



PLAYING THE FIELD
TEE'D OFF



J. M. SNYDER

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...The guy flashes Greg another of his winning smiles. "Oh, my God. Greg? Gregory Chennault? Is that really you?"

Confused, Greg nods. Who *is* this guy? Should he know him? Hell, *can* he, please?

The hand opens, offered. When Greg doesn't move, he finds his own hand grabbed in both the stranger's own and pumped vigorously. "I'm Trevor's son."

"Junior?" Greg can't believe it. Trevor Johns Junior had been a gawky, awkward kid of fourteen when Greg saw him last. He'd never thought that shy, clumsy boy with the skinny legs would grow up so damn sexy.

"It's Trey now." The hands holding Greg's have grown warm but don't relax in the slightest. Instead, Trey covers Greg's thumb with one palm, encasing his hand completely. Greg is very aware of the heat generated between them, and the faint touch of Trey's fingers where they rest along his wrist. "God, it's good to see you. How the hell have you been?"

With a self-conscious shrug, Greg murmurs, "Oh, fine." Then, before he can stop himself, he gushes, "You look amazing."

Trey laughs. "You're one to talk! They say some things only get better with age."

A thin blush rises in Greg's cheeks, heating his face. Had he known the kid would fill out so nicely in the years to come,

he would've made a point to keep in touch. Just looking at Trey stirs his blood, and his heart quickens at the hands on his, that sunny grin, those sparkling eyes...

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BY

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AMBER QUILL PRESS, LLC

<http://www.AmberQuill.com>

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AN AMBER QUILL PRESS BOOK

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Copyright © 2009 by J. M. Snyder
ISBN 978-1-60272-499-0
Cover Art © 2009 Trace Edward Zaber

Layout and Formatting provided by: Elemental Alchemy

PUBLISHED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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Greg Chennault has loved the sport of golf since he was a kid, when his parents lived in a gated community with its own small course for residents. Then, Greg's backyard butted up against the fairway. On clear days, he would lie beneath the bushes, head in his hands, and watch the graceful swings of the golfers as they played through his line of vision. Whenever his father wanted to mow the lawn, Greg's duty was to tramp through the grass in search of errant golf balls, which he kept in a bucket behind the shed.

When he was twelve years old, he jumped the fence separating their yard from the course and trooped toward the club house, determined to get a closer look at the sport.

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Watching Nicklaus play on TV was one thing; feeling the springy grass under his feet and the cool breeze blow the sweat off the back of his neck quite another altogether. He stopped in mid-step to savor the feel of the sun on his arms and scalp, the scant wind across the open field, the soft crunch of footsteps on gravel and grass, the distant call of "Fore!" Closing his eyes, Greg raised his face to the sun, basking in its warmth. To his pre-teen mind, this was paradise.

A man's voice interrupted his thoughts. "You busy here, kid? Or can I play through?"

With a start, Greg turned to find he was no longer alone—an older gentleman leaned on his nine iron, a bemused expression on his face. He nodded in greeting, tipping the brim of his cap in Greg's direction. A bag of golf clubs lay on the ground behind him. "Do you mind?"

"What?" Greg asked. Then, realizing he was in the way, he jumped aside. "No, sorry!"

The man gave him an indulgent smile. Quietly, Greg circled around behind him, watching intently as the man squatted to set his tee in the ground. Over his shoulder, the man asked, "Can you get me a clean ball? They're in the front pocket of my bag."

"Where's the one you were using?" Greg asked as he hurried to obey.

The man made an off-hand gesture in the direction of Greg's house. "Over there somewhere."

Brightly, Greg told him, "That's where I live. I can go find it for you, if you want. My dad says I'm really good at finding

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all the stupid golf balls that wind up in our yard.”

The man laughed as he took the new ball Greg offered him. “You’re something else, kid. You like golf?” At Greg’s eager nod, the man extended one gloved hand, which Greg shook eagerly. “I’m Trevor Johns. I got a boy myself, a few years younger than you, I imagine. I hope one day he’s as into the sport as you seem to be.”

“I love golf,” Greg gushed. “This is my first time on a course. I came looking to see if they’d hire me on for something. Do you think I’m too young to get a job here?”

“Probably a little,” Mr. Johns admitted.

Greg’s face fell—his mother had *told* him he’d need a work permit, and he wouldn’t be able to get one for another three years.

But a heavy hand clapped his shoulder, and when he looked up, Mr. Johns smiled again, a warm expression that lit his dark eyes. “I’ll tell you what. My usual caddy couldn’t make it this afternoon, and I’m left carrying my own clubs. It’s not the most glamorous job on the course, I’ll admit, but if you want to get into golf, you have to start somewhere. Would you like to caddy for me today?”

“*Would* I?” Greg grinned so hard, his cheeks hurt. He heard the excited squeal in his own voice and clamped both hands over his mouth as if to stifle it. Then he nodded vigorously and, from between his fingers, said, “Yes, please, Mr. Johns. I’d like that very much.”

Mr. Johns ruffled Greg’s thick mop of sandy brown hair. “You think you can lift the bag? It might be too heavy for

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you—”

“It’s not,” Greg assured him. He didn’t care if it weighed a hundred pounds—he’d carry it to the club house and back, slung over his shoulder the way he’d seen the caddies do it on TV.

* * *

Fifteen years later, Greg works at the Hermitage Country Club, an exclusive resort tucked away in the small town of Colonial Pines. The pay is good, the lodging free, and in his spare time, he has his pick of five different golf courses on which to practice his swing. He’s on staff as an “expert,” which is a far cry from the nervy kid who had jumped the fence looking to learn the sport. Greg owes his career to Mr. Johns, who hired him on as a full-time caddy despite his age and kept Greg on the fairway all throughout his teenage years. When Greg left for college—on a scholarship, no less, with the campus golf team clamoring for him to play—Mr. Johns gave him a gift he still treasures to this day: his own set of clubs. At the Hermitage, he has his pick of expensive clubs, nine irons and five woods by the best manufacturers on the market, but whenever it’s just him and the ball out on the green, he totes his own bag.

During the last weekend in May, the Hermitage hosts its annual Mid-Atlantic Golf Tournament, a small event that attracts golfers from up and down the east coast. Greg spins into overdrive—he has to coordinate the lodging, the food, the entertainment. He hires mowers to trim the green down to a

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playing height; he brings in rakers to smooth out the sand traps, and divers to clean the ponds. He has to replace every worn out and ragged pennant on the fairway, and puts his employees to work repainting old golf balls until they gleam in the sun. He's the one the concierge calls when the rooms are full and guests have to be diverted to another hotel; he's the one who arranges for discounts at the Hilton Garden and Sheraton West. The week before the tournament begins, Greg doesn't get a chance to hit the putting green on his lunch break—he doesn't *get* breaks. He runs from sun up to sun down, trying to pull the tourney off without a hitch.

Then the weekend approaches and the first guests start to arrive, and things *really* get hectic.

* * *

It's Thursday, a mere twenty-four hours before the first rounds of golf begin, and Greg stands in the lobby of the Hermitage, waiting. He's behind a long registration table—spread out before him are nametags on lanyards, free pens, and goody bags full of promotional tees and mini golf balls on key chains and other knick-knacks golfers will love. Greg knows; he spent most of the night before stuffing the last of the bags after the shipment of Ping-sponsored golf towels finally arrived. Now he stands with his arms folded behind his back, his gaze roaming over the table one last time, assessing it as if the items before him were an offering to please the gods.

His attention is drawn to the nametags, which look jostled.

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A few of them are just slightly out of line with the others. The smallest detail bothers him—with so many people lodging at the Hermitage for the tournament, Greg knows just how much can go wrong over the course of one weekend, and he's determined to make sure nothing happens that might make golfers not want to return or sponsors pull out of the event. Anything he can control, anything at all, takes priority, even if it's as simple as straightening a line of nametags.

Leaning over the table, he runs his hands along the rows of plastic-coated tags to shimmy them into position. They're in alphabetical order, the registered golfer's last name in large print across the center of the tag, their first name or nickname of choice in small print above that. This being the South, there seems to be an extraordinary number of men named "Bubba" participating in this year's tournament. Greg thinks it's a stupid nickname, but as long as they paid their three hundred dollar entry fee like everyone else, he'll call them whatever they want, no matter how dumb "Bubba, sir" may sound.

Now that the first row is fixed, he moves onto the next, and the next. Halfway through the rows, he notices a name he hasn't seen in quite a while. *JOHNS*. From where he stands behind the table, the first name is hard to read—he's looking at it upside down, and the nametag above it partially obscures the word. He sees the letter *T*, though, and to be honest, how many other Johns does he know in the world of golf? It's a small sport of diehard fanatics like Greg himself. Each year, the same faces show up at the Hermitage for the tournament. Greg recognizes a lot of the names when he receives their

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entry forms. Some of the older guys he's played with on the green, and can even cite their handicap if asked.

There's only one Johns among the golfers in Virginia, and Greg remembers him well. It's good to see he's still playing the game. *I'll have to keep an eye out for him. Make sure I say hi.* Mr. Johns would get a chuckle when he saw that Greg still dragged around his mentor's old golf bag full of clubs some ten years later.

