

Cut Bait
BA Tortuga



Games
People
Play

Cut Bait
by B. A. Tortuga

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Chapter 1

God.

Rick stared at the huge pink ... thing in his hands, wondering if it would fit in the box under his bed. Why couldn't his sister Charlene go into Mary Kay? Avon. Something that she could have garden parties with. Or Tupperware. Did they do Tupperware still?

Why in the name of all fuck did she have to go into sex toys?

The dildo, for he might as well call a spade a spade, didn't fit in the box. He put it in his old Samsonite in the closet. Hell, he and Billy never went anywhere that required more than a carry on or weekender.

Then, since he was the first one home, he went and scrubbed the "desert beige" paint from his latest house off his hands and started on supper. Maybe some pork chops tonight.

He heard Billy whistling before the screen door opened—it was either Stand by Your Man or Farther Along, it was sort of hard to tell—and Hooper and Boss started barking, Moose doing that weird-assed yodeling thing he did. "Hey, guys," Billy said, "get out of the way, now. Come on. I gotta get my boots off."

"You'd best get them off and not track up the floor. Charlene and her girl were in to clean today." Charlene needed the money more than he and Billy needed to do housework, so they paid her and his niece to scrub. It was a good arrangement, especially as Charlene was hooked up

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with another loser who was sponging off her worse than a loofah.

Except she kept harping on the whole "Try out my sex toys" thing.

"Bitch, bitch, bitch." Billy's rough-as-sandpaper laugh floated in and he knew—he just *knew*—Billy was sticking that tongue out at him. "How's it going, man? You ready for a weekend?"

"I am. Jesus knows, that lady over in Grand Saline has changed her paint choices about five times." He peered over his shoulder. "You want potatoes or rice?"

"What're we cooking?" Billy was covered in diesel and dust, those gray-green eyes almost bright in the dirty face.

"Pork chops. Thought we'd bake 'em." He grinned and found a clean spot next to Bill's mouth. "That way we have time to shower."

"Mmm. I'm a fan. We can put the rice in that dealie your momma gave us so it won't burn." Bill winked. "In case the washing goes long. Did I tell you that Trey and Linda Martin want to hire you to paint Linda's daddy's house?"

"Nope. That's good news. How was work?" God, that man had a smile that made him happy deep inside.

"Work. Not bad. I'm glad the storm held off until I could get the rig parked." Ten years of driving an oil rig around the area, and Rick knew Bill dreaded the days that the roads were wet and slick.

Hell, so did he. He worried a bit.

"Want to feed the mutts while I get butter and shit in here? I'll start the rice, too."

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"Surely. You want I should pull a pie from the deep freeze while I'm out on the porch?" Billy headed for the mud porch, grabbing the bowls for the inside group before going to feed the pack of strays.

"Yeah. That sounds fine. Real fine," he called. The little things, man. After just under two years living together, they were what was important.

That whistling started up again, the rattle of dog food and the sound of the water dishes being refilled just right as rain.

He quick rubbed some butter and salt and pepper on the chops and put them in the baking dish, then set up the rice cooker. He'd toss some leftover biscuits in after they got out of the shower, just to heat them through. Wasn't nothing he hated like old, cold bread.

An apple pie clattered on the counter, along with bacon for in the morning, then Bill started stripping and putting the gasoline-soaked clothes into the hamper with the locking lid. Charlene had come up with that thing—both so the dogs didn't poison themselves and so that the smell of diesel didn't get everywhere.

"I'll meet you in the bedroom, man," he said, grinning as Bill stood there, all naked and pretty.

"I'll get the water started." Mmm. Bill was built like a mini-brick shithouse, broad shoulders, strong back, tight ass tapering into short little legs.

He'd touch, but his hands were all covered in butter and lemon juice and shit. "I'll look forward to it."

Rick got everything ready to go when he realized the shower wasn't running.

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And Bill wasn't whistling.

That was weird as fuck.

Washing up, he wandered into the bedroom, wiping his hands on his jeans. "Billy? You all right?"

"Well, I hope so..." Billy was sitting on their bed, still butt-assed naked, holding...

Oh, shit.

"Oh. Oh, jeez, Billy. Put that away, okay?" He trotted right over and grabbed the lid to the box, popping it back on so all those wildly colored sex toys disappeared.

"Uh. Okay." Bill didn't hand the box over, though. "You, uh, got something to tell me, darlin'?"

"No!" Well, that sounded guilty as shit. It wasn't like he *did* have something to hide. "Oh, hell, honey. Charlene's trying a new business. One of them party things."

"Are you hiding her inventory from her kids?"

"No." His cheeks went hot, his eyes sliding away from Bill's. "She keeps. Damn it, Bill, she keeps saying we're the only ones in the family having any sex."

Billy blinked a minute, then that deep, rumbling laugh bubbled out. "Oh. Oh, God. Well, darlin', I'll take that as a compliment, I guess. Lord." Billy popped the lid off the box, shaking his head and staring. "Heavens, Rick. Look at the *colors*."

"You should see the giant dildo." Oh, it relieved him to hear that bass rumble of a laugh. He didn't know what he'd been hiding that shit for.

"Giant dildo? Oh, now. You gotta share." Bill looked tickled as shit, if a little bemused.

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Digging in the closet, he produced the huge, violently pink thing, wagging it at Bill. "What do you think?"

"I think it looks like one of them kosher hot dog deals blowed up to movie screen size. Good lord, Rick. Why would someone buy that? Hell, where would you put it?"

He peered at it. "Well, it's supposed to go in..." But hell if he could see how.

Billy's eyes went wide. "Shit. I was talking about where in your bedroom ... it's too big to hide in a sock drawer."

"Oh." Yeah, that was why it went in the suitcase. "Maybe it's supposed to be a conversation piece. I didn't ask Char. She would have held forth. You know her."

"That girl is something special, I swear to God." Billy's words were fond, full of laughter. The man loved his family better than anyone could expect, but Charlene could try a saint. "Why do you reckon they go for all these colors? I mean, dicks ain't green. Well, if I came across a green one, I wouldn't be letting it anywhere near me, anyway."

"I'm thinking it's so's you know it's fake, honey." And maybe women liked them to be pretty?

"Now that makes sense, I guess." Billy lifted a purple vibrator up, looking it over. "Bumps. Huh. You got any batteries?"

At his look, Bill shrugged. "Wanna see what the motor can do."

Nodding, trying to get his buggy eyes back in his head, Rick went to the closet. "I got some Cs. Is that what it takes?"

"Lemme look."

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He looked over his shoulder and got the honor of seeing his lover with a purple bumpy cock looking like it was growing out of one eyeball. Rick didn't know whether to laugh right out loud or flinch as his balls kinda shriveled. "Lord, Bill, put that thing down."

"Huh?" Bill looked up at him. "I think Cs'll work."

"Okay. You look like something out of an alien movie." He turned and rummaged. He kept some batteries in there for the flashlight. Ah ha. There. "Here."

"Good deal." The batteries went in and the base got screwed on and ... Man, as loud as that thing was in Bill's hand, it was louder when Bill jerked and dropped it on the hardwood floor and it went skittering and buzzing again.

"Listen to that thing!"

"Holy shit. That would. Well, it would hurt, wouldn't it?" Damn. He scrambled for it, feeling it rumble against his palm when he picked it up.

"Well, you'd sure know it was there. Your damned teeth would rattle."

"I'm guessing." There. There was a switch there, the sudden silence seeming odd.

"And you say women get together and look at all these things in someone's front room?"

"Yep. Like Mary Kay or something." It was all pink, right? Rick tossed the purple thing back in the box, ready to let it go away for the day. "You ready to shower, honey?"

"You know it." Bill's fingers just brushed his arm, the hairs all standing up. "I'm ready."

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"Me too." Suddenly really ready. All revved up, in fact. Hoo boy.

Oh, now that Bill stood up, Rick could see he wasn't the only one. My, my. That was.

Nice.

"So. Shower." Rick held out his hand, not sure if he'd get a hand in return or ... something else. Either way it would be good.

Bill nodded, fingers sliding against his palm in a tease. "Shower. Soap. Slick. Now, darlin."

"Okay." Little tingles went from his palm to his shoulder, and his nipples drew right up. He got to the bathroom before he remembered clothes. His, in fact. Dirty, paint covered clothes.

Of course, stopping to get naked meant getting to watch Bill bend over and start the water, bend over and grab some towels...

He lost it halfway between his shirt and pants and grabbed that ass, squeezing hard. Then he went for the blond fuzzed balls. Not squeezing.

Those little legs spread, Bill's groan just filling the air.

"Mmm. So damned hot, the way you draw up for me." Billy liked him to talk a little. He'd been embarrassed that he couldn't keep his mouth shut 'til he found that out.

He could see it, the beginnings of the dull flush crawling up Billy's butt, along the strong back. Bill was listening. Wanting.

One hand stayed on Bill's skin, the other finished working his pants open. "Oh, God, look at your skin. I love that. Fucking love it, honey."

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"Mmm..." Bill wasn't much of a talker, but those sounds? They let him know, told him how far Bill was into it with him.

Finally naked, he pushed up behind Bill, rubbing his cock against those soft, wrinkled balls. "Water all good and hot?"

"Mmmhmm. Ready for us." Bill wiggled, thighs closing around his cock, kinda hugging it.

"Go-od." He grunted right in the middle, his hips smacking Bill's ass. They stumbled into the shower, slipping on the tile a little, both of them straightening and flailing a little. "And for our next act, Grace," he said, laughing breathlessly.

"Fucking on the flying trapeze?" That made it worse and they both just hooted, the laughter ringing out until Bill turned around and pushed into his arms.

He kissed Bill hard, loving on him. That ass filled his hands, just like that. So hard muscled, so good. He dug his fingers in a little.

Bill's hands were on his shoulders, sliding down his arms, the pressure good and strong, working his muscles.

Oh, the man knew him too well. Too much time with his hands up over his head, painting ceilings made for sore as hell arms and shoulders. Rick moaned, his head falling back as the hot water joined Bill's massage to make him all melty.

"Oh, yeah." Bill's lips found his throat, that touch so soft compared to those hands. Damn.

"Uh-huh. Bill. Honey. Your mouth." His own hands finally listened to him and unclenched so he could stroke up Bill's back, following the bumpy line of spine. The skin there was softer than Bill's hands, too.

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Bill nodded, lips and tongue sliding to trace his collarbone, the hollow of his throat. Those hands though, they headed south, sliding down over his belly.

"Uhn." He did love that. Loved the whole 'anything of Bill's' touching his cock. He really, really did. When it was hands he would just start humping, losing thought for a moment.

Bill encouraged him to bend his knees a little, lining them both up so that one of those hands could wrap around both of them, stroking good and hard.

Little lights popped up behind his eyes as he shuffled even closer, one hand rising to flatten between Bill's shoulders, the other running back down to cup those balls again.

"That's it, honey," he said. "That's it. Keep on like that."

Bill nodded, licking the water off his chest, teeth scraping a little when those fingers came up, worked the tips of their pricks.

"Bill. Your thumb. I want." He wanted that little scrape. Hell, he was addicted to it. Like needing. He pushed, letting his actions say as much as his words.

Just like that, Bill's thumb pushed against his slit, giving him that little zing, that little second of oh and wow and fuck.

"Yeah! Yeah..." His words trailed off to harsh groans, his hands clumsy when they moved on Bill's body, all of his attention focused below the waist.

Bill's teeth found one of his nipples, scraping right against the tip, giving him that much more.

"Fuck!" That was it. He shot hard, his come joining the falling water, hot and wet. He clung to Bill, his knees kinda

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permanently bent, and damned if his head didn't get all spinny.

Billy wasn't far behind, panting and jerking and rubbing against his slick skin, breath hot against his chest.

"Damn, honey. That was..." Fast? Hot as Hell? They were always good together, but wow.

"Uh-huh." Bill blinked up at him, looking more than a little dazed.

"Cold!" Man, the water went cold on them in a rush, no gradual chilling going on there at all. He jumped a good foot in the air and came down reaching for the taps.

"Shit. Shit. I swear to God, taxes come in we're buying a bigger water heater."

"I hear that." Towels. Bill had gotten them towels. There. They warmed up in a hurry rubbing each other with the towels. Jeez.

"The pork chops smell good." Bill grinned up at him, looking bone-deep happy. "Real good."

"They do. Can't wait to have pie, too. I got some ice cream on the way home." He took a kiss, handing Bill his robe, hating to see that body disappear, but pulling shit out of the oven naked was kinda a chancy proposition.

"Good deal." Bill tossed him the soft-soft shorts that he liked.

