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JAMIE HILL



Born to Run
by Jamie Hill

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a Phaze Rocks novella by
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Chapter One

"You're late." Sam Nielson drummed his fingers on the table at Houlihan's Pub.

"And you're ugly. But I can buy a watch." Gil Gates slipped into the chair next to Sam, glancing around. "Apparently I'm not the only late one. Where's D'Amato?"

"Oh, you know." Sam screwed up his face. "All lovey-dovey at home these days. He probably won't even show up."

"Who won't show up?" Nick D'Amato slapped the back of Sam's head. "Wouldn't be talking about me, now, would you?" He pulled out a chair, throwing his leg over the back, and sat.

"Don't do that!" Sam cradled the back of his head. "Christ, you'd think we were back at the academy together."

Nick smiled. "Sometimes I feel like we still are. These past few months, I'd swear I was twenty years younger."

Gil raised a hand, summoning the waitress. "Regular sex will do that to you. So come on, spill it. How are things at home? William getting along okay?"

They paused long enough to greet their regular server. "Hey, Donna," Sam said. "Could we get three beers, please?"

"Sure, detective. Light beer on tap, I assume?"

"Fine, thanks."

The plump, middle-aged woman nodded and returned to the bar.

Sam turned back to his friends, and had to smile. They did look the same as when they'd met in the police academy. A

little more filled out, with a crease or the occasional gray hair, but basically the same. Gil still wore his blonde hair closely cropped. Nick's hair was consistently shaggy, hanging over his collar. That hadn't changed.

The spring in Nick's step, however, was a fairly recent development. Since he settled down with his lover, William, Nick wore a permanent smile on his face. They exchanged rings in front of a long-haired minister and all their friends, and settled into a bungalow in Bedford Park. Nick transferred from the vice squad, in the forty-first precinct where Sam worked, to the fifty-second precinct, and a job working with kids in an anti-gang task force.

Now both Nick and Gil lived in the more affluent Northwest Bronx. Sam was the lone holdout, content to remain in South Bronx at the older precinct, affectionately nicknamed 'Fort Apache' for the violence there decades ago.

Donna returned with three mugs of beer, setting them on the table. "Want me to run a tab?"

"D'Amato's paying," Gil informed her, picking up his stein.

"Whatever." Nick shrugged good-naturedly.

The waitress held her hand out to him. "Well?"

"We're not quite done drinking, Donna," Sam said.

She rolled her eyes. "I know that. Since when has Mr. Stuck-in-the-Eighties *not* wanted me to play something on the jukebox?"

"Oh!" Nick pulled a wallet from the pocket of his black leather jacket. "Here you go." He handed her two dollar bills.

"I think they put Springsteen's new song in there. Like to hear it?"

Nick screwed up his face. "Not really. Something classic, maybe?"

"What a surprise." She snatched the bills from his hand and walked off.

Sam shook his head, sipping his beer. "Some things never change. So you never answered, Nick. How's Will handling everything, now that he's out of rehab?"

"Will's doing great. He goes to meetings; collects his chips just like they give at A.A. Sometimes I go with him. I think he's done remarkably well."

Nodding, Sam grinned as the familiar tune of *Born in the U.S.A.* wafted overhead. He smiled at his friends and they nursed their beers. He and Gil had been surprised to learn Nick's lover had a sex addiction—they'd heard of it, but never known anyone with that particular affliction. Nick assured them it was an illness like alcoholism or drug addiction. It possibly took *more* help to overcome, because most people just didn't *give up* sex. Like overeating, it was a condition to be managed, not cured. "I'm really glad to hear it. And his job at the Bronx Zoo, how's that working out?"

"He loves it! Comes home smelling like an animal most days, but he's working outside, and really seems to enjoy it."

"Can't imagine you mind the smell," Gil teased. "You've always been an animal in the sack. If you *make it* to the sack, that is. Hell, you probably throw him over the sofa and mount him right there when he gets home. Am I right?"

"You been watching?" Nick raised his eyebrows and smiled. "If there's videotape, we'd like a copy. So what about you, old man? Still living vicariously through my fabulous sex life? I

can share details, if you want to go in the men's room and whack off."

"Gawd, spare me." Gil waved a hand. "I'm still going through a dry spell, but that's to be expected when a long term relationship ends. Jerry and I were together eight years."

Sam nudged Gil's arm. "That ended *six months ago*, buddy. Time to pick up and move on."

"Don't rush me. I do things at my own pace."

"And always have," Nick agreed. He tossed back the last of his beer and deposited the mug with a *thud*. "Another round, anyone and everyone?"

"Yep." Gil nodded, finishing his first.

"Why not?" Sam sank back into his chair. They were all driving, but one more wouldn't hurt. Half the police force of the Bronx was in Houlihan's anyway, as they were most Friday nights. He looked around, noticing a familiar face moving through the crowd.

The man had neatly cut black hair. The sides and back buzzed close like his, but the top appeared longer, smoothly slicked back. Light brown skin hinted at a Hispanic heritage, which was common in the area. The Bronx was a melting pot. South Bronx, in particular, ran heavy with different cultures.

Where have I seen him before? The face seemed familiar, the muscular physique one Sam felt sure he wouldn't easily forget.

"What's wrong?" Gil watched his face.

"Nothing. Just thought I recognized a guy, is all."

"Who?" Nick spun around, looking from table to table around the bar. He and Gil blatantly scanned the crowd.

"Turn around!" Sam snapped, passing out the fresh beers Donna left at their table. "Christ, I can't take you two anywhere."

"What?" Nick said.

"Oh, shit." Sam fidgeted as the man approached their table. "Don't say anything."

"Why?" Gil asked, glancing up at the newcomer. "Hey, there."

"Hi. Man, this place is packed. I heard a bunch of guys at the department talking about getting a beer here after work. Thought I'd check it out."

The police department. That was it. "Ah, yeah." Sam nodded, remembering the man from work. "You're the new guy, Ramirez, isn't it?"

"Rodriguez. Bobby Rodriguez. You're Sam Nielson. I just got here from Brooklyn a couple days ago. Haven't met everyone yet."

"Oh," Sam said inanely, and the conversation lulled.

Nick extended his hand. "Good to meet you, Rodriguez. I'm Nick D'Amato. I used to work vice at the forty-first."

Bobby shook his hand, and smiled. "Vice at Fort Apache. That had to be interesting."

"Very interesting," Nick agreed.

Sam watched the exchange. Nick would never tell anyone his lover had been a hustler in his precinct when they met. That was the reason they moved north, for a fresh start. Of course, Nick knew he and Gil would keep the secret. The

three men were like brothers. Sam would take a bullet for either of them. He just wished Nick would stop talking to this new guy. Something about him made Sam nervous.

"This is Gil Gates," Nick introduced. "Watch out, he's a captain up in Kingsbridge. He can make your life hell if he chooses to."

"Pleased to meet you, sir," Bobby replied nervously.

"D'Amato is full of shit," Gil muttered in his gravelly voice. "Yeah, I'm a captain. But I haven't made anyone's life hell in a long time. Might start with you, D'Amato, you asshole."

"Bring it on, big boy." Nick grinned, patting Gil's shoulder.

Sam felt Nick's boot nudge him under the table, but he couldn't think of anything to say.

"So," Nick picked up the conversation again. "What department did you say you were in?"

"Special investigations," Bobby replied.

"Really? How interesting. Sam here's in homicide." Nick glared at Sam.

"Yeah, I've seen him there." Bobby glanced around. "Well, it was great meeting you all. I'm going to grab a beer and watch some of the game on that big screen in the corner."

"Good to meet you. Have a nice night," Nick told him.

Gil added, "Take it easy."

"Yeah." Bobby glanced at Sam one last time and sauntered off.

"What the fuck is wrong with you?" Nick muttered through his teeth, kicking Sam's shin hard.

"Ouch!" Sam grabbed his leg.

Gil glanced toward the back of the pub. "He's one tall drink of water. And there sits Nielson, thumb up his ass, not saying a freaking word. Am I right?" He looked at Nick.

"You're right. Sam, he's gorgeous! He works in your building! What's wrong with you? Why didn't you ask him to join us?"

"Friday nights are *our* time," Sam replied petulantly. "We never ask anyone to join us."

"It's not a freaking law, you jackass." Gil shook his head.

"What makes you think he wanted to join us, anyway?" Sam muttered. "He wanted to watch the game, not hang out with three gay guys."

"You don't think he's gay as hell?" Nick asked incredulously.

"How the fuck should I know? It's not stamped on his forehead."

Nick and Gil burst into laughter. "He practically drooled over Sammy," Gil spouted between guffaws.

"No fooling." Nick shook his head. "Those were fuck me-big brown eyes if I've ever seen them."

Sam shifted uncomfortably in his chair. He'd get up and walk out, but his cock bulged painfully in his jeans, and he didn't want to move. "You two are full of shit."

* * * *

Steam clouded the bathroom mirror. Sam used his towel to wipe a swath across the middle. He leaned in, studying his appearance. *Not bad, for forty years young.* Drawing fingers through the top of his short hair was the only attention it

required. The sides and back were razor cut, extremely easy to care for. His neatly shaven face was smooth; complexion clear.

People told him his eyes were one of his best features. Bright blue with long, thick lashes, they seemed to be chick magnets. He fought girls off in school, dating a select few before he realized his tastes ran to the masculine. He bided his time until he graduated, and then the game was on.

He thanked God for the diversity New York City provided. He never had trouble meeting guys. There was usually someone around for casual, no-strings fun. It wasn't until he joined the police academy that Sam discovered deep, true feelings for another man.

Nick used to stare into his eyes. When Sam caught him looking, Nick would give a sheepish grin. They usually ended up in bed, fucking each other's brains out until all hours of the morning.

In those days, cadets weren't as closely supervised. Hell, it was probably him, Nick and Gil who caused them to tighten rules at the police academy. Same sex relationships were forbidden now, but in the New York Police Department, the policy was *don't ask, don't tell*. A few of his co-workers knew he was gay. They also knew he was a damned good cop, so it wasn't an issue.

The memories caused Sam's cock to stir. He and Nick had some great times. When they met Gil, and got comfortable with each other, the three of them had weekend orgies at a nearby hotel. They were three young studs, able to go at it

repeatedly for hours. *Those were the days.* Smiling, he stroked his staff.

He'd considered whacking off in the shower, but twenty minutes ago the idea was half-hearted. Now it fully sprang to life, his erection waving. Sam carried his towel to the bed, tossing back the covers and laid down. Pulling the length of his shaft up and down made his stomach tingle, balls pleasantly churning.

It seemed pathetic, jerking off to memories of his best friends, even though they'd shared incredibly hot sex. When their time at the academy ended, they went their separate ways, latching on to the best possible jobs for each of them. The three men decided their friendship was more important than slaking their lust, and ended the sexual encounters. Over the years, they'd formed very strong bonds, and couldn't have been closer.

Sam closed his eyes, picturing a different man kneeling in his bed. He purposely didn't give the body a face. *No strings attached sex, his specialty.* He focused on the nicely shaped ass cheeks and muscular thighs. Spreading the man wide, he envisioned a sweet, crimson rosebud. *He leaned forward, pressing his tongue to the puckering anus. The tight outer ring blocked his advance but he pushed through, sending his tongue deep into his fantasy lover's ass.*

Sam stroked the length of his cock languidly, picking up pace as his imagination soared. *He was on his knees, slathering slick lubricant over his weeping prick. A few gentle nudges put him inside the man's tight channel, flesh slapping against flesh.*

Pre-cum oozed from the slit in his crown. Sam smoothed it over the shaft. His balls drew up, preparing to release their offering with his shuddering orgasm. A few more forceful thrusts and the image of Bobby Rodriguez kneeling in a pool of his own cum sent him over the edge, cock spurting wave after wave of creamy seed. Milking the rod until the last drop escaped, Sam sighed.

Where had the image of Rodriguez come from? He remembered his rock hard cock at the pub the night before. The man set him off, no doubt about that.

Using his towel to clean up, Sam tossed it aside and stretched out, staring at the ceiling. It had been awhile since he'd actually been with anyone. One of his longest relationships had ended a few months ago. The guy was a sexy stockbroker named Brian. Things were great until Brian dropped a bombshell. He'd hired a surrogate mother and fertilized her eggs with his sperm. He wanted a baby, and intended to get one.

Sam couldn't get away fast enough. Children were okay, as long as they were somebody else's. He couldn't imagine Nick choosing to even *work* with kids. They were needy little creatures, who only got worse as they grew up. Little ones cried all the time. When they stopped crying, they started talking. Once they did that, they never shut up. The older ones were mouthy, and a pain in the ass. That was his take on them, anyway.

He smiled to himself. Good thing he was gay. He'd have made a horrible father.

* * * *

The five boroughs of New York averaged approximately one homicide per day. No two were exactly the same, and except for the open and shut cases, it took some footwork to figure them out. Sam had always liked puzzles. His precinct had a good case closure rate. The people he worked with were top notch.

Precinct headquarters was quiet when he got to work Monday. Sam got caught up on paperwork, and was sitting at his desk shortly after noon when the activity picked up. Before he had the chance to ask what was happening, a staff meeting commenced.

"Cut the chatter. Let's get going, here." Captain Jacobs, the man in charge of the forty-first, called over the din.

Sam perched on the edge of a desk. It was unusual for the captain to brief them, usually the lieutenant handled that.

"A floater turned up in the river late last night. It didn't seem too unusual at first, until we identified him. The victim was Ardon Santiago. Before you have to ask where you've heard that name, I'll clue you in. The Santiagos own several city blocks in the Bronx, some of the most sought after and expensive retail space there is. Ardon took over the family business when his old man retired a few years ago. Needless to say, Victor Santiago is not a happy man."

Sam exhaled. No wonder a current of electricity zipped through the office. Every homicide was regrettable and unfortunate, but this was the most important dead guy they had in a long time.

