his thick, rigid cock bumping against the back of his restrained lover's hand.

"I'm clean," he said hoarsely. "If you want to go bareback."

There was nothing he wanted more. Jory took hold of Pierce, familiarizing himself with the size and shape of his lover for mere seconds before Pierce pushed against his shoulders and pinned him to the mattress.

With his face buried in the pillow, he felt Pierce against his rim, gently stretching him open. Jory wriggled, drawing his ass up to meet Pierce, feeling the weight of his partner above him and the stiff, pleasurable feel of his cock entering him. The metal bar piercing through his partner's dick made him hold his breath, but it didn't hurt as he'd expected. He'd never been with anyone who had a piercing, at least not this kind, and he almost wished he could see how it looked as it entered him.

He let out a sigh as Pierce lay over him, one knee between Jory's, the other at his lover's hip. Teeth nipped at the back of his neck, holding him in place while trim, powerful hips ground against his ass, plunging his cock deeper into him.

"I want to fuck you so hard." Pierce groaned.

He slid his hand beneath Jory's body and took hold of his dick, pumping him with fury that had matched Jory's urgent

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pace. The bed added to the friction, allowing Pierce to take full control and do exactly as he wanted, as they both wanted.

Every inch of his body belonged to Pierce just as it had in the past. He made no attempt to hold back, calling his lover's name over and over until he felt Pierce lengthen his strokes.

"I need you," Jory whispered. He knew he'd never been this hard in his life, never so ready to give up everything he had.

Pierce circled his fingers around the head of Jory's dick. "You like it when I control you, don't you?"

"Yes," he answered. When it was like this, when he knew Pierce would leave him filled and fulfilled at the end of the night.

"You're mine again, Jory," he breathed in his ear. "All mine."

Inch by tantalizing inch, he filled Jory, the tip of his bulbous penis rubbing against his prostate in slow, calculated strokes, the metal bar providing a different but fascinating sensation, like a toy and real meat rolled into one.

Holding back became impossible and he gritted his teeth, groaning as he struggled for just a little more time with Pierce.

"I want you to smell like me," Pierce said. "For the rest of the night. Any man you see." His pace quickened, his hips pounding against Jory's ass cheeks as he grunted, his words lost to his desire. "Any man you see, any guy who kisses or blows you, will know I've had you first."

Pierce's words undid Jory in a dizzying, hard climax. He felt the heat of his sperm against his belly, staining the

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pillowcase just as he'd wanted. He cursed under his breath, his hands tightly clenched as he savored his release.

"Mine." Pierce's rock-hard dick twitched, his body giving way to spasms that rocked them both. Heat filled him to the core and he closed his eyes, wanting Pierce's scent on his skin, a brand of lust he wanted to experience all over again.

CHAPTER 5

“We should get back out there.”

Pierce straightened his wings before he combed his hair back into place, eyeing Jory who had not yet left the bed. He’d been released from his restraints, but he had no intention of joining the party again, except to thank what’s-her-name for the great love spell. It may not have been the reason behind his night with Pierce, but it certainly couldn’t have hurt. Everything seemed to fit back into place, just the way he would have hoped if an air of cynicism hadn’t kept him from dreaming.

“I figured we could catch up a little more,” he said.

“About?”

HEX ON THE EX

“What we’ve both been doing this last year?”

“I’ve been working. You?”

So that’s how it was going to be. Fuck, this was exactly as it had been in the past. This is why they couldn’t waste their time with words. The script to their lives was boring and aggravating, worse than any porno he’d ever seen. At least in a movie simple dialog always led to sex, not simmering irritation and more questions than he wanted to admit.

“Working,” Jory answered, sitting up. “And I was going to mention I have tickets for a game next weekend. They’re great seats, got them at work since the Reds are one of our clients.”

Pierce made a face. “I’m not into football. I can watch it on TV, but in person...”

He wrinkled his nose. “It’s July. Baseball season.” Didn’t Reds tip him off?

Pierce inhaled. “Even worse than football.”

“Since when don’t you like football and baseball?”

“It’s just not really my thing, Jory. A couple of guys get together and play poker or watch a fight. Call it evolution.”

“Alright.” He sighed. Forget love blossoming over the manly sport of baseball.

“Is that an issue?”

“You evolving from primitive watcher of America’s pastime to seasoned gambler?”

Pierce chuckled to himself. “I’m going to find something for you to do with that mouth of yours.”

He rubbed his wrist where the handcuff had left his skin red and swollen. “Come back to bed and I’ll help you.”

HEX ON THE EX

“As inviting as that sounds, I can’t disappear for too long. We’ve invited like two hundred people tonight.”

Jory pulled on his clothes while Pierce disappeared into the attached master bath and returned looking just as perfect as the moment they’d first been reunited. No hint of sex remained on Pierce, which made Jory grind his teeth. He wanted Pierce to be his, completely. And he wanted others to know just by looking at the two of them that they were back together.

The house still throbbed with music as Jory followed Pierce out of the bedroom. He couldn’t spot Jake from the upstairs hall, but he could hear his best friend issuing orders and keeping the party flowing.

“He’s crazy,” Pierce said over his shoulder, yelling over the music. “I don’t know why the fuck I let him do these things.”

“Because he’s good at it.”

“Yeah, true.” He flashed an evil grin. “At least he’s good at something, right?”

Jory shrugged and looked away, not wanting Pierce to see any hint of affection he had for Jake. They’d been friends for too damn long to ever hook up, not without risking a solid friendship. He didn’t want to admit to Pierce, let alone Jake, that he’d thought about using Jake as a rebound lover for a while but couldn’t do that. Not to Jake. Not to anyone. Before Pierce, he’d found every leach in a gay bar and swore off ever purposely using or hurting another person.

“Why don’t we find good old Jake?” Pierce suggested, massaging Jory’s shoulder. He had a twinkle in his eye, one

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that Jory found dangerously inviting. Images of his partner and best friend together after the party ended filled his mind. Two for the price of one.

Two women blocked the stairway, kissing and fondling one another as they giggled to themselves. They eyed Pierce the moment they spotted him, licking their lips and playing with each other's hair in a seductive invitation.

"Rox, Summer, I have someone I'd like you to meet," Pierce said, wrapping his arm around the nearest woman.

Her hand trailed down his bare chest and she squinted up at him in a way that Jory figured was supposed to make her look hot but really made her look like she'd forgotten her contacts.

"What is it, baby?"

"This is Jory."

The moment Pierce said his name, the other woman leached onto him and he straightened, not wanting to be rude but at the same time attempting to make it clear he had no interest in her. A threesome with Pierce and Jake he could do. A foursome with Rox and Summer wasn't exactly in his plans.

With a crooked grin, Pierce detached the woman from Jory and slung her arm around his shoulder. "He's not exactly into that."