"Yeah." The box under the bed could just stay out of his mind now, thank you very much. He had Bill, had supper to eat and a movie to watch and mutts to cuddle.

He couldn't ask for more than that. Especially not if it came in bright pink.

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"You and me goin' fishin' in the dark..." God, he loved that song. Billy turned the stereo up, then sat on the edge of the tub with a plastic minnow, an Exact-o knife and Rick's box of sex toys.

He filled the tub about half way up and stuck one foot in to balance himself. Okay, now. Logically, them vibrator dealies were meant to go in where things were wet. So the motor ought to run in the water. Still, he figured he ought to test the littlest one first, 'cause it was sure to be the cheapest.

Billy wasn't sure, but it was logical to charge by the inch.

Although, the littlest one would fit best in the plastic minnow, so he'd hate to ruin it first...

Maybe he could cover it.

Ziploc bag?

Wal-Mart sack?

One of them Tupperware...

Oh, hell! He knew!

Billy stood up and started rummaging, still singing at the top of his lungs until one old ditty bag produced what he was looking for.

Rubbers.

Perfect.

He unrolled one and plopped the little thing right in, tying the end in a tight knot and admiring his handiwork.

Then he went to...

Well, shit.

How the hell was he supposed to turn it on?

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Two rubbers, one dropped Exact-o blade, an AAA battery and three songs later? The little thing was bouncing and buzzing all over the bottom of the tub like a wild thing.

Man, that was pretty fucking neat.

He grabbed the little plastic minnow. Okay, now. How to get that in there...

"What the fuck are you doing, Bill?" Rick asked, leaning in the doorway of the bathroom and like to scaring him to death.

"Uh ... Trying to make a minnow lure that sorta swims?"

It was weird, but it was also the truth.

"Don't fish hear vibrations or something?" Oh, now the man was flat laughing at him.

He flung one of the broken rubbers over at Rick, just hooting. "Shit, I was just thinking on your box of goodies and thought I could find a use for the little one..."

"Well, you might as well use them as lures. Char don't want 'em back, and I can at least tell her we're using them this way." He got a bright, evil grin. "You want a beer?"

"Uh-huh." He fished the little wet buzzing thing out of the tub and stood up, dangling it. Wet, buzzy, slimy—perfect to tease your man with.

"Aw, man, that's gross." Backing away, Rick cleared the hall and headed for the living room, hightailing it away from him.

"Yep." Gross and fun as hell. He got hold of it good enough that he could poke Rick right in the ribs.

"Billy!" Rick staggered back, making the face usually reserved for hair plugs in the drain and dog puke. "Jesus. That that thing has a minnow attached!"

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"It's only plastic and it's brand new out of the package."

"But it looks ... it looks like a tiny dick with a fish flopping on the end. That's just so fucking wrong." Rick flapped a hand. "Put that thing away."

"Spoilsport. I was just playing." He sliced the rubber open and dumped it in the trash, along with the minnow, then he tossed the still-buzzing vibrator over at Rick.

Rick caught it automatically, staring down at it as it rumbled in his hands, looking like Bill had just thrown him a dead rat or something. Somebody had a hang up...

"It won't hurt you, darlin'. It's just a piece of plastic."

"I just don't think I get it, Bill. I mean ... I guess if you ain't got nobody." Those blue eyes flashed up to his, Rick's sandy brown hair sorta standing up all over. The crinkles around those eyes deepened. "But I got you."

He nodded. "You do. I mean, shit, darlin', I don't know. Some folks like to watch their lovers, maybe? Maybe it just feels good."

He didn't know.

"Maybe." Those paint covered fingers finally found the off switch. Rick laughed a little. "I guess I'm a fuddy-duddy."

"Bullshit." He pushed right up close. That wouldn't do, his Rick feeling all ... whatever that was that made that laugh wrong. "You're the right one for me, yeah?"

The little vibe clunked on the floor right before Rick wrapped both arms around his neck, pulling him down for a kiss. "Yeah," Rick said when they broke for air. "Never been happier in my life, either."

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"Good." He nodded, nibbling a minute on Rick's bottom lip. "We're solid, darlin, through and through."

"We are." There, that was the smile, the laugh he wanted. "I'm sorry, honey, that just. If you'd'a seen that thing cold. Lord."

"Well, you know, I reckon it's like pornos." Bill waited for Rick to give him that curious look, that raised eyebrow, before he went on. "Well, if you're at a party and there's porno, it's stupid and goofy and everybody laughs. If you're watching it at home by yourself in the front room, it's sorta sad and creepy. But if you're in the bed and there's two of you and stuff, then it's. Well. Different."

Hot, maybe.

Rick tilted his head, just like one of the pups when he made a noise they didn't quite get. "Well, now. That makes sense. What you do together is something bigger than the weirdness, yeah?"

"Yeah, I figure." Bigger. Yeah. Bigger worked. He grinned and leaned for half a second, both of them rocking a bit. It was good, this thing they had.

"Mmmm." Rick seemed content to lean back and pet. Until the man shocked him right on down to his toes by saying, "You ever think of trying any of them out?"

He considered going with 'hell, no', but he'd just spent all that time convincing Rick things were cool. Shit. He needed to stop talking so fucking much. "I might've, yeah."

Those lean, brown hands massaged his shoulders, which he hadn't even realized had gone all tense. "S'okay, honey. I was just asking, not suggesting or nothin'."

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"Well, there ain't no harm in it, right? Worse thing? We have a damned good laugh about it."

"Yeah. Yeah, we can always laugh." They could, too. No lie. They always got a kick out of trying new shit. Why not this?

He went up on his toes, took a kiss. "We might like it." Weirder things had happened.

Rick kissed him, opening his mouth right up by pushing in, Rick's tongue hot and slick. The man never seemed to tire of touching him, even when he threw weird slimy rubbers with lures in them at him.

His fingers slid up Rick's back, digging into the strong muscles so that Rick felt it, felt good. He could tell it worked, because Rick rose up on tiptoes, their mouths pulling apart for a moment. Then Rick bent and kissed him again, pushing him back until he hit the wall.

Oh, fuck. This was hot. Surprisingly hot for an average night. Damn.

They kissed even harder, Rick's hands coming up to cup his cheeks, their mouths turning to get deeper, hotter contact.

Bill's eyes rolled and he groaned, starting to fuck Rick's mouth with his tongue.

Humming, Rick fought him just enough to be hot, the control of the kiss passing back and forth between them. Damn. Oh, damn.

Billy's cock was steel-hard in his jeans, Rick's thigh pushing against it hard enough to make him grunt, groan into the kiss. He grabbed Rick's ass, tugging them tight together.

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"Uhn. Bill, honey..." Rick humped against him like a naughty puppy, just going to town. Those swollen lips slid down his neck, Rick licking his pulse point.

"Uh-huh." His chin lifted, hands working that pretty ass hard enough he'd see marks in the morning. Fuck. Close. Damn.

"Gonna. Babe. I ... yeah." Rick sounded like he was right there, and he knew that feeling, the one that came when Rick lost it and started moving with no rhythm.

He nodded and jerked, entire body into it as he shot like a teenager under the bleachers with the prom queen.

"Shit! Bill." Those blue eyes went so wide for him, so dark, and then Rick was shaking and moaning for him, skin hot and flushed red. Nothing sexier in the world.

He just watched and rubbed, let himself enjoy Rick all the way down deep.

"Mmm. Damn, honey. We're hotter than a two dollar pistol today." Rick leaned, face settling in the hollow of his neck and shoulder.

"Mmhmm. You're something else." The man got to him like nothing else.

"So are we going fishing or what?" He felt Rick grin, heard it in that deep voice as Rick pinched his ass.

"I reckon we ought." He hooted a little, nodded. "You might catch something for once..."

"I might. I'll use you for bait, you sumbitch." The pinch turned into a swat on his hip.

He just cackled. "Shit, with my butt? You might not even catch the plastic minnow."

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Rick pulled back to look him right in the eye. "It would catch anything with a pulse and then some. That's my ass, honey."

Oh. Well. Damn.

His cheeks got all hot and his belly went tight. "Yeah, Rick. All yours."

"And don't you forget it." Rick flushed too, laughing right out loud, ears all pink. "Listen to me."

"I do." Hell, he kinda got off on it.

"Mmm. You best stop that looking at me or we'll never go fishing." Oh, ho. That was a squeeze, not a pinch or a swat.

"Well ... there's other things a man could hunt for..."

"There are. Wanna go see what they might be?" Rick gave him a glinting grin, one he could no more resist than a dog could turn down bacon.

"You know it, darlin'. I surely do."

He grabbed Rick's hand, tugging him toward the bathroom. After all, they had to get the paint off first.

Chapter 2

Rick had thought about it for days. It kinda ate at him, in fact. The whole ... sex toy thing. Oh, not the whole minnow lure thing. God knew he tried to put that out of his mind. But the other, well...

So he waited until Bill went out with Tom and Evan for poker night, then got that stupid box out from under the bed, and started just looking. There was a rubber ball thing, and a little glove with weird fucking spikes, and there were oils that smelled like cinnamon and peppermint, which he thought might just hurt. If you used them you know where.

He finally settled on a little, what, a dildo? It was fairly small, Rick thought maybe he could figure out which end was which. He'd use his own lube, thank you. Cherry or passion fruit just seemed too fruity. In all of the bad ways.

Without Bill he didn't have to worry about feeling like an idiot, but he still felt furtive as he tiptoed to the bathroom and stripped. He started the water in the tub. Normally a bath wasn't his thing, but this way if it got gross, well, he was ready. The little tube of lube yielded just enough, and he looked back over his shoulder at the closed door before he kinda ... well.

Got himself all wet and started thinking about working that thing in.

The dogs went crazy before he started, but they calmed right down, so he decided there must have been a stray cat or a coyote or a skunk or something.

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He hadn't heard Bill's truck, anyway. So he gritted his teeth and bore down like he would for Billy and pushed the thing in an inch or so. That was frickin' weird. Not human, almost like a man in a rubber but not *quite*.

He didn't hear the door open, not even a bit, but he heard Bill's groan, deep and low and raw. His eyes flew open and Rick stared at Bill, torn between horrified and hard as a rock. Caught.

"Don't stop, darlin'." Bill reached right out, stroked his bottom lip. "So fucking hot."

"I ... okay." He couldn't stop now, anyway. His body just sort of pulled the damned thing in. Rick stared, biting his lip as his hips rolled. "Hey."

"Hey." Bill still had his Stetson on and it shadowed his face, made him look different, hungry.

Those greeny gray eyes just shone down at him from under the brim, and Rick's cock jumped heavily, his heart kicking up. He automatically reached with his free hand and touched his cock, moaning as he did.

He could see Bill's muscles go tight under that t-shirt, see that belly ripple and those fingers open and close like they wanted to grab him up.

"Bill..." his words trailed off with a moan as he shoved the silly thing in a little too hard and it hit his sweet spot, making his nerves zing like crazy. He bucked, a surprised shout escaping him.

"Right here, darlin'." Bill stepped forward, boots clicking on the tile. Then the man knelt, right there with him, lips hovering close. "Do it again."

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Well, hell. What could he do but do it again? He rolled his hips, pushing down with them, pushing up with his hand, and he didn't feel a bit stupid now, no sir.

Bill's hand joined his, rubbing his prick, tongue light as anything on his lips, almost like Bill didn't want to muffle the sounds he was making. So he just let them come, moaning and pushing and humping and just ... damn. His skin felt too fucking tight, his face hot, and he needed all sorts of touches and kisses and he started begging.

"Bill. Please, honey. Come on. I can't ... I need you, man. I need. I'm too hot. Gonna blow."

Bill didn't say a word, but one of those hands wrapped around the back of his head, pulling him into a kiss he felt from his toes all the way up, burning him like a live wire.

Rick went nuts, torn between the fire of Bill's kiss and the stretch and burn of his ass. He reached back and pushed that stupid dildo again, all but shouting into the kiss, his whole body shaking near apart as he came, hot come spreading between them, staining Bill's shirt and jeans.

Bill's forehead rested against his as he floated down, hat tipped back, those eyes staring right into him. "Poker game got cancelled."

"Uh-huh." He panted, random little shivers rocking him. "I, uh ... I thought I would see if it was bad."

"Was it?" Like Billy hadn't seen.

"No. It was okay before, but with you? Honey, you made it good." Bill had been right. Together, everything was better.

"You looked ... Damn, Rick. Blew my mind." Bill moaned, helped him stand up on shaking legs.

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"Okay, but I feel fucking weird now." He laughed, the sound as shaky as his legs. "You. Uh. You okay?"

"Yeah. I'm good. A little swampy, but good. You wanna hop in the shower with me?"