"Cause of death was a twenty two in the forehead, execution style. He was already dead when he was dumped in the drink.

"I'm assigning two teams to this one. Miller from homicide and Benson from special investigations—you two need to hit the crime scene and question everyone you can find. We've had uniforms combing the area since dawn, but they've come up with squat. I expect you to do better."

"Yes, Captain." Len Miller, one of Sam's fellow detectives, nodded.

"Santiago lived in a fancy neighborhood up in Kingsbridge, not far from his old man's mansion. Nielson, you'll go talk to his father and his widow." Jacobs glanced at his clipboard. "Donatella." He looked at Sam. "Take Rodriguez from S.I. with you. And for Christ's sake, don't ruffle any feathers. Captain Gates from the fiftieth knows Victor, and suggested we tread lightly. God knows why Gates thought you'd be a good one to question the man." He shook a finger at Sam. "Don't be a wiseass, just do what you need to do, and get out."

Sam blinked innocently. "Me, a wiseass? I'm hurt, Captain. I really am."

"Aw, fuck me." Jacobs glanced around. He focused on the Hispanic detective in the back. "Rodriguez, keep an eye on him. I know you're new around here, but you're big enough to sit on Nielson if you have to."

Sam looked back in time to see Bobby smile. They exchanged glances, Bobby's dark eyes twinkling. "I think I can handle it, Captain."

The boss looked from one man to the other with irritation. "Get a copy of the file from Stacy up front. Then get the fuck out of here."

Swearing to himself, Sam went to his desk and started shoving folders around. He spotted Rodriguez walking toward him and escaped down the side aisle, which led directly to Jacob's office. "Captain?" Sam knocked on the door.

"Haven't you left yet?" Jacobs leaned back in his chair.

"Almost. I wondered if it was wise to stick Rodriguez on this case? You said yourself he's new. This is a big case."

"Close the door."

Sam stepped in and followed instructions. He turned back to his boss expectantly.

Jacobs frowned. "Is this because of the rumors going around the office? I hate to break it to you guys, but Stacy is more than just a thirty-eight double 'D'. She's my eyes and ears out there."

Sam fidgeted from one foot to the other. *Did Stacy have big tits?* He honestly couldn't remember. "I'm not sure what you mean, sir."

"Stacy told me there's a rumor that Rodriguez is gay. Now me, I don't care one way or the other. I suspect we've had gay cops in this precinct before. But if it's going to get in the way of his duties—"

"Oh, no sir!" He gulped, trying to maintain composure. Captain suspected Bobby was gay? *How many years have I worked for him?* Nick, too. He tried to remember, then noticed Jacobs staring and focused on the problem at hand. "That's not it at all. I couldn't care less." He bit back another

comment, not wanting to protest too much. "I was truly concerned about his experience or lack thereof."

"Look." Jacobs crossed his arms. "The kid had a spotless record in Brooklyn. Moved here for a change of scenery, or so he said. A lot of guys think Fort Apache's going to be a hell of a lot more exciting than it is. I don't know. What I do know is—Gates requested you for this assignment. That looks good on your record. I don't want the other kids to think I'm playing favorites, so I have to knock you down a little."

He waved a hand. The teasing hadn't bothered him in the least. The idea of partnering with Bobby bothered him *a lot*. "I don't give a shit. But Rodriguez—"

"Is standing outside my door, waiting for you. If you're truly as liberal-minded as you said, then get out there and go to work. Any more objections and I'll think it's the homosexual issue again. That could be a problem."

Sam shook his head vehemently. "No problem. Thank you, sir." He opened the door and stepped out, glancing at Bobby. "I had to get some last minute instructions. Are you ready to go?"

"I've been ready. I already got a copy of the file." Bobby gazed at him coolly.

"Come on." Sam ignored the look. He patted his pockets for the essentials—cell phone, keys, notebook. "I'll drive."

"I figured." Bobby followed him out.

Walking to his car, Sam tried to mentally tamp down the erection growing in his jeans. After the other night at the pub, and his fantasy the following day, merely thinking about

Bobby got him excited. Sitting next to him in the car for thirty minutes would be hell.

In the parking lot, he pushed the button on his key ring and the doors to his silver Lexus unlocked.

"This is nice." Bobby slid in, looking around as he fastened his seatbelt.

"Not bad." Sam got in and started the car. "I'd like a new one, but in this neighborhood I'd need to hire someone to keep it in one piece whenever I left it."

Bobby chuckled. "Probably right. It hasn't been as bad as I'd heard, though. It's really pretty nice around here."

Settling in for the drive, Sam shifted in his seat, getting comfortable. "So what brought you to Longwood? I'd have thought Brooklyn would be a pretty good gig."

"It was fine. I got restless, did some research. There's a high percentage of Hispanics here, and a lot of single parent families. I signed up with a mentoring program, thought maybe I could work with kids in my free time, weekends, whatever."

"Kids," Sam repeated dully.

"What?" Bobby stared at him. "I suppose you don't like kids, either?"

"I'm not really fond of them, no. And what do you mean, *either*?"

"Oh for Christ sakes, Nielson. It's obvious as hell you can't stand me. Not exactly sure what I did."

"Are you serious?" Sam cast him a sidelong glance as he drove.

"Totally. You've been a prick since we ran into each other at the pub. I don't know why—"

"Bobby." Sam cut him off. "Look, this isn't the time or place for this, but I need to clear something up. Jacobs told me there's a rumor you're gay."

Bobby's face darkened in anger. "Are you shitting me? If you have a problem working with a gay guy, say it now. I'll ask for reassignment. I guess I haven't hidden it as well as I should, but I've never had trouble before. Son of a bitch." He looked down, shaking his head.

Sam reached across the console between them, touching Bobby's arm. "Take it easy. The only problem I have working with a gay guy is the distraction. My cock's been rock hard since the night I saw you at the pub. It's not any better with you sitting two feet away."

Bobby's head snapped up and he blinked at Sam. "You mean—"

Reaching into his pocket, he pulled out his cell phone and handed it over. "I have G.P.S. on my phone. We're almost to Kingsbridge. Punch in the address and get me to Victor Santiago's place, will you?" He tried not to smile, but knew his eyes gave him away.

"Yeah, sure thing." Bobby said softly. "We'll need to talk about this later."

Adjusting his erection through his pants, Sam muttered, "We'll need to do more than talk."

Bobby chuckled and looked at the phone. "How the fuck do I use this?"

"Shit." Sam shook his head. "Newbies. Don't know a God damned thing."

"I know a few things." Bobby replied seductively. He punched buttons. "Oops, I think I just erased something."

"Give me the phone!"

Bobby held it up and their hands touched as he grabbed it back.

A spark tingled through him, straight to the erection he'd been trying to hide. "Dumbass," he muttered lightly.

Bobby grinned again. "I love it when you talk dirty. I think we're going to have a real good time."

"Christ!" Sam swore, his cock heating a hole through his jeans. He had no doubts.

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Chapter Two

Victor Santiago's home really was a mansion, as the captain had suggested. Sam stopped the car at the gate and spoke into a microphone aligned with a video camera before they were allowed access. The big gate swung open and he drove through. It closed behind them.

A pond curved around one side of the long drive; a fountain, with a huge gold trimmed angel at its center, sat on the other. "Good God." Sam parked behind a limousine in the circle drive. He stared at the large stone house, complete with gold accents and trim.

"At least there's nothing showy about the man." Bobby raised his sunglasses.

Sam gaped at him incredulously. He saw the dark eyes twinkle and realized Bobby'd been joking. "I've never seen a gaudier place. All the gold reminds me of the cheesiest casino I've ever been to in Atlantic City."

"I've never been to Atlantic City." Bobby exited the car and they stood, studying the house.

"Really? I think it's a hoot. Usually lose too much money, so I don't go very often."

"I've never had the money to spare." Bobby looked at him. "My dad died while I was in college, and I've spent the last few years trying to help my mother out."

"That's tough. Are you the only kid?"

"No, there are eight of us. Seven went to college and one quit halfway through to become a nun."

Sam laughed. "You're full of shit."

"Swear to God." Bobby held up two fingers.

"Fuck, a boy scout, too." He trudged ahead to the front door. "I guess it's not too late to change my mind."

"Yes it is," Bobby whispered. He fastened the front button of his suit coat.

"Fuck." Sam rang the bell, shaking his head. *A Catholic boy scout with a huge family—and he loves kids.* His instincts told him to run for the hills. His cock said something entirely different. Sam tried to ignore it as the front door opened.

"May I help you?" A thin, balding man in a tuxedo looked them over suspiciously.

Flashing his detective's shield Sam replied, "I'm Detective Nielson and this is Detective Rodriguez. We're investigating the death of Ardon Santiago."

The butler nodded, motioning them in. "A tragedy. I know Mr. Victor would like to give you his thoughts on the matter."

"We would love to hear those thoughts." Sam stepped inside, lowering his voice. "Do you have to wear that monkey suit every day? Doesn't it get a little tight?" He ran a finger around his open collared shirt.

The man frowned. "Mr. Victor appreciates propriety. He undoubtedly will *not* appreciate your coming here dressed in that manner." Turning to Bobby, he gave a curt nod. "Please wait here." He retreated down the long hallway.

Sam raised his eyebrows at Bobby questioningly, and glanced down at his dark jeans, crisp white shirt and navy sports jacket. "What the fuck? It's not like I'm wearing Bermudas and flip flops."

"I guess the man appreciates a sharp dresser." He dusted the sleeve of his black suit coat, and adjusted the knot in his striped tie.

"I only wear suits to court and funerals. Thankfully I haven't been to either lately. I suppose I should get my suit dry-cleaned."

"Your one suit?" Bobby smiled.

"Shut up." Sam nudged him with an elbow, straightening when an older Hispanic man ambled down the hall, butler in tow.

"Officers?" He gazed over Sam quickly and let his eyes settle on Bobby. "I'm Victor Santiago."

Bobby extended a hand. "Detective Rodriguez from the forty-first precinct. This is Detective Nielson."

Victor shook hands warmly with Bobby and briefly with him, Sam noted. *Whatever*. He didn't want to make friends with the man. He wanted to find out who killed his son. He'd let Bobby take the lead if the old man felt more comfortable that way.

"I was just going to have some coffee. Can I offer you anything, coffee, tea?" Victor asked.

"Not for me, thanks." Sam replied.

"I'd love a cup of coffee." Bobby told him.

"Excellent." He turned to the butler. "James, we'll have coffee in the study, please."

"Yes, sir." James walked away, moving at what was apparently his one and only speed, slow.

"This way, detectives." Victor led the way down a side hallway.

"Can you believe his name is *James*?" Sam whispered to Bobby. "Home, James. Coffee, James."

"Shut up."

"You've been waiting to say that, haven't you?" Sam swatted his arm as they entered a large, dark office.

Bobby made a face at him before looking at Victor. "What a handsome room. Your whole house is amazing, sir."

Sam glanced at the tall mahogany bookshelves and brown leather furniture. It was far too dark for his tastes. His partner did seem to know the right things to say to the old man, though. Santiago seemed to be eating it up.

His partner. The thought sent a chill down his spine. Sam forced himself to tamp it down. They had a case to solve; this was no time for fantasizing.

"Thank you. Please, have a seat." Victor sat in one high-backed chair, motioning to two others.

They situated themselves and James brought coffee before the questioning finally began. "When's the last time you spoke to your son?" Sam asked.

Victor thought about it and looked at Bobby. "He had dinner with us here Friday night. I spoke with him briefly Saturday afternoon. That was the last time."

His grief appeared genuine. Sam had interviewed a fair number of people following homicides. Occasionally they surprised him, but more often than not, he could spot someone who was truly sad, as compared to the person who was merely trying to *look* that way.

Bobby sipped his coffee so Sam continued asking questions. "Can you think of anyone who'd want to hurt

Ardon, Mr. Santiago? Had there been problems recently or threats?

Victor replied to Bobby, "No threats or problems that I was aware of. But I'd point my finger at Donatella in a heartbeat."

The blatant snubs started to piss him off. "Mr. Santiago? I'm right here." Sam waved a hand, and smiled. "Please tell me what makes you suspicious of your son's widow?"

"I'm sorry," Victor replied insincerely. "I assumed Detective Rodriguez was in charge, because of his attire."

"Yeah, well, we're working together." He thought about saying more, but suddenly realized he didn't want to offend Bobby. There was nothing gained by suggesting he was the new kid. "What was it again that made you suspect Donatella?"

The grieving father stared at him with cold, gray eyes. "She was cheating on my son. I only recently found out, but apparently Ardon had known about it for a long time."

Sam raised his eyebrows. "He put up with it? Were they still together as a couple or separated?"

"They were together. He loved her. Ardon tried to get her into counseling with him, but she resisted. Frankly, she'd become much more open about the whole thing in recent weeks. When Ardon came here Friday night, she went to meet *her lover*." Victor spat the last words with disdain.

"Did she want a divorce?" Bobby asked. "Usually when someone stops sneaking around, it means they just want out, and don't care what people think."

"Ardon wouldn't give her a divorce. She'd asked him several times and he refused to consider it."

"Ah ha." Sam exchanged glances with Bobby. Perhaps this homicide wasn't such a mystery after all.

"Anything else you'd like to tell us?" Sam returned his gaze to Victor.

He seemed to intuitively understand that Sam was running the investigation, and finally addressed him cordially. "I never liked my son's wife, Detective. She's manipulative and deceptive. If it weren't for my grandchildren, I'd gladly never set eyes on her again."

"How many children do they have?" Sam made notes in a small book.

"Two. Gina is fourteen, Tony is fifteen."

"You get along well with them?"

Victor's eyes lit up. "Like my own children. I love them very much."

