

A Sip...



A Torquere Press Short

***The Starlight
By Vic Winter***

“Come on, Danny. You haven’t been out in a hundred years!”

Dan tossed the Nerf ball at the garbage can, fist pumping in the air as it landed. Two points. Go him. “I think that’s a bit of an exaggeration, Billy,” he said into the phone.

“Not by much, girlfriend! No one knows your usual anymore – all the cute waiter boys have changed over, the bartenders are all different. Hell, even the décor’s changed.”

“Bullshit – the Starlight hasn’t changed in fifty years, and *that* is no exaggeration.” Death, taxes and the god-awful, gaudy décor at the Starlight. Three constants in life, and Dan Bowman was well-acquainted with all three.

“You’ll just have to come and see for yourself,” coaxed Billy.

“I’m not in the mood.” And he wasn’t trying to just fob Billy off, he really wasn’t.

“It’s been over a year.” The words were quietly spoken.

“One year, two months and three days.” It still felt like yesterday sometimes, too. Not as often as it used to, but every now and then it would sucker-punch him. One minute he’d be fine, the next he’d feel just like he had that day he’d opened the door to two cops. They were Ben’s co-workers, his friends, standing there, eyes wet as they told Dan that Ben had been shot on the job. Killed instantly, Ben hadn’t suffered.

“You are not still keeping track!” Billy’s scandalized voice cut through the memories and Dan sighed.

“Just... not tonight, okay, Billy?”

“When then? You never come out with us anymore! It’s like we lost both of you when Ben died. It’s like you died that night, too, Dan.”

“Billy... I.” He what? Wished he *had* died, too? Yeah, he had his moments. But he wasn’t dead and, with time, that had become okay. “I wouldn’t be any fun to have around.”

“No one cares if you’re the life of the party or not – we just want to see you, honey.”

Dan pursed his lips and moved the mouse, randomly clicking links, counting how many it took before he hit porn. Four, but it was boring girl-on-guy porn and possibly didn’t count.

“Danny? Dan, are you still there?” Billy’s voice brought him out of his idle reverie.

“Yeah. Yeah, I am.”

“Are you going to come?” Billy’s voice was moving from needling to whining.

Dan looked at the naked bodies on his computer screen and shook his head at himself – he was staying home for this?

“Yeah, all right.”

“What?”

Dan chuckled at Billy's surprise. "I said all right."

"You're coming? I don't believe it! Are you sure? I mean--"

"Shut up, Billy, before I change my mind."

"Okay. Okay. Zipping my lips and locking them. Throwing away the key. Okay. God, the guys aren't going to believe it. Just wait 'til I tell them. You'll hear the squeal there, I'm sure! We're meeting at the usual table. You do remember which one that is, right? We haven't changed tables, so it's still--"

He cut Billy off. "I remember. And for a man with zipped and locked lips you're making an awful lot of noise."

"Oh, you big silly." Billy laughed, sounding genuinely happy. "Wear something sexy, darling."

"I'm wearing my jeans and a T-shirt." He was going to meet his friends for some drinks and *maybe* a bit of dancing. He was not cruising.

"Danny..." He could hear Billy's pout. "You look so hot in your manskirt..."

"My jeans, Billy. And a T-shirt." He started shutting down his computer.

Billy sighed dramatically. "I guess as long as you're coming, you can wear what you want."

"Thank you," he murmured dryly.

The décor at the Starlight hadn't changed. It was still a gaudy, spastic mix of glitter and Cleopatra, and it made Dan grin. So maybe coming out tonight hadn't been such a bad idea after all.

He'd compromised for Billy, wearing black jeans that hugged his legs, and a grey T-shirt that used to be tight as well, but he'd lost some weight over the last year or so. His black hair was pulled back into a ponytail that hung down between his shoulder blades. He'd almost left it down and put on eyeliner, but he wasn't really ready for that yet, for putting himself out there like that. The dark lines around his eyes made his blue eyes bluer, gave him a come-and-blow-me look that he wasn't ready to deal with yet. Mind you, his prick begged to differ, tired of over a year of nothing but his own hand and obviously working on some sense memory of the Starlight. Maybe it was the King Tut heads behind the bar; maybe it was the music.

