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**BLACK POINT
REVISITED**

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BLANK POINT REVISITED

BY

A.J. LLEWELLYN & D.J. MANLY

DEDICATION

AJ would like to dedicate this to Herve

DJ- would like to dedicate it to AJ

CHAPTER ONE

“Let me get this straight, Rose Carter. You’re blaming *me* for having writer’s block?”

“You *said* it. You said the words. Now it’s true.”

Matt stared at his dark-haired, incredibly handsome husband, Thomas, AKA best selling erotic romance author, Rose Carter. “You said it first. I was just repeating what I heard. You’re blaming me for being too happy to write.” He lay back against the pillows for a moment and suddenly the idea tickled him.

“I’m glad you think it’s so funny,” Thomas huffed. “I never get...you know...”

“Writer’s block.”

Thomas pointed a finger at him. “You said it again.”

“Honey, it’s a myth that we writers need to be miserable to write. Look at me. I’m the happiest man alive and I’m writing better than ever...” He bit his lip. “Maybe this wasn’t such a good time to mention that.”

Thomas was slitty-eyed. “You stole my muse.”

“Aw, hon...lookit...I can give it back.”

"Him. My muse is a man."

"You have a male muse?"

"Of course I do. He's a hairy little bastard with a Cuban cigar, gossamer wings, a dick that resembles yours, a fedora...and work boots."

Matt blinked. "Your muse shows you his dick?"

"He used to...I don't see him much anymore."

Thomas lay back, staring at the ceiling, the sound of ocean waves seeming louder.

Matt reached into the nightstand, not liking the small separation from his husband this mere action caused. Thomas apparently didn't like it either. His leg swung over his as Matt leaned back into the man he loved.

"What's that?" Thomas asked, looking brighter now.

"Altoids."

"And what are you going to do with them?"

"Put them in my mouth and give you a mind-blasting blow job."

Thomas looked at him.

"Seriously. My friend Trish Wilson tried this on her husband. I read it on her blog."

"Matty, let me understand this. You're now getting sex tips from a *woman*? On a *blog*?"

"Baby, it's not like you to be sexist. I mean, you write as a woman. Besides which, she is the Countess of Sex. Trish road tests every new sex toy and urban sexual myth on the market."

"You don't say."

"I do say. And I also say we need to try out the candy. She says the Altoids have a special ingredient that when they start dissolving, induce feelings of incredible pleasure for the recipient."

Thomas raised himself on an elbow and grinned. "In my experience, you always bring incredible pleasure to this particular recipient."

"Are you saying I can't bring you a little extra...cheer?"

"Oh, I'm not saying that." Thomas shrugged and flopped back on the bed again.

Matt leaned over him, giving him a long, sultry kiss.

"Well," Thomas said, finally when Matt broke off the kiss. "I do like cock and I do like candy. I guess this is an interesting way to enjoy my two favorite food groups."

"I'm the one giving you head," Matt reminded him.

"Yeah, but if I like it, you know I'm going to want to do it to you, too." Thomas looked all shiny and happy again.

Matt felt the stress and tension leaving his new husband's body. Two weeks and four days they'd been married. Everything had been blissful between them on their *Hawaiian* honeymoon until they'd vacated their dream holiday house at *Black Point* and driven to the airport and picked up his

parents and their fourteen-month-old niece, Daphne.

Now ensconced in an equally luxurious house on the beautiful windward coast of the island of *Oahu* on the oceanfront of *Lanikai*, Thomas was freaking out.

"I see Mr. Happy hasn't lost his muse." Matt's hand strolled down to his husband's hardening cock.

"Mr. Happy has a mind of his own," Thomas snapped.

Cocks as a rule do not lie, especially not Thomas' cock, which was in a very good mood as far as Matt could tell. He quickly opened the box of mints and the bittersweet smell reached their nostrils.

"Oh, all right." Thomas sighed, thrusting back the bed sheet in a martyred way. "You made me lose my muse, so it's only right you kick his hairy ass into submission."

Matt dipped his head to lick his husband's warm shaft and a small sigh escaped Thomas' mouth. Matt felt Thomas relaxing more and more as he received the blow job from hell. Matt's mouth roved over the huge balls cupped in his hand. God, he loved this man. Matt took his time savoring the balls before reclaiming the cock it was his privilege to satisfy...sucking down to the base. He pulled back with a vengeance and

Thomas started to react to the sensations he was feeling. He writhed under Matt's assured ministrations. When Matt looked up, Thomas' nipples were erect, his eyes smoky with lust as he watched Matt sucking him.

Coming off that beautiful cock a moment, Matt shook a few of the strong mints into his mouth. Man, those Altoids were like fire on his tongue. In a few seconds, they started working their own magic as he plunged his mouth back over the *very* happy Mr. Happy.

Thomas bucked against him. "Oh...man, that actually feels..." He panted, trying to get his whole cock in Matt's mouth. "Oh...that's fucking amazing. Hot...and cold...and woah! My cock is tingling..." Thomas' legs opened up and his feet flew to Matt's shoulders. He fucked Matt's face in a frenzy, muscling his thick cock past the grasping, suckling tongue and lips and Matt smiled inwardly. Thomas held onto Matt's ears and a long moan escaped him. He came so hard it surprised them both. Matt kept his mouth glued to the eruption as foamy, white juices spilled from his mouth.

"Mmm...peppermint soda." Matt licked up the sweet, sticky mess he'd made, coming back to the head of that still rigid cock, giving the slit a last, loving swipe as Thomas jolted. Yep, Matt was convinced he'd just found his man's muse again.

Thomas lay there a few moments, his eyes closed, and when he opened his eyes, Matt was careful not to smile too wide. "How was that?"

"All right," Thomas said. Man, was he a tough customer.

"Just all right?" Matt cocked a brow at him.

"It was quite good...okay?"

Matt looked at him. "Quite good?" He ran a hand up his husband's thigh. "Should I try again and see if I can do a little better? I'm certain I smell stinky cigars...I'm pretty sure the muse is back in residence."

Thomas laughed then, the sound echoed by Baby Daphne's joyful squeaks emerging from the ocean. The two men paused, listening to the footsteps of Matt's parents coming up their private stone steps from the beach, the squeak of the black iron gate, the only thing separating them from the white-sandy shore of *Lanikai* the reputed most beautiful beach in *Hawaii*.

"They're back. We can eat!" Thomas sprang from the bed, reaching for the orange board shorts he'd bought the day before and slipped them up his long legs.

Matt stared forlornly at him. *I guess Mr. Happy's forgotten all about me.*

"C'mon babe, shake a leg." Thomas threw Matt's dark blue board shorts at him and thrust open the door to their guesthouse, darting into the

narrow space between their domicile and the main house.

“Unca Tommy!”

Tommy. Thomas hated being called Tommy, but thought it was the most incredible thing in the world when Daphne said it. He knew any second she’d come charging in here and he quickly donned his shorts as the baby raced into the room, her dark eyes sparkling.

“My Matty!” She threw herself at him, warm and wet, in her pink polka dot bikini bottoms—Daphne refused to wear bikini tops—smelling of sand and sea and sunshine.

“Did you have a nice swim?” he asked her.

“Oh, yah. Unca Matty...shell!” She held it flat in her little palm for him.

He studied it for a moment. It was quite spectacular...a small, circular shell in pale peach and faintest mauve. Nature was truly the most gifted artist. He turned it over. The inside of the shell was the color of a ripe peach. “It’s beautiful, baby. You ready for breakfast?”

She nodded eagerly, bounding away.

He loved the way she’d made herself at home. She flew up the six stairs to the main house and, as he followed her, Matt marveled once again at how amazing this house was. Not a single window treatment adorned the huge, plate glass windows and outside were the two tiny islands that made

up *Mokulua*, one of the most photographed spots in the whole world.

Matt got a secret thrill out of the fact the coffee table in the sunken living room had a huge picture book, *The World's Most Beautiful Beaches*, on it with the islands right on the cover.

The main house was right on the beach and the sound of the ocean was like constant music. It was filled with *koa* wood furniture and beautiful local artwork. He recognized Pegge Hopper and even valuable pieces by artist and poet, Don Blandings. It was comfortable, yet elegant and perfect for families who wanted warmth at night when it grew cold and threw the doors open to the sun by day. The long *lanai* wrapping the house contained two different outdoor dining tables, one sheltered, one not. The Japanese shichirin barbecue was a generous size and made everything taste wonderful.

Their boogie boards and snorkel gear lined the wall outside the kitchen and flip-flops and sandals littered both entrances to the house. The homeowners forbade shoes indoors, not that it was a problem to the Lucas family. No, keeping shoes on Daphne's feet when they went out was the biggest problem.

Matt took an appreciative sniff of the perking peaberry coffee, deciding it added to the feeling that this was home.

Thomas was sitting at one of the high-backed dining chairs under the *koa* wood fan at the dining table, reading a magazine. Matt's mom, Elise, was reading the same article, her chin on Thomas' shoulder.

"That looks sooo good," she sighed.

"Doesn't it?" Thomas' tone was wistful, but Matt's attention was immediately grabbed by his dad, Baxter, making his usual catastrophic mess in the kitchen as he prepared chocolate and macadamia pancakes for breakfast. Baby Daphne strummed her new ukulele Matt and Thomas had bought her in Chinatown the day before.

"Wanna play my ukulele?" she asked Matt, pronouncing it the *Hawaiian* way, oo-koo-lay-lee.

"Naw. I think I want a kiss instead. Can I have a little kiss?"

"Nope!" She shrieked with laughter as he picked her up and threw her in the air, catching her in his arms. "Do dat again!"

Thomas smiled as he glanced up, watching them. There was something in his expression that troubled Matt. Thomas went outside. Matt gave him a few minutes alone, hoping he was doing some work out there, but realized Thomas was still reading the magazine at the table on the back *lanai*.

"Grub's up," Baxter announced and they loaded trays with coffee, pancakes, fresh guava

juice and went outside.

Baby Daphne knelt on a padded seat cushion, the magnificent Pacific Ocean glistening like a long piece of foamy turquoise jewel behind her. She forked the pancakes Elise cut up for her, eating the way the entire Lucas family did, like their food was about to be arrested and taken away from them. Thomas seemed subdued as he asked Elise about the plans for the day.

"Well...Baxter wants to take the baby kayaking. We found one in the garage." She glanced at her husband as if seeking his approval and continued. "It won't fit more than three of us. We need to rent a life jacket for the baby so if you want to come out with us, we could rent another kayak."

"No, mom, you go right ahead," Matt interjected. "Enjoy your day."

Baby Daphne had Hoovered up her pancakes and was ready for more. Thomas reached over and forked another one for her, Elise cutting it into pieces.

"Ono!" the baby said, her *Hawaiian* getting better every second.

"You want to call your daddies?" Elise asked her.

"Nope," came the reply.

Elise looked pleased. Daphne, the daughter of Matt's twin brother, Ryan, and his husband, Cole, was the first and only grandchild Elise and Baxter

had. Elise was a little...possessive.

Thomas smothered a smile as Matt said as gently as possible, "Mom, you should still call them. She enjoys saying no."

"What about you, honey?" You like saying no?"

The heat was back in his eyes and Matt enjoyed seeing that fire there...the fire Thomas had for him. "I would never say no to you, baby."

Elise refilled Daphne's juice glass as Thomas smiled and glanced back at the cover of the magazine on his lap.

"We need more syrup." Baxter went back to the kitchen and Matt covered Thomas' hand with his.

"What's the matter baby? You're looking at that magazine with such longing."

Thomas actually laughed. "No...God...it's so stupid. I saw this dish on the cover..." He held the magazine, *Dining in Paradise*, one of the freebies you could find at the green tin stands all over *Waikiki*, toward Matt, who glanced at the image of a piece of salmon is a sea of saffron and other delicious things.

"I don't get it." Matt started to fret. What was he missing?

"Well, this is apparently the hottest dish in the islands and they make it at Roy's."

"Uh-huh." Matt could see *Roy's* stamped on the plate. "What's the problem? If you want to go

there, baby, I'll take you tonight."

"It's in *Maui*. I didn't realize I picked up the dining guide to *Maui*. I thought it was our island, *Oahu*."

Their conversation was interrupted by Elise's merry peel of laughter on her cell phone. She ended her call and looked at them in a hopeful way that tore at Matt. "My friend Doris is here with her husband and her three-year-old granddaughter...they want us to have an early dinner with them tonight..."

Matt nodded. "Perfect. You have your day, we'll have ours. I think it would be fantastic for Daphne to have another little girl to play with."

Elise looked so happy. "Do you mind if they come here?"

"Mind?" Matt frowned. "Of course not."

"They're staying in *Waikiki* and the beach there is so rough..."

Matt held up his hand. "This is the best beach on the island and the waves are perfect for the kids. You want them to stay overnight? You know we've got the top half of the guesthouse. There's two beds up there."

"You wouldn't mind?" Elise's cheeks glowed. She adored entertaining and relished being a grandma. He knew she was excited about finding new playmates for the baby. To Elise, the best, lifelong friendships were forged in childhood.

"What are you two going to do?" Baxter asked, pouring more syrup over his pancake stack.

Matt grinned. "Thomas and I are going to *Maui* for the day."

"*Maui*?" Thomas gaped at him.

"Sure. We'll take the Superferry over. We can put the car on it...zip around the island and have dinner at Roy's. We could stay somewhere wonderful tonight and come back tomorrow."

Thomas looked at him with such hunger it took Matt's breath away. "Won't it be...expensive? We've spent so much already..."

"It's not expensive at all. Besides, we're honeymooners."

"Right." Elise poured them each one more cup of coffee. "I had no idea there was a ferry to *Maui* and that you could take the car. What a wonderful idea."

"Yeah," Matt said. "I'm thinking it's time to broaden Mr. Happy's horizons."

"Mr. Happy?" Baxter grinned. "Is that what you call your husband?"

No, that's what I call his cock. "Mr. Happy is my muse," Matt said with all the dignity he could muster. He caught Thomas' delighted grin. He leaned over and kissed him quickly.

"We're going to have to boogie, baby. The morning ferry leaves at eight thirty."

CHAPTER TWO

The journey to *Honolulu's* seaport was a straight run down the *Pali Highway* and down to *Nimitz*. Traffic was surprisingly light, considering it was a weekday morning and they were heading toward the downtown business district, but the two men had made good time. They packed only one overnight bag borrowed from Elise with extra underpants, jeans, t-shirts, tennis shoes and their toothbrushes. They'd thrown beach towels into the trunk as well. Each of them wore board shorts, tank tops and flip-flops and had their laptops with them.

Thomas sat rigid in the front seat, drinking in the view as they approached Terminal Nineteen. "I bet this is how it was in the old days, on *Boat Day*," Thomas said. "I found this magazine article and it's amazing. It looks like nothing's changed down here. Except women used to come down here with *leis*, musicians would play on the dock. Oh, Matt...look! There's an old lady selling *leis*!

Pull over!"

Matt swerved to the shoulder, hoping a cop hadn't seen them, and watched his husband's animated conversation with the old Chinese woman as she held up two tuberose and pink *plumeria leis* to Thomas who broke off a twenty and handed it to her, running back to the car. The old lady kept staring at the twenty as if in disbelief. Thomas draped one of the heady garlands over Matt's head and shoulders.

"*Aloha* sailor." Thomas kissed his mouth warmly. "Thanks for finding my muse again, baby."

He was like a little kid when the briny stench of harbor water hit them like a slap as Matt rejoined the flow of cars, lowering the window to pay for their trip.

"There's an energy, isn't there? Oh look at that! We drive right on the ferry!"

Thomas was giddy with the experience and Matt was just happy seeing his husband so absorbed. They could see other people strolling the decks wearing *leis* of their own...Thomas was right. It really was like they'd gone back in time.

They followed the guard's instructions, driving slowly into the bowel of the ferry and parking almost right up on the rear of the car in front. Their car was inspected and they answered a volley of questions about transporting forbidden

plants and even cattle. They parked and locked, leaving the overnight bag in the trunk and taking their laptops with them. Their rented PT Cruiser's rear and side windows were heavily tinted as an extra precaution against the island's biggest problem, theft.

Matt and Thomas rose to the sun-dappled deck. "Wow." Thomas snuggled into him. For another eighteen bucks a piece, they could sit inside on the upper deck, which they were told was a good idea for anyone suffering from seasickness, but they both wanted to be outside. They were the first ones over to the *Lanai* Deck in back, right in the sun.

"Oh man," Matt moaned. "I want to lay you out naked right here on this bench and suck and lick your cock and ass and balls until you come at least twice."

Thomas grinned. "We can't do that. Somebody will see us."

"We can totally take this bench and..."

A family of five was rounding the corner and Matt and Thomas quickly threw their legs over the bench, watching the sea ahead of them. Thomas reached into his messenger bag and extracted a journal. He started making notes and Matt who wouldn't have minded a long and ardent soul kiss, closed his eyes, trying to locate his own muse.

"Matty?"

His eyes flew open. "Yes, baby?"

"What does your muse look like?"

"That's weird, I was just thinking about that myself." He stared out at the ocean as the ferry started moving forward. Ahead of them, the islands of *Maui* and *Lanai* beckoned invitingly like massive green jewels in gray satin. He couldn't wait to show Thomas the island of *Maui*. Its vibe was so different to *Oahu*.

"Well?" Thomas asked him.

Matt's thoughts flittered back to their conversation. "I don't know. I never thought about it to be honest. Honey, should I be jealous of your muse?"

Thomas frowned. "No. Should I be jealous of yours?"

"I don't even know if I have one."

Thomas seemed like he was about to argue, but let the comment pass, his gleaming black hair falling forward over his face as he scribbled.

Over the loudspeaker, one of the crewmembers announced a family of tiger sharks surfing the reef to the starboard side of the ferry. As their voyage continued at a pretty good clip, humpback dolphins arced and soared in the air, crashing back into the ocean. Matt stole a look at the couple beside them with their children. They were riveted by the aquatic displays.

Matt felt a momentary qualm that he and Thomas would never be parents. Thomas had made this clear only the night before and they'd had an unpleasant conversation about his childhood. He was still affected by his disappearing father and his—according to Thomas—rigid mother. Matt decided he'd rather be with Thomas and settle for being a doting uncle to Daphne than be alone in the world without him. He could deal with anything if he had Thomas by his side. Thomas was in good health, happy and..."Thomas, darling, you feel okay?" he asked suddenly.

"I feel fantastic, why?"

"Just making sure."

Thomas glanced at him quizzically. "My muse is dictating at a fast pace. Can't tell if the little bastard thinks it's the most amazing stuff in the world or if he's just eager to get it over with." He continued writing at a frantic pace.

Matt tried not to feel let down that they weren't holed up in the restroom having wild rabbit sex. He smiled as the children beside them got up and ran around the boat. Thomas was lost in his work and Matt kept his eyes on the sea, the approaching land mass ahead of them, remembering how the first Chinese sea traders who arrived here called them The Sandalwood Islands because the scent of sandalwood was so strong. With a pang, he

realized those days were long, long gone with those trees harvested into extinction on the islands for trade.

He thought about his own fictional characters and tried visualizing a scene on the ferry for them. He was quite intoxicated by his new male lead, Herve, and pictured him and his lover on this very bench. Herve was fearless. He would have taken the risk of getting caught and pursued his passion.

Herve placed the adoring Andreas on his back on the bench. Andreas laughed as Herve's fingers tore at the Velcro snaps on his shorts.

"Somebody might catch us, Andreas," he whispered, his thick French accent arousing every last nerve ending in Andreas.

"And if they should, I shall tell them you are mine...your ass belongs to me. I don't share with anybody...unless we both decide we want that. Now lift your ass..."

Herve kept his hot gaze on Andreas' face, his thick, hard cock bouncing out of the shorts, his legs pulled up at the knees, which opened as Andreas lowered his face to suck at his cock.

A cry escaped Herve's throat as footsteps approached. Andreas was gone...too far gone to stop what he was doing and Herve was equally intoxicated.

"I'm your whore," he whispered, tugging Andreas' head closer...

Matt opened his eyes and felt Thomas staring at him. "What's wrong, baby?"

"Nothing. You were making strange noises."