Sam stood. "One last question, Mr. Santiago. What kind of a relationship did your son have with his kids? Did they get along?"

"Other than the usual teenage nonsense, they were very close. Ardon was a wonderful father." A tear glistened in the corner of his eye.

Bobby stood and moved next to Sam. "We're very sorry for your loss, sir."

Nodding, Victor gritted his teeth. "Just find the evidence you need to convict the bitch. I'm not saying Donatella pulled the trigger, but I know, in my heart, she's behind it somehow."

"We'll do everything we can." Sam extended his hand and this time Victor shook it vigorously.

"Thank you." The older man shook hands with Bobby before raising his voice. "James?"

The butler appeared in the doorway. "Yes, sir?"

"The detectives are leaving. Please show them out."

"Of course." James motioned for them to follow, and headed down the hall.

"We'll be in touch." Sam told Victor.

"Thanks again." He nodded, watching them go.

At the front door, Sam stepped from the stifling house into fresh air. "Thanks, James."

The butler closed the door without another word.

Sam made a face at Bobby. "He's a tough cookie."

Whipping out his sunglasses, Bobby started for the car. "Given a little more time, you'd win him over. See what you did with the old man?"

Sam put on his own sunglasses and got into his car. "He was a bit chilly at first. Nothing I couldn't handle."

"Too bad." Bobby glanced at the rearview mirror on his door. "Jacobs said I should sit on you if I needed to. I was hoping I'd get the chance."

"You still might. We'll see how the interview with the widow goes."

Bobby looked at him. "You think the old man's right? It'd be a pretty easy case if that's all it was."

"I don't know." Sam shrugged. "Have to talk to her, try and get a read. I thought we might check in with Gates at the precinct first, and put in a call to Mrs. Santiago to make sure she's home."

"Whatever you think."

"Hold that thought for later, will you?" Sam tossed him a sidelong glance.

"We'll see. I'm kind of used to getting my way." He wagged his eyebrows.

Sam's cock throbbed in his jeans. He glanced at his watch. "On second thought, I might just call Gil."

"We could set something up with Mrs. Santiago for first thing tomorrow," Bobby agreed.

"That might be best." Sam took the first exit heading back to Longwood. He couldn't get home fast enough.

* * * *

"This is nice." Bobby glanced around Sam's apartment as they walked in. He tossed his sunglasses on a table, and slipped out of his suit coat.

"How about a beer?" Sam shrugged out of his own coat and tossed it aside. He went straight into the kitchen and opened the fridge. "I've got some pizza in here, too."

"Maybe later. Beer sounds good now. Whatever you're having."

Sam handed one bottle over and twisted the top off the second. He took a long pull and swiped the back of his hand across his mouth. "I think you know what I'm having. Or what I want, anyway."

Bobby chugged half his beer then set the bottle down. "I'm still a little in shock about that. I was just getting used to the idea that you hated me."

Taking a step closer, Sam smiled. "*Hate's* not the right word. Nervous is more like it. I was so turned on I could

barely walk after thinking about you. I just kept wondering how in the hell I was supposed to work in that condition."

Bobby loosened his tie, maintaining eye contact. "You thought about me?"

"It was a damned nice thought."

He stepped forward until they were chest to chest. Reaching out, Bobby cupped Sam's crotch. "Did you touch yourself when you thought about me?"

"Oh yeah. Couldn't help it." Sam wriggled against the firm hand. "We've got way too many clothes between us. We need to take care of that, *now*."

"Impatient boy." Bobby squeezed, gripping Sam's erection through his jeans. "I might like to take things slow."

Sam closed his eyes, thrusting into Bobby's hand. "You'll kill me."

"Nah." Bobby leaned forward, speaking into Sam's ear. "But I'll have fun trying. So, do you like things a little kinky at all?"

A thrill zipped down Sam's spine. He never tried anything that could even mildly be described as kinky. There was the three-way sex with Nick and Gil, but that was straightforward anal and oral. *What does he have in mind?* "I don't know. I've never really—" He gasped as Bobby squeezed his cock.

"Do you trust me?" Bobby's voice was a mere whisper.

"I, uh—" He thought about it. He didn't know why exactly, but he did. "Yes."

With the swift movement of a trained police officer, Bobby pulled a set of handcuffs from his back pocket and snapped

one ring around Sam's wrist. "Glad to hear you say that. Because I'd never hurt you—much."

The cuffs were a surprise, but tingles of excitement ran through him. "Bobby, I don't know—"

"Shhh." He whirled Sam around, tugging both of his hands behind his back and locking the cuffs. "You're not supposed to know. Let me run things this time. If you don't like it, I'll give you the opportunity to do whatever you want to me later. Deal?"

Sam's erection bulged painfully in his jeans. He'd agree to anything at that moment, just to feel those hands on him again. "Deal. Let's go to the bedroom, please. That way." He nodded toward the hall leading from the kitchen.

Bobby chuckled, shoving Sam down the hall. "There's that impatient boy again." He stopped at the doorway to Sam's bedroom. Pulling the cuffed hands back so he could murmur in Sam's ear, he said, "I think you might need to be spanked until your ass is cherry red. What do you think about that?"

Sam moaned. "I think I might come in my pants."

"Don't you dare!" Bobby snapped. "Behave yourself, and I'll make this first time real nice. Misbehave and your balls will sting like fire."

"Shit." Sam's breath caught in his throat.

"Just take it easy." Bobby unbuttoned Sam's white shirt and peeled it off, tugging the sleeves down to the handcuffs. "Let me get you out of these clothes." He unlocked one wrist and tossed the shirt aside.

Sam squirmed as Bobby tugged off his shoes, socks, jeans and briefs. He stood next to the bed, cock jutting forward and oozing pre-cum.

"Very nice." Bobby eyed the stiff prick, but didn't touch. He threw the covers back and demanded, "Lie down. Face up."

Sam did as instructed.

Voluntarily, Sam raised his hands, allowing Bobby to lock the cuffs around the spindle headboard. "There we go. You have the perfect bed for this."

"Who knew?" Sam felt vulnerable and exposed lying naked on his bed, hands secured. He also felt like his cock might burst at the slightest touch.

Bobby slowly removed his clothes, studying Sam intently. "You have a great body. Tight abs, a lightly furred chest, and perfect nipples. He leaned over and licked one. "I love nipples."

"Christ." Sam squirmed. "I love *that*."

His teeth grazed the taut nub. "Good." Finally naked, Bobby stood next to him.

Sam examined his body. The Hispanic man had slightly darker skin than he did, but their physiques were otherwise similar. About the same height and size, Bobby had equally gorgeous abs and tight, flat nipples. His long, thick cock swayed as he moved. "You look good enough to eat."

"I was thinking the same about you. Would you like to feel my lips on your dick?"

You don't know how much. "Yes, please."

Bobby lay next to him on the bed, hands lightly caressing Sam's chest as his their mouths pressed together. He kissed

Sam solidly, his tongue battling for dominance. Mouths still touching, he murmured, "You understand, I'm in control, don't you? If I decide you've earned an orgasm, you'll have one."

"Okay." Sam's stomach fluttered with nervous excitement.

Bobby worked his way down his body, licking and nuzzling skin. "I'm going to suck your cock now. Don't even think about coming. The brief pleasure you'd get wouldn't be worth the intense pain I'd inflict afterward."

Sam groaned. He wasn't sure if Bobby was teasing or not. He decided not to test the man. When the warm mouth enveloped his cock, he thought about work or whatever he could to keep his mind occupied.

"You taste good." Bobby sucked him deep before pulling back, licking from base to tip. His movements were slow and torturous.

"Oh, God..." *I'm going to shoot.* "That's good—so good."

"You're not close to coming, are you?" Bobby clamped one hand around the base of his cock and squeezed tight. "I didn't say you could climax yet."

Before he realized what was happening, Sam felt Bobby's thumb and forefinger pinch the head of his cock. Pain shot through him and an orgasm was suddenly the farthest thing from his mind. "What the fuck?"

"That's better." Bobby knelt on the bed next to him. "I told you, I was in control. Did you doubt me?"

Games were one thing, but that treatment hurt like hell. "What's up with you, man? I thought we were just—"

Leaning over so their faces were inches apart, Bobby smiled. "I know what you thought. 'Rodriguez is yanking my chain. He'll do whatever I say because I'm Sam Nielson, hotshot detective at the forty-first.' I hate to break it to you, babe, but you're not shit right now. You're my bitch, and I'm going to fuck your mouth before I fuck your tight ass. Then I might allow you to come. *I might.*"

Embarrassment coursed through him. Sam felt his face flush beet red. "I don't know who the fuck you think you're talking to—"

"Shhh." Bobby ran both hands over his face and cupped his cheeks. "Play with me. Relax and surrender control for a little while. See if it doesn't turn you on like nothing ever has. If you're not thoroughly satisfied when I'm through, I promise you can do whatever you want to me. Or I'll leave and we'll never mention this again."

Sam gazed into the soulful dark eyes. Bobby was incredibly gorgeous, hot as hell—and he was right. As long as it was just a game, the whole scenario excited Sam beyond belief. He shot a steely glare at the man who wanted to control him. "Fuck me. Make it good."

Bobby chuckled as he again rose to his knees. "Oh, it'll be good. But you might regret mouthing off. A submissive generally gets punished for telling his Master what to do."

Nervous tingles zipped down Sam's spine. *Master? Submissive? What the fuck have I gotten myself into?* Before he could speak, a throbbing cock filled his mouth and he was forced to accept it. Sam closed his eyes and sucked rapidly to keep pace with Bobby's thrusts.

Pushing himself deep, Bobby fucked Sam's mouth until salty pre-cum coated his throat. He finally pulled out and grabbed his cock, running the tip over Sam's lips. "You have a talented mouth. Hot, wet and sexy. I'll make good use of it."

A smartass reply on the tip of his tongue, Sam bit it back. He didn't know if the punishment stuff was true, but after the painful cock pinch, he wasn't chancing it. He focused on Bobby's leaking rod.

"Ah, a quick learner." Bobby ran a hand over his face. "You wanted to say something, didn't you?"

Sam remained silent.

"You've done remarkably well for your first time! I know it's killing you not to toss out a snappy comeback. I can just tell."

He stared at the bulbous purple crown. If this was a test, he was going to get an 'A'.

"Fuck, yeah! I thought you might be trainable."

That did it. He made eye contact with Bobby.

He grinned. "Pushed it, didn't I? That's okay. Like I said, you've done a hell of a job for your first time as a submissive. I believe I'll reward you with an orgasm. Doesn't that sound generous?"

Sam raised his eyebrows.

Bobby chuckled as he settled between Sam's legs. "At least, I think I will. Unless I change my mind."

Groaning at the prospect, Sam almost commented. His cock was limp and he considered willing it to stay that way, rather than be disappointed again.

"God, this is fun. I hope you're enjoying it as much as I am." Bobby teased the flaccid cock with the tip of his tongue before stroking the length of it.

Sam inhaled as the mouth sucked him in. Any thoughts of remaining limp disappeared as his cock hardened almost painfully. *Please don't stop*. This whole ordeal had gotten him really worked up, and he wanted to come like never before. He bucked his hips, groaning with pleasure.

Bobby deep throatied him, burying his face in the nest of dark pubic hair at the base of his cock. Lips, tongue and mouth worked in harmony, coaxing him to the precipice of a very large cliff.

Sam wasn't sure he could hold back if he had to. *Please don't make me*. He winced as the first trickle of hot cum flowed into Bobby's mouth.

With a murmur of apparent pleasure, his lover gulped it hungrily. His hand massaged Sam's balls, urging every drop from them.

Sighing with relief, Sam relaxed and let go. Waves of pleasure washed through him, shooting load after load of creamy seed down Bobby's throat. The delightful orgasm seemed to last forever.

Eventually, Bobby kissed his way up Sam's body, paying special attention to each nipple before reaching his mouth. "Ah, that was nice. See how good it feels to release control sometimes?"

"I don't know." Sam panted to catch his breath. "But that blow job was fucking fantastic."

Bobby chuckled, pressing kisses on his mouth and face. "I thought so too. I'm as hard as a rock, and need some relief. Are you going to let me fuck your sweet ass?"

Sam gazed up at him. "Are you asking? I thought you just took what you wanted."

"I normally do—once I'm sure you're having as much fun as I am. Not every man is a submissive."

"I can't believe any men are. It sounds so ... I don't know. *Gay.*"

"Both women and men play these games. Gender doesn't matter. It's all about personality and attitude."

Sam groaned. "Do we have to talk about this now? I thought you wanted to fuck."

"I definitely do. Where can I find some lubricant?"

He nodded towards the nightstand. "Drawer. Condoms in there too."

"Excellent." Bobby retrieved a tube of lube and a foil packet. He sheathed his cock and squirted a handful of slimy lube over it. "Oh, yeah." He eyed Sam. "Usually I'd prefer to take you from behind, but I'm really turned on by the handcuffs. I think I'll fuck you missionary style this first time."

Raising his knees, Sam exposed his anus. "I like the sounds of that."

Bobby traced a slick finger around the tight hole. "You like the sounds of this position?"

"Well, that too." Sam gasped as the finger drove in. "It was the 'this first time' comment I really liked."

"Yeah?" Bobby smiled and glanced at him. "You having fun?"

"More than you'd ever believe. More than *I'd* ever believe. This whole thing has totally blown me away."

"Good." Bobby added another finger to the first and plunged them in and out. "Because I think you're sexy as hell. We could have some great times together."

Bucking his hips, Sam made it known he desired more. When the tip of the big cock nudged his hole, he groaned with pleasure. "Yeah, that's it. Fuck me with that monster."

"Here you go, baby. It's all for you. I'll forgive you for not asking to speak, this time." Driving in a few inches, he pulled back and pressed forward again.