Then the sliding glass doors leading into the lobby open, and the first busload of golfers descend on the Hermitage. Some make a beeline for the check-in counter; others veer in Greg's direction to complete their registration before they even bother unloading their luggage. Hands reach for the nametags, scattering Greg's arrangement as nimble fingers flip through looking for their own name. The goody bags start to disappear as if by magic. Ducking beneath the table, Greg grabs another box of bags to restock the supply. *Let the games begin.*

* * *

A little before noon, Greg's coworker Carla weaves through the crowd that loiters around the registration area. In her early thirties, she's a few years older than Greg and pretty in an ephemeral sort of way. Her hair wisps back from her face in pale blonde feathers, and a smattering of barely-there freckles dot her cheeks and nose. Her skin looks almost translucent, and her eyes are the light blue shade of clear ice. She looks impossibly frail, as if the first strong wind could

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knock her off her feet.

But since he's been working with her, Greg has learned not to misjudge Carla. She's feisty, quick, and damn strong, to boot. One evening after work, as the two shared a few drinks at the lodge's bar, she told him she'd been studying *tae kwon do* since high school. Greg laughed, picturing this little dandelion of a woman playing at martial arts. "Stand up," she said, indignant. "I'll show you."

To humor her, he pushed himself up from their table. "In case you haven't noticed, honey, I'm a big guy. I'm pretty sure I'll be able to hold my own—"

A petite foot struck his inner thigh. As he lowered his arms to block the kick, Carla's open palm chopped at the sensitive spot between his shoulder and neck. The next thing Greg knew, he knelt on the floor in front of her, the beer in his stomach churning nervously, threatening to come back up. "Oh! I'm so sorry!" Carla's hands smoothed over Greg's back, seeking purchase to help him stand. "I didn't hit you all that hard."

Since then, Greg has been careful *not* to underestimate his coworker—he watches those tiny hands of hers at all times just in case she decides to throw him down again. At the moment, a glower simmers on her ethereal features and Greg hopes that isn't directed at him. As she eases around behind the registration table, he turns from the guests picking over the goody bags and flashes her what he hopes looks like a sympathetic grin. "Uh-oh. I know that look."

Her smile is just a sardonic twist of her lips. "The next old

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man who winks at me with his wife standing *right there* and asks if I'll meet him up after work for a drink or two at the bar is going down. I'm just saying."

Greg laughs. "Old men like you," he teases. "You should be flattered."

"We're not talking Sean Connery." Carla glares at a couple of golfers lingering at the table and they quickly move along. "We're talking wrinkly old geezers with pace makers and hearing aids."

Because that describes most of the men in the Hermitage's tournament, Greg can't disagree. Still, she doesn't have to put it so succinctly, particularly when their table is surrounded by golfers who fit her description. Greg doesn't want to hear any complaints about the staff this weekend, especially those coworkers he considers friends. "Now honey, you're just being mean."

"Don't *Now, honey* me," Carla warns. "Who seriously hooks up with a random person they meet working at a place like this? I mean, really? I've been in the hotel industry all my life and I've *never* gotten with a guest. *Ever*. Hello? Three days and he's gone. It's bad enough that happens normally, but why bring it upon yourself in the first place?"

Greg chooses not to answer, but his lack of response doesn't deter Carla. Wagging her hand over the nametags on the table, she flashes her wedding ring at the golfers gathered there and says, "I'm *married*, people. Back the hell off."

"Ooo-kay." Greg steps in front of her, his back turned to the guests. Leaning against the table, he absently picks at a

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nametag behind him as he stares Carla down. "Listen. They're harmless. I'm guessing if you ever winked back and said, 'Hey, sounds great, I'll meet you at eight,' the old man would have a heart attack right there at the front desk. We'd have to call the ambulance."

A slight smirk curls the corners of Carla's mouth, but she pouts harder to tamp it down.

Greg sees that half-attempt and grins. "And heaven help whoever decides to press his luck. I've seen you work your—" he chops the air with one hand—"magic. These guys just think they're being cute, flirting with you."

"How many guys have *you* picked up working here?" she wants to know.

There's no fooling Carla—she knows he's gay. He never said it out loud and she never asked, but at some point during their friendship, she made it clear through similar comments that she knew. Greg thinks that's the reason she likes him so much, because he's one of the only guys at the lodge who doesn't hit on her.

Turning his back to the table so the golfers there won't overhear, Greg admonishes, "Carla! *None*. That's not my scene."

"That's why you're single," she replies.

"You said it yourself—three days and they're gone." Carla isn't the only one who's had offers—Greg is always surprised when he gets propositioned by a guest. He just doesn't get involved with them, end of story. His last lover was one of the chefs in the lodge's steakhouse, but before things could get too

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serious, Antoine was offered a better position at the Omni in Richmond and left the Hermitage. After that, Greg threw himself into his work, and has been too busy with the tournament these past few weeks to even look twice at anyone else on staff.

Carla doesn't need to know that. "Just smile back," Greg advises. "You never know, you might get a good tip. What's the harm in that?"

Wrapping her arms around herself, Carla frowns past him and doesn't reply. She knows he's right. After last year's tournament, one smitten retiree left her a tip so large, he had to call his credit card company to assure them it wasn't a mistake.

For the first time all day, there's a lull in the lobby around them. Greg glances at his watch—12:10, time for his lunch break. "I'm going to get something to eat. Promise me you won't go all *kung fu* on the guests while I'm gone."

She narrows her eyes at him, peeved. "You know that's offensive, right? *Tae kwon do* is Korean, not Chinese."

Before he can reply and possibly say something even worse, Greg feels a touch on his hand and a man behind them speaks. "Excuse me. I believe that's mine."

Greg turns. He's been leaning back against the table, his hand resting on it to steady himself, and now finds an attractive young man pointing at the nametag under his fingers. For a moment, Greg can only stare. The man is a few years younger than himself, with broad shoulders that fill out a loose-fitting polo shirt and a narrow waist accentuated by crisp

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khakis cinched with a leather braided belt. The flat plains of his chest and stomach hint at a band of thin muscle hidden beneath that shirt. His hands are large, his arms strong and tanned and covered in faint, pale hair, as if bleached by long days spent in the sun.

Eye contact, Greg reminds himself, forcing his gaze to rise from the front of those khakis, up over that firm chest. A thin gold chain winks in the open collar of the man's shirt. Above that, his face is smooth, giving him a boyish appearance, and something about him pings Greg's memory. That thin top lip that curves back when he smiles, the pert button of a nose, the warm eyes like twin pools of melted milk chocolate. Greg knows him somehow, or has met him before, maybe at an earlier tournament. *Somewhere*. Sweet Lord, how could he ever forget a face like *this*?

The guy smiles as he plucks his nametag from Greg's nerveless fingers. He lowers his head, holding the lanyard open wide to get it on over the baseball cap he wears. His hair is dark and long, brushing the back of his collar, and he flips it up to get the lanyard situated. Greg's gaze drops to the nametag and he gasps.

JOHNS.

"Wait, I'm sorry." *This* isn't Mr. Johns, at least not the one Greg knew. Nodding at the tag, he asks, "Is that yours?"

The guy picks up the nametag and turns it around to read it. "Yep. Thanks." He flashes Greg another of his winning smiles, then falters when he *really* gets a good look at Greg. One hand reaches out, forefinger extended, pointing. "Oh, my

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God. Greg? Gregory Chennault? Is that really you?"

Confused, Greg nods. Who *is* this guy? Should he know him? Hell, *can* he, please?

The hand opens, offered. When Greg doesn't move, he finds his own hand grabbed in both the stranger's own and pumped vigorously. "I'm Trevor's son."

"Junior?" Greg can't believe it. Trevor Johns Junior had been a gawky, awkward kid of fourteen when Greg saw him last. He'd never thought that shy, clumsy boy with the skinny legs would grow up so damn sexy.

"It's Trey now." The hands holding Greg's have grown warm but don't relax in the slightest. Instead, Trey covers Greg's thumb with one palm, encasing his hand completely. Greg is very aware of the heat generated between them, and the faint touch of Trey's fingers where they rest along his wrist. "God, it's good to see you. How the hell have you been?"

With a self-conscious shrug, Greg murmurs, "Oh, fine." Then, before he can stop himself, he gushes, "You look amazing."

Trey laughs. "You're one to talk! They say some things only get better with age."

A thin blush rises in Greg's cheeks, heating his face. Four years apart in age, Junior had always followed Greg around, toting a kid's set of golf clubs as he trailed behind Greg, who carried Mr. Johns' bag. While his father played a hole, Junior would set up his own tee nearby and swing voraciously. "Watch me, Greg," he'd cry out, interrupting the other golfers'

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concentration. "Greg, watch this! Watch!"

The memory makes Greg smile. Had he known the kid would fill out so nicely in the years to come, he would've made a point to keep in touch. Just looking at Trey stirs his blood, and his heart quickens at the hands on his, that sunny grin, those sparkling eyes. Searching for something to say, anything to keep Trey at the table a little longer, Greg asks, "How's your dad?"

"Doing well," Trey tells him, nodding in affirmation. "Real well. He booked a cruise this week in the Bahamas or he'd be here himself. He was so jealous when I told him I'd registered for the tournament. Wait until he hears I ran into you. Damn, you look fine."

Beside Greg, Carla clears her throat. "Weren't you going to lunch?"

Reluctantly he withdraws his hand from Trey's. "Hey, yeah. Want to join me? We can catch up over a bite to eat. I'd love to hear what you're up to now."

"That'd be great." But Trey glances at his watch and frowns. "But I can't. Tee time starts in ten minutes. I'm a little rusty and really need to practice my swing if I'm going to place this weekend."