"Sorry."

Thomas shrugged and returned to his work.

Matt quickly shut his eyes again, but Herve and Andreas were gone. *What do I tell Thomas if he ever asks me again? I know who my muse is now. I see his face so clearly...it's Thomas. Does this make me the biggest dork alive?*

He felt his two fictional men coming back to him in the warm morning sun, but only received snippets of scenes...nothing tangible. Next thing he knew, Thomas was nudging him.

"Matty?"

"Uh-huh..."

"I changed my mind. I hear the Roy's on *Maui* has no view...it's in a strip mall! They say the food is amazing, but I'm told we *have* to go to the Grand *Wailea* and we have to try Table..."

"Table 70," a gray-haired old gentleman responded, smiling at them.

Matt realized he must have fallen asleep on the bench and felt a little disoriented. "Whatever you want, babe," he said, feeling a headache forming right behind his eyes. He had no idea when Thomas had left him and started wandering around talking to people.

Thomas looked ecstatic. "We can really go there?"

"Sure." Matt grinned.

Thomas took his cell phone out of his bag and began making calls.

"I can't believe you can get reception out here," Matt said as Thomas asked the operator for the hotel resort.

"We will be arriving in *Maui* in ten minutes," a voice announced over the loudspeaker.

There was a hum in the air and Matt looked at the sleepy isle across the bay and pondered all the things he and Thomas could do that day. The trip had taken a little over two hours. They had a whole day ahead of them.

"I booked it for six thirty." Thomas slid beside him. "Is that okay? What will we do until then?"

"Mmmm...I have plans." Matt nuzzled Thomas' neck and Thomas didn't pull away.

"What sort of plans?"

"I thought I'd take you to *Hana*...how would you like to see beaches of green, red, gold and black sand?"

Thomas stared into his eyes and his voice was husky. "I think I would like that very much."

They arrived in *Kahulu* by the airport and picked up a schedule for return trips to *Oahu*, retrieved their car quickly, returning the *Aloha*

greetings of the dockworkers. Once again at the wheel, Matt pulled confidently onto the highway and Thomas sat riveted, drinking in the vast expanse of scenery...acres and acres of lush greenery, a sparkling rainbow dancing over the imposing *Haleakala* volcanic crater, which dominated the landscape. On their right, they passed untended green fields, grazing, indolent horses, the odd cow or goat...the ocean dipped to their left as the signpost ahead read *Hana* Highway and suddenly the tempo, the very air became thick with tranquility.

"Oh..." Thomas' voice was soft. "This is amazing." His head swiveled from one side of the car to the other. The driver's side was a staggeringly close series of sharp turns close to the sea where jagged lava rocks glinted in the hot sun. To the right, amazingly lavish tropical flowers, plants and trees grew impossibly out of vast lava chunks. The road narrowed and expanded...time stood still and no sound could be heard except for the occasional crack of ocean spray or the sound of their own wheels turning.

"I feel like I could reach out and break off a piece of lava and eat it like chocolate." Thomas' neck craned for a closer look as they rolled over a cattle grate. "This is...this is...so different to *Oahu*. I feel like I stepped back a whole lot of years. It's peaceful...it's beautiful...it's..."

"Paradise."

Thomas nodded, his gaze straying back to the flashing scenery.

"It's fifty-two miles to *Hana*...and I read somewhere there are six hundred curves, fifty-nine bridges, almost all of them one-lane bridges and oh...over two thousand cows. The cows outnumber the people in *Hana*."

Thomas sat back and relaxed, allowing the ambience to wash over him, his hand moving to Matt's lap. Matt wanted to do the wave, he was so happy. God, how could he love this man *so much*?

Matt took the sharp turns and challenging duels with approaching cars with ease. The two men grinned as they approached the homemade Halfway-to-*Hana* sign.

"We must stop here," Matt insisted. "We're not really half way...but close. This is the best fruit and bread we're gonna find. Let's make a picnic of it."

Thomas jumped out of the car eagerly and followed Matt into a homely store where the smell of freshly baked banana bread made their bellies rumble.

"On the house." The owner of the business pushed a loaf toward them and the two men thanked her, picking up fresh baby mountain apples, bottles of spring water, ripe mangoes and a pound of *lilikoi* passionfruit, a couple of plastic

knives and paper napkins.

They carted everything back to the car in a bulging, plastic sack, kicked off their flip-flops and continued their leisurely drive toward *Hana*. The sound of waterfalls greeted their ears.

"Would you like to go to the 'Oheo Gulch?" Matt asked. "They used to be known as the Seven Sacred Pools, but there are more than seven and it's quite spectacular."

"What color is the sand?" Thomas asked.

"Not much sand...the gulch is a natural series of lava pools. The water falls from the top to the bottom and it's crystal clean and really lovely."

"How could I resist?"

They parked in the makeshift parking lot, making sure their laptops were well hidden from view in the trunk, grabbing their beach towels and picnic items and walked down to the gulch. At the top of the pools on a little wooden bridge, Thomas inhaled sharply.

"Spectacular doesn't quite cut it, does it?"

Matt laughed. "I guess not. I thought you'd like it."

"Like it? It's Shangri La. It's the Garden of Eden...oh, Matty, we're the only ones here!" They completed their downhill trek, selected a pool, settled down on a dense patch of cool green grass and ate quickly.

Matt split a *lilikoi* in two and gave Thomas half.

"Suck it quickly, baby." Thomas did as he was told, licking the tangy syrup with a taste all of its own from Matt's fingers.

"That's oh...that's delicious." They sliced bread, apples and mangoes, slathering pieces of each in the *lilikoi* and gobbling them up quickly. Thomas had a famished look in his eye as they replaced everything in the sack, took their cell phones out of their pockets, stashing them under their towels and climbed into the pool.

Matt sat in the pool and Thomas stood before him. Matt could not resist. He reached up to his husband's waist and ripped the Velcro snaps on his shorts, sliding them all the way down his long legs, tossing them into the pool directly below them. Without a word, he took Thomas' hardening cock into his mouth and Thomas quickly straddled Matt's lap.

"Get your cock out for me," Thomas commanded and Matt fumbled with his own snaps. His cock bobbed to the surface and he held his husband in his strong arms as Thomas lowered himself to his lap.

Matt's cock went right for Thomas' ass when Thomas asked, "What's *yuzu* cheesecake?"

"Excuse me?" Matt stared at him stunned. "I'm about to give you a righteous ass fucking and you're thinking about cheesecake?"

"The guy on the ferry said we should have that

tonight at Table Seventy. I can't help it. I'm obsessed now."

"Can you concentrate on American cock and we'll get to the fancy cheesecake later?"

"Tee heeee."

The two men turned. Holy cow! A Japanese couple in wholly inappropriate clothing, dress pants and shoes for him, high heels and a pencil skirt for her, had somehow managed to walk down to their pool. The young woman held her hand to her mouth and kept giggling as Thomas reached down, buck-naked, and retrieved his shorts.

Matt was devastated. He couldn't believe their bad luck. Thomas dressed quickly and sat beside in the pool, the two men watching dumfounded as the Japanese man set up a tripod on a lava ledge three pools below them that was slanted awkwardly, very close to the ocean spray. Matt slipped his arm around Thomas as the young woman followed the man's demands. She sat on a rock, her legs tucked elegantly around her and she would keep turning to check on the surf, trying to keep a smile on her lips. She was clearly frightened, but the man was oblivious and the photo shoot was interminable.

"Is he trying to kill her?" Thomas muttered, echoing Matt's thoughts as a wash of ocean spray reached the young woman's back, making her

shriek. The waves were coming in faster and stronger now and the young woman was pale and petrified. The man sat beside her and waited for the self-timer to work, but nothing happened. He got up, muttering in Japanese. The woman turned just in time to see a huge, monster wave roar over her.

Her mouth opened in a long, silent scream, the wave taking her out to sea as her legs disappeared over her head.

The oblivious man was too busy working on the camera as Matt and Thomas screamed, racing to the ocean break to save the drowning woman as a huge shark came out of nowhere, its menacing fin aiming straight for the woman tumbling in the gritty surf.

CHAPTER THREE

Matt didn't hesitate throwing himself into the water to rescue the woman, scraping his knees painfully on jagged reef deceptively close to the break. Thomas was right beside him and the woman's small body kept rolling away as they tried to reach her.

Thomas got to her first, grabbing her arms. Matt grabbed her feet and they brought her out as the shark...a massive tiger shark Matt realized now as he saw him up close with scary, blank, hungry eyes, missed the woman's foot by mere inches. The shark moved forward and the two men threw the woman into the first pool, missing the shark themselves as it slowly retreated, circling the break as they picked the lifeless woman up again, dragging her to the second pool and to safety on a ledge.

"Turn her over...start mouth to mouth." Matt's breath was ragged as Thomas followed his instructions. The husband stood numb, camera in

hand, staring at them as if he couldn't believe what had happened.

"You idiot!" Matt raged at him. "You almost killed her!" Matt rushed past the guy, snatched his cell phone from under his towel and called nine one one, thankful when he got a signal. Thomas was doing a fine job of counting and breathing into the woman. The phone operator told Matt she would stay on the line with him.

"My husband's giving her mouth to mouth," Matt told her.

"Let me talk to him."

"Can I put you on loud speaker?" he asked.

"Perfect."

She was a fantastic operator who kept calm and realized Thomas and Matt were doing an excellent job of the CPR.

"I'm right here with you, Thomas," she said every twenty or thirty seconds. Within a few short minutes, the police helicopter was flying over them and oh great...a news chopper right behind it.

Thomas and Matt rolled the woman over as instructed when she started to wake up and seawater spewed up out of her mouth. She coughed and spluttered and cried when she realized she was alive.

"Great job, Thomas and Matt! Your emergency crew is on scene now," their operator said,

sounding overjoyed.

"Thank you," Matt told her and ended the call.

The two-man rescue response team came down via a ladder from the chopper. Their brisk attitude indicated they were used to emergencies here.

"People have been eaten," one of the guys shrugged nonchalantly. "We try and warn people..."

The young woman was strapped into a portable gurney and raised above their heads.

"She's going to be okay, thanks to you," the second rescue response officer told Thomas, whose teeth still chattered from the shock of the whole ordeal.

The husband was in shock himself and went with the lone uniformed officer who showed up. Matt gave him his card in case the officer wanted to talk to them.

"Nice job," the officer said to them.

The news crew that taped the incident kept asking questions, but Matt waved them away.

"Anybody would have helped," he said, still feeling shaky himself when he thought about how close and how determined the shark had been.

"If you two hadn't been here and seen it for yourselves, people might have thought he tried to kill her," the reporter said.

Neither Matt nor Thomas responded. Matt still wasn't convinced the man *wasn't* trying to bump

her off. He kept his arm around Thomas, pushing past the small crew. He picked up both their towels, wrapping them around Thomas who kept staring into space. He took the plastic sack and Thomas' cell phone, tossed the sack into the almost overflowing garbage bin on their way back to the car.

Once they reached it, Matt leaned against it, holding Thomas in his arms. For long moments after the ambulance, the cops and the news crew finally went away, the two men stood like this, wrapped in each other's thoughts.

"You know what I thought of?" Thomas asked, his voice raspy from the exertion of his lifesaving efforts, his head on Matt's chest.

"What, baby?" Matt kissed his face tenderly, adoring the tiny specks of lava sand on those long eyelashes.

"Daphne. I thought of Baby Daphne and how much I would miss her if I never got to see her again."

Thomas' hold on him tightened. "We're going to see her first thing in the morning, right after we get back."

"I want to go back now. I want to go home to her."

Thomas huddled in his arms. "No can do. You're my hero. I need to reward you with dinner, remember. Besides, this is the only place in the

whole of America where I can get you *yuzu* cheesecake."

"Really?" Thomas raised his face and looked at him, the lust for life back in his eyes.

"No, I am probably lying, but I want you to myself. We can call her and, in the morning we can buy her some cool stuff and hurry back to *Kailua*."

Thomas' smile was faint. "I'd love that." His voice faltered. "Matty...I keep seeing that shark..."

"I know, baby...me, too."

"He was so close to your foot." Thomas' eyes pooled with tears. "I would die without you, do you know that?"

Matt kissed him for long, lovely minutes and put him in the passenger seat. Thomas took the cell phone Matt had retrieved and his fingers shook as he pressed some buttons.

"Elise?" His face creased in a smile finally. "It was on television? Are you serious?" He looked worried again. "Daphne didn't see it, did she?" He broke into laughter. "Ah...the coconut wireless. Does that mean somebody else saw the report and called you?"

Matt drove quickly back the way they came. It was now three o'clock in the afternoon. They might just make their dinner reservations after all...

Thomas was dazzled by the bright lights and luxury of the Grand *Wailea* Hotel. Matt let Thomas run through the selection of rooms with the desk staff, ecstatic when he chose an ocean guestroom that had a combination of oceanfront and garden view. He already knew Thomas was in love with *Maui*. Their room was wonderful. Huge, spacious and not a glimpse out of any window of another human being or building.

"I think I love it almost as much as *Black Point*," Thomas said, rushing around the huge rooms, admiring their lavish digs.

They had minutes to spare before dinner so they took a quick, hot shower together, slipping into their jeans and fresh t-shirts. Matt could hardly wait to check out the restaurant *Humuhumunukunukuapa'a*, named for *Hawaii's* state fish. Table Seventy turned out to be under its own thatched roof, right over the ocean. They walked on a wooden bridge over a calm, turquoise lagoon. Matt brushed the memory of the shark from his mind as he held Thomas' chair for him.

Their attentive waiter brought them a bottle of free champagne, compliments of the hotel, when he recognized them from the TV coverage of their sea rescue.

Thomas looked like a little kid, his happy gaze darting over the menu. "I love the idea of the *ahi*

tuna traps...hmmm, but then again the pan seared scallops sound so good...maybe we should get the sampler and try a little of everything?"

"Good idea." Matt slid his hand onto his husband's thigh, liking the impish smile that greeted him when his hand touched Thomas' cock.

"And for the main course...oh...we're dying to know. What's *yuzu* cheesecake?" Thomas asked the waiter.

"That's not even on the menu," the waiter said. "How do you know about it?"

"A reliable tip."

"Well, it's a rare, bitter Japanese citrus fruit. I would suggest ordering that right now."

"Is that your best dessert?" Matt asked.

"My favorite is the chocolate soufflé and you should definitely order that now. It takes an hour to prepare."

"We'll take one of each."

For their main courses, the waiter suggested Tasmanian salmon. It came with fried rice cooked in vanilla brandy cream.

"I think I'm drooling." Thomas handed the menu back to the waiter who left them alone at last.

Thomas and Matt held hands, smiling at the collection of candles and wooden tikis on their table.

"We did a good thing today," Thomas whispered.

"A very good thing."

"We're good for each other."

Matt looked into Thomas' eyes. "Yes we are."

"It took me a long time to find another story to write...something I loved as much as the one I sold to Hollywood and I thought that was the biggest drama of my life." Thomas took one of his hands away to sip at his champagne. "But I realized today that losing you...losing my new family would be worse than never being able to tell a story again."

Matt's fingers tugged Thomas' face toward him. "Oh, baby...our lives together are just beginning."

Thomas nodded. "You've given me so much..." The waiter returned and Thomas looked up at him. "Is there any chance in the world we can have our dinner delivered to our room?"

"Sir...you two are heroes...on this island, you can have whatever you want."

Matt couldn't wait to undress Thomas, who seemed torn between the champagne, the fried rice and the hot naked man pushing him to the vast, sprawling bed overlooking the ocean.

"Look at that." Thomas pointed and Matt turned. Directly in front of them, the stars shone right on the water and into their room.

Not close enough for sharks, thank God. "It's beautiful...but I like the view I have right here in my bed."

Thomas laughed. "You do have a one track mind, don't you?"

"You bet I do."

Thomas lay underneath Matt, smiling up at him. "Now you've got me exactly where you want me, what are you going to do to me?"

"I haven't yet decided." Matt lowered his mouth to Thomas'.

"Umm...before we get too involved, the waiter's going to show up in about forty-five minutes with our desserts."

Matt's cool look made Thomas laugh. "Geez...I'm just saying."

"Speaking of dessert...how do you feel about fun with cheesecake?"

"I'll think about it when it gets here. In the meantime, on your back, buddy."

Matt laughed as Thomas pushed him back.

"Mmmm...I see we have a Mr. Happy...no, no...a Mr. *Ecstatically* Happy here and I haven't even got started yet."

Matt laughed as Thomas' dark head shot to his cock. Oh....*bliss*. Finally. Thomas was licking his thighs and balls and, oh mercy, his cock with serious intent.

Thomas reached up and took a mouthful of

champagne and Matt held his breath, watching Thomas' mouth go back over his hard cock again. Man, that felt so good. His cock competed with the bubbles in Thomas' mouth and he felt a wonderfully warm sensation spread through him as Thomas kept up a blistering pace sucking his cock. Matt marveled that Thomas was able to keep him and the champagne in his mouth, but then a different sensation started. Thomas allowed the now-warm champagne to flow over his cockhead and licked it up.

Matt twisted around on the crisp, white, expensive hotel bed sheets, sighing into the open night air, the windows flung open to the scent of tropical flowers and the ocean breeze. Thomas took another gulp of champagne, pressing his mouth over Matt's cock again. Matt tossed and turned...oh man he'd never felt anything like this...aw, he was gonna come...and within seconds, he did, the champagne doing amazing things to his cock head as he came, gasping for breath, his husband holding the base of his cock to his hungry lips.

"Better than cheesecake, baby."

Matt's heart still pounded as Thomas crawled between his legs. "Open your fucking legs," Thomas growled, pouring the rest of the champagne over Matt's open thighs. He felt the liquid trickle down to his ass and Thomas leaned

down to lick it up.

"Keep your legs open, my little American whore," Thomas grunted, taking his mouth off him for a moment. His tongue went back to licking him, preparing Matt for the fucking he'd wanted...needed all day.

"You ready for your cock?" Thomas asked, not even waiting for a response before plunging straight into him.

Thomas picked up the second glass, tossing the contents over Matt's chest, crazily licking at the liquid, sucking in Matt's nipples and moving up to his mouth. Oh God, Thomas was a firecracker in the sheets.

He fucked Matt relentlessly, pulling out all the way, then sticking his cock all the way back in, calling Matt his whore and Matt responding by calling Thomas his slut until they rode each other to a frenzy.

"That's it, come for me," Thomas grunted in his ear. "Show me what a little whore you are." He held Matt's cock in his possessive fist, slamming into his ass. When the two men stopped coming, Matt rolled on top of his husband.

There was a knock at the door. "Your dessert is here," the waiter said from outside.

"Leave it at the door, please." Matt looked down at the man whose cock was still imbedded in his ass.

"I want to try that cheesecake...right out of your ass. I bet it tastes great. A little Japanese cheesecake mixed with a little French Canadian slut."

Thomas pulled his head down to him..."Come here, my American whore and show me who owns my French ass."

Matt awoke with the sun warming his skin, his husband running around the room like a lunatic.

"Thomas...baby...wha..." He grabbed his cell phone, squinting at the time. Six o'clock in the morning. Oh geez... "What's wrong?"

"Your parents aren't answering the phone. None of the lines. Not their cell phones...not the landline. Something's happened to Baby Daphne. She's been eaten by a shark. I just know it."

Matt stared at him. "Sweetheart, please...they're probably still sleeping."

"Rubbish! Your dad is up before the sunrise, dragging her down to the beach for a swim. I had bad dreams, Matty. That shark ate you." He pointed at Matt. "Then he went for the baby."

Matt stared helplessly as his husband ran from room to room. He knew from the experience of Thomas losing his lucky suit on their wedding day that when he got into this state, he didn't listen. He *couldn't* listen. And then the swearing in French started.

As if on cue, Thomas hurled a string of expletives...yep...there it was. Matt picked up his cell phone and sent a text to his mom. *Urgent. Please call.*

Aloud he said, "Thomas, my parents would never allow anything to happen to Daphne. They love her as much as we do."

"I'm telling you, this dream was real, Matty. I saw that shark..."