Fuck. Delightful pressure was replaced by fullness and warmth. Sam moaned as Bobby's balls slapped against him and he knew the man was firmly seated. He cleared his throat. "Can I speak?"

Bobby thrust into him several more times before answering. "Go ahead."

"Oh, Jesus. Fuck me harder. That feels so good."

"Mmm, he likes being fucked by his Master's cock." Bobby pressed Sam's knees forward, pounding deeper and harder. "Tell me. Tell me how much you like your Master's cock."

"Fuck." Sam's head flew from side to side. In the throes of passion, he'd been known to say some nutty things. *What the fuck.* "I like your cock, Master. I fucking *love* the feel of your cock in my ass."

With a shuddering gasp, Bobby exploded. He clung to the knees he grasped, and released.

Sam groaned as warm heat filled his ass. His own cock throbbed full and erect again, but his hands were still bound and couldn't do anything about it.

"Oh, yeah." Bobby dropped onto him. "Damn, that was good. You're tight and hot."

"And hard again."

"Mmm, I feel that." He slipped a hand between them, grasping the shaft. "Come on, baby. Show me a little love. Share that hot spunk with me." He pulled the skin up and down over the hard veined rod.

"Milk me." Sam squirmed beneath him.

"Milk me, what?" Bobby breathed into his ear.

So close to bliss once again, he'd say almost anything to feel that orgasm. "Milk me, *Master*." His body quivered as he shot ropes of cum into the strong, grasping hand.

His second spectacular climax in less than an hour. Maybe there was something to Bobby's kinky games. Sam emptied his load and smiled.

* * * *

Bobby unfastened the handcuffs and tossed them onto the nightstand. He flopped on the bed next to Sam. "So, what did you think?"

"Jesus, I don't know." He rubbed his hands over his face.

"Doesn't it add a new dimension to sex? I think it's amazing." He stared at the ceiling. "I remember when I first started out. A man I trusted introduced me to the lifestyle. I was his submissive for three years."

"You're kidding me." Sam murmured, amazed.

Leaning up on his side, resting his head on one hand, Bobby smiled. "Nope. I loved it. The idea of surrendering control turned me on, big time. It wasn't until a few years later I discovered my dominant personality. Now I get off being in charge."

"You keep talking about 'surrendering control'. That's fucking foreign to me, man. I've only been with guys as equals. No one's ever tried to tell me what to do."

Bobby grinned. "That kills you, doesn't it? Taking orders in bed."

Sam's face heated. "Shit, no. I take orders every day. I'm used to it."

"Not these kinds of orders." He leaned in. "It's a whole new world when it happens in the bedroom. I know. I had to get used to it, too."

"But now you're a dominant. You give the orders."

"That's fun, too."

Sam shifted to put them face to face. "What if I decide I have a dominant personality? Maybe I want to give the orders."

Bobby shrugged. "Maybe you will, eventually."

"What happens then?"

He grinned. "We'll take turns. Someone who does that is called a Switch."

"A Switch." Sam repeated, gazing into his eyes. "This stuff is totally fucking foreign to me."

"I know." Bobby ran a finger down Sam's bicep then circled one nipple. "You'll figure it out."

Sam wondered about that for a moment. *Do I want to figure it out? Are Bobby's sex games worth it?* The guy was gorgeous and sex with him was hot, yet somehow it felt slightly humiliating. *Can I live with that?* He rubbed his wrists, sore from the hard metal handcuffs.

Using a feather-light touch, Bobby's fingers played over his skin. They reached his groin and tormented his cock back to half-mast.

Sexual torment. That's all the games were. Sam groaned as the skilled fingers brought him to full arousal. He'd never been ready to go again so quickly. The man had a way of exciting him. To his surprise, he realized he wanted Bobby to call the shots.

"What do you think?" His sexy lover breathed in his ear.

"I think for next time we should get some fur lined cuffs. My wrists hurt."

Grinning, Bobby rose above him. "You'll be wishing that was your only pain when I'm through with you. If you keep complaining, I may have to see about that spanking."

Sam's cock throbbed with desire. The mere mention of a spanking had him nearly shooting his wad, *again*. Maybe he was a more depraved fucker than he realized. "The cuffs were much too tight. And my back hurt from being in the same position so long."

"Is that so?" With a smooth motion, Bobby flipped Sam over to his stomach. He ran a hand down the small of his back and cupped one ass cheek. "It's a shame to redden this handsome flesh. But you have to learn to follow the rules."

"You're right." Sam panted with excitement. "I screwed up."

Bobby sat on the edge of the bed and dragged Sam over his lap. Manipulating Sam's erect cock, he positioned it between his own thighs and clamped them tight. "Perhaps we need a refresher on the rules so far."

Blood rushed to Sam's head as it drooped toward the floor, his naked ass exposed to the cool air and Bobby's kneading hands. The caresses felt good, but he wanted more. He tried to thrust his butt higher but his genitals were caught in the vise of the man's legs. Sam groaned with frustration, and tried another tactic. "I've never been much for following rules. I pretty much do as I please."

A sharp rap stung his ass cheeks. *Bobby spanked me!* He closed his eyes to equalize the pain and pleasure.

"You'll follow my rules or there'll be punishment."

He braced himself for another hit. "That all you got?"

A second, harder slap burned his flesh.

"No, I've got plenty more." Bobby squeezed his thighs and clamped on Sam's cock and balls.

"Ouch!" The pull on his dick hurt worse than the slaps.

"Ouch? Still complaining?"

Sam bit back a retort. He didn't mind the spanking but the pain to the rest of his anatomy was tougher to accept.

"That's better. Now, the rules. You'll speak only when given permission." Bobby smacked Sam's ass firmly with the palm of his hand.

He groaned with the delightful mix of pleasure and pain.

"Aw, Jesus. Your cock is leaking, making a mess. Rule number two: you'll come only with permission." Bobby planted another solid slap to the center of his ass. "You'll do what I say." *Slap*. "When I say it." *Slap*. "No arguments, no discussion." *Slap, slap*. "You got it?"

Biting the inside of his cheek, Sam nodded. He was so close to exploding he could taste it. If Bobby found out, he'd surely cut off the orgasm. Sam had to force it back.

"When we're playing, you'll address me as Master. I'll address you in any manner of terms—slave, bitch, or my fucking piece of ass. Whatever I feel like at the time. Got that?"

Sam froze, forcing back his impending climax.

"Answer me when I speak to you!" Bobby slapped his burning ass again.

Before he knew what was happening, Sam lost it. Streams of cum spurted on the floor between his legs as his body shook with an intense orgasm.

Bobby scooped a handful of spunk and massaged it into Sam's swollen ass cheeks as he came.

The caress felt so wonderful, Sam never wanted it to stop. When his shudders subsided, he froze, expecting more punishment for coming without permission.

"Damn, that was hot." Bobby kneaded his ass. He dragged a finger through the sticky cream and teased it around his anus. "I could smack you again for making such a mess—without asking first, I might add—but watching you come from being spanked has me jazzed. Was that your first time?"

"Being spanked?" Sam struggled to catch his breath and remain spread across Bobby's knees. "Yeah."

"Excellent. It made you so hot you couldn't help yourself. I fucking love that." He inserted the finger and reamed Sam's asshole in and out slowly. When he removed the finger, he massaged the ass cheeks firmly. "We'll work on your self-control issues later. Right now, I'm hard as a rock. I want you on the floor between my legs. Suck my cock until I tell you to stop, slave."

Scrambling to accommodate, Sam hit the floor on hands and knees. The carpet was soaked with his cum but at that moment, he didn't care. Pleasing his Master was his only thought.

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Chapter Three

Sam woke when shards of sunlight shone through the blinds the next morning. He blinked to get his bearings. Bobby was sprawled across the bed, one arm and one leg tossed over him possessively.

He slid out from under as quietly as possible. Stepping into the bathroom he closed the door, leaning against it for support. *What have I done?* In the dark of night, the things that happened seemed okay—wicked, perhaps, but good sensual fun.

In the light of day, he felt mortified. He'd never called anyone 'Master' in his life—nor let anyone call him 'slave' or spank his ass. Sam closed his eyes in shame.

"Good morning." Bobby tapped on the bathroom door. "Everything all right?"

"Taking a piss," Sam called hurriedly, hoping the man wouldn't walk in. He couldn't face him. He peed and then turned on the shower. "I'll be out soon," he hollered over running water. Sam stepped into the white tiled stall and closed the door.

"Wait for me." Bobby entered the bathroom and opened the shower door. "Hi, there." He smiled, devilishly handsome eyes twinkling.

"Hey," Sam mumbled. "I'll be right out."

"I'll help you wash." Bobby stepped into the shower. He took the bar of soap from Sam's hand and cupped it at his crotch.

"We need to get going." Sam attempted to protest, but the soapy fingers caressing his balls were already working their magic.

"I know." Bobby pressed him against the wall, one knee spreading his thighs. "We need to do this, first. You can't even look at me today, can you? I remember the feeling after that first time."

"Bob ... please." He bit off the name halfway, unsure how he should address the man.

Bobby smiled. "It's okay. We aren't Master and slave all the time. Right now, I just want to reconnect with you. Remind you how good it is with us. You know, start the day off right." He kissed Sam, pressing one thigh into his erection.

"Fuck," Sam muttered, returning the kiss with abandon. His hands ran over Bobby's face and neck, caressing wet skin.

"Oh, yeah." Bobby leaned back and grasped both their cocks in his left hand. He repositioned the shafts so they'd rub each other with every pull, and began stroking. Gazing into Sam's eyes, he murmured, "See how nice this is? Rough sex is great. Slow, gentle love-making is fantastic, too."

"You got that right." He thrust into Bobby's hand and then kissed him, shoving his tongue deep. The whole situation was extremely erotic. Warm water sprayed, hot tongues mingled and before long, two loads of creamy cum bubbled over his lover's fist.

Bobby shoved him against the tile wall so they'd remain standing. When the pulsing stopped, he raised the cum-splattered hand to both their mouths for a taste.

Sam licked a finger and groaned. "Fuck. You don't know what you do to me."

"Oh, I think I do. You do the same to me. My only regret is that I came so quickly. I'd love to take you to the bedroom and handcuff your hands to your ankles. I'd fuck you senseless."

"Christ!" Sam closed his eyes. The idea almost made his cum-drenched cock hard again. He shook his head. "We have to get to work. We've got an appointment with—you know—" In his groggy-headed state, he couldn't remember the woman's name.

"I know." Bobby smiled. He released his grip on Sam's prick but cupped his chin. "What do you think about tonight? Want to be my cock-sucking slave again?"

Embarrassment flooded Sam and he turned quickly, reaching for the soap. "We might have to work. Can we talk about it later?"

Bobby reached between Sam's legs from behind and grabbed his balls. "I understand you're overwhelmed right now, Sam. I just want you to answer me one question." He squeezed firmly.

Sam squirmed.

Pressing against his back, forcing his stomach to the cool wall, Bobby said slowly, "If we don't have to work, do you want to be my slave again tonight? Because personally, I'm hard again just thinking about it."

"Me too," Sam whispered.

"What did you say?" Bobby tugged his balls firmly.

"I said, Yes, Master. I'm getting hard thinking about it too."

"Perfect." He released his grip and pressed a kiss to Sam's neck. Using the soap to clean up quickly, Bobby exited the shower and left Sam clinging to the wall feeling a mixture of embarrassment and sheer lust.

* * * *

Sam dressed for work in his usual button-down shirt and jeans. They ate leftover pizza from their late night meal for breakfast. He got Bobby's address and drove by his apartment letting him run in and change. Waiting in the car, he caught his reflection in the rearview mirror and had a flash of momentary surprise that he didn't look any different. Unsure what he expected, he only knew things felt different on the inside, and it seemed like his appearance should reflect that.

He watched Bobby jog down the front steps from his building. In a fresh suit, his hair neatly slicked back and sunglasses in place, the man looked strangely the same as the day before. Sam's gut churned.

"Hey." Bobby slid into the front and fastened his seatbelt. "Hope I didn't take too long."

"Not a problem." Sam glanced behind his car before easing out into traffic.

"We might want to go to my place tonight. I've got some toys you might like."

Toys? Sam gulped. He wasn't sure he was ready for that. He wasn't entirely convinced he'd been ready for what had

happened the night before. Sam shook his head. "I don't know, man. We might need to take this slow."

"Whatever you think. I have a kickass cock cage. It's a little harness for your prick, with a leash that clips on the front—"

"Jesus Christ." Sam groaned. "I can't talk about this right now. When we're working, we need to focus on the job."

"Aw..." Bobby reached over and squeezed Sam's crotch. "Makes you hard just hearing about it, doesn't it?"

"Bobby, God damn it!"

He laughed and moved back to his side of the seat. "All right. I was just teasing. I'll save it for later."

Sam focused on driving, and controlling his breathing. The fact that his cock was erect didn't help. He needed to take his own advice, and concentrate on the job. "I, uh, checked in with Captain Jacobs. I told him we were going straight to Kingsbridge, and meeting with the widow Santiago."

"Good."

Sam's cell phone rang and he pulled it from his pocket. Checking the display, he saw Gil's name and flipped the phone open. "Hey."

"Morning, sunshine. How's things with you today?"

He tossed a sidelong glance at Bobby. "Fuck if I know. How are things with you?"

Gil chuckled. "I sense a man in the picture. Anybody I know?"

"Maybe."

"Oh, my God! You didn't take that stockbroker back, did you? He's a dickhead, Sam. Am I right?"

"You're right. And no, it was not him." Glancing over his shoulder he changed lanes, veering onto the exit for Kingsbridge.

"Somebody new, then. Someone I might know. Hmm..."

"Fuck." Irritation surged through him. It seemed he couldn't get away from talk—or thoughts—of sex, and it wasn't helping him solve his case. Hell, he couldn't remember all the player's names until he'd read through the file while waiting for Bobby. He cleared his throat. "Did you call for a reason, Captain?"