"Well, then," his former leach said. "We could convert him."

"Trust me, that's not going to happen," Pierce replied.

"You never know," the girl said in a lyrical tone. "We can be very convincing, can't we Summer?"

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Summer wagged her arched brows and leaned across Pierce's chest, tonguing her girlfriend. All the while she watched Jory as if trying to tempt him, which couldn't have turned Jory off more. "Give him to me for an hour. I'll bring him back a changed man."

"I'll just turn it off for a while," Jory said, looking around the hall to demonstrate how little she interested him. He hadn't been with a woman in three years and had no intention of going back now, especially with these two. They weren't at all his type, not even if it got him into bed with Pierce.

"How do you know him so well, Pierce?"

"We used to be together," Pierce announced, eyeing Jory with his trademark wide grin.

"Now that makes me horny," Summer said, her words a little too loud, a little too scripted.

"Oh, yeah?"

She eyed her friend. "Should we join in or just watch?"

"Well, I hate to tell you, but he's not going to change in an hour. He's pretty set in his ways, aren't you, Jor?"

"How can you remember that far back?"

"I've got a good memory when it comes to you."

Jory exhaled. He clenched his fists but didn't say a damn word. He hadn't changed much since he'd been with Pierce, and maybe that was the problem. Up until meeting Pierce he'd fluctuated back and forth between dating women and men, but when it came to Pierce he thought he'd finally figured it out. He enjoyed men. He liked the feel of a man in his arms, in his mouth. It turned him on to run his fingers over the muscle's of

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his partner's back, to feel his way down a sculpted torso with his tongue.

We used to be together. It sounded as though a lifetime had passed since they'd been a couple, as if they hadn't just walked out of the bedroom together after mind-blowing sex, the sort of encounter that led to more than a handshake or a nod at the end of the night.

The conversation continued but he didn't follow. Somewhere he'd taken a wrong turn, possibly between his head and his heart. He found himself staring at a framed photograph on the wall, a black and white image of a boat out in the lake.

"I'm going to give these two the Official Pierce House tour. You want to come with us? It could be very interesting, especially with Rox. She only likes it doggie style."

Jory looked him over, searching for the passion they'd rekindled, but he knew Pierce didn't notice. He'd become too preoccupied with the women pawing all over him. Was it really that easy for him to turn his affection on and off?

"I'm good," he lied, shoving his hands in his pockets.

He felt about as far from good as possible without actually breaking bones in his body or being violently ill. Without another word he watched Pierce disappear into the room across the hall, both of his hands slipping down the tight jeans of his two guests.

"Jory." A frantic Wicked Witch popped up at his side. Small, feminine hands gripped his arm and tugged him into the corner. "Sugar, we need to talk."

HEX ON THE EX

“You again.”

“Listen, the spell didn’t work.”

He blinked at her. “Yeah, I know.” *I just lived it.*

“Uh oh.” She waved her hand in front of his face. “Yep, it’s bad.”

“It’s worse than bad,” he said, wondering why exactly he was talking to her in the first place. Since when did he start trusting a bar-tending Tarot card reader in a witch mask?

“Couldn’t keep it up?” she asked, biting on her nails.

“That’s not quite the problem.”

Her eyes widened. “Oh, hell, he can’t keep it down, can he?”

Jory sighed. “What was the spell for? A night? Maybe it’s ironic that I got what I wanted.” It just seemed a shame that Pierce was getting it a lot more. From all angles. And probably at that very moment.

“See, now there’s the problem, darlin’. The spell wasn’t cast the way it should have been cast. It went all wonky and haywire and now it’s just...it’s bad. We’ve got to do something about it before it germinates and grows all out of control and untamed.”

“What?”

“Honey, I hate to tell it to you like this, but it’s all your fault.”

“Of course it is.”

“Your sole job was to think of who you wanted. Did you do that?”

“Yes.”

HEX ON THE EX

"The entire time?"

"Yes."

She tilted her chin down. "Certain?"

He paused. His short-term memory wasn't the sharpest, but he was pretty sure he'd done a halfway decent job of keeping Pierce on his mind. Pierce had a permanent front row seat for all of Jory's thoughts.

"I think so."

"Not good enough. We need to get rid of this half-assed spell."

"Great. How do *we* do that?"

Gidget took a deep breath. "Offhand, I have no idea. I'll have to Google it as soon as I get home, sugar."

He frowned. "You have to Google a spell?"

"It's faster than perusing an entire bookshelf, especially if I can find the translation. Now, here's what we have to do to make this half-assed spell go away..."

"Is that the technical name? Half-assed?"

She tilted her head to the side. "Darlin', I don't name them, I just cast them."

"Well, maybe you should stop because apparently it's not working."

"Like I said, this is your fault, buster," she said, not missing a beat. "You didn't keep your thoughts in one place. If you had, guess who would be in that room?" she said, pointing across the hall.

Jory took a breath. "Fine. It's my fault. How do I get Pierce back?"

HEX ON THE EX

Her blue eyes stared out at him from behind the mask as though trying to gauge whether or not he was ready for what she had to say to him. “You don’t.”

“What?”

“I said you don’t.” She reached for his hand and pressed her thumb to the meaty center. Her touch burned him—literally—and he pulled away, staring at the triangle she’d left branded into him. “Now listen to—”

“Hey!” Jake practically screamed in Jory’s ear, then hit him so hard in the back he nearly doubled over. He turned to face Jake, seeing that he’d donned a Darth Vader mask, which looked positively trippy considering he’d also changed into a Hawaiian shirt with neon flamingos.

“Where in the hell have you been? I thought you might have left after I dedicated a Cher song to you.”

Gidget’s eyes widened and she looked from Jory to Jake and back again, then hitched her thumb in Jake’s direction. “Sweetheart,” she said, her eyes narrowed and accusing.

Jake brought the Wicked Witch in close for a bear hug. “If I had a girl, this would be her. Did you just get your reading from the Great Gidget?”

Jory nodded. “She sort of made me.”

“Kinda creepy with how accurate it turns out, isn’t it? Like she knows exactly what makes you tick and what kind of screws to rearrange to make you tick better.”

“Yeah.” Fucked up was a better description, but creepy worked, too.

“Hey, sweetheart, what am I paying you for?”

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"To fix your friend's problem," she shouted back over the music. "He's one of the three sides."

"Fantastic. Good for him. Hey, listen, I have a whole herd of people waiting for the readings downstairs," he said, shooing Gidget away.

"Not yet, Jake, we're in the middle of something."

"Great Gidgy, you promised me a night of fantasy. It's either this or Jell-o wrestling. You pick."

"This is serious."

"You're at my party. We don't do serious at parties."