The phone rang. "Is that them?" Thomas lunged for it, but Matt got to it first. It was Ryan, Matt's twin brother and Daphne's father.

"Say, you guys, I've been trying to reach you since last night. How's my little girl this morning? Cole and I miss her so much. We were starting to get worried."

Matt's heart did a painful back flip on his chest. "Ryan, hey, bro. Actually, Thomas and I are in *Maui*." Thomas was staring at him wide-eyed. There was no use pretending. "I'm sure everything's fine, Ryan."

"You mean you haven't spoken to them either?" Ryan sounded panicked.

"No, we spoke to them yesterday afternoon and everything was fine. Thomas was now holding his hand to his forehead, fingers up, in the classic shark fin pose kids so when they're swimming. Matt ignored him.

"They haven't returned any of our calls and

Cole is worried. She's our *baby*, Matt. You do understand that, right?"

"Of course I understand that. Thomas and I are on our way back to *Oahu* right now. I'll call you as soon as we have some news." There was a beat.

"Cole and I are flying there today. I can't believe mom isn't returning our calls. My husband is in a terrible state." Ryan hung up on him and Matt dropped the cell phone on the nightstand.

"I told you something was wrong. We're leaving right now." Thomas raced around throwing their few possessions into the overnight bag.

Matt's thoughts tumbled with images of smashing waves and a shark's eye. He shook the image from his mind. "We can't get on the ferry until nine thirty." Matt tried to keep his voice even.

"Nine thirty? Are you *crazy*? We're flying back right now."

"We can't fly back. We have the car."

Thomas opened his mouth.

Matt cut him off. "Look, we need the car in *Oahu*. We'll be stuck at the pier with no way to get home. We will also pay stiff penalties for abandoning the car here. They may ban us from ever renting another car again."

Thomas seemed at war with this, even though it made sense. "Okay, but I'm calling the police in

Kailua. I want them to go and check the house."

Matt decided it wasn't a bad idea and made the call himself. The officer he spoke to was very kind and said he'd send a uniform patrol past the house to check on the family.

"No *huhu*, no worries...give me your number."

Easy for him to say no *huhu*...if anything had happened to Daphne or his family...Matt brushed the eye of the shark away from him. Nothing had happened to her. She was safe.

He and Thomas went down to the lobby and checked out of the hotel. They asked for coffee on the back *lanai* and it arrived in a French press, small pastries decorating the tray. It was a small, comforting salve to a strange start of their day. As they sipped the coffee, small children darted from one glorious, grand pool to another and Matt's heart almost broke. *Daphne*...

"I can't stand this," Thomas whispered, apparently in the same pain.

Matt paid the check and his cell phone rang. It was a police officer from *Kailua*. Nobody was at the house.

"The house looks like it's okay...front door is unlocked...we didn't see any...you know, bodies. We left a note for the family to call us. Mebbe they're all at the beach? You call us if you need us, you no worry, yeah?"

Yeah, no worry.

"Try the numbers again." Thomas drained his cup.

Still no answer. Now Matt was worried, too. He and Thomas sat numbly in the car once they retrieved it from the valet guys. What a strange couple of days it had been. Thomas turned and looked over his shoulder.

"Matty...we're holding up traffic."

"Oh...sorry."

Thomas kept his hand on Matt's thigh, reassuring him as they drove out of the hotel's sweeping entrance. Matt turned north heading toward *Lahaina*, neither of them saying anything for the longest time.

"Where are we going?" Thomas asked finally.

"The airport. You know...back to the ferry dock. It's right next to it."

Thomas nodded. "Do you mind if I try calling them again?"

"Go ahead."

For the next two hours, they tortured themselves and each other...they couldn't imagine what had happened to the family and Matt, who intuitively felt they were fine, raged at them, wondering how he would respond once he spoke to them.

It was a relief when they could board the ferry and head back to *Oahu*.

"You still think they're okay?" Thomas asked

him again.

"Yes, I do. I don't know why...they...I just feel they're fine."

They huddled together on the long trip back to *Oahu*, almost knocking people out of the way at the pier to retrieve their car. They were on the *Pali* half way home when Matt's cell phone rang.

Elise.

"Mom?"

"Hi, honey!" her voice sounded breezy.

"Where the *fuck* are you?"

"What kind of language is that?" she chided.

"We've been trying to call you all morning. We even called the police."

"The police?"

Matt could hear voices in the background. Aloud he said, "Thomas I can hear the baby...thank God, she's fine.

"Of course she's fine." Elise sounded indignant. "We've been out for a walk. We watched the sunrise. Good Lord, you really did call the cops. There's a note on the screen door. What's wrong with you, Matty? We've been organizing a surprise for you and Thomas."

"What sort of a surprise? You know Ryan and Cole are frantic. They're flying out today. You'd better call them and apologize."

"Don't take that tone with me, young man," Elise huffed and hung up on him.

"Can you believe her? A surprise, if you please."

"What surprise?" Thomas asked.

"Who knows? I am so mad at her scaring the crap out of us like that..."

"I am so glad they're okay."

"Yeah...you're right. Call her back, will you please, sweetheart?"

Thomas took the phone and pressed the numbers. "She's not answering. I think she's pissed."

Matt sighed. At last they were on the street where they were staying. In the driveway as they pulled up, Thomas stared.

"Oh, shit."

"What is it?" Matt asked.

"Oh no...I don't believe it. I cannot believe she did this to me."

"Sweetheart, tell me what it is..." he followed Thomas' gaze when he saw how white his husband's face was.

Matt stared at the woman who turned and stared back at them.

"Not a what," Thomas mumbled. "But who..." before Matt could ask, he said, "It's my mother."

CHAPTER FOUR

Matt had no idea what to say to this woman. In fact, he was speechless. Thank God his parents were outside as well, chatting up a storm about how Celine's flight had been postponed due to some bad weather in Quebec.

"I didn't think I'd ever get here," she said suddenly, glancing nervously over Matt's shoulder a few times.

She was a beautiful woman, not surprising, given how gorgeous Thomas was. She had long black hair with incredible green eyes, tall and willowy. She could have been a fashion model. And young looking. God, she didn't look as if she'd passed her thirtieth birthday. She also had a charming French accent. Thomas had never told him his mother was French. In fact, he'd never said too much at all about his family.

"I'm Matt," he said, holding out his hand.

She smiled faintly. "It will take me a...how do you say that...a little bit...to ah..." She cleared her

throat. "Why is Tommy still in the car? Doesn't he want to see me?"

Matt held up his finger. "I'll, ah...be right back. Mom, why don't you take Celine in the house and I'll..."

"Of course," she said. "I'll make coffee."

His father took Celine's arm.

Matt walked back over to the car and got in beside Thomas. "Hey," he said.

The expression on Thomas' face was etched in stone.

Matt sighed. "Care to talk about it or are you just going to sit out here all day?"

No answer.

"I take it that bringing your mother here wasn't a good thing?"

Thomas glanced at him. "How did she get in touch with her?"

"I'm not sure."

"I think it should have been a sign when I didn't invite her to the wedding, Goddamnit."

"She had good intentions, sweetie. She —"

"She had no right."

Matt groaned inwardly.

"I want that woman gone."

"That woman is your mother."

Thomas met Matt's gaze. "Don't you dare preach to me. Just because you're Mr. One Big Happy Family. You don't know anything about

my family.”

“You’re right,” Matt accused, trying not to get angry. “I don’t. And whose fault is that? You’ve told me nothing, shut me out. How can I understand if—”

Thomas reached for the door handle. “You don’t need to understand. I don’t want to dredge up the past. I’ve put it behind me.”

“Well, apparently not.”

“Fuck you,” he muttered.

Matt sucked in some breath. He watched in the rearview mirror as Thomas walked down the driveway and disappeared around the corner. Thomas was in pain, but damn it, he couldn’t help him if he wouldn’t let him. Damn it. Matt placed his forehead against the steering wheel for a moment, then raised it and looked at the house. How in the hell was he going to deal with this? He’d have to find some delicate way to cut this visit short or he had a feeling Thomas wouldn’t come back.

* * * *

Thomas walked until he felt as if his legs had turned to rubber. Finally, he found a wobbly bench in a small green space by the water and sank down on it, trying to find a way to handle the sudden bombardment of pain he was

experiencing. It wasn't Matt's mother's fault. He really couldn't blame her, but damn it, there was no one else to blame right now. He should have just come out and told them that he had cut off all contact with his mother as soon as he'd left home at eighteen. But he was embarrassed about that.

First, he was sure they'd judge him, not understand. Family seemed important to them. And he envied that. But it was impossible to have a relationship with Celine. It wasn't just because of all the things she'd done to him when he was a kid. It was her manic-depressive moods, which fluctuated out of control because she often refused to take her meds. Then she'd attempt suicide, end up in the hospital and start taking them again. Sometimes she'd have a new boyfriend and she'd get manic and out would go the meds.

He stood, starting walking again. He had no idea where in hell he was going. It didn't matter. He'd have to go back there, explain himself somehow. God, he just hoped Celine would get the message and take the next flight home.

After his father left, Celine lost it. She began with the depression. At seven, he was taking care of her. The electricity got turned off because she didn't pay. They got evicted twice. And when he'd try and talk to her about the bill collectors harassing them, she'd lock him in his room, sometimes for days. He spent a lot of time alone

growing up, a lot of time writing, which saved his life. Celine was in and out of hospital. And when she got manic, she'd do a stint dancing in some club to make money and the men would come.

One of them tried to molest him when he was fourteen and when he tried to tell her what he'd done, Joe put up a stink and said, it was *either him or the kid*. She'd put him out. He spent three of the scariest nights of his life on the street, before she came to her senses, dumped the sleaze and came looking for him in tears, begging him to forgive her. Well, he was all out of forgiveness now. He'd forgiven his beautiful mother too many times before.

Then before he left home, he found out that his father had been trying to find him for years. He found letters from him, asking her to send *the boy* to him. He'd remarried and had another son. His new wife was willing to make Thomas a part of the family. *I know you're not mother material, Celine. It will free you. Please, I need to see my son.* For a few years, he'd also sent birthday cards with money. The cards were there, the money gone. The fact that she let him grow up thinking his father didn't care about him was something he could never forgive.

The irony was that in spite of all the crap she'd pulled, when she found out he was gay, she'd called him *sick*. She'd cried for days, accused him

of making her ill again and blamed him when she went into depression and spent three weeks in the hospital.

"What have I done wrong?" she demanded when he came to see her that one that time.

"Everything," he told her. "But it has nothing to do with my being gay. Don't ever think you can take credit for that."

She'd switched into French then, going on about what her parish priest said about such things, a priest she saw once a year at mass on Christmas eve, if at that.

He had no idea what in hell she was doing here. Why had she come at all? She would never approve of Matt and his marriage, never understand it. And in all honestly, he didn't want her approval. He didn't want anything from her.

* * * *

Matt watched the woman, who was Thomas' mother, pick up her coffee cup and drink. He could see Thomas, his smile, his hair, even some expressions on her face.

"So," she said, "my little boy got married."

"He did," Matt nodded. "I'm a lucky man."

"Um." She put down her cup. "Thomas is special. I'm afraid we haven't always agreed about ah...well...his lifestyle...is that how you say it?"

I'm afraid sometimes when I translate, it sounds bad non?"

"It's not really a lifestyle," Matt said gently.

"I was raised a strict roman catholic a —"

"You have to take all that with a grain of salt," Baxter said. "I have two gay sons, so...well..." He laughed, shrugged.

"Two?" Her eyes widened.

"Yes," he nodded.

"It's inherited?"

Matt shifted in his seat. "Just worked out that way." He cleared his throat.

She nodded.

"So, what is it you do, Celine?" Elise asked.

"Right now, I am working as a receptionist in a...a men's club."

"Oh, that must be interesting," his mother said.

Matt smiled tightly. Sometimes his mother was so naïve. He checked his watch. Two hours. He'd been gone two hours.

"Where is Tommy?" Celine asked abruptly. "I come all this way and he snubs me. Didn't he know I was coming?" She looked at Matt's mother.

"It was kind of a surprise," Elise said.

"Mom," Matt said, "why don't you show Celine where she can freshen up. I'm sure she's tired and I'll, ah...see what's keeping Thomas."

"Of course," his mother said.

Celine looked at him, an edge to her voice he hadn't heard before. "I gave birth to him. He owes me."

Matt nodded stiffly and left the house. Outside, he tried Thomas' cell. He rang twice, hung up and tried again. Finally, he answered.

"Yeah, it's me."

"Where in hell are you?"

"Walking."

"Walking where? All this time? Are you planning on coming back or what?"

Silence.

"Where are you? I'll come pick you up. Let's talk okay? Please, honey. I love you. I need to know what..."

There was huge sigh. Then thankfully he rattled off the street and talked about an Asian grocery store nearby.

"Is there a café there called Passion?"

"Ah, yeah."

"Meet me there." Matt got into the car. "I'll be there in ten minutes."

* * * *

Thomas watched Matt get out of the car and cross the road from where he sat at a small table in the café. He cradled the cappuccino in his hand, gripping it tighter when Matt entered.

How handsome he was. The two women in the corner looked up and smiled at him as he walked in, but Matt's gaze was strictly on him. "Baby," he said, leaning down and pressing his mouth to his forehead, "are you all right?"

Thomas nodded. "Sure."

"You're a liar."

"You want a coffee?"

Matt shook his head. "I want to know what's going on. Tell me. Did she abuse you when you were a kid or..."

Thomas uttered a funny little laugh. "It's hard to put a label on it."

"Is there any way to work it out?"

"No."

"Then I trust you. I won't judge you, sweetie. I won't try and force you to have a relationship with your mother if you can't."

"Oh we could have a relationship, Matt, one which makes me miserable, gives me hope that one day she'll change, that every little kind gesture is a sign that..." He stopped talking. "She's sick. And she won't admit it. And she won't stay on her meds. Her sickness causes her to live a life that...anyway..." He sighed. "She looks at me and sees my father. She sees some sick queer that she thinks she may have created. She's never truly seen me. She doesn't know me. But damn it," he said, his throat feeling raw, his eyes tearing, "I

know her."

Matt reached over and squeezed his hand. "I'll tell her to leave."

"No," he shook his head. "I'll tell her."

"Talk to me, baby. Tell me what you need to. What about your dad?"

"I think I told you, he left. She always made him the villain, but he left for good reason. He's remarried. I have a brother that I've never seen."

Matt's eyes widened. "Thomas!"

"Yeah," he nodded. "My dad tried to communicate with me, wrote to me before he lost track of us. He wanted me to come to him, to live with his new family. She never even showed me his letters. She let me think he didn't care."

"I'm sorry."

He nodded.

"What about today? Don't you want to find him? Do you know where he is?"

"It's too late."

"Sweetheart, it's never too lately, baby."

"I have no idea what he'd think of me and..."

"He'd love you. He'd be proud of you."

Thomas sniffed. He stood. "Let's go. I'll deal with Celine. We'll put her up in a hotel until her flight leaves. I'll take care of it."

"If you want to tell me about..." Matt began, standing also.

"I will," Thomas said, reaching over and

squeezing his forearm, "I promise. One day, I'll tell you everything, just not today, okay?"

Matt nodded.

"Just keep loving me."

"That's not a problem," Matt said, hugging him when they got outside the door, "I just can't seem to stop."

CHAPTER FIVE

Matt watched with concern in his eyes as Thomas walked up the stairs to where Celine was resting. They had talked some more on the car ride, Thomas telling Matt that it was all right to explain things to his parents while he was *handling Celine*.

Elise put up a bit of a fuss, being a mother, when Matt tried to explain.

"It's always the mother who gets blamed," she said.

"It's not like that. Try to understand," he said, "there's a lot we don't know, a lot of pain, past history that we didn't live. Leave it alone, mom."

"Thomas is probably mad at me," she said.

"No, he's not. But next time, ask before you go ahead and do something like that."

"Poor boy is an orphan," she shook her head. "We'll adopt him."

Matt hugged his mother. "You're so sweet. Did I tell you how lucky I am to have you for a mom?"

"Yes," she grinned, "but it doesn't hurt to say it again."

* * * *

When Thomas heard his mother say *come in* in French, he didn't hesitate to open the door. He had prepared himself so he might as well get it over with. He had decided no yelling, no tears. When he saw her, he immediately choked up, then recovered. "You look well," he said.

"What, you can't speak French to me anymore," she complained, coming over and hugging him, "too much time in the States."

He accepted her embrace stiffly, then stepped away. He switched into French. "Je parle toujours française. Comment allez-vous, Celine?"

"Just fine. Aren't you going to ask me if I'm taking my meds?"

"No. That's up to you. I've wasted enough time in my life trying to make sure you did that. I'm not your keeper anymore. Celine, you must know," he told her in French, to make sure she understood every word well, "I didn't invite you here."

"Oui," she said. "It was Matt's mother."

"Yes, and you know that I don't want you here. And yet, you accepted the invitation anyway."

"I thought it was time I saw my son."

"Okay, you've seen me. Now, I'm going to put you up in a hotel nearby and get you a flight back to Montreal."

"You hate me, don't you? You hate your own mother."

He sighed.

"It's why you call me, Celine."

"It's your name. If you deserved the title of mother, I would give it to you."

"That stings."

He shrugged.

"One day you might need me."

"I've gotten by all these years without you. I have Matt now."

"That won't last. He's too pretty."

Thomas laughed harshly, let his eyes close for a second. "Yes well..."

"Your father was a pretty man. I see him in you."

"You always did. You punished me in his place."

"I did not. You have an active imagination. It's the writer in you. Are you still writing dirty books?"

"Yeah," he said, "I still am. I'll wait downstairs for you. I'll make a reservation at a nice hotel."

"You pay?"

He nodded. "No problem."

"It pays to marry up," she snorted.

He was going to reply that he had money to pay himself, but it was no point, waste of breath.

"Take me to dinner at least," she called after him as he walked into the hallway.

"The hotel has room service," he muttered and walked down the stairs.

Matt was waiting anxiously at the bottom.

"Did you get all that?"

"Couldn't, you were talking French half the time."

Thomas laughed and hugged him tightly for a moment, then he saw his mother. He let Matt go and grinned at her.

"I'm sorry, honey," she said.

"Your heart was in the right place," he said softly, kissing her cheek. "Now, I have to make a reservation at a hotel. Matt, come and suggest something. I'll drive her back."

"Do you want me to come?"

Thomas hesitated, then nodded. "Sure. No problem."

* * * *

The tension in the car was so thick you could have cut it with a knife. Thomas insisted on driving, probably as a way to occupy the time. Matt sat up front, his face turned to the backseat, pointing out this and that attraction as they went. Half the time,

he didn't know what he was saying. He just wanted it to be over for Thomas.

Matt breathed easier when they drove into the parking lot of the Days Hotel. Thomas whisked Celine inside and registered while Matt stood cautiously by.

"Aren't you coming up to the room?" she asked, looking at Matt as if he would be on her side.

Thomas shook his head. "No time. Sorry. You're booked on the eleven o'clock tomorrow. Your ticket's at the airport. Taxi is arranged to pick you up then. Everything is paid. Do you have your passport?"

"Of course." She looked at Matt. "He really does want me gone."

Matt looked away, uncomfortable.

"Bye, Celine," he said.

Matt watched him walk out of the hotel. He looked at Celine. "Well," he said, "it was nice meeting you and—"

"No, it wasn't," she said. She held out her hand and shook his briefly. "Matt," she said, glancing to the front door, "take care of him."

Matt narrowed his eyes, then nodded. "Of course I will. I love him so much."

She nodded again and headed to the elevator.

When Matt got into the car, Thomas started the engine. "You okay?"

"I will be if you quit asking me that."

"She told me to—"

"I really don't want to know," he said sincerely and drove out of the parking lot.

"Okay. Thomas, I want to thank you for being so good about this. My mother felt so badly and—"

"No problem."

"Are you hungry?"

"No."

"What would you like to do?"

"Go home," he said, looking at him, "go to bed."

Matt grinned. "It's lunchtime."

"A nooner suits me."

Matt laughed. He placed a hand on his thigh. "Suits me, too. Drive faster, will you?"

"Okay, but if I get a ticket, you're paying."

"It's a deal."