The big disco ball hanging over the middle of the dance floor reflected the light back in a million directions, and the techno pop booming out of the speakers vibrated the floor. It definitely had associations of sex. Either pick-ups or knowing he was going home with Ben...

Dan went to the bar first, to get a drink. A little liquid courage to keep him from bolting at the smallest memory. Billy was right about one thing – he didn't recognize any of the bartenders, or the waiters coming and going with drink orders.

The young, shirtless blond behind the bar, who couldn't possibly be more than just barely legal to serve alcohol – and he missed having someone to make the snarky remark to – leaned over the bar and Danny met him halfway.

"Tequila Sunrise," he shouted. A wussy drink, Ben had called it. Dan's favorite. And he'd never cared if anyone thought it was a wussy drink, though it had always made him blush, the way Ben used to tease him about it.

"You got it, man."

He watched the shirtless bartender mixing his drink. The guy had nice abs and a cute grin and he was working the flirting angle. Dan tipped generously and took his drink, heading to the back corner where some trick of the acoustics dulled the noise a little, affording anyone sitting at one of the half dozen tables there a chance to actually hear each other speak.

A cheer went up from the two last tables as soon as he was spotted, and he almost stopped in his tracks. Christ, how many people had Billy dragged along? It looked like the whole gang was there.

A couple of them were dressed for cruising, but most were wearing jeans like him with nice shirts and they all looked happy to see him. He tried not to feel like a display at the zoo; these were his friends and they cared about him.

They pushed him down next to Andy, whose afro was giving him seventies flashbacks, and several conversations started up again amid calls of, "Yo, Danny", and "Good to see you, man," and "How the hell are you?"

Billy squeezed in next to him. Short and skinny, with ever-changing hair that was short and blond with pink tips tonight, and Dan's fingers itched, as always, to touch the perfect button nose. "I'm so glad you came, darling. The place just isn't the same without you." In addition to the eyeliner, Billy wore dark red lipstick. Many a cock had ended the night with that color on it, Dan knew well. Hell, he'd had Billy's lips wrapped around his cock himself when he'd first come out, his best friend eager to introduce him to just how good things on this side of the fence could be. The man gave excellent head.

"You've got plenty of people out tonight; you hardly needed me."

Billy rolled his eyes. "I'm not having this conversation with you again. We missed you. Period. End of story. Deal."

"Okay, okay." He held up his arms to ward Billy off and took a sip of his drink.

He worked on the Tequila Sunrise, mostly just watching and listening, his friends respecting his silence. He wasn't left out of conversations, but no one pushed him into any of them either. By the time he was halfway through his second drink, he was starting to get a nice buzz on. Okay, so this hadn't been the worst idea Billy'd ever had...

Peter and Winston joined their table, the beautiful black lovers sitting across from him. He spent some time shouting across the table with them as they caught him up on their latest adventure – a trip to Bali. He was invited to a dinner party the following Thursday night to see pictures and souvenirs, and he accepted, finding it easier to slip into the social scene again than he'd expected.

A third drink appeared in front of him just as he finished the second, and he started to consider hitting the dance floor. Half their group was out there, including Billy, so he knew he'd have partners who weren't expecting anything more than the dancing, and he was starting to feel rather mellow.

Before he could get up, Peter and Winston raised their glasses to welcome someone else to their table. "Bo! Come and sit with us."

Bo turned out to be a tall, built guy in a pair of tan slacks and a light purple shirt. And maybe it was just the Sunrises talking, but Dan thought the man really pulled off the color.

"Dan – Bo. Bo – Dan." Peter made the introductions as Bo sat next to Dan, crowding him over.

"Hi," said Bo, holding out his hand. "It's nice to meet you."

Dan wasn't big on blonds. They just weren't his type. So why did he find Bo so damn attractive? Because the truth was he did.

He was pretty sure his friends had set him up, and for that reason alone he should have been annoyed and just barely tolerating Bo. Add in the blond thing, the light beer – come on, *light* beer? – thing, the too easy smile and too pretty-boy good looks, and the fact that Dan was still not ready for this, whatever this turned out to be, and Bo shouldn't have been a blip on Dan's radar.

Except that he was.

