

# Rusty American Dream

Connie Bailey



CHRIS drummed his fingers lightly against the steering wheel as he neared the turn-off. Every day for three months, he'd been passing the car for sale on the side of the road, sometimes stopping just to have another look, saving his pennies until he had the full amount to ransom her. Today his boss on the painting crew had finally ponied up a bonus he'd been making excuses about for over two weeks. Today Chris could slap the money down in Mr. Montrose's sweaty palm and buy his dream.

Brushing his wispy sun-bleached bangs out of his eyes, Chris smiled at the tail-finned road yacht when it came into view at the crossroads. He blew the mammoth vehicle a kiss as he turned the corner and drove another half mile to a dirt-lot car dealership with an adjacent salvage yard. Faded plastic pennants flapped overhead as Chris got out of the company van and walked to the structure grandly designated as the office by a green neon sign that had seen previous duty at a motel. The office was approximately the size of three phone booths from the days when there were phone booths. Inside, Chris knew he'd find Montrose taking up half the space in his squeaky swivel chair with the wall unit air conditioner blowing directly on the side of his oily head. Chris couldn't wait to see the expression on the salesman's face when he put his money down.

Chris knocked and froze on the concrete step with the door half open. A guy about his age with hair as short, dark and glossy as sealskin stood in front of Montrose's desk. The stranger wore a strappy white t-shirt and brand-new jeans and he was counting out a stack of hundred dollar bills roughly the thickness of the one in Chris's wallet.

"What the hell do... oh it's you," Montrose said. "Get in or get out, but close the damn door."

"There you go," the stranger said. "Eleven hundred even and you're robbing me."

Montrose snorted. “That there car is a classic. I seen worse in the Auto Trader for a hell of a lot more.”

“It’s got rust holes the size of my balls.”

Chris’s eyes narrowed. Montrose only had one car that could be described as a classic: the 1957 Cadillac El Dorado Brougham parked at the corner. Chris’s car. “Hang on a minute,” he said. “What’s goin’ on here?”

“I’m sellin’ a car. This is a car lot.”

“Which car?”

“The Caddie.”

“You can’t do that. I told you I was coming back for it. You’ve got two hundred dollars of my money.”

Montrose took two bills from the pile on his desk and held them out. “Here’s your deposit back,” he smirked.

“You asshole,” Chris said. “You know it’s not about the money. You know how much I want that car.”

“Yeah, ya told me.” The salesman shrugged. “Tough titty, kid, you may not be a dollar short, but you sure as hell are a day late. That’s a good one, huh?” Montrose chuckled.

“Son of a bitch!” Chris spat. “I should take you to court.”

“Have your attorney call mine,” Montrose laughed again.

“Hey, bro,” the dark-haired man said. “I appreciate your disappointment, but I just bought the car, okay? Now I’d like to get the keys and take possession before this swindler takes my other arm and leg. So if you don’t mind movin’ aside...”

“I’m not sure I can do that. I’ve been dreaming of this day since I first laid eyes on that car three months ago. I’ve been saving up ever since then.”

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“I can see it means a lot to you. I understand. Believe me; I do. The second I saw those tail fins I had to have her. She’s even got the original 365 V8.”

“Yeah, I know.”

“Right. Well, like I said, I feel for you, but I came in with the cash first.”

“Tell ya what,” Montrose said. “I could give Guido here his money back and the two of ya could fight for it. Sure would liven up my day.”

“I told you twice, my name’s Gaetano, not Guido.”

“Like I give a rat’s ass. Here’s your keys. Now get out of my office and take Blondie with ya.”

“You keep doin’ business like this, mister, and some day somebody with a shorter fuse than mine is gonna tear you a new one.” Chris backed down the steps and let the other man out. Flipping Montrose a double bird, he slammed the office door and had the satisfaction of hearing something crash to the floor.

“Don’t you think that was a little childish?”

Chris spun around to glare at the El Dorado’s new owner. “Look, I know none of this is your fault, but you’re not my favorite person in the world right now. How about you don’t talk to me.”

“Harsh, bro. I was gonna offer you a ride in my baby.”

“Get bent. And I mean that sincerely.”

“Ouch!” The dark-haired man clutched his muscular chest with both hands. “What a stinging retort! Come on; just talk to me and let’s see if we can’t work something out.”

“Why?”

“‘Cause I think it’d piss Montrose off.”

“I’ll give you thirteen hundred dollars for the car.”

“You don’t get it. I don’t want to sell the car. I love the car.”

“Then what?”

“Walk with me.”

Chris raised his eyebrows as they stopped beside his company van.  
“So what do you have in mind ... Guy...tanno was it?”

“Gaetano. You got the pronunciation pretty much right.”

“What kind of name is that?”

“It’s the name of a little town in Spain that someone in my family came from about a hundred years ago. That’s all I know. And you are?”

“Chris.”

“You paint cars, right, Chris?”

Chris glanced over his shoulder at the big sign on the side of the van.  
“How’d you guess?”

“All right, smart ass, I’ll get to the point. I’m a pretty fair body man and I’m a damn good mechanic. Are you any good with a sprayer?”

“I’m fuckin’ Rembrandt.”

“Excellent. Here’s my proposal. If we go in halves on the car, we’ll have enough money to get a start on fixin’ her up.”

“I don’t know. Buying a car with a friend is never a good idea.”

“We’re not friends.”

