



# CAR WASH

Shawn Lane

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...Kevin was smiling when Michael caught up to him in the kitchen. It was an almost innocent smile and it tugged at something inside Michael he didn't want to analyze.

"What are you smiling at?" he asked, walking to his refrigerator to stash the leftovers.

"I always wanted a big kitchen with one of these islands," Kevin said. "Sometimes I go to model homes and check out the amenities and usually go straight for the kitchens."

Michael laughed. "Do you cook?"

"Well, I did when I had my old job. Not so much since I got laid off."

Kevin ran his hand along the black marble island almost lovingly. To Michael's surprise Kevin jumped up to sit on the edge. Michael swallowed heavily, his gaze taking in the height of the island. About waist high.

Michael stood between Kevin's slightly spread legs and closed his hands on his hips. "Kiss me, Kevin."

Kevin didn't hesitate. He leaned forward and pressed his lips to Michael's. Kevin's lips were warm and soft and still tasted faintly of the wine they'd shared. Michael slipped his tongue inside to collide with Kevin's, and pulled the younger man closer.

"Tell me," Michael said, breaking their kiss, but staying less than an inch from the young man's amazing lips. "When you thought about wanting one of these islands, did you ever

think of being fucked on one?”

Kevin’s breath hitched, his long dark lashes dropping over his intense blue eyes. “No,” he whispered. “But I think I could be persuaded.” His hand closed over the bulge in Michael’s trousers...

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# CAR WASH

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BY

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CAR WASH  
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*To Daisiemae, thanks for being my fan.*

# CHAPTER 1

Kevin Flaherty stepped off the city bus and pulled his windbreaker tighter around him. The bus dropped off a block from his job and it was damn chilly this morning.

His teeth chattering, Kevin hurried down the street to the car wash. Okay, so maybe he should have finished college. Then he could have maybe had prospects for a decent job when he got fired from his old one.

*Laid off.*

That's what they called it when they had no real reason to get rid of you but wanted to anyway. Four years at his stupid office job and he'd received what? Two weeks severance.

Kevin was all right with being forced to take a crappy job



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in this poor economy. Shoot, at least he'd found *something*. But the killer blow had been having to sell his motorcycle. He didn't have enough money to keep up the payments.

When he reached the car wash several of the other workers had already arrived. Many of them only spoke Spanish and Kevin only spoke English, but they were friendly. They waved hello and he stepped inside the tiny little office that housed the cash register. He noted it was only slightly warmer inside.

"Good morning, Gabby," he called to the cashier, plastering on his usual smile. Next to the register was a coffee pot and paper cups. He poured himself coffee.

"Good morning, Kevin." Gabby Ramirez yawned. She was probably his only real friend there. She wouldn't tell him her age, but he guessed she was somewhere around thirty-five. He knew she had two little boys who she kept promising to bring by one day so Kevin could meet them. "How you can be this cheerful at this hour, I don't know."

"It's my perky personality." Which happened to be very hard to keep up these days. No man, no bike, and no job. Okay, a half-assed job. He was behind in the rent for his apartment, too.

"Flaherty, I'm not paying you to drink my coffee," the owner, Mr. Lewis, barked, coming into the office. He was a large, middle-aged man with premature white hair. "Get out there and wash cars."

Kevin glanced out the window. "There aren't any yet."

"Well, wait for them then."

He tossed his now empty paper cup in the waste basket and

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went behind the counter for his burgundy smock. Kevin had come to decide as uniforms went it wasn't that bad. It sort of matched the dyed red streaks in his dark hair and his first name was embroidered on the front. Next to it Gabby had stitched a little rainbow for him. At least it gave the ugly thing a little personality.

Mr. Lewis wasn't such a bad boss. After all he'd given Kevin a chance when he admitted he didn't really need any more car washers. He was just a tad creepy and liked to pretend he was gruff, but Kevin couldn't complain. He paid on time and divided the tips evenly.

"Hey, Kev," Gabby called after him as he moved through the doorway.

"Yo?"

"We're probably going to get lunch later today. Want anything?" Gabby asked him, her reading glasses perched on the end of her pert little nose.

Kevin bit his lip, his stomach growling in an automatic reaction to the thought of lunch. He'd only had a banana for breakfast.

Removing his wallet from the back pocket of his tattered worn jeans, he opened it to check out his money situation. He had a dollar and some change for the bus fare home. Nothing else. His bank account was negative, too, when he'd checked at the automatic teller machine last night. It wouldn't even let him take any money out. He was counting on the tips he would receive for the day to give him bus fare tomorrow.

Swallowing back disappointment and a little bit of shame,

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Kevin shoved his wallet back in his pocket. "That's okay, I don't need anything."

"You sure?"

"Uh-huh." Kevin walked outside before he gave in to the despair clawing at him. Talk of food and money only depressed him. Wallowing in self-pity wouldn't get him fed or his rent paid.

Hardly anyone came to have their car washed this early so it was pretty quiet. Some of the other guys stood off to the side chatting in Spanish. It made Kevin feel even more alone. They didn't exclude him on purpose. It was his fault for never learning Spanish. He'd taken it back in high school, but hadn't paid a bit of attention. The only reason he'd even gotten a C-grade in the class was because he'd charmed the teacher.

He should have made his last lover teach him some stuff. *Raphael*. Yeah, right. His name had really been Louis, but he'd renamed himself Raphael. Kevin snorted. Anyway, if the man had taught him Spanish at least Kevin would have gotten *something* out of the affair. All he'd gotten was a big giant pain in the ass. And not in a good way, either.

He leaned against the wall and crossed his arms across his chest. He didn't regret one bit giving Raphael the slip. But he did feel a little twinge over his lover before Raphael, Tad. They'd had two good months together before Tad dumped him. For a chick, no less.

"What are you doing after work, kid?"

Kevin jumped, not even realizing Mr. Lewis had come up next to him. He smelled a little of stale alcohol. Lately, things

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had been turning decidedly uncomfortable with his boss. He had been sort of...well, leering at Kevin. For the most part, Kevin thought he imagined it. After all Mr. Lewis had a wife, but he was always sneaking up behind him.

"I...uh, dunno."

"You've been looking skinny lately, Flaherty. Even skinnier than when I hired you." Mr. Lewis licked his lips. "You getting enough to eat?"

"Sure, mostly," Kevin lied. He didn't like the way his boss was looking at him and he didn't really want handouts anyway. He hadn't even told most of his friends his situation.

Mr. Lewis smiled. "Well, if you want to earn a few extra bucks, I know just the way you can do it."

"Really?" Kevin asked, cautiously.

His boss leaned toward him. A wave of stale alcohol and sweat hit Kevin. "I'll give you twenty dollars every time you suck my dick. I figure you being gay and all you won't mind getting something extra on the side."

Kevin's stomach lurched with a sickening twist. He simply stared at the man unable to form a coherent response.

Mr. Lewis stared back, his expression almost baleful, before he suddenly started laughing. He threw his head back, laughed harder and then slapped his leg. "Ah, Jesus, Flaherty, you should see your face. You are too funny. I was *joking*, for Christ's sake. Go get the broom and sweep the driveway while you wait for cars."

"Um, okay," Kevin agreed, feeling his fair skin burning. He hurried away, pretty sure Mr. Lewis had *not* been joking.

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He spared a backward glance and saw his boss grab his own crotch and squeeze all the while looking in Kevin's direction. *Fuck.*

He needed this job, such as it was. He did not need to be worried about some crazy ass boss sexually harassing him. Kevin bit his lip and grabbed the broom. He simply could not do that. He just couldn't kneel in front of old man Lewis and service him. Things were bad, but reducing himself to whoring?

Swallowing back the bile threatening to rise in his throat, Kevin began to sweep the debris that had accumulated overnight in the wide driveway leading into the car wash. If he just pretended Mr. Lewis really was joking maybe it would go away

Several hours later, around one in the afternoon, Kevin rubbed his painfully hungry stomach. He had a lunch break to take so he walked into the cashier booth.

Gabby smiled. "Hey, Kev, how's it going?"

"Okay."

"You look a little pale. Are you feeling all right?"

"Uh, sure. You think I could use the phone?" He glanced behind him, looking for his boss. He'd stopped paying his cell phone and it had been disconnected two days ago.

"Yeah, it's okay. Mr. Lewis isn't here right now." Gabby handed him a wrapped double cheeseburger from McDonald's. "And here. I got you this."

His mouth watering, Kevin stared at the sandwich. His throat tightened. "I-I can't pay for it."

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She shoved it into his hands. "Honey, I'm not asking you to pay for it. It's on the dollar menu, Kevin. I promise, it's fine."

He smiled. "Thank you, Gabby. You're so sweet. You make me almost wish I was straight."

She laughed. "You're also too young for me. Eat your burger and then use the phone before Mr. Lewis returns."

Kevin sat on the little stool beside the cashier's counter and wolfed down the double cheeseburger in four quick bites. He didn't really even taste it, but his stomach appreciated it even if his taste buds didn't get to savor it. He poured himself a small cup of water from the dispenser and swallowed that in two gulps.

"Thanks again, Gabby. You're a lifesaver."

Kevin scooped up the phone and dialed the work number for his friend, Noah. He didn't get to see Noah nearly as much as he once had. Noah had a new man in his life, Charlie, and the two were getting very serious. In fact, right around Christmas, Noah had moved into Charlie's house. Noah now had a nice empty house he did nothing with and Kevin would give anything to live there. But he couldn't pay any money for it, not now, and he also couldn't tell Noah about how far his life had fallen apart. He was simply too ashamed.

"Noah Riggins."

"Hey, beautiful," Kevin said, forcing a cheerful note into his voice he definitely did not feel.

Noah laughed. "Kev, what's up?"

"Listen, babe, I hate to cancel on you and all, but I can't

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make it over tonight.” Noah had invited him a week or so ago to come over and have dinner and maybe play some poker. Kevin wanted to go, but without his motorcycle he really couldn’t find a way to get to Charlie’s house. The stops for the city buses were just too far.

“Oh. Well. Are you sure?”