Greg understands. He's a blast from the past, nothing more, and Trey isn't interested in someone he used to know ten years ago. He was kind enough to say hello. If Greg is lucky, he'll see Trey before the weekend's over, and maybe Trey *will* mention it in passing to his father, but that would be it. Come Monday, Trey will be back to his own life, wherever

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that may be, leaving Greg at the lodge to clean up after the tournament and wonder why he'd never bothered to answer the few letters Junior had sent him his freshman year of college.

"Well," Greg says, keeping his voice light, "guess I'll see you around."

To his surprise, Trey reaches across the table to touch his arm. The press of flesh is a simmering heat that smolders between them. "What about tonight?" he asks, hopeful. "Maybe we can get together later, have a few drinks, you know. What do you think?"

"Tonight?" Greg's surprised to hear his voice crack when he says the word, as if he's prepubescent all over again. Clearing his throat, he tries to play it off with a disinterested shrug. "That sounds great. How about dinner? We have a good steakhouse here at the lodge. I'm off at six."

He holds his breath, waiting to get shot down a second time. *Sorry, Trey will tell him, but I just sort of meant a beer at the bar, nothing fancy, nothing much. Just a quick drink, some laughs, and we'll go our separate ways. Nice seeing you again and all, but really. I've got to go.*

But Trey's smile widens. "We'll meet here at what, six-thirty? Seven?"

Greg feels a weight lift off his chest. "Seven's good for me."

"It's a date, then." With a wink, Trey steps back from the registration table. "See you at seven. I can't wait."

For a moment, Greg stares after him as he disappears into

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the crowd. Then a sharp elbow prods his side. "That's not your scene, eh?"

He turns to find Carla smirking at him. "What?"

"Oh, I don't know." She flips her wispy blond curls over one shoulder. "He was just all over you. What a hottie, too! Greg, babe, you've been holding out on me. Who *is* he?"

Greg feels the heat creep into his cheeks again. "The son of an old friend," he admitted. "His dad's the first golfer I ever caddied for, years ago."

"And now he wants to carry *your* bag," she jokes.

The first beads of sweat pop up along the back of Greg's neck. Her words are too damn close to his own sordid thoughts for comfort. "Carla! That's vulgar."

She shrugs. "You hear worse working here. Golf's full of sexual innuendos. So, are you getting with him or what?"

"It's only dinner," Greg points out.

"And drinks," she adds. "Who knows where it'll lead?"

Greg doesn't, but he can't wait to see.

* * *

The rest of the afternoon drags. Registrations peter out once the green opens, and new arrivals head straight for the fairway without even stopping to grab their nametags first. Greg keeps an eye on the lobby, but Trey doesn't make another appearance. It seems so surreal, running into him again after all this time. He hopes Carla was right when she said Trey had been into him, because Greg would like nothing more than the chance to see where the night might end.

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Greg's memories of Trey are ancient. Mr. Johns' only son, affectionately called "Junior" as a kid, Trey had been like a little brother to Greg—always underfoot, always annoying, and never really registering on his radar. Trey had never shown any real interest in golf, much to his father's disappointment. When he would tag along with them to the course, he'd bother the other golfers so much that Greg was often asked to take him back to the club house. There the two boys would wait for Mr. Johns to return, Greg flipping through the channels on the television in the lobby while Trey kept up a constant chatter. "What do you think about that?" he'd ask, trying to snag Greg's attention. "Huh, Greg? We can watch this if you want. Oh! I love this show! Can we watch this instead? I wish they had a Nintendo. Are we leaving soon? Greg? Are you bored yet? I'm bored."

As Greg grew older, his own interest in the sport naturally began to waver. Sure, he still caddied for Mr. Johns, but most of the time while he waited on the green, his mind wandered. He was a teenager, with raging hormones, and out on the golf course, he'd passed many an afternoon lost in wicked thoughts. More than half of them involved Mr. Johns, who was attractive even if he were old enough to be Greg's father. Whenever Trey joined them for a few holes, his presence grated on Greg's nerves. He was a geeky kid who wore glasses and had a constant battle with acne on his cheeks. Around Greg, he had such a goofy, nervous laugh. Suddenly he couldn't string together two complete sentences; he grew awkward, his usual banter quieted, and the moments they had

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to spend together were strained. Greg began to suspect they simply had nothing in common, or perhaps Trey harbored some resentment toward him for working so closely with his father.

But now, looking back, Greg thinks maybe Trey might have been crushing on him. Here he was, eighteen and confident, working for Mr. Johns on a regular basis with cash in his wallet, a car of his own, and the promise of college on his immediate horizon. Trey was just a freshman in high school. The change from adoring fan to sullen teenager had been abrupt, but Greg was too occupied with everything else going on in his life at the time to worry much about it. They had never been *friends*, not really, so in his mind, it had been no great loss.

And here they were, going to dinner years later. On a *date*—Trey said it himself. Every time Greg thinks about their chance encounter, he wants to laugh. Who would've thought all those years ago that they might come to this?

What *is* this, exactly?

Greg doesn't know yet, and he doesn't really want to get his hopes up so soon, but when six o'clock rolls around, he practically knocks over the registration table in his hurry to return to his suite and freshen up.

Staff at the Hermitage can choose to stay at the lodge—the second floor is dedicated to their quarters, the room and board free. Greg has a nice suite, one of the larger rooms available. There's a mini kitchenette, a breakfast bar that doubles as a dining area, and a central living room with a gorgeous view of

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the fairway. On clear days from the balcony off the living room, he can see all the way out to the water trap at the eighteenth hole.

His bedroom is dark at this hour of the day, the curtains closed against the dying sunlight outside. Greg clicks on the overhead light to rummage through his closet for something to wear. A nervousness has settled into the pit of his stomach, a fluttering mass of anticipation that he hasn't felt in quite some while. With Antoine, it hadn't been there—they knew each other from work and had finally hooked up at a lodge party one evening, chatting and laughing and drinking way too much wine before the night was over. The two men had helped each other into the elevator; no words were exchanged, but before they even reached the second floor, the fly on Greg's pants was open and Antoine's hands were jammed down the front of Greg's briefs. Their first time had been a hot, quick fuck on the floor just inside the door to Greg's room. He doesn't even recall if they had bothered to close the door behind them or not. He only remembers the hard cold tile on his hands and knees, the tight pressure of Antoine pushing into his ass, and throwing up on the carpet after he came.

Tonight, none of that will happen. Well, no—Greg won't say that. Carla was right, he only has three days, and unless something really sparks between them, he knows he might never see Trey again. So he has to make this count, whatever "this" turns out to be. And if it leads to sex...well, he hasn't gotten laid since Antoine left, so he's about overdue for a good screw. It'll be a little weird at first, he's sure, but the

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child he remembers Trey as is grown now, the age gap narrowed. If something *does* happen between them, who's to stop it?

He ducks into the bathroom for a hot shower, then dresses in a pair of his tightest jeans. He waffles between a snug T-shirt and the closet full of golf shirts he owns, identical except for color. The T-shirt might be too much—he *does* work here, after all, and he doesn't need to broadcast his hopes for the evening to the rest of the lodge staff.

A golf shirt, then, light blue to match his eyes. He stands in front of the bathroom sink, peering into the mirror for long moments. Too much blue? Not enough? God, is he going *gray* already? He runs a hand through his short-cropped hair and leans in close to the mirror, scrutinizing the cropped curls. No, they're just darker than normal because they're still damp. And he's gotten a little sun in them, that's all. He's not even thirty yet. He isn't going gray.

Calm down, he tells himself. Deep breaths, you hear me? This is only Trey Johns. Junior. You know him already. Nothing to get yourself all worked up about, is there? I mean, seriously. You've seen him naked before. You know it ain't all that.

True, he *has* seen Trey's goods, but the kid was twelve at the time, and Greg had accidentally entered the upstairs bathroom at the Johns house while Trey was changing. "Greg!" Trey had shrieked, throwing one of his muddy golf cleats at the door to chase him off. He'd seen a skinny ass, knobby knees, white briefs down around Trey's ankles, and

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the red fisted tip of a hard dick before he had turned away. It was the first time he had ever seen another guy naked, and the encounter embarrassed both boys so much, they couldn't look at each other for weeks. Trey took to locking the bathroom door behind him, and Greg...well, let's just say his wet dreams took a more realistic turn after *that*.

Somehow, he suspected the now sexy Trey might be a little more filled out than he had been all those years ago. He'd seen the way those khakis hugged Trey's buttocks as the guy walked away from the registration table. Those legs looked strong and firm, as muscular as the rest of him. And what treasure might hide nestled between them? Greg hopes to find out.

* * *

Downstairs in the lobby, Trey waits by the large-screen TV that's constantly tuned to the Golf Channel. His back is to Greg, his hands thrust deep into the pockets of his pants, pulling the khakis taut across his ass. He's wearing the same pants he wore earlier, but the polo shirt has been replaced with a flimsy, dark red shirt tucked into his khakis. As Greg approaches, Trey turns, a winning smile already sliding across his face. The top three buttons of his shirt are undone, through which the hint of a tan tank top can be seen. A braided hemp choker around his neck blends in with his tan. His baseball cap is gone; his hair falls to his collar, the front of it tucked behind his ears. He looks as refreshing as summer and impossibly young, and Greg's heart leaps to think a guy this hot just

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might be interested in a boring old fart like himself.

He holds out a hand as he nears Trey. "Hey, man. You look good."

"Me? Nah." When Trey ducks his head, a strand of hair falls across his brow and he sweeps it back into place before taking Greg's hand in his. Instead of the quick shake Greg expects, he finds himself pulled into a tight embrace. Suddenly Trey's body is pressed to Greg's, one arm easing around Greg's shoulders to hold him close. In his ear, Trey murmurs, "Now you, on the other hand...you look amazing."