“True. Okay, I’m willing to try it for a while if you agree to sell me the car if you can’t hold up your end.”

“Why would I agree to that?”

“Why would you agree to anything?”

“Told you. Montrose is an asshole, and besides, I could really use the help restoring that baby. Come on; I can see how much you love her. What have you got to lose?”

“Plenty,” Chris said.

Gaetano grinned. “We’re goin’ halvesies on an American dream; don’t be such a realist.”

Chris sized up his new partner. Now that Gaetano wasn’t the guy depriving him of his heart’s desire, Chris realized the other man was a looker: dark hair and darker eyes, smooth olive skin, broad shoulders and arms with well-defined musculature, long strong legs and a smile like the crescent moon. Gaetano was, in fact, very attractive, with a little scar at the corner of his full lips that Chris found irresistibly kissable. The young painter sighed in exasperation at this turn of events. He wasn’t seeing anyone, but having a crush on a business partner was no good. It gave the other guy all the power.

“One of us has to be level-headed,” Chris said sharply. “It’s gonna take a lot a time and money to get that honey on the road and if we slack off, it might never happen. I don’t know about you, but I think it’d be a real shame if we let this car die. She belongs on the open road, blowin’ the doors off everything she passes, making everybody stop and stare. That’s what she deserves and I don’t want to let her down.”

“Whoa, all right, good to see your level of commitment matches mine. What do you want to do about getting her home?”

“Where’s home?”

“You got a garage?”

Chris shook his head, ragged blonde hair brushing his neck. “Just a carport.”

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“I live in my brother’s garage. I already asked him, and he said it was all right for me to work on a car there. We can use his tools as long as we don’t wreck anything.”

“Sweet,” Chris admitted. “How’d you get here?”

“Walked from the corner where the bus dropped me.”

“Then you drive the Caddie and I’ll follow you.”

“Just because the engine turns over doesn’t mean she’ll run.”

“Then I’ll tow you, but one way or the other, we’re not leavin’ her here for another minute.”

“That’s cool, bro. My thoughts exactly.”

Chris gave Gaetano a ride to the corner where the Caddie waited, marooned in a sea of weeds. The mechanic hopped out and unlocked the El Dorado’s door, giving Chris an unparalleled view of his backside. Chris did his best to ignore Gaetano’s butt, however it was as round and tasty as two apples under a napkin. Thoughts of what he could do with that ass stampeded through his mind in a swift series of mental images that made him shift in his seat. “What’s takin’ so long?” he yelled.

“Just savoring, bro,” Gaetano grinned as he turned the key in the ignition. The engine rumbled to life and kept running at a chugging lope. Both young men listened in reverent silence for a moment before they raised their heads and their eyes met in a moment of pure communion. Then Gaetano’s gaze dropped to the fuel gauge. “Of course it’s on empty.”

Chris nodded. “No way Montrose would give away gas. And this beauty’s gonna be a thirsty girl.”

“Go easy on her. When she rolled off the line, gas was cheap.”

“Neither of us was born yet when she was in the showroom,” Chris replied. “Hang on. I got a gas can in the back.”

After pouring five gallons in the Caddie's tank, Chris got back in the van and watched Gaetano ease the big car onto the pavement. The El Dorado farted loudly a few times leaving a hanging reek of fumes that had Chris leaping to roll up his window. He sure hoped Gaetano was telling the truth about being a good mechanic. At least the garage looked bona fide: a solid concrete block structure with four oil-stained bays and an array of tools on benches and overhead. Chris parked to the side and went in.

"Nice," he said. "Your brother do a good business?"

"It's not really a business," Gaetano said, as he got out of the car. "Lonzo likes to go fast and so do his friends. He's got a legit place over on Dakota, but this is his playpen."

"And you live here?"

"It's not much, a kitchenette, a bathroom and a place to sleep, but it's enough for me right now. Not like I have a wife and kids to worry about."

"Yeah, me either. I'm free as a bird, which is actually good, since I can spend all my time workin' on the car without distractions."

"Perfect. When do you want to get started?"

"Anything wrong with right now?"

Gaetano flashed his white grin again. "Not a thing in the world."

They set to work, in silence for the most part, though occasionally it became necessary to ask for a particular tool, or a third hand. The spark plugs were cleaned, re-gapped and replaced, the air filter blown clean, the carburetor soaked and cleaned, and a myriad other small things, mainly involving cleaning, that would improve the neglected engine's performance before they ever bought a thing. A couple of hours later, everything was back where it belonged and Gaetano handed the keys to Chris.

"Go ahead and crank her up," he said, slapping Chris on the shoulder.



Chris sank into the driver's seat, ignoring the smell of mildew as he put a hand lightly on the steering wheel. Caressing the generous curve, he let his hand slide down to the ignition. Grasping the key, he turned it to the right. There was a definite improvement in the sound of the engine and Chris let it wash over him like the subtle vibration that was making his dick hard.

"Oh, man!" Gaetano said. "Doesn't that shit make your dick hard?"

Chris drew breath to agree, but he was pre-empted by the loud arrival of a tricked out compact car trembling with each blast of bass from the speakers in the trunk. Two men with skin a darker shade of olive than Gaetano's got out of the street racer and the music stopped abruptly. With the swaying stride of predators, the pair walked over to the rusty Caddie. Halfway there, they started to chuckle.

"Oh no, baby bro," the taller one said. "This is a garage, not a junkyard."