Bo was charming and fun and good-looking and somehow had Dan utterly fascinated.

They talked about sports and how there was no way the Bruins were taking the division. They talked about current events, but steered clear of politics by some unspoken agreement, focusing instead on other issues, nodding hard when they agreed and arguing amiably where they didn't. And Dan needled Bo about his light beer.

“Seriously, Bo, light beer is for babies. Hell, babies think light beer is just colored water.”

“What about mixed drinks, man? Juice. They’re teenagers’ drinks – God forbid you should actually taste any of the alcohol.”

“You got that right – I can’t stand the taste of the stuff.” Dan hid his grin behind his glass. It might get him a bit of ribbing, but it was the truth and the way it took the wind out of Bo’s sails was cute.

“Wait a minute. You’re not supposed to agree with me.”

“I’m not?” he asked, as innocently as he could manage. Damn, he was having a good time. A really good time.

“No.”

“Okay, I can do not agreeing. I disagree man – teenagers shouldn’t drink mixed drinks. Or really anything with booze in it at all, so there’s no way my Sunrise is a teenager’s drink. That better?” He didn’t bother hiding his grin this time.

“Yeah. Much.” Bo laughed and Dan laughed right along with him. God, this was fun.

He was glad he’d come. He’d have to buy Billy a round or two, although there was no way he was telling Billy *why*. He’d never hear the end of it.

“Hey, you like to dance?” Bo asked, and Dan found himself nodding.

They moved together through the first couple of dances, each boogying, doing their own thing as the techno beat thudded through the whole place, learning how each other moved. Then came the slow song, and it felt natural to slide his hands around Bo’s waist and for Bo to pull him close.

Bo wasn’t quite a head taller than him, and he laid his head down on one broad shoulder, enjoying the heat and the strength of Bo’s body. Sighing, Dan closed his eyes and sank into it, letting Bo lead him through the dance.

They closed the place down.

Most of the gang left before last call, and Billy left just after, giving him a hug and wagging those ultra-blond eyebrows at him. “Be good, darling.”

“Fuck off, Billy.”

“Oh, I will, that’s a given. But will you?” Billy laughed and winked and wandered off arm in arm with the bartender with the nice abs and the baby-face.

Dan and Bo stayed until the lights were turned on and off, the shout of, “Get lost ‘ya bums,” going out across the bar, aimed at them and the last of the stragglers.

“I think that’s our cue to go,” murmured Bo; he seemed reluctant to do so.

Of course, so was Dan. “You want to come back to my place for some coffee or something?” The words were out of his mouth before he even really realized he was going to say them.

“I would. But only if you’re sure.”

Dan nodded without thinking about it and decided he’d go with his gut. “I’m sure. I’m good.”

He popped up and held out his hand before he could change his mind. Bo’s hand swallowed his right up, and he liked the feeling of safety it gave him. He wasn’t some shrinking violet or anything – he was a good sized guy, and he worked out – but he liked that feeling of being safe, cared for, that came with having a bigger than himself partner.

His place wasn’t far and it wasn’t cold out at all, the nights not yet freezing. They chatted as they walked, not talking about anything important. Feeling a little nervous as they arrived at his apartment building, Dan managed to drop his keys before getting them into the lock to open the big glass doors into the lobby. Before he could turn the key, Bo’s hand covered his.

“We don’t have to do this, you know. I could give you my number...”

Bo’s hand was warm and the touch was light and it was... comforting. With maybe a promise of more than comfort. Dan suddenly wanted more of that. He wanted to hear a voice in his apartment that wasn’t his own or coming from the TV. He wanted someone to put their arms around him and hold him. He wanted this. No, just maybe he needed it.

Turning his hand to link it with Bo’s, Dan shook his head. “No, I’d like you to come up. I mean, maybe all we’ll do is have a nightcap and talk, but that’s better than sitting around and moping.” And it was past time for him to be good with having someone come up for coffee.

The smile Bo gave him warmed more than just his hand, and Dan turned abruptly, getting the door open. It was late, so they didn’t meet anyone in the lobby and the elevator was right there, the cranky ding going off as the doors slid open. “I’m on the sixth floor,” he told Bo as he pressed the button. “Obviously.” God, he was a dork.