Greg laughs and tries to step back. At first he doesn't think Trey will let him go—*forward much?* "You said that earlier. You sure you didn't leave those glasses of yours lying around here somewhere?"

"I don't wear them anymore. I had corrective surgery when I graduated from State last year." Trey releases Greg but keeps hold of his hand, and his arm still rests on Greg's shoulder. This close, his sun-browned cheeks look flawless. Gone are the acne scars of his youth, the blemishes that had plagued him as a teen. Greg finds himself staring at the tiny dark lashes that curl beneath Trey's warm eyes. "My present to myself. My eyesight's twenty twenty—I see fine. And I like what I see."

With another laugh, Greg retracts his hand and tucks both into the back pockets of his jeans. He isn't used to guys being this open toward him, this flirtatious. Part of him wants to roll with it, see where it leads, but another, very real voice inside his head keeps whispering, *This is Junior. What will his father*

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think? Greg looks at the guy and sees the child he used to know superimposed over the man standing beside him.

Glancing around the lobby, he notices the open glass door that leads to the lodge's steakhouse. "Are you getting hungry?" he asks with a nod. "Their sirloin just melts in your mouth. Let me buy you something to eat."

"Oh no," Trey says. "It's my treat. I'm the one who asked you out, remember?"

His hand drifts from Greg's shoulder to his elbow, where it stays. His heated skin seems to simmer on Greg's bare arm. As they head over to the steakhouse, that hand drops lower, tickling along Greg's forearm before drifting up again. Trey's fingers fold into the crook of his elbow with a faint squeeze. Greg wants to clamp his arm to his side, trap that hand there or, better yet, take those fingers in his own and hold them tight. He wishes he were that bold.

Inside, the restaurant is filled with guests visiting for the tournament. Greg has never seen the place this busy in quite a while. Every table is taken, and younger, single golfers line the bar. Silverware clatters against plates, and raucous friends raise their voices to call out to one another across the room, the noise easily drowning out the faint piano music played over the speakers.

"Two?" a harried server asks, grabbing a couple of menus and a handful of utensils.

Trey has to shout to be heard when he jokes, "I'd say somewhere quiet, but I guess that's not really an option, huh?"

The waitress laughs. "If you want quiet, go back to your

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room and order in. We deliver.”

When Trey looks at him, hopeful, Greg shakes his head. Too fast, too soon. “We’ll eat here. Is the back room open?”

She shakes her head. “It’s still too early. We can sit you by the bar—”

“The back room will do.” Greg digs into his pocket and flashes her his employee ID card.

Frowning at his card, she seems undecided. “I’ll have to ask. We don’t usually open it until a little later in the evening...”

He hands her the ID. “Check with your boss. We’ll wait.”

They don’t have to wait long. In a few minutes she’s back, her smile once again in place. “Right this way, Mr. Chennault. I’m sorry for the delay. I’m just over from the Hyatt for the night and didn’t know you worked here. The back room’s all yours.”

Trey’s hand stays on Greg’s arm as they follow the server. Set off the main dining room, the steakhouse’s back room holds an additional twenty tables, none of which are filled at the moment. They’re given a table by a window that overlooks the fairway, the green dark this time of the evening. The horizon is tinged with a deep mauve where the sun has disappeared from view, and the moon shines as a bright dot just behind a small copse of trees. “Gorgeous,” Trey murmurs, taking the seat across from Greg. He winks and adds, “The view’s nice, too.”

With a laugh, Greg opens his menu. “You’ve grown up a lot since I saw you last. The Junior I used to know wasn’t

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quite so cocky.”

“I was just a kid then,” Trey says. Greg glances up to find his friend staring openly at him, his own menu untouched. “I’m older now, and I know what I want. What I’ve *always* wanted. You.”

A foot nudges Greg’s beneath the table. Suddenly his palms feel damp and sticky—he wants to wipe them on his pants to dry them off but doesn’t. Hoping to keep the conversation light between them, at least at first, Greg jokes, “And here I thought you only came to play golf.”

Trey sighs, exasperated. “You want to talk golf? Fine. I’m here with a few guys I knew at State. We used to tee off during finals to relax, and when my dad got the tournament brochure in the mail, I thought why not? It’s a chance to get back together again with old friends, you know? And yes, I mean you. I saw your name on the registration form and wanted to see you again.”

“Trey—”

“I’ve always liked you, Greg.” Trey gives him a frank, no-nonsense look. “Don’t act like this is news to you. Every time you so much as *looked* at me back in the day, I creamed myself. The first guy I ever slept with reminded me of you.”

“Trey,” Greg tries again. “This is really quite sudden—”

“Is it?” With a frown, Trey shakes his head. “It’s been ten years. I don’t think so.”

Before Greg can answer, their waitress approaches with glasses of water. “You guys ready to order?”

Trey doesn’t drop his gaze from Greg’s. “I know what I

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plan on having tonight. How about you?"

His suggestive tone hints at more than just dinner. Greg's stomach flutters in nervous anticipation. "I'm ready if you are."

* * *

As they eat, the back room gradually fills with other diners, until they are no longer alone. Trey's foot nestles alongside Greg's. Every now and then, his hand disappears under the table and drifts to touch Greg's knee. The way he watches Greg makes Greg feel as if he's the only person in existence—everything he says earns him one of Trey's sunshine grins, and there's an infuriatingly cute flush coloring Trey's cheeks. He stares at Greg, a hunger shining in his eyes that has nothing to do with the two sirloins sizzling on the plates before them. *I want you*, he said—the words hang between them like music drifting in the air. *I've always wanted you.*

How can Greg say no to that?

Their conversation is tinged with suggestion. Carla was right, golf is *full* of sex talk. At one point Trey sets his knife and fork aside and rests both elbows on the table, hands steepled in front of him, as he watches Greg eat. Greg glances up, sees pure, unadulterated lust staring back, and chokes down the mouthful of food he's chewing.

"You know," Trey purrs, "I've been thinking..."

If it's about you and me retiring together after dinner, I'm thinking the same thing. But Greg doesn't know if the words

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would sound as suave if he said them aloud, so he just sips at his wine and asks, "What's that?"

Trey's Cheshire cat smile is intriguing. "Do you still caddy?"

With a shrug, Greg turns back to his steak. "Occasionally. Mostly I'm on hand for private lessons—"

"I'm sure you could teach me a thing or two," Trey murmurs. "How about I show you my swing after dinner? I have a private room."

Greg listens to himself in disbelief as he answers, "I've got an eight wood perfect for a long drive."

One of Trey's eyebrows arches in surprise. "Okay, after a comment like that? There's no way I'm letting you out of my sight this evening. That's an eight wood I've got to see."

Greg laughs. Who said golf was a solitary game?

Swirling his fingertip around the mouth of his wine glass, Trey says, "If things work out, maybe I can have you on my bag tomorrow, too."

At first Greg thinks he's being asked out a second time, and he hopes he looks nonchalant when he shrugs. "Sure. Sounds good."

"*Can* you caddy for me?" Trey asks, his grin fading. "I mean, it's not against the rules or anything, is it? Just because you work here..."

Too late, Greg realizes they're really talking about golf now. "Oh! No, I can. No problem. The staff here is on hand for any guest who needs us. Most of these old guys don't bring their own caddies, you know? The registration fee's too high.

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So yeah, if you want me with you on the green, we can work something out."

"I want you all right," Trey sighs. His gaze drops to Greg's mouth and his tongue darts out to gloss over his own lips. "I'm ready to see this eight wood you mentioned whenever you're ready to show me."

* * *

Between them they split two bottles of wine, but Greg thinks he drank more than his fair share. By the time they rise to leave, he wobbles unsteadily on his legs and Trey slips an arm around his waist to help him. His closeness is more intoxicating than all the glasses of Cabernet Greg downed. Greg leans heavily on his old friend and lets himself be steered toward the bank of elevators off to one side in the lobby. There the two men are alone; after Trey presses the UP button to call a car, he wraps both arms around Greg and pulls him near. "I'm on the seventh floor," he murmurs, his breath hot against Greg's neck.

"I'm on the second," Greg answers, but he doesn't know why he bothered—these public elevators don't stop at the staff's quarters. That lift is off limits to guests. They could try the stairs...

But a metal door opens before them and Trey guides Greg inside. The chance to ask if he'd like to come to Greg's room is gone.

Inside the brightly lit elevator, Greg leans back against one mirrored wall, eyes shut. His head is swimming and, when the

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lift moves, the world threatens to drop away from him. They're alone. Finally, alone.

Greg isn't quite sure what he thinks about that.

Part of him wants Trey—wants him so badly his balls ache. It's been a while since he's been with anyone, and the prospect of getting lucky has his blood humming along with the alcohol that sloshes through his veins. But the moment he starts to play out the night ahead, picturing Trey naked beneath him, feeling the hotel bed rocking under their combined rhythm, the image of that surprised twelve year old flashes in his mind, dousing his ardor. Greg knows Trey's father, or did, once. After tonight, how will he ever be able to look at the man again? Every time he hears the name *Johns*, he'll think of bedding Trey.

He shouldn't do this. He shouldn't be here, in this lift, with Trey. He should drop the guy off at the seventh floor, thank him for a good meal and great company, and head back to his own solitary suite. Jerk off thinking of what might have been before he falls asleep. Show up tomorrow on the putting green with a clear head and a clearer conscience, all business once again.