"I know you're joking, Lonzo," Gaetano said. "You wouldn't diss my ride."

"Course not, wouldn't be polite." Lonzo's words ended in a snicker. "Why don't we ask Sonny what he thinks of your fine automobile?"

Lonzo's beefy companion looked left and right and shrugged. "I don't see no automobile."

"Yeah, you're very funny guys," Gaetano said. "How about not embarrassing me in front of my friend?"

"Friend ... or boyfriend?" Lonzo raised his eyebrows until they almost disappeared under his bandanna.

The spit in Chris's mouth dried up instantly and he felt the cold rush of adrenalin. He had a mental picture of the tools on the bench behind him and wondered if he'd have the guts to pick one up and use it. His sexuality had always been carefully hidden, and he'd never had to defend himself over it, but he knew he didn't live in a vacuum. Intolerance was

everywhere, in some form or another and one day it might do more than brush shoulders with him.

“Why? Are you looking to dump Sonny for fresh meat?” Gaetano countered and the horrible moment ended as the newcomers chuckled.

“Just curious,” Lonzo said. “He’s kind of cute like that actor with the big nose. What’s his name, Sonny? You know it. We saw that movie with him a couple of nights ago ’cause Nita rented it.”

“I don’t pay no attention to that shit, bro,” Sonny said. “I think Gae’s rubbing off on you and you’re turning queer, too.”

“I swear to the Madonna, if I didn’t love you, I’d cut your balls off, man.” Lonzo smacked the back of Sonny’s shaven head.

“Only so you could wear ’em for earrings,” Sonny retorted.

“Are you guys gonna hang around and waste our time all night?” Gaetano asked. “Me and Chris got a lot of work to do.”

“In my own place he asks me this.” Lonzo looked to Sonny to witness the audacity.

“Well, he does got a lot a work to do,” Sonny said.

“Anyway, I thought you said you weren’t gonna be here tonight,” Gaetano said. “Didn’t you say some strippers invited you to a party?”

“Yeah, for sure, man, but it’s way the fuck out in the canyon, you know? Not sure the pussy’s worth the drive and the gas.”

“I told you,” Sonny said. “You’re turnin’ queer.”

This time, Chris joined in the laughter. There was a little conversation about the Cadillac and then Lonzo and Sonny left.

“So, you’re gay?” Chris asked as soon as the engine noise had faded.

“Yeah, aren’t you?”

Chris hesitated long enough for Gaetano to speak again.

“Hey, it ain’t no thang if you don’t want to tell me. I’ll drop it.”

“Well, seems like you already know, so why say it?”

“Works for me. What color should we paint her? Red?”

“Of course, the brightest pull-me-over red we can find.”

Gaetano held up his hand for a high-five and Chris slapped his palm.

They worked on the car most nights and complained bitterly about time spent elsewhere. Sometimes Lonzo and his crew were there, sometimes not, but Chris got used to their noise and their flash and the occasional beer or pizza slice they offered was always welcome. Many times, Gaetano simply heated a can of chili and crushed a bag of tortilla chips on top. The food didn’t matter; they just wanted to eat and get back to the Caddie. After a couple of weeks, her engine was in tip-top shape and she was looking pretty good, all her dents hammered out and her rust spots sanded and filled. Chris and Gaetano made a good team. Their strengths were complementary, but Chris wasn’t sure how much longer he could endure the sight of his partner’s sculpted butt when Gaetano was under the hood.

“I’d say she’s ready for a coat,” Gaetano said as he stood back from the massive machine.

Chris nodded, trying not to let on how Gaetano’s arm around his neck was affecting him. “We can build a booth out back. I know where we can get some scrap lumber and a few rolls of plastic won’t cost that much. I can borrow the equipment from work as long as I have it back in the mornin’. Our biggest expense is gonna be the paint itself.”

“Don’t you get some kind of employee discount?”

“Dude, I’m lucky if I get paid on time.”

“Then why do you work there?”

“I have flexible hours. Before I saw this beauty, I did a lot of surfin’.”

“That explains it.”

“Explains what?”

Gaetano took a step away from the other man, his lips curling in a mischievous smile. “You know, the way you dress, and that mop you call hair.”

Chris looked down at his Hurley t-shirt and baggy shorts. “Looks pretty normal to me.”

“You got no style, bro. Do you even comb your hair?”

“Hey, it’s a look.”

“If you say so, but you’re not a surfer boy anymore.”

“Yeah? Then what am I?”

“A hot rodder ... and a hot rodder can’t be dressing so lame.”

“How nice a you to say so; fuck you very much.”

Gaetano held up his hands. “Just trying to help a brother out. You’re a hottie just the way you are.”

Chris rolled his eyes, hoping the warmth he felt in his cheeks wasn’t visible as a blush. “That would probably mean a lot to me if you had any taste.”

“Damn! Why you have to be so harsh?”

“I was just rippin’ on ya. Guys I hung with at the beach were a pretty competitive bunch.” Chris paused. “Don’t worry about the paint, okay? I’ll take care of it.”

“All right, cool. Lonzo knows an upholstery guy. I think he’ll be too rich for our blood, but won’t hurt to talk to him.”

“It’s gotta be red and white to match the exterior.”

“Duh. Hey, you want to sit in it?”

Chris nodded. This had become the ritual at the end of the night. They took turns sitting in the driver’s seat, pretending they were coasting down the open road. Tonight it was Chris’s turn and he slid behind the wheel to settle on the temporary seat cover. He gripped the wheel at ten and two and stared through the windshield at an endless highway that split the night. Gaetano climbed in on the passenger side and glanced over at Chris.