"Okay, I see how it is. Well, let me know when you're ready to spill details. I still need someone to live vicariously through, and D'Amato's so whipped it makes me nauseous."

"*Whipped?*" Images of lying over Bobby's knees being spanked flooded Sam's mind. "What do you mean?"

"You know, pussy whipped." Gil made a swooshing whip sound. "Does whatever the little woman asks of him. Excepting the fact that his little woman is a finely sculpted young man."

"Except for that, yeah." Sam chuckled with relief, shaking his head. *Damn it!* He was going to read double meaning into everything he heard today. Must be his guilty conscience acting out.

"Did you talk to Victor Santiago yesterday?" Gil turned his attention to the homicide case.

"Yeah," Sam answered, back in comfortable territory. "He doesn't like cops who wear jeans."

"Neither do I, but that's another story. What *does* he like?"

"His daughter-in-law for the murder, mainly. He's not looking at anyone past her. Said she was cheating on his poor, innocent son."

Gil snorted. "I don't have to tell you there are two sides to every story. Have you spoken with her yet?"

"We're headed there now."

"Who's we?"

He glanced sideways again. "Bobby Rodriguez, from special investigations. You met him the other night."

"Oh, yeah! Black hair and nice ass. I remember him."

"That would be the guy."

"Oh, my God! Did you spend the night with those 'fuck-me' big brown eyes?"

"What did you say? I'm losing my cell phone signal." Sam punched the off button on his phone and shoved it into his pocket.

"Captain Gates?" Bobby asked, amused.

"Captain nosey fucker," he muttered in reply.

"You guys seemed pretty tight at the pub. I figured you were just friends but—oh, shit! Do you have a relationship with one of them?"

"No, I don't. We're just friends, honestly."

"Really?" Bobby eyed him suspiciously. "He seemed to be questioning you pretty good."

"Like I said, he's a nosey friend." He glanced at Bobby and back at the road. "Okay, back in our academy days, the three of us had a thing. But not since then."

"The three of you!" Bobby whooped. "I thought *I* was kinky. You're into ménage and you never told me."

"Look." Sam spun into a parking lot and pulled into the first available space. "There was nothing kinky about it. Nick and I had a relationship. When we met Gil, it turned into a threesome for a while. When we left the academy, it ended. We've been friends ever since. Good friends."

"Fuck buddies?"

"What? No! Friends."

"It's okay if you are." Bobby leaned closer to him. "I'd just like to know about it."

Sam removed his sunglasses and looked at his partner sincerely. "There's nothing to tell, I promise. I'll be happy to fill you in on the details of my last couple of relationships, but now isn't the time."

Bobby tugged off his shades so they could make eye contact. "We'll save that for pillow talk. It's sexy as hell hearing about you making it with other guys, especially two at a time. Of course, if we're going to have a relationship, I'd prefer it to be exclusive."

Sam's stomach knotted with excitement. "So would I. But don't you think it's a little early to be talking about relationships?"

"No, I don't. I know what I like, and I definitely know what I want."

"Oh yeah?" Sam's face inched forward. "And what's that?"

"You." Bobby grasped the back of his head with one hand. "I want you."

Sam's mouth opened to accept a warm, wet kiss. He groaned with desire. Bobby's tongue batted his into submission. They kissed passionately for long minutes before

finally pulling apart. "Fuck," Sam muttered. "The more I try not to think about you, the harder my cock gets."

"That's what I like to hear. Make it all nice and hard for me, baby. By the time we're alone tonight you'll be dripping, begging me to let you come."

Sam smiled. "And you're going to make me beg, aren't you? On my hands and knees, sucking your dick while mine throbs, painfully ignored."

"Damn, now you've got me hard." Bobby grinned. "If we didn't have this appointment—"

"We'd be at the office, where I guarantee you we'd both be fired for giving each other blow jobs on top of our desks."

"It's fun to dream." Bobby kissed him one last time. "We'd best be getting to Kingsbridge. Save those dirty thoughts for later, sexy boy."

Pulling back regretfully, Sam adjusted his sunglasses onto his face. He exited the parking lot and resumed their trip, his mind reeling. As shameful and embarrassed as he'd been that morning, there he was, looking forward to their next round of dominant and submissive sex. Something about Bobby stirred those feelings and, saints forgive him, he couldn't help himself. He wanted it, *bad*. The workday couldn't end soon enough.

Approaching Kingsbridge, Bobby held out a hand. "Want me to use the G.P.S. and get us to the Santiago's?"

"Think you can figure it out?" Sam handed over his phone teasingly.

"I did yesterday, and I only erased a few phone numbers."

"Dumbass." He used the same insult as the day before, testing Bobby's reaction, given their new relationship.

"I know." He shrugged calmly. "Cell phone challenged, here. That's why mine is the simplest, most basic style I could get."

"I suppose I could show you a few things." He glanced at Bobby quickly, then at the road again.

"You might have to. Or I'll just keep erasing your old boyfriends' numbers by accident."

Sam chuckled. "Fucker. Press seven and follow the instructions."

Bobby did as instructed, raising the phone to his ear. "You know you're going to pay for that later."

"Oh, I know." Sam grinned.

* * * *

Donatella Santiago wasn't as intimidating as her father-in-law. She wasn't anything like Sam expected, either. Petite in stature, she had a full head of curly black hair, which fell below her shoulders. She dressed stylishly in a simple black pantsuit. Sam didn't usually check out women, but this one's shapely figure would have been hard to ignore. When she wasn't in widow mode, he bet she used her looks and money to full advantage, making people notice her wherever she went.

After introductions, she motioned them into her airy, white living room. "May I offer you something?"

"Not for me, thanks." Sam sat in one of the two wing-back chairs.

"I'm good." Bobby took a seat in the other.

Donatella lowered herself gracefully to the edge of the sofa. "This has been a very trying time. When Ardon left here Saturday, I assumed he'd be home late that night as usual. He never showed up. By late Sunday morning, when he'd missed church, I knew something was wrong."

"When he left Saturday, did he say where he was going?" Sam pulled out his notebook.

"To the club. He had a golf date with one of his business associates."

"Who would that be?"

"Martin Scoffi. He owns a string of strip malls in the area."

Sam nodded. "You wouldn't have a phone number for Mr. Scoffi by any chance?"

"Sure." She went to a small end table in the corner of the room and opened the drawer. "Ardon had it on his cell phone. It's right here." Returning, she handed over a fancy black phone.

"He left his cell phone here?" Bobby spoke up before Sam could. "Is that unusual?"

"Very. Ardon was in a hurry that afternoon and said he misplaced it. He borrowed our son's phone for the day, since Tony didn't have plans. Tony doesn't really use his phone that much anyway. Now, our daughter..." She smiled. "Don't *even* ask to borrow her phone. It's permanently attached."

"Girls." Sam nodded understandingly, as if he knew anything about them. He hadn't been able to figure out women even back in the day when he thought he might be interested in them. Not much had changed. They were still a

mystery to him. "So, your husband borrowed your son's phone. Victor said he talked to Ardon Saturday afternoon."

"It would have either been from Tony's cell or a phone at the club. Unfortunately, they never found Tony's phone. It wasn't with Ardon's ... body." She shuddered, dropping back onto the sofa.

"No, his pockets were clean." Sam glanced through his notes.

"Is robbery a motive?" She asked quietly.

"Might be. We haven't nailed down the particulars, yet." He glanced at her, trying to phrase his next question carefully.

"How was your relationship with Ardon?"

Donatella chuckled bitterly. "Relationship? That's a strong word for what we had. Casual acquaintances, at best. If it hadn't been for the children, we might never have spoken at all. I can say that about him—Ardon loved his children."

Sam softened his tone. "What about you? Did Ardon love you?"

She seemed to ponder the question for a moment. "At one time, yes he did. We were very happy in the early years of our marriage. Then the kids came along, work became stressful. Things went downhill as they do sometimes in a marriage."

"I'm sorry to get so personal." He gazed at her gently. "What about infidelity?"

Looking at him levelly, she shrugged. "What about it?"

Sam smiled. "There was rumor that you might have had someone on the side."

"Is that your polite way of asking if I was unfaithful? I'm sure Victor couldn't wait to blab that juicy little tidbit. Ardon had so many secrets in his life, but my relationship with Stefan was one thing he never tried to hide. Any chance to make me look bad, he grabbed it."

"We might need to talk to Stefan."

"I'll be happy to give you his last name and number. He's expecting your call. We were with friends Friday night. Neither of us have anything to hide."

Bobby gazed at her. "Victor didn't expect you to have pulled the trigger."

"Oh for pity's sake!" Donatella stood and stomped about the room. "Neither of us had anything to do with Ardon's death. We'd never have done that to my children. I love them too much to hurt them that way, and Stefan, well, he loves me."

"I'm sorry." Sam stood and faced her. "Please understand, we have to exhaust all leads."

"I understand. But I really think you should look closer at Ardon's circle of friends. They weren't what a normal person would consider reputable. Undoubtedly why he never mentioned them to his father. You'll find a couple of numbers on his cell phone."

"All right." Sam glanced at the phone before dropping it into his pocket. "I assume we can keep this a few days?"

"You can have it, for all I care. I don't need any of the information it contains."

Bobby stood next to Sam. "Do you know if there was one person Ardon saw exclusively?"

She folded her arms across her chest. "I don't know for sure. I overheard something about a woman named Ronni. I'd bet anything her number is one that he dialed frequently."

"We'll check that out." Sam nodded. "Anything else you can think of?"

"No." She shook her head sadly.

"Stefan's number?" Bobby reminded gently.

Donatella reached for Sam's notebook and pen, plucking them from his hands. She wrote the information down and handed them back.

"Thank you." He eyed her with the slightest irritation.

"Are we finished?"

"For now." He headed to the front door with her and Bobby in tow. "We'll call if we have any more questions."

"I'm sure you will." Her voice softened. "Thank you. I hope you can catch *whoever* did this. My children don't feel safe any longer."

"I could speak to the local precinct captain about ramping up police patrols in the neighborhood," Sam offered.

"We've hired a security service. But thanks."

"We'll be in touch." Sam offered his standard parting line.

"We're sorry for your loss," Bobby added.

"Thank you." Donatella nodded and showed them out, then shut the door quickly.

"Good thing you weren't holding a gun." Bobby glanced at Sam. "She'd have gotten the jump on you."

"I'd hold a gun tighter than I hold a notebook." Sam rolled his eyes. They approached his car.

"Let's just hope." Bobby grinned and slid in.

In the driver's seat, Sam handed the black cell phone over. "Check the outgoing call log on this thing. If you find anything, I can holler at Gil and get some numbers traced."

"Yes, sir." Bobby accepted the phone with a smile.

Sam rolled his eyes again. Bobby compiled a list of numbers while he phoned Donatella's boyfriend. As expected, Stefan Grimes offered nothing new to the investigation. "We'll run him through the system anyway," Sam suggested after hanging up.

"I'll take care of that. Here are the four most frequently called numbers in Ardon's phone." Bobby handed him a list. "Scratch the first one—that's Victor's number. The second is Ardon's office. Want to trace the other two?"

"I'm on it." Sam called Gil, who transferred him to an officer who could handle the task. He made some notes, thanked the man, and disconnected. "One's a cell number. He suggested we just dial it. It'll take him longer to get that information."

"And the other?"

Sam looked at him. "A bar named Spike's, down by the river."

"Never heard of it."

"You want to track it with G.P.S. or call the cell number?"

Bobby shrugged. "You're the boss."

"Not so sure about that." Sam handed over his phone. "You track the bar. I'll call the number."

They traded phones and he hit redial on Ardon's cell. After three rings, a woman's voice came on. "This is Ronni. Do what you gotta do." *Beep.*

Sam disconnected the call. "Bingo. We have her number, anyway. Did you find Spike's?"

"Oh, yeah. An even crappier part of town than I expected."

"Glad it's daylight." He turned the key in the ignition, shoved it into gear, and drove.

"Want to get some lunch soon?"

"Sure. After Spike's work for you?"

"You're the—"

"Shut up!" Sam felt his face flush with warm heat.

Bobby laughed.

* * * *

Spike's was a dingy hole-in-the-wall dive on the riverfront. Sam glanced at Bobby as they entered, looking around, taking in the surroundings. A big, bearish man with a full red beard wiped down the counter behind the bar. A man with long gray hair perched in front of him, sipping a beer. Sam's eyes bulged when he realized a woman knelt at the gray haired guy's feet. She wore a thick, black leather collar with a chain leash that led to his belt, and not much else. "Is that a leash?" Sam mumbled.

"Oh, yeah." Bobby averted his gaze.

"What the hell is she wearing?" He tried to look without staring. There appeared to be a leather bustier shoving her tits high. Her nipples were exposed, each bearing a silver hoop. A skimpy black thong covered very little of anything else. The woman kept her eyes to the floor, so Sam took an extra moment to study her.

"See anything you like?" Bobby teased.

He cocked his head sideways. "Is there a law against that?"

"The leash, no. The naked tits might be questionable."

They stepped to the closest end of the bar. Sam leaned against it and scoured the rest of the patrons. Two women sat at one table. Their normalcy relieved him for a moment. Then he spotted a third woman dressed in black leather sitting at a table in the back. A man on his haunches sat at her knees. He wore a silver studded collar attached to a leash the woman held. *At least he was fully dressed, even if it was some kind of Spandex suit.* Sam watched her sip beer from a bottle, and then lean down to pour some in a bowl on the floor. Her slave lapped it like a kitten.

"Fuck me," Sam muttered.

Turning his back to the bar, Bobby raised his eyebrows up and down and smiled. "That could be arranged."