Before he can suggest any of that, a hard body leans against his, pinning him to the wall. Greg moans, his lower lip caught between his teeth. "Trey."

A warm, soft mouth covers his. Strong hands take Greg's, fingers lacing through his own. Trey's lips part, opening Greg's mouth; his tongue licks just inside Greg's lower lip, along sensitive skin that tingles at his touch. Then he delves

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in, insistent, as if Greg were another glass of wine to be sipped, savored, and swallowed. Greg moans again, louder this time, and one of Trey's knees eases between Greg's own to press against the ache throbbing in the front of his jeans.

"Trey," Greg tries again, but the word is lost in their kiss.

"I want you," Trey murmurs. It's the headiest thing Greg's heard in a while, more potent than the wine, more seductive than the dinner. He arches his hips and pushes his crotch into Greg's, their erections singing sweetly together. "In me, tonight. Now. God, I'm all yours."

A bell sounds, interrupting them. When Trey steps back, Greg leans forward, following—he doesn't want the kisses to end. But the hand in his tightens as the elevator door opens, and Greg finds himself stumbling out into an empty hallway. "I'm down a ways," Trey says.

He places a hand on the small of Greg's back to steer him down the hall, then grabs a fist full of his shirt to reel him in when they reach his door. "Right here." Trey leans heavily against Greg, his chin on Greg's shoulder as he smiles up at him. When he speaks, his voice is low and breathy. "Thanks for coming."

"I haven't yet," Greg says. The alcohol buzzes in his brain, fizzles through his veins, and invigorates his dick. Given the erection he's sporting now, he knows it won't take much to set him off.

With a laugh, Trey tucks his keycard into the lock and opens the door to his room. Greg follows him inside, both hands holding onto one of Trey's. The door closes behind

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them with a soft *click*.

The room is spacious, with a king size bed facing a flat screen TV. It's more hotel than apartment, though, and not as cozy as Greg's quarters. Sitting on the edge of the bed, he kicks off his shoes and bounces a little on the mattress. "This is nice."

"Just you wait," Trey promises.

As Greg watches, Trey unbuckles his belt, unzips his khakis, and pulls his undershirt free from where it's tucked into his pants. With nimble fingers, he unbuttons his red, see-through shirt. Greg watches, mesmerized, as each undone button reveals more of the man beneath the fabric. A flat stomach, the hint of definition to the muscles around his navel, the thin trail of brown hair that dips into his pants and disappears. The shirt is shucked off and falls to the floor; the undershirt is pulled off over Trey's head and follows suit. Then he crawls onto Greg, laying him back against the mattress as his legs slip free from his pants. One knee comes up beside Greg's right leg, an arm hems Greg in on either side—he lies down with Trey above him, dark eyes alive with a flickering hunger that dinner wasn't able to sate. "I want you," he breathes.

Greg lets his hands play across Trey's smooth chest. The skin is dusky, tan and firm. "Yes."

"I *need* you," Trey purrs. "In me. Now."

"Yes." Greg's thumbs brush over Trey's nipples, which stiffen in response. There's a bulge at the front of his briefs that strains the white fabric, hanging like a promise above

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Greg's crotch. "Please."

Trey's lips find Greg's again, silencing him. With both legs on the bed now, Trey lets his knees slide apart until he's flush along Greg's body. All that separates them are Greg's clothes and Trey's briefs. His hands fist in Greg's hair, pulling Greg close as their kiss deepens. Trey's mouth is hot on his; his breath is a fire that fans over Greg's skin, and his touch burns like the sun. Greg would love to melt in Trey's embrace. To feel the press of flesh, these lips on every inch of his body, Trey's ass clenched tight around his cock. He fumbles with his belt, his hands caught between their bodies, eager to strip and lay himself bare before this young god above him. "Yes," he sighs, unzipping his jeans. Trey kisses the words from his lips. "Yes, please. Trey, yes."

It's awkward, wriggling under Trey as he tries to undress, but once Trey realizes what he's doing, he helps. Rolling onto his side, he cradles Greg's face in both hands and turns it toward him, his tongue tasting Greg's numb lips before licking into him again. As fast as he can, Greg wrestles free from his jeans, tugging off his briefs, as well. His cock stands from a thick thatch of dark hair, and his hands drift to massage his own length as he drowns in Trey's kisses. *Yes.*

A hand tickles up his belly to stroke his nipple. With his pants around his ankles, Greg awkwardly mounts Trey. *He* wants this, he *needs* it, *yes*. Strong hands cup his ass, spreading his cheeks—one exploratory forefinger rims his puckered hole and he gasps in delight. "Yes."

Reaching for Trey's briefs, he watches his own hand strum

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over the taut material. He traces the outline of Trey's thick cock, then hefts Trey's balls in the palm of his hand. Closing the distance between them, he finds a sensitive spot on the underside of Trey's chin and kisses his way along Trey's jaw to his ear. "Fuck me," Trey whispers with a lusty moan. "God, Greg. I've always dreamed of you fucking me."

Always.

The word is a dash of cold water on Greg's libido. *Always* calls to mind a twelve year old Trey changing in the bathroom when Greg walked in on him. *Always* is a young boy with a bag of toy clubs following Greg around as he caddied for Mr. Johns. *Always* is the sullen glare that had greeted him at the door the day he left for college, when he had swung by to say goodbye.

Always reminds him of the history they share—this isn't a one-night stand with a random guest. This is Trevor Johns, *Junior*, who Greg has never thought of in any sexual way until today. Trey, who had been a brother to Greg while growing up. Trey, who wants Greg to caddy for him tomorrow.

Trey, whose bright smile and warm eyes Greg knows he won't soon forget once this weekend is over.

Who he knows he'll want to see again.

He can't rush through this. He wants more; they *deserve* more. His voice sounds foreign to his own ears when he murmurs, "No."

Trey's hands clench Greg's buttocks harder. "Hmm?" he asks, kissing a tender place behind Greg's ear.

"I can't." Somehow, Greg manages to push himself up,

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away from the willing man beneath him. Trey's chocolate eyes are dulled, drugged on desire, and Greg runs a hand across his own face to keep from falling into that gaze. "I mean..."

Now Trey sits up, and Greg falls back. His legs feel cold, exposed; between them, his dick stands stiff, poking at his stomach.

"Can't what?" Trey asks.

Skirting the question, Greg glances at the alarm clock on the bedside table. "It's getting late. I have to go."

"Wait." Trey reaches for him, but Greg pulls back and tumbles over the edge of the bed to land heavily on the floor. "Greg, what is it? Tell me. What did I do?"

"It's not you." Standing, Greg hauls up his jeans and tucks his erection down into his briefs. It takes two tries to get the zipper up over *that* bulge. He feels unclean for some reason, like he's taken advantage of Trey in some way. Greg always saw him as a younger brother and this sudden intimacy is too much, too soon. He made that mistake with Antoine. He doesn't want to do the same with Trey and risk losing whatever they could have together. He can't take that chance.

But it's so hard to see Trey lying there, his mouth wet with Greg's kisses, his chest and legs bare. There's a translucent spot on the white fabric of his briefs, to the right side of the fly, where he's started to come, just a little, and his juices have seeped through. Greg resists the urge to lean down and lick the spot, taste the cottony tartness of Trey's cum. To strengthen his resolve, he says again, "I can't."

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“Greg,” Trey starts. When Greg scoops up his shoes from the floor, Trey reaches for him and his fingers brush over Greg’s backside. “Let’s talk about this. Don’t just leave. Things were going so well...”

Too well, Greg thinks. His head spins as his thoughts reel out in a dozen directions at once. He needs to think about this, about Trey. He shouldn’t have drunk so much. What time is it again? He has to go.

“Wait!” Trey calls as Greg heads for the door.

Greg doesn’t wait. He hears the creak of bed springs and hurries out into the hall. He carries his shoes in one hand and uses the other to smooth his shirt down over the front of his jeans. His dick hurts, his balls ache. By the time the door latches behind him, he already regrets his decision. They had been so *close*.

But Carla’s words come back to him. She’s right, of course. He doesn’t want just a weekend fling, not with an old friend. Not with Trey. Dinner and some wine, a little flirtatious talk, enough kisses to make him want more...a *hell* of a lot more. He’s doing the right thing, he assures himself.

Then why is his heart hammering in his chest? Why are his palms sweaty, and the nape of his neck damp? Why does every nerve in his body tell him to turn around and go back?

* * *

The next morning Greg wakes feeling like shit. There’s a stabbing pain behind his right eye that gets worse when he turns on the light, and his balls throb as if disappointed Trey

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isn't sharing his bed. Now that he's slept on it, he thinks he might have made a mistake. He needs to find Trey and apologize—is there anything he can say or do that will bring them back to where they had been the night before? Or did he just blow his chances with only *the* hottest guy he's seen in a long time?

He doesn't know, but God, he hopes not.

A hot shower invigorates him, and he takes a couple aspirin to chase away the headache. Then he dresses in light khakis and a dark shirt with the Hermitage's logo on the left breast. Despite what happened between himself and Trey, he still expects to caddy for the guy, so he slathers on sunscreen and tucks a cap into his back pocket to protect his face when he's out on the green.

He needs something to eat—the aspirin are making him feel a little light-headed now, but at least the pain is receding. He'll go down to the lodge's dining room for their complimentary breakfast and a nice, steaming cup of coffee. Then he'll find his way up to the seventh floor and hope he can remember which room is Trey's. *I was being stupid last night*, he'll say. This time *he* will be the one who asks if they can meet for dinner, and it will be *his* room they retire to afterward. He's already wasted one evening. He isn't going to let himself waste another.