“Man, just picture us cruising the boulevard,” he said.

Chris smiled. “All the way to the ocean.”

“All the way,” Gaetano echoed.

“We done for the night?”

“I guess.”

“I gotta be up early tomorrow, so I’m gonna take off.”

“Sure, bro. I’ll tap Lonzo and a couple more guys and we’ll get that booth built.”

“Sounds good. I’ll pick up the lumber and plastic on my way over.” Chris got out and walked to his van. “Good night,” he called over his shoulder, adjusting his hard-on as soon as his back was to Gaetano. “Hasta mañana, amigo.”

“Damn skippy, dude,” Gaetano said in his best whitebread impression. He watched the van’s taillights until they disappeared, wondering if he should come on a little stronger with Chris. After a month of working closely together, Gaetano still couldn’t read the other man. There were times when Chris’s aloofness seemed sweetly shy and times when it looked like nothing more complicated than lack of interest. Gaetano didn’t want to sink the boat by moving too quickly, but it got harder and harder to be so near Chris without doing something about it.

It was on a Sunday that Chris decreed the masking tape and paper could be removed from the newly painted Caddie's glass and chrome. He'd showed up Friday night with a big cardboard box of paint cans in the cargo bay of the van and started spraying on Saturday morning. Gaetano found endless ways to make fun of Chris's jumpsuit and protective mask, but he was very impressed with his partner's skill. When the clear coat was dry, the El Dorado looked like it had been built the day before. After Chris and Gaetano finally finished polishing her around three on Monday morning, she was shining like a diamond.

"Damn," Gaetano breathed, running a hand down the silky front fender. "Ain't she fine?"

"Too cool for school," Chris said solemnly. "I believe it's your turn to drive."

Gaetano opened the car door carefully and slid into the driver's seat. Chris got in the other side and they sat there for a few minutes just soaking up the wonderful feeling that comes from accomplishment. They were both tired and Chris was due at work at eight-thirty, but neither was willing to break the spell. They just sat in companionable silence and enjoyed what they'd created together until Gaetano finally spoke.

"All that's left is the upholstery."

Chris nodded. "Yeah, but that won't stop us from taking this beauty for a test voyage."

"No, but it sure will make it nicer to do stuff like this." Carried away by the mood, Gaetano disregarded his fears and leaned toward Chris. He had a close-up view of Chris's baffled eyes and then his lips were brushing Chris's in the lightest of kisses. When there was no protest, Gaetano increased the pressure and put a hand on the back of Chris's neck. Gently, he pulled the other man closer as the kiss heated up.

Chris opened his mouth, inviting Gaetano deeper as he let his tongue out to play. Thrusting and withdrawing, sliding wetly together, tongues gave preview of the talents of lower organs as the two young men wrapped arms around one another in an embrace that surprised both in its

fierce intensity. Chris settled back against the passenger door as Gaetano got his right knee on the seat in a bid for greater physical proximity. Neither said a word as hands began exploring, roaming contours and planes that yielded excitingly under gripping fingers. Kisses went astray, as they twisted and twined on a surface that had seen action before.

“Damn,” Gaetano whispered again as he shoved Chris’s Volcom t-shirt up to his armpits.

Chris never peeled his shirt off when working, but Gaetano couldn’t see why he’d be shy. The surfer boy’s chest was hard and well developed, nearly hairless except for sparse haloes around his sweet pink nipples. Gaetano’s mouth watered as he lowered his head and drew one of the nubs between his teeth. Chris made a small choked noise and then a moan drifted out between his parted lips. Gaetano’s dick got a little harder and he worked his knee between Chris’s thighs, seeking contact, needing to rub against something in the worst way. Grabbing Chris by the hips, Gaetano held him in place until he could align their crotches. Chris looked up at Gaetano, blue eyes as hot and bright as gas flames, melting all restraint, and Gaetano dove on him.

Arching and thrusting, Chris and Gaetano strove to chafe away the denim and nylon that were the only barriers between their yearning cocks. As they ground against each other, Gaetano returned his attention to Chris’s sensitive nipples, wringing groans and gasps of pleasure from his partner that ratcheted his own excitement up by several notches. He was unaware that he was whispering broken endearments and abbreviated pleas and demands as he used lips, tongue, teeth and fingers to bring Chris to a state of near delirious excitement. Just seeing the laid-back surfer lose control at his touch affected Gaetano powerfully and his thrusts became more insistent.

“Hang on,” Chris said breathlessly as he tried to reach Gaetano’s fly.

Gaetano obligingly raised up, and Chris unzipped his black jeans. Pulling Gaetano’s rock hard length through the gap, Chris wrapped his hand around it and shifted into overdrive. Gaetano maneuvered his arm from behind Chris’s back and slid his hand up one leg of Chris’s board shorts. He encountered the slippery fabric of the sewn in swim briefs and

knew a moment of sheer frustration before he grabbed Chris's cock and started stroking. Though he was denied the thrill of Chris's bare dick, Gaetano enjoyed the feel of the synthetic material sliding silkily up and down the rigid shaft. From the noises Chris made, it sounded like he was enjoying it too.

"Oh fuck, baby," Gaetano chanted feverishly. "Oh fuck, yeah. Come on, baby. Come on. Just like that. Yeah. Oh, yeah. Fuck yeah! Come on, baby. Come with me. Come on. Come on."