"Shit." Sam looked at Bobby, and they both glanced back at the leashed guy on the floor. "Don't ever fucking think—"

"Nah, don't worry." Bobby shook his head. He lowered his voice. "There are varying degrees of bondage and discipline. These people look like lifestylers. I'm more of a weekend player. I'm not that hardcore, and I'd never do anything in public."

"I'd be dead meat at work if anyone there found out."

"They won't," Bobby replied firmly. "Like I said, I'm not into exhibitionism."

"Thank God." Sam rubbed one hand over his face. He suddenly felt the nervous and uncomfortable feelings of earlier all over again.

The bartender approached, giving him something else to focus on. "Help you fellows?" He gazed at them warily, and shoved the corner of his apron back so they could see the sheathed knife on his belt.

"We're looking for Ronni." Sam watched the man's expression.

His eyes flickered before quickly returning to normal. "No one by that name hangs around here."

"We hear she hangs with Ardon," Bobby offered.

The man looked them over. "I'm told Ardon don't hang with anybody, anymore. But then you know that, don't you?"

"That's right." Bobby pulled out his shield and flashed it at the man. "We're investigating his murder. We have no reason to believe that Ronni might be involved, we simply want to talk to her."

Sam added, "If she wants to talk here, it'll be quick and easy. If we have to track her down and drag her to the precinct headquarters, I'm sure it'll take much, much longer."

"Ronni didn't do anything. She loved the motherfucker."

"Oh, so there *is* someone by that name that comes around here?" Sam eyed him.

The man flashed an irritated expression. "Wait there." He moved to his cash register and locked it. Still watching them cautiously, he went to the back of the room and disappeared.

"Trusting soul." Sam glanced at Bobby, then at the gray haired man who continued sipping his beer, ignoring the half-naked woman at his feet.

Bobby grinned. "Who's gonna fuck with a big guy like him?"

"No shit." Sam looked around. "What kind of a place is this?"

"I can't tell if it's BDSM specific or just an alternative lifestyles bar. Maybe anything goes."

"Wonderful." The achy feeling returned to Sam's gut.

The bartender strolled up to them, taking his place behind the counter. "Ronni's in the back. First door on your left. She hasn't done anything, and she's very upset about Ardon. So take it easy on her. If I hear that you didn't—" He put one hand on his knife handle.

"It'll be fine." Sam waved him off and headed to the back of the room, anxious to leave the scene there. Bobby followed closely on his heels. At the door, Sam knocked once and then opened it. "Ronni?"

"Come on in."

They stepped inside the small office and closed the door. The blonde woman curled up on the grungy sofa had been crying. Her heavily applied makeup was smudged. Brows that had been plucked severely framed her face. Sam guessed she was attractive in a strange sort of way, but not a classic beauty like the widow Santiago.

He glanced quickly at Bobby. Dark eyes mirrored the same thing Sam wondered. *Why would anyone choose this woman over the beautiful Donatella?* "I'm Detective Nielson, and this is Detective Rodriguez."

She nodded, dabbing her eyes with a wadded handkerchief. "I didn't know if the police would want to talk to me or not. Most of Ardon's friends and family didn't know about me."

"We have his cell phone," Sam told her.

"Ah." She nodded. "Big, stupid dummy. He told me he'd misplaced it."

"So you saw him on the Saturday he died?"

"We were together. He left my place about midnight."

"I don't suppose anyone can vouch for that?" Bobby stared at her.

"The doorman in my building was taking a break," she snapped. "Of course no one can vouch for it. If Ardon had wanted people to know, we'd have been meeting at a nicer place."

Bobby nodded. "We'll need your address. In fact, if I could just see your identification that would be helpful."

She sniffed. "Are you saying I'm a suspect?"

"Miss—" Sam stopped.

"Jones," she said in a rush.

"Miss Jones, I'll tell you the same thing I told his wife. We're covering all our bases, looking under every rock, to find out who shot Ardon and dumped him in the river. No one in particular is a suspect, and no one's been completely cleared yet."

"I guess I expected that." She stood and reached for a red handbag. Digging through it, she pulled out a driver's license and held it up.

Bobby stepped forward and took the card. He studied it for a moment, then copied some information into his notebook. Turning his back to the woman, he muttered to Sam, "I think I found the attraction."

"Oh?" Sam asked with interest.

Nodding, Bobby faced her again. "So, Mr. Ronald Jones, is the address on here current?"

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Chapter Four

Sam blinked, looking from Bobby back to the woman—*man*—person, standing by the disgusting old sofa.

Her face fell. "Yes, the address is correct. And yes, I'm technically a man. I've lived as a woman all my adult life."

"Have you had the reassignment surgery?" Sam asked softly.

"Nope, still have all my dangly bits. I couldn't afford it, and once I started dating Ardon, he didn't want me to get anything cut off." She smiled sadly. "He wouldn't admit he was a homo, but the fact that he liked my cock said something, didn't it?"

Sam cleared his throat, his mind racing. "But you're not gay, because you're a female living in a man's body."

"That's right." Ronni squared her shoulders. "The tits are all mine, though. Estrogen shots and implants." She glanced down at her small breasts. "Not bad for a start, do you think?"

"Not bad at all." He took a step backward. The air was stagnant with cigarette smoke and beer, and he really wanted to get the hell out. "If we have any more questions, we know where to reach you."

"I didn't kill Ardon." Her eyes filled with tears again. "I loved him. You gotta believe that."

"Thank you, Ronni." Bobby opened the office door and allowed Sam to step out first. "We'll talk to you soon."

Sam moved toward the front door and didn't slow down until he'd hit the sidewalk. He knew that Bobby had stopped to talk to the bartender but he didn't care. He needed fresh air and sunshine, *now*. Putting both hands on the hood of his car, he let his head hang down.

"You okay?" Bobby touched his back gently a few minutes later.

"Yeah. Just a little creeped out. Sorry."

"No big deal. Those people were pretty extreme. Don't let them color your vision of the lifestyle."

"The lifestyle," Sam repeated. "I didn't know I was signing up for a whole fucking life change here. I just wanted sex."

"No you didn't," Bobby whispered into his ear from behind. "You never realized what you wanted, until you found it. Now I wonder if you can live without it."

"Don't press me on that," he warned. He wasn't sure what he could or couldn't live without anymore.

Bobby chuckled. "Let's get some lunch. You'll feel better."

Sam slipped out of his reach and moved to the driver's side of the car. "I'm better already. There was a strange vibe in that place. It gave me a headache. I just wanted to get out."

"I know. Come on. There's a great restaurant a few miles from here. We'll grab a bite, plan our next move."

"I hope you're talking about the case." Sam scooted into his seat.

"What else?" Bobby grinned over at him.

* * * *

Sam's headache worsened throughout the afternoon. "I've got to go home and get some sleep," he told Bobby, heading back to Longwood late in the day.

"I could give you a neck and back massage. That usually helps me."

"I appreciate the offer, really. But tonight I just want to crash. Can we talk tomorrow?"

"Sure," Bobby replied slowly. "You want to drop me at the precinct so I can get my car?"

"You bet." He drove to their secured parking area.

Bobby directed him to his car. There were lots of people milling around, so when Sam pulled up, Bobby didn't touch him overtly. He ran one finger over the back of Sam's hand on the car seat. "I'll miss you tonight. I was just getting used to having you around."

"I'll see you tomorrow. This is no big thing. Really."

"I know. Just please, don't worry about what you saw in that bar. Those people were hardcore."

Sam finally smiled at him. "I won't. Meet you back here in the morning? We have a couple more leads to pursue before we sort this case out."

"I'll be here. Take it easy, Sam."

"You too." He watched Bobby get out and into his own car. Sam drove home, his temples throbbing.

He washed down some aspirin with a glass of water. Two hours later when he felt better, he added a couple beers. He ate a sandwich and mulled the case over in his mind.

Donatella had a reason to want Ardon gone, and probably had life insurance as a motive. But she didn't feel like the

right suspect. Ronni—or Ronald—didn't seem to have a reason or motive, but she—he—appeared to be a likelier candidate. *Or am I being prejudiced?* He'd known transgendered people before and they never bothered him much one way or the other. Something about this person, whom they discovered in a kinky BDSM bar, troubled him.

Was it the possibility that Ronni and Ardon had dominant and submissive sex? Sam had never given much thought to the personal lives of other people. Live and let live was his credo, as long as people stayed within the boundaries of the law.

The practices Bobby exposed him to were legal, just kinky as hell. Thousands of people in the world probably did the same stuff. Sam was still having trouble coming to grips with how he felt about it.

He tossed and turned in bed. The light scent of Bobby's aftershave remained in the room, especially on his pillow. He bunched the foam up and clung to it. Memories of the previous night wafted back to him. Bound to the bed, with Bobby's delicious torment sensitizing every nerve ending, Sam was in heaven.

If he enjoyed it, and Bobby obviously enjoyed it, what was so wrong? Sam's erection grew merely thinking about it. He glanced at the clock—midnight. Hopping out of bed, he threw on jeans and a t-shirt, and tossed some clothes into a bag for the next day. He slipped into some sandals, grabbed his keys, and took off.

Bobby answered his door wearing pajama bottoms and nothing else. He looked tousled, but not particularly sleepy.

"Did I wake you?" Sam leaned against the doorframe.

"Wasn't sleeping. Tried for awhile, but it just didn't happen."

"Same here. I kept thinking about you."

"I figured you were thinking about the people we saw today. Pretty much thought that took care of things, so I'd never see you again."

"We still work together, dumbass," Sam said lightly.

Bobby reached for the front of his t-shirt, grabbed a handful, and pulled Sam toward him. "I meant see you, like this." He gazed into Sam's eyes. "You knew what I meant."

Sam stepped in and kicked the door closed behind him. "Yeah, I knew." He pressed his mouth against Bobby's and they kissed. His tongue was the first to go exploring.

Bobby opened his mouth willingly. When he had to pull back for a breath he whispered, "What changed your mind?"

"Once I got rid of my headache, I had another problem. A cock so hard it ached—from thinking about you."

Bobby cupped his crotch. "Ah, it is hard. Nice and big. You could have taken care of that yourself, you know. You whacked off thinking about me once before."

"I wasn't sure I had permission to touch myself." Sam gazed into his eyes. It felt as if his heart had suddenly wedged itself in his throat.

Bobby smiled. "You got that fucking right. Next time you touch your dick without permission, it better be to pee."

"I figured as much." Sam thrust his hips into the hand. "So here I am, ready and willing to do whatever you ask."

"Thank God." Bobby dragged him closer for another kiss, running his hands over Sam's face and shoulders. "Let's go to bed. I want to make love to you."

Sam's lips pressed against Bobby's. "I thought I might be punished for going against your wishes."

"Ah, but you see, you don't get to decide when you're going to be punished. It's completely up to me. If I decide to redden your ass, that's my prerogative." He pulled Sam by one hand into his bedroom. Stopping by the side of the bed, he kicked off his pajama bottoms. "Let's get you out of those clothes." He yanked Sam's t-shirt off and tossed it aside. When he unzipped his jeans, Sam's erection bulged through the opening. "Um, you didn't even take time to put on underwear. I like that. Your cock looks hot next to that zipper."

"Feels a little scary to me." Sam shoved his jeans down, removing them and his shoes.

Bobby chuckled, using one hand to grope the firm staff, the other to massage Sam's balls. "I hear that. Don't worry; any pain inflicted will be at my hands."

Sam groaned as the hands squeezed him tightly. Perhaps he could goad Bobby into the response he hoped for. "You're a big talker. I haven't seen much action."

"That's not going to work." Bobby released his grip and spun Sam around to face the bed. "I'm not going to punish you tonight. I am going to fuck you, so lie down, and shove those pillows under your hips. I want your ass nice and high for me."

He scrambled to do as instructed, putting three of the four bed pillows under him. Sam inhaled when Bobby knelt behind him. He heard the nightstand drawer open, then felt cool lubricant slide down his crack.

"Oh yeah." Bobby massaged the grease into his ass checks before spreading them wide. Using one finger he dipped into the waiting anus, stretching it pleasantly. "Your ass is gorgeous. I could play here all night long."

"Please ... more." Sam moaned, his face buried in the last pillow.

"Such an ass slut." Bobby reamed him harder, jerking his hand in and out.

Sam couldn't tell how many fingers plunged into him but it wasn't enough. He bucked his hips impatiently.

"One of these nights I'm going to bring out my monster-sized dildo. We'll see what you can do with that bad boy."

"Shit." Sam felt pre-cum oozing from his cock pressed into the pillows.

"Like the sounds of that?" Bobby pumped his fingers deeper and harder.

"Yes," he gasped.

The hand withdrew abruptly.

Sam gasped again, feeling naked, exposed, and unbearably empty. "Please, don't stop!"

Bobby rose over him, placing warm kisses over Sam's back and shoulders. "I'm not stopping, handsome. I'm changing instruments. Ready to be pounded by my cock?"

Sam heard the foil packet rip, and moments later the tip of Bobby's rod pressed into his clenching hole. "Yes, please, yes."

Bobby inserted the crown of his staff and stopped. "Ask politely."

With a shuddering groan, Sam muttered, "Please, fuck me."

Another inch pressed in. "That was almost it. Ask again, the right way, and I promise to fuck you so hard your eyes will roll back in your head."

"Sir, please fuck me." Sam pressed his ass higher, begging for more. It finally occurred to him what he was supposed to say and added, "Master."

"There we go." Bobby slapped Sam's ass firmly and plunged deep. He gripped the quivering hips and pulled back, only to slam in again.

"Good, so good..." Sam rocked with the force. He drove his ass back to meet the hard thrusts. "Fuck yeah, fuck yeah."

Bobby reached around and clamped one hand on Sam's dick. "Don't come yet. Practice self-control. Take my load, but don't spend yours."

"Shit!" Sam's eyes flew open, trying to focus on something to ground him. If he couldn't come, he had to think about something else. All he could see was Bobby's spindle headboard. He imagined the handcuffs around one spindle, his hands bound tightly over his head. "Fuck!"