Kevin felt bad. He heard the disappointment in his friend’s voice. He’d canceled a lot lately on plans they had. He closed his eyes. Sooner or later he would have to admit he’d lost his job. He knew he would. “Yeah, sorry, babe, something’s come up.”

“You mean another man?”

“You guessed it. I can’t pass up a chance to get laid, now can I?” The levity in his voice sounded forced even to him. But, man, the perkiness was tough today.

“All right. I’ll call you later in the week to set something up,” Noah said. “Oh, hey, wait, is something up with your cell? I called it earlier and it said something about not being in service.”

“Yeah, um, I’m having trouble with the cell company. I’ve been harassing them.” *Or they’ve been harassing me.* “I’m sure they’ll get it straightened out soon.”

“Okay, Kev, talk to you soon. Bye.”

“Bye.” He replaced the receiver and carefully avoided Gabby’s sympathetic gaze. “I’ll see you later, Gabby.”

He walked outside and studied the cars lined up to be washed. Reaching into his back pocket, Kevin pulled out the pad of paper where he marked what washing packages the

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owners chose. He went to the head of the line and started taking care of customers. He didn't even look up for several moments, having no idea the size of the line.

Jose, who stood near him ready to vacuum the interiors, whistled. "*Caliente.*"

Kevin glanced up from the pad. Just a couple cars away was a dark red Maserati. Kevin recalled seeing it in a magazine advertisement. He thought the name of that particular model was the GranTurismo. His jaw dropped. He swallowed heavily, unable to keep from staring, but not at the sleek, sexy speed demon. Rather his gaze was fixated on the hot-as-fucking-hell guy behind the wheel.

The god wore deep, dark shades, had dark wavy hair, and sensuous, kissable lips. Kevin's tongue slipped out, and he ran it along his own lips, imagining what the other man's mouth would feel like. Even though he was still a couple spots away, Kevin could see he wore a suit. Broad shoulders filled out that suit. He frowned. Damn, but there was something disturbingly familiar about the man.

Jose nudged him.

Kevin blinked out of his stupor and realized the woman in the sedan in front of him glared at him. "Sorry, ma'am." He flashed the woman his don't-you-just-think-I'm-adorable smile. "You wanted the standard wash, right?"

He wracked his brain, trying to think of why the Maserati guy looked familiar. Someone famous?

The Maserati finally pulled up to him. The man smiled. Oh, Lord, the god had dimples.



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“Yum,” Kevin said, before he could stop himself.

Mr. Maserati lowered the sunglasses. Dark, chocolate eyes framed by impossibly long lashes stared back at him. “Kevin? Kevin Flaherty?”

*Oh, fuck.* Michael Bennett. It couldn’t be. But it was. No wonder he looked so fucking familiar. When Kevin was growing up he’d been best friend’s with Michael’s little brother, Danny. Kevin had had a huge crush on Michael. And when Michael had come out as gay when Kevin was fifteen...well, he’d made a fool out of himself. Throwing himself at Michael and begging him to take his virginity. Of course, Michael had said no. And Kevin had died.

Well, not literally. Though he might have wished it so just then.

“No, sorry, wrong guy,” Kevin mumbled.

Michael raised a sexy eyebrow. “Your smock says Kevin.”

*Shit.* “Like there’s only one Kevin? I’m not him. Whoever it is.” Kevin stepped away. He’d get Guillermo to take Michael’s car wash order.

“Flaherty! What are you doing?” Mr. Lewis yelled from by the cashier booth. “Take the guy’s order.”

Kevin grimaced and turned back to the wet dream. “What did you want?”

“So,” Michael said, his lips twitching. “You *are* Kevin Flaherty.”

Kevin blew out a breath, a lock of his own hair floating on his forehead. “Whatever, dude. You want the works or what?”

“Yeah, I think that’s exactly what I want.” He’d dropped

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his voice low, sounding unbelievably sexy. It sent an unwelcome jolt to Kevin's cock.

He wrote a code on the windshield with chalk, then tore off the sheet from the pad and handed it to Michael. The man deliberately curved his fingers up, running the tips along Kevin's palm, sending shock waves through Kevin.

Michael got out of the car and turned it over to those who would vacuum it and take it into the automatic washer. He wrapped those damn fingers around Kevin's wrist. "I'll see you later, Kevin."

"I don't even know who you are," Kevin lied.

Michael laughed, the bastard. "*You* know."

He walked away to stand with the other waiting customers, Kevin watching his every move. He hated himself.

## CHAPTER 2

Michael Bennett stood just outside the cashier's booth watching Kevin for a while as he took customers' orders.

The last time he'd seen Kevin the kid had been fifteen. Not that he was a kid anymore. Kevin must be what twenty-four? And hot enough to melt the rubber in his tires. For some reason Michael couldn't quite figure out, he found the dyed burgundy streaks in Kevin's spiky dark hair appealing. Michael even kind of liked the little crystal stud in Kevin's nose. Not to mention those big, pouty lips and baby blue eyes. He'd been a cute kid, so it was no surprise that as an adult he was gorgeous.

He frowned. A little too pale and thin though. He stepped

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inside the booth and handed the woman his slip.

"The works, huh?" The woman, her name tag said Gabby, rang up his car wash. It had been a long time since he'd been in this neighborhood. He'd been meeting a client not too far away when a flock of birds made a mess on his car. Just on a whim he'd come to this car wash. Funny how life worked sometimes.

"How long has Kevin Flaherty worked here?" he asked, handing her his debit card.

She lowered her glasses to the end of her nose and sniffed. "I can't give out information about our employees."

"We're old friends."

The woman actually snickered like she didn't believe him, but she shrugged. "A few weeks." She gave him back his card.

He glanced back through the dirty window of the booth at Kevin. "Is this a second job for him?"

"If you're old friends, why don't you ask him?"

He turned back to give her his most intimidating attorney stare. He'd used it often in his position as a highly compensated divorce attorney to celebrities and other wealthy clients.

She sighed. "It's his only job. He was laid off."

Michael wasn't surprised. Times were pretty rough for a lot of people. It just hadn't occurred to him things would be so bad for Kevin. He'd been such a happy-go-lucky sort when Michael had known him. Of course, after he'd been forced to push the kid away Kevin had ended his friendship with Danny and disappeared off the face of the earth as far as the Bennetts

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were concerned. Michael had never meant for that to happen.

“Thanks,” he told Gabby and slipped back outside.

He couldn't keep his eyes off Kevin. The man even moved in a sexy way. The way his long slender fingers curved around the pen as he wrote down each driver's order. He could just imagine the way they'd feel grasping his cock. *Think about something else before you end up embarrassing yourself at the car wash.*

Too soon the Maserati pulled in front of him and several workers began to dry and wax it. Michael was aware many of the other patrons eyed it with undisguised envy.

Truth was, he was a little uncomfortable with it. Oh, he loved it. It was a damn hot and sexy car. But in these troubled times it was more than a little flashy. It had been a gift from his father for his thirtieth birthday. And really, who would turn down a Maserati?

Michael noticed the line of cars waiting to enter the car wash had dwindled down to nothing. Probably a temporary lull, but one he decided to take full advantage of nonetheless. He walked over to where Kevin stood.

“Hey, Kevin, how's it going?” Michael spoke to his back.

Kevin jumped and took so long to turn around he'd begun to think Kevin planned on ignoring him. Finally he turned and fixed those incredible baby blue eyes on Michael.

Wow.

“As you can see, it's going well,” Kevin said, his sultry, sexy voice laced with sarcasm.

Shit, when had Kevin Flaherty become so fucking hot?

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Had he always had that killer voice that did really inappropriate things to his cock? Michael didn't think so. The Kevin he remembered was somewhat geeky and awkward, although always cute.

Michael ignored the sarcasm and instead said, "It's been a long time. It's been close to ten years, hasn't it?"

"Nine years, one and a half months, actually, but who's counting?"

"I like the red." Michael gestured to Kevin's hair.

Kevin's gaze left his face—he felt the loss like a kick in the gut—and slid to his car. "I like the red there, too."

"Bordeaux."

That intense, cock hardening gaze came back to land on Michael. "Excuse me?"

Michael grinned sheepishly. "The name of the color is Bordeaux. According to Maserati."

"You're obviously doing well," Kevin said. "Working at your father's firm?"

"Yeah. I'm a full partner though. A divorce attorney."

"Still breaking up relationships, huh?"

Michael winced. "Kevin—"

"How's Danny?"

He relaxed a little, though he was still wound tight with sexual energy. "Good. He lives up north. Going to Stanford. Engaged, too, to a fellow medical student."

"Another wildly successful Bennett. Well, good for him. That's great. Be sure to tell him I said hello."

Michael swallowed his discomfort. This new somewhat

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hostile Kevin was hard to get used to. He opened his mouth to say something else when Kevin swayed a little. His arm shot out and automatically wrapped around the man's waist to steady him. "Are you okay?"

Kevin nodded but didn't immediately pull away. "Yeah, yeah, I'm fine. Just a little light-headed."

Damn. Michal had a feeling the kid wasn't getting enough to eat. He thought he'd heard Kevin's stomach growling a little earlier. Aware of the stares of others, Michael removed his arm, but he kept his hand on Kevin's shoulder. "Listen, they're probably almost done with my car and I know you probably need to get back to work, but I wanted to ask you if maybe you'd come to dinner with me tonight."

"Dinner? You think you can just waltz in here with your hot wheels and snap your fingers and I'll be free?" Kevin shrugged his hand off his shoulder.

Michael sighed. "All right, how about tomorrow night then? Give me your address and I'll pick you up." Behind them the car washers whistled. He glanced over and one of them waved his towel at him.

Kevin pulled his bottom lip with his teeth, uncertainty in his eyes. Michael could clearly see he was torn.

"Please?"

Kevin nodded, exhaled. "Okay, but, um, pick me up here. I get off at five."

Giddy relief flowed through him, far out of proportion to the way it should. "All right. I'll see you tomorrow night then."