Chris's teeth dug into his bottom lip as he felt his climax coil tight, on the verge of breaking the sweet tension that had grown almost unbearable. He increased the speed of his stroke, thumbing the head of Gaetano's cock on each pass, slicking the velvet pole with the fluid that oozed from the tip. Gaetano groaned deep in his chest and Chris felt the resilient steel in his hand pulse a signal. The only sounds in the El Dorado were moist gasps for air and the subtle rasp of cloth on cloth as the pair strained toward release. Chris crossed the line first, squirting a spreading warmth in his shorts and Gaetano's fist. Helpless in the grip of pervasive bliss, Chris shuddered against the bench, fingers jitterbugging on Gaetano's aching arousal.

"Fuck, baby, you're makin' me cum," Gaetano panted as his orgasm broke over him, spilling across Chris's knuckles to drip onto Chris's trembling belly. He pumped his hips a few more times, sliding his spurting rod in the slick socket of Chris's fist, stretching the climax out, eyes squeezed shut in ecstasy. "Shit, that was good," he purred as he gathered Chris in his arms.

Chris took Gaetano's weight as his partner settled against him and the afterglow stole through his veins, making him disinclined to move. Gaetano nuzzled Chris's neck and shoulders, kissing and licking, until he made his way to Chris's face. Covering Chris's lips with his, Gaetano took possession of the other man's mouth in a long, lazy caress that evoked an echo of their recent climax.

"I can't do this again right now," Chris said when he had the use of his tongue once more.



“Am I getting you hot?”

“Like a leaky radiator, but I gotta be to work in a few hours.”

“Yeah, sure.” Gaetano stirred, levering himself off Chris.

“Hang on a second. I don’t want you to think this didn’t mean anything to me. I’m not a ‘wham, bam, thank you, man’ kind a guy. It’s hard for me to talk about this stuff, but that doesn’t mean I don’t have feelings. I wouldn’t have done this with you if I didn’t like you.”

Gaetano gave Chris a dubious look.

Chris rolled his eyes. “Okay, I’ve had a couple of one night stands, more like five minutes stands, if you know what I mean?”

“Fraid so, chico.” Gaetano shrugged. “Guess we’ve all been there, huh? In the alley beside the club. In the back seat of a stranger’s car. On the dance floor.”

“On the dance floor?”

Gaetano smiled. “I’ll tell you all about it later.” Pulling Chris up into a hug, he brought their lips together again.

Chris responded warmly, but pushed Gaetano away after a few seconds. “Seriously. I gotta go.”

“I feel like we ought to talk about this or something. It feels ... I don’t know ... important or something.”

“Yeah, I know.” Chris kissed Gaetano and got out of the car. “But we can talk about it when I come back tonight.”

“You’ll be over right after work?”

“I’ll be here at five oh five. You can time me.”

Gaetano grinned at Chris over the El Dorado’s roof. “Don’t worry; I will.”

Chris came around the hood, holding the front of his shorts away from his crotch. “How come I get stuck with the wet spot?”

Gaetano’s grin got bigger as a chuckle bubbled out of his throat. “I like you when you loosen up.”

Automatically, Chris gave him the bird. “Damn, she’s gorgeous,” he said.

Gaetano turned his gaze to the gleaming Cadillac. “No doubt. We did good, bro. Listen, don’t forget to bring the bill for that paint so I can give you half.”

“Don’t worry about it.”

“Don’t be stupid. That shit costs a lot.”

“Not as much as you might think if you get creative.”

Gaetano’s high spirits stopped soaring and went into a holding pattern. “Creative?”

“Hell, my boss owes me so much money...”

“Stop,” Gaetano interrupted. “Tell me you didn’t steal that paint.”

“Of course I didn’t steal it.” Chris paused. “They owe it to me.”

“Did you tell anyone you were taking it?”

“Why?”

“Because if you didn’t, then you stole it.”

“Quit sayin’ that. I’m not a thief.”

“Do you help yourself to things a lot?”

“Only when...”

“Stop,” Gaetano interrupted again. “Shit, I can’t believe this shit. Why?”

“What the hell’s the matter with you, man?”

“There isn’t enough time in the world to explain, but the short version is that my cousin Matteo was a thief and he went to prison and the stories he told me when I was kid made an impression. I never took a thing that wasn’t mine since that day and I can’t have that kind of shit going on around me.”

“Are you fuckin’ with me?”

Gaetano held out the keys to the Caddie. “Take ‘em,” he said. “I don’t want any part of this car now.”

Chris’s jaw dropped. “Have you gone crazy? It’s just a few cans of paint.”

Muscles bunched along Gaetano’s jaw line. With an abrupt gesture, he tossed the keys to Chris. Chris caught them out of reflex; his eyes never left the other man’s stony face.

“Why are you doing this?” Chris asked. “We just... We were... Fuck!” With the expletive ringing in the air, Chris threw down the keys, turned and went to the van. He looked back once before putting the vehicle into drive, but Gaetano’s back was to him. Laying rubber in reverse, he backed into the street and sped away. It was only the low-lying rays of the rising sun that made his eyes water.