The dining room is downstairs off the lobby. Though the day is still early, the room is already crowded with golfers, their caddies, and a few disgruntled wives looking forward to taking the lodge's bus into town later for some shopping while

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their spouses play. Greg gets in line at the buffet table, but he doesn't take a plate; he wants a muffin, some butter, and the biggest cup of coffee they have. As he shuffles along in line, he glances around the room, pleased to see it filled. Half the guests are scheduled to tee off today, the rest on Saturday, with Sunday reserved for any tie-breaking holes they might have to shoot. Winners will be announced at a banquet Sunday evening, and the golfers can choose to head home on Memorial Day or stay for morning rounds if they want. Greg hopes Trey decides to stay. More than that, he hopes he can work things out between them. He was such an ass last night...

As he looks around, he sees Trey sitting by himself at a small table by the window. The morning newspaper obscures his face, but Greg recognizes his profile. Suddenly his heart jump-starts in his chest, his palms begin to sweat, and he almost misses the basket of muffins on the buffet. *Shit.*

Trey doesn't see him. While Greg fills his coffee mug, he watches Trey from the corner of his eye. The guy never looks up from his paper, and doesn't look over to where Greg stands. The mug grows warm in his hand, then the first hot trickle of coffee splashes his fingers. "Shit," he mutters, aloud this time. He sips the overflowing mug gingerly and shoves his burnt hand into the bowl of ice that chills the milk. He has to go talk to him, he's decided. It's good Trey is here, and not upstairs in his room. Things will go more smoothly if there are others around.

Still, he crosses the dining room with the heavy steps of a

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condemned man. When he stops beside Trey's table, the guy *still* doesn't look up at him. Greg clears his throat—no acknowledgement. Pulling out the chair across from Trey, Greg asks, "Is this seat taken?"

Now Trey glances up. His eyes are cold and hard, his mouth set in a tight line that isn't quite a scowl but isn't friendly, either. Though he doesn't answer, Greg drops into the chair anyway. "How are you feeling this morning?"

No reply.

Greg forces a laugh. "Me too," he admits, preferring to mistake Trey's silence for a hangover rather than anger. "Woke up and my head was *pounding*, I'm telling you. Never again, man. I ain't as young as I used to be."

"What do you want?" Trey asks. His voice is as hard and unforgiving as his eyes. He folds the paper and sets it between them like a barrier, then leans back in his seat, one hand tapping the front page of the paper.

Taking another sip of his coffee, Greg grimaces at the taste. "Trey, I'm sorry. I really am. I never meant—"

Trey laughs, a bitter sound that chokes Greg's apology in the back of his throat. "Sorry. You left me hanging, dude, and all you can say is you're sorry? Fuck off."

"No, wait..."

But Trey laughs again. "Why? You didn't wait up last night. Just walked out and left. I've never had anyone push me away like that, Greg, I'll have you know. And I sure as hell didn't expect it from you."

The conversation isn't going well. Greg dares to reach

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across the table and cover Trey's tapping hand with his own, silencing it. "Trey, please," he says, his voice low and contrite. "This is all so...so *sudden* for me, you have to understand. In my mind I still see you as the kid trailing after me, dragging along a bag of toy clubs so you can play golf with your dad and me—do you remember?"

A faint smile breaks through Trey's defenses, but he smothers it quickly.

Greg knows that hit a nerve. They share too many memories together to let one misfired evening throw them off course. "Last night I got spooked," Greg admits. "You might have liked me forever but I've always thought of you as a...I don't know, a little brother, or something. So it's hard for me to see you in any other way."

Trey starts to pull his hand out from under Greg's. "You're saying you're not interested, then."

Greg clasps Trey's wrist in both hands, holding onto it tightly. "No, not at all. I'm definitely interested."

A shadow of doubt crosses Trey's face, creasing it into a frown. "Then what—"

"Give me another chance." Greg rubs a forefinger along the tender skin at Trey's wrist, stroking it gently. "We're still on for today, right? Let me caddy for you, get to know you now that you're older, the *real* you, and tonight I'll make it up to you. What do you think?"

Indecision wars across Trey's smooth features. "I still need a caddy," he murmurs, watching the pattern Greg's finger makes as it strums over his wrist. "And I definitely want you

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on my bag.”

Greg grins. “On and off the course, I hope.”

Trey looks up, meeting Greg’s eyes with a stern gaze. “But if you’re just fucking around with me here—”

“I’m not,” Greg assures him. “Let me prove it...”

He trails off as Trey stands, extracting his hand from Greg’s. “We’re on the third course,” he says, suddenly all business again. Digging his wallet from his back pocket, he deposits a couple dollars on the table as a tip. “Tee time’s at nine o’clock. Every time you used to caddy for my old man, I always wanted you following *me* around, not him.”

“I’ll be there for you,” Greg says, rising to his feet.

“That’s what I thought last night,” Trey points out. “Don’t bail on me again.”

Greg shakes his head. “I won’t. Course three, at nine. Then maybe later, after the game...”

With a nonchalant shrug, Trey turns away. “I already let you in my bed once, Greg. You walked out on that.”

A sinking feeling fills the pit of Greg’s stomach. Didn’t they just talk this out? He reaches for the young golfer, grasping his shoulder before he can get far. “Trey—”

But Trey shrugs him off as he walks away. “We’ll see how things play out.”

* * *

Greg’s stomach is a knot of anxiety as he hurries down to course three. Over one shoulder is slung the bag of golf clubs Mr. Johns gave him all those years ago. He doesn’t know if

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Trey brought his own clubs or not, but he thinks these old beauts should bring a smile to Junior's face. And get him back in the guy's good graces, at least.

When he reaches the course, he almost turns around and returns to the lodge. Trey stands with a pack of buff young men who look cut from the pages of an Abercrombie and Fitch catalog. Firm muscles, tanned flesh, quick smiles and gorgeous eyes...they're carbon copies, each prettier than the last. What Trey wants with a pale, out of shape, older jerk like Greg is the *real* question. Why bother wining and dining Greg the night before when Trey had arrived with half the cast of a gay porno in his back pocket? Even the other golfer's caddies are studs, a trio of sexy frat boys with bored expressions on their faces who grimace as Greg approaches.

Coming up behind Trey, he sighs, "Hey."

Trey glances over his shoulder, acknowledging him with a nod. That's all he gets before Trey turns back to his friends and Greg is left standing midway between the two groups, not one of the golfers this time and too old to fit in with the other caddies. This is going to be a *long* game.

When the time comes to get underway, Greg falls into step beside Trey. Thank God for the convention that keeps a golfer with his caddy while on the fairway—he'd die if he had to waste the afternoon alone. None of Trey's friends have so much as looked his way, *none* of them. He wonders if anything were said to explain his presence. "*Oh, he used to caddy for my old man. Damn fucker left me with a bad case of blue balls last night, let me tell you. He has no idea what he*

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threw away."

Greg hopes Trey's seriously thinking about his offer of a second chance because if he gets one, he swears he won't walk out again. Now that he sees what Trey *could've* had and didn't? He's flattered, of course, and more than a little determined to get back in that bed he left so gracelessly last night. He was a fool, he knows that. He wants to apologize again but Trey still hasn't said a word to him yet and he doesn't want to interrupt the golfer before the game.

To what, say he's sorry? Trey heard it already. The ball's his to play.

At the first hole, Greg hangs to the left of the tee, where he used to stand while Mr. Johns swung so he wouldn't be in the golfer's line of vision. Trey plays the same side, his back to Greg as he lines up his club with the ball. After a moment's deliberation, he turns and signals Greg with a slight hand gesture that has the caddy running to his side. "Too windy for a driver, do you think?" he asks.

All golf. There's no smile, no wink, nothing flirty at all about his demeanor today. Greg clears his throat and resolves to be just as stoic. Lifting his face to the sun, he squints as he mentally assesses the wind. "You should be fine," he says. "Those trees on the right block most of it farther down the green. It's par two, so it's an easy hole."

"They're all easy once you're right up on them," Trey tells him. "I've only ever had one that wouldn't putt out."

The pun isn't lost on Greg—he knows Trey's talking of him. But before he can comment, Trey's throwing his elbows

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for more room and Greg retreats back into place.

Once he swings, Trey holds his follow-through position as he watches the ball take flight. Greg sees it sail through the air and fall, bouncing once on the green before rolling to a stop mere yards from the first flag. He marks it mentally, but he doesn't need to worry—each of Trey's teammates have different colored logos on their balls to tell them apart at a glance. Still, he's a caddy and keeping up with Trey's shots are part of his job.

As he jots down the stroke number on the score pad he carries, Trey comes over and digs into the front pocket of the golf bag for the bottle of water Greg has inside. "This my dad's?"

"The clubs, yeah." Greg tucks the score pad and its little nub of a pencil into his back pocket.

At the tee, Trey's friend yells out a comical, "*Fore!*" that makes the other golfers snicker.

Greg wants to apologize again—he thinks this might be a better time to say it, when Trey's distracted by the game and his guard is down. But then Trey turns his back to Greg as he watches his friend's swing and the moment is lost.

* * *

The next few holes are the same. Trey tees off, then stands by Greg without speaking as his friends finish the hole. Of the foursome, he's the best golfer, and is pretty much playing the course for par. His friends aren't as serious about their game—oh, they're quiet enough when Trey's at the tee, but they joke

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and kid around when their turns come. By the third hole, Greg's fed up with them, and he wishes he could get them thrown off the green. "What the hell do you see in them?" he asks.