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He walked to his car and handed the washers their tip. Michael noticed the older heavy-set man who'd yelled at Kevin earlier standing just inside the doorway of the cashier booth. He stared in Kevin's direction. Kevin was back to taking orders for washes. Something about the way the man stared made Michael uneasy. There was something predatory about it. He damn well didn't like it.

As soon as Michael got going on the road toward his Laurel Canyon home, he called his brother.

"Hi Michael," Danny answered after only two rings. "Where are you?"

"Hey, kiddo. I'm on my way home, actually."

"Isn't this a little early for you?"

"Yeah," Michael acknowledged. "But I'm wiped out." *And horny as hell.*

"Good, you work too hard. Glad to see you're giving yourself a break. What's up?"

"You'll never guess who I saw today."

Danny paused. "Hmm, Clark Gable?"

"Ha ha, he's dead."

His brother laughed. "I know, that's why it would be someone special to call me about. Michael, you work with stars all the time. Isn't the celebrity spotting getting old?"

Michael grinned. "I never said it was a celebrity. You'll never guess, so I may as well tell you. Kevin."

"Kevin? Kevin who?" Then there was a small gasp. "Kevin *Flaherty*?"

"In the flesh." *And fine flesh it was, too.*



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“Oh, my God. Where’d you see him?”

Michael didn’t want to tell Danny that Kevin was working at a car wash. For some reason he knew Kevin would be extremely embarrassed for Danny to know. “Oh, just at the store. Anyway, I’m going out with him tomorrow night.”

Now there was a long pause. “You’re what?”

“I’m having dinner with him. You know, that’s what people who aren’t engaged do. They go out on dates.”

“Yeah, but, Kevin? I mean, hasn’t that boat sailed? You didn’t want him before.”

“He was *fifteen*, Danny.”

“I know, but you still weren’t interested.”

“Because he was fifteen. Jail bait. End of story.”

Danny chuckled. “Okay, so how does he look?”

*He’s the hottest fucking guy I’ve ever seen.* “Pretty nice. A little on the thin side though.”

“Yeah, he always was thin. Is he still as crazy and flamboyant as he was then?”

“Kind of. He has a stud in his nose and red dye in his hair, which is all spiky. He looks a bit like a Japanese anime character from a video game, really.”

His brother cleared his throat. “Doesn’t sound like your usual type.”

“Maybe not, but I think my type has just changed.”

“Wow, you sound almost smitten, Michael.”

“Hmm...anyway, just wanted to let you know. How are things with you and Peggy?”

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Kevin scooted out of the car wash lot and down the street toward the bus stop as quickly as he could. He did *not* want to be stopped by Mr. Lewis. Whether or not he'd been joking, Kevin wanted no part of it and he didn't find it the least bit amusing.

What a strange day. He couldn't believe Michael Bennett had come to the car wash and had even asked him out. Kevin had noticed Michael seemed to be devouring him with his eyes. Kevin had learned over the years that most gay men found him attractive. He didn't ever have to wait long for attention in gay bars. But he *had* been surprised Michael actually asked him out.

The bus arrived and Kevin slipped his money in the slot. It only took about fifteen minutes for the ride that took him to within a block of his apartment.

Michael wanted to have sex with him. Kevin had no doubt of that. The question was whether Kevin would allow it. Having had no money for a while, meant no bars for looking for pickups. And with no steady boyfriend for even longer, he'd had sex with his hands and toys only lately. And he'd wanted Michael all those years ago. Now, he could even have him. *If* he wanted him.

Kevin got off the bus and walked to his apartment. He ran up the stairs and then stopped halfway up looking at an envelope taped to the outside of his door. A heavy ball of dread pitted in his stomach. He stood frozen, unwilling to move the last few steps to the door.

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“Just do it,” he said out loud.

He charged up the rest of the way and removed the envelope. He tore it open and read the words, “Eviction Notice.” *Great.* Now he was going to be starving *and* homeless.

He unlocked his door and entered the dark apartment. He flipped on the switch, grateful the light came on. At least his electricity hadn’t been disconnected. He threw the envelope on the nearby coffee table and headed to the kitchen. He might be able to find some ramen noodles or something. He turned on the kitchen light.

“Ah, fuck!”

Hundreds, maybe thousands, of ants swarmed on his kitchen counters and sink. Okay, now the perkiness was officially shot. Grimacing, he reached under the sink to locate his bug spray. Kevin could swear they’d built these apartments on an ant hill.

Pointing the can at the ants as though he were a cop getting ready to taser a perp, he pushed down hard on the button coating the creatures with a heavy dose of poison. Then, when he was sure most of them were drowning in the spray, he dosed them again. He returned the can to its place and stared at the bugs. He was getting nauseous now. He definitely didn’t need to throw up the little food he had in his stomach.

He walked out of the kitchen and out the front door of his apartment, relocking it. He just couldn’t stay there. Couldn’t face the cleanup. Not tonight. Kevin trudged down the stairs and down the street to the nearest drug store. He knew they

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still had a pay phone. A rarity these days. He quickly called the one person who knew what shit he'd been going through.

"Hi, Gabby, it's Kevin," he said when she answered. "Listen, I-I'm having a bad night. Do you think maybe I could stay with you?"

"What happened?"

He swallowed heavily. "Well, I got home to an eviction notice for starters."

"Oh, Kev, that's terrible."

"I know. And then there were all these ants and I—" He stopped, his throat clogged with too much emotion for him to go on.

"All right. Where are you? I'll come get you."

He got out the directions to the drug store and then hung up. He was grateful he could count on Gabby. He didn't know who else to call. Yeah, he could call Noah and he knew Noah would come. But, Noah had his own life now. He certainly didn't need a loser like Kevin horning in.

One thing was true. He really needed to come straight with his friends. He knew they'd be pissed he'd been hiding it, but Kevin knew he couldn't hide his humiliation any longer. He did not want to be homeless.

He walked outside to wait for Gabby. At least he had something to look forward to tomorrow night.

## CHAPTER 3

It was already ten minutes past the time Michael was supposed to pick him up and Kevin had started to think he'd been stood up. *Great.*

As if being rejected by Michael once hadn't been enough, he had to put himself through it a second time. He hated himself for having actually looked forward to it all day.

Kevin looked up the street toward where his usual bus stop was. A couple minutes more and he'd head home. He needed to clean up the ant mess from the night before. Not to mention figure out what he was going to do about getting evicted from his apartment.

Last night had been great. Gabby had fed him dinner and

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he got to actually watch television. When was the last time he'd gotten to just veg in front of the TV? Cable had been one of the first things he'd canceled when he lost his job.

Then this morning, Gabby had made him toaster waffles for breakfast and had even packed him a lunch. But as great as it was, he couldn't continue to mooch off Gabby. She had two kids to feed.

He was going to have to talk to Noah. He hated having to do so. Noah was the second guy he'd loved who'd rejected him. Yeah, yeah, Noah didn't really know Kevin had feelings for him, unlike Michael, so he didn't really know he was rejecting Kevin, but unrequited love sucked. Even before Noah hooked up with Charlie, Kevin knew it was a lost cause.

Still no Michael. Okay, so he'd been officially stood up. Now he needed to go home. He straightened from the pole he'd been leaning on.

"Flaherty, what are you still doing here?"

Kevin's heart sank. He did *not* need this. He plastered on a fake smile and turned to face Mr. Lewis, who'd pulled along next to Kevin in his sedan.

"Hi, Mr. Lewis. I was waiting for a ride, but it didn't come so I'm heading to the bus stop."

"That's too bad," Mr. Lewis said, smiling back. "I'll give you a ride."

There was something distinctly sinister about the odd little emphasis the old man put on *ride*. Kevin shivered.

"No, that's—"

"Hey, Kevin," Michael called from his Maserati which had

## CAR WASH

just pulled up to the curb. "Sorry I'm late." He gazed past Kevin at Mr. Lewis, his expression cool.

Mr. Lewis made a growling noise. "Listen, Flaherty, I don't allow hustling on my property."

*Ah, geez.* "I'm not hustling, Mr. Lewis."

"We're old friends." Michael leaned over and opened the passenger door. "Get in."

Kevin bit his lip and cast one last glance in his boss's direction. "Uh, good night, Mr. Lewis."

The minute the door clicked close, Michael drove away. Kevin blew out a relieved breath.

"What's up with you and that guy?" Michael asked immediately.

"Nothing. He's just my boss." Kevin looked Michael over, admiring the obviously tailored suit stretched across his broad shoulders. His dark hair was neatly trimmed, but there was just the hint of five o'clock shadow on his jaw. Kevin resisted the urge to stroke his fingertips across the tightened muscle there.

"I'm sorry I was so late. Traffic was worse than I expected."

"You're lucky. I was about to leave."

Michael shot him a quick glance. "With Lewis?"

"Oh, hell, no," Kevin burst out before he thought better of it. He cleared his throat. "No, I mean, I was going to go down to the bus stop."

"I remember when you were a kid you were into motorcycles." Michael's knuckles gripped the wheel hard.

## *CAR WASH*

"I'm sort of glad to hear you don't have one."

"Why?"

"They're absurdly dangerous."

Kevin rolled his eyes. "Well, actually, I did have one. I had to sell it."

"Oh."

He crossed his arms and looked out the window. "As much of a loser as I'm sure you think I am, working at the car wash was not my first choice. I got laid off."

"I know."

"How?" Kevin frowned. "You must have talked to Gabby."

"Yes." The Garmin on Michael's dash told him to turn right.

"Where are we going?"

"A little Italian place not too far from where I live. You do still like Italian, right?"

"Sure. Where do you live?"

"Laurel Canyon. I don't, by the way."

"Don't what?"

Michael sighed. "Think you're a loser."

Kevin snorted. "Yeah right. You're some hotshot lawyer with a Maserati for God's sake."

"It was a birthday present from my father after I'd taken care of a big case," Michael said, his cheeks flushing.

"Uh-huh. And your father is a hotshot lawyer who can afford to give Maseratis as gifts. Your brother is going to medical school to be a doctor and he's going to marry one. I'm



## CAR WASH

sure your parents still belong to that country club. Hell, you probably do, too. I didn't go to college and I'm working at a car wash. You think I'm a loser."