"Hell, yes." Swampy. Oh. Oh! Well, damn. Good. He laughed, kissing Bill. "And you wanna help me get this thing out?"

Bill chuckled. "Surely, you just bend right over to get the plug pulled in the tub and start the water..."

He laughed, his belly shaking as he did just that, giving it a little wiggle, just because he had to laugh or just die of embarrassment. But it had been a good thing, so he couldn't bitch.

Bill's mouth landed on the top of his crease as the damned thing was pulled out, too, making it less ew and more oh...

His back arched right up, hips pushing out. "Oh. Bill. Honey, that. Wow."

"Mmhmm." That tongue slid up the small of his back, teasing and hot. "Yeah?"

"Uh-huh." His hands fumbled as he pulled at the drain plug and got the water going just right for a shower. "Yeah. I fucking love your mouth, honey. Love the way you touch me."

Bill's hands were on his ass, squeezing as those thumbs teased his slick hole, pushed in a little, stretched a little.

Going up on tiptoe made him almost tilt right into the tub, but he didn't. Rick braced, got his feet under him and pushed back. Making Bill's thumbs slide in again, a little deeper.

"Look at you..." That mouth started moving again, heading south this time, tongue flicking against his skin.

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"Bill." Was that his voice? Lord have mercy. He sounded needy as anything, his voice rough and broken. Like he hadn't just come all over.

"Mmhhh." Billy moaned, thumbs pushing in, tongue sliding over his hole. Good god.

Now he was thinking he should have used passion fruit, but their usual stuff was fine, and then he stopping thinking, just rocking back and forth.

He could feel Billy's breath, so damned hot along with those little moans and growls and whimpers against him.

Those sounds. God. He was the talker, not Bill, but those sounds made him shake. They had him grinding back like a big old slut, panting.

Billy pulled back a little, thumbs still working, pushing deep. "Darlin'? Can I? I need, Rick."

"Yeah. Yeah, come on, Bill. Please. I'm ready. Fuck me, man. Please." Listen to him beg. Lord, that man. He'd fooled around a lot before Bill, but no one else made him feel so hot, so desperate. "Come on."

Bill stood up and moved away, the sound of button and zipper reminding him that Bill hadn't even bothered to strip down yet, hadn't even started. Then that heavy prick was rubbing against his hole and he forgot all about that.

"Hell, yes." Bracing on one hand he reached back with the other and pulled Bill in, just like he had the dildo. Only this was hot flesh and wider and deeper, making him burn. He humped and humped, moaning and grunting, needing it all in him. Bill in him.

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Bill's hands wrapped around his hips and they were just going to town, Bill's jeans rasping against his legs as their bodies slapped together.

Rick went with it, closing his eyes and feeling how good it was, his cock hard again, rubbing against the slick porcelain of the tub, his hands scrabbling for purchase. Goddamn, that was good. Just ... the perfect fit.

Bill fucked him good and hard, but it wasn't too long before the steady strokes got jerky, Bill's fingers digging into his hips. "Darlin..."

"Uh-huh. It's okay. Ready." He was, too, just like that. All it would take was a stroke. Just one.

"Yeah..." Billy nodded and bucked, slamming in good and hard and pegging him, just where he needed it, heat filling him up just like that.

"Uhn!" He shot again, not quite as hard but surely just as good, his ass clamping down on Bill's cock, just really squeezing.

"Good lord..." Bill swayed a little against him, heart pounding against his back.

"You know it. Little more swampy now, huh?" He laughed, his arms shaking hard. They were either gonna stand up or go down.

"Uh-huh. Shower. Good." Damn, Bill was down to single syllables.

"Yeah." They eased up, both of them swaying as Bill slid free. Then he unlocked his legs and stepped into the shower, holding out a hand for Bill.

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Bill stripped off, quick as a bunny, and then pushed right in, holding him good and tight.

Rick wrapped around the man and closed the shower curtain. He'd been afraid as Hell to let the man see him do something he thought was so stupid.

Now he was glad as a man could be that poker night had been a bust.

Chapter 3

Shit, marthy, it was chilly.

Billy wandered through the house, closing windows on the north side, listening to the newscast with half an ear. Him and Rick were supposed to go out bird hunting over the weekend, but it felt damned near too chilly for that.

Which would really suck monkey balls, because Leo and Teddy and Cooter had all put in for a nice little travel trailer deal and they could cook real food.

Of course, that meant sleeping in the same trailer as Leo. And Teddy only knew how to make beans.

Gag.

Maybe bad weather wasn't so horrible. Billy really didn't like the quail-plucking portions of hunting trips.

"Hey, honey," Rick said, coming in from out back, leaving the dogs in the mud room. "Damn. I think it's pretty raw."

"Yeah. I shut windows." He looked out the kitchen window at the steel grey sky. "You know, we might could just make us a big ole pot of chili and some queso and stay in."

"Hey, that sounds good. You wanna call the boys?" Rick stomped his feet a little, but left his jacket on. "I can go on to the store real quick and get whatever we don't have."

"That works. Get some movies, too. We'll make a weekend of it." He wandered over for a quick kiss, pleased down to his toes. They'd already stocked up on bacon and biscuits, eggs and snacks, so they should be good to go.

Kissing him right back, Rick hummed before pulling back and sticking his head in the pantry closet. "We got chips?"

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"Get some Fritos, but we got three bags of tortilla chips." He checked the spice cabinet. "We need chili powder, too."

"Okay." He laughed when Rick grabbed a sticky note and started writing shit down. The man had the memory of a goldfish.

He grabbed the phone and called Teddy, all ready to make their excuses when Teddy said they were canceling. Fucking A. They got to vegetate all weekend, guilt-free.

A hard pinch to his ass was his goodbye when Rick headed out. He could hear the big old engine roar as Rick's truck pulled out, and then the dogs were peeking out of the mudroom, knowing the one who'd told them to stay was gone.

He chuckled and headed for the dog biscuits, taking his opportunity to spoil and scritch, listening to Teddy ramble on and on about his new boat motor and the weather and Susan Jenkin's butt.

God save him.

"Look, Teddy? I got to go feed the beasts and all. You have a good weekend, 'kay?"

Teddy'd just hung up when he heard the rumble of a much smaller motor than Rick's. Damned if it didn't sound like Charlene's little Honda. Shit. She could talk up a storm that girl. Rick always said she'd gotten all of Rick's extra words.

He considered just hiding, but sure as shit she'd've seen Rick alone in the Chevy and she'd know.

Then her feelings'd be all hurt and she'd call Rick and whine and Rick'd growl and there went his weekend.

Damn it.

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The little knock on the door told him he was right, plain as day. No one else did that little taptap yoo-hoo.

The dogs went nuts and he went to open the door, finding a real smile for her. "Hey, lady. What brings you out to the boonies?"

"Oh, hey, Billy!" She bounced right in, smiling for all she was worth. She and Rick would look just alike if she didn't bleach the hell out of her hair. They both had the bright blue eyes and the sharp chin. "I brought you some cupcakes. They had a bake sale down at Lana's school."

"Thank you. How's Miss Lana doing?" He kissed her cheek and took the box of cupcakes from her. "Rick told me she was going to be a guppy in the school play."

Or was it a swordfish?

Octopus?

Seaweed?

Something.

"She's going to be an otter, you fool!" She whapped his arm. "A mammal. Oh! I brought something for Rick, too."

She produced a violently pink box and handed that over, too.

"Good lord, did you spray Pepto over it?" He set the cupcakes aside. "An otter? One of those slick little beasts that crack clams on their bellies? Lana'd be good at that."

"She will! It's her to the ground, huh? And no, that's the brand of those parties I'm giving. Rick's told you 'bout that, I'm sure." She got this wicked glint in her eyes, her perfectly arched brows going up and down. "What do you think of the stuff I've sent over?"

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"I think you're a pervert and that Rick would swat you, if he was here." Like he'd tell her about when they. Uh. Yeah.

"Oh, come on." Charlene pouted, that pink lipstick she wore just making her look like she had those wax lips on.

"Rick at least blushes."

"Sorry to disappoint you, sweetheart, but I don't kiss and tell." Especially not nosy sisters who ought to find more to do. "Those parties working out for you okay?"

"They're not bad at all. I have to be careful who I ask, is all." Fluffing her hair playfully, Charlene grinned at him. "You got five bucks? Lana would love to think someone bought the rest of her cupcakes."

"Oh, good Lord." He dug a ten from his wallet, shaking his head. "You're a menace, you know that?"

Plucking it from his fingers, she bounced up and kissed his cheek. "I know it. They're real good. Thanks, Billy. You'll tell Rick I stopped by?"

"I will. I'm sure he'll call to thank you for your ... delivery." Bitch. Good thing she was family or he might try to not like her.

Bright pink fingernails twinkled as she waved and bounced back to her car, tooting the horn at him when she pulled out. Made the dogs just howl.

"Oh, for fuck's sake. Y'all shut up."

He stared at the pink box in his hand. Then he went to lock the door before he peeked.

The box yielded a pair of handcuff type thingies, with ... fuzz. Like soft fuzz on the inside. They were adjustable, which

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made sense he figured, as a man and a woman had different sized wrists.

Well.

He stared, closing them and opening them again, the click sounding pretty damn solid, really, for toys. He put his wrist in one of the open cuffs, rubbing against the fuzz.

Soft.

And black, not pink, thank god.

That actually felt pretty nice. Gave a man ideas. As long as he didn't think about Charlene while he had those ideas, it worked. He closed one of the cuffs, the metal clicking around his wrist. He tugged at the free cuff, surprised at how well the things held.

Damn.

The dogs set up a howl a few minutes later, or at least he thought it was a few minutes. It was Rick's truck, though, so who knew how long he'd stood there with the silly thing around his wrist.

Shit.

He scrambled for the key, the fucking things scattering across the floor. Damn it straight to hell.

"Hey, honey! They had the best shit on sale!" Rick came bouncing in with his arms full of groceries. "Did you know you locked the ... what on earth is that?"

"Nothing. Charlene brought you. Shit." He grabbed the keys and stuck both hands behind his back feeling like three kinds of a fool. "What was on sale?"

"Those guacamole chips we like so much. Chili. Green chiles and cheese. Brought me what?" Damn that man, Rick

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just set everything down and came over, reaching for Bill's hands.

Damn it. He tried his damndest to unlock the cuffs, but it wasn't happening. "Cupcakes. They cost us ten bucks."

"So what, you're hiding them from me?" Rick dodged and weaved, trying to get behind him.

"They're in the box on the table." He got tickled, some, their little dance almost funny.

"Then what's behind your back?" Finally Rick just lunged and grabbed and they did like a little two step with twirl that ended with Rick holding his arm, staring, eyes wide and forehead crinkled.

"I just ... They were in the pink box." Well, that didn't make a lick of sense.

"Uh-huh. Her and those damned pink boxes. Does it feel weird?" Rick's fingers slid over the cuff and his wrist, almost slow and contemplative.

"It's soft, strong. Kinda weird." Rick's touch, though, it was more hot than weird.

"Huh. It looks..." Rick looked up at him, those blue eyes hot as anything, a little worry maybe lurking behind.

"I." He didn't know what to say, whether to push closer or pull away.

"I tell you what, when Charlene has them, these things are weird. With you. Well, honey. Damn." Lifting his hand, Rick kissed his wrist, just below the cuff. "It's different."

"Mmm..." His fingers curled, stroking Rick's face a little, his cock jerking and filling.

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Those lips explored even as Rick tugged at the cuff, testing it, the little pull at his skin not quite enough to sting.

"They're. Uh. Strong. Stronger than they look." Goddamn, he almost whimpered.

"They are. Doesn't hurt, does it?" Another tug, with Rick watching him intently, and man, it was suddenly a good thing Charlene had stopped by.

"No. No, darlin', it doesn't hurt, not a bit." Hell, the only thing that was hurting was his cock that was pressing against his zipper.

"Oh, good." He got a look, kinda glinting and full of mischief. "Is it fricking strange to want to try them out?"

"I won't tell no one if you don't." Fuck, his Rick was fine.

"Nope. You and me and the bedroom has always stayed you and me and the bedroom." Grabbing the dangling second cuff, Rick pulled at him, tugging him toward their room. "And ain't nothing that has to go in the fridge right away."

He chuckled, following along like the cuffs were a leash. "No ice cream, huh?"

Like the weather heard him, the damned wind started howling, rain smacking against the side of the house.

"Nope. I did get us a pie, and the whipped topping stuff has to thaw anyway." They got into the bedroom and Rick advanced kinda slow and sure, holding his hand off to one side and moving in to kiss him.