"I'm coming." Bobby clutched his hips. "Damn you, don't spill more than a drop. I want to drain that nectar from your gorgeous cock."

Sam dug his hands into the mattress. He'd made it this far, he could hold out a little longer. The warmth of Bobby's heat filled his ass, and he sighed with pleasure.

When the man on him stopped shuddering, Sam told him, "I made it."

"Of course you did." Bobby caressed one ass cheek. "I told you what to do, and you did it."

Sam inhaled, biting back a smile. *Had it only been that easy!* Maybe with practice, it'd get that way. "By the way, if we both got tested, you think we could lose the latex? I'd love to feel that heat flow into my body."

Bobby pressed one last kiss to Sam's shoulder blade. "I'd love that, too. I'll fill you up so full you'll overflow." Easing his cock out, he disposed of the condom with a tissue and forced Sam to roll over.

Sam shoved the pillows away and flopped onto his back. He spread his legs, Bobby climbed in between them. "What about me? Think I might be able fill you up one of these days?"

Bobby licked around the edges of Sam's leaking erection and flicked the tip with his tongue. He glanced up, continuing to stroke. "You want to top me? Honey, you have to earn that right."

Thrusting his hips up, Sam moaned with pleasure at the smooth torment. He was so glad he hadn't come yet. This was much better. Bobby understood that. He seemed to understand things Sam hadn't thought of yet.

Warm lips sucked him deep, the tip of his shaft nudging the back of his lover's throat. "Oh, yeah. That's perfect. Your mouth is so good."

"Just for you, baby. Everything I do is only for you. I want to bring you more pleasure than you've ever experienced."

"You do." Sam jerked his hips again.

"I might have to tie these legs down. You're so impatient. Haven't you figured out that slower is better?"

"Slower is killing me," Sam muttered.

Bobby chuckled, teasing the slit in his cock. "What a way to go."

Sam was on the edge of glorious release. At that moment, he'd have sold his soul for completion. "Tie my legs. Do whatever you want. I'm yours."

"Mine," Bobby repeated, sucking more firmly. "That's a good start toward earning a night of control."

"Can you teach me what to do?" Sam panted, on the verge of an intense orgasm. "Please, Master. Tell me what to do. Show me what you like."

"That's my good slave. I'd love to teach you. But first, I want you to come. *Now.*" Bobby tugged the shaft as he sucked the tip.

Sam's balls churned with release. Load after load of warm cum shot into the air as he quivered with one of his best climaxes ever. Through a foggy haze, he watched Bobby catch a ribbon of cum with his tongue, while allowing other streams to cover his face. The sight of his lover covered by choice in his cream prolonged Sam's pleasure for precious moments.

Bobby milked the last few drops and proceeded to lick Sam clean. When he finished he climbed over Sam's stomach, rubbing their cocks together. "That was fucking hot." He rubbed both hands over his own face, spreading the cum around.

"Words can't describe it." Sam pulled his lover into his arms, kissing him deeply, tasting himself on Bobby's tongue. "I'm so glad I came here tonight."

"You're staying." Bobby held him possessively. "If we don't have to drive into Kingsbridge in the morning, we can sleep an extra half hour."

"Sleep?" Sam looked at him.

Bobby smiled.

* * * *

After nearly two weeks, the case had gone nowhere. Sam slapped his computer mouse down on the desk and shoved his chair back.

Once Victor Santiago discovered the truth about his son's marriage and personal secrets, he wasn't so anxious to push the police for answers. He seemed content to let the murder remain unsolved. Sam wasn't sure if Victor was more concerned about Ardon's reputation or his own, but they were closely tied. If the media got wind of Ardon's kinky sexual activities it wouldn't benefit anyone, and might seriously harm his teenage children.

Captain Jacobs hadn't exactly closed the case; he'd just piled so many other cases on Sam that he didn't have time to

chase dead ends. It frustrated him to no end. He liked things neat and tidy, and unsolved homicides went against his grain.

Gil didn't like it either, but he knew Victor, and understood the man's point a little more sympathetically than Sam.

Standing to stretch his legs, Sam walked to the break room for a drink. He glanced at Bobby's empty desk as he passed. Jacobs had assigned another high profile case to Bobby and the special investigations team, leaving them out in the field most days.

Fortunately, the nights were theirs. Long, passion-filled nights that kept Sam going during even longer, infinitely more boring days. He spent most of the past two weeks at Bobby's apartment out of sheer convenience. Bobby had *toys* and Sam liked them.

He'd been tied up, tied down, gagged, spanked, and had his cock caged for several hours on the weekend as punishment. The excitement hadn't waned, and the orgasms had only grown deeper and stronger. Sam still had a few mixed feelings in the light of day, but at night he was the perfect submissive. *Except when I want to be punished.* Then he was naughty as hell, and loved every minute of it.

Bored and disappointed, he took a can of soda back to his desk and popped it open. He had a mountain of paperwork in front of him, but nothing even slightly interesting.

"Guess what I found?" Bobby appeared from behind him, dropping a large stack of papers on his desk.

"I've got plenty of reports, thank you very much." He shoved his soda to the side, stomach tingling at the very sight of his sexy, dark skinned lover.

"Not like this, you don't. Remember how the one witness we found down by the river the night Ardon Santiago was killed saw an old, light blue convertible?"

"Yeah. And I remember that when we ran that make through the database, it found six thousand similar cars registered in the state of New York."

"Such a pessimist. I narrowed down the search to the Bronx. Then there were only twenty-two hundred."

"Twenty-two hundred?" Sam laughed. "Oh, that's so much better."

"You wanna shut the fuck up so I can talk or you want me to go talk to someone else?" Bobby's eyes sparkled.

Sam raised his hands. "Shutting up. Go ahead, Ma—" he bit his lip and glanced around. No one was in hearing distance. "Sorry. Go ahead, Bobby."

Bobby eyes darted around before he grinned. "Such a well trained slave. Make me happy tonight, and I might have a present for you."

"I like presents. I'll make you happy, sir."

"Excellent." Bobby's eyes settled on his crotch and he licked his lips.

"Christ." Sam shifted in his seat, an erection blooming.

"I intend to make you happy, too. I printed out the report of registered blue convertibles in the Bronx, and took it on my stakeout the past couple days. Finally, it paid off."

"You printed it out?" Sam thumbed through the large stack. "That must have taken forever. Did you say you found something?"

"I did. Look here, right on top. Guess who has a blue convertible registered in his and/or her name?"

Sam gazed with disbelief at the circled name. "Ronald Jones? Is it the same guy?"

"Same address. I took the liberty of calling your friend Captain Gates. He's got a team looking for Jones' vehicle. They got a pretty good tire print the night of the murder. If this one matches, it's enough to bring him and/or her in for questioning."

"Would you quit saying that?" Sam grinned. "She's living as a woman."

"And her license says she's a dude. I'd hate to think what would happen if she wound up in prison. They'd use her as a cum catcher until she was dead or worse."

"Christ." Sam shook his head. "Don't say things like that. Believe me, I'd like to solve this case, but we still have to establish motive."

"We will. Right now, we're waiting for a call back from Gates. We'll go from there."

"Nice job." Sam patted the report and looked up at Bobby.

"Thank you. Hopefully, I'll be saying those words to you later." He winked.

Sam smiled. "Oh, I'm sure you will. There was talk of a present, wasn't there? I really like presents."

* * * *

I really hate waiting. Sam was handcuffed spread eagle to four hooks placed strategically on Bobby's bedroom wall. He already sucked his Master to completion, carefully ingesting

every drop and licking him spotlessly clean. He'd then been spanked with a paddle for allowing a droplet of his own cum to hit the carpet. Spanking still made him come every time, so his Master had placed a cock cage on his prick. No chance of anything happening with that cruel little device on board, so Sam waited.

Bobby eventually removed the cage, but left Sam chained to the wall. He ate dinner in front of him, offering Sam two small bites. Worse yet, he massaged the exposed, now raging cock every time he came near.

"I'm stuffed," Bobby told him, setting his plate on the dresser. "How do you feel?"

"May I speak, Master?"

"Certainly."

"Hungry and horny as hell. I'd forget about dinner if you'd just let me come."

"Nah, you'll have dinner. I was just testing you. You did wonderfully, I must say. I believe I'll reward you with an orgasm and your present."

"Thank you, Master." Sam tried to steady his breathing. He almost panted at the idea of coming.

Bobby released Sam's left hand. "You're a righty, correct?"

"Yes, Master."

"Perfect." He lay flat on the floor in front of Sam. "Whack yourself off with your odd hand. When you come, I want it in my mouth. Anything that misses, you'll clean up. If there's too much, that'll be your dinner."

Sam closed his eyes. The treatment was humiliating, but *damn it!* He was hard as hell. He couldn't believe how much

he'd come to crave submission, in the two short weeks they'd been together.

"Let's go. I don't have all night. Well, you might. Do you think you could sleep standing there?"

"No, Master!" Sam grabbed his shaft and pumped. His aim needed to be precise, which would be tough not only using his off hand, but controlling the direction in the middle of an orgasm. Somehow, he'd manage.

"Think you can do this?" Bobby grinned up at him.

"Yes, Master," Sam panted, the first shudders tweaking his body. "I'm close, Sir."

"Come on, then. I'm hungry for dessert." He opened up.

Sam exploded. He pointed his cock at Bobby's hungry mouth, and the first stream hit dead on. The second dribbled down his chin. The third and fourth drizzled out, spotting the carpet. Sam hung his head.

"Fuck me, that was hot!" Bobby hopped to his knees. He clasped Sam's ass cheeks, sucking his cock deep. "I'm not going to make you clean up, I want every drop for myself." He sucked Sam with vigor, coaxing a few more shudders and ribbons of cum.

Bobby stood, wrapping his arms around his bound lover. "You're the fucking best, man. I get off on the way you accept whatever I mete out. My perfect submissive." He kissed Sam and unfastened his other hand and feet.

Sam stretched his limbs and spun around, shoving Bobby backwards onto the bed. He climbed on him and they rolled around, rubbing cocks and sucking tongues.

"Damn, that was perfect." Bobby rubbed a hand through Sam's hair. "You want to eat first or you want your present?"

"Present." Sam smiled.

Bobby grinned, rising to open the top dresser drawer. He removed a maroon velvet box and handed it over. "I hope you like it as much as I did."

Sam opened the jewelry box and stared. It contained a man's necklace made from shiny silver that looked like bicycle chain. "Wow." He didn't know what to say.

"It's called a French Prison Collar. Apparently, the bicycle chain style is what they used in their prisons back in the day. What do you think?"

"A collar?" Sam blinked.

"There was a ring on the front, to attach a leash. I knew that would freak you out, so I removed it. But the back clasp is locking. Only I can put it on or remove it."

"Wow," he repeated, still unsure what to say.

"You don't like it." Bobby appeared disappointed.

"No, it's great. I just wasn't expecting *a collar*."

Bobby moved close, speaking in his ear. "Only you and I will know it's a collar. To everyone else, it looks like a cool, masculine neck chain."

"That's true." It *was* attractive. But it was *a fucking collar*.
"I don't know what to say. Thanks."

Touching his arm, Bobby smiled. "We won't put it on yet. You think about it, and decide when—and if—you want to wear it. This decision I'm leaving up to you, babe."

"I appreciate that." Sam breathed a silent sigh of relief.

"Let me fix you something to eat. And then how about a back massage? I'm sure your shoulders are kinked after being chained for so long."

"Sounds good." Sam set the box aside and looked at his accommodating lover. *His Master*. He'd grown to love the sex games, perhaps he'd grow to love the collar, too. He shivered.

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Chapter Five

"It's a fucking collar!" Sam told Gil before they even ordered their beer.

"What the hell are you talking about?" Gil sat at their usual table.

Sam had called to ask Gil if they could meet a half hour early. He needed to talk about the situation with Bobby, but couldn't do it in front of Nick. He and Nick had been too close at one time. If D'Amato thought someone was slapping Sam around for whatever reason, he was liable to kick the guy's ass.

"Look at it." Sam pulled the chain from his pocket and set it on the table.

"Oh, that's nice." Gil fingered the metal.

"It's a fucking collar!"

"So you've said."

Sam dropped into his chair. "Where's Donna? I need beer and lots of it."

Gil motioned to their waitress. "Just two for now, please."

"You got it," the woman called back, heading for the bar.

"What are you going to do with it?" Gil smiled at him.

"I don't know. It's the damndest thing. The sex is great." He glanced at Gil and knew his face flushed. "But the rest of it—I just don't know. At first, the dominant and submissive stuff shocked the hell out of me. Once I got accustomed to the idea, it wasn't so bad. Now..." He couldn't go on.

"Now it gets you hard as hell?" Gil leaned back and folded his arms.

"Sort of. Well, yeah." Sam blushed again.

"Look, Sammy. This is no big deal. Jerry and I experimented with that stuff when we were together. Remember when you teased me about that adult novelty shop, and how we could spice up our relationship since it'd gone stale after eight years? Man, we tried all that shit. Some of it was hot, some was not. It kept the juices flowing for a while, but there wasn't enough left between us to keep it going. We finally had to admit it was over."

"You tried the kinky stuff?" Sam was surprised at his friend.

"Hell, yeah. Whips and chains, handcuffs, the works. Some of it was pretty sexy. Am I right?"

"You're right." Sam nodded, glancing around for Donna and their beer. He felt a little better talking to Gil, but he was thirsty.

"The way I figure it, what goes on between two consenting adults is their business. Some of those lifestylers can get pretty hardcore, but this looks like harmless fun." He fingered the neck chain again.

"Yeah, I guess you're right."