She looked at Jory and spread her hands, to which he shrugged, still examining his hand, which hurt like hell, worse than the time he'd burned his hand with the car cigarette lighter on accident when he wanted to see how hot the orange center actually got.

Like salmon swimming upstream, she attempted to fight through the crowd, but eventually gave up and walked down the stairs, mouthing something to him in the distance.

Jake patted him on the back. "She'll chat your ear off if you aren't careful, man."

"We were just discussing a spell." He craned his neck, but he could no longer find her.

"Cool. Just don't vex me or anything, okay?"

Jory didn't answer. If he could put a hex on Pierce and make him impotent for the rest of the night, he might have done it.

"What's up?" Jake asked. "You look like you need another drink."

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That was the last thing he needed. From this point on he needed to stay sober so he could drive home, let his dog out, and sulk for the rest of the night while he watched ESPN and applied ice to his burned hand.

Despite the mask, Jory knew Jake frowned at him. “You saw him, didn’t you?”

“I’ll tell you about it later.”

“Tell me now. I’ve had too many Italian Stallions and I won’t remember in the morning.”

“I’m not shouting a dissertation to you in the hallway.”

Jake gave an exasperated sigh. “Fine. Come on.”

CHAPTER 6

“I’m an idiot.”

Jake shut the passenger side door and scratched his neck. “Please tell me I didn’t just leave my own party to sit in your car and hear something I already knew.”

“I’m serious.” Jory felt like banging his head against the steering wheel. Jake didn’t do serious, just as he’d explained to Gidget. He did comic relief or he ignored uncomfortable situations, but he didn’t do serious. Ten years of friendship had proven that to Jory, which made him love and hate Jake.

“Fine, be serious and ruin the night.”

Jory glared at him. “I’m an idiot. For the past year I’ve been thinking about Pierce and how we could work everything

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out. Then tonight, I see him again and see he really doesn't care at all. Why the hell did I come here?"

"Because I invited you."

Jory exhaled. "I shouldn't have come here."

Jake fell silent and took off his mask, allowing it to rest on the top of his head. He stared straight ahead and blew air out his mouth, allowing several seconds to pass before he offered a reply.

"Maybe he does care and just doesn't show it."

"He's showing it right now to Summer and Rox."

"Well, it's not like it's a secret he's bi."

Jory gritted his teeth. "That's not my point."

"Have you talked to him?"

"About what? Baseball? He's no longer into primitive, caveman sports. He's moved on to bigger and better."

"I'm just going to pretend I understand what you're talking about. Look, Jory, if you want him back so bad then—"

"I had sex with him."

Jake snapped his head around, his eyebrows shooting into his hairline. "Tonight?"

Why in the hell he'd decided to tell Jake he didn't know, but he couldn't really back out of it now. Jake knew almost everything about him, and Jory doubted this would be the deal breaker for their friendship.

"Yeah."

"And?"

"And nothing. Obviously. If there was something I'd be in there with him, wouldn't I?"

HEX ON THE EX

Jake exhaled hard, blatantly uncomfortable with their conversation. “Then he’s an asshole. He’s got a fantastic mind for business, he’s amazing when it comes to renovations, but deep down inside he’s like the Grinch of all men.”

“No, I’m an idiot.”

“You’re loyal and artistic. He’s the idiot.”

“He’s the one who knew when it was time to move on. I’m thirty-six and I’ve just wasted an entire year of my fucking life waiting for something that was never going to happen.”

Jake pursed his lips. “I’m not going to lie. You do have a point there.”

Jory slammed his skull against the headrest and sighed. “What the hell was I thinking?”

“Were you thinking?”

“No,” he admitted. “Or just the opposite and I over thought the whole thing.”

“And look where it landed you. Hiding out in your car across the street from a huge party with lots of hot guys.”

“Fantastic,” he grumbled.

“Fate is one cruel bitch.” Jake grunted. “But at least you have me.”

Jory shook his head and glanced over, wanting to tell Jake he was so full of himself. He turned, his lips parted, but his voice gone. His heart stuttered, his gaze dropping from Jake’s face to the hand resting on his knee. Fear and joy pulsed through him, dared him to accept or retreat.

For a long moment he stared at Jake’s outstretched hand as though it were the first time he’d ever seen him. They’d gone

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camping together, spent a weekend hunting even though neither one of them could actually pull the trigger and kill anything, and allowed their lives to tangle together until the past couldn't possibly be separated. Countless car rides had been spent sitting side-by-side, listening to games on the radio and arguing over where to turn or what exit to take.

But this was different, exciting and terrifying, completely forbidden despite the sense of relief Jory felt inside. He slowly looked up at Jake, but he'd already turned away.

"Or should I say stuck with me?" Jake finished, his tender gesture turned into a hard pat on the leg.

"Jake—"

"You know, I think you might be right. You are an idiot and I think I might be an idiot, too."

"If you had any idea how I felt," he said under his breath, wondering how Jake could know when he himself didn't know.

What would it change even if he could admit his feelings to Jake, tell him how much he did care about it. The guilt he felt for ignoring his instincts would always stand in front of him, a pillar he could move around but never destroy.

Jake took a deep breath and reached for the door handle but didn't exit the car. "I honestly thought I did know how you felt. Half the time when you're talking I feel like I can finish your sentences. But maybe that just means I've been around you too long."

"Maybe you know me better than I know myself," Jory mumbled. They sounded like dangerous words to his own

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ears. His heart felt twisted, squeezed into a tight ball until everything inside of it bled out.

“If that were true, then I’d know what you want.”

“Jake—”

“I’m drunk. You shouldn’t listen to what I’m saying because it’s all a load of crap.”

He stared straight ahead, knowing Jake didn’t get drunk, at least not in the fall down out-of-control sense. On the surface they could play games and lie to one another, pretending none of this had happened, that Jory wasn’t a complete moron chasing something he’d never have and that Jake wasn’t offering to make it all better.

For the night he’d let him slide.

“Then what’s my excuse?” If only they were both drunk or high, then they could reach across their bucket seats and blame their state of mind on sloppy kisses in the backseat. Maybe then they could remain close friends the morning after, shake it off as though it hadn’t happened.

“You’re the idiot, remember?”

Jory forced a laugh. His balls started to ache again, but not for Pierce. Curiosity piqued desire and he risked a glance at Jake, who stared back at him, ruggedly handsome despite boyish dimples, his face weathered from too much sun when he was growing up.

It had been a long time since he’d really looked at Jake. More often than not they carried on conversations while in the car or at the gym where something had always provided distraction. Not this time. Now they only had each other to

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preoccupy their minds and Jory found way too much to study and appreciate.

He lacked Pierce's manicured look, no deep tan or glossy, magazine good looks. Familiarity glowed through him with his short, spiky dark hair and hooded, European eyes set in a square face with a strong, defined jaw.