"I do not. I do think you could have applied yourself better and gone to college."

"Whatever." Kevin got depressed just thinking about how he'd wasted some opportunities in life. "It's not like I could afford some fancy university."

"You could have gone to community college."

Kevin could hardly argue with that, so he said nothing. He was grateful Michael didn't say anything else either until they pulled into the parking lot of a restaurant called Antonio's. A guy in a valet uniform hurried out to them.

When they had been seated in a little corner booth, rather than picking up his menu, Michael looked point blank at him.

"Tell me the truth, Kevin. What's up with your boss?"

Kevin didn't meet his gaze and instead picked up his menu and pretended to be studying it. "I told you nothing."

"Bullshit." Michael pulled the menu abruptly out of his hands. "When I drove up you looked like you were about to pass out. Besides, I *saw* the way he looked at you."

He squirmed. "Which was?"

"Probably the same way the witch looked at Hansel and Gretel."

The waitress took that moment to stop at their table for drinks. Michael ordered a carafe of Riesling with some unpronounceable name without even looking at the menu.

Michael went back to staring at him intently.

## *CAR WASH*

“Okay, okay, something weird happened,” Kevin admitted.  
“Weird how?”

He sighed. “Mr. Lewis said he would give me an extra twenty dollars every time I sucked his dick.”

The other man’s eyes widened, then narrowed. “How many times have you done it?”

“None,” Kevin said, outraged. He felt his cheeks burn. “Geez, I’m not like that, Michael.”

“Okay, I’m sorry.”

“He told me right after that he was only joking, but it didn’t seem like he was and he’s been kind of freaky ever since.”

“Fucking son of a bitch,” Michael snarled.

“Hey, it’s cool, man. I’ve been avoiding him mostly. And he did give me the job when no one else would.”

“It’s not right, Kevin.”

“I know. But I need this job. I just got an eviction notice,” he admitted and then wanted to kick himself. Why in the world did he tell Michael that?

The waitress returned with the wine and had Michael taste it. He nodded his approval and she poured two glasses.

Then Michael smiled. “We’re not ready to order. Can you give us a few minutes?” As soon as she walked away, he asked, “How many months are you behind?”

“Three.”

“How much is your rent?”

Kevin frowned, not liking the direction of this conversation at all. “What difference does it make? I can’t pay

## CAR WASH

it.”

*“How much?”*

“It’s a one bedroom so I was paying \$1200.”

Michael shook his head, but picked up his menu.

Kevin did the same, relieved the conversation appeared to be over. When the waitress came back to take their order, he requested spaghetti and Michael asked for some chicken with wine dish. When she walked away, Kevin decided to change the subject. For some reason he felt uncomfortable being the focus of the conversation. Strange since he usually went out of his way to ensure that with most dates.

“So, I’m sort of surprised you asked me out.”

“Really? Why?”

“A couple of reasons, I guess. One, a rich good-looking guy like you must have boyfriends beating down his door.”

Michael rolled his eyes behind his wineglass. “And the other?”

Kevin shifted in the booth. He looked away for a moment, checking out the other patrons in the dimly lit restaurant.

“Hey,” Michael said, closing his hand over Kevin’s, drawing his attention back to their table.

“Well, back before, you made your disinterest in me pretty plain.”

The other man sighed. “Not that again.”

“Okay, setting aside the fifteen-year-old thing.”

“I can’t set that aside, Kevin,” Michael said, grimly.

“The point is you didn’t seem attracted to me in any way, my age notwithstanding. I get that I’m older now and probably

## *CAR WASH*

look better than I did then, but I can't look that different. So what's changed?"

"First, I don't have a current boyfriend, so if you're trying to make some sort of implication that I'm cheating on a significant other, you're wrong. I had a boyfriend a year and a half ago, but we broke up."

"Why?" Kevin asked before he could stop himself.

Michael's lips thinned and he looked like he wasn't going to answer. After a moment though, he said, "There were some issues, including fidelity."

The waitress arrived and set their dinners before them. Kevin twirled spaghetti on his fork. "Yeah? He cheated on you? That sucks. I've had that happen before."

"You have?"

Kevin nodded. "Sure."

"Well, actually, I cheated on him."

Something cold formed in Kevin's stomach. He reached for his wine and took a sip. "Wow."

"Kevin—"

"Hey, it's none of my business, hon," Kevin interrupted quickly. "You're free to conduct your relationships however you want."

"It's complicated."

"I'm sure it is." Kevin grabbed up his garlic bread and quickly shoved a huge bite into his mouth. He would never have thought Michael would admit to cheating. He wasn't sure how he felt about it. Well, he was sure if they were going to have any sort of thing, but he wasn't sure they were.

## *CAR WASH*

“What about your family, Kevin? Can’t they help you?”

Kevin snorted, once again glad for the change of subject. “You must be kidding. My parents got divorced several years ago. My dad lives in Las Vegas with a cocktail waitress. He’s on disability and spends whatever he gets on slot machines.”

Michael winced. “And your mother?”

“She lives in Illinois now and prays for me.”

“Oh.”

“Yeah, oh.” Kevin took a bite of his spaghetti. “Not everyone lives happily ever after, Bennett. Anyway, you know that was what I always liked about Danny. You guys always had more money than my family but we immediately became friends when we met in grade school. He was like the brother I never had.” He stopped, lowering his gaze. Damn, he sounded pathetic.

“I’m sorry, Kevin. I never meant for what happened between me and you to interfere with your friendship with Danny.”

“S’okay. We probably would have drifted apart eventually anyway. We didn’t really have anything in common and now you tell me he’s at Stanford.”

Michael looked like he wanted to say something else, but refrained. He cut into his chicken and took several bites before taking a large sip of his wine. “What about boyfriends? A guy like you must have had a few.”

He raised an eyebrow. “A guy like me?”

“You’re every gay man’s wet dream, Kevin. You must know how attractive you are.”

## CAR WASH

Kevin flushed with warmth. Sure, he knew he was good-looking, but it was still nice to hear coming from someone like Michael. He bit his lip. "Then why did you turn me down all those years ago?"

Michael sighed and reached for Kevin's hand. "It's just what I told you, Kevin. You were fifteen. A *child*. I was twenty-one. You were too young."

The waitress came by and set the check down. "Boxes?"

"Please," Michael said, not letting loose of Kevin's hand. "Come home with me, Kevin."

Kevin hesitated. It had been a while since he'd been with a guy, let alone someone as hot as Michael. *And Michael*. The man he'd wanted practically all his life. "Well, I do have tomorrow off."

Michael smiled. "Then stay with me. I can take you home tomorrow."

Thinking of his lonely apartment with dead ants, Kevin said, "Okay."

\* \* \*

Michael watched Kevin spin around the front hallway of his two-story house. The younger man had a natural energy Michael had always admired and envied. And there was a sexy elegance to the way he moved, too.

It hadn't been a lie when Michael had said he had rejected Kevin because of his young age. Kevin's energy and enthusiasm alone drew Michael to him. Now, all these years later, Kevin had finally fulfilled what the cuteness of his youth

## *CAR WASH*

had always promised, and he was absolutely gorgeous.

"This is a great place," Kevin said after a while. He stopped in front of the stairs. "Must've cost a pretty penny."

"Mmm." The only pretty thing on his mind was Kevin. There was nothing stopping him. Kevin was definitely old enough now. He held up the doggy bags from the restaurant. "Want to see the kitchen? I've got to put these away anyway."

"Sure." Kevin practically bounced toward the archway leading to the kitchen.

Michael's mouth watered as he kept watch on the man's tight ass. He figured he'd better get it together or he'd be taking him in the kitchen.

Kevin was smiling when Michael caught up to him. It was an almost innocent smile and it tugged at something inside Michael he didn't want to analyze.

"What are you smiling at?" he asked, walking to his refrigerator to stash the leftovers.

"I always wanted a big kitchen with one of these islands," Kevin said. "Sometimes I go to model homes and check out the amenities and usually go straight for the kitchens."

Michael laughed. "Do you cook?"

"Well, I did when I had my old job. Not so much since I got laid off."

Kevin ran his hand along the black marble island almost lovingly. To Michael's surprise Kevin jumped up to sit on the edge. Michael swallowed heavily, his gaze taking in the height of the island. About waist high.

Michael stood between Kevin's slightly spread legs and

## *CAR WASH*

closed his hands on his hips. “Kiss me, Kevin.”

Kevin didn’t hesitate. He leaned forward and pressed his lips to Michael’s. Kevin’s lips were warm and soft and still tasted faintly of the wine they’d shared. Michael slipped his tongue inside to collide with Kevin’s, and pulled the younger man closer.

“Tell me,” Michael said, breaking their kiss, but staying less than an inch from the young man’s amazing lips. “When you thought about wanting one of these islands, did you ever think of being fucked on one?”

Kevin’s breath hitched, his long dark lashes dropping over his intense blue eyes. “No,” he whispered. “But I think I could be persuaded.” His hand closed over the bulge in Michael’s trousers.

Michael sucked in a breath and pressed against the other man’s hand. A moan escaped his lips. “Wait here, I’ll get the lube and a condom.” He placed a quick kiss on Kevin’s lips and hurried out of the kitchen.

He didn’t know why he hadn’t thought to leave condoms and lube downstairs. He’d have to remedy that and store some in the downstairs bathroom. He took the stairs leading to his bedroom and bathroom two at a time. Michael found the lube and strip of condoms under the bathroom sink and took them back to the kitchen.

His heart racing, his pulse beating rapidly, he stopped to admire Kevin lying stomach down on the island, his worn blue jeans stretched tight across his perfect round ass.

Kevin looked back over his shoulder, a small grin playing



## *CAR WASH*

across his sensual lips. “Going to just stand there all night or what?”

Michael stepped over to the island. “Okay, wise guy, hold these.” He handed the bottle of lube and a foil packet to Kevin. “Lift up.”