Matt knew his mother was perplexed when the car came careening up into the driveway and they didn't even bother to stop to say *boo*. They were upstairs in a flash, the door flying closed, stripping off their clothes without so much as a single word or touch.

When Matt looked over at Thomas, he was standing there, completely naked at the head of the bed. There was a look of pure lust in his eyes. Matt licked his lips. It was turning him on big

time, not to mention the strapping erection Thomas was sporting. "You know, you take my breath away," Matt said softly.

Thomas smiled at him. "Oh really? Well, come on over here and I'll give you some of mine."

Matt laughed and crossed the room.

Thomas took him in his arms and crushed his lips against his, kissing him deeply, penetrating him with his tongue, devouring his mouth in a way that was truly unholy and indescribably intoxicating. Matt melted against him, Thomas' erection bumping insistently up against his own. Matt stretched out his hand and touched his shaft with his fingertips. It was a silky smooth masterpiece of cock. Matt felt the stickiness suddenly and he spread the cream over the helmet head, letting his thumb enjoy the sensation while Thomas ravished his mouth, his hands now squeezing Matt's butt cheeks.

Matt's fist tightened around Thomas' cock as he felt his body hit the wall. Thomas was lost and there was no finding him now. Hell, he didn't want to find him if it meant he'd stop kissing him like that. A hand found Matt's cock now, another moved across his chest, keeping him prone against the wall, pinching his nipple, then finding it with lips and teeth as Thomas' hot mouth left his.

Matt moaned, his head sliding back against the wall as Thomas snacked on his nipples, then

moved downward, gently cuffing his cock, making it harder, making it ache. "Tom," he cried out, only really calling him that when he felt completely in his power.

Understanding that, Thomas chuckled as he sunk to his knees, his mouth so close to Matt's needy prick. "Tom, is it?" There was a look of sheer devilment in his eyes.

"Baby."

"Um," he said, reaching under his cock and teasing his balls. He didn't seem to be in one hell of a hurry all of a sudden. "Spread your legs, my whore."

Matt grinned, spread his legs.

"That's nice. I'm going to slap your cock a bit more. It is totally undisciplined."

"Thomas!" Matt pleaded. He loved it when Thomas talked like that. He could talk the talk like no one else.

One finger, then two found its way to Matt's anus while Thomas brushed his cheek against Matt's cock. "You like your ass fucked, don't you?"

"Oh yeah," Matt replied.

Thomas ran his other hand over Matt's cock again and then gently slapped it.

"Um," Matt managed.

"I love to play with your body, love to finger that tight ass of yours, and your cock, oh, Matt,

your cock, it's so hard."

"Thomas."

"Yeah?" he replied, moving his fingers now roughly in and out of him while the other hand relentlessly punished his cock.

"If you play too long...I'll....oh shit....I'm going to..."

Thomas backed away suddenly. He grinned, laid down on his back and spread his legs, his erection so beautiful that it would have made a grown man cry. He motioned with his finger. "Come on, stud. Sit on it. Open yourself up on my cock. Come on."

The offer was far too tempting to refuse.

"Use it," Thomas insisted.

Matt was more than ready, his cock leaking come. He was half way there already. Who in the hell wouldn't be, seeing Thomas on display for him like that. "God, you turn me on so much. I can hardly stand it," he muttered, grabbing Thomas' cock and directing it up into his ass. He positioned himself well so that he'd have leverage to use that cock of his to the limit. "You realize you asked for this," Matt warned with a grin as Thomas lifted his hips in order to delve deeper into Matt's ass.

"Oh I know," he grunted. "So, fuck that ass of yours, use it. Ahhhh....yeah."

Matt had no reservations. He bore down on that cock, taking it as deep as possible, then reared

back up, slamming all the way down on it. Once he got his rhythm, Thomas was completely his. Matt had taken absolute possession of his cock and that was the greatest turn on possible. He came all over his chest, moving his hands down to smear the come on his nipples, feeling Thomas come himself, so powerfully that his cock rocketed out of his ass, and the cords in his neck stuck out as his face displayed the force of his orgasm.

Matt rolled off him. He lay still on his back for a moment, his body stiff, humming, that peace washing over him, lulling his eyes closed as it often did. When he opened them, Thomas was looking down into them. Matt reached up and hand and caressed that black hair, now longer, a little unruly, but oh so sexy. "Did I sleep?"

"A little."

"Do you love me? Don't say, a little!"

Thomas laughed faintly. He lay down on his back as well, his shoulder touching his.

"Is that a yes?" Matt looked down into his face now.

"It is."

"Say it."

"I love you." It was said simply but sincerely.

"Forever?"

"Oh, yeah." He nodded.

Matt's heart beat harder in his chest. He wondered if he'd always feel like this. Would

there come a day when he'd be able to look at him without wanting him? "You scare me sometimes."

"I'm a scary guy."

"Get serious. You know what I mean."

"Not really."

Matt smiled, caressed his cheek. "What's your father look like?"

"I don't know. I haven't seen him in years."

"Do you have any pictures?"

"Nope. She destroyed them all."

"Let's find him."

"Absolutely not."

"You have a brother."

"He hasn't come looking for me."

"Maybe he doesn't know."

"My father, I mean."

"What did he do, your dad?"

"He worked in construction."

"Where did he go when he left?"

"Let's drop it, okay?" Thomas sat up.

Matt nodded, but actually had no intention of nodding.

CHAPTER SIX

The internet was amazing. Jacob Carter was C.E.O. of Carter and Sons construction in London, Ontario. Matt stared at the picture, dumbfounded when he found it. It took him exactly five minutes. There he was, Thomas' father, a great looking man in his late forties with a son who sure as hell would not be mistaken for Thomas' brother, definitely in his twenties, and a sweet looking wife. It was a family run business, and from the looks of it, very successful. Now, did he show Thomas the picture or not?

He'd agonized half the day about it, slipping out of bed to look at the picture over and over again. Finally, late in the afternoon as Thomas dozed, he made his decision. He was going to show Thomas the picture before his brother and family showed up. Then Thomas could do what he wanted.

However, when he brought Thomas' to the computer and brought up the website, Thomas

simply said, "I know."

"Then you researched this yourself before and didn't tell me? Damn it, Thomas, I skipped a damned fine siesta over this."

"Which probably is a sign that you were up to something you shouldn't be," Thomas scolded.

Matt stood and put a hand on his arm. "You knew?"

"A few years ago, now forget it, okay?"

"I don't get you."

"Matt," Thomas eyed him, "you're not me, okay? Come on, let's go to the front house. I just heard a car drive up. Your family is home."

"Our family," Matt gave him a serious look.

Thomas smiled and nodded. "Matt," he said, just as Matt was about to head out the door.

"What?"

"Want to write a book with me?"

Matt's face exploded with joy. "You mean it?"

He nodded. "I'm in edits with what's his name's book now so..."

"You can mention his name," Matt said, hugging him, "just not too often."

"Okay," Thomas gave him a screwy face, then slapped his butt. "Go!"

Matt laughed. "Race you," he said.

"Hell with that, I'm taking the face way."

Matt grabbed him as Thomas headed for the stairs to the main house. "No way." They wrestled

all the way, laughing and jostling until they reached the screen door. They only sobered when they saw Cole's face.

"What's wrong?" Matt asked suddenly.

Cole's hand tightened in Daphne's. "It's your brother," he said.

"What's he done now?" Matt asked.

Suddenly they heard someone shouting and his mother was crying. Matt muttered under his breath. Thomas' eyes widened.

"What's wrong with him? Why's mom crying?"

"He's mad about them disappearing with the baby." Cole shook his head. "I've had enough. I'm taking the baby upstairs. The fighting isn't good for her."

Matt headed for the other room, Thomas at his heels. "That's enough," Matt bellowed when he entered the room. His mother had her hands in her face, sobbing, while Ryan towered over her, roaring like a lion. *Where in hell was dad?*

Ryan paused for a moment and glared at his brother. "Stay out of this, Matt. It has nothing to do with you."

"You don't have to scream at her like that. She made a mistake and —"

"Mistakes! This family is filled with damn mistakes. Cole and I were frantic. We didn't know what in hell happened. We had to come all the way out here just to —"

"So you made a trip for nothing! I'll pay your flight if—"

"Oh, stop trying to make everything right, Matt. There are some things," he pointed, "you can never make right."

Matt stiffened. He looked at Thomas. "Thomas, baby, why don't you go check on Cole, make sure he has everything he needs to—"

"Yes, Thomas," Ryan cleared his throat, "go see to Cole. Better you than my brother here."

Matt shot him a dirty look. He went to comfort his mother. "Ignore him, Thomas. He's blowing hot air. Mom," he said, cradling her in his arms, "don't pay any attention to Ryan. He—"

"I'll get over it," he sneered, "like I'm expected to get over everything. I wonder though," he smiled like a Cheshire cat, "if you've ever really gotten over Cole. God knows, he still dreams about you. Maybe we could switch," Ryan gave Thomas the once over, the grin being replaced with a leer, "I wouldn't mind a crack at that. God knows, it's only fair. Didn't you tell us that, Mom, when we were kids, share and share alike?"

Everyone was speechless. A silence hung over the room like a funeral shroud. Matt's gaze was riveted to Thomas. It was the only reaction he cared about. He almost said something, but he, then Thomas looked at Ryan. His expression was cool, calm, only his voice revealed the strain. "First

of all, I think you need my consent, not Matt's, if you want a crack, as you call it, at me. And hell would probably freeze over before. Secondly, you guys should really work out this fixation you got going with Cole. Decide whose bed he's going to be in, and keep him there. Let me know what you decide," he said, glancing at Matt.

Matt couldn't seem to move. When Thomas left the room, his heart fell. He closed his eyes, only opening them when he heard the crack.

"See what you've done," his mother accused, leaving a bright red mark on Ryan's cheek. "Your bother loves this man. They are meant to be together. If you do anything to come between them, Ryan, I'll never forgive you."

Matt was going to say something, but his mother held up her hand. "And you. You better be honest with Thomas, tell him what happened between you and Cole, and tell him it's over and done with. It was over and done with a long time ago. And you better hope to hell he believes you."

With that, she stalked out of the room, leaving the two brothers alone, staring at each other.

"We shouldn't do this now," Ryan said, holding up his hands. He went and sat in front of the TV. He picked up the remote.

Matt paused. *No...better to do this now.* "You want to explain?" he asked. "I'm not looking for a fight. I want to understand why you're so angry

with me."

Ryan turned up the TV. The aging, balding *Dog the Bounty Hunter* was chasing down a bad guy in somebody's backyard.

Matt would never admit this to anybody, but he found the rough, gruff Dog to be a major turn on. He sat on the edge of the armchair by the window.

Ryan sighed, hitting the mute button on the remote. "I'm not mad at you, Matty. I was pissed at everyone because I couldn't find my baby. Do you have *any* idea what hell Cole and I have been through today?"

"A small idea..."

"I called in favors, Matt. I borrowed a friend's private jet to get here as quickly as we did. Cole is in the middle of a huge fucking deal...he's doing his own clothing line...and when we thought we were coming here to a dead family...you have no idea."

Ryan's eyes filled with tears and he swatted at them.

"Thomas and I went crazy, too, and...and...oh God, Ryan, I'm sorry. Mom loves her, you know that. She jus—"

"Yeah, I know...she misses having a baby." Ryan pointed the remote at the TV. "So lookit. I apologize for being an ass and for acting out. I don't really want to screw your husband. And for the record, I fucking love you. So leave me alone

with the other man in my life..."

Matt grinned. "Dog is the other man in your life?"

"If you ever tell anyone, I'll tell them you used to have the hots for Wayne Newton."

"Wayne Newton? Oh my God...I never had the hots for him!"

"I can be damned convincing, Matty. Now scoot. And you need to think about having a kid of your own so mom can share all that love."

"Thomas doesn't want any kids."

Ryan glanced at him. "I didn't either, remember?"

"No, I don't."

"Nah, I lied. I just wanted to make you feel better." He hit the mute button and the TV blared once again.

Matt went outside and stood on the *lanai*, more tired than he ever thought he could be. Nothing had happened with Cole. An exchange of emails...a couple of phone calls...a suggestion of meeting. There was a time when things were not good between Cole and Ryan...long before Daphne, long before their marriage. Ryan was so possessive of Cole and yet...Matt stared at two kayaks crossing the horizon, loaded with big, beefy *Hawaiian* men. Judging by their speed, it was a race.

He remembered how much he loved kayaking on his last trip here...that special spot...and he rose to his feet, trying not to trip over the discarded shoes and shells in his path as he raced to the guesthouse he shared with Thomas. The door was ajar...he threw it open, expecting to see his husband lying on the bed, staring at the ceiling.

"We're out here," Thomas said and when Matt turned, he was dismayed to see his husband's eyes filled with darkness and with so much hurt.

"My Matty!"

Matt was seduced anew by his niece's sweetness. She was sitting with Thomas on the grass between the guesthouse and the main, holding up a gecko.

"Mine!" she chortled, her perfect little teeth gleaming as she held the trapped creature up to him.

"My two favorite people in the world." Matt moved quickly toward them. Something in Thomas' eyes sparked...yes, hope. The hope was still there. He knelt beside Thomas and kissed him. "I will never take our family from you," he whispered against Thomas' mouth. Then he kissed Daphne's little face, studying the poor, squirming gecko squeezed between his niece's well-intentioned but vice-gripped fingers. "He's very pretty, sweetheart. It's good luck to find a gecko,

you know." His fingertips touched the slick skin of the bright green lizard and Daphne snatched the gecko to her chest.

"My baby," she crooned and the gecko sprang from her arms and into the grass. She squealed with joy, lunging for him.

Matt took advantage of her distraction to kiss Thomas again. Thomas bit his lip gently as the kiss continued, Matt breaking away as Daphne darted around the garden on her hands and knees chasing her gecko. "You knew you were marrying into insanity." Matt shrugged. "It hasn't skipped a generation."

"Did you fuck him?" Thomas asked, his gaze steady.

"No." Matt knew that one word was enough. For now.

"What's all the noise?"

Matt and Thomas turned to see Cole on the upstairs balcony of the guesthouse, a sullen look on his face. "I'm trying to get some work done up here. You *are* keeping an eye on her, right?" His glance was accusatory.

"Of course we are," Matt responded, wondering if Cole had overheard their brief conversation. "Thomas and I are heading up to the North Shore, can we take the baby?" He glanced at his niece who was holding the gecko in her hands again, allowing Thomas to loosen her

strangle hold on the delicate creature.

"No, you may not." Cole's tone was sharp. "I don't trust anyone in this family with my baby."

"That's not fair!" Matt shouted, surprised at his own fury. He'd never raised his voice to Cole, ever.

"We were worried about her, too, Cole." Thomas sounded weary, scooping the baby onto his lap. "We had a bad morning...we rushed to get back here." He looked up at Cole. "It was the worst morning of our lives."

The truth of that statement seemed to hit all three men at the same moment. Whatever Thomas' demons, whatever unfinished business remained between Cole and Matt, the truth was, Daphne was adored by all of them. She was the future. And she was now.

Daphne stared wide-eyed at Matt. She'd never heard him yell before and he reached his arms out to her and she tumbled into them, allowing him to kiss and stroke her head.

"Where are we going?" Thomas asked him, his eyes soft now.

"Chinaman's Hat."

"Chinaman's Hat?" Thomas wiggled his eyebrows at him. "Lemme guess...a souvenir store?"

"No," Matt laughed. He glanced back up at a sullen Cole. "How about it, can we take Daphne?"

Cole sighed. "What are you going to do?"

"Kayak...have something to eat." Matt's thoughts raced. He wanted time alone with Thomas, but Daphne would be a sweet little buffer from any negative discussion. Besides, he wanted some time with her, too.

"I..." Cole hesitated when he saw his daughter leap into Thomas' lap now, releasing her gecko back to nature and wrapping her arms around his neck.

"Kayak!" she screeched.

"Oh, all right. Keep your cell phones on," Cole said, sounding testy, sounding not like Cole at all. "If I can't reach you, there will be hell to pay."

Matt and Thomas packed a beach bag with things they'd need and Matt was relieved to see his husband looked excited about their outing.

"Can you get her pink bikini off the washing line?" Cole called down to them. "That's her favorite."

Matt and Thomas ran bang-slap into Baxter, hiding around the side of the house, between two lines of baby clothes, stuffing his face with a whopping piece of pound cake.

"Don't tell your mother," he said, looking guilty. "I'm supposed to be on a diet."

"Baxter?" Elise's voice came from the opposite direction and Baxter let out a yelp, tossing the cake into Thomas' hand.

"What's going on?" She stood, hands on hips, as Daphne jumped up for a bite of cake.

"I want some cake," she said. "Please, Unca Tommy."

"Is that really your cake?" Elise's eyes were unpleasant slits.

"No, papa's cake!" Daphne pointed to Baxter whose face turned gray. He ran down to the beach.

"Out of the mouths of babes," Elise muttered and Daphne happily took custody of the slab of cake.

"Congratulations." Matt turned to Thomas who raised a quizzical brow. "I think our entire family now hates us."

The two men dragged a roof rack from the garage and Cole came down to help them screw it in place as Elise picked up Daphne.

"No!" Cole took her and put the baby in Thomas' arms. "You're on probation."

Elise opened and closed her mouth, clearly upset.

Cole and Matt finished fitting the kayak with bungee cords and strapping it down.

"Don't let her go into the water with her pull-ups on," she said. "An—"

"Mom, we'll be fine." Matt was trying to be patient with her. Why oh why had she invited Celine here without a word of warning?

"My friends are supposed to be coming back later," she said. "We're having a barbecue. Why can't you all just stay here? Thomas, I'm sorry!" Elise blurted. "I didn't mean to make you unhappy. I didn't mean to make any of you unhappy. I...I...want you all to need me." She burst into tears.

Cole put the baby seat down in the back of the car and, with a reluctant air, went and put his arms around her. "You mad woman. We all need you. Just don't ever take off with my baby again and..." he jerked his thumb toward Thomas. "Don't spring anymore unwanted family members on my favorite brother in law."

Thomas laughed. "I'm your favorite?"

"What about me?" Matt asked.

"You're not unwanted," Thomas deadpanned.

Cole, the first to always cave in a family crisis, hugged Elise and, after making sure Matt and Thomas had spare pull-ups, swimsuit, a change of clothes, her life vest, towels, reef walkers and a hat, Cole kissed his little girl goodbye. "What are you eating?" he asked her.

"Yummies." She held up the mashed contents of her hand.

Cole actually laughed. "Have fun," he said.

Matt saw the tense looks exchanged between his mother and brother in law and he tried not to worry.

"She's making me hungry." Thomas grinned.

Matt glanced at the time. It was four o'clock. It had been a long day.

"Look, just stay and hang out at the house...take the baby over to that little island with kayak. We'll barbecue and tomorrow, I promise you can take her to Chinaman's Hat," Cole said.

Matt sighed. Thomas looked at him and shrugged.

"I promise," Cole said again.

"Oh, all right." Matt felt extremely grumpy as he unleashed the bungee cord that missed Thomas' eye by a fraction of an inch.

"First he punches my lights out in Canada...now this," Thomas joked, but Matt was stricken. "Honey, it was a joke." Thomas stared at an ashen-faced Matt and took charge of the kayak. "Come on, let's get her out in the water, you bring the life jacket for Daphne."

The little girl, now running around with excitement, lifted her arms to Matt who swung her easily to his hip.

Cole handed him the oars. "You're going to have to walk, baby. Matty needs both hands."

"No," she said, scowling.

"Is that the only word you know?" her father asked her.

"No." She shrieked with laughter.

It was an effort to get Daphne to wear reef

walkers, but Matt had long experience of the small tropical reef a half mile out in the lagoon. He'd wound up in pain for weeks from coral stuck in his foot. He and Thomas made a great paddling team and Daphne was the perfect guest, sitting still, singing along on songs that Thomas and Matt made up. Her favorite seemed to be a mixed up version of *I'm a Little Teapot* and *Itsy Bitsy Spider*. In their collaborative effort, the spider climbed into the teapot as the rain came down and swam home...somewhere. Matt and Thomas grinned at each other as her little fingers combed the water.