Trey stands beside him, watching one of the guys line up a shot. It takes three swings before he hits the ball. The others laugh when it finally sails into the distance, and his own caddy teases, "You're already over par, Chet. I wouldn't hit it again if I were you."

At first, Greg doesn't think Trey will answer. When he does, he just shrugs. "They're my friends, what can I say? We're just here to have a good time."

The words hang between them, balanced precariously on their double meaning.

"Trey, look," Greg starts, "about last night—"

But Trey waves him aside, dismissive. "It's cool. I'm over it."

Over it? What's he mean by that?

Dread curls into Greg's stomach. "Give me another chance. I didn't mean..."

Trey waves his hand again, the fingerless glove he wears a flash of white through Greg's grass-filled line of sight. "I said it's cool. Just drop it."

He steps forward, distancing himself from Greg, and leans on his golf club as he watches the next play. Greg rocks back on his heels, dismissed. At this moment, he hates himself. He made a mistake, he's admitted as much, but Trey doesn't seem to want to let him make up for it. He wishes he could turn

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back the clock, rewind the time, play back the hours leading up to the moment he walked out of Trey's room. This time he'd force himself to stay. This time, he wouldn't scare so easily. It would be better to regret having done something than this constant need to apologize for something he *didn't* do.

Trey keeps the talk between them light. He comments on the course, asks Greg's advice on putters and reading the green, worries aloud about the wind and various hazards scattered around the fairway. With perfunctory answers, Greg replies. Watching these young men together makes him feel so damn old. He suspects there's more than water in some of the guys' bottles—their slurred speech and constant laughter tells him that. When one of them is concentrating on a shot, the others snicker behind his back, goofing off. Once they snuck up to the guy called Chet and yanked his pants down as he swung the driver. He cursed and swung the club back, hoping to hit someone, but his friends squatted to the ground as they laughed out loud. Even Trey grinned at that.

Greg finds their antics boring. They drag the game out—the sun seems stuck in the sky, unable to advance, and every hole begins to look the same to Greg, which is saying something. Usually he can tell at a glance what course he's on, but now it all begins to run together. Chet's the worst of the bunch, and by the fifth hole, he randomly swings his club at any ball on the green, whether or not it's one of his. When it takes him ten minutes of back and forth putting to finally sink a shot, Greg wants to pull the heaviest iron from his bag and brain him with it. How Trey can stand there so quietly and

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watch his friends make a mockery of the sport, Greg hasn't the slightest idea.

And he can't ask, either. Any comment he makes that doesn't relate directly to the game as Trey plays it is ignored. Trey asks his opinion—he's the caddy, after all, and works at the lodge so he has a better understanding of the course than the others do—but there is no chit-chat between them, nothing personal, nothing *real*. It's his own fault, Greg knows. He wishes they were alone, he and Trey, with no distractions, no interruptions. He wouldn't feel the need to talk then; he'd try to recapture their evening instead, relive those kisses, and let his body tell Trey what he's feeling instead of struggling to put it into words.

Out here on the green, the memory he harbors of Junior has changed. It's aged, as if he watched Mr. Johns' only son grow up from that annoying pre-teen from the past into the sure, confident young man who stands beside him now. Part of Greg wishes he *had* seen Junior grow—when had he dropped the nickname and started using a shortened form of his first name? When did those thin muscles appear on his arms and chest? When had he shed the nerdy awkwardness of youth and morphed into the confident, bold man Greg met the night before?

Greg wants to know. If he'd stayed in touch with Mr. Johns over the years, would things have played out the same? If he'd gone to visit the golfer when he came home from college, would he have grown closer to Trey? If he had answered the kid's letters, had met with him during holidays,

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had become friends instead of just two boys who had nothing but Mr. Johns in common...would he be here now, standing on a golf course, squinting into the sun, as he waits for one of Trey's asshole frat brothers to sober up enough to play ball?

Or would last night have been different? Would they have met, not as acquaintances but as old friends? Would sharing bottles of wine have led to more than hangovers and waking alone? Would Greg even now be thinking ahead to an evening spent cuddling nude with Trey beneath hotel sheets instead of wondering exactly how he can possibly apologize enough to *hope* to get that far again?

A hard slap on his ass jars him back to the moment. "I'm losing you," Trey says.

Greg shakes himself awake. His butt stings pleasantly, and he wonders how he can get Trey to do that again. "I'm right here."

As he hefts the golf bag, though, Trey nods at a couple of old men teeing off up ahead. "Looks like there's a bit of a blockage on this hole. The guys have decided not to play through."

"Oh." Disappointed, Greg shoulders the bag and looks around. Trey's friends weave toward the crowds gathered around the edge of the course—beyond them are restrooms, and refreshment stands. With a grimace, Greg mutters, "What, they need fresh booze?"

Trey grins, the first time he's smiled at Greg all morning. "Something like that. The club house is nearby, if you want to wait there."

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Greg glances in the direction Trey points and sees a group of small cottages clustered together near the woods. They must be on the ninth hole, then—the cottages mark a midway point in the course, allowing golfers a bit of a break from the wind and the sun and the game. The main club house stands to one side, a large building with wireless access, a fully staffed kitchen, and a flat-screen television. In the hot Virginia summers, more golfers stay in the club house than they do on the course, socializing, drinking, and keeping out of the humidity. Around the main house, smaller cottages fan out for those who want a little privacy.

A cold drink and a soft cushion to sit down on sounds heavenly right about now. But Greg is Trey's caddy—he goes where the golfer goes, and he doesn't miss the way Trey stares after his friends. "It's up to you," he says with a shrug. "What do you want to do?"

To his pleasant surprise, Trey nods at the club house. "Why don't you see if any of those little cottages are empty? I'll just let the guys know where we are so they can swing by and pick us up when they get back."

Greg suspects "the guys" won't be in any frame of mind to continue the game after they reach the alcohol stands, but he doesn't tell Trey that. Instead, he repositions the bag over his shoulder and heads for the nearest cottage, the promise of air-conditioning and cool water egging him on.

* * *

The first cottage Greg tries is locked, a subtle sign that it's

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already occupied. He heads to the next, and the knob turns easily in his hand. With a wave back at Trey to show this would be theirs, he pushes open the door. "Hello?" he calls out as he enters, but there's no need—the cottage is empty. Setting his golf bag against the wall, he closes the door behind him, careful to leave it unlocked. He isn't sure why Trey felt the need to bother with his friends in the first place; another drink or two and the one called Chet won't be in any condition to take the field again. That guy is a nuisance with a club in his hand.

The cottage's main room is sparsely furnished—a sofa and twin armchairs huddle together in the center of the room, a cozy nook for those looking to unwind with friends, and along the side wall is a credenza laden with food. Baskets of fresh fruit nestle beside individual packets of chips and candy, and at either end, mini glass-fronted refrigerators offer small cans of soda or bottles of water. Greg helps himself to one of the latter, guzzling an eight-ounce bottle in one swallow, then grabbing a second to nurse.

Two doors stand like sentinels along the back wall of the cottage. Greg checks them out—one leads to a small bathroom, complete with shower stall. The lodge spares no expense for its guests. The second door opens onto a supply closet. Boxes of chips and candy are inside, as well as bulk packs of the soda and water for easy restocking. Also in the closet are a few random clubs, a bucket of balls that were retrieved from the course, complementary toiletries and towels for the bathroom, and a few extra polo-style shirts with the

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lodge's crest embroidered on the left breast. For anything else a guest might need, a sign by the door suggests visiting the main club house, "*To help us satisfy ALL your needs.*"

Greg smirks as he settles onto the sofa and kicks off his shoes. Why is it when he sees a sign like that, he always thinks of bath houses and brothels? Now that he's sitting down, he's aware of *one* need the club house probably wouldn't fulfill. The front of his khakis cut across his crotch with a sweet ache, reminding him of the slight erection that's dogged him all morning. Damn Trey for doing this to him. He said he was sorry—what more could Junior want? He knows he was wrong the night before. If Trey doesn't forgive him, that mistake will haunt him forever. How will he possibly get through the next few days, knowing what he might have had? And if Trey visits again? What then?

With a growl of frustration, Greg throws himself back against the sofa, one hand punching the cushion beside him. He leans his head back to glare at the ceiling. It's his own fault. Now that he can think about it with a clear head, he knows that. Last night he worried what Mr. Johns might think if he learned his old caddy and son were hooking up. But today, here, now? Fuck Mr. Johns. Trey's hotter than his father *ever* was, and more than willing. And he *likes* Greg, that's the kicker. He's *always* liked Greg. Why couldn't he have given Greg some inkling of that earlier? If Greg had known of Junior's affection back in the day, he would've been more prepared for it. Then there wouldn't be a ten-year gap between who they used to be and who they had become. And

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Greg wouldn't have freaked out so easily, and they might be together now...

The cottage door opens. Greg rolls his head to one side and grins as Trey enters. "Did you catch up with them?"

"Barely." Trey tugs off his cap and wipes the sweat from his brow with his arm. When the door shuts behind him, he locks it without comment. Picking at the front of his shirt in an effort to cool down, he pulls the fabric free from his pants as he looks around the cottage. "They're great guys, really. They like the driving range but anything longer than a round of mini-golf and they're bored. When they're bored, they drink. I don't think they've yet figured out we're not in college anymore."

"Do you really think they'll be back to finish the game?" Greg asks. He watches Trey assess the room, his gaze restless. What's he looking for?