The younger man rose up enough to allow Michael to reach under him and unfasten his jeans. He wasted no time in yanking them down to Kevin’s knees. His mouth watered when he saw Kevin wore no underwear.

“Shit, you’re so fucking beautiful,” Michael whispered. His hands roamed over the round globes of Kevin’s ass. He undid his pants and pushed them and his blue silk boxers down to his own knees. His hard cock bobbed free. “Hand me the condom.”

Kevin’s body quivered. He tossed the foil packet back at Michael, who caught it and tore it open. He rolled it onto his erection, pausing a moment to get himself back under control. He didn’t want to embarrass himself by coming too soon. He kneaded Kevin’s ass with his fingers while exhaling deeply.

“God, that feels good,” Kevin murmured.

Michael pulled Kevin down until only his upper torso rested on the island. His round ass hung over the side invitingly. He ran his cock along the crack of the younger man’s ass. “Toss me the lube and hold on tight.”

Sloshing out a generous amount of the slick stuff over his fingers, he lubed his stiff cock. “Ready?”

“Yes, stop talking about it and just do it.”

Michael chuckled and pushed a finger in Kevin’s entrance.

## *CAR WASH*

He hesitated only a moment before thrusting past the tight ring of muscle.

“More.”

He inserted a second, stretching and probing for Kevin’s prostate.

“Oh, my God, yes,” Kevin moaned. “More, please, more.”

“Ah, shit.” Michael gritted his teeth, a wave of pure lust causing his balls to tighten. The soft begging was nearly his undoing. He withdrew his fingers and poised the head of his erection at Kevin’s opening. He pushed in, then hesitated for a few heartbeats, allowing Kevin to get used to the intrusion.

Kevin pushed back, insistent. Michael slid in farther. Gripping Kevin’s hips tightly, he pulled the other man flush against him, impaling him fully.

He closed his eyes, letting the sensations of being inside Kevin wash over him. Never in a million years had he imagined this. He’d thought to never see Kevin again when he’d disappeared out of his family’s life all those years ago.

“Move,” Kevin urged.

And he did. Michael withdrew almost all the way, thrusting back in, again and again. Kevin was unbelievably hot and snug. His whimpers and moans were so responsive. Michael had been thinking about them like this since seeing him at the car wash the day before, so he didn’t know how long he could last this first time. Already a tingle at the base of his spine and an aching burn in his balls alerted him to his impending orgasm. Later, when he moved Kevin to his bed, he’d take his time, fucking him all night if the younger man

## *CAR WASH*

was up for it.

“God, Kevin, you’re so damn sexy, I’m ready to come.”

Kevin gasped, pushing back against Michael’s thrust, drawing Michael’s cock farther in if possible. He removed one hand from the death grip he had on the edge of the island and began stroking his own cock.

“I wish I could see your face when you come,” Michael said.

“Later,” Kevin promised, even as cum shot out from his cock and on to the edge of the island and the floor.

It was all Michael needed to send him over the edge. He sped up, pumping into Kevin faster and harder, his release shuddering through him.

They both panted heavily, and Kevin dropped to his knees as soon as Michael withdrew. Michael leaned a hand on the island and peeled off the used condom.

“Damn, that was good.”

Kevin grinned, peering up at him from beneath sweaty dark and red streaked hair. “Of course it was. What did you expect?”

He laughed. “You’re a brat. Did anyone ever tell you that?”

“I think maybe you did.”

Michael grinned. “Yeah, maybe I did. Come on.” He reached a hand down to haul Kevin to his feet. “I want to continue the tour.”

## CHAPTER 4

“Okay, your house officially rocks,” Kevin declared, jumping on to the king-sized bed covered in a feather bed top and comforter. He buried himself in the softness. “And this bed, man, I could totally get used to this.”

Michael laughed. “I’m glad you approve.”

“I definitely do.” Kevin sighed, inhaling Michael’s scent from the bed. He hadn’t bothered to get completely redressed from the kitchen to the bedroom, so only had on his jeans, which he’d left unfastened. He lay on his back and crossed his arms behind his head. “Rich people have it made.”

“I don’t consider myself rich.” Michael had likewise been in a state of partial dress, but he had now disposed of his

## CAR WASH

clothing and stood nude next to Kevin. He reached over and started tugging off Kevin's jeans.

"Hon, you drive a fucking Maserati. You are *so* rich." Kevin lifted up a little to help him remove the pants.

"I do well," Michael acknowledged.

Kevin rolled his eyes and bounced on the bed. "Do well. Yeah, whatever. Come on and give me some sugar." He puckered up.

"Damn, you're adorable."

He grinned. "I know."

"And a brat, too." Michael set the bottle of lube on the nightstand along with a few condom packets, then kneeled on the bed.

"You already said that."

"It's still true." Michael lowered himself next to Kevin and hovered over him, kissing him deeply. Kevin put his arms around Michael's neck to pull him closer.

One of his favorite parts of sex had always been kissing. He knew plenty of guys who didn't feel that way, but Kevin figured they were missing out on a very sensual part of sex. There was something so erotic and intimate about melding lips and tongues together. Luckily for him, Michael seemed to like it as well and also was apparently an expert at it. *Damn*.

Kevin slid his tongue farther in Michael's mouth, tasting, exploring. This is what he'd always wanted. Well, for a number of years anyway. Michael framed his face with his hands and deepened the kiss. He decided it would be all right with him if they spent the rest of the night like this, but he

## CAR WASH

guessed Michael had something more in mind.

He wrapped his leg over Michael, using it to drag the man over until he lay on top. He could feel Michael's semi-erect cock against his thigh. It sent a jolt of lust through his own cock. Okay, maybe kissing all night wasn't what he wanted either.

Michael finally broke the kiss and looked down at Kevin, their gazes meeting. The hot glazed passion he saw in Michael's eyes was so powerful he shook with need.

"You okay, Kev?" Michael asked, running the pad of his thumb over Kevin's bottom lip.

"Yeah. You're just so fucking hot I can't believe I'm here," Kevin admitted.

Michael smiled. "You're the one who's beautiful." He slipped a hand between their bodies and closed it around Kevin's now fully erect cock. "First, I'm going to taste this. Then after I've swallowed every drop of your cum, I'm going to fuck that sweet, round ass of yours over and over."

Kevin's breath hitched. "Geez, you're going to make me come just by talking like that."

His lover gave him a quick kiss and then a slow tantalizing stroke along his shaft.

Pulse racing, Kevin watched Michael crawl down until his delectable mouth was poised right above his cock. The sight of Michael's dark head right *there* was almost too much. He whimpered.

"Still okay?" Michael asked, glancing up at him, his chocolate brown eyes shining.

## *CAR WASH*

Kevin didn't trust himself to speak, so he nodded. He fisted the feather comforter, anticipation nearly killing him.

Michael's hot, moist mouth closed over the tip and Kevin couldn't stop a squeal from escaping his lips. It was so fucking good. Michael pulled it out and then swirled his tongue across the slit. Kevin closed his eyes and turned his head, gripping the comforter tighter.

"Oh, my God."

He couldn't keep still. His hips rose, pushing himself against Michael's mouth, seeking re-entrance. Michael opened and let him in, sucking him past the tip, down the shaft. Michael grasped his sac, squeezing.

"Ah, fuck, Michael." Kevin gasped, tremors wracking through him. He held back pushing in farther, afraid of gagging his lover. But Michael swallowed him deeper. Kevin couldn't believe he was going to come again so soon after sex in the kitchen. He released the feather comforter and moved his hands down to Michael's head. He speared his fingers through the dark hair, surprised at the softness.

His release tingled at the base of his spine. Moans tore from his throat as his balls tightened in Michael's grasp. He tried to pull out to save his lover from getting a mouth full of cum, but Michael wouldn't let go until he'd poured out every last drop.

Panting heavily, Kevin pushed Michael's mouth off his softening cock, too sensitive for more contact.

Michael chuckled and scooted up until his face was close to Kevin's. "You taste amazing. Want to taste?"

Kevin could only nod.

Michael pressed his lips to Kevin's, thrusting his tongue inside. Kevin tasted the musky, slightly bitter taste of his own juices.

"You know, I just had you in the kitchen. You'd think I'd be satisfied with that, but no."

"No?"

Michael stroked his fingertips across Kevin's jaw. "No. God, I want to fuck you so bad."

"Well, then quit talking and just do it."

"Okay, brat." Michael reached over to the nightstand and picked up a foil package. Kevin watched him tear it open.

"Wait," Kevin said, bending toward him. "I want to put it on you."

His hands shaking, Kevin took the packet from Michael and removed the condom. Before he rolled it on the man's erection, he ran a finger along the prominent vein in his shaft.

Michael moaned and closed his eyes.

Kevin bit his lip and swiped the drop of pre-cum from the tip of Michael's cock. He rolled the condom over it.

When Michael opened his eyes, their gazes met. The scorching desire he caught in Michael's gaze nearly melted his skin. His lover grabbed the lube. "Are you sure? You're not too sensitive for this?"

Kevin gave him what he hoped was an exasperated look. "Yes, for God's sake. Just get on with it."

"As you wish, brat." He poured lube over his fingers and then used them to slick up his straining cock.



## *CAR WASH*

Kevin licked his lips and lay flat on the bed. He could almost get hard again. Too bad he wasn't super human.

Michael lifted Kevin's legs and slipped a lubed finger inside Kevin. Since he was still slick from their earlier sex, it slid in easily, followed by a second. His lover worked them in and out, pushing and spreading.

Just when Kevin thought he would never enter him with his cock, Michael pushed all the way in with one deep thrust.

Kevin gasped. "Oh. My. God."

Michael stopped, tensed. "Are you all right, baby?"

He nodded. "Yeah, I am still just a little sensitive."

"You want me to stop?" Michael asked, his expression pained.

"No."

"Good, because I really need to move." Michael hiked Kevin's legs up a little higher and wrapped his arms around the calves.

Every nerve in Kevin's body seemed to be standing on end, electrified, pulsing. It was almost too much. He resisted the urge to close his eyes as his lover thrust in and out, brushing his prostate, because he wanted to watch Michael come. For all he knew, this night might be the only time for them. And if that was true, he would savor this.