Fearing he'd reach out and touch him, Jory balled his hands into fists. His thoughts turned muddled, blossomed into intimate moments they hadn't shared. Yet. Damn, he wanted to find out how Jake tasted, how he felt as they stood and embraced one another. They could be those shadows, those men embracing in the window.

"I am an idiot," he mumbled.

His hands had started to shake, despite the tight fists he held, wishing he could take hold of Jake.

"At least we solved something tonight, right? Guess I came in handy for something."

"Don't talk," Jory snapped. He couldn't bear to listen to Jake, not with his self-deprecating tone, not with his full, luscious lips perfect for biting, for sucking, for kissing.

Jake sat back and scratched his temple. The mask slid off his head and he caught it before it rolled into the backseat, but Jory had reached for it, too. He held his hand over Jake's, surprised at how one simple touch didn't electrify him the way he'd expected. It enlivened him, made him aware they both breathed in time, how they both sat straight and rigid as though the same invisible strings moved them both in sync.

Where would the strings pull them next, he wondered? Out

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of the car and into the party? A dark corner? Apart for weeks until they could figure out what the hell had happened and avoid it at all costs?

"I don't know what you want me to do, Jor, but you sure as hell better figure it out soon. Tell me how to act around you so I can get my lines down right, because I don't want to fuck this up," Jake said under his breath.

Jory ground his teeth. "I don't have answers."

"Then what do you have? For me."

Fire roared inside him, threatened to burn away the last fragile strands of sanity. He wanted Jake to shut his goddamn mouth and just sit there, wait for something to happen. Maybe another car would drive up and distract the two of them, maybe guests would be leaving the party and he'd have to play host again. Maybe Pierce would walk out with Summer and Rox and they could watch them drive away, happy and oblivious.

"Jory."

But Jake wouldn't shut up and that pissed him off. He slammed his fist against the steering wheel and felt his knuckles crack open on impact. "I don't want to lose you, alright?"

They both stared at the blood filling the crevices of Jory's hand. He tried to focus on the pain, on the sight of blood red and hot as his anger, as the passion he felt inside that had no chance of escape.

Jake gave a heavy sigh. "So we're done here, then, right?"

Unsure of what Jake meant, Jory didn't reply immediately.

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His hand had started to throb and he wondered if he'd broken his fingers.

"Thanks for stopping by tonight," Jake mumbled.

Jory turned to face Jake just as the car door swung open. He panicked, his good hand whipping out to grab his closest friend by the shirtsleeve and reel him back into the vehicle. They collided, a heap of angry, testosterone driven males sharing cramped space.

Jake's eyes flashed with frustration, his mouth open, twisted in question. Any moment now Jory knew one of them would take a swing and all hell would break loose in the Honda Accord.

He couldn't let it end like this, not the night, not their lives.

"You drive me fucking mad," Jory said through his teeth, shaking his long time friend. He wanted to say more but he couldn't. Words refused to escape, and all he could think to do was lean in and taste what he desperately wanted.

CHAPTER 7

They struggled only briefly, both of them fighting for the same thing, to hold one another. Jake managed to slam shut the passenger door, and the dome light faded into darkness. They grunted and kissed one another, trembling, fumbling, and clawing their way closer and closer until Jory managed to twist and crawl onto Jake's side of the car.

He held him down with the weight of his body, feeling uncomfortably smashed into the car but unwilling to give up his spot, not when he had Jake beneath him.

"I don't know about you, but I kinda dig driving you fucking mad," Jake murmured between kisses.

"It has its advantages," he admitted against Jake's lips,

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tasting sugar and alcohol on his friend's mouth. Nothing felt or tasted as he expected, which made him realize just how much he'd anticipated this moment.

"How many ways am I allowed to explore?" Jake asked as he abandoned Jory's lips in favor of his throat.

"As many as the Honda will allow."

Jake chuckled, his fingers running along Jory's scalp. "How limber are you? One of us needs to do a handstand if we're going to make this worth it."

"I'm electing you because you came up with a brilliant idea." He leaned back, sliding between the front seats. The car bounced with his movements and he tumbled into the open space, crushing a box of tissue.

Taking the easy route, Jake opened the door and walked out of the car, then joined him in the backseat. He immediately put his hands on Jory's chest and kissed him again, deeper, more passionate than before.

"I walked in on you once," he said, slipping his hands beneath Jory's shirt. "When Pierce was blowing you on the couch. I couldn't see anything, but I could hear you clear down the hall."

In silence he listened, his hand running down Jake's back as his friend knelt on all fours and lifted his shirt, kissing and biting his nipples, licking and sucking his way down Jory's torso. Jake's hand had already made it to his crotch and began to knead and stroke through his shorts, sending Jory into overdrive. He couldn't imagine continuing, but at the same time there was no way in hell he wanted to stop, not without

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the feel of Jake's mouth on his dick.

"I went back to my car and jerked off twice just thinking about you."

His cock jumped in response and he closed his eyes, rubbing between Jake's parted legs. He wanted to feel his naked ass, play and explore him in the comfort and privacy of the house, not outside. Years of friendship deserved more than this, but Jake didn't seem to want to let him think.

He pulled Jory's dick through his opened shorts and rubbed his thumb along the sensitive head. Jory inhaled sharply, his trembling hand searching beneath Jake until he, too, found his friend's zipper. He practically ripped it open, needing to feel the blunt weight of Jake's dick in his hand.

Somehow they rearranged themselves in the backseat, Jory sliding onto his back while Jake knelt over him. Warm breaths tickled his belly just as he got his first whiff of Jake's musk, strong, sex-filled, and completely his.

He nuzzled Jake, buried his nose in the soft, springy hair, and groaned in satisfaction to both the fragrance and the feel of his lover playing with him. He kissed Jake's sac, feeling him quiver in response, the length of his penis bobbing as he spread his legs wider.

He kissed the base of Jake's thick cock, his tongue tracing prominent veins all the way up to the bulbous, plum-colored head, and Jory felt his actions mirrored, pleasure given, pleasure returned.

In the back of his mind he wondered if guests had realized their hosts had disappeared. They hadn't made much of an

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effort to be discreet, which added to his excitement. He could make other men jealous, envious by his position in the car, caught beneath Jake's body. He wanted to intrigue voyeurs from across the street, make them wish they could trade places and have their dicks sucked while they pleased a tall, strong, ruggedly handsome man.

"Jake." He sighed, his best friend's name sounding strange but unbelievably right to his ears. His tongue circled around the head, caressed the slit offering salty, clear fluid, a mere drop of satisfaction when he needed more.

How could they have gone all these years and not hooked up once? They'd spent so much time together and neither one of them had hidden their sexuality, at least not to each other.