Bill watched, kinda fascinated, loving the way Rick stared at him, saw him like he was something special.

Their lips met and Rick kissed him. This wasn't deep and hard, just a slow, thorough exploration. He loved that, too.

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Sometimes they jumped all over each other. Sometimes they just heated up slower, touching and kissing almost leisurely like.

He stepped close, free hand sliding around Rick's waist, fingers rubbing lazy circles.

"Mmmm. Nice. Bedroom's warmer anyway." Working at the buttons of his shirt, Rick pressed against him, making him realize the man still had his outside jacket on, for Heaven's sake.

He reached to get Rick's snaps when the jingle-jangle of the cuffs brought him up short. Oh. Right.

"This okay?" The man always knew when something might be off kilter. Even if it was just him staring at the cuff. "We can take it off. I just want you, honey."

"It's different, but yeah. I'm okay." He pulled Rick back down into another kiss.

They turned in a slow circle, almost like when they pulled the blinds and turned the radio on and danced the night away to George and Garth. This time Rick was dancing him back toward the bed, though, and his knees hit it, stopping them.

He grinned into Rick's mouth, swaying just a little as his body tried to decide whether to sit or stand.

Rick solved that one for him, pushing him back so he flopped down on the bed, bouncing a little. Then Rick was undoing his shirt and unbuttoning his jeans, just really going for it.

His hand clanked against the bed, the cuff jingling. Fuck, he was hard, aching for it.

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Quick as a bunny, Rick grabbed the cuff and pushed him up toward the headboard, attaching the other cuff to the bedpost. Then he got a grin that made a hard lump of need lodge in his belly.

"Is this okay? Playing like this?"

"Yeah. Yeah." He tugged, cock jerking as the chain rattled. "Yeah, darlin'."

"Oh, good. Oh, honey. You look ... fuck. You look good." Yeah, he could tell how good Rick thought he looked. That look burned like fire, and Rick undressed so fast he probably left fabric burn in sensitive places.

Bill reached down, his free hand sliding up and down his prick as he watched that fine form get naked for him.

"Uhn." Skinning out of his jeans, Rick came around to the side the cuff was on, hands sliding up Bill's arm, lips finding his fingers and sucking each one in, one at a time.

He blinked and watched, hand moving a little faster, watching that amazing fucking mouth, loving on him. Christ.

"Slow down, honey. Want it to last." Blue eyes cutting to his for half a second, Rick grinned, then went back to work, licking up his wrist, biting just under the cuff.

"Oh. 'kay." He reached down further, fingers just barely petting the base of his cock.

"That's it. Jesus, Bill. Gonna kill me." What he could see of Rick's body was flushed pink, hot for him, and he saw that long cock bob when Rick moved, little drops forming at the tip that made his mouth water. He jumped good and hard when Rick bit at the skin on the inside of his elbow.

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His toes curled and he made this noise, low and rough and odd.

"Mmmhmm. Taste good. Oh, honey. I could eat you up." Half of making love for Rick was the talking, he knew, and it made him hot as anything. Rick never expected him to talk back. He just babbled.

Billy watched with eyes that felt like they were burning in his head. He wanted to touch Rick, but his fingers were caught around his cock, just barely moving, just enough for him to feel.

Finally he got a harder touch, because Rick crowded up on the bed to crouch over him and nip at his shoulder, teeth scraping. It almost tickled when Rick nuzzled his armpit. Almost, but more of a zing.

"Rick." He twisted, trying to get closer, chest pushing up against his lover, cock begging for attention.

"Uh-huh. You blow me away, honey. Make me so hard. See how hard?" Rick backed up a half a foot and grabbed that sweet cock, showing him.

He licked his lips, looking and nodding and wanting that prick so fucking bad. "So fine."

"You're like Christmas dinner." They were both stroking their cocks in time, both humping hard. Finally Rick seemed to make up his mind what to do next, and it was moving to take Bill's cock in his mouth, just like that.

"Rick!" He arched like a hunting bow, entire body begging for it.

"Mmmph." That mouth might be full, but he could swear Rick was still trying to talk to him because all sorts of

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encouraging noises vibrated around his cock. Rick worked him good with lips and tongue, hands coming up to cup his balls.

He got his free hand all wrapped in Rick's hair, petting and touching as his thighs spread wider. Fuck, yes. Just like that.

Up and down, Rick gave him just what he wanted, lips rubbing him like crazy. The man knew all of his hot spots, knew that the skin on the insides of his thighs was so damned sensitive that stroking it would make him cry out.

He tossed his head, ass cheeks clenched on the bed as he fought to come, to hold on, to something. Shit.

Rick looked up, eyes meeting his, and he saw the need there, the yeah, come on there. Rick was waiting for him, to hell with slow and lazy.

"Fucking love you." He got the words out, even as his balls tried to tighten into stone.

Rick's back arched, hips wiggling, and then that cock was pressing his leg, Rick humping like crazy. The man went right down on him, all the way to his pubes, those lips sealing to the base of his own cock, and fuck, it was all too damned much.

The entire fucking world went bright and light as he shot, hand pulling on that cuff, eyes just rolling.

The jangle of the cuff vied with Rick's moan for the loudest sound in the room, and he felt heat and wet against his leg, Rick coming without even a touch.

"Love..." Lord, his head was spinning like he'd been on a tilt-a-whirl, heart just pounding in his chest.

"You know it." Rick slid up and kissed him, his own taste strong in his mouth. "Where are the keys, honey?"

"Front room on the little table." Right? Hadn't he dropped them there?

"Let me get you loose." He got to watch that ass when Rick left the room, and got to watch the front when Rick came back in. Damn, his man was built as he could be, all lean muscle and pretty eyes and smooth skin.

"Never been so glad for a cold front."

That was the God's honest truth.

"Hell, I've never been so glad that my sister dropped by," Rick said, unlocking the cuff. "Love you, honey."

Man, his shoulder was a little stiff—not bad, but he could feel it. "Yeah, darlin'. So much."

Rick's fingers dug in, massaging his muscles, seeing his little roll of his arm. "You okay? It's not bad?"

God, it was enough to make a man kinda humble, being seen so good. "No. I'm just not used to it being up like that."

"Oh, good. You ... it was hot, honey. Real hot." Grinning, Rick cuddled in with him, pulling the quilt up. "You wanna nap a bit before movies and queso?"

"Mmm. Good plan." This was the good part, the shit that made real sense. Their legs twined up and Rick's head landed on his shoulder.

The cuff flapped a little as they got settled, but then he forgot all about it, letting the rhythm of Rick's breathing send him off. That stuff Charlene brought was good fun, but this? This was what he was in it for. For as long as Rick would have him.

* * * *

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The quilt felt warm and heavy, and Billy snuggled right up to his side, making Rick figure he was the luckiest man on earth. They were munching popcorn and watching a movie as the storm howled outside, their greasy fingers bumping in the bowl.

This was the good stuff, he figured. The little things. Thank God they hadn't gone fishing.

"Can you reach me another beer, honey?" They'd set out a bucket with some ice and some suds so they didn't have to keep getting up.

"Surely." Billy's chest rubbed against him with the stretch. "Man, look at that car go."

"Uh-huh." He wasn't really looking at the car. Or at the beer he'd just popped. He was kinda staring at Billy's eyelashes. They were really blond.

And long. And darker at the base than the tip.

Billy looked over at him, smiled. "Penny for your thoughts."

"I was just admiring." No sense lying. He loved how Bill looked, head to toe, balls to bones.

That got him a blush, dark and red and hot, Billy shaking his head and grinning like a newborn fool.

Rick leaned a little closer, loving on the heat and solidity of Bill's body. "And it's all mine."

"That it is, darlin'. All of me, all over." Billy leaned forward, took a sip of his beer, lips wrapped around the longneck.

Oh, that was the prettiest thing. Bill didn't have girly lips or nothing, but they were kinda pink, and real pretty. And now they were swollen from all the kissing they'd done all

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weekend. Bill's tongue slid out, traced the mouth of the bottle, then the bow of Billy's lips.

Damn. Rick forgot all about the beer, moving the bottle down to rest against his thigh as he took another round of kisses instead.

Billy scooted right close, lips open and swollen, clinging to his, making all sorts of promises.

Letting his tongue slip into Bill's mouth, Rick hummed and wrapped an arm around Billy's back, sliding under the quilt so they could stay warm. Buttery popcorn and beer, that was the flavor, and he could sit here and do this all night.

The wind took up howling again and he felt Billy smile into their kiss. Rick wasn't the only one who was happy they'd not gone fishing.

"Mmmm. I tell you what, honey," he said against Billy's mouth. "This has been a good weekend so far. Wanna turn off the movie and neck?"

"You have the best plans." The remote was searched out, then the car-chase music turned off with a click.

"You think? I like it." It was simply, easy, and a hell of a lot of fun, as plans went.

"I think." Billy's laugh tasted fucking amazing, the bit of stubble on his jaw making him tingle.

Rick turned a little, hands sliding under the quilt to rest on Bill's chest and thigh, just enough that he could brace for a kiss.

"Mmm. You're something else." Billy arched up into his touch, just wanting him.

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"We don't know what..." Chuckling, he kissed Billy some more, really slow and easy, letting himself taste and push his tongue deep.

Billy hummed, long eyelashes drooping, heart beating hard enough that he could feel it.

Touching that man was one of his favorite things. So was licking and sucking and ... yeah. It was damned cold out from under the quilt, though, and Rick wrapped around Billy instead of undressing them, just hugging and nibbling on whatever skin he could reach.

Stocking feet slid along his legs, pushing at his sweats. Decadent—it felt fucking decadent, to snuggle on the sofa like this, relax. They worked so damned hard, both of them. Oh, it wasn't like they had a problem with hard work, but suddenly Rick was grateful as hell that they hadn't gone hunting.

"Love you, honey."

"Good." Billy's laugh pushed into his lips. "This is the life, darlin'. I swear to God."

"I was just thinking that. No humping through a field of mud for ducks..." He kissed just under Billy's ear, licking, the stubble on his chin catching on Bill's scrub.

"Uh-huh. No bullshitting until three a.m. with the guys because it's too fucking cold to sleep."

"No listening to the music the beans make..." They laughed together on that one, bouncing around under the quilt, the whole thing turning into a tickling match.

He won, because he was only ticklish on his feet and Billy would cackle from ribs to hipbones.

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They panted, resting together, his face in the crook of Bill's neck. "Mmm. Now we're warming up."

"Yeah." Billy's hands were on his shoulders, his back, pushing hard, loving on him.

They rocked a little, both of them getting hard, but not rushing it, keeping it good and hot and slow. Bill tipped his head back and started kissing him, and Rick moaned, loving the slide of lips on lips.

"Mmm." Bill's hands brushed over his belly, over his hips. Every bit of his skin started to tingle.

"Feels good. Real good." His hips started to roll, his cock pressing against his sweats in that needing sort of way.

"Uh-huh. Good." They got their sweats untied, their cocks pushing together.

Who needed toys? Skin was good. Hands on skin better. Their cocks sliding was pretty much heaven.

"Gonna do this forever, huh? Me and you?"

"Yes. Lord, yes." Somewhere Rick could hear Moose yodeling, probably wanting outside, but he just couldn't stop. He had to put his hands down, pulling him and Bill together, grunting happily.

One of Bill's big old hands joined his, rubbing away, sweet as it had been the first time they'd tried. Maybe better, since there wasn't a lot of weirdness.

God, he remembered that night. They'd been tipsy as hell, both of them so wild and eager and yet scared to death to fuck things up. The fiery look in Bill's eyes had made him come, just like that. Just like thinking on it now was about to make him do.

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Course Bill'd stayed right there with him, when the other guy usually pulled away. Stayed right there and held on.

Just like he was now.

"Oh. Honey. Now. I need to now." His spine liked to snap in two, the way he arched and thrust.

"Uh-huh. Come on. I got you." Bill's thighs went tight and hard, shaking some against him.

He let his head fall back, let his eyes roll, his hips out of control as he shot. Goddamn, he loved that, loved it when Billy gasped and looked at him like he was the hottest thing in the world.

Billy ducked his head, humping and rubbing against him, the movement slick now, getting even slicker as Billy came.

"Oh, honey. I was remembering the first time we did that..."

"Mmm. I thought it'd never happen. I was a ball of knots."

"I hear you. I thought I was gonna shake apart." That had been such a damned fine thing. It was better now.

"Yep. But we didn't." Billy grinned, bumped their noses together. "We just shot all over and then went to bed and did it again."

"You wanna do that again?" Bed sounded good. Really good, as long as Billy came with him.

"You know it, darlin'. I'm right with you."