Matt blinked...man, he kept seeing that shark. He had to get over that. It took everything in him not to bark at Daphne to keep her hands in the kayak.

"You thinking about the shark?" Thomas asked, his face turning red from their efforts.

"How can you tell?"

"I think I know you pretty well now." Thomas smiled at him.

Matt's heart melted again in a million pieces wondering what Celine had done to him. If he ever found out, he wondered if he would want to kill her.

They reached the small barrier reef and Matt hopped out first, pulling the kayak to shore. Thomas held Daphne up to him and she gripped him like a sumo wrestler. The three of them

explored the tiny reef, which was full of shells, tiny shrimp swimming in warm water holes and even a seahorse, which charmed them until a small wave lapped it back out to sea. They covered the small islet inch by inch, Daphne squatting beside them, examining everything, taking note with real understanding of everything the men pointed out to her. Then it was time to paddle back to reality.

"She's so aware," Thomas said, looking awed. "I don't remember being that smart when I was her age."

"Neither do I. Smartest thing I was doing was eating my Play doh."

Thomas laughed as Matt got ready to push the kayak back into the water. Daphne peed in the ocean and thought she was being very naughty. She kept giggling, which in turn made them laugh. When she was finished, Daphne settled happily between Thomas' thighs and Matt felt emotion swelling through him.

"I never loved anyone the way I love you," he told Thomas who nodded.

"Yeah, I know." They paddled back toward the house.

"You going to sing with me?" Matt asked Daphne.

"No." She laughed as he launched into another mangled nursery rhyme.

"Let's do air guitar," Thomas said and he and Daphne did a pretty good job on that.

"I have to buy you a guitar, bunny."

"Yes," she said, surprising them both.

The house was buzzing when they got back and Daphne hurled herself at Ryan and Cole who greeted her with hugs and kisses. Matt and Thomas sauntered over to the barbecue, where they met Elise and Baxter's friends. Baxter hid a half-eaten sausage behind his back as Elise approached and Matt wanted to laugh. His poor dad would never do well having his food intake modified.

"I blame old age," Baxter said, piling skewers of shrimp and chicken onto Matt and Thomas' plates with wooden tongs that every couple of minutes made furtive swipes toward a plate hidden behind a potted *ti* plant.

"You want corn on the cob? Baked potatoes?" On their eager nods, he muttered, "You skinny, fucking bastards," making them explode with laughter.

They took their plates and almost mowed down Daphne and another little girl chasing each other around the *lanai*. Matt grabbed a couple of Primo beers and he and Thomas took the stone stairs from the property down to the beach. The sun was setting slowly and the water washed over their

feet as they walked across the sand, which was soft, white and very, very warm. They were alone with the surf.

Sitting down on the first wide spot they found, they clinked bottles and ate their food. "I should tell you about my mom," Thomas suddenly said.

Out spilled his entire story, startling Matt whose stomach clenched repeatedly as he heard the story pulled from his lover's heart, ripping and laying root in his own. He opened and closed his mouth repeatedly to catch his breath. When he heard about Thomas' three days on the streets, he dropped his plate of uneaten food and grabbed his husband in a hug.

But Thomas kept talking. When he was done, the sun had set and night was coming in faster than a monsoon wind. Unbelievably, nobody had interrupted them until the last words were out.

Thomas said, "Wow, I never thought I would tell you these things. I never told anybody."

Matt said, "I'm hiring a hit man. She's toast."

Thomas gave him a sad smile that looked exhausted in the encroaching darkness.

Matt studied him for a moment. "You never told anybody?"

Thomas took a sip of his beer, which was probably warm, but he drank it anyway. "Nope. Now, your turn. I want to know what the fuck is the deal with Cole?"

Matt felt relief finally. He was about to open his mouth and tell him when Cole ran over to them. "Have you seen Daphne?"

"No," the two men said in unison.

"Oh God..." Cole turned and ran back to the house, Matt and Thomas close on his heels. Both of the little girls were missing and the search became frantic as every adult ran all over the property, Elise on the verge of calling the police when Thomas found them, curled up together on the bed he shared with Matt.

"Unca Tommy," she said, her brown eyes hardly able to stay open. He held her to his chest, glancing at Matt who stood beside him, signaling to Cole outside that she was here, the girls were safe.

"Just so you know," Thomas said, as they handed the sleeping girls off to their parents. "I'm never going to change my mind about having one of our own. I couldn't handle the thought of this...the fear of losing a child ever happening to us."

Matt understood, but also despaired. He wanted this. He wanted to feel this matter of life and death. He wanted it very badly.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Matt kick shut the door to their guest room as outside, the party raged on. He could hear Cole and Ryan walking around upstairs and it was somehow comforting.

"You want to miss all the fun?" Thomas lounged on their bed. He didn't seem to be in too much of a hurry to get back to it. "I bet they start playing poker for matchsticks...or spot the denture pretty soon."

"While that sounds...charming, I had something a little different in mind for us. Another kind of fun."

"You did?" Thomas tilted his head to one side. "Dominoes? Backgammon? Old Maid? Am I close?"

"Lap dance, baby."

Thomas' eyes popped. "You're going to buy me a lap dance?"

"No, I'm going to give you one."

There was a knock on the door. Without

waiting for an answer, Ryan thrust open the door.

"Excuse you." Matt was furious. "Ten seconds later, I would have been gyrating all over my husband's lap."

"Wayne Newton," Ryan stage whispered.

"What did he say?" Thomas scrunched up his face.

"Nothing. Ryan, you're drunk!" Matt stared at his brother. He'd never seen him so inebriated.

"I'm not drunk. Did you know, I thought my baby was dead this morning? I had this weird dream a shark ate her." Ryan shook his head like he was trying to shake loose change out of a piggy bank. Matt and Thomas exchanged surprised looks. "Where was I? Oh...I heard you say lap dance." Ryan was weaving in the doorway now. "We should go to a club."

"We're not going to a club. You're drunk and you need to sleep it off," Matt said, not liking the look of his brother's skin.

"No, no," he said, stepping forward and falling flat on his face.

"That was a fun party," Thomas said. "Do you and Ryan have that telepathy thing that twins have?"

Matt shrugged. "Not for a long time." He stared down at his brother. "Babe, help me get him upstairs?"

Thomas got to his feet. "I'm...still interested in

getting this lap dance I keep hearing about.”

“Let’s get him upstairs and then you can have anything you want.”

“What will you wear for this dance?” Thomas asked, picking up Ryan’s feet.

Matt gripped his brother’s shoulders and thought Ryan looked a little green. They stumbled upstairs and Cole opened the door, the baby plastered to his shoulder.

“Get him in the bathroom before he throws up everywhere.”

Matt and Thomas almost didn’t make it. Ryan threw up everywhere the second they got him in there.

“He’s been a wreck all day.” Cole looked upset. “First he thought you were eaten by a shark, then he thought the baby was—”

“He almost was,” Thomas said quietly.

Cole looked stunned. “Wait, really?”

“We rescued a woman from a shark yesterday.” Thomas looked down as Cole knelt on the floor beside Ryan who was moaning.

“Man, nobody told us,” Cole said. “He got me all worked up, too. When we couldn’t get hold of anybody... Look, go. He’ll hate knowing you saw him like this. I’ll take care of him.”

“You sure?” Thomas asked.

“Come on.” Matt took Thomas’ hand. “Let’s get out of here.”

Still wearing their board shorts, they threw on t-shirts, jumped into their car and drove. After getting lost a few times on *Kailua's* dark, twisting, turning roads, he found the way to the *Pali* Highway.

"Where are we going?" Thomas asked him, as he lowered the window, allowing the wind to whip his face.

"We're going to our love nest, baby. We're going back to Black Point."

They arrived in twenty minutes, their exhilaration tempered somewhat by the fact the lights were on and somebody was home.

"Somebody's in our private place," Matt said. "I made love to you for the first time in that house."

Thomas reached out a hand and touched a curl of hair at Matt's ear, stroking it. "I know you did, baby. You rocked my world. That's why I married you."

They stared at the house a moment.

"I write so well there...the words just flow." Thomas bit his lip. "I'm sorry, I'm being stupid."

Matt turned to him. No, you are not. We're writers. When the sink gets blocked, we stop."

A commotion outside the house distracted them. A young couple, a man and a woman, was running out of the house. Matt squinted in the

darkness.

"Fuck me," he said.

"Who is it?" Thomas asked.

"You are not going to believe it."

"I fought off a shark yesterday. I believe anything."

They watched the couple hurling small suitcases into the back of a convertible, backing out of the small driveway and race off too fast for the sleepy, upscale neighborhood.

"So who are they?"

Matt shook his head. "That was Carly Ann Westaway, your wayward studio executive and if I'm not mistaken...her ex-boyfriend, the gondola guy."

"He's cute." On Matt's sharp glance, Thomas shrugged. "What? I'm married. I'm not dead. I can still look."

"She's cheating on her fiancé. In our house." Matt felt stricken. "Our love nest, baby."

"We'll get an exorcist," Thomas quipped.

"Yes, we will. Thomas, they're gone so technically speaking, we could you know..."

"Break in?"

"Not break in...we could go round the back to the *lanai*. You love writing out there."

Thomas took a very deep breath. "You wouldn't mind?"

Matt gave him a warm smile. "I want you to

write. It's been a weird couple of days. And if you're a very good boy and write a few pages, I'll buy you coffee and cake on the way home and I'll give you a lap dance that will cure all your ills."

"I...I..." Thomas threw open his car door. "I don't have my laptop or notebook."

"Darling, do you know me at all? I always have a notebook. Check the glove compartment."

Thomas did, looking ecstatic at the spiral bound notebook he found. "And I have my pen." Thomas reached into one of the zippered pockets on his hip and extracted the Mont Blanc pen Matt had bought him back in Los Angeles.

"You carry it on you?" Matt couldn't believe it.

"Of course I do. Apart from my wedding ring, Matt, this is my most treasured possession."

Matt grinned and followed his exuberant husband down the driveway of the house they loved. They giggled like girls as they clambered over the lava rocks surrounding the house, mounting the stairs to the back *lanai*.

Then...peace. They stood, looking out at the view of ocean and mountains and time. They stared at the ring of green-black belonging to the *Ko'olau* Mountains, the dormant volcanic crater, the front of which was their beloved *Diamond Head*. It was the most beautiful place in the world. They told each other this over and over again.

"Look, Matty, they left the *lanai* door open."

Boy was that a no-no in the leasing agreement. "We'd be doing the owners a favor wouldn't we, you know, locking up properly..."

"Agreed. And for our troubles, we could make a little coffee...clean up after ourselves..." The two men exchanged grins. "Baby, you start writing." Matt reached into the house, felt around the wall for the *lanai* lights. "I'll make the coffee."

"Excellent. My muse is buzzing around my head already. I detect the smell of stinky cigar." He plopped himself down on one of the comfortable padded chairs facing the ocean and, head bent, began to write.

Matt stepped into the house, not completely surprised to see that Carly Ann and gondola boy had been less than reverent with it. Nothing was trashed, but it was a mess. He found a bag of *Kona* coffee beans in the freezer, just enough for a couple of cups. He started the coffee pot going and opened the fridge to find it stuffed full of empty takeout containers. He didn't want to leave the place so untidy, but in his mind, Carly Ann deserved to get slapped with a few dollars being extracted from her deposit for the work she was leaving the owners.

He thought briefly about her affair. His only concern was Thomas and if it affected his movie development at all and decided it didn't. Her fiancé, a powerful agent and producer, was not

associated with the movie and couldn't *red light* it. He inhaled the delicious scent of the dripping coffee and took two mugs out to the *lanai*. Thomas mumbled his thanks, lost in his literary world. Matt took the chair opposite him, feet on the wooden railing and stared out at the black water, wondering if Thomas had given serious thought to his suggested collaboration. Long minutes passed in peaceful creativity. One of the joys the two men had discovered was how well they were able to work with one another.

Matt closed his eyes and instantly flew back to his own literary creations, his lovers Herve and Andreas. They were never far away when he put his mind to them...they were always there as soon as he closed his eyes. Herve and Andreas looked suspiciously like Thomas and Matt, which made them more real. He watched the way Herve's face lit up as Andreas walked into the room. Room? Where were they? He pulled out the iPod he had in his pocket, wishing he too had brought a notebook and pen.

Suddenly Thomas said, "I'm ready for my lap dance, Mr. Lucas." On Matt's raised eyebrow, he thrust the notebook toward him. "I filled ten whole pages. I'm ready for my sexual rewards, please."

Matt laughed and moved over to him, iPod in hand. He rifled through the songs on the menu

and picked out Jason Mraz's *Butterfly*, a song he thought was one hot, sexy, fuck me number. He told Thomas to put the ear buds in his ears and pressed play. Thomas sat back, his hungry eyes watching Matt as he started dancing slowly, first to Jason's voice, then the buildup of horns. Matt could hear the song even though Thomas had the earphones...one of his hands shot to Matt's thigh and he sighed. Matt moved forward as the horns hit and straddled Thomas' lap.

Thomas bit his lip as Matt's knees surrounded him, moving around on his lap, allowing his ass to barely touch Thomas' hardening cock.

"This is a stripper song!"

Matt's face broke into smiles.

"How come I never realized that before?"

Matt kissed his mouth, Thomas' eager lips opening up to him. Matt sighed as their tongues caressed one another. Oh man, his husband was so tasty.

"This is a very naughty striptease, baby," Thomas said into his mouth, his hands moving to Matt's ass now. Matt was barely touching him with it, driving him crazy. "I never had one quite like it."

"I should hope not." Matt did not stop gyrating on his lap. He started lifting his t-shirt and Thomas testily pushed it off his shoulders, his mouth moving to Matt's chest. Matt got up again,

frustrating him until he saw how hard Matt's cock was and how difficult it was for him to get his fly unfastened. Thomas moved forward to help him, one hand stroking Matt's cock in a possessive way.

"This is not helping me at all," Matt said. Pushing Thomas back down on his long, low chair, he straddled him again, his shorts dangling from one leg. He was grinding harder on Thomas' lap now, and he was anxious to get him completely naked. Thomas tore the shorts from Matt's leg. Matt was now naked and he was not. Matt got Thomas' t-shirt off and they touched each other again. Matt thought he was going to come. He kept riding him as the song changed...he didn't care what was playing...he wanted to totally seduce his loving whore of a man. He stood then and his cock was in Thomas' face. His hands curled around Matt's calves and he sucked his cock, looking up at him...Thomas could never get over how big Matt was...or how much Matt loved to have Thomas fuck him. He knelt between his thighs and unfastened his shorts. Thomas gasped when his leaking cock came out and Matt licked it...he crawled back up to straddle Thomas' thighs, facing him.

"Fuck me, you slut," he whispered and he pointed Thomas' cock at his ass and their eyes connected at the same second. Matt lowered

himself onto it...

"Oh you are such a whore for me," he grinned, kissing Matt's throat. He grabbed Matt's cock as he rode him and knew he was close. Matt pulled off him and faced away from him. Legs closed between his open thighs, he lowered himself to Thomas' beautiful cock again and speared himself with it. He leaned his elbows on his knees, rising and falling, loving how big and hot Thomas felt inside him, how hard his cock was taking him.

"Oh, you're so tight." Thomas' hands held his hips and belly and he pounded into Matt who ground down on him. Thomas reached around and he grabbed Matt's cock. "You'd better come, too," he admonished, one hand going to Matt's shoulder to give him some traction. Matt loved fucking like this. The way he pulled off Thomas and came back down on him was both blissful and upsetting. It felt fantastic each time Thomas powered into him and devastating when he didn't have him inside him. Matt felt Thomas' orgasm building in him at the same moment he felt his own.

"Fuck me," he screamed and Thomas did. Both hands were at his hips again, keeping Matt exactly where he wanted him as his cock steamed in and out of him. He almost missed at one point and they both shouted with frustration. As soon as Thomas' cock was inside him, Matt knew he was

going to shoot and his whole body rocked with the force of his eruption. He jerked on his own cock and muttered, "Fuck," over and over again.

At last, the little earthquakes stopped. Their slick, hot bodies slumped again one another. Matt's ass muscles squeezed Thomas' cock and Thomas moaned.

"You know what?" Matt asked as Thomas' arms tightened around his belly.

"What, baby?" Thomas kissed his back.

"I'm gonna buy this house for you."

CHAPTER EIGHT

After a long, lazy morning in bed, Matt and Thomas awoke to Daphne crawling over them.

"Kayak!" she screamed in their ears. Cole darted into their bedroom after her as the little girl clung to Thomas' neck. "My Tommy!"

"Sorry. She's determined to go to Chinaman's Hat."

"She'll go." Matt stretched, remembering with a smile the wicked sexual workout he'd given his husband the night before.

Thomas burrowed into him deeper as Daphne covered his face in sticky but salty kisses.

"Why does she smell funny?" Matt asked.

"She's discovered dill pickles. She ate an entire thirty-two ounce jar and then she drank the juice. I can't wait to change that diaper." Cole gazed at his little girl affectionately. "You want breakfast in bed?"

"Not if she's eaten all the pickles," Matt joked.

"I'll serve it in the kitchen then."

"You're in a good mood," Matt observed, trying to still his niece's wriggling body.

"My husband told me he'd take me on a shopping spree since you're taking the baby out for the day."

"Did he now?" Matt grinned. "He's not hung over?"

"Oh, yes. He's hung over. Thomas, in case you haven't figured it out yet, guilt works wonders on the Lucas men."

Thomas opened an eye and grinned. "I'll keep that in mind. Daphne...where's my Daphne?"

"Me, here!" she squealed, hugging him tighter.

Cole looked blissful watching them. "We're going to the outlet mall on the other side of the island. Daphne, you want to help daddy make breakfast?"

"Nope," came her predictable response.

"The one word she had to master perfectly," Cole muttered and stomped out of the room.

"Well, I'd like to suggest we drive along the coast, some kayaking, pick some place nice for lunch," Matt said.

"Sounds good to me."

Daphne raced from the room screaming, "Kayak!"

Thomas laughed. "Who comes to *Hawaii* to shop at the outlets?" Matt's big hands pulled him closer.

"Not us."

"Except for the house...oh, Matty...I think...I really want that house."

"It's ours. I don't care what it takes."

"I dreamed of it, you know. I also had weird dreams about the shark, oh, Matty...you suppose that woman is okay? Can we check on her today?"

"Good idea. I have to confess, I keep having snatches of nightmares about the shark, too. I keep seeing his teeth...and his..."

"Eyes," they said in unison and Matt took all the horrible images away for both of them by kissing Thomas.

Daphne tottered into their room just as things were about to turn frisky between the two men and announced, "Yummies!" She pointed to the main house.

"No breakfast in bed?" Matt asked.

"Nope!"

"I could have predicted that answer," Thomas said as Daphne tottered out again loudly. He and Matt grabbed their shorts and heard her clatter back into the main house again.

"What does she have on her feet?" Thomas mused.

"I think she was wearing mom's high heels," Matt replied.

Indeed, when they walked into the main house, Daphne was stumbling around in Elise's sandals,

even though shoes were strictly forbidden in the house. Not only was it island custom, but a sign was posted at every door by the owners.

Matt removed her shoes.

She enveloped his head in a big hug. "My Matty!"

Cole brought a platter of fruits to the center of the dining table, Elise following with a platter of eggs and grilled turkey sausage. She slapped her husband's hand as he reached for a slice of thick *Hawaiian* sweet bread.

"You're on a diet!" she barked at Baxter.

Ryan was huddled behind sunglasses sipping what looked like a bloody Mary.

"Hair of the dog?" Matt asked him.

"A few dogs," Ryan responded, taking a healthy swig. Sotto voce, he said to Matt, "I'm afraid of getting car sick, but if I don't go shopping, Cole will whine at me all day. I think he learned that trick from mom."

"Keep drinking," Matt advised. "The color is coming back into your cheeks."

Baxter stared at Matt, eyeing every bite he took of his sausage. The moment Elise's back was turned, Cole surreptitiously handed him a sausage.

"You are a beautiful child of God," Baxter said and swallowed it in two bites.