Michael's thrusts became rapid, harder. Beads of sweat formed on his forehead and his dark brown eyes were hazy with lust. Kevin reached for one of Michael's nipples and twisted.

"Ah, shit." Michael gasped, tensing and jerking within

## *CAR WASH*

Kevin a few more times before he collapsed. He rested his head on Kevin's stomach. "God, that was good."

Kevin brushed the sweaty locks of hair out of Michael's eyes. "You keep saying that."

"Because it's true. You're amazing, Kevin. So tight and hot and responsive." His warm breath brushed the hairs of Kevin's stomach.

He laughed. "Stop that. You're going to get me excited again."

Michael leaned his chin on his hands and peered up at Kevin. "Could you?"

"No," he said honestly. "You?"

"Maybe in a few hours." Michael yawned.

"Well, why don't you come up here and go to sleep with me," Kevin suggested.

Michael rose from the bed, pulled off the used condom and went into the bathroom.

While he was gone, Kevin pulled aside the feather comforter and crawled beneath the sheets, too sleepy to try to clean up. He hadn't gone to sleep with a man since Raphael and even that had been sporadic.

Michael came back into the bedroom and Kevin was happy to see he hadn't pulled on pajamas or anything. He slipped under the covers next to Kevin and pulled him close. "Night, Kev."

"Goodnight, Michael."

\* \* \*

## *CAR WASH*

It was around eight-thirty when they left Michael's house for him to drive Kevin home. Kevin spent most of the car ride wondering if he should ask when or if he would see Michael again. He couldn't seem to get up the nerve, though.

As they got closer to his apartment, Michael said, "I'm going to give you my number and I'll need your number so I can call you later this afternoon."

Kevin shifted uncomfortably. "I don't have a phone."

"You what?"

He shrugged and slouched down in the seat. "I couldn't pay the bills."

Michael nodded. "Okay. We stop at the store first then."

"For what?"

"We're getting you one of those pay-as-you-go cell phones."

"Michael—"

"You're not going without a phone, Kevin. How do you make calls now?"

"The drugstore down the street still has a pay phone."

The muscle in Michael's jaw flexed. "What happens in an emergency? Not to mention you shouldn't be traipsing down there in the dark just to make a call. We're getting you a phone. What kind of food do you have?"

"Um."

"We'll stop at the grocery store, too."

Kevin looked out the window. "You don't have to."

"Yes, I do. Do you still have electricity?"

"Yeah."

## *CAR WASH*

“Well, at least that’s something.”

About an hour later, Michael dropped him off with the new phone, Michael’s home, office and cell numbers programmed into it, and groceries. He promised to call later and sped off. Apparently that meant they were going to see each other again, Kevin decided, even though they hadn’t had any sort of conversation. He was already coming to realize Michael liked being the boss.

Kevin finished putting away his groceries and then realized he couldn’t put off cleaning up the dreaded ants any longer. As it was, they were a massive black, icky mess.

He opened the sliding door and set to scrubbing down the kitchen and emptying the garbage. After that he was sort of in cleaning mode so he cleaned his bathroom and bedroom, too.

When he finished, he realized he was grungy and in serious need of a shower.

When he returned to the living room all freshly washed himself, a few hours had already flown by. His gaze went to the eviction notice. He took a deep breath, picked it up and looked for a number to call. He would have to find out what his options were, if he even had any.

Using his new phone, he called the law firm listed on the notice.

“Marker and Jakowitz,” a nasally feminine voice said.

“May I speak with Mr. Harris, please?”

“Who is calling?”

“Kevin Flaherty. I received an eviction notice and I—”  
There a small click and then more ringing.

## *CAR WASH*

“Keith Harris.”

“Mr. Harris? My name is Kevin Flaherty and I received an eviction notice for my apartment at the Terrace Pines complex.”

There was a shuffling noise, like the man was going through paperwork. “Yes, Mr. Flaherty. What can I do for you?”

“I was wondering what I can do to stop this.”

“Stop what?”

Kevin swallowed. “The eviction.”

“Mr. Flaherty, that’s all been taken care of.”

Kevin pulled his phone away and stared at it, then returned it to his ear. “What do you mean?”

“Your apartment is paid current. In fact, it’s paid in advance of next month, too.”

His stomach dropped and his heart raced. “What? There must be some mistake.”

“There is no mistake, sir. I’ll be sending you a notice of withdrawal of the eviction, of course. You should get it in the mail in a few days. Good-bye, Mr. Flaherty.”

Kevin grimaced and set the phone on the dining room table. Paid current? How could that be? It had to be a mistake. Maybe Harris had gotten his file mixed up with someone else’s?

His phone rang and since only one person had this number, he flipped it open and said, “Michael?”

“Hi. What are you doing?”

“Cleaning up some.”

## *CAR WASH*

“What are you going to have for dinner?” Michael asked.

“I don’t know. Chicken?”

“That’s good. And?”

Kevin scratched his leg, his gaze still on the eviction papers in hand. “Nothing.”

“You need to have a vegetable, Kevin. Even a salad.”

“What are you my mother? Actually forget that, she didn’t even bug me about eating vegetables.”

“Hmm. Listen, Kevin, I called because I’m not going to be able to get away to see you tonight. Got a crazy case right now and I’m going to have to work late.”

“Okay.”

“So, I’ll see you tomorrow, all right?”

“Sure.” Kevin forced himself to ask, “Hey, Michael, can I ask you something?”

“Yes, but make it fast. I’m about to go into a meeting.”

“Do-do you know anything about my apartment—”

He could hear another voice and then Michael said, “Kevin, I have to go now. Can this wait until tomorrow?”

Kevin bit his lip and sighed. “Okay, yeah.”

“Talk to you soon.”

“Bye—”

Michael had already hung up.

## CHAPTER 5

“Mr. Lewis wants to have a meeting after work with all the employees,” Gabby told Kevin two days later at the car wash just before two o’clock.

Kevin was taking a short break inside the cashier’s booth. He’d just filled a cup with some coffee. “What? Why?”

She shrugged. “He didn’t say. Just said it was important and mandatory for all employees.”

Kevin sipped at the bitter brew. “And you don’t have any clues?”

“None. He was acting kind of weird though.” Gabby chuckled at his raised eyebrow. “I mean even weird for old man Lewis.”

## CAR WASH

“Um. Okay. I’ll see you later.” He stepped out of the booth and punched in Noah’s work number.

“This is Noah.”

“Hey, girlfriend,” Kevin said cheerfully.

“Hi, Kev. I was about to have the police search for you.”

“Yeah, sorry, I’ve been out of touch so much lately. That’s why I’m calling you. I have a new cell number to give you.”

“Great, give it to me.”

Kevin gave him the new number. “Anyway, I’m just on a short break. Maybe we can reschedule dinner at your place real soon.”

“Absolutely.” Noah paused for a moment, then said, “Are you all right, Kev?”

“Of course. Maybe when I come for dinner I can even...bring someone,” Kevin said, wondering himself if that would be true.

Michael acted on the phone like he wanted to continue seeing Kevin, but he wasn’t sure how long that would last. Two days in a row he’d called Kevin and said he couldn’t see him because of work. Some divorce case was taking up all his time. The call last night when Kevin got home from work had been very brief. Kevin still hadn’t had the chance to ask him about the apartment.

Really, for all he knew Michael calling him and telling him he had to work late was his way of easing out of seeing Kevin. Sort of like, *I’ll call you*, but then they never do. He couldn’t imagine Michael would pay the rent on his apartment and buy him a phone and food if that were the case, but Kevin never



## *CAR WASH*

had fully understood Michael Bennett. He didn't know for sure Michael had paid for the apartment, but unless it was a mistake there was no other explanation. He only hoped he would actually get to speak to Michael about it.

"Kevin," Noah said loudly.

"Oh, sorry, sort of got lost in thought. What were you saying?"

"You said maybe you could bring someone. Are you actually seeing someone?"

Kevin smiled at the incredulous tone in his friend's voice. "It's not like I've never had a boyfriend, Noah."

"Well, it's been a while. And you're not actually counting Raphael as a boyfriend, are you?"

"I wasted several weeks of my life on him, doesn't that count?"

Noah snorted. "I guess. So, do you have a boyfriend?"

"I don't know, really."

"How can you not know?"

Kevin glanced at his watch and realized his break was over and he'd better get back to work before Mr. Lewis took note. "It's a long story and I can't get in to it right now. I'll call you later."

"You'd better."

"I will," Kevin promised. "Say hi to Charlie for me. Bye."

Kevin slipped the phone into his back pocket and returned to work, his stomach fluttering nervously about whatever Mr. Lewis planned to say to the staff.

## *CAR WASH*

\* \* \*

Kevin stood next to Gabby among the group of car wash employees just after closing. He twisted his hands while he waited for their boss to speak.

Mr. Lewis stood at the top of the group, near the vacuums, sort of positioned so he could seem to be looking down at them. That's the way it appeared to Kevin anyway. He let his imagination go a bit and imagined the man wearing a diamond tiara. The image was so absurd, Kevin couldn't stop a laugh from escaping.

Gabby glanced at him quickly, her eyes wide and curious, which only made him laugh more.

"Hush," she said.

He bit the inside of his cheek when he noticed Mr. Lewis looking pointedly in his direction.

"Gabby, can you join me up here? I'll need you to tell them in Spanish what I'm saying," Mr. Lewis said.

Gabby nodded and headed over to stand next to the boss.

"I've owned this car wash for about ten years now and I've had some ups and downs," Mr. Lewis said. His chest was all puffed up like he was giving his acceptance speech in an election or something. "So, anyway, I've decided to retire." He paused for dramatic effect.

Kevin frowned. What did that mean?

"I received an offer to buy the car wash and it's one I just couldn't refuse." Mr. Lewis chortled. "Obviously, some details have to be ironed out before the sale can go through, but it's already in the works. Until then things will remain as

## *CAR WASH*

they are, but once the new owner takes over, well, I'm not sure what his intentions are. All right, that's it. I don't know how long it will take, but I'll let everyone know as it gets closer."