They took the quilts and closed up after the dogs went out and came in and went on to bed. Damned storm was sure good for something. Rick figured he'd take it and be happy.

Chapter 4

"Uncle Billy! Uncle Billy! Come throw the ball again!"

He grinned over at Rick, rolled his eyes and handed over the spatula. It was a fine, fine weekend. Warm and sunny with the blue-norther passed though—perfect for a pre-football game of catch and beer brats and burgers with the family. "I guess I'm up, huh?"

"I think so." Rick was panting a little, sweat beaded up on his hairline, even though it was a pretty mild day.

"Man, we're getting old." Bill winked, grabbed the spare glove and headed toward the kids. "All right, y'all. Get ready."

He tossed the softball to Lana, the dogs barreling after it, wagging and panting.

He could hear Rick singing as the kids squealed and fought the dogs for the ball, the sound of meat sizzling on the grill just underneath. Charlene gabbed away with one of the girls from Rick's contractor's office, both of them looking pretty as anything with their hair all newly done.

The potato salad was in the fridge, Charlene had brought the chips and relish tray and someone had a crockpot with them little weenies in.

It was rocking.

"Come on, y'all! Quit playing with the dogs and throw it back!"

The ball sailed back, stopping nearly three feet in front of him. No wonder Rick had run himself ragged. Lord, lord.

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Still, he ran for it, spending another ten minutes throwing and tossing and playing until Rick hollered out that the meat was done.

Thank God.

The kids all cheered, piling over to the big picnic table to load up plates. "You're looking good, honey," Rick said, grinning over and dancing out of the way.

"I'm getting old, you bastard." He took the cover off the potato salad, grabbed the plate.

"It's hell, ain't it?" Popping his butt with a dishtowel, Rick came on over and picked up a paper plate, too, lining up right behind him. "You're still my one and only thing."

"Good." He got the radishes and green onions, leaving the pickles for Rick.

Pickles and those little round cheeses and celery with peanut butter. That's what Rick liked; that and the beans and brats and those dark brown rolls.

Of course, he had the secret weapon.

Banana pudding.

Hidden in the fridge.

They sat side by side, legs touching, and just laughed and joked and watched the kids' antics. God, it felt good to be in the sun and just playing. Banana pudding might get him a blow job.

"Y'all going to come to my next party? I could make it guys only."

Billy blinked, stared at Charlene. "Can I kill her, darlin'?"

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"Sure. I figure she's earned it. Go for it." Rick gnawed a sausage, looking completely unconcerned with Charlene's demise.

"Thanks." He looked back over at Charlene, giving her his best glare. "We will not be showing at any damned pervy party, Miss Thing."

"Pervy! It's a perfectly natural expression of physical love!" Charlene said with a petal pink pout. "Come on, y'all."

"No." He caught one of the kids who was on a headlong freefall toward the deck.

"No? But..."

"The man said no, Char. 'Sides, that skanky boyfriend of yours will most likely be there," Rick said, pointing his fork at her. "And you know I cain't abide him. He ain't right."

Not only that, one day, Rick was gonna kill the smarmy fucker.

"Y'all just have no sense of adventure." Charlene let it go, though, the boyfriend mention shutting her right down.

"Nope. We're just staid ole boys, me and Rick." Staid, staid, staid.

Even if they had played a little. Most of that shit was better as fishing lures.

Rick's ears were bright red, telling him the man was remembering some of the adventures they'd had. It hadn't been bad at all. No, sir. But it was Rick. Nothing was bad with him.

The back of his hand brushed against the back of Rick's, just a little. Hell, they'd been having more fun than they could shake a stick at.

Cut Bait
by B. A. Tortuga

Rick glanced over, eyes hot as blue fire. Lord Almighty, he could read just exactly what the man had on his mind, right there.

And Rick didn't even *know* about the banana pudding...

* * * *

It was the banana pudding that did it.

Rick loved that stuff, loved that Billy had made it for him, not Charlene, because Charlene always used the nasty overripe 'naners, and Billy used firm ones.

Firm bananas. Rick cackled, washing up the last of the cookie sheets they'd used to carry the meat back and forth from the grill. Even the dogs had stopped begging, knowing everything was put away and wrapped up and scrubbed.

So Rick was left to contemplate firm bananas and Billy, and he finally dried his hands, heading to the front room with a purpose.

"Hey, honey. You ready to let me thank you for that fine pudding?"

Billy was stretched out on the sofa, legs sprawled, shirt tossed off after an unfortunate barbeque sauce incident.

Rick took a moment to stop and admire that short, stocky body, the pretty hands, the way those greeny-gray eyes caught his. "Well, hello there," he said, grinning.

"Mmm. Hey darlin'. It was a good day, wasn't it?" One hand was held out to him.

"It was." He took that hand, letting Billy pull him down. "I think we can get that shirt clean."

Cut Bait
by B. A. Tortuga

"It's old. I'm not worried." Billy's lips pushed against him, the kiss sweet and slow and hot as the blazes, all at once.

His arms wrapped around Billy's back, his one leg sliding over Bill's thigh. Jesus, that felt good.

Billy smelled damn good—a mixture of Old Spice and smoke and man—and he ate it up, let it make him good and hard. Rick was just enough taller than Billy to get his legs straddled over Billy's lap, and he started rubbing and pushing, taking the kiss higher. There was just something about making out on the couch that took him right back to being a teenager.

He wasn't alone in that, either, was he? Hell, no. Billy arched and rubbed, tongue sliding on his lips, into his mouth.

Rick reached between them, hand pressing against Billy's zipper, feeling the heat and hard under there. The man had the prettiest cock. Way better than the fake ones under the bed.

"Mmm. More." Billy spread a little wider, pushing his legs apart as well.

"Uh-huh. I want it all, babe." Everything. Skin. Well, he had that barrel chest to play with, and when he remembered he had another hand, he started petting.

Billy leaned his head back against the back of the sofa, throat working as a flush climbed its way up Billy's belly.

Leaning in, Rick licked that corded throat, following the path of muscles and tendons. Salt, mesquite, and all Billy. Lord. He needed more.

"Oh..." Bill swallowed under his throat, Adam's apple a'bobbing.

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by B. A. Tortuga

"Mmmhmm. I do love how you taste, honey. Love how you feel..." Grunting, he moved back just enough to get Billy's zipper open, wanting to smell and feel and taste there, too.

"Want, huh?" Billy was damn near at the grunts and clicks stage, heavy cock pushing out, trying to get to him.

"You know it, honey." That was far better than a banana. Which made him think what he ought to be doing, and Rick slipped back, sliding to the floor. He wanted to taste.

Billy stared, belly muscles taut as that cock throbbed. Oh, yeah. Someone wanted him.

His mouth closed easily around the head of Billy's cock, tongue working up and down and around. Salt and musk exploded through his senses, and he damned near came in his pants, right there. He'd been on a low hum of desire most of the day.

"Darlin'..." Billy's fingers clenched, the knuckles creaking. Oh, he wasn't the only one needing.

He thought better of nodding, but Rick managed an encouraging noise, one hand planted on Billy's thigh, the other reaching up to stroke those heavy balls, still half covered in denim. The heat there was incredible.

Fuck, Billy made the best fucking sounds, rough and raw and all for him.

Closing his eyes, Rick worked his way down, lips closed tight, then up. He started bobbing his head, really giving it to his lover as hard as he could.

Bill's hands landed on his shoulders, not pushing, but touching good and hard.

Cut Bait
by B. A. Tortuga

The way Bill's thumbs pressed in and massaged his muscles had him working even more, showing his appreciation. Not just for the banana pudding either. Rick loved the way Billy took care of him right back.

"Gonna, darlin'. I'm real close." Yes, he could taste, the drops sliding on his tongue coming more and more frequently.

All he could do was work Billy all the way down and swallow. He wanted every damned bit he could have.

He got it, Bill coming in long pulses into his mouth, his name ringing out, and Rick just opened up and let Billy fill him, the salty-bitter taste sliding across his tongue when he finally pulled away. Rick rubbed his cheek against Bill's thigh, humming happily.

"Oh. Oh, man, darlin'. That was fine..." Bill's head sorta rolled, all loose on his neck.

"Mmmhmm. I swear, honey. You're amazing." He kissed the inside of Billy's thigh, smiling a little. That was the best way to end a fun day.

"Just yours, huh?" All his.

"You know it. If I was one of them kinky types Charlene makes money off of, I'd stamp it on your ass or something..." Rick snorted, suddenly tickled beyond reason.

Bill blinked, then started laughing, just shaking with it.

Crawling back up on the couch and wrapped himself around Billy's heaving body, laughing like a loon. Lord, he loved that man.

He got himself a hard, deep kiss of his own. It didn't seem like he was alone in that, at all.

Cut Bait
by B. A. Tortuga

"Mmm. Let's go get a shower, babe. Then we can watch some TV in bed, huh?"

"Sounds perfect, darlin. I'll soap you up and rinse you off," Billy said, nuzzling his cheek.

"Yeah? I could handle a real thorough wash..." He got up and held out a hand, pulling Billy up and wrapping an arm around those sturdy shoulders.

Billy's hand slid around his waist, squeezing. "It'll be a good thing, darlin'. I swear."

"Then bring it on." Family barbeques were great. The kids rocked. But it was the nights at home with Billy that he loved best.

Chapter 5

"You want some more pie?" He grabbed the paper plates off the table, heading for the trash can. Rick had made supper—beans and cornbread and sausage, yum—so he had dish duty.

Thank God beans were wet.

"Yeah. I think maybe a half a slice. You wanna share?" Rick was looking like all was right with his world, smile wide, blue eyes dancing, one big dog drooling on his knee.

"Surely." He rinsed off the forks and dumped them in the dishwasher before handing the pie over and stealing a kiss.

"Mmmm." Rick's hand came up to catch the back of his head, holding him there for a much longer taste.

He moaned, groaning, caught for a minute. Hungry bastard. Billy adored him.

He got a pat on the ass, a huge grin when they broke for air. "Come and have more pie, honey."

"You know it." He nodded toward the front room. "You come in there, we can share the couch."

"Oh, good idea." Taking the plate, Rick got up, his long, lean body wiggling and putting on a show.

"Look at you..." He followed, forgetting right about the dishes.

"Like what you see?" That tight little ass gave one more shake before Rick flopped on the couch, pushing Hooper away with one foot.

"You know it." He plopped down beside Rick, right down on something hard and pokey and ... "What the hell?"

Billy pulled out another squat, pink box. "Jesus Christ."

"Oh, Jesus. I didn't even know that was there, honey."

Rick stared at the thing like it was a snake about to strike.

"Now she's hiding them in the furniture?"

"Apparently. We'd best watch that recliner. Somebody'll get impaled." He opened the box, blinking at the thing inside.

"It looks like a bullet, sorta."

Rick peered over his shoulder. "What the heck..."

He fished out the instructions and handed 'em over, lifting the thing out and looking at it. It had a little give to it, really. Not squishy, but not *hard*.

"I ... Damn, Bill." Rick read through the instructions before handing them back over to him, shaking his head.

He read and his eyes bugged out, turning the thing around and around. It would make you damn full, that was for sure.

"That's kinda. Well. I dunno, Billy." He was getting that half ashamed but interested look, Rick's eyes just a bright, fiery blue.

"Uh-huh." He didn't either, wasn't sure if he wanted to know.

Wasn't sure if he didn't.

Billy pushed into Rick's arms, lips smashing together in a kiss.

Moaning, Rick kissed him right back, tongue pushing out to taste him, pressing the copper flavor of a split lip back into his mouth. Oh, fuck. His hands got caught in Rick's hair, one leg sliding over so he could straddle his man. Fuck. Hot.

Cut Bait
by B. A. Tortuga

"Mmm. You ... I love this." He knew it. Knew how much Rick loved it when he got a little aggressive, got right up there and humped like a bad dog.

"Need you." He jerked as Rick's hands landed on his ass, squeezing hard, fingers sliding in the crack.

"Always need you," Rick said and pressed up and up, all but lifting his knees off the couch, that cock hard enough to drive nails.

"Yours, then." He pushed back, rocking hard down against Rick, their skin slapping together.

"Love you, honey." Grinning like a wild man, Rick pulled him down for another kiss, then another, until he couldn't breathe. Until his ears rang with it.

They broke apart, forehead to forehead, breathing hard, just staring at each other. "I don't want the fucking pie."

"Huh? Oh." The pie went sailing to the floor, what wasn't smeared on them, anyway. "No more pie. Bed?"

"Fuck, yes." It wouldn't hurt the dogs. He stood up, grabbed a hold of Rick's hand. "C'mon."