Moist heat enveloped his cock and he groaned, doing the same to Jake, tasting and testing him while he fondled his lover's testicles. Need overtook him and he sucked harder, plunging Jake to the back of his throat. Together they moaned, the car rocking as they made love to one another, neither one of them particularly concerned with going all night. Maybe they'd have tomorrow to try again, maybe this would be it. Nothing mattered except the experience, the sighs and groans leading to taste and the pleasure of being tasted.

Jory tore off his mask and grabbed hold of Jake by the legs, steadying himself as he pumped faster and faster. Jake increased his tempo and reached beneath Jory, his index finger pressed firmly behind Jory's testicles. He scooted closer, begging Jake to massage around his anus, bring them closer than ever before.

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Jake gave a groan as though to tell him to be patient, and Jory countered by offering the same stimulation. Now let's see who has the patience and stamina to wait, he wanted to say.

Competition didn't bother him one bit, and he certainly didn't mind seeing who could draw it out the best, especially when they could share the prize at the end.

As if he knew what his lover had in store, Jake circled around Jory's hole until the tip of his finger penetrated. In anticipation, Jake's anus puckered, waiting to be filled, the length of his dick solid as steel.

Every inch of him looked and felt perfect, and Jory couldn't wait to explore him on the inside. He parted him with two fingers, curling them slightly in order to massage Jake's large, solid prostate.

A groan of satisfaction left Jake's mouth, vibrating against Jory's cock. His hips thrust upward, farther into Jake's mouth as he felt him do it again, louder than before, the vibration rumbling through him from tip to root.

The thrill of being caught, the excitement of being with Jake, everything unraveled him faster than he would have preferred. He trembled from head to toe, hearing Jake groan as he swallowed Jory's seed, greedily drinking every drop of hot semen.

A rush of heat filled his mouth as well, salty and male. Jory couldn't believe they'd climaxed together, he and his closest friend in the world. Eyes closed, he kissed Jake just below the head of his penis, nuzzled his face in the welcomed scent they shared.

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Perspiration trickled into his eye and he wiped it away with the back of his hand as Jake swung his leg over Jory, allowing him to sit up. The car felt like a sauna, and he figured they were fortunate the weather had been cool all week or they may have been on their way to the ER with heat stroke.

“So that’s what we’ve been missing,” Jake murmured as he sat down beside Jory and buttoned his shorts.

“Yeah,” he said. “All of those nights watching Monday night football could have been a lot more interesting.”

Inside he still trembled, his mind working faster than his body desired. Questions bit into his contentment and gnawed at him, demanding guarantees he knew didn’t exist. He should have been lying in Jake’s arms, enjoying their closeness no matter how long it lasted, but he wanted to know it would last for years, if not a lifetime.

Jake eyed him. “Tell me you’re not running home right now.”

He pinched the bridge of his nose. “I need to let Indiana out.”

“He has a dog door, doesn’t he?”

With no kids, no nieces and nephews, and no partner, Jory had given the five-year-old terrier mix just about anything he wanted, including an electronic doggie door, purified water dish, and a timed feeder. Other than their daily jogs, Indiana could pretty much take care of himself over night.

Jake’s warm, callused hands slipped beneath Jory’s shirt and pulled him close. “You’re not running away from me tonight,” he said, his voice low and easy. “Tomorrow you can

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do whatever you want, but tonight I want you to stay.”

It was part command and part request, half insistent lover and half caring friend. Jory pursed his lips, needing to comb through both sides of their lives. He could stay all evening until the last throng of guests either crashed on the couches or took cabs back home. Then he could say goodnight to Jake, spend his night wide awake in bed, and wonder where the evening left him.

Or he could leave right now and forgo the rest of what he knew could be a perfect evening—as long as he didn’t see Pierce in his black wings and matching leather pants.

Goddamn him for still being in my fucking head, he wanted to scream. *Doesn’t he realize he can’t stay here anymore?*

“Don’t think about it,” Jake said.

It took Jory a moment to figure out if he’d said him or it. The last thing he wanted was for Jake to know he’d had a split second of thinking about his ex.

“Jake—”

“I’ve got two words for you.”

Jory sighed. At least he wasn’t about to say *I love you*. “Which is?”

“Hot tub.”

At last he grinned and put his arm around Jake, drawing him close, needing to feel him. They kissed gently, their tongues prodding, tasting one another until Jory wanted to know if Jake’s heart beat in time with his. It was the artist in him talking again, but everything else about their time

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together had flowed together.

He flattened his palm against Jake's chest and heard him suck in a breath. At first it sounded like pleasure, but then Jake swatted him away and held his hand over his chest.

"What the hell was that?" he asked.

Bewildered, Jory pulled away. "What was what?"

"You just burned me."

He started to shake his head, but the palm of his hand throbbed with white-hot pain. Instinctively he wiped his hand against the seat cushion, then shook it out as though it would extinguish the flames burning beneath his skin.

Jory uncurled his fingers and stared at the triangle, which had blistered and turned bright red on one side.

"What the hell is that?" Jake asked.

"I don't know. Your fortune-teller did it to me."

"What?"

"It's part of some spell," he muttered. "She didn't tell me."

"Why not?"

"Because you shooed her away."

Jake rolled up his shirt and sucked in a breath through his teeth. "Well, whatever she did to you, you just did to me."

Jory's gaze snapped up from his hand to Jake's exposed chest where a triangle had been branded just above his left nipple. The top point appeared prominent while the sides slowly faded, the bottom bar almost nonexistent. A wisp of smoke left the heaving surface, followed by the smell of burning skin.

A shudder rattled down Jory's spine as he met Jake's eye.

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Suddenly a parlor game no longer felt like something harmless and fun.

“You’re kidding, right? Please tell me you’re kidding and this is some sort of kink. I can take being branded or tattooed, Jory.”

“I’m not kidding,” he answered blankly.

“Then what is that?”

Jory reached for the car door. “I don’t know, but I’m sure as hell finding out.”

CHAPTER 8

They entered the backyard together, finding half the crowd had lost their inhibitions as well as their clothes.

“The neighbors are either going to love me or hate me,” Jake said as they wove past a couple slow dancing naked on the patio. Poolside had turned into a queer version of the Playboy Mansion with toned bodies sprawled on the cement and co-ed skinny dippers playing volleyball in the shallow pool.

Side by side they scanned the crowd, but Gidget didn’t appear to be outside. Most people had decided to keep their masks on, including Jake, who stood with his shoulders hunched. Not many situations seemed to eat at him, but Jory

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knew frustration when he saw it and couldn't blame Jake for being wary.

"Anything?"

Jake shook his head. "She may have gone home."

"What? How could she go home?"