Gabby repeated everything he'd said to those who didn't speak English. Everyone stood there stunned. Kevin was pretty stunned himself.

"Good night, folks, and have a pleasant evening," Mr. Lewis said. His gaze stopped on Kevin, lingering overlong as far as Kevin was concerned, but then he turned and walked toward where he always parked his car.

Gabby walked back to Kevin. "Wow, I can't believe it."

"Yeah. How long have you been here, Gabby?"

"Seven years." She looked worried. "I hope whoever the new owner is won't tear it down or anything."

"Me, too."

She sighed. "You want a ride home, Kevin?"

"I don't want you to have to go out of your way. I know you have to pick up your kids. The bus is cool."

"All right. See you tomorrow." She waved and walked away.

Kevin realized with a little disappointment he hadn't heard from Michael during the day. Last night during the brief call, Michael had told him he expected to get away a bit earlier and would probably call Kevin at work. It never happened. He was beginning to feel like maybe he was getting the brush-off after all.

It was already well after six o'clock and getting pretty dark, so he figured he'd better hurry home. Before he could

## CAR WASH

make his way out to the street to head for the bus, Mr. Lewis's car pulled up next to him. The window lowered.

"Flaherty, get in."

"Um, that's okay, Mr. Lewis, I don't mind taking the bus."

"I want to talk about my offer." The old man licked his lips.

"You mean to sell the place?"

His boss grinned. "No, Flaherty. The one we spoke about the other day."

*Oh, God.* His heart plummeted. He could tell by the heat in his face he was blushing, too.

Mr. Lewis laughed. "Are you shy? Actually, I think I might have an even better offer for you."

"What?" Was that squeak of a voice really his?

"Get in."

Kevin's phone sprung to life in his pocket. Casting a wary glance at Mr. Lewis, he backed up a step and answered, "H-hello?"

"What's wrong?"

"Michael." A giddy sense of relief washed through him.

"Kevin, what the hell is going on? You sound seriously freaked."

"I'm just standing here, chatting with *Mr. Lewis*," Kevin said, his heart pounding hard.

"Fucking prick. I'm two blocks from the car wash. I was coming to pick you up."

"Good. Hold on." Kevin pulled the phone away to talk to his boss. "My ride's just about here, Mr. Lewis. Thanks

## *CAR WASH*

anyway.”

Mr. Lewis made a sort of growling noise and then the car window slid up.

Kevin tried to smile, then went back to the phone. He swallowed. “Thanks.”

“Is he still there?”

“Yeah, but I think he’s getting ready to drive away.”

Mr. Lewis revved the engine for a few seconds, as though in defiance, but then he pulled away and headed for the driveway leaving the car wash.

“Okay, he’s gone.”

“All right, stand by a streetlight or something. I should be there in just a few minutes. Bye.”

And just like that Michael disconnected again. Kevin decided he really needed to talk about Michael’s abruptness on the phone, too. Obviously the man wanted to be the boss of the world or something, but Kevin was used to being his own boss and it was starting to rankle.

Still he found himself standing near a streetlight while he waited. A few minutes later, he watched Michael’s Maserati approach. It was kind of hard to miss that car.

Kevin got in and had barely fastened his seat belt before Michael pulled away.

“I’m guessing you’ll want to stop at your apartment for some of your things,” Michael said.

“Excuse me?”

“I just figured you’d be staying over.”

“Oh, you just figured that, did you?” Kevin tapped his

## *CAR WASH*

fingers against the dashboard, trying to remain cool.

“What’s up? You don’t look so good. Had a bad day? I mean other than Lewis.”

He sighed. “Yeah. I didn’t hear from you all day even though you said you’d call.”

“I got busy.”

“Apparently. This may come as a surprise to you, Michael, but I’m sort of high maintenance.”

Michael smiled. “I know.”

“I also like to be the center of the universe or at least for whomever I’m dating. That doesn’t seem to be the case with you.” Kevin tapped his fingers. “I hate to be an afterthought.”

“You are no afterthought.” Michael’s hand cupped his knee, sending a jolt of lust spiraling through him.

Kevin grimaced. “Whatever. And then Mr. Lewis announced today he was selling the car wash.”

“Oh?” His fingers caressed Kevin’s thigh.

“Nobody knows if the new guy will keep it running or keep us or anything.” He bit his lip. “I hate to be out of a job again.”

“I want to talk to you about that anyway, Kevin.” He squeezed his thigh and then let go. “Let’s wait until I’m not driving to talk fully, but basically I’d rather you weren’t working there anyway.”

Kevin opened his mouth to reply, but found no sound coming out. He clenched his jaw and looked out the window.

“Kevin?”

“Let’s wait to talk like you said.”

## CAR WASH

When Michael pulled in front of Kevin's apartment without even turning off the engine, Kevin got out and got even more pissed.

"You know what? I think I'm too tired for this," he said, leaning into the car.

"Too tired for what?"

"This." Kevin waved at Michael. "I don't do this, Michael."

"Do what?" Michael frowned in confusion.

"Come running with someone parked at the curb waiting for me. Nor will I answer to honks and I don't appreciate being strong-armed. You want to have a conversation with me? Park your fucking car and come up to my apartment. Otherwise, good night." He straightened from the car and headed up the stairs, not bothering to see what Michael's reaction was. He was fairly sure Michael would follow him given the way the man had been touching him in the car. Or at least he *hoped* so.

When he got into his apartment, Kevin kicked off his shoes, then headed straight for the bathroom and extracted a foil wrapper and bottle of lube from under the sink and brought it out the dining room, leaving it on the table. He knew they needed to talk, but right now all he could think of, suddenly, was having Michael fuck him. It *had* been a few days after all.

A very short time later, there was a loud rap on his apartment door.

"Open the damn door."

## *CAR WASH*

For just the slightest second, Kevin hesitated. He wanted to open the door and wanted to jump Michael, but he knew he'd probably irritated the man, too. If he hesitated too long, he'd probably anger him more.

He opened the door just a crack and was only mildly surprised when Michael pushed it open hard.

"What the fuck?" Michael growled, slamming the door shut with the palm of his hand.

Kevin threw himself at the other man, pushing Michael against the door and searing their lips together. His fingers grasped the tail of Michael's pale blue tie, tugging him even closer. Their teeth clacked together, their mouths mashed roughly.

Michael's fingers threaded through Kevin's hair, tugging hard on the ends. He broke their bruising kiss long enough to ask, "Where's your bedroom?"

"Forget that. On the table," Kevin said. Without waiting for a response, he took the few steps over to the table and sat on it, his leg dangling off. He unfastened his jeans and pushed them down his hips and thighs.

Michael's gaze took in the condom wrapper and lube. He yanked Kevin's pants off. "Is this table sturdy enough?"

"Yes. Who cares? Just fuck me."

Michael reached up to remove his tie.

"No," Kevin said quickly. "Leave your clothes on. Just take out the necessary equipment." He grinned.

Michael's eyebrow shot up. "This is an expensive suit."

"You can afford the cleaning bill."



## *CAR WASH*

The man grimaced and for a moment Kevin thought he wasn't going to do it, but then, Michael unzipped his black dress pants and pulled out his erect cock and balls. "Happy?"

"Not until that's inside me. Hurry."

Michael tore open the foil wrapper and rolled the rubber over his dick. "Hand me the lube."

Kevin scooped up the bottle and handed it over. He scooted toward the edge until his ass barely rested on the table. He lay flat on his back, spread his legs wide, and raised his ass for the ease of his lover.

Michael slipped an oiled finger into Kevin, and Kevin closed his eyes, clenching around it. Another joined the first, spreading, probing.

"Ah, God, please."

"Please what, baby?"

Kevin bit his lip. His mind drifted off to a time when at fifteen he'd attacked twenty-one year old Michael, kissing him, pleading with him, begging him. And Michael pushing him away. He'd vowed then he would never beg anyone again, let alone Michael Bennett.

"Kevin?"

"I—"

"Come on, baby, tell me what you want," Michael urged.

"Michael, please, fuck me."

With a low, deep moan, his lover pushed into him. He stopped, for just a second, at the slight resistance from Kevin's body. Kevin grabbed the edge of the table, lifting himself up, trying to urge Michael deeper. A whimper tore from his lips.

## *CAR WASH*

“Shhh,” Michael said, soothingly. He thrust in deeper, all the way to the hilt. He stilled again, this time his arms linking under Kevin’s legs, drawing him closer, pulling their bodies flush so they melded as one.

It was almost too much, too intense. His lover stroked that particular spot over and over. Kevin heard a sort of keening cry and knew it came from him.

“That’s it, baby, give it to me. Everything.” Michael’s thrusts sped up, pushing impossibly deeper. “God, you are so fucking tight.”

Kevin reached for his cock, stroking up and down the length, his balls drew up, and release tingled deep within him. Michael angled up just slightly, hitting his prostate once more. It was enough to send him over the edge. He came, screaming his lover’s name.

Michael pumped a few more times before tensing and roaring his own release. After a moment, he withdrew and leaned down to place a gentle kiss on Kevin’s lips.

He felt like he was made of gelatin. “I don’t think I can move.”

“I’ll be right back.” Michael disappeared and Kevin had no idea where he went. A minute or so later he returned with a wet, warm cloth to wipe Kevin clean. Then he helped him sit up and handed him his jeans. Kevin jumped down from the table and pulled on the pants.

“Are you hungry?” Michael asked, pulling him into his arms. He rested his chin on the top of Kevin’s head.

“Yeah.”

## *CAR WASH*

“All right. Let’s make something to eat and then we’ll have that talk.”

Kevin swallowed, feeling unexpectedly nervous. He nodded, but didn’t move out of Michael’s arms yet.

“You okay, babe?”

“Yeah, sure. Let’s make dinner.” Kevin pulled away and gave him a smile.

\* \* \*

Michael watched Kevin dig into his kitchen cabinets looking for pots and pans to use for cooking. He’d told Michael he didn’t really need his help.