Trey's response is a noncommittal, "Hmm." Then he steps out of his shoes, and starts to unbuckle his belt. "Speaking of finishing things..."

Greg watches him approach. By the time he stands behind the sofa, his pants are undone, the belt unstrapped, the zipper down, the fly open. With lithe moves, he shrugs his shirt off over his head and drops it to the floor. His chest is smooth and bare, just as Greg remembers it. Trey stops right behind Greg; the caddy has to lean back to keep his golfer in view. Lightly, Trey touches the underside of Greg's chin with his fingertips. They tickle down his neck, over his Adam's apple, to caress the hollow of his throat. "You still think of me as an annoying

little kid?" Trey murmurs.

Greg shakes his head and swallows thickly, which feels like a gulp the way he's sitting. Leaning down, Trey kisses the point of Greg's chin, then his lower lip. He tastes warm and fresh, like a summer day, and Greg can feel the heat radiating from his bare stomach as he bends over him. Another kiss lands on both lips, upside-down. When Trey licks into his mouth, the odd sensation of his tongue lying flat on Greg's is exhilarating.

Trey's hands massage his neck and throat, rub along his jaw line, under his chin. Trey's mouth is insistent, his kisses heady and hot. When he breaks away to trail tiny pecks over Greg's cheek, his hands delve down farther, smoothing over Greg's shirt, heading for the ache at his crotch. Greg manages one quick kiss on Trey's chest before the guy leans down over the back of the sofa, arms stretched over Greg's shoulders, hands grasping Greg's cock through the front of his pants. Into Greg's ear, Trey breathes, "I still want you."

"Please," is all Greg manages to say in reply.

Nimble fingers work loose his belt and zipper as Trey suckles Greg's earlobe. The feel of his teeth nibbling Greg's sensitive skin is welcome, and Greg fists his hands into the cushions on either side of him as if to hold himself in place. Every touch of Trey's, every kiss, every squeeze, threatens to send Greg soaring with desire and lust. He knows now what he wants, and it's this, *this*.

When Trey has Greg's pants unzipped, he spreads the material wide and begins to fondle Greg's stiffening cock

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through his briefs. "Yes," Greg sighs, turning to catch Trey's next kiss on his lips. His mouth brushes over warm, dry hair before finding the supple skin of Trey's cheek. "Oh, God. Please, Trey. I want you, I do."

Rubbing his nose against Greg's, he sighs. "I've waited a lifetime to hear you say that."

"I'll say it again," Greg promises. "I need you. Now. I want you—"

Trey silences him with a kiss.

Greg's eyes slip shut as Trey kneads his dick through his briefs. The golfer has a tender touch, almost reverent—he cups Greg's balls, massaging them in his palm, while his other hand traces the outline of Greg's hard shaft. After a minute or two, when Greg's dick strains the thin white material which has begun to dampen at the first beads of pre-cum, Trey eases his hands into the briefs, pushing them down below Greg's balls. Now his hands encircle Greg's length, the rasp of skin on skin loud between them, muffled only by Greg's desirous moans. Pleasure shivers through him, cycling up from his groin to kindle in his lower belly. He feels safe here, with Trey's arms hemming him in, Trey's shoulder a firm pillow on which he rests his head. "Yes," he sighs. Finally, *yes*.

With a gentle kiss on Greg's cheek, Trey stands.

"What...?" Greg asks the moment his touch disappears.

Another kiss quiets him. As Trey rounds the sofa, his hand trails over Greg's shoulder, along the back of Greg's neck. Then Trey stands in front of him, Greg's feet trapped between his own. He plucks something small and square from the back

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pocket of his khakis and flicks it into Greg's lap; a condom packet lands on the exposed skin of Greg's lower belly. "Only if you're sure this time," Trey purrs. "I don't want to waste it."

Greg scrambles to open the condom. "Oh, God, I am. I'm so sorry—"

Trey is bent at the waist, stripping out of his pants, but he places a hand to Greg's lips. "It's over with. We're cool. Let's just stop talking already, okay? Make it up to me now."

With a nod, Greg rolls the condom onto his erect cock. When he sits back, Trey stands naked before him, his skin an even, golden hue that reminds Greg of summertime. A thin line of brown-blond hair trails from his navel to kink into curls at his crotch, where a long, thin cock stands at half-mast. But Greg's attention is drawn to the heavy sac hanging below that dick, hidden in shadow and hair. When he hefts Trey's balls in his hand, the younger man moans, a lusty sound that ignites Greg's blood to hear it.

"God," he sighs, spreading his legs wider to allow Greg more access. As one finger explores the soft skin behind his balls, Trey grasps Greg's shoulders and thrusts at him. That finger slips a little farther back, tickling over hidden flesh and the first hint of muscle. "Fuck me, Greg."

The words fuel Greg's lust. Leaning forward, he licks out to take the tip of Trey's dick into his mouth. His tongue rims the flared head, then runs along the underside of the slim shaft, guiding it into him. One hand fists the length at its base, and a gentle squeeze makes Trey sob with want. Greg's other hand is between Trey's legs now, his middle finger stretched to rub

over Trey's velvety hole.

"Yes," Trey cries—he fists his hands in Greg's shirt, tugging him closer as his hips buck forward to thrust his cock farther in. "God, Greg. Please. Now, now!"

He pushes against Greg, who lies back. As he settles onto the sofa, Trey climbs into his lap, one knee on either side of Greg's legs. His dick points at Greg as if wanting to be caught again and Greg obliges, ducking a little to taste the tip that rises to meet him. With both hands he cups Trey's ass, kneading the firm cheeks before spreading them wide. "Yes," Trey gasps, wriggling when Greg's fingers strum over his taut hole. "*God*, Greg. That feels amazing."

Encouraged, Greg rims and stretches Trey's tight muscles. They flex, drawing him in, as Trey rocks above him. At one point, he cradles Greg's face in both hands and turns it up toward his for a soulful kiss. His tongue is demanding, filling Greg. Greg feels the tip of Trey's cock brush over his chest, leaving a wet streak across the front of his shirt. Then Trey sits, legs sliding farther apart while Greg eases into him.

Trey bites Greg's lower lip as they lock together. He sets a fast pace, grinding his hips into Greg's groin as they fuck, his warm weight welcome in Greg's lap. With his eyes closed, Greg gives into Trey's kisses and the movement of Trey's body above his. Trey's tight ass encircles Greg's dick, muscles tightening around his shaft, working him to release. He trembles on the edge of fervor, his lust building to a frenzy within him. Each thrust anchors Trey in his mind, replacing his memories with the man he holds so tight. There is no

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Junior, no Mr. Johns, no half-assed night, no game with three restless friends—nothing before Trey in his arms, moving against him, loving him.

They come in a rush that takes Greg's breath away. Trey's kisses leave his lips swollen, numb. Without pulling out, Greg rolls onto his side, guiding Trey down beside him. Trey drapes his legs over Greg's, one arm trapped between Greg and the sofa's cushion, the other tugging the front of Greg's shirt, sticky and wet with Trey's cum. "Get this off," he commands.

Greg complies, allowing Trey to peel the shirt off over his head. It falls forgotten to the floor as Trey snuggles closer to Greg, his hand straying to pluck at one pert nipple that peeks through the thick hair on Greg's chest. Smoothing the mussed hair back from Trey's brow, Greg kisses his temple. "Well?" he asks, only half joking. "Was it worth the wait?"

"God, yes," Trey gushes. He presses his mouth into the hollow of Greg's throat. His breath is ticklish along Greg's neck, and his lips leave a damp imprint when he trails tiny kisses over Greg's collarbone. "You just don't know. After last night..."

"Did I make it up all right?" Greg grins into Trey's hair. "Or do you need more convincing I'm definitely interested in you?"

Trey curls his hand into a fist and thumps Greg's chest. "You have all weekend to finish making it up, mister. Don't think this lets you off the hook so easily."

Before Greg can answer, the cottage door shakes as something hard hits it. They hear muffled laughter, then the

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knob rattles noisily. "Trey-vor!" a deep male voice yells as knocks hammer the door. "Open up, man! You in here?"

It's Trey's friends, drunker by the sound of it. Greg groans. "So much for the afterglow."

Trey covers Greg's mouth with his hand. "Shh," he says, snickering. "They don't know we're in here for sure. If we don't answer—"

"There goes your game," Greg points out. He kisses Trey's fingertips, then catches Trey's pinkie finger between his lips in a playful bite. "If you don't finish the course, you won't place in the tournament."

There's a smirk on Trey's face that's hard for Greg to read. "I saw your name in the brochure," Trey says, speaking slowly so Greg will get his meaning. "That's the only reason I came here in the first place."

"You spent how much in registration?" Greg asks, incredulous. "Just to get with me?"

Trey's shrug settles him closer to Greg. "It was worth it, don't you think? See? They're already going away."

True enough, the sounds from outside their cottage fade as Trey's friends lose interest. Then Trey's mouth is on Greg's again, a pleasant distraction that promises so much more before the day is through.

J. M. SNYDER

An author of gay erotic/romantic fiction, J. M. Snyder began self-publishing gay erotic fiction in 2002. Since then, Snyder has released several books in trade paperback format and has begun exploring the world of e-publishing, working with Amber Quill Press and other e-publishers. Snyder's highly erotic short gay fiction has been published online at *Ruthie's Club*, *Tit-Elation*, *Sticky Pen*, and Amazon Shorts, as well as in anthologies by Aspen Mountain Press and Cleis Press. A full bibliography, as well as free fiction, book excerpts, purchasing information, and exclusive contests, can be found at:

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* * *

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