Matt and Thomas read the front page of the

Honolulu Advertiser together. The adults around them issued instructions and ran around throwing things into shopping bags.

"Keep your cell phone on," Cole shouted to Matt. "Look after my baby."

Elise came into the kitchen looking for her sandals and glanced at Matt and Thomas. "Your father and I are going with the boys...look after Daphne."

"No, I thought I'd send her outside to play on the road," Matt said and his mother walked off in a huff. Daphne was sitting opposite him, her tongue protruding between her focused lips as she emptied her crayons on the table, choosing surprisingly coordinated colors for her dinosaur coloring book.

"Brontosaurus," she said aloud.

Matt found himself grinning as she shaded the creature's spine in three different hues of green.

"God it's nice, just the three of us," Thomas said. "When Daphne's finished her brontosaurus, you want to clean up and go down to the beach for a nice walk and a swim?"

"Let's leave everything and clean up later," Matt said.

Daphne dropped her crayons and raced for the door. She was wearing her pink bikini bottoms and she was ready.

Her uncles took a hand each, swinging her

between them as they took the stairs down to the beach. It felt wonderful to walk and chase waves with her. Every little thing delighted that child. She would fall over and laugh, the ocean would lick her feet and she'd laugh. They walked all the way to the end of the horseshoe shaped cove, then back again.

Half way back, Daphne said, "I tired." Matt picked her up and carried her the rest of the way. Back in the house, the landline was ringing.

Matt picked up the receiver. He and Daphne screamed, "Hello!" and a voice at the other end chuckled.

"Hey, Matt." It took him a moment to identify the caller. It was Christian, his husband's writing partner. How in the world had he gotten the house number?

"It's for you." Matt handed the phone to Thomas without saying a word to Christian. Having his family vacation home invaded by that....marauder was too much. Matt moved to the dining table with the baby and she eagerly followed his lead, coloring in her primordial world.

"Blue trees," she commanded and Matt smiled. He was listening to Thomas' end of the conversation and felt ridiculously pleased that it didn't appear to be a love fest.

"Jerk," Thomas said, ending the call.

"Everything okay?" Matt asked.

Thomas banged around the kitchen. "I can't believe that guy! You know how long I've been writing gay erotic fiction? He writes one little short story and suddenly he wants to tell me how to write! He thinks my work lacks focus. Needs detail. I'd like to detail his ass with my shoe!"

"Why don't you come and color? I'll clean up the kitchen." Matt waited a beat. "Listen, Sandra loves your books and she will side with you. She won't let that dingbat ruin your work."

"I would rather work on a collaboration with you," Thomas said. "The more I think about it, the better it feels. I mean, being a couple in real life can't hurt sales and I think our work would blend...I think our styles would complement one another."

"So do I." Matt handed him a crayon. "She wants blue trees."

Thomas took the crayon and sat, within seconds, fully absorbed as Matt knew he would be. It was one of Matt's favorite things to do. Coloring was therapeutic. He also liked cleaning. *Man*, he thought to himself, *I am so gay!*

He loaded up the dishwasher and swept the kitchen floor. He wasn't surprised when Daphne managed to persuade Thomas to tell her a story. He started his tale and Daphne interrupted him.

"Potty!"

Thomas laughed.

"I'll take her." Matt lifted her off the chair.

"So if I start work on our story today, it's cool?" Thomas asked. "Because I have an idea."

"It's cool."

There was a nice hum in the house with birds twittering outside every window, the waves rolling in a comfortable way and the dishwasher seemingly keeping pace with the tide.

By the time Matt brought the baby back to the dining room table, Thomas was writing so he and Daphne tiptoed into the garden to investigate the nature scene. They climbed the tree in back, Matt finding a perfect nook for the two of them to fit in and they looked across the bay at the ocean and blue, blue sky streaked by tiny fluffs of cloud.

"Mmmm, yummy," Daphne said. She was right. It was. They climbed down the tree and walked through the tangle of tropical plants, Daphne inhaling the scent of ginger, admiring the dazzling red honeycreeper supping from a heliconia plant.

"Matt!" Thomas came out of the house. The two men exchanged looks.

Matt tried to identify the worried look in Thomas' eye, but couldn't.

"I'm ready for the drive up the coast," Thomas said. "But me potty first."

Half an hour later, they were on their way. Thomas, who was closest to the ocean, lowered his window, the ocean spraying his face. "Oh...this is lovely."

Matt stole his hand onto Thomas' lap. He felt his husband stiffen, felt the imperceptible shake of his head and withdrew again, feeling stung.

Thomas sighed, reaching over, taking hold of his hand. "You big baby, you." When he saw Matt's face light up, he laughed.

For the first time since they'd set foot back on *Oahu*, Matt felt okay again. Better than okay. He turned on the radio and Thomas fiddled with the iPod which was plugged into the cigarette lighter. The two men smiled. Jason Mraz...their partner in crime from the night before.

They drove for forty-five minutes, Daphne singing along, making up her own baby language lyrics, delighting in making her uncles laugh.

"Oh, look...how cool...what is The Crouching Lion?" Thomas asked.

Matt felt pained. "It's kind of an institution, but the food's not great."

"It looks okay and the view's stunning. Matt, it's the first place we've seen for miles."

"Yummies!" Daphne suddenly shouted.

"Yeah, I'm hungry, too...and look the sign says it's under new management," Thomas pointed out.

"Okay, okay...geez. I know when I'm beat." Matt waited for the cross traffic to pass and turned left into the parking lot.

"Where are we?" Thomas asked, rescuing Daphne from her car seat. She was wearing her pink top and shorts with pull-ups underneath them. She would have to be changed for their kayak ride later, but for now, she was fine.

"We're in *Ka'a'awa*," Matt told him. He pointed out the huge rock formation on the mountain high above the restaurant. "If you stand right here...look up...what do you see?"

Daphne, riding on Thomas' hip looked up. "Ooohhh..."

Thomas hugged her. "It...it's a crouching lion, isn't it?" he asked, staring up at the rock formation in wonder.

Matt nodded happily. "They say he was once a man and he rejected Goddess *Pele* and she turned him into stone."

"Yikes," Thomas said. "Most chicks cry and eat a boatload of ice cream."

"Speaking of which, I'm hungry. Come on my starving family, let's get our vittles on."

The waitress who led them to their table, gave them one at the front, where they could watch the view. She left menus with them, promising to return quickly with apple juice for Daphne. Thomas' cell phone rang. He checked the readout.

"It's your daddy," he told Daphne. "Want to say hi?"

"Nope." She grinned impishly.

Thomas ignored her, answered the phone and passed it to her. She threw the cell phone straight out the window. Thomas gasped and ran off to retrieve it.

Matt was laughing when Cole called him a few seconds later.

"What's going on?" he asked.

"Nothing...we're stopping for lunch."

"Where?"

"Crouching Lion."

"Isn't that place closed?"

"No...it's open." Man, Cole was a nut bag today.

"Here you are," the waitress said, returning with Daphne's juice in a small glass. "Are you ready to order?"

Matt assured Cole that everything was fine just as Thomas returned with his cell phone.

"We'll check in with you later," Matt told Cole and ended the call. He looked at his husband. "Is your phone okay?"

"Yes, surprisingly. I could eat a horse, but I'll settle for pulled pork."

"What do you want, bunny?" Matt asked Daphne. "You want some crab cakes?"

"Nope," she said, her little hand snaking

toward Thomas' cell phone again.

He snatched it up. "You're right," Thomas said to her. "Crab cakes...yecch!"

Daphne laughed and laughed, and Matt watched the adorable way Thomas handled her. They ordered dinosaur chicken nuggets and coconut shrimp for Daphne, salmon for Matt and the two men split a Crouching on the Beach cocktail, which turned out to be very much like a Mai Tai and packed a wallop.

"I'm glad we shared," Thomas said, downing a glass of water. "A whole one of those would have me crouching on the beach begging for your..."

"Ahem," Matt said.

"Yeah, your...*ahem*."

"Remind me to buy you one later." Matt grinned at him.

Their little girl insisted they each try a shrimp and a nugget.

Matt actually liked her food more and wished he could swap. "Somebody has a stinky diaper," he said, sniffing the immediate change in the air.

"No." Daphne giggled.

"Oh, it must be me then," Thomas said. "Bad Tommy."

Daphne laughed and laughed.

"You're good for my ego kid, stick around."

Daphne was entranced by Thomas, who didn't blanch when she wanted him to change her pull-

up.

"You're lucky we're in mixed company," Thomas told Matt as he picked up Daphne and headed to the rest room. "This drink makes me want to do the funky chicken with you."

"Dang," Matt said, feeling glum. "Do I get a rain check?"

"Yes." Thomas' gaze was steady. "You do."

CHAPTER NINE

They were all in fine spirits as they wove up the coast and arrived at the closest beach opposite the little island out in the Pacific known as Chinaman's Hat.

"Hey, it really does look like a hat. We're going to kayak out there?"

"Yep." Matt dragged the heavily polished *koa* wood vessel off the roof and pulled the paddles out of the trunk. He and Thomas had to snap the baby's life vest on her wriggling body and dutifully called Cole once more.

"Where are you now?" he grunted.

"Chinaman's Hat." Matt wrestled with his giggling niece who didn't want to wear her reef walkers, but Matt knew once they reached the island, she would need them.

"Okay..." Cole sounded very sullen.

"What's going on?" Matt asked, wondering if he would regret it.

"I'm lurking in a fudge store. I hate when your

mom forces dad on a health binge. The rest of us suffer for it." He ended the call with a swift click and Matt sighed.

"Everything okay?" Thomas asked.

Matt nodded. This was his favorite place and he was determined nothing would spoil it. And then, the impossible occurred. A shark hovered into view, swimming very close to the shore.

Thomas visibly paled and Matt's own thoughts returned to the woman they'd rescued the day before.

"Shit! The baby!" Matt yelled. The wayward toddler was running straight out to the ocean. He snatched her up and she laughed...Thomas and Matt were spooked, but relieved she was safe. They loaded up the kayak again and got back into the car. Half a mile up the road, they spotted a park with seesaws and swings. Daphne loved the idea of the park and they veered off the road again and let her run around like crazy, taking turns to push her on the swing. By the time they turned around to head back to *Kailua*, the cell phone was ringing.

This time it was Ryan. Thomas took the call so Matt could focus on the road. A cow appeared out of nowhere and Matt hit the brakes. The cow glared at him and continued walking right into somebody's front yard.

"You don't see that every day," Thomas

laughed.

No, not unless you were in *Hawaii*.

"Ryan says we're all having a barbecue tonight and your mom wants us to stop by Ted's Bakery. Something about a macadamia cream pie?"

"Oh, they're fantastic," Matt said. "Tell her we'll pick one up and me home in about an hour."

"Cool," Thomas said, repeating what Ryan was telling him. "What's that?" he said into the phone. "Sorry. I have the window down. I can't hear you." How raised the window. "Okay, now I can hear you...what's that...you've got good news? You must be psychic. I love good news."

Thomas' face suddenly went slack and Matt had to slam the brakes to avoid hitting a skittering cat. "What's going on?"

"You're not going to believe it." Thomas' face was white.

Matt thought his husband was going to be sick and quickly pulled to the side of the road.

On the other end of the cell phone, Ryan kept yelling, "Hello? Hello? Damned cell phones!"

Matt took the phone out Thomas' hand and said, "Ryan, what's going on?"

"I was just telling Thomas our good news. Guess what! Cole and I are moving to *Hawaii*. We're buying the house at *Black Point*!"

They kept saying the same troubled things over

and over to one another on the drive home. *It can't be...it's a mistake...maybe the sale will fall through...* Daphne slept in her car seat, unaware of the devastation her uncles were going through.

Thomas reached a hand over to Matt's thigh. "You think there's a possibility their offer might not be accepted? I mean, I'm sure they put in a high bid. They've got money...right?"

"Yeah." Matt felt bleak. "They've got money and now Cole's signed that exclusivity contract with Earnest Sewn...they're not hurting at all." Neither of them said something for a moment. Then Matt's thoughts tumbled out of his mouth. "But if he's going to be modeling jeans for them, he'll need to be in L.A. right? How can he live here?"

Thomas shook his head. "I would have thought New York. He packs up the baby and travels, doesn't he?"

Yes, he did. Or Elise and Baxter took care of the family's most precious gem. His cell phone rang, but he ignored it.

Thomas checked the readout. "It's Ryan."

"I know."

"Want me to answer it?"

"No. I want you to tell me about the book we're writing together."

Thomas glanced at him, their gaze holding for a moment. "I love you, Matt. More than the house.

More than anything.”

“Keep telling yourself that. I feel like I let you down, T.”

“You didn’t let me down. Who’d have thought they’d want to buy that house?”

Neither had an answer to this conundrum and Thomas smoothed their mutually ruffled feathers with his new idea. The cell phone chirped again and Thomas sighed.

“I’d better answer it, they’ll worry about Daphne otherwise.” Thomas kept up a brief, soft conversation with Ryan, explaining the baby was asleep. A pause. “Sure, we can’t wait to celebrate with you and Cole.” He ended the call and caught Matt’s glare. “What was I supposed to say? We’re gonna come home and kick your asses?”

“Absolutely.”

They both laughed, the baby stirred and Thomas resumed his plot outline. By the time they returned to *Kailua*, they were resigned to the loss of the house and the plans for the new book...until Ryan came running from the house to greet them.

“Was she good? Is she okay?” Daphne’s eyes were bright little lights when she spied her father opening the back door.

“Daddy!”

“Oh, darling...” He took her out of the baby seat and held her to him, covering her face with kisses. “I can’t wait until you two have babies,”

Ryan said. "She'll have her own little best friends."

Children. Thomas didn't want them. Daphne was all he had. Matt's face registered myriad emotions, none of them good.

Ryan let his girl down onto the grass to chase a huge butterfly. Straightening, he caught Matt's expression. "What? What is it?" He looked from Matt to Thomas.

"I wanted that house for Thomas." Matt's face had taken on a dangerous shade of red.

* * * *

Thomas thought he might spontaneously combust. He, too, was crushed, but he cared more about how upset his husband was. "Matty, it's okay."

"No, it's not. We fell in love with that house. It's our love nest."

"Our love nest, too. We put an offer in...you never mentioned you wanted it."

"I thought you were going to buy a house in Malibu." Matt was pacing now.

"Cole wants a fresh start. He wants us to be here. We never fight here. And the baby loves it."

"She loves everything," Matt said.

"Cole wants it," Ryan said.

"So does Thomas." The brothers were at an

impasse. "I can't believe you did this."

Thomas reached out a hand, but Matt walked away.

* * * *

Matt went into the main house. Baxter, Cole and Elise were in the kitchen, holding glasses of champagne. His brain flashed red and white sparks and he turned and walked out again, slamming the screen door so hard it actually came off its hinges. Thomas followed him, racing to catch him. Matt was intent on flight. He picked up speed running down the stone steps to the beach.

* * * *

"Please," Thomas implored. "Stop!" He stumbled on the edge of one and landed on top of Matt. They crashed onto the sand at the foot of the stairs as a huge wave rolled over them, sucking them out to sea.

They were caught in a rip. Thomas could feel it. Matt twisted underneath him. Another big set and they were washed out further. Thomas held onto Matt and as the water leveled, he grabbed Matt and kissed him. They trod water together, Matt resistant at first to the kissing and Thomas tasted his tears.

"Oh, baby." He kissed Matt's closed eyes. "Don't you know I don't care about anything except being with you?"

Another giant wave took them under and they rose to the surface spluttering.

"I thought this was supposed to be the tame side of the island. I hope nobody brings Daphne out here." Thomas blew out a breath. "Man, this shit's exhausting!"

Matt laughed and water slapped into his mouth, gagging him. The waves leveled off again, but the invisible rip dragged them away from the house. The two men held hands, treading water still. "I wanted the house for you." Matt was hot with rage.

"Maybe they'll let us visit."

"Visit?" Matt looked so bleak.

Thomas started kissing him again. "I blame myself," Thomas said at last, when they couldn't breathe anymore and took their mouths off each other. "Big wave, baby."

"What the hell are you talking about?"

They ducked and came back up for air. Thomas picked up exactly where he'd left off. "No, I mean it. I blame myself. I think God's punishing me because I sent Celine away."

Matt sighed and pulled Thomas to him. "She hurt you. She didn't deserve another chance."

"Maybe..." Thomas dropped under, Matt

taking the brunt of the wave.

They rose from the foamy brine, laughing again.

"All we need now is a shark," Thomas said.

"Don't say that. You'll attract one." Matt wheeled around, but the only thing coming was another set of waves.

They started stroking in unison, racing for the shore. They managed to crawl onto the sand, watching the water come and go.

"You know," Matt said as he parked his butt on the first patch of dry sand they could find. "I never understood the concept of unprovoked shark attacks. What is a *provoked* shark attack?"

Thomas sat very close to him. "I think it's maybe fucking a very beautiful man in the middle of the Pacific. Sharks get jealous, you know."

"I didn't know that."

"Matt...how about it?"

"How about we talk about the house...how about we talk about what you just said, about Celine?"

"It's too late. I'm sure she's left. I didn't make her feel welcome."

"Yeah, so I noticed."

"What happened between you and Cole?"

"Man, are we back to that?"

"I can't help it. You woke me up, you fucking bastard. I was having a nice old snooze in my

cave...writing my books, living a very comfortable existence. I love how it feels to love you. But it's scary, too..."

"Yeah. Tell me about it."

Thomas put his arm around Matt's shoulders. "I want to know." For Thomas, it was as much the curiosity of a storyteller, wanting the details in a yarn, as much as it was a lover's insecurity.

"We both met Cole at the same time."

"I didn't know that."

Matt shrugged and his arm moved to cover Thomas' legs. "I thought I mentioned that. I was attracted to him, he was attracted to me. I'll admit, Ryan and I both liked him and even entertained the idea of a threesome."

"You and Ryan used to...do that?"

"No, baby. We both liked this totally hot guy who was on every billboard in town, all over Beverly Hills and Hollywood. He liked both of us. Well, he liked me at first. I was the one who went over and talked to him. He was just a naturally sexy guy."

"I'll say." On Matt's shrewd glance, Thomas laughed. "Oh come on, you don't think I noticed? He's gorgeous and he's adorable. I don't get Ryan and his cheating..."

"That's in the past. Behind him."

"Yeah, and so's my ass. Go on with this...fascinating story."

"Am I going to be punished for it for the rest of my life?" Matt asked.

"Only when you misbehave. Go on, I love a good story."

"Well, I thought I was charming the pants off him—"

"*Vraiment?*"

"Oh fuck, I love when you speak French." Matt zeroed in for a kiss, but Thomas pushed him away. Matt sighed. "Well, I thought he was falling for me...I thought I had him flopping around in the bucket and Ryan walked over and reeled that big fishie right away from me."

"*Quelle damage.*"

"Yeah, fuck you, too." Matt threw himself on Thomas who didn't push him away this time. Their cocks were hard as the two men lay on the sand, kissing.

Thomas looked up into his husband's face. *I want to be with this man forever*, he thought. *I know he wants me, too*. For Thomas, in that moment, nothing else mattered. "I want to fuck you, then I want to go find my mother," he said aloud, surprising them both.

"In that order?"

"Yeah. I want you in me, you fucking bastard."

Matt laughed. "That's an offer too good to refuse."

"I want to be the only fishie in your bucket."

"You are the *only* fishie in my bucket, baby."

"So you never fucked him?"

"Who?"

"What kind of lousy fisherman are you? There's one fishie in the bucket. I'm talking about Cole."

Matt leaned over him, confusion crossing his face. "Didn't we cover that? No. I danced with him. I got a nice long kiss and then somebody...wow...I'd forgotten this. Somebody brought over a bottle of jungle juice."

"You sniff that stuff?"

"I never tried it in my life before. I sniffed it and went berserk, dancing and next thing I knew, Cole was going home with my brother."

"Out of the frying pan into the fire."

Matt laughed and ground his crotch against his. "Something like that."

"So something must have happened. Some...incident later on?"

"He got drunk one night and called me and said a bunch of stuff. All I will say is that if Ryan wasn't my brother, I would have reached into his...frying pan and stolen my fishie back."