Chris slept through his alarm and didn’t wake until ten-thirty. His eyeballs hurt from the lids scratching across them and he got up to close the blinds. Glancing out the window, he froze with the cord in his hand. The El Dorado was parked at the curb, every curved surface twinkling in the sun. Jarred out of his haze, he peeled off the clothes he’d fallen asleep in and donned a fresh shirt and shorts. He walked down the sidewalk of his tiny bungalow hoping the big car would prove to be a mirage, that last night would turn out to be a terrible dream, that it was Sunday morning and he could do the day over. His heart sank as he reached in the open window and touched the keys in the ignition. They confirmed all his doubts about himself. No matter what he did, he was never quite good enough to be loved.

Chris's boss stopped calling on his third unofficial day off when Chris called him a dick-licking, baboon-brained ass-wiper. It was around the same time that Chris exhausted the in-house supply of booze that his boss sent someone to pick up the van. Faced with walking seven miles or driving the Caddie, Chris shuffled through the pizza boxes and dirty clothes until he found the keys where he'd flung them. With none of the joy he'd once anticipated in the event, Chris got behind the El Dorado's wheel and closed the door. It was just a car, a way to get from here to there; all its magic had been leached away. He was only twenty-four, less than half the El Dorado's age, and he felt so worn out that he didn't know why he kept going. Every time he reached for a dream, he ruined it.

"When will I fuckin' learn?" he muttered as he pulled away from the curb.

He heard sirens as he turned onto Anderson and saw the police cruisers blocking the street in front of the liquor store. Deducing that Mehmet had been robbed again, Chris resignedly made a three point turn and headed west. There was a larger package store he'd patronized a few times when he was on the way home from the beach. It had been a while, but places that sold booze rarely went out of business or moved location.

The store was still there, but Chris was surprised at the number of cars in the lot on a Wednesday evening. As he eased the El Dorado over the crumbling concrete of the entrance, he noticed quite a few people standing around the vehicles and figured the place had become a gear-head hangout. Cocking the wheel to the right, he made a detour for the drive-through window. As he pulled around the other end of the building with his purchases, a man stepped off the curb in front of him. He hit the brakes in time to avoid an accident, but the squeal of the tires drew attention to him.

"Man, that's a fine piece of machinery," commented a bystander.

"Yeah, you got a nice car there, asshole," said the man who'd stepped out in front of Chris.

Chris's head whipped around to the open passenger window. "Thanks," he said.

“What the hell are you doin’ here, man?”

“Look, I get it. This place is locals only. Move away from the car and you’ll never see me again.”

“You a faggot?” someone said in Chris’s left ear. “You look like a faggot with all that long hair.”

Chris swallowed hard and prepared to hit the gas when two more men moved to stand at his bumper. “Hey, come on, guys. I’m not hurtin’ anything by bein’ here.”

“Faggot like you don’t deserve a car so fine.”

“That’s right,” said the man at the passenger window. “Gimme your keys and I’ll let you walk out of here.”

“You’re stealing my car?” Chris blurted incredulously.

“You calling me a thief, asshole?”

“No. Of course not. That would be stupid when you have so many friends.”

“Just get out of the fucking car, asshole. You don’t deserve it.”

Chris was reaching for the door handle when a flashy little car came to a sudden stop behind him.

“Hey!” a woman called out. “What are you doin’ with Gaetano’s car?”

The threatening men drew back from the El Dorado as the woman and the male driver of the compact car approached. “Hey, Chooch,” the man at the Caddie’s passenger window said, his demeanor undergoing a rapid change. “What’s up, homes?”

“I ain’t your home-boy, Ignacio,” the driver said. “Angela asked you a question. What’re you doing with Gaetano Escavara’s car?”

“This is Lonzo’s brother’s car?” The men moved farther away from the Cadillac. “Why is this guy driving around in it?”

“He’s Gaetano’s chauffeur, dumbass,” Angela said. “Don’t you all have jobs or something?”

In a few seconds, the area of the parking lot around the El Dorado was clear. Chris took a shaky breath as a woman he remembered seeing once at the garage stopped beside his window. “Thanks,” he said.

“You’re Chris, right?” she asked.

“Um ... yeah.”

Angela’s eyes followed her man as he went back to his car. “I only got a minute, so listen up, okay?”

Chris nodded. “Thanks again.”

“Chooch don’t like gays, but I convinced him he ought to do something or look like a wimp. Reason I did that is because Gae and me were good friends in school, you dig?”

Chris nodded again.

“I don’t know what happened with you two,” she said. “All I know is he was happy when you were there and he’s not happy with you gone. If you want to get back with him, I think you ought to go see him.”

“He doesn’t want me back.”

“That’s bullshit. He wants you plenty or he wouldn’t be so fucked up over you leaving.”

“I didn’t leave; don’t you get it? He kicked me out.”

“I guarantee you he’s sorry, but if you don’t even want to try, I got nothin’ more to say.”

Chris watched the warble of her well-packed Spandex butt as she walked away. The man behind the wheel blew his horn and Chris

remembered he was blocking the drive. He took his foot off the brake and pulled out of the lot, reaching for the bottle of tequila as he merged with the sparse traffic. His hands were shaking too badly to get the cap off while he was driving so he pulled over at the first opportunity. His heart was still pounding from his narrow escape, but the fear was overshadowed by Angela's words. What if she was telling the truth?