Bo chuckled, hand coming out to slide on Dan’s back. Dan half-closed his eyes and focused on how nice it felt. He’d been starving for touch without even realizing it. Sure he talked to Billy on the phone a lot, probably at least once every day, but even Billy was rarely over and he hadn’t realized how much he’d been depriving himself even from simple things like a hug from a good friend.

The elevator dinged again as it jolted to a stop, thank God – he'd been getting pretty maudlin and he didn't need that. Not when he had someone with him who was touching him. Someone who was easy to talk to and who he got along with. Come on, Dan. This man likes you – don't be a wuss and send him running for the hills.

He had better luck with the key in his own door, managing to open it without any mishaps or shaking hands. "Ta-da!"

Bo came in and Dan deliberately did not make a big deal of it. He didn't remind himself that this was the first man he'd invited home since Ben had passed. Nope, not him, he wasn't thinking about that.

"Coffee? Or a nightcap of some sort?" he offered.

"To be honest, coffee will keep me up all night. Have you got Bailey's or something?"

"Yeah, actually, I do." Now, whether it had gone off or not remained to be seen. Dan didn't drink much, but he and Ben had kept several bottles on hand for when they had guests. Dan hadn't even gone near the cupboard in question since the last time he and Ben had entertained.

The Baileys smelled fine, so he poured a finger or so into a small glass and filled a tumbler with water for himself. No matter what happened tonight with Bo, he didn't want to be able to say it was simply because he'd been drunk. He was doing this awake and aware, eyes open.

Not being drunk, he was well aware that it scared the heck out of him.

Dan drank half his glass of water and then went back to the sink to refill it. There were little frogs on the glass, sitting on lily pads.

When he got back to the living room, Bo was lounging on his couch. "Hey, here you go. I had some in the cupboard."

"Thanks." Bo patted the couch cushion next to him and Dan nodded, sat down, clutching his water.

Bo didn't try anything, which went a long way to relaxing him, and soon the two of them were back in conversation, discussing everything and nothing. They talked into the night, and kept talking long after their drinks were finished. It was easy somehow, like Bo fit here in his home.

It was Dan who finally made the first move. Their conversation had eventually wound down and there was a moment of silence. It wasn't one of those uncomfortable silences; Dan figured they'd talked too long and too well for that. Maybe that was why it felt so natural to lean forward and press his lips against Bo's.

For a moment, a really long moment, Bo didn't kiss him back. Then, just before Dan could decide that this was the worst idea in the history of ideas, Bo's lips twitched beneath his, and parted, tongue dashing out to slip briefly into Dan's mouth.

Something broke inside of Dan, something hard and needing, something that had been clenched into a fist in his gut for a long time, so long he'd forgotten it was there. With a cry he sank against Bo, devouring Bo's mouth and pressing their bodies together. It was like dancing, only better because nakedness was coming.

Bo drew back for a moment, hands stroking over his arms, his shoulders and his back. "Dan. I think we should slow down."

"Do you know how long it's been? I don't think I can slow down... I mean I can, but it just might break me."

"I'm not saying stop, Dan. Just maybe... we can get naked first? Horizontal?" Bo's eyes were smiling and there was desire there. Bo wanted him. He could see that.

Dan blinked. "Horizontal?"

"Yeah, you know – flat, supine, reclining, prone, uh... recumbent."

"I know what it means. I was just caught up. In what we were doing."

"And I'm not saying stop. I'm saying maybe we can continue on a flat surface. Like your bed. And with fewer clothes to get sticky and gross." Bo looked right into his eyes. "If you don't want more than a quick fumble on the couch, that's okay, but if I have a choice, I'd much rather be more than a quick lay."

Standing, Dan held out his hand. "You are more. Come on. I'll show you." As he said the words, Dan knew they were true. He knew he was finally making a move to bury the past. He wasn't letting go of Ben, but he was letting go of Ben's death, of his anger at being left behind; he was filling the gaping hole. He felt like everything was going to be all right. All Bo needed to do was take his hand.

Thank God Bo did, or Dan would have had to have a whole other speech in his head. One that didn't end with him and Bo getting off.