"I know I'm right." Gil's cell phone rang. He pulled it from his pocket and flipped it open. "Gates. What? For sure? Okay, he's there now? Sit on him, I'm on my way." He disconnected the call and looked at Sam. "We got a hit on that car Rodriguez was tracking. Ronald Jones' car is the same vehicle that made the tracks when Santiago was killed. I have a

uniformed team at Spike's right now, keeping Jones and the car under surveillance."

"Son of a bitch!" Sam stood, snatching his chain from the table. "Let's go!"

Gil tossed a twenty on the table as Donna approached with their drinks. "Sorry, doll. We gotta roll. Catch you next time."

"Okay." She accepted his cash and watched them head out.

"You know Jones is living as a woman," Sam reminded Gil.

"If he did this, he'll be going to a man's prison."

"I know." Sam stopped beside his car. "I just feel sorry for her. I never thought she did it."

"We'll see." Gil shrugged.

"Why don't you call D'Amato and tell him what's happened? I'll swing by and pick up Bobby. We'll meet you in the parking lot at Spike's."

"You got it. Drive carefully." Gil got into his car and took off.

Sam flipped open his phone and dialed Bobby.

"Hey," the man answered. "You drink up all the beer already?"

"Haven't had a drop. Got a hit on your car, though. Ronni's tires match the tracks at the scene."

"No fucking way!"

"Yep. She's at the bar. Gil and I are headed there now. You want to come along?"

"Damn straight."

"I'll swing by to get you. Five minutes."

"I'll be ready."

Sam snapped his phone closed and shoved it in his pocket. His service revolver was in the trunk. He needed to remember to get it out when they got to the bar. No telling what might happen.

* * * *

He and Bobby rolled to a stop in the parking lot behind Gil's S.U.V. They got out, quickly assessing the scene.

Gil nodded to them. "My man says Jones is in the back. About a dozen customers are in the place. Half of them are on leashes, so they shouldn't give us much trouble." He grinned.

"Shit." Sam closed his eyes.

Bobby nudged him. "Should we go in and talk to her? She might tell us something."

"One of you should," Gil replied. "The other needs to lag behind with his weapon at the ready. We got no idea what Jones is capable of."

"Are you gonna give us some backup?" Sam looked at him incredulously.

"Of course. I've got a couple bullet-proof vests if you want them, too."

"I've got mine." Sam popped open his trunk. He removed his shirt to put on the vest.

"I'll take one." Bobby told Gil. He took the offered protection and put it on as Sam had.

"I'm going in," Sam announced. He tucked his gun down the back of his jeans.

"I don't think so." Bobby faced him. "You cover me, and I'll go in."

"Don't get into a pissing match." Gil rolled his eyes. "Did Jones respond to one of you better? Seem to like one of you a little more than the other?"

"Me." Bobby stepped forward. "I'm going in."

Before Sam could protest Gil said, "Let him go, Sammy. One of you has to do it, and you're a damn fine shot if he gets in a pickle."

"That's good to know." Bobby headed toward the bar.

"You know what you're going to say?" Gil called to him.

"Oh yeah. No problem."

Sam caught up to Bobby. "You be careful."

He grinned. "I always am, babe. I'll be fine with you watching my back. Not my ass, my back, right?"

"Fuck you." Sam rubbed a hand over his face. He hadn't felt this much fear in a long time—but he wasn't concerned for himself.

Bobby winked and entered the bar.

Sam gave him a few minutes, and followed. The burly bartender had his back to Sam, so he hurried past. The restroom had a clear view into the small office when the door was open. He stepped into the john surreptitiously, and stopped just around the corner.

In the office, Bobby left the door open a crack. He was speaking just loud enough to be heard. "You never told us you drove an old, light blue convertible, Ronni."

"What difference does that make?" Sam couldn't see her, but her voice was indignant and he imagined the look on her face.

"A car matching that description was at the scene of the crime the night Ardon was killed. But I think you knew that. You were there, weren't you?"

"No! I wasn't there!" She sounded genuinely surprised, or was a skilled liar. Sam smiled to himself. She was a man, posing as a woman. Of course she was a good liar.

She went on, "I had nothing to do with it! I told you, Ardon left my place around midnight."

"This was after midnight. What happened, Ronni? You two get in an argument? Where'd you get the gun?"

"You're crazy! I loved Ardon. I would never hurt him."

"The police have other evidence. It's time to go down to the station and talk about it. If you agree to go peacefully, I won't make a scene. If that's not an option, I'll read you your rights and take you out of here in cuffs."

"Look, I loaned my car out that night. I was home the whole evening, I swear it." Sam heard quiet desperation in her voice.

"Who did you loan it to?" Bobby sounded calm and steely.

"I, uh, can't say. But I swear to God, I didn't know anything about this."

"Withholding information is a crime, too. Let's go, Ronni. We'll get this all sorted out at the station."

A large, hulking form blocked Sam's view. "I don't think so," the man said.

Sam peered around the corner. The bartender had stepped into the office. He had a twenty-two pointed at Bobby's head. "Ronni's not going anywhere."

"Take it easy, friend." Bobby raised a hand slowly.

"Max, no!" Ronni faced him with a tear-streaked face.

"Get back, Ronni." He motioned for her to move aside.

"I'm gonna take care of this for you."

"Like you took care of Ardon?" Bobby asked quietly.

The big man didn't respond. Sam wished he could see the expression on his face to know what kind of crazy they were dealing with. He reached for his gun, bringing it in front of him.

"Max, how could you?" Ronni sobbed. "I loved him!"

"You think I didn't know that?" Max yelled. "Ardon, Ardon, Ardon! I got so fucking tired of hearing about Ardon! Meanwhile, you never noticed that I've been here all along loving you."

"No." She froze, her face a mask of horror. "How come you never told me?"

"I tried. You were so blinded by that Italian bastard, you just didn't see."

Ronni glanced at Max's gun, aimed at Bobby. She looked back at the big man. "Well, thanks to you, Ardon's gone now. Maybe there's a chance for you and me." She took a small step forward.

Sam marveled at her ruse. He could tell by the expression on her face that she'd kill the man before she'd let him touch her. She was trying to help Bobby.

"Stay there!" Max waved his gun at her. "We'll have our time. First, I need to take care of the cop."

"You don't think I'm here alone, do you?" Bobby said calmly. "The place is surrounded, Max."

"Not possible." He moved to the window and pulled back the blinds.

"Slightly possible." Sam stepped into the office, his gun aimed at Max.

"Son of a bitch!" Max yelled, tossing a lamp at the door.

Sam ducked and came up to find Bobby in the curve of the big man's arm, gun pointed at his temple.

Fuck. He thought he'd been so careful. "Let him go, Max. You don't want to compound trouble for yourself."

"I'm beyond that point, detective. So if you like your pretty friend's face, I'd suggest you drop your weapon."

"Max, no!" Ronni cried. "I'll help you. We'll go away somewhere—"

"We sure will, baby. I just have these two things to take care of first."

Sam kept his arms held high, the gun aimed at Max's head. "And the dozen or so officers outside, Max. We didn't come here alone."

"You did before." He cocked the trigger against Bobby's temple.

Sam glanced into the stoic eyes of his partner. *His partner.* The words held more meaning than ever before. When they got out of this he had to tell Bobby exactly how much he meant to him. He bent his elbows, raising his gun to the ceiling.

Max lowered the gun an inch and released the trigger.

"Let's just go," Ronni insisted. "We'll leave right now. We can figure out where we're going once we're on the road."

Max glanced at her for one second too long. The window behind him shattered and a rifle appeared.

"Freeze, motherfucker!" Gil yelled from behind Sam's back.

Confused, Max aimed at the doorway and pulled the trigger.

Bobby shoved Max's shooting arm firmly, pointing it away, but the bullet had fired.

Sam dropped to the floor, and Gil shot Max through the chest.

Everything grew quiet.

Sam blinked. His arm burned like fire, and his vision was blurred. He thought he saw Bobby and Gil kneeling above him. "What are you doing here?" he murmured.

"Well, he's not dead." Gil ruffled Sam's hair. "Looks like the bullet grazed his arm, nothing serious. He might have hit his head, though. We should get an X-ray."

It all came back to Sam. "Bobby?" he murmured.

"Right here, buddy." Bobby touched his arm.

"You okay?"

"I'm fine. You saved me."

"I think that was Gil."

"Yeah, Gil shot Max. But you saved me."

Gil patted Sam's cheek. "He saved you right back, buddy. If he hadn't deflected that shot, it might have been much worse."

"Thanks." Sam gazed into Bobby's eyes.

"Anytime. But not too soon, okay?" He smiled.

Police officers came and went around them so Sam didn't—couldn't—say anymore. He'd save it for when they were alone.

Gil disappeared and returned. "Max is dead. We're taking Ronni to the station for questioning."

Sam struggled to sit up. "He confessed, Gil. I don't think she knew about it. She was trying pretty hard to save Bobby."

"We still have to question her. If we keep her overnight, I'll make sure she gets a private cell."

"Good." Sam nodded, and his head spun. "Damn."

"You're going to the hospital." Gil took one arm, Bobby the other, and they helped him to his feet.

"Nah, I'm all right."

"Hospital," Bobby said firmly. "I'll go with you."

"I'm not riding in an ambulance. Will you take me?"

"Sure." Bobby pressed a handkerchief to Sam's bleeding arm.

"I'll call Mercy and let them know you're coming." Gil squeezed Sam's good arm. "Can you walk?"

"Since I was one or so." He wobbled.

Bobby caught him. "Lean on me."

"I'm fine." Sam straightened up. "But I'll lean on you if I can."

"Always," Bobby murmured, and they headed out to Sam's car. "Gimme your keys."

"Where are they?" Sam patted his pockets.

"Here." Bobby dug into Sam's jeans and pulled out the keys. "Get in. I'm driving."

"Yes, sir." Sam did as instructed.

Bobby slid into the driver's seat and slammed the door. He checked to make sure no one was around and grasped Sam behind the neck. "Are you really okay? I about died when that gun went off and you hit the deck."

Sam gazed into his eyes. "I'm okay. I felt the same way when he put the gun to your head. It scared me worse than anything ever has."

Bobby kissed him gently.

"Here." Sam fumbled in his other pocket and pulled out the chain necklace. "Put this on me, please?"

Bobby's eyes lit up. "You have it with you—and want to wear it?"

"Always." Sam handed it over.

"You're probably going to need X-rays. Should we wait until they're over with?"

Sam shrugged. "We'll take it off if we have to. After that, I'm never taking it off again."

Bobby's fingers fumbled as he removed his own keys and unlocked the chain. He placed it around Sam's neck and locked it. "That's pretty big talk. Never is an awfully long time."

Sam looked down and back up, into his eyes. "I hadn't pictured myself as the settling down kind. Always kind of figured I was born to run. Meeting you has changed my mind, Bobby. I don't want to run anymore unless it's toward you."

Bobby cupped his chin. "I respect you more than anyone I've ever met, Sam Nielson. And I might as well say it, I love you. I know it's soon, and you'll think I'm nuts, but—"

Sam grinned. "I love you, too. Just wasn't sure if I had permission to say it."

"You have permission to say it every day for the rest of our lives. How's that?"

"I can do that." Sam kissed him, and they both sighed.

Someone rapped on Sam's window and they pulled apart. Gil opened the door and leaned in. "Hospital is waiting, Sammy." He spied the necklace and smiled. "Hey, that looks good."

"It feels good," Sam agreed.

He patted Sam's face. "I'm assuming the hospital's going to treat and release you. If they need to keep you overnight, call me. I find out you didn't, I'll send Nick to kick your ass."

"I got it." Sam waved a hand.

Gil glanced at Bobby. "And you, you better treat Sammy right. I find out you didn't—"

"Nick comes to kick my ass?" Bobby answered.

"Nick or me. Maybe both of us. Sam's a special guy."

"I think so too." Bobby glanced at Sam sideways.

Gil turned back to Sam. "So what do you say, next Friday we hit Houlihan's and make up for missing tonight? You and Bobby, Nick and Will, me and my lonely ass."

"I could probably get you a date," Bobby offered, tongue in cheek.

"I'll keep that in mind, thanks." He stood and patted the roof of the car. "Good work tonight, you two. You do realize you shouldn't work together anymore?"

"You're right. I'll talk to Jacobs." Sam nodded.

"I'll do it," Bobby said quickly.

"I could talk to him for you," Gil said at the same time.

Sam smiled. "Thank you both. I'm a big boy, I can handle it. I've worked for Jacobs long enough. I should be able to level with him. If I'm wrong, there are other cop shops in the Bronx."

"I'd hire you," Gil offered.

Sam snorted. "Like I could work for you. Thanks, though."

He grinned. "Get out of here. Let me know how you're doing." With a nod to Bobby, he closed the door and walked away.

Sam glanced at Bobby. "Hope you're ready for those guys. They're as close to family as anything I've got."

"I think we'll get along just fine. I know family—I've got seven brothers and sisters, you remember."

"Ah, yes. One's a nun."

"She's a firecracker. They're all good people. Don't worry, they'll love you."

"I hope so." Sam settled back into his seat.

"Of course, you realize I still intend to work with underprivileged kids, once my free time loosens up. I've been, shall we say, *preoccupied*, lately."

Sam smiled. "Personally, I hope that doesn't change for a long, long time."

"I doubt it will." Bobby grinned. "We'll make time. Who knows, I might end up taking you along to work with the kids."

"Kids." Sam shook his head. "Somehow I suspect you probably will. I'm pretty sure you could get me to do just about anything."

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Bobby winked, and they headed out into the dark night.

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About the Author

Jamie Hill was born and raised in the Midwest, where she continues to live with her husband and two sons. She juggles her spare time to include writing every day, freelance editing, reading as she finds time, tinkering on the computer, listening to country music, as many naps as possible, and watching movies (especially scary movies) with her family. For more information please visit her website: www.jamiehill.biz.