"Cut it out," he muttered, banging a fist on the steering wheel. "Why do I do this to myself?" Two minutes later, he dashed the tears from his eyes with his sleeve and tossed the bottle into the back seat. He'd probably get his ass kicked again, but fighting for Gaetano was worth it. Putting his foot down on the gas, he sped along the familiar route to Lonzo's garage. As he pulled around to the side, his headlights splashed across the big doors that were rolled down and locked. The security light came on as he got out of the car, casting his shadow on the wall as he went to the door of Gaetano's apartment. Not expecting an answer, he pounded on the metal panel.

"I told you Lonzo's not here," Gaetano shouted as he flung open the door.

"I'm not lookin' for Lonzo."

Gaetano stared over Chris's shoulder for a long time before he spoke again. "I see you been taking care of the queen."

"It's only been three days."

Gaetano started to close the door, but Chris stopped him.

"Can we talk?"

"Apparently." Gaetano sighed. "Come on in, trouble."

Chris stood awkwardly in the small living space until Gaetano gestured him to sit. Dropping into the bucket seat that passed for furniture, Chris waited until the other man sat down on the bed before he said anything.

"Hope this isn't a bad time."

“If it was, I wouldn’t’ve let you in.”

Chris winced at the lack of give in Gaetano’s voice. “Look, I fucked up; I know that. I just need to know if there’s any chance it’s fixable.”

“I don’t know,” Gaetano said. “When I look at you, I want to say yes, but I don’t want to get hurt.”

“I don’t want a hurt you.”

“Maybe, but taking things gets to be a habit. I know you don’t see the harm in it, but if you get caught and go to jail, I don’t think I could stand it.”

“I promise I’ll never steal anything ever again.”

“How can I be sure of that?”

“How can anybody be sure of anything?” Chris paused. “Sorry, I wasn’t trying to be funny, but all you can do is put your faith in me and trust that I care enough about you to keep my promise.”

“Well ... you cared enough to come here and talk to me. That’s a good start.”

Chris got out of his seat not knowing what he was going to do, only that he had to do something. He went to his knees in front of Gaetano and put his arms around Gaetano’s waist. “Please give me a chance to prove myself,” he said.

Gaetano put a hand on Chris’s head and stroked the pale silky hair. “Those eyes are a pretty convincing argument,” he said softly.

Chris pushed his luck. “And don’t forget we have a car together. You’re not sticking me with sole custody. Be fair.”

“That’s funny. Be glad I’m in the mood to be cheered up.”

“I am, and if that cheered you up, you’re going to be hysterical over this.”



Gaetano grabbed Chris by the ears as Chris made a dive for his cock. Taking Chris's face between his hands, Gaetano leaned in and kissed him tenderly. "I really want this to work," he said.

"Then we'll make it work, just like the El Dorado. We just gotta want it bad enough."

"I do." Gaetano's dark gaze smoldered as he met Chris's eyes. "Think this bed's big enough for both of us?"

"If we're stacked just right."

"Maybe we ought to work on that."

"Anything wrong with right now?"

"Not a thing in the world."

Chris sat back on his heels. "I'd really like to see you naked," he said.

"I could use a hand," Gaetano smirked as he finished unbuttoning his shirt.

"Stand up."

Gaetano rose to his feet, peeling his shirt down his arms, his eyes locked on Chris's. Chris knelt and unfastened Gaetano's jeans, pushing his hands under the denim, shoving it downward as he grabbed a double handful of firm ass. Gaetano groaned as Chris rubbed a lightly stubbled cheek against the underside of his hard-on, following the nuzzling with a series of little sucking kisses.

"I will never wear skivvies again," Gaetano vowed as Chris pushed his trousers farther down.

"Works for me." Chris kneaded Gaetano's resilient butt cheeks as he moved the attention of his mouth southward. Sucking the heavy hanging balls into his mouth one at a time, Chris tantalized Gaetano with the exquisite sensation, ignoring the other man's rapidly stiffening cock.

“You’re driving me crazy, baby,” Gaetano groaned. “You gonna touch my dick or what?”

Chris chuckled as he left off tonguing the velvety sack. “Foreplay is more than just a word.”

“I missed you, all right? Practically all I could think about was how it felt to be next to you.”

“Yeah, me too. I was fuckin’ pathetic without you.”

“Come here.” Gaetano pulled Chris to his feet and into a hug.

The two young men swayed together for a minute before Chris leaned back far enough to find Gaetano’s mouth with his. As the kiss went on, Gaetano dropped backward onto the narrow bed, taking Chris with him. Chris’s shorts slid easily down his slim hips, allowing him to slide his hard length against Gaetano’s. Taking both arousals in his hand, Chris propped himself on an elbow to look downward.

“Nice bush and a really sweet cock. Thank you, God.”

“Glad you like it. Now how about giving it the feel of approval?”

Chris began to pulse his hips, working his shaft against Gaetano’s in the ring of his fist. Dipping his head, he kissed Gaetano’s eyelids, his cheekbones, his chin and the tip of his nose before returning to his lips. Gaetano lifted his butt, matching Chris’s rhythm, sucking Chris’s tongue to the same beat. Chris broke the kiss to slide down Gaetano’s body and take the head of Gaetano’s cock in his mouth. His hands crept up the cobbled abs, over the smooth pecs and stopped at the coffee bean nipples. Gaetano moaned and writhed, pushing his arousal deeper into Chris’s mouth as the surfer rolled the hard buds between his fingers. The tidal taste of pre-cum warned Chris and he flicked his gaze up to Gaetano’s face just as his partner began to slide off the thin mattress. Letting the hard length slip from between his lips, Chris kept them both on the bed by bracing one foot on the floor.