"I asked her to come over an hour early to set up and center herself for her readings. It's almost two in the morning, Jor. If what she did is actually real...I don't know...maybe she's tired."

Jory clenched his fists. The nun who'd been rolling over in her grave had most likely taken off her femur to hit herself in the skull at this point.

With a sigh, he opened his hand and looked at the mark, noticing how it still looked more prominent on one side than the others, though it no longer throbbed.

He turned to Jake, who was checking out a couple of men entering the hot tub. "Does yours still hurt?"

"No, you?" Jake motioned him toward the sliding glass doors and they walked into the kitchen where the air felt humid, scented by cooking meat from the barbeque and spilled alcohol. The music thumped against the walls, creating a constant flow of sound Jory thought might split his head. With the volume turned up full blast, the music became distorted, adding to his frustration. This wasn't even his type of music to begin with, but now it just sounded like hell.

Jake answered him, but he shook his head, unable to hear over the bass.

"It stopped once we got out of the car," Jake shouted.

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“Same here.”

They exchanged looks and headed down the hall, zigzagging through humanity. The crowd seemed to have grown as the night went on, and everywhere Jory looked it appeared he'd stepped into a forbidden dream where any person in attendance could have changed from stranger to lover, no questions asked, no act too kinky. Now this was a party.

It took longer than it should have to step over bodies strewn out along the hall and the stairs, but Jory followed him, knowing where Jake was headed. The best place to look for Gidget was where she'd set up her table on the upper floor—unless her beanbag chairs now served other purposes.

He wondered if she'd screwed up anyone else's night—and blamed it on the person who wanted a second chance.

Jory grabbed his hair at the roots and gave a groan not even he could hear. He followed Jake through the shifting tide of bodies and smiled to himself. His night hadn't been ruined, it had been turned in a different direction, and he liked that direction.

All of a sudden he slammed into Jake and fought to steady himself. He leaned forward, grasping his friend's shoulders, surprised at how normal and right it felt.

“What's—”

Movement on the stairs caught his eye and he stopped before he started.

Smack dab in front of them, at the top of the stairs, Summer and Rox did a strip tease for a small, interested crowd

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of men and women. They used Pierce as their stripper's pole, humping and grinding against him in time to the distorted music. Their masks, if they'd had them at the start of the party, were long gone, as were their shirts. They rubbed their breasts against Pierce's chest and took turns licking his nipples and running their hands down his leather pants.

Pierce didn't seem to notice. He stood with his hands on his hips and his gaze trained just above the crowd, statue-like in appearance. Only his head moved to the music and even that appeared slight, as though he weren't really there in the room.

What went through his mind, Jory wondered?

He snapped his eyes shut, attempting to clear his thoughts. It didn't matter what Pierce thought as he stood between the two women leaning in to kiss one another. He'd made his decision for now, possibly forever.

Jory ran his hands down Jake's torso, feeling the contour of his hard, flat chest and brought himself back to the moment. This is where he was, where he'd been for hours now. For a split second he thought of taking a step back, afraid he only wanted to use Jake to get Pierce out of his mind.

Aggravated, he wrestled with his thoughts, with his mistakes and with the few things he'd actually done right in life. Coming to the party looking for Pierce had been a mistake, but finding Jake? He couldn't call him a mistake. Jake had been there through parts of life Jory already knew he wouldn't have survived on his own.

As if knowing Jory's thoughts, Jake leaned back against

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him and lifted his black plastic mask. With his head turned to the side, he offered Jory a quick, mischievous smile.

“Who are you thinking of right now?” Jake asked.

His hands reached Jake’s zipper and he stroked his lover through his clothes, finding his dick semi-hard, ready to play again. His own cock jerked to life, craving another moment alone with Jake, far away from the noise, the crowd, and the display at the top of the stairs.

With his gaze locked on Jake’s face, Jory smiled back. “Gidget.”

Jake’s expression immediately sobered. “You’ve got to be kidding—”

“Relax. I thought you didn’t like being serious?”

“I don’t, but right now you’re driving me fucking mad.”

Jory gave his friend’s hardening dick a squeeze through his jeans, finding it difficult to pull away. An hour in the backseat of his car wasn’t nearly enough to satisfy his curiosity.

“Yeah, I can tell.”

“And you’re still thinking of Gidget, eh? You want to bring the Great Gidg into this?”

“I’m thinking you and I need to find her.”

For a long moment Jake continued to stare at him, his dark eyes hinting at jealousy and possession. Jaw set and nostrils flared didn’t fit his otherwise handsome face, and Jory smoothed it away with a tender kiss, his arms locked tightly around Jake’s body, giving his best friend no choice but to rest in his arms.

They stood front to back, ignoring the sweat and grit of the

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party around them.

"There's something about you tonight," Jake said in his ear, struggling to turn and face Jory. "I don't know how to explain it."

"Then don't try."

Jake seemed satisfied by that answer and smiled. "Let's get out of here."

"What? We can't. What about the burns?"

"Maybe it's a sign," Jake answered, grabbing Jory by the arm. "A sign we're supposed to be together."

In a burn unit, he wanted to say. His brow furrowed and he stared at Jake, wondering when he'd become so...mushy when it came to love. This was not at all what he expected from a guy who still liked to belch the National Anthem.

They stumbled through the crowd and practically fell through the doorway. The brash sent of bleach and cleaning supplies told him they'd entered the mudroom, which was surprisingly empty given the people strewn across the house. At first it felt like falling into a black hole, the lack of light jarring. Jory reached out, prepared to brace himself for a fall when he bumped up against something metal and solid, either the washer or the dryer.

Before he had a chance to right himself, Jake pounced on him. Slightly taller and heavier, he easily pinned Jory to the machine and somehow manage to find his lips, kissing him hard, almost too hard.

But Jory made no complaint. At first his muscles tensed, but as soon as Jake pushed his tongue into his mouth, he

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stilled, savoring the darkness, the quiet, and the company. His hands found their way around Jake's body as though he'd been with him countless heated moments in the past. Soft groans and sloppy kisses filled the air, drowning out the party still going full force.

"I can't look at you without my dick getting hard," Jake said against his lips, flinging his own mask and Jory's to the ground. "I can't think without you being on my mind, and I don't want to stop until you're the only thing I can taste and feel."

They struggled with each other's clothing, both of them chuckling as the air kicked on and the vents blasted them with cool air.

"Out of all the places in the house, you pick the laundry room," Jory mumbled, reaching into Jake's briefs to feel his cock already hard, the tip lubed with pre-cum. His own shorts slid down to his ankles, shackling him to Jake's side—as if he wanted to be anywhere else.

"Shut up. We have more room here than in the back of your car."

"Yeah, but here I can't see you."