Rick came right along, pushing him with little gropes and pokes, that damned pink box left behind with the pie. Thank God. They tumbled down onto the bed, both of them grunting and twisting, trying to get clothes off.

"Ow!" Laughing, Rick pulled something out from under them again, but this time it was a paint stirrer. "Damn it. Sorry, babe."

"Lord, between you and your sister, we're gonna be all bruised." They got to cackling, tickled.

Cut Bait
by B. A. Tortuga

"No shit. I swear, that's not something I want to explore, honey." Rick attacked his ribs, rolling him across the bed.

"Tickles!" He howled with it, doing his best to fight back while laughing his damn fool head off.

They ended up with Rick on top, chortling against his throat, hands finally still. Lord, he couldn't catch his breath, couldn't stop chuckling. It made everything a little swimmy, a little desperate, but the grin on Rick's face was so worth it.

Rick finally shook his head, the laughter fading a bit, their bodies rubbing together with a little more purpose. He got a kiss, light and easy, letting him get his air back in between touches.

"Mmm." He reached up for the next kiss, lips clinging to Rick's, letting it linger.

Elbows propped by his shoulders, Rick pushed both hands behind Billy's head to hold him there, tongue tasting his mouth deep. Sweet. Damn.

He got fucking lost in it, fingers opening and closing as Rick took his mouth and just sent him over the fucking moon. His cock tried to drill its way through Rick's hip.

Rick murmured, low in his throat, body starting to move against Billy in a slow, rhythmic dance. He could so handle dancing with this man, feeling that hard cock press against him.

He spread, hips canting, making an offer, rubbing against Rick good and hard. Their tongues pushed together, both of them just going to town with it.

Panting, Rick pulled back to stare at him, blue eyes hot as the backyard grill. "Want in you, honey."

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by B. A. Tortuga

"Yeah." He shuddered a little, loving that voice, the way Rick needed him.

"Where in hell did we put ... Christ!" Rick was rummaging in the side table, and he recoiled like something had bitten him. "I think I'm going to kill her."

"Rick?" He pushed up on one elbow, looking.

There was a basket in their usual bedside junk drawer. A pink basket, full of colored condoms and little packs of lube and some kind of rubber geegaws that looked like mini porcupines.

"What the *hell* are those?" Mini porcupines. Jesus Christ.

"I dunno." Poor Rick looked like he was gonna explode. "I'm going to just kill her."

"Okay. Can you fuck me first?"

"Huh?" Head snapping back up, Rick burst out laughing, settling back between his legs with their own tube of KY.

"Hell, yes. Sorry, Bill."

He grinned up, both of them staring at each other, just starting to cackle. Jesus, the shit that life threw at a guy.

"So where were we, honey?" Rick asked, bending to kiss him again. "I don't want to think of anything but that anymore."

"You were going to make me a very happy redneck." He licked Rick's lips, relaxing back into the mattress.

"Oh, right." He got another kiss, then another, the tension slowly building again. Rick's fingers liked to drive him crazy, touching his cock, his balls, his hole. The slick stuff eased the way when Rick pushed two fingers inside him, stretching him

Cut Bait
by B. A. Tortuga

right out. Oh, yeah. That was more like it. No weird porcupines.

No plastic bullshit things.

No fucked up toys.

Just him and Rick and those fine fucking fingers.

Those fingers pressed in deep, crooking to find his gland, and that sent fireworks off behind his eyes, his body arching. Rick hummed when he shuddered, and then did it again.

"Darlin'!" His shoulders left the bed, his eyes feeling like they were going to pop out of his head.

"Oh, look at you. Jesus, Billy. Yeah. Feel so hot inside." Again and again, those fingers stretched him, making his eyes roll now.

Oh. Oh, that. He. Bill felt like he was fixin' to shake apart and Rick hadn't even hit the main event. So fine. So fucking hot.

"Shhh. Breathe, honey. Breathe." Pulling his fingers free, Rick moved up between Billy's legs, settling the head of that cock hard against his hole.

He nodded, took a deep breath and just bore down, groaning at the stretch, the sweet burn.

Slipping in until their bodies slapped together, Rick gave him just what he needed, mouth sliding along his throat as that thick cock pushed inside his body.

"Rick." Bill closed his eyes and just rocked, both of them moving together, the bed squeaking and creaking.

"Yeah, Honey. Love how you ... Oh, God. That's..." Rick just babbled for him, voice low and hard and full of need.

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by B. A. Tortuga

That strong body rubbed all up and down his, Rick's chest hair making his nipples tingle.

"Uh-huh." His balls ached, they were so tight. "Don't stop, darlin'. Don't stop."

"Not going to. Can't." That mouth met his again, Rick lowering himself down so their bellies trapped Billy's cock, giving it the friction it needed.

He wrapped his hand around Rick's neck, holding on as they just went to town, the old box springs singing for them. They got to a fever pitch, both of them panting and sweating, needing release. It was Rick who gave it up first, head snapping up, blue eyes wide and dazed as he came, looking like Christmas morning.

So pretty.

So fucking fine.

Bill reached down, pumped his cock a couple times, just to shove himself over the edge.

"Billy." Rick helped, lifting up just enough, hand closing on him, making him holler like a damned fool. It felt better than anything, ever.

"Urmph." That was the best he could do, given he was melted on a bone-deep level.

They just flopped together like a couple of rag dolls, both of them breathing hard. Rick nuzzled his neck, smiling against his skin. He could feel it between every kiss.

He patted Rick's butt, happy as a dog with a bone. This was what Charlene and them didn't get. Nothing plastic could make do when there was warm skin for the taking.

* * * *

Cut Bait
by B. A. Tortuga

Rick cradled the phone between his shoulder and cheek, trying to get the window to stay up so he could fix the damned screen. "I swear to God, Charlene. If you ever go into my bedroom again, I'll kill you. No shit stuffed in the couch, either. Jesus, what if your kids found that crap? Or the guys coming over for poker?"

Damn it, the window kept slipping. Rick waved at Billy, who was helping with the fall cleaning, and pantomimed something to prop the window up with. "No, I mean it. No damned things with ... Ticklers? Those things don't look like they'd tickle."

"Tell her they attracted bass real good, darlin'." Billy looked around, then snapped his fingers and grinned, heading for the closet.

"No, you heard him right. Billy used them as bait. Well what the hell else was he supposed to do with them?" His arm was starting to get tired, and the window was slipping again, taking his screen patch with it.

Billy came running, the big purple dildo in hand. "Ta da!"
Oh, Jesus Christ.

He about ruptured himself laughing, trying to hold the window and the phone and not beat Billy to death. "No, no, I got to go, Charlene. I'll talk to you later. No more toys."

He let the phone drop as Bill stuffed the monster dildo in the window. It held, though.

"Oh, man. I knew that thing had a use!" Bill looked pleased as punch, bouncing in his stocking feet.

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by B. A. Tortuga

Tilting his head, Rick looked at the damned neon purple ... thing. "Well, it sure does work. Not the most attractive prop for a window, but sturdier than a wooden spoon. Hand me the thread, yeah?"

"Yeah, yeah. Man, that wind feels good, fresh. I got the bathroom done."

"Go you!" Rick took a little break now that his hands were free, grabbing Billy and reeling him in to take a kiss. "You think that pink one would hold up the little window in the kitchen?"

"Hell, yeah. That would get us a cross breeze..." Bill bent down, started rummaging under the bed.

Grinning, he watched that sweet ass wiggle and bounce, pondering how Billy was just built like a brick shit house. In fact, he kinda forgot what he was doing and got lost in happy contemplation.

"Did you mean the shiny pink one or the dull pink one with bumps?" Two dildos were held up in one back-stretched hand, Bill's head still under the bed.

"Jesus, Bill. Where the hell did the bumpy one come from?" That thing looked like a rotting pink cucumber. Or one of them fruits with the horns. Some kind of melon?

"Hell if I know. There's one that looks like a melty ice cream cone, too." The toy in question waved in the air.

"Fuck a duck. Well, it's too squishy. We need one of the really hard ones." How many of the damned things had he ended up with, anyway?

"I don't know. This one'd be less likely to hurt. Hell, it might feel good." Bill kept rummaging. "I think there's an old

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by B. A. Tortuga

mitre box under here that might work. Why's there a mitre box under the bed?"

"I don't know, honey." Giving up his ogling, Rick got back to work, getting the screen patched. Work first. Then play.

Of course, Bill didn't help, hands wrapping around his hips, thumbs rubbing the small of his back.

"You're supposed to be helping and propping up the kitchen window." Hell, he didn't mind, but he was genetically incapable of not teasing.

"Uh-huh. I'm helping. Rubbing your back." Billy's lips smiled against his shoulder.

"Feels good." It did, too. After long days on a ladder, stretching to paint tiny corners or big moldings, home improvement kinda added insult to injury.

"Good." The rubbing got harder, Billy really pushed, his muscles relaxed.

"Mmm. Oh, honey, gonna make me want to just go lie down and let you do this for an hour." Jesus, Billy took good care of him.

"There's a bed, right here." Billy turned him, nice and easy.

"There is..." Grinning, he grabbed Bill's hand and pulled him along gently before sitting on the edge of the bed to tug of his boots. "Come on, honey."

Bill tugged his own sweatshirt off, tossing it in the chair.

They both got undressed, and Rick spent some more quality time staring at Bill, watching that stocky, muscled body move around the room when Billy closed a couple windows and shades. Damn, he loved they way Bill moved.

Cut Bait
by B. A. Tortuga

Billy turned, cheeks flushed, cock mostly hard—all for him.

"Looking good, honey." His own cock perked right up, anticipating a little massage of its own.

"Thanks." Bill grinned, looking just pleased as punch. "You still wanting that massage?"

"I think we could negotiate." Patting the bed next to him, Rick smiled back, his want ratcheting up a notch or two.

"Mmm. I'm listening." Billy settled right in close.

"Oh, good." Leaning against the sturdy shoulder, Rick reached over and stroked Bill's thigh. "I think maybe we could skip the massage until tonight."

"Yeah?" That thick thigh shifted, Bill's heavy balls drawing up a little.

"Uh-huh. I got other things on my mind." He pushed a little, spilling his lover back on the bed, giving him that chest and belly to stroke and kiss.

Billy spread for him, fingers in his hair, cock going good and hard.

Rick licked at one nipple, letting his teeth close on it just a bit. "You like the plan?" he asked, moving across to the other nipple.

"Uhn. Uh-huh." He got a soft little moan, Bill's pecs going tight.

"Yeah. Love how you taste." Thumbs pushing up to rub those hard little bits of flesh, Rick worked up to Bill's throat, sucking up a mark at the base, where it wouldn't show.

"Darlin..." Oh, listen to that. Listen to how hungry his man was.

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by B. A. Tortuga

"Mmmhmm." Licking the spot, Rick pressed down with his tongue, letting Billy really feel it.

Bill's hand dragged down his spine, fingers digging in a little harder than usual.

"What do you want, honey?" Bill had been good to him. Now it was his turn. "Want me to suck you?"

"Oh ... We both can." Billy grabbed his hip, tugged him around.

What a damned fine idea. He got his knees set, lowering his cock to Bill's lips before dropping his mouth down over the hard cock waiting for him.

Billy sucked him in, pulling hard, hands wrapped around his thighs as that hot tongue slid on him.

Rick closed his eyes and sucked right back, pulling at Bill's cock for all he was worth. It had been ages since they'd done a sixty-nine, and Rick spared a second to wonder why. Then he went back to humping and licking.

They rocked together, those heavy thighs framing his face, the heat around his cock maddening.

The scent of Bill's skin had him moaning, the feel of his lips sliding along Bill's prick hot as hell. His hands cupped Bill's ass, pulling his lover closer.

Bill spread a little for him and that nose nudged his balls, Bill taking him to the root.

"Mmmph." He opened wider, too, taking Bill in as deep as he could before running his tongue along the underside of that amazing prick, wanting it all.

Billy groaned, the sound vibrating all through him. God *damn*.

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by B. A. Tortuga

They both jerked, both thrust hard, and they both had to back off a bit to breathe. Stroking Billy's ass, Rick went deep again, lips sealing around the base of that amazing prick. He felt Bill's cry, vibrating around his cock, into his balls. That did it for him. His hips went crazy, and Rick had to really watch his teeth as he came, his eyes rolling in his head with the effort.

Billy wasn't too far behind, still sucking and licking at him as that salty bitter spunk landed on his tongue.

Humming happily, Rick rolled off Billy and rested next to him on the bed, breathing hard. He was shaking like a newborn colt.

"Goddamn." Billy reached out for him, patting him clumsily.