"But you didn't."

"No, I did not." Matt's gaze landed hotly on his. "I was never in love with him. He was never in love with me. I think there were times when he wished he had those feelings and, for a moment in time...I did, too."

Thomas accepted this. What else could he do? He was married to Matt and he loved him. "Some guys would have taken advantage of Cole's vulnerability."

"Not me." Matt sighed. "I believe they are meant for each other. I wanted what they had. I...wanted what I have with you, Thomas."

He got the crazed look Thomas knew so well. When Matt was anywhere near Thomas' cock, he went bonkers. He gave the best head of any man Thomas had ever been with and now he knew he would kill anyone who tried to take his husband from him.

Matt planted hard, wet kisses from Thomas' throat, down his torso, along his belly and down to his crotch. Thomas silently begged him to suck his cock. He did not have to wait long. It was a toe curling, mind-blowing experience having Matt's mouth on him. Thomas grinned as he felt his shorts slide down his legs...oh man...the feeling of that hot tongue lapping at him...Thomas dug his heels into the sand as Matt's head dipped between his legs. Oh...he was sucking his balls now.

A tiny crab walked across the sand under his heel, tickling him and making him laugh.

"Hey, dude." Matt lifted the creature and placed it gently further across the sand. "Find your own man." "Put your feet on my shoulders,"

Matt commanded, lifting his head for a moment.

Thomas almost whimpered with desire. He looked up into the full sun as a shadow crossed it and he screamed. Matt's tongue shot straight to his ass and he looked up into Ryan's eyes.

Thomas tried to sit up, but Matt was licking at his ass now.

"Go away," Thomas gasped.

"Oh my virgin eyes," Ryan quipped. "Geez, bro."

"Go away!" Thomas shouted this time and Matt finally raised his head.

"Ryan...your timing sucks."

"I'm not the only thing sucking around here. Look, there's no easy way of telling you this, but Thomas, your mother's here. She won't leave the island until you talk to her."

"Okay," Thomas said, still pissed about being interrupted.

"Dude...get lost." Matt covered Thomas' body, waiting until Ryan walked back to the house. He lifted Thomas to his feet.

"That man is entirely too happy about having bought the house at *Black Point*. I shouldn't care, but I do," Thomas blurted.

"Lift your foot, baby." Matt had Thomas' shorts in his hands and helped him get them on again. "Time to cast our pearls before the swine, baby." Matt kissed his throat and Thomas melted in his

arms.

"Don't leave me alone for a minute."

"I won't." Matt's arms tightened around him.

"And one more thing."

"What's that?"

"If Celine touches our niece, I will beat the shit out of her."

Matt gave him a wonderful smile. "I might beat you to it. Come on, baby..."

Celine was sitting at the table on the *lanai* watching the ocean. She turned as they approached her from the beach. "There are dolphins playing out there."

"Yes, we get them all the time." Cole placed a creamy cocktail in front of her. He glanced at Thomas. "Mom wants to see you in the kitchen a moment."

Thomas nodded and felt his own mother's sharp stare. It felt natural to think of Elise as his mother. When he and Matt arrived at the kitchen door, she grabbed him to her.

"Matty, this won't take long. Go out and talk to our guest."

"But —"

She shoved him back, closed the kitchen screen door, still off its hinge and she took Thomas into the dining alcove.

"Thomas. I'm sorry she came back —"

"It's okay...I was going to speak to her anyway."

"You were?" Her face was so troubled, he couldn't resist hugging her. "She's not you, Elise. She never put me first. I think that's what hurt me all my life. You put your children first. Even the way you fuss over Baxter's diet. I know you love him, but I know deep down it's also because you want him healthy and strong for the family. I...I never felt this way about a man or a family before."

"She's not taking that away from you, Thomas."

His heart skipped a beat. That was it. He'd had glimpsed all his life of family...glimpses that amounted to nothing. She recognized that in him.

"I had the world's crappiest mother, too," Elise said. "Which is why I wanted to be the best mother I could. We belong to you now. You are another son to me. I just want you to know that."

Thomas sat for a moment, a little stunned by their conversation, but a weight had shifted from him. Elise and Matt knew his truth and they loved him. He, too, loved them.

Elise touched his arm. "I didn't know about your mo...about Celine. I'm so sorry I tried to surprise you. I won't do it again. I can't make up for all the injuries from your childhood. I can only make sure as an adult, she never crosses a line. My

husband and I would eject her into the stratosphere the moment she tried."

Thomas laughed. "Surprise me with cupcakes and I'll be the best son you ever had."

Elise grinned. "There goes my husband's diet." She dropped her voice. "Celine said I should withhold sex to make him stop eating."

Thomas' breath caught in his throat. "Don't you take advice from her. She couldn't hold onto a man for anything...lookit. Let him eat. It's depressing to watch him sneak food. Matt and I will start running with him every morning. Deal?"

"Deal."

Out on the *lanai*, baby Daphne, wearing a cute grass *hula* skirt with a tiny coconut bra top, was tottering toward Celine. Thomas ran for her at the same moment Matt did. The two men grinned at each other, Daphne gooey-eyed at Thomas. She threw herself into his arms and Matt held a chair out for them.

"You were never into children before," Celine said, looking surprised.

"I never had a niece before." Thomas kissed her dark, shiny little head as Daphne reached for her heart shaped sunglasses and slipped them on her face, resting her chin on her hands.

She proceeded to stare right at Celine who suddenly looked discomfited.

Cole came bustling out of the house with a tray

of drinks. Daphne was still gazing at Celine who glanced at her, away again and back at her.

"You like music?" Celine asked her.

"No!" Daphne looked up at Thomas. She pursed her lips and he thought his heart would melt. He was getting used to this sweet treatment. He loved when she wanted to kiss him. He lowered his cheek to hers and she kissed him.

Celine tried again. "I brought some music...you like Garou?"

Daphne put a finger to Thomas' lips and he dutifully kissed it.

"Come. We put Garou on the stereo."

"Here, give me the CD." Cole snatched it out of Celine's hands. "Say, he's hot." He glanced at Thomas' amused expression.

"Darling, I'm allowed to window shop. Daphne, you want to come with daddy?"

"No," she, Matt and Thomas said in unison, exploding with laughter.

Cole threw up his hands and went inside. Seconds later, Garou was singing a very upbeat number.

"One of my favorites," Celine said as the song belted from the speakers on the *lanai*.

Daphne wanted to dance and Thomas obliged her. Soon her fathers were joining in and Thomas looked across to see Celine lean forward and say something to Matt, who did not look happy.

Matt glanced up at Thomas and shook his head, very slightly.

"What did she just say? What did you just say to him?" he asked, louder now.

Celine looked up at him, her eyes filled with tears. "I asked if there was anything I could do to make you love me again."

"No," Thomas said. "There's nothing you can do. All my life...you...asked for me to love you...to accept you and then you'd punish me again. I must have been crazy to think you and I could be friends." He started to move away and beside him, Daphne had stopped dancing.

She was staring at him, tears pooling in her eyes. "I want us to be friends," Celine cried over the music.

Thomas bent down and picked up his niece, bouncing her in his arms. "Then you be nice. Just be nice. And don't push."

Elise and Baxter came out to the *lanai*. "Who wants a steak?" Baxter asked.

"Not you," his wife retorted. "You are on a diet."

"Bossy broad. Celine, do you think I need to lose weight?"

"At least fifty, sixty pounds," she deadpanned.

Everybody burst out laughing except Baxter.

Elise drew Celine to her. "Come and talk to me in the kitchen. The salads are almost done."

Baxter threw himself into a chair, eyeing the tray of drinks. As soon as the women were gone, he pounced at a tall, frothy concoction. "What's that? Can I drink it? Is it on my diet?"

"It's a pina colada and it probably isn't, but I won't say a word." Cole lifted the glass off the tray and pushed it toward him.

"I don't know...somehow she knows when I cheat...I think she spies on me. Shit...I wonder if she has hidden cameras out here in the shrubbery." He got up, darting around the side of the house.

"How does she find out?" Matt asked Cole.

"I tell her," Ryan said, picking up the glass and sipping at it.

"You mean I'm married to a snitch?" Cole asked as Daphne jumped onto the *lanai* again and began dancing, her little grass skirt swaying adorably.

"It's revenge, sweetie. I have to get back at him somehow."

"Back at him for what?" Thomas asked, allowing himself to be yanked to his feet by his determined niece.

"He caught me smoking when I was eighteen. He said I was a bad boy."

"You were fourteen and you were smoking a cigar...you set off smoke detectors," Matt reminded him. "I was there."

"Who are you? The cigar police?"

"It's quite sexy actually." Cole grinned. "I like being married to a bad boy."

Ryan pretended to growl and Matt made a gagging motion as the two men took their daughter's tiny fingers and danced with her.

"Man...you're cutting in on my action," Thomas teased.

"Watch yourself," Ryan gestured to him. "Or else you won't get any visiting rights to *Black Point*."

There was a tense moment and Ryan sighed. "Look...you know we love you guys. It's your house, too. We talked about it. Why don't we all buy it? It'll be our family home on the island."

"We'll think about it," Thomas said. His gaze connected with Matt's. He had fallen in love with this house...realized actually, he'd fallen in love with *family*. He no longer cared where they lived. As long as he got to hang out with them all.

"I'll dance with you, sweetie." Matt stood and started doing the funky chicken.

Baby Daphne thought that was great and started copying him.

"There are many embarrassing moments being married to a Lucas man," Cole said, giving him a quick shoulder hug.

"Lemme show you my cockroach dance," Ryan shouted, flopping onto his back and spinning

around. The two funky chickens screamed with laughter.

"See what I mean?" Cole grinned.

Thomas shook his head and chose that moment to follow the sizzling smell of barbecue. As he walked by the kitchen, he glanced inside. His mother was talking to Elise...*his mother*...no, she was Celine. He sighed. He would give her this night with his family, not a single day more.

"You did good, kid," Baxter said to him when he joined him at the barbecue.

Thomas was taken aback. "I did? How?"

Baxter slapped steaks onto the grill. "You were submarined. We all feel badly about that...but she'll be on her best behavior or else..."

"Or else what?" Thomas picked up the bowl of marinade and brushed the steaks.

"I'll piss on her food."

Thomas laughed. "Good to know you have my back."

"There's a Navajo saying that in life...everything...all relationships...life itself. It should be finished in a good way. It should be finished in beauty. You may never want to have a night like this with her again, but you're saying goodbye to a bad past with her. And it is finished in beauty."

It is finished in beauty, Thomas thought. I have a fantastic new life. I don't care where we live. She no

longer has any power over me. I feel like Patsy Stone...I can finish the Beaujolais and walk away... He burst out laughing.

"What's so funny?"

"Nothing." Thomas realized Baxter had an illegal sausage in his paw.

"Life is funny."

Thomas smiled. "It sure is."

"Don't squeal on me about the sausage."

"I wouldn't dream of it. I'm too afraid you'll hose my steak."

Baxter let loose a moose of a laugh. From out of the kitchen, Celine poked out her head. "Thomas, telephone call for you."

He could tell she was already tipsy. In the kitchen, she handed him the receiver.

"You sold a movie to Hollywood?"

"Yeah...I did."

"It's a woman named Elizabeth. She's just emailed you the first draft."

Mother and son stared at each other for a moment. He thought of lots of ugly things to say to her. *Remember when you said my dreams of being a writer were ridiculous? Remember when you tore up the things I wrote?* Instead he thought, *it is finished in beauty*, and he took the receiver out of her hands.

"Hello, doll?"

Elizabeth's voice sounded far away.

The landline in the house gave new meaning to the expression coconut wireless. He had fond memories of his lunch with her and Matt in Hollywood.

Elizabeth was laughing. "Who was the woman asking me a million questions?"

"My mother," he said, taking a stool at the kitchen counter. Matt's laptop was set up there and all the adults had access to it since it was the only line in the house. "Sorry about that," he murmured, aware of Celine hovering.

"Don't be sorry," Elizabeth said. "I am in Paris...having a wonderful time and I still managed to get my head around work. I just sent you the first draft. Open it up and tell me if you can read it okay."

Thomas could not get online and he called out to Matt. It was Ryan who came into the kitchen, fiddling with the lines and connections Matt had set up. Celine and Elise were taking food out to the *lanai*.

"I'm sorry about the house," Ryan said.

"Who's that? Is he cute?" Elizabeth asked on the other end of the line.

Thomas laughed. "It's Ryan."

"He's cute and gay and married. Fuck...I need more Absinthe," Elizabeth replied.

Thomas liked this woman. She was such a hoot.

"Do we have a connection?" Ryan asked.

His Google account opened and Thomas nodded. "Elizabeth just emailed the first draft of my screenplay."

"So I heard. Say hi to her. And tell her Cole and I will happily father her babies."

"I can't tell her that," Thomas gasped.

"Give me the phone." Ryan snatched it from him and proceeded to have a conversation bordering on phone sex.

Thomas downloaded the word document file. His heart sank. There was the title of *his* book, *Last Chance*, with the words *Written By Elizabeth Croft* underneath it.

"Everything okay?" Matt was behind him now.

"This is like...it's like seeing my husband walking down the street with another man."

"What is?" Matt looked at the screen.

"My name's not on it."

"Don't worry, T. Your name will be on the final credits. You can bank on that."

"But I wrote this," he croaked.

"I know, baby. Welcome to Hollywood. This is just a first draft, for your eyes only. I will make sure the final draft has *based on the novel by Rose Carter* right underneath it."

Thomas scanned through the first page. She'd started it in the middle of a scene that actually came midway through the book. An interesting choice.

"An old movie trick," Matt observed. "You always start a screenplay with a piece of action, preferable in the middle of a scene. The only way to keep those studio executives reading. They've all got shorter attention spans than the baby."

Matt kissed his cheek. Thomas kept reading, aware of Ryan and Matt wrestling with the phone now.

"Lizzie," Matt said finally, grabbing the phone. "He's reading it now. We'll get back to you."

Thomas wanted Matt to read it with him. "Sit with me?"

Matt raced to his side, pulling a stool closer to him. "Take it back to page one, baby. Let's see what she's done to our child."

CHAPTER TEN

Herve and Thomas rolled around on the sand...water lapped at their feet. They were alone with the ocean. A seagull soared overhead.

Backspace. No seagulls in Hawaii.

They were aware only of the sand, the ocean and Herve moved over Thomas, whose hot cock pointed upward so hard, Herve just had to lick it.

"I love the taste of you."

Thomas moaned as Herve sucked the entire length into his mouth...Thomas became impatient.

"Sit on my face. Please...before somebody comes."

Herve shifted position. The tide was coming in...they could be swept out to sea as they fucked. He pointed his cock at Thomas' mouth but Thomas surprised him by holding his hips, his tongue reaching up to Herve's ass. Herve let out

a cry, his hand moving swiftly over his burning cock. Beneath him, his lover reached one hand down to stroke his own cock, the other keeping Herve over his searching tongue...

"You know baby, Herve's lover is Andreas."

Matt looked up and found Thomas reading over his shoulder.

"Look. You wrote Thomas instead of Andreas."

"Yeah. I know. It wasn't a mistake." Matt sipped the freezing cup of coffee at his elbow.

Herve wanted to suck Thomas' cock...

"Why are you writing Thomas?"

"Who are you?" Matt asked. "The word police?"

"No...but as your husband and as someone who puts up with your ranting when your editor says you make lots of typos, I'm only trying to help."

"It's not a typo!" Matt pushed the chair back from the *lanai* table and stomped into the kitchen. The coffee pot was full and he slopped out the cold cup and poured himself another. He was trying hard not to show his irritation. He was on a roll with his book. The house was blissfully quiet. Their parents, Cole and Ryan and the baby had left for California that morning. Celine had flown back to Canada and he and Thomas were going to

spend two more glorious days in the house. Matt had organized a little surprise for Thomas. All he wanted was a little more time to complete the scene he'd started.

"Not a typo?" Thomas asked.

"I..." Matt sighed. "I am only inspired by you now, Thomas. The only way I can write those scenes is to imagine it's you. I type your name...the scene comes out smoking hot...then I go back and change the name to Andreas."

Thomas stared at him, a giddy smile spreading across his face.

"Look, you're my muse, okay?"

"You know, Matty, it's a sad, sad day when our fictional characters get more action than we do. I mean...aren't we writers supposed to write what we know?"

Matt laughed and put the coffee cup down. "In the interests of research I will nobly sacrifice my art..."

Ever since Thomas read the first draft of the screen version of his novel *Last Chance*, he hadn't been able to write a word. Unless you counted the word *fuck* written again and again on blank pages he later deleted. He hated the first draft. Felt it was too...*girlie*. He felt she'd turned his two male leads into chicks in pants.

Matt held Thomas in his arms. "You want your husband to fuck you right here?"

"No. I want to be naughty boys and fuck on your parents' bed."

Matt laughed. "Thomas, you constantly surprise me."

"You never wanted to fuck on your parents' bed?" Thomas asked, leaning in closer to him.

"It's funny you mention it, but there was this one time, my parents went out...Ryan and I were teenagers and he found dad's porn stash. Oh man, was that stuff funny. There was *Debbie Does Dallas*, *Deep Throat*...Ryan wanted me to watch with him and he was sitting on their bed, jerking off. Somehow, he thought it would be more erotic...I'll tell you what though, that's when I realized I was gay. I didn't enjoy watching the chicks' you know...pussies. I adored looking at the cocks. In fact, I rewound *Deep Throat* again and again and I kept watching how Linda Lovelace sucked cock. Man, she was really into it. She was drunk with cock. She taught me the art of fellatio, Linda did."

"Ah, I have her to thank, do I?"

"Yes, you do. Now...about my parents' bed?"

"Well, now I think about it...right here will do. After all, if I remember correctly, you're the man who uses the bedroom as a last resort in your novels..."

"I see my reputation precedes me," Matt joked.

"Your reputation and your very nice, juicy cock." Thomas' hand moved to the snaps on

Matt's shorts and reached for his own personal love connection. "Your cock is so beautiful...and big...have I ever mentioned how happy I am with it?"

"Not as often as I'd like."

Thomas laughed and moved in for a sensational kiss.

"You always get me with those kisses," Matt said against his mouth.

"Thank you, baby. I've been practicing for a long time."

Matt pressed against Thomas, loving the feel of his increasing heart rate against his lips. He dropped his man's shorts and Thomas stepped out of them, discarding them with a savage kick. Matt lifted him up to the kitchen counter.

"Oh fuck...I wanted to get nailed this way ever since I saw *Fatal Attraction*," Thomas said, leaning back as Matt kissed his way down his arms. "Baby...if you start this way, it will take forever to get you inside me."

Matt frowned at him. "You are so disrespectful, Thomas. You need to be taught a lesson."

Thomas laughed as Matt shouldered him, the way he had just several weeks ago in *Black Point*, when he knew Thomas was the man for him. He carried him into the living room and threw him face down over the arm of the big leather sofa.

"Oh...Matt..."

Matt responded by going face first into Thomas' proffered ass. He licked and sucked at his husband's hot hole. He couldn't wait. He had to fuck him. Thomas was muttering gibberish as Matt put his cock right at the opening.

"Now...Matty...now..."

He stuck it right in, Thomas' feet coming off the floor as Matt pounded into him. The waves crashed and roared outside the windows, sea foam splashing tiny droplets on the glass. Thomas moaned.

"More..."

Oh, Matt was happy to give him more. He held his man's legs like the arms of a wheelbarrow and squared him over the sofa. He fucked him with a relentless pace, leaning down to kiss his shoulder blades. Thomas met each thrust and the two men savored in the moment when they each knew the other was going to come. His hands stroked down Thomas' toned body, he loved knowing he was Matt's for the taking.

Outside, the waves increased their merging with the shore. Nature sensed their urgency and Matt reached under Thomas' thighs to grab his hard cock.

He jerked on it, in time with the ocean, in time with his own thrusts and Thomas screamed his name now and Matt lost all control. They came together, each shouting, *I love you...* and Thomas

shouted in protest when Matt came out of him.