"Well, then," Jake murmured, his lips leaving Jory's to explore the column of his throat and his collar bone. "I guess you'll just have to use your imagination."

Not seeing the kisses peppered along his flesh made him inhale sharply and run his fingers through Jake's hair, feeling the warmth of his scalp and smelling male perspiration mixed with sex.

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“You have a gift for making me forget where we are,” Jory told him, his legs instinctively parting well before Jake reached his belly.

“Where do you want to be?”

The flick of a tongue around his navel made him thrust his hips forward, his cock swaying as it stood neglected. “Fenway, up in one of the boxes.”

“Nice. Full crowd?” He gently cupped Jory’s testicles, rubbing his palm over his sac, his fingers massaging just behind his tight balls.

“Yeah.”

“Night or day game?”

“Night. After the World Series.”

“Who’d they play?”

“By some gigantic rule change, and to make up for the strike, Boston just beat the Yankees.”

His fist slid from the base to the tip of Jory’s cock, turning his hand as he pumped him. The sensation lifted Jory’s heels from the floor, his grasp tightening around the roots of Jake’s hair.

“How many games did it go?”

“Seven game series, all the way to the very last play.”

“Shit, I could come just thinking about that.”

“I’m finding it a little difficult myself.”

Jake chuckled, his breath hot against Jory’s sensitive head. “Too much for you, old man?”

“Those five months I have on you make a difference.”

The tip of his tongue circled around Jory’s pulsing crown.

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He felt as though he could barely stand any more attention to his sensitive dick. “Then I’d better take it easy on you,” Jake said.

All of the breath in Jory’s lungs left him the moment he felt Jake’s lips close around his dick. Every nerve in his body led straight to his groin, and he moaned, his head tossed back, his hips thrusting him deeper into Jake’s warm, wet mouth.

But Jake was far from done with him. He reached between Jory’s parted legs and stroked his ass, petting him softly.

“Why aren’t you letting me touch you?” He groaned, his voice barely recognizable as his own.

Jake offered no audible answer, but he stroked Jory faster with his mouth, the side of his head brushing against Jory’s stomach, his fingers prying between his ass cheeks.

He reached down and ran his fingers through Jake’s hair, wanting more than he’d been given. The last thing he wanted was to seem like a pig dick and have Jake do all the work, but he wasn’t in a position to do more than receive—not that he wanted to complain. His imagination filled in the details he couldn’t see, and he pictured Jake looking up at him as he hungrily licked and sucked his dick, wanting to taste every inch of him. Feeling someone so eager for him made his balls ache more than ever, which shouldn’t have been possible. He wanted this, wanted Jake.

Slowly he leaned back against the cold metal machine, which allowed him leverage. He thrust in time with Jake, using what little control he had to keep their rhythm slow.

Jake, however, had different plans. He allowed Jory’s cock

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to slip from his mouth momentarily and wet his fingers, leaving Jory to sigh and hold on for the ride. He cried out as Jake penetrated him, thrusting one finger, then two until he felt stretched to the brink of pleasure and pain. The discomfort quickly subsided, giving way to a wave of sensation he fought to keep at bay.

It wasn't his choice any more. Whatever Jake wanted, he would have. Now.

"Jake," he murmured, licking his lips. "I'm gonna..."

A tongue swirled around the base of his cock up to the head, pushing him over the edge without mercy. He held his breath, but the tremble had already begun, the first pulses of a hard, satisfying climax. His body shook, his breaths coming out as hisses through his teeth, so loud he almost didn't hear Jake groan as he received him.

"That was amazing," he said under his breath.

"I don't know about you, but the Red Sox beating the Yanks does it to me every time." He stood, his naked hips aligned with Jory's, allowing him to feel his steel hard erection.

"Tell me," Jory said, grasping Jake's dick, remembering the feel of him in darkness. "Where would you be?"

"In a movie theater. High def and surround sound."

"Watching what?"

"*Indiana Jones...Raiders of the Lost Ark.*"

He wrapped his thumb and index finger around Jake's impressive girth and gave him several long, sweeping pumps, then ran his closed fingers over the head. Sperm beaded at the

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slit, providing all the lubrication he'd need for the moment. He had a feeling Harrison Ford would provide the rest.

"So I need a leather hat and a whip?"

"You'd need to be in front of me while I watched the movie."

Jory turned in Jake's arms, facing away from him. He felt the urgency in Jake's hands as he pushed on his shoulders, leaning him over the machine. He accidentally hit one of the buttons on the front and started the washer filling with water.

"Shit," he muttered.

"Leave it." Jake swiped his hands away from the dials and pulled them behind Jory's back, leaving him doubled over and pinned to the washer, the smell of laundry detergent in his nose.

All of a sudden Jake turned into the powerful master, his hands clamped around Jory's wrists, his hips smashed up against his ass, dick pressed between his cheeks. Jory shivered, wanting to feel him take full control. He'd never realized he liked being the submissive party as he always figured it was just for Pierce.

The name flickered like static through his mind, gone the minute he focused on Jake's lips against his ear.

"I have lotion on the shelf above you to use as lube, but I don't have a condom."

"I've been fully vetted," Jory answered. "I've got my papers in my wallet if you want to see them."

"What about Pierce?"

"Clean."

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“His word or you saw proof?”

Jory bent farther down and fished for his shorts. “I’ve got protection,” he said. At a time like this he didn’t want to argue or worry about their safety. If Pierce had lied to him—and he sure as hell better not have—he’d pay the price, but he wouldn’t drag Jake down with him.

He pressed the foil packet into Jake’s hand and stroked his testicles and thighs as his lover slid the condom down. Within seconds their disruption turned to fierce kisses, the mood returned to urgent, both of them needy to have one another.

Jake reached around him, fumbling for the bottle of lotion, which he squirted on his hands, then spread over Jory’s flesh, massaging it between his cheeks. He’d never felt more ready and relaxed, knowing his first time with Jake would be memorable, completely what he needed.

“Do you want me to hum the overture?” Jake offered.

“Do it and I’ll kick your ass.”

Silence returned between them and Jake once again eased him forward just as the washer went from filling to churning clothes. His cock pressed to Jory’s rim, the vibration from the machine rattling through both of them, a delicious, unexpected sensation.

Head bowed, Jory waited, wanting Jake inside of him. Slick heat made his muscles contract and relax in anticipation. Never one for waiting, he curved his spine, bringing himself closer until Jake pushed forward.

The bastard gave him only an inch, forcing him to wait. Teeth gritted, he gave a grunt of disapproval and reached

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back, grabbing hold of Jake's hip. That seemed to be exactly what Jake wanted and he thrust forward, hard, forcing Jory to bite his lip as his lover and friend filled him.