"Uh-huh. I'll move here in a minute. Promise." They still had a lot of cleaning to do, and a whole day to do it.

"Uh-huh." He got another pat, a sweet, slow blinky look. "'s good."

Chuckling, Rick squirmed around until they were more face to face, taking a little kiss. They could have a nap.

"Mmm." Billy snuggled right in, already snoozing.

They'd finish the windows and all, later. For right now, Rick could ignore the big purple dildo holding the one frame in place.

Mostly.

* * * *

Bill stretched and hummed, back popping as his butt slid on the sheets.

Cut Bait
by B. A. Tortuga

He frowned, blinked.

Wait.

What was he doing naked in the bed in the middle of the...

Oh.

Right.

Blow jobs and naps.

He chuckled and hopped up, hunting his sweats. He could hear Rick whistling away in the other room, just happy as a lark. About the time he got his sweats on, Rick broke into song, wailing about a tear in his beer, the sound of something mechanical buzzing in the background.

"What are you up to, darlin'?" He wandered toward the sound, which was fortunately near the fridge and that pitcher of tea.

"I'm tenderizing us some meat for chicken fried steak." The whirrrrr got louder, and when he peered over Rick's shoulder, he saw a bright teal ... thing. With a motor. And those rubber knobby things on the business end.

"Oh, man" He leaned against the door frame, thinking on that. Lord, if that could tenderize steak...

"Women got to have some tough innards."

"It's a lot less work than the meat whacker..." Rick switched songs, singing about someone's cheatin' heart, warbling like crazy.

He chuckled and went to pour a glass of tea. Lord love a duck.

The silly thing just kept a'buzzin' until Rick finally turned it off to bread the steaks. "Figured it might as well use it for

something ... You know, I can't imagine someone using it for what it's intended."

"Well, you liked that one that time, but it didn't..." He waved one hand. "Bzzzzz."

"It was hot because you were there, honey," Rick said, flipping the steak in the flour. "I mean, I was willing to try it on my own, but it was weird until you came in."

Now that made him feel damn good, didn't it? Yes, it did. "You looked ... fucking hot, darlin'. Made my mouth dry."

"Yeah?" Those blue eyes flashed at him in a sideways kind of look, curious and bright. "I liked you liking it."

"Yeah." He went to get some potatoes out of the bin, grabbed a little knife. "I thought my cock was gonna beat its way out of my jeans."

The ridiculous blue thing buzzed right under his nose, Rick turning it back on. "I could beat your meat."

"Don't make me hurt you, darlin'. You'd have to go to work Monday all bruised and folks'd think poorly on you." Asshole.

Tossing the thing in the sink, his lover nodded, washing up his hands. "I know. They'd think, 'poor Rick, his boyfriend beats up on him all the time and he lets the poor fool think he's tough'."

Billy snorted, rolling his eyes. "Uh-huh. Poor, poor Rick."

He got him a pitiful look. "I'm just so abused and shit. How do I ever survive?"

"I know it. Just been torn down and down." Bill got himself a quick handful of ass, squeezing good and hard. "Lord, you're something."

Cut Bait
by B. A. Tortuga

"Yeah? Well, I do make you chicken fried steak." Winking, Rick sashayed around the kitchen, getting flour and shit together.

"Oh, right. You want me to peel potatoes?" Fried, breaded meat. Uhn.

"Yeah, that would be good. I'm gonna make gravy after."

Oh, God, he remembered the first time Rick had made gravy, hanging on the phone with his momma, burning the roux to a black goo.

He'd eaten lumpy gravy.

Raw gravy.

Watery gravy.

Grey gravy.

Good thing he loved Rick. Better thing that the man learned how to make gravy. Now, the gravy was almost as good as Granny's, fluffy and white and just right. A couple of momma's boys like them learning to cook seemed like pretty much a miracle.

'Course there was a lot of shit that seemed like a miracle with them.

Rick turned around and whapped right into him, the flour canister sort of ... poofing. "Sorry, babe," Rick said through a haze of white. "Need to bread."

He chuckled, grabbing hold of the canister before it crashed to the floor. "What to you want for the veggie?"

"How about green beans. We got some that Charlene canned last year." Laughing, Rick got pans heating and oil warming and started to get things smoking.

"They're gray, darlin'. How 'bout corns?"

Cut Bait
by B. A. Tortuga

"Sure. We got some frozen carrots, too. They won't take but a minute to heat up." They bumped hips on a pass through, their little kitchen close enough for a little encounter now and then.

The steaks went in the oil and he peeled up four taters, chop-chop-chop. They worked together good, just like they always did, and as long as he didn't look at the makeshift meat whacker in the sink, he didn't get a bad case of the chuckles. Supper was on the table in no time, that good gravy just right for the steaks and freezer biscuits.

Two big ole glasses of tea, Garth on the stereo and the back door cracked and things were perfect.

"Smells awesome, man. You spoil me."

"Shit, we're good at spoiling each other." Leaning one hand on his chair and the other on the table, Rick leaned down to kiss him.

Oh, now. That was fine.

He opened right on up to it, tongue pushing against Rick's and just making the kiss all sorts of good.

"Mmmm. Oh, that was a fine blessing, honey."

"You know it." Bill reached out, stroked Rick's cheek.
"Amen."

Another kiss and Rick was sitting down to eat, chattering about this house he had to paint or that trim he had to put in.

He dug in, nodding and chuckling, both of them making plans for Thanksgiving and talking about the Cowboy's chances for the playoffs.

Good stuff.

Normal stuff.

Cut Bait
by B. A. Tortuga

"So, what do you think we ought to do with that load of two by fours Kane dropped off, honey?" Rick was asking, forking up the last bite of carrots.

"Hmm. You wanting to build an outbuilding? It's either that or build out the porch some..."

"I was thinking we could build out the porch, maybe layer in some lower deck." The man was obsessed with decks.

Still, it was a good idea. Something to sit out on, drink a beer.

"We ought to have enough left to patch the dog run, yeah?" Winking, Rick got up and went to the fridge. "You ready for dessert?"

Oh, ho. He hadn't even known there was dessert.

"You know it. What is it?" Man, they ought to do shit around the house more often.

"Momma brought us a cherry pie to put in the freezer yesterday. I thought we'd have it with some ice cream. You want me to heat it up?"

"Sure. I'll do the dish thing." He started gathering up plates, humming a little. "You think we're boring, darlin'?"

Honestly, they were like old married...

Bill looked down into the sink where the teal, meat-smashing dildo was lying, half-covered in potato peels.

"Bill? You want to get the ice cream?" Rick nudged him with one elbow. "Hell, no, I don't think we're boring. I think we're just us."

"Yeah. Yeah, honey. I hear that..." He tumped the plates into the sink and headed for the freezer.

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"You okay?" The pie thumped on the counter, Rick coming to slide both arms around him, cheek against the back of his neck.

"I am. Just don't seem real sometimes, man. That I got so lucky."

"Mmmm. I think we're real enough," Rick said. The man sure felt real, rubbing up on him like that.

"I hear you." He leaned a little, ass shifting side-to-side.

"Mmmm. Lord, you're fine. Just fine." Kissing his neck and licking a little, Rick just loved on him, warm and slow and easy.

"Oh, I swear to God, honey. You melt my butter." Billy blinked nice and slow, damn near dancing with it.

"Yeah? I'll melt your ice cream..." Laughing low, Rick turned him neatly around and kissed him hard, tongue tracing his lips.

"Mmm. Yeah, darlin'." Lord have mercy. That was fine.

"God, I love your mouth. Have I told you that?" Rick asked. Those blue eyes glittered for him, and he figured Rick had forgotten all about cherry pie.

"Once or twice." That made him feel like a stud, like he was ten feet tall.

"Kiss me again, honey." Rick's hips pushed against his, a slow roll that had him grunting, moving to try and get more.

"Yeah." He dove right into it, tongue pushing and sliding into Rick's mouth, doing his damndest to make his man need. Hands cupped the back of his neck, and the kiss went deep and hard, stinging a little. Those long legs shifted against him, Rick's prick prodding against his belly.

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"Mmm." He couldn't help his moan, his sudden sharp want surprising him. That prick against him was finer than anything rubber or plastic.

"Come on, honey. Let's go to the couch or ... or somewhere. We're too damned old to be doing it on the kitchen counter." Bright laughter had him following Rick to the front room, where they made it to the big easy chair, but no farther.

Rick sat and he straddled, settling right in like he was made for it. "Hey, darlin'."

"Hey, you." Those strong hands worked up and down his back, thumbs digging in along his spine, making him hum. "This is good?"

"Uh. Uh-huh. Damn." He rested there, looking at Rick, just melting from top to bottom. "Don't stop."

"Not gonna. You've been driving too damned much, honey. You're all stiff." Rick snorted happily. "'Course we're both stiff."

"Mmhmm. I was appreciating your stiffness in the kitchen. All real, and all for me."

"You know it, Bill. Love you, love the way you feel. Makes me hard as a rock." Pulling down and rubbing up, Rick proved it for him, over and over.

He shivered a little, nodded. Man, Rick talking got him all sorts of hot.

"Damn, you feel good. Come on and get this off." Rick tugged at his shirt, getting it up around his chest, one hand coming back down to stroke his belly.

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He got it the rest of the way off, nipples hard and stiff, his belly rippling.

"Jesus, look at you." Rick touched him like he was a treasure, thumbs rubbing along Bill's collarbones, down over his nipples. Rick loved his belly, and stroked it, tracing each ridge.

Fuck, but Rick made him feel fine. His cock filled right up, going harder than Chinese algebra.

"Honey..." Rick's fingers found the button and zipper on his jeans, pulling them open, getting him out in the air.

"Uh. Uh-huh..." His cock just ached, balls drawing up tight, just from having Rick's eyes on him.

"Yeah. That's it. That's what I need." Those fingers explored him all over, stroking him, up and down. Loving on him.

"Anything, huh?" Anything for his man.

"You know it. Anything we want." Licking his lips, Rick looked up. "Kiss me, honey."

Oh, hell, yes. He bent down, lips brushing against Rick's at first, then pressing harder, then harder. Opening right up, Rick sucked on his tongue, hands working him like crazy. That man knew just how to touch him, just how to make him crazy. He rocked and rubbed, rolled and hummed, all caught up in the web that Rick was making for them.

"Love you, honey. So much." Rick was talking again, low, deep love words. They poured over his cheek, his throat, that voice making him moan.

"Uh-huh." One kiss turned into another and another. His cock was leaking like all get out, slicking Rick's hand.

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They rocked, Rick's fingers teasing his slit, then sliding down to wrap around the base of his prick. He was just gonna lose it, was gonna come like there was no tomorrow.

"You ... I can't. Fuck, yeah." He didn't want to be selfish, but what was a man supposed to do?

"I got you, honey. I so do. Come on. I want to ... I can watch this way." Jesus, those eyes were on him, like Rick couldn't look away.

"Uhn. Love. Fuck." His head snapped back, throat working as he jerked, shooting all over the fucking place.

"Jesus, that's hot. Oh, babe. Yeah." Moaning, Rick pulled him down for another kiss, hard and deep, all but burning his lips.

He couldn't catch his breath, couldn't think—fuck, Rick melted him but good.

Rick was rocking against him still, making these little noises that ripped right through him, but they were happy noises, needy. Those pretty blue eyes showed nothing but pleasure.

"I ... What do you need?" He could prob'ly get his hands to working.

Maybe.

"Just need to get off, babe." Laughing, breathless, Rick moved hard against him. "This is good ... Just. Just let me..." Rick grunted, hips jerking up and up, and he could smell it when Rick came, even through those jeans.

"Goddamn." Bill leaned in, hard, breathing them in. "Shit, marthy. That's fine."

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"Hmm? Uhn." He got a blinky grin, Rick patting his back with clumsy thumps. "I don't think this is boring, honey."

"Uh-uh. Not boring." Fuck him, this melted his bones.

"Not one bit. You still want that pie? I bet the ice cream is a goner."

Shit. Were the dogs in or out?

"Shower first?" Bill asked. "Bathroom's clean."

"You bet. You'll have to help me up." Oh! Oh, no fair, Rick tickling him in the ribs like that.

He hooted, grabbed Rick's wrists and hauling him up.
"Beautiful bastard."

"Yours, balls to bones. Come on, honey. Let's get me out of these jeans."

Rick looped an arm around him, steering him to the bathroom. Yeah, boring or not, they belonged to each other.

He figured that was good enough for him.

Chapter 6

His cell phone rang just as Rick pulled out of the contractor's parking lot, tires spinning on the gravel. With the weather so bad, he didn't have nothin' to paint, so he headed home to wait for Bill, worrying on that man driving all over Hell and half of creation. Damn, the winter was sucking wind this year—and not in that fun, spanky way.