When the walk to the bedroom, the interruption of the passion, didn't make everything suddenly awkward, Dan took it as a sign that this was the right thing to do. That he was ready. Of course the way his heart was trying to pound its way out of his chest might have made him think otherwise, but then his cock was also pounding, throbbing with each heartbeat, caught tight behind his zipper. Why had he worn his jeans so tight? Oh yeah, because Billy had expected him to make some sort of effort in going out this evening.

He led Bo right over to the bed. It was a queen, sitting on a lovely homemade frame he'd found at a small flea market outside of town. He'd redone the bedroom a few months after Ben was gone, needing to make it his own. He supposed, as Bo began to work open his shirt buttons, that after tonight it really would be his. Not his and Ben's.

He thought he was indeed ready for this. It was about time, really. He reached out and began undressing Bo, too. Shirt, pants, shoes, socks, underwear: it all came off, of Bo and of himself.

God, he was naked. With another human being. And kissing. How had he managed to live without kissing for so long? He groaned into Bo's kisses. He moaned into them. He never wanted them to stop. Of course what Bo's hands were doing was really good, too, and how had lived without that for so long?

He stopped thinking about it, all of a sudden, in terms of what he'd done without, of how long it had been since he'd had this with Ben, and suddenly, it was him and Bo and their bodies and it felt so very good.

He found one of Bo's nipples and pinched it lightly, smiling into their kiss as Bo jerked. He touched the other one a little harder, then the first again. He played them together and separately. It made Bo jerk and moan and the long cock pressed against his belly began to leak, leaving smears of pure heat on his skin.

"Bed. Horizontal. All that other shit," he muttered. As his knees began to give way, it all sounded really good.

They more or less fell to the bed and Dan laughed, pressing close to Bo, his hands carding through all that blond hair. He slipped his hands down to the other blond hair, the tight little curls golden, the perfect foil for the red-tipped, swollen prick.

He wanted to suck that. He wanted to feel it deep inside him, too. He didn't think he was going to last long enough to indulge in either. He could feel his orgasm beginning to gather in the small of his back. It was coming from being touched and kissed and smelling that incredible musky heat that you couldn't find anywhere else but where two men were fucking, rutting.

Bo's fingers wrapped around both their cocks, holding them tightly together as Bo's hand jacked slowly. "Is this okay?"

Dan looked up to find Bo watching him, hand still going slowly, almost not going at all. He groaned and nodded vigorously. "More than. Please. More." The sentences ran together, his voice low when he begged as prettily as he could.

"Yeah." Bo brought their mouths back together.

Dan wrapped his arms tight around Bo's shoulders, his fingers digging in as his hips bucked. Bo worked him hard, demanding his pleasure. And, with a cry, Dan gave it, his body bucking, this

incredible yell coming from his throat. As easily as that, Dan came, his whole body feeling it, shuddering.

Oh, he'd needed that. He'd needed to feel the pleasure coursing through him and pouring out of his cock. He'd needed that little explosion inside his brain that wiped out everything but how good his body felt.

Bo cried out and jerked, heat splashing up between them, mixing with Dan's come. Dan needed that, too. He held on tight to Bo, slowly catching his breath, a great, wonderful lassitude filling him, making it feel like he was sinking into the mattress. Oh, this was a good place to be.

Bo found his box of tissues on the shelf at the head of the bed and cleaned them both up. "You okay?" Bo asked. "Is this okay?"

"Yeah." Dan took a deep breath and nodded, too. "Yes, it's okay. Better than okay. It's good."

"Cool. How about me staying, is that good, too?"

A glance at the clock showed it was after five in the morning. They'd talked all night. "You staying would be very good."

Dan let Bo hold him, feeling light, like he might float away if Bo didn't keep holding on. He thought he and Bo would have to do this again. Soon. He thought Ben would approve. He *knew* Billy would.

Dan laughed softly, shaking his head.

"What?"

"Did you just happen to be at the Starlight tonight or did Billy set me up with you?"

"Will you kick me out of bed if I say it was a set up?" Bo asked, body still.

"No. I just want to know how much of a pain in the ass he's going to be when he calls me later."

"Probably a big one."

Dan thought about that, Bo's body keeping him warm. "Okay. I can live with that."

He so could.

The Starlight

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