Jake pulled out almost completely, the feel of him snug and trembling thanks to the washer causing Jory's mind to reel. He hadn't imagined it like this, completely uninhibited and unplanned, but now that he had Jake inside of him he couldn't imagine them being together any other way.

"Oh, Jake," Jory murmured, allowing his lover to push him forward, onto the metal surface his body had managed to warm.

"You like it like this?"

"Yes," he answered.

Jake thrust harder, his hand snaking around to feel Jory's cock hardening again. He had no choice but to achieve another erection, especially with Jake inside of him, stroking his prostate.

"I want you to come again," Jake said, leaning against him.

Jory gave no argument. His cock remained unbelievably sensitive, wanting to respond to the slightest touch, and Jake seemed to know this. He grasped Jory loosely between his thumb and forefinger and gave him slow, easy strokes, keeping him just far enough away from the edge to enjoy the sensation.

"I want you to come when I come," Jake told him.

He knew he couldn't take more than several minutes of Jake masturbating him, not when he could smell his musk in the air and think of nothing but how it felt to have Jake's legs

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pressed up against his, his arm wrapped around his body, his dick buried inside of him.

Unable to stop him, he groaned loudly, hoping Jake could hear him over the churn of the washer and the steady thump from the party. He couldn't hold on a moment longer and reached back, grabbing Jake's side. With one final, hard thrust, he heard Jake give a groan, the sound of pleasure almost lost to Jory's ragged sigh.

"I've got you," Jake said in his ear, slowing his strokes until he leaned into him, his naked body draped over his lover. "I've got you, Jory. I've got you."

The gentle words rippled through him, carried him down from the place they'd shared. Jory closed his eyes and smiled to himself, feeling Jake plant kisses along the back of his neck, his breath still harsh and urgent. He wanted to hold fast to the moment, keep Jake with him for as long as possible as his lover for the tonight, fearing tomorrow would be different. At least for the moment he had what he wanted.

"We've got some damn good fantasies," Jake said, turning Jory to face him. "World Series and Indiana Jones. Can't really beat that, can you?"

"Not at all." He snaked his arms around Jake, wanting to hold him close a while longer and enjoy the feel of their perspiration slick bodies melded together. He leaned forward, kissing Jake on the lips, when a bang at the laundry room door made them both jump.

Together they struggled in the darkness to find their clothes and dress before Jake pulled open the door with Jory

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directly behind him.

"Hey," Jake said. "We were just about to look for you."

"I bet you were, sugar," Gidget answered, her hand firmly planted on her hip.

"Seriously. Jory's been saying—"

"Yeah, yeah." She gazed past Jake at Jory, her mouth forming a straight, thin line, and grabbed him by the shirt collar. "We have a problem."

With more force than he gave her credit for, she dragged him out of the laundry room and into the kitchen. Litter covered the counters and finger foods lay scattered on the floor, but the crowd had moved into the great room.

"We? There is no 'we.'"

She gave a sigh of aggravation. "I didn't think so either, but apparently we're not yet done with each other."

Jory's eyes narrowed. "What?"

"I should have known it would end up this way." She grabbed his hand and traced the mark she'd branded into him. "Just like I thought."

"What's just like you thought?"

"You, me, the triangle...just great."

"What the hell are you talking about?" Jory looked to Jake for answers, but Jake stared straight ahead, the same blank look on his face Jory had seen from Pierce earlier. Brow furrowed, he waved his hand in front of Jake's face, but Jake didn't move.

"Not good," Gidget said. "Not for you, not for me. If only you'd listened to me in the first place, this wouldn't be

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happening.”

Jory whipped around to face her. “Who the hell are you and what are you doing?”

Gidget tore off her mask and handed it to him. With her head tilted to the side, she looked him over, a look of irritation he recognized well plastered on her face. No man ever forgot the utter disdain in his ex-girlfriend’s expression when he pissed her off—especially his last girlfriend.

“April?”

“We need to talk, Jory.”

“Since when are you from the south? You never had an accent before.”

“I moved to Georgia right after college.” She paused, and he translated her words into *right after you left me for another man*. “Let’s consider that just one of the many things you don’t know about me anymore.”

“What are you doing here?”

“Trying to fix what you screwed up.”

“Me?” Now it all made sense. In the two years they’d dated everything had always been his fault. Damn, he should have seen this coming.

“To your credit, tonight you, a novice, have created a half-assed love spell and a hex on your ex.”

“What?”

She grabbed Jake by the wrist and he obediently stepped forward. “He’s worse than I thought.”

“What did you do to him?”

“I haven’t done anything besides accidentally unlock you

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from your hold and let you play with magic, which you obviously can't handle. God, who would have ever thought you'd have it in you?" She threw her hands up in the air. "Come on, we don't have much time before this becomes the spell from hell."

"The what?"

"Sweetheart, quit talking and follow me. Now."

"Where are we going?"

"Not far."

Jory exhaled and trailed behind, glowering as he followed April and Jake back into the laundry room. He looked from Jake, who still stood like a zombie, to April, who looked just as she had when they'd parted ways following graduation. After all those years she'd proven him right...she really was a witch.

"Alright," he said. "Explain..."

To Be Continued In...

Playing With Magic, Book II: Spell From Hell

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GABRINA GARZA

Gabrina Garza is a Latina romance writer who lives in the Chicagoland Area. She's dedicated to bringing readers fun, exciting stories with characters women (and men) can relate to. When not writing, she's actively involved in animal rescue and donates portions of her royalties to rescue efforts. Her "pack" includes two children, five cats, and currently eight dogs (relax, she fosters abused and abandoned dogs)—plus one husband who is more trouble than the rest of them combined. She'd tell you she's also a secret ninja with laser beams for eyes and kick-ass six-inch vinyl boots, but she'd be lying about the ninja part. You should visit her immediately because her website promises all the virtual cookies you can eat. Her books are fat free and made with 100% natural ingredients and should therefore be consumed monthly in a literary sort of way. Her long-term goal is to take over the world and eliminate all forms of reality television. Until then, please save a life, spay and neuter! Check out her website for all you never wanted to know: www.gabrina.com.

* * *

**Don't miss *Take Me Out*, by Gabrina Garza,
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Ty, shortstop for an independent pro baseball team the Arsenals, has managed to keep his personal life separate from an unforgiving industry, but the arrival of a new third baseman threatens to challenge the delicate balance he's held for so long. On the outside, Ty has a spunky "girlfriend" who knows the truth and won't let him get hurt, but it's never been enough. Just one look at Jae, and well, when the ump calls "ball two," baseball is the farthest thing from Ty's mind!

Jae Wise joins the team to replace an injured player, so his time with the Arsenals is only temporary, but he can't think straight when it comes to Ty. When they become roomies on the road, then housemates during a stretch of home games, the attraction the two young athletes feel toward one another cannot be denied.

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