“My place next time,” he muttered.

“Whatever. Get up here and let me get down for a while.”

Chris moved up until his knees were on either side of Gaetano’s chest and lowered himself carefully. Gaetano wrapped his arms around Chris’s lean thighs and pulled him closer. Lifting his head, Gaetano ran his tongue along Chris’s crack from back to front before licking his way over and around Chris’s tight balls to the base of Chris’s shaft. Taking the upstanding rod in his first, Gaetano stroked it firmly from root to tip as he let his tongue wander back along the moist cleft. Chris’s inner thighs trembled and his legs went weak as Gaetano’s tongue found his lower entrance and circled it a few times before darting inside. Quivering with the need for release, he leaned farther back and took hold of Gaetano’s cock. Gaetano made a muffled noise and pushed his tongue deeper into Chris, shuttling his hand faster on Chris’s dick.

“Oh fuck,” the words exploded from Chris’s mouth on a puff of air. “Fuck that feels amazing. You’re gonna make me cum any second.”

Gaetano slowed his stroke and moved until he could see Chris’s face. “I’d really like fuck you, bro, but I got no lube. You think you could get off with me dry-humping you?”

“Switch places.”

Gaetano lost no time flipping Chris onto his back and moving between his thighs. Working up as much saliva as he could, Gaetano spit in his palm and rubbed it on his dick. Chris rested a calf on one of Gaetano’s shoulders as the other man slotted his hard shaft into Chris’s spit shiny crack. Taking hold of Chris’s lolling length, Gaetano stroked it while he thrust, sliding his aching cock up and down Chris’s cleft, his balls and the base of his arousal.

“Fuck, this is so good,” Gaetano panted. “You like this?”

“I like it, but I really wish you had some lube.”

“Forget it, whitebread. First time we do it is when we christen the Caddie.”

“Oh, shit, I’m cumming! I can’t hold it!”

“Damn, you look so beautiful when you cum,” Gaetano said as Chris fountained a stream of glistening seed that dappled his chest in gleaming spatters. Collecting the viscous liquid, Gaetano smeared it on the head of his cock, mixing it with the cloudy fluid that oozed out. He leaned forward to rest some of his weight on his hand, bending Chris’s leg almost double. Gripping his hard-on firmly, Gaetano nudged at Chris’s lower opening. “Can I? Just a little?”

Sated and loose-limbed, Chris nodded. He trusted Gaetano to go easy and stayed relaxed as his partner leaned forward. The blunt head of Gaetano’s straining cock pressed against the elastic opening and popped through. Chris reacted out of reflex and Gaetano groaned in ecstasy as his shaft was squeezed hard just behind the tip.

“I don’t care if I ever go the heaven. It can’t be no better than this,” Gaetano said as he eased in another inch.

Gaetano pushed a little harder, sheathing half his length before pulling back out. Chris let out a long hissing breath between his teeth and braced himself for the next thrust. Instead of going deeper, Gaetano held on to his arousal and shunted the first couple of inches in and out of the clenching socket, his eyes glued to the spot where he entered Chris. Chris began to squirm as the flanged tip bumped across a slight swelling in front of his sheath and he clamped down on the thick rod in an instinctive ploy to increase his pleasure.

“God damn, that feels good!” Gaetano cried out. “Too good!”

Bending over Chris, Gaetano sank his full length into the other man as he took his mouth in a kiss that didn’t end until the last of his load dribbled forth. Chris wrapped his arms around Gaetano’s back, holding him tightly as Gaetano’s seed unfurled, making them a part of each other. When their lips finally parted, Gaetano let out a laugh of pure joy.

“I can’t wait to do that again,” he said, brushing Chris’s damp hair out of his face.

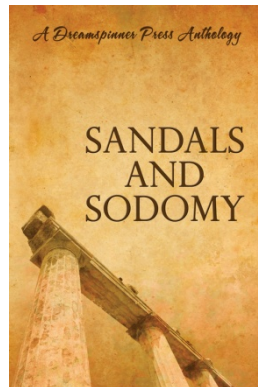
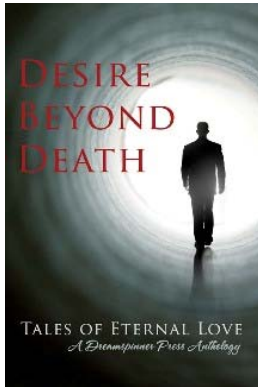
“Okay, but right now, I think it’s time you had a ride in the El Dorado.”

“Oh hell yeah!” Gaetano bounced up, forsaking the pleasures of a post orgasmic cuddle for those of the slipstream, acceleration, and the company of a soul mate.

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AND that’s how my friends Chris and Gaetano met, over an American dream quietly rusting by the side of the road. They just had like their tenth anniversary, even though they’ve only been legally married for like two years or somethin’. I don’t know how you feel about all that gay stuff, but Chris and Gaetano are righteous dudes and I figure if that’s true, then maybe bein’ gay ain’t no better or worse than bein’ straight, just different, you know? If they can see past my juvie car thief record and believe I’ve changed enough to give me a job in their garage, then I guess I can try not to think about what they do between the sheets. That’s their business anyway, and I sure ain’t God to be makin’ no judgments.

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Available in paperback and eBook formats at

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

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Cover Design by Mara McKennen

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Released in the United States of America  
September, 2008

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