"I'm here, baby...I'm here." His face went back to Thomas' ass and then he turned him around. Thomas lay back on the leather seat cushion and Matt kissed him for a long time, his hand making warm, round circles over Thomas' torso.

He lifted his face suddenly. "Baby, we gotta go."

"Go? Where?"

"The airport. We're expecting company."

Thomas opened and closed his mouth. They jumped into the shower. "I don't suppose there's any point in asking you who we're meeting?" Matt was doing wondrous things to his ass and cock with some tropical liquid soap and a sponge. "It's not my father or anything equally gruesome?"

"No, baby." Matt leaned across Thomas and turned off the taps.

"Hey, I was just starting to enjoy myself."

"Sorry, baby. "We're in a hurry. Do you suppose Lizzie would like the second bedroom here or do you think she'd prefer mum and dad's room?"

Thomas' face lit into smiles again. "Lizzie? Is that who's coming?"

"Shit on a brick. Me and my big mouth."

"Matt, that's fantastic."

"I thought it would be good for you to hash out

a decent first draft together. Email's fine, but I'm a man who believes in sweetening any proposition. We'll dazzle her with a few days on island and she'll dazzle you with a kick-ass first draft."

Thomas reached out a hand and stroked Matt's cock through his board shorts. "I've noticed your dab hand at negotiation. Did you have to pay for her ticket?"

"No, baby. Movie budget. I told you, I will do whatever I can to make this a great experience for you. She'll spend a couple of days here and —"

"What are you going to do?" Thomas followed Matt into the room Baxter and Elise had shared. The bed had already been stripped. All the beds had and the sheets were in the wash. The rental agreement on the house stipulated that all the sheets and towels had to be washed and dried and the beds made for the next guests. It was one of those island rental rituals. Mandatory if you wanted your hefty deposit to be returned.

"I'm going back to work on Herve and Thomas, AKA Andreas...I think this room, don't you?"

Thomas nodded and they retrieved the sheets from the dryer and quickly made the bed. The room looked amazing with fresh island flowers Elise had bought at a roadside stand adorning the *koa* wood dresser. They put fresh towels and a tube of the shower gel on her dresser.

"What, no chocolates on her pillow?" Thomas

teased and laughed when Matt found a couple of Jolly Ranchers in the kitchen cupboard.

Thomas stared at the beautiful painting on the wall above the dresser.

"Who is she?" he asked Matt after he finished artfully arranging the candy on Elizabeth's pillow.

"That's the last *Hawaiian* Princess, *Kaiulani*." She was astride her pony, fairy, riding *paniolo* style, like a cowboy. "I hope it gives her inspiration."

"She's beautiful," Thomas whispered.

"Very. She died when she was twenty-four. She went riding out in a bad storm when she received the news that her kingdom had been stolen by the American government. They say she never recovered...but islanders say she died of a broken heart. She kept peacocks you know. The night she died, her peacocks screamed and the sound could be heard all across the island. And that was how they knew she'd died. The peacocks kept screaming."

"I want to read about her," Thomas said. "You are a champion of broken hearts, Matty. You do so much for me."

Matt looked into his eyes. "Don't look at me like that or I'll have to fuck you again."

Thomas shrugged. "So? I'm not in a hurry. Let her wait."

Matt grabbed his husband and threw him on

the bed. "We're gonna have to change the sheets again," he muttered.

"It'll be worth it," Thomas whispered, pulling at Matt's shorts in a frenzy.

They stopped by the *lei* stores on King Street and Thomas ran inside two before deciding on a glorious firecracker and *pikake lei* for Elizabeth. It was a strong island tradition that guests to the island be greeted with one. The two men loved the *lei* which filled the car with such a heavenly scent, it was intoxicating.

The trip from Chinatown to the airport took mere minutes and as they whizzed by the international terminal with a range of mostly Asian airline names posted out front, they found Elizabeth, a tall, curvaceous black woman with long dreadlocks, sitting on her Luis Vuitton suitcase. She was dressed in a red pleather miniskirt, red pleather sleeveless vest and matching aviator hat, long black boots with red stripes. She was typing furiously on a laptop balanced on her knees.

"Christ, what an ensemble." Thomas looked shocked.

"God, I love her. She's a genuine loon. She must be ghost writing some pop star's autobiography."

"Why do you say that?"

"She's a method writer. She's dressed like a

ho." Matt honked his horn. She flipped him the bird, jumped up and Thomas ran to her, placing the *lei* over her head. "Oh, it smells gorgeous and it matches my outfit. Give me a hug, Matt. I've flown across Europe for you."

Matt jumped out and hugged her. "How many words did you write while you were waiting for us?" he asked her.

"Seven hundred and thirty-two."

"Are you writing a pop star's bio?" Thomas asked.

"I can't divulge. Confidentiality agreement. But let's just say, she's young, talent free, but she's a superstar."

"That narrow things down," Thomas joked.

Matt laughed, loving the way Lizzie kept hugging Thomas. She and Thomas had only met one time over a genuine Hollywood power lunch, but he and Matt had decided together that Lizzie, one of Matt's closest friends, was the perfect writer for *Last Chance*. She got Thomas in a headlock as a bus honked them. Man, he thought she outgrew that shit. He mouthed *sorry* to the driver who pulled around them.

Elizabeth had Thomas under her armpit, kissing him.

"Make her stop," Thomas whined.

"I can't. You have to say the magic word."

"What's the magic word?" Thomas sounded

panicked.

"Supercalafraagisticexpialidocious."

"Are you kidding me?"

"I'd advise you to say it," Matt said as Lizzie's chokehold strengthened.

"Supercalafraagisticexpialidocious. Gah!"

Thomas reeled when Lizzie let him go.

"It's no fun if you tell him, Matt." She let him place her bags in the trunk. She looked at their shorts, t-shirts and flip-flops and down at her own outfit. "I need to change. I feel overdressed."

"We're holding up traffic. We'll go home and you can change there."

Elizabeth glanced around at the cars and tour buses pulling around them. "Oh, hell no. I'm changing right here."

"You almost strangled me," Thomas squawked.

"I haven't strangled anyone in years," she retorted. "Open the trunk, Matty." She took off her hat and tossed it inside. "Now I'm ready for *Waikiki*."

She piled into the backseat and Thomas found some cool island music on the iPod—their new favorite was the local hero *Keali'i Reichel*—and they were off.

"Where are we going?" she asked. "It's like what, one o'clock local time? I have a hankering for Chinese food. Is that place in Chinatown still open, the one with the food on bamboo skewers?"

"Indigo," Matt said. "It's still there."

Thomas glanced at him. "How come you've never taken me there?"

"Because you didn't say the magic word."

"Supercalafraagisticexpialidocious."

Lizzie laughed from the backseat.

"I know when I'm licked." Matt grinned and swerved onto the Dillingham exit.

Indigo was doing brisk trade, but they managed to grab an outdoor table. The Asian-French fusion restaurant was expensive, but worth every dime. Matt watched the way Thomas and Lizzie scanned the same menu. He let them both pick the food. He silently applauded their choices of crisp goat cheese wantons with a four fruit sauce, seared scallops in harissa sauce.

"This is the only place in the world that makes harissa sauce the way they do in North Africa," Lizzie said.

"What is harissa?" Thomas asked.

"Red peppers. Oh, look Tommy. They've got mahi mahi in toasted black mustard...oh it comes with ginger tapenade and lily bulbs."

Tommy. Thomas didn't seem to mind. Matt smiled to himself. Both Daphne and Lizzie seemed to have his husband in the palms of their hands.

"What do you think of the Hanoi shrimp and enoki mushroom summer rolls?" Thomas asked her.

"It's fabulous with a lychee martini," she replied and Matt laughed to himself. At least she hadn't suggested the oyster shooters. Those lethal little babies came in kai vodka. Last time he'd come here with her, he remained drunk for two days.

"Matty." She leaned across the table, looking earnest. "Let's start with an order of oyster shooters."

Crud on a bagel. He caught Thomas' pleading look and he caved in, of course.

"I'll drive," he said firmly. "And don't play with my husband's cock under the table, Lizzie."

"What fun are you?" she deadpanned, ordering the first round of drinks. Thomas laughed and Lizzie brilliantly chose the moment he'd downed his first lethal shooter to mention the screenplay. "What exactly didn't you like?" she asked him. "Come on, I'm a big girl. I can take it."

Matt sat back and watched them talking, hoping this was a good idea...that Thomas would feel Lizzie was protecting the integrity of his story and not softening the gay sex storyline. They were, as he suspected having a...er...gay old time and she whipped out a fire engine red notebook to make notes. Matt sipped his mineral water as the first bamboo skewers arrived and he caught Thomas' gaze.

Thank you, Thomas mouthed and he wanted to

dive bomb him across the table and fuck him. He downed a prawn doused in cocoa bean curry instead and found himself drifting toward the other man in his life, Herve.

*Herve reached a hand out to Thomas.
"Come...feel the water. It's so warm. I want to
make love to you in it..."*

"What do you think?"

Matt came back to reality. "Sorry, T, what are you asking me?"

Thomas looked exasperated. "I'm asking you what you think about the new storyline we came up with. The—" he glanced at Lizzie for approval. "The C thread."

"I think you need to tell me again."

Thomas tilted his head at him. "Were you back with Herve and Thomas?"

"Yes, baby, I cannot tell a lie."

Thomas grinned. "I think I am jealous of Herve."

Matt reached across the table and covered Thomas' hand with his.

Thomas turned to Lizzie. "Since you're a method writer, what do you wear when you're working on *Last Chance*?"

"I stop sleeping with women and, when I'm actually writing, I work naked with a strap on."

Thomas and Matt stared at her a beat before exploding with laughter.

"Are you serious?" Thomas asked.

"Of course I am. Now I'm ready for dessert. "Who'll split a Madame *Pele's* Chocolate Volcano with me?"

"I will," Matt said.

"We both will," Thomas said.

"My one chance for a threesome and all I get is chocolate out of the deal." Lizzie sighed. "I thought all homos were supposed to be fast livin' party boys?"

"We're party boys. We're ordering more martinis." Thomas signaled the waiter and reached across the table this time for Matt's hand. "But my love is a one hit wonder."

"Say...that's a cute line." Lizzie wrote it down. This led of course to a discussion of their favorite one hit wonders and when Lizzie mentioned a Canadian called Boys Brigade and they were off again.

"You know Matt used to be in a boy band," Lizzie suddenly said.

Oh my God...why did she have to mention that?

"You were?" Thomas asked. "You never told me!"

Matt felt miserable. He did not want to have this conversation.

"What was the name of your band?" Thomas

persisted.

“Customer Parking.”

“That’s a cool name. What instrument did you play?”

Matt took a deep breath. He sensed Lizzie’s storytelling shark instincts circling for blood. Any second she’d bite and he’d had enough shark attacks for one vacation. “I played drums. We were a jazz, folk fusion band and we sounded great in my dad’s garage, but we sucked the one time we played out.” Lizzie the shark opened her mouth and Matt spat out the rest of the story. “The owner of the club actually offered to buy us beers if we *stopped* playing.” Maybe it was the vodka he’d been drinking, but Matt was devastated by Thomas’ wild laughter.

“You weren’t that bad,” Lizzie offered and Matt felt better.

“Thank you, Lizzie.”

“Those novelty holiday CDs with cats and dogs singing songs are definitely worse.”

Oh man...the shark got me after all. Thomas was hysterical now and Lizzie’s shark swam off with Matt’s emotional blood in the flow...

“You know, there was another band that sucked almost as much as Matt’s band,” Lizzie said and she was off again, mauling other artists.

“I spent a year in Montreal, you know,” Lizzie said. “I adored it.”

Matt groaned inwardly. He wanted to staunch the blood tide. Writing was what he was good at...Herve was beckoning him, inviting him back into his imaginary world and he wondered if it would be rude to take his own notes.

Thomas squeezed his hand again. "You okay, there?"

"Sure, baby." He returned to the present, laughed when they laughed and by the time they left the restaurant, Thomas wanted to go home and have a siesta, in Matt's arms.

"I sleep so well with you," he said.

Boy I hope that means you want to fuck.

Lizzie conducted business on her cell phone in the back seat as they drove up the *Pali* toward home.

"Think we can get some inspired chaos going on when we get back?" Thomas asked.

"Inspired chaos?" Matt asked.

"Listen, you moron," Lizzie exclaimed into her cell phone. "When I say I expect fifty per cent up front, that doesn't mean three years after completion. Yes, yes, that's right. I'm a bitch and you're a moron. Now get with the program, Britney."

Matt and Thomas exchanged glances. They both tried hard not to laugh. Could she possibly be talking to Britney Spears?

They wound down the road forking off to

Kailua. Matt held Thomas' hand and they parked in the driveway. They took out Lizzie's belongings from the trunk and passed Daphne's gecko sunning himself on a rock in the garden.

"Oh look, he misses her," Thomas murmured. The gecko watched their progress, took one look at Lizzie following them, he black and red boots ka-thunking on the front door mat and he scurried away.

Lizzie snapped off her cell phone. "Say, this is damned cool, guys. "Where's my strap on? I have an urge to write."

They dropped her bags in her room, left her to her own...er...devices and raced off to the privacy of their guest quarters.

"Do you think she really writes with a strap on?" Thomas mused.

"What do you care when I've got the real thing?" Matt grinned. He didn't want to talk about Lizzie's eccentricities. In fact, he didn't want to talk at all.

Thomas disappeared into the bathroom and Matt stripped off his clothes and posed himself on the bed. That would get his attention. He placed one arm up over his head, arranged his cock, which was being undisciplined as usual and pasted a sultry look on his face.

Thomas came out of the bathroom with a

toothbrush in his mouth. His eyes widened when he saw Matt and he started to choke on his toothpaste.

When Matt walked into the bathroom, Thomas looked at him through the mirror and started to laugh.

"Not exactly the reaction I was hoping for," Matt made a pretense of being pissed off.

Thomas wiped off his mouth on a towel and turned around. "Oh, honey," he cooed, as if to a baby, "I'm sorry." He grinned and pulled him into his arms. "It's just that you looked like one of those porn stars, you remember the guy in *Take It Like a Man*?"

Matt started to laugh, pushing him away playfully. "Yeah, I know the one. Talk about over acting. But right now," he said between clenched teeth, looking down at his cock, "I'm in serious trouble."

His significant other folded his well-muscled arms across his glorious chest and raised an eyebrow. "Guess I'm going have to assess the situation."

Matt reached out and grabbed him, dragging him by the arm.

"At least he's not pulling me by the hair," Thomas chuckled to himself, taking off his clothes as he went.

"Me Matt," he said, his eyes sparkling.

"Oh, you're Matt alright," Thomas said, pushing him back to the bed. "Get in that cave."

That struck him funny and he started to laugh, his laughter only made worse by Thomas as he began tickling him. "Stop it," he protested as he struggled, rolling onto his stomach.

"Oh, this is perfect," Thomas yelped, nipping his shoulder with his teeth. He moved his lips down his back to his ass where he proceeded to rim the hell out of him until Matt pleaded for him to stop. "Ah, you don't like it," Thomas teased, "so guess I won't do that anymore."

"You are so going to get it," Matt threatened.

Thomas reached under his lover and stroked his cock. "I sure as hell hope so."

"I was worried that you didn't want to fuck," Matt breathed, listening to the sound of Thomas fiddling with the lube.

"You need never worry about that."

"I don't think I'm going to need that lube."

"I need it. My poor cock is used and abused, thanks to you."

Matt rolled his eyes. "I'll have to lick it for you."

"Yes," he growled, "you will." He placed his hands under Matt's waist and pulled him up to all fours, then yanked him around. Matt mouth was directly in line with Thomas' cock.

God, Matt sometimes forgot how strong

Thomas was. He was a man with great strength, both physical and emotional, but he didn't wear it externally. He kept it there beneath the surface, ready to use when he needed it. Matt had no doubt Thomas could kick the shit out of any guy twice his size, and he'd do just that if he, or anyone he loved, was threatened, but he wasn't the type of man to act macho, to walk around bragging about his prowess. That was one of the things Matt loved about him. But right now, he was loving that Thomas was displaying that strength full force. His maleness, his blatant need was turning Matt on big time. He was more than content to be his willing sex slave.

Thomas held out his cock to him, his fingers stroking himself. Matt groaned inwardly. Yes, it was sexy. It was sinfully sexy, pure decadence really, to have this insanely beautiful man offering him his cock. "Okay now, my fine, young, horny slut, put it in your mouth and make it sing."

He wasn't kidding. And the fact that he meant every word was so hot. There is no way he could ever imagine himself getting bored in bed with the man. Matt took his cock in his mouth, one palm balancing him as the other hand curved around the base of Thomas' cock. He looked up at Thomas as he slid his lips up and down the length of his shaft. Thomas' head was back. He was making pleasurable sounds in his throat. Matt increased

the fiction, suddenly feeling Thomas' hand reach out and touch him, indicating he wanted him to back off. Matt licked his lips. He had come to love the taste of him. He stayed in place, waiting for him to look down into his eyes. "I was going to come," Thomas said, his chest heaving. "I want to come inside your ass, not your mouth. Turn around. Stay on your knees."

Matt smiled, moving around into position, teasing him by wiggling his ass a bit. That received a firm slap. "Um," Matt replied. "I like that."

"You want me to spank you?" Thomas laughed.

"Only if you think I need it," Matt muttered, a grin on his face that Thomas couldn't see.

Thomas massaged both his ass cheeks for a moment. "Knowing you, you'd put something on your ass to make it hurt less."

"Damn right, stud,"

Thomas smiled. "Stud eh? Say it again. Tell me what you want."

"Take it if you want it," Matt urged breathlessly as Thomas reached around to carelessly play with his genitals. Matt grunted. "Not fair."

"All is fair in love and war, baby," Thomas breathed, grasping his hips.

Matt sucked in some breath in anticipation. Thomas' cock sliced into his ass without fanfare. He began to pump hard, his fingers gripping

Thomas as much as it did him.

Thomas blinked. "What made you say that?"

Matt wound his arms around him, held him there for the longest time. He couldn't speak. He couldn't answer. Absolutely happiness, sheer bliss, it was the perfect moment.

"Matt," Thomas said, "are you all right?"

"I'm not crying," he said.

Thomas disengaged himself and studied his face. "Okay. We have a new term for watery eyes now?"

Matt pushed him away and wiped his eyes. "Shut up."

"Okay," he said with a smile. He lay down on the bed, propping the pillow up under his head.

Matt lay down beside him, taking his hair between his fingers, feeling the silkiness of it. "Thomas?"

"Um?" His eyes were closed.

"Do you think we'll always be together?"

His eyes opened. "Yes," he said. Nothing more than that. He reached out and pulled Matt closer.

Matt snuggled down into his arms. Thomas was asleep in a matter of minutes, something, which seemed to allude Matt right now. He listened to Thomas' deep breathing. There was so much to think about—the house at *Black Point* that would never really belong to them, except in spirit. Thomas kept telling him it was all right, but

damn it, it wasn't all right. That house meant everything to them. He didn't want to share it with Ryan and Cole.

Then there was the movie. What would celebrity status do to Thomas? He was already well known as an author, but this was way bigger than that. One movie deal could very well lead to others. What if he met someone else? What if they were forced to be apart a lot and...He stopped. This was insane. It was just his insecurities talking. But for some reason, he felt as if he could lose him. He glanced at him, kissed his mouth softly, murmured, "I love you." He wasn't expecting a reply, but miraculously, Thomas threw his leg over his.

"I love you, too, babe. Go to sleep."

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

A. J. Llewellyn lives in California, but dreams of living in Hawaii. Frequent trips to all the islands, bags of Kona coffee in his fridge and a healthy collection of Hawaiian records keep this writer refueled. A. J. loves male/male erotica, has a passion for all animals (especially the dog, the cat and the turtle). A. J. believes that love is a song best sung out loud.

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I write not only for my own pleasure, but for the pleasure of my readers. I can't remember a time in my life when I haven't written and told stories. When I'm not writing, I'm dreaming about writing, doing something wild and adventurous, or trying to make the world a better and more open minded place to live in. I adore beautiful men, and I know I'm not alone in this! Eroticism between consenting adults, in all its many forms is the icing on the cake of life!

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