He grabbed the phone, trying to keep it from slipping out of his cold hand. "'Lo?"

"Rick? Hey, Rick, I got a problem..."

Charlene sounded like she was crying, her voice shaking like crazy.

"Honey, what is it?" He turned off the main road at Harris instead of Water's Street, heading out to Charlene's place.

"I ... I'm in the bedroom. We've got the door locked and all, but I think he's a little crazy."

Shit. Rick didn't have to ask who "he" was. That jerk Charlene was hooked up with had always been unstable at best. "I swear to God, Char, if he's touched you, I'm gonna kill him."

She gave him a watery laugh, and he could hear the kids chattering away in the background. Thank God they were okay. "I just ran in and locked the door. He was ranting and raving and all, Rick, really scared me."

"Well, I'm two minutes away." He pushed it harder, the tires slipping on the ice, the truck shooshing into Charlene's drive like a runner sliding into third base. He stormed up the

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drive and over the porch, ready to tear that no good bastard down.

No one beat on his family. That asshole was going to leave town, one way or another. Then Rick would go home and make some supper for Billy.

Sounded like a damned fine plan.

* * * *

Lord have mercy, his ass was cold. The roads was slick as snot, from Bonham to Terrell and back over to Waxahachie, and he'd fought to keep that evil bitch between the lines all fucking day—a nine hour run turning to an eighteen hour one, just like that. No coffee. No lunch. Nothing at all. Now he was in the pickup, heading home.

Smelling like trash and diesel and rain.

Soaked to the bone.

Stiff as all get out and with one hand tore to hell, that gas line clamp having bit him but good. Fuck, it was hell being a working man. He shoulda listened to his Aunt Fanny and tried to be a lawyer or something. Yeah. Right. Like he wanted to sit on his fucking ass all day and have to be nice to assholes he didn't care for. Fuck that.

Bill lit a cigarette, driving with one elbow as he breathed deep, the smoke warming him right on up. He was just trying to get himself home in one piece and not be itching for a fight.

When he pulled into the yard the dogs were out, all of them covered in mud and sniffing around, the kitchen door sitting wide open. Wide fucking open.

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Shit. He hopped out, ignoring his screaming back to hurry in. Either Rick was dead, the heater was broke or ... the dogs had grown opposable thumbs.

There was mud everywhere. Icy, slimy mud, from the kitchen door all the way through the eat-in, all the way down the hall. Jesus, what a fucking mess.

"Rick? Darlin'? You okay?" He slipped about halfway through the kitchen, cracking his chin on the cabinet but good. Fuck. Stars. Little tweeting birds. Somebody was going to die. "Rick?"

"Billy? I'm in the bathroom!" Well, Rick's voice came strong enough, echoing down the hall. Okay. So Rick wasn't dead. Outside the back door, Moose started howling, the sound raising the hair on the back of his neck.

He could feel his chin bleeding, just dripping out, and he tore off his work shirt, holding it up to save the carpet as he ran to figure out what the fuck.

The bathroom looked like a mud pie kitchen. Jesus, there was even mud on the ceiling. Rick was almost bare assed, just his boxer briefs on, and the man's skin was all but blue.

"Rick? Darlin'? What the fuck? Are you hurt?"

"I don't know." Rick turned a grime-smeared face to him, blue eyes almost shocking in all that muck. "I ... Oh, fuck, honey. You're the hurt one."

"You don't know? How can you not know?" He headed over, sick to his stomach and sliding like he was on one of them fun house dealies. It was fucking ten at night; he was supposed to be in bed, not scared to death and bleeding.

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"Well, I can barely feel my feet. What the hell did you do to your chin?" Rick turned the rest of the way around, hands coming up to cup his cheeks. Christ that was cold.

"I fell. Jesus, what's wrong with you? Why are you so fucking cold, darlin'?" He reached out and tugged Rick close, muscles screaming at him.

"I let the dogs out. I came back in to get towels. When I went back out, Boss had gotten hung up in the fence. You know how he puts his head through?"

"Oh, shit. That stupid fucking mutt. How long'd it take you?"

Grinning through chattering teeth, Rick shook his head. "I dunno. I fell a couple times." Then Rick's eyes widened, a curse exploding out of that pretty mouth. "Shit! You're home. Finally. Fuck me. Jesus, Billy, you must be dead. Here, sit down." Rick guided him to the toilet, where the lid was down and a clean towel lay draped across.

He just sat and blinked. Okay.

Okay.

Either Rick had been drinking. Or the ice had addled the man.

Something.

Because, damn.

"You need a shower, darlin'? Warm up? I gotta get the dogs in and the doors shut."

"I'll do that. I forgot I left them." Rick finally smiled, looking a little more settled, a little less like he'd had an extra bowl of crazy for breakfast. Oh. Breakfast ... "I'm sorry,

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honey. I was just so cold; I had to get in and get those clothes off. You just stay right there."

Oh. That was more like the Rick he knew.

He nodded and waited for Rick to get out of the way before he tried to stand up and get naked without blood getting into his boots.

"I'll be right back, man." Rick looked like some kind of crazy patchwork quilt, all old towels and a ratty bathrobe Billy thought he'd thrown out a year ago.

"Kay." Man, the place was ... "Damn."

He used his shirt to swipe up mud until he realized he was smearing blood in with the dirt, which made him queasy as hell.

Rick came back, slipping and sliding on the tile. "Billy? I got the dogs in the mudroom. Locked 'em in. Let me get another towel."

"Careful. It's slick." He still wasn't sure how the mud got everywhere...

"I know. I kept sliding and falling down. My feet are pretty numb."

As soon as the worst of the mud was up, Rick started the shower, hot water billowing out. Oh ... Steam.

He headed over, blinking a little slow, like his eyes were sorta froze. "Hey. You scared me, man."

"I'm sorry, babe." Rick's hands still felt frozen, and clumsy as all hell. "Your back must be killing you. Come on. In."

"Been a day." Hell, he hadn't eaten since he left at four this morning. Thank God tomorrow was Saturday. He thought he might just sleep 'til lunch and then con Rick into cooking

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waffles. Waffles and sausage with fluffy eggs. He looked at the tub.

At his legs.

At the tub.

Man, they needed a shorter bathtub...

"Honey? What do you need?" Letting go, Rick moved away and stripped off the layers of crap, rinsing his hands off before coming back to move him slow and sure.

"Sorry. I just zoned out." He got in the tub, ducking his head and just letting it hit him square. Oh, massaging heads were proof that God loved rednecks and needed them to be happy.

"Oh, Bill. Look at your poor back. It's all knotted up." Well, sure it was; coming home from a long ass drive and finding your door wide open and your lover covered in mud and bruises did that.

Not to mention the whole fun house, slippery-slidy thing. Man, they needed to move to the Valley. They could grow grapefruit and drink Mescal with the locals.

"Honey?" Rick was staring away, eyebrows all bendy.

"It's been a day." Wait. Had he said that already?

"You're scaring me a little, honey." Rick turned him around to wash his chest, staring right at him, looking worried as hell. Man had a shiner that wouldn't quit, now that the mud was off.

"Rick? What happened to your face?" That wasn't the fucking dogs...

"Um. I don't want to tell you." Rick wouldn't quite meet his eyes, but at least that was honest enough.

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"Well, that's fair, but I reckon I should know if you're tying it up for fun or if someone's been a fuckhead."

See him. See him work on his reasonable bone.

"Charlene called. That skanky man of hers was fixing to rough her up. I stopped by on the way home..."

Oh.

Oh, that motherfucker.

Billy growled, hands clenched into fist. "It's bad enough that shitty son of a bitch makes the girls cry and that your stupid sister lets him be evil, but it's a complete other deal for that piece of shit fuckhead to be hitting on you! I'll go over there and rip off his arm and shove it up his ass."

"Billy." Rick grabbed him when he would have crawled out of the tub. "Charlene's at Momma's and he's headed off God knows where."

"Well..." His hands just creaked, muscles popping all over. "Tell me you kicked his ass."

"I wiped the fucking floor with him." Rick sounded savagely satisfied, so it had to be the truth.

"Good." Pride filled him and he nodded, satisfied, bone-deep. "That all you're hurt?"

"My knuckles a little." Once he settled back in the shower, Rick got him soaped up and started massaging his back.

"Mmm." He leaned hard, eyes closing as he started loosening up a little.

"That's better, honey." Rick said, digging in with strong thumbs. "Your poor back."

"Rick." Oh, he was keeping the fine son of a bitch.

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"Uh-huh. I'm sorry I stressed you out, honey." A soft kiss brushed the nape of his neck. "What do you want for supper?"

"You eat yet?"

"No. Did you?"

"Not since breakfast. Y'want to?"

"Yep." Rick pressed against his back, hugging him tight.

"Better?"

"I think I'll live. Christ. Tell me tomorrow's Saturday?"

"It is, and I have the day off." Oh, that sounded good.

They could snuggle a bit, maybe.

"Oh. Perfect. Me too." Well, duh. He always had weekends off.

Usually Rick did, too, but sometimes he had to make up for rain delays and shit. So go them. Rick turned off the water, the steam keeping them warm while they dried off.

"You want to clean the mud tonight or in the morning?" He could probably handle it.

Maybe.

If not, he'd just collapse, which worked.

"I tell you what. You go get the coffee and some whiskey and have a sit and I'll mop up. Then we can have some supper." Wrapping him in the good robe, Rick gave him a big old smacker of a kiss.

"You're a good man, Rick darlin'. I swear to God."

He hugged real quick and went to find them both something cozy and warm.

Billy could hear Rick whistling and the dogs barking along, just like a chorus. It made him chuckle while he moved

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around the kitchen. The mud brigade caught up with him, Rick mopping and scrubbing and wiggling.

The smell of the coffee perked him right up. Well, that might've been part the sight of Rick's ass, but the coffee didn't hurt. Neither did the cookie he grabbed from the jar.

The mud still showed around the edges when Rick was done, but it would do until they could scrub. Boss and Moose came over for scratches once Rick let them in, and the freezing rain was out there, not inside, so things were looking up.

"You want me to make some eggs, honey?" He poured them both a cup with a liberal shot. "We got them froze biscuits."

"Mmm. Biscuits." Nodding, Rick handled the freezer and the tin foil and the toaster oven. Breakfast for supper was a favorite for them.

He found some sausages and got them going before digging out the eggs and the butter and milk.

They moved around each other, bumping hips and laughing at how clumsy Rick was for someone who worked with his hands. Rick grinned over at one point, shiner just blue and purple. "You know what Charlene tried to pull while I was there?"

"She tried to get you to unclog her toilet or start her furnace?"

"No. She wanted to show me the set up for her next party." Shaking his head, ears red, Rick slapped butter in the pan for him. "She's got to find someone else to bond with."

He snorted a little. "So? Did she have anything good for fishing?"

"No. She had this thing that was made out of glass, Billy. This thing that you put ... there." Lord, the man was gonna go up in smoke, blushing.

"Glass? For fucking? No shit? Glass?" He sorta stared. "Ain't that dangerous, darlin'?"

"I would think so. Charlene says it won't break, but I was thanking God they're so expensive, so she wouldn't try to get me to take one..." The eggs started to sizzle, smelling a little done.

"Are they clear?" He rescued the eggs and turned the meat. Glass. Lord.

That would be...

Ew.

"They're all colored-y. Purple and blue and swirly..." Rick turned those baby blues on him, like a goat looking at a new fence. "Can you imagine?"

"Darlin', you know I'd do anything for you, but ... No. I cain't. I'd be too busy worryin' about it breaking important bits of us to feel like sex."

The horrified look Rick gave him had him hooting. "God, no, Bill. I ain't asking to try. That's just wrong. No matter who does it."

Billy nodded and slid the sausage patties onto a plate. "You know it. I reckon we've got enough to play with for awhile, what with the dogs and the mud and the odds and ends she got us."

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He got a sideways glance, Rick nodding slowly. "Yeah. I figure we're not the right test market, you know?"

"Oh, we had some fun, honey, we did." He rolled his shoulders, the muscles so much better now. "But they ain't nothing but geegaws; they ain't real."

They weren't them.

"Nope." The stove clicked off, Rick pushing the eggs onto a plate and setting the pan aside before coming to wrap around him, warm now, all flannel and soap scented skin. "I got what I need right here."

"Mmhmm." He lifted his face for a kiss. "We're all good, Rick. Mud and dogs and all."

The rest could stay in the box beneath the bed. They didn't even need it for a rainy day like today.

They just needed to get on with the business of living.

END

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