“Hey, do you mind if I make a quick call?”

Kevin shrugged.

He decided that was all the answer he would get. Kevin still seemed pretty agitated and touchy. He glanced toward the balcony and went outside. He wanted to check on his car anyway. This wasn’t a bad neighborhood, but a car like his might draw too much attention. He punched the speed dial for his brother.

“It’s about time you called me back,” Danny said by way of greeting.

“Yeah, sorry. Things have been crazy. Client’s wife is trying to claim he abused her to get extra money out of the settlement.” He paused and leaned over the rail. “And other things have been occupying me, too.”

“Other things? Are you still seeing Kevin Flaherty?”

“Uh-huh. I’m with him now. Well, he’s inside making

## CAR WASH

dinner.”

“Making dinner?” Danny’s voice sounded incredulous. “Are you setting up house or something?”

“Maybe.”

“Maybe?”

“What are you a parrot?” Michael didn’t see anyone around his car. He sighed. “I like him.”

“You like him like him?” Danny asked, his voice distinctly amused.

He gritted his teeth. “Yes.”

“Wow, who knew? I never thought, after the way things ended, you and Kevin would ever end up together.”

“Well, we haven’t *ended up* together yet,” Michael admitted. “I’m sort of still working on that.”

“You mean you haven’t slept with him?”

Michael snorted. “Of course I have. I meant we’re not living together yet.”

There was a long pause on the other end and he almost thought they’d been disconnected.

“So,” Danny finally said, “you’re actually considering that?”

“I told you, I like him.”

“Yeah, but you *really* like him. After what happened with you and Felix I never thought you’d get serious again.”

“Believe me Kevin and Felix have nothing in common other than both being gay.”

“You’re moving pretty fast though.”

He shrugged. “It’s not like we were strangers. I always

## *CAR WASH*

liked Kevin.”

“And he sure as hell liked you. So, then, what’s the problem? How come you haven’t brought him to the folks to re-introduce him to the fold and all that?”

Michael glanced toward the apartment. “He’s sort of prickly.”

Danny laughed. “He always was.”

He smiled. “Yeah, but I think it’s gotten worse. He’s something of a drama queen. Not all the time. Just sort of comes and goes. Right now it’s definitely the vibes he’s giving out. In fact, I’m probably pissing him off right now being on the phone too long.”

“All right. I’ll let you go, but call me tomorrow and let me know if I need to buy you two a house warming gift.”

“Bye, Danny,” Michael said pointedly and hit the End Call button.

## CHAPTER 6

Michael slid the door open and stepped back into the apartment. Kevin stood leaning against the kitchen bar, his arms crossed defensively in front of his chest.

“Need any help?”

“I told you before, no.” Kevin just stared, his gorgeous blue eyes solemn. Hardly seemed like the same guy who’d just been begging him.

“What are we having?” Michael decided to act casual. He already knew he needed to tread cautiously against this particular aspect of Kevin’s personality. He’d known it before when Kevin was a teen. He’d already become reacquainted with it since meeting up with Kevin recently.

## *CAR WASH*

“Chicken and mushroom pie.”

“Yum. Sounds good.” He was trying to lighten the mood, but it seemed pretty clear Kevin wasn’t going for it. The man just continued to stare at him. “Okay, spit it out. The surly act is starting to get to me.”

Kevin nodded. “Okay. Did you pay the rent on my apartment?”

“Yes.” He saw no reason to lie about it. He’d pay the rent again.

“Why? I can’t afford to pay you back.”

“I didn’t ask you to,” Michael responded. “I didn’t want you to worry or stress out about it, Kevin. I knew it was bothering you.”

“Yeah, but you didn’t even pay just the back rent, but a month in advance. What’s going to happen after that when I can’t afford it again?”

Michael didn’t think this was the time to tell Kevin he hoped he wouldn’t need the apartment anymore because he’d be living at Michael’s place. Kevin didn’t seem like he’d be very receptive to the idea at the moment.

Instead he said, “Don’t worry about that right now.”

“Easy for you to say,” Kevin muttered. He sighed and relaxed his stance just a little. “How did you make that happen so fast, anyway?”

“I went to law school with one of the partners there.”

“And what about the car wash? What am I going to do if the new owner doesn’t want me to work there or whatever? I don’t want to be out of another job.” He was almost pouting

## *CAR WASH*

and, if Michael wasn't afraid of Kevin's reaction, he would have kissed that pout right off his mouth.

"Well, actually I have another job for you anyway."

The blue eyes narrowed. "What?"

"You did office work before you were laid off, didn't you?"

"Uh-huh."

"My firm needs office help. It's just mail, filing and doing computer work, but it will definitely pay you a lot more than the car wash. You can start Monday. Until you can afford transportation, and by that I mean a car not a motorcycle, you can ride with me." Michael waited for the fireworks. He could practically see sparks shooting out of those intense eyes.

"And now you're telling me, like you can, not to get another bike?" Kevin asked, his voice very neutral.

Somehow the calmer Kevin was a little more bothersome. "I'm not telling you that you can't get a motorcycle, I am strongly advising against it. I told you, they aren't safe. Before I got into family law I did some accident work and most of my cases involved motorcycle accidents. Whether they were the fault of the rider or not, they mostly ended badly."

Kevin shifted from one leg to the other, but otherwise kept up the calm façade. And Michael knew it was fake. He could see the emotions churning in Kevin's eyes.

"I don't wear suits."

"You won't have to wear a suit. Just business casual. No ratty jeans or shirts," he said easily. Michael smiled. "And you wouldn't have had to worry about losing your job at the car



## CAR WASH

wash. I know the new owner pretty well.”

Kevin moved away from the bar and took an almost menacing step toward him. “Okay, what? What does *that* mean?”

Michael decided that perhaps now hadn’t been the time to divulge that information, but, in for a penny, in for a pound. “I’m the one who is purchasing the car wash.”

“What the fuck?” The calm shattered and the dramatics arrived. Kevin’s fists clenched. “Why? Why would you do that, Michael?”

“I didn’t want you working for that scumbag.” He shrugged. He couldn’t believe, frankly, it wasn’t obvious.

“Oh, my God, what are you, some kind of stalker freak?”

Michael winced. *That* hurt. “No.”

“Well, I’m not Cinderella and you sure the hell aren’t my fairy godmother. You can’t just wave your magic wand and make all my problems go away.”

“I don’t see why not.”

Kevin had been pacing back and forth in front of the kitchen bar, but now he stopped right in front of Michael. “If you aren’t a stalker then what do you call it? You paid my apartment, you bought where I worked, and now you want me to work at your firm. What? So you can keep an eye on me?”

He nearly rolled his eyes at the drama, but fought against it. “I told you. I paid the rent because I didn’t want you to stress out and worry about being homeless. I want you to work at my firm because it’s a better job and it pays more. There’s nothing nefarious there, Kevin.”

## CAR WASH

“What about the car wash?” Kevin bit his lip.

“I didn’t want you working for Lewis. He wanted to make you have sex with him for money.”

“Isn’t that what you’re doing?”

“*What?*” Okay, now his own calm, reasonableness slipped a bit.

“It’s the same thing, isn’t it? You’re basically paying me to sleep with you. It’s just wrapped up in a prettier picture. The apartment, the job, all of that. You’re trying to buy me. Like I’m your kept boy.”

That threw him for a loop. He’d never imagined in a million years Kevin would view it in that light. He’d thought their attraction, their relationship—wherever it was going—had been mutual. He’d taken for granted since Kevin wanted him before, he still wanted him now. But now that Michael thought about it, he had been pursuing Kevin pretty hard and Kevin had been just letting it happen.

“I see. I hadn’t realized you would feel that way.” Michael turned away, gathering his composure. He was used to being in control. Liked it that way. He wanted everything in his life to fit neatly, the way he imagined it should. For just a moment he’d thought Kevin could be part of it.

He could feel Kevin watching him, but the other man didn’t say anything else.

He finally turned back to look at Kevin. “I’m sorry. I guess I have been pressuring you. I was under the impression you wanted to have sex with me.”

Kevin opened his mouth, but only a squeak came out.

## *CAR WASH*

"I never meant to imply you were obligated to because I was buying you things and offering you a job. What was the first night then? Did you think because I bought you dinner you had to have sex?"

"No, no. Michael, that's not—"

"Or were you still playing out your fantasy from when you were fifteen? You wanted to finally say you'd slept with me?" He was floundering here and he knew it. "What happened, Kevin? Was I not as good as you thought I'd be?"

"That wasn't what I meant at all. You know I wanted you. I still—"

"Well, forget it," Michael cut him off. "It's over."

"What?"

He nodded. "You heard me. I don't want you thinking you have to put out. You're right, I was being just like old man Lewis."

Kevin grimaced. "I didn't really mean that."

"Yeah, you did. I don't want you believing I think you're a boy toy. Look, I still want you to take the job at the firm. I'll even still give you rides there until you get some transportation. You'd have to take too many buses otherwise. But that's it, okay? Nothing else." His stomach was knotted and he felt bereft, but he didn't know what to do about it. He couldn't force Kevin to want something more with him. Hell, maybe he was starting to feel the way Kevin must have felt when Michael had rejected him.

Kevin stared at him, his mouth hanging open. "You-you don't mean that."

Michael swallowed. "I do. It's over, Kevin. Let's keep things strictly business between us." He glanced at his watch. "In fact, I should go. Thanks for the offer for dinner, but I'll have to pass."

"You can't do this." Kevin shook his head. "You can't just turn it on and off like that, Michael."

"Yes, I can," he insisted. "Listen, we were moving way too fast anyway. Or at least I was. I was pushing you and trying to make you be with me when you didn't really want to. I get it. Now that we've got it out of our systems—"

"Out of our systems?" This time Kevin cut him off. "You think I'm out of your system now? Is that what it was to you? Getting the stupid kid who had a crush on you out of your system? Me, too, huh? I just wanted to bed Michael Bennett the stud, right?"

"Maybe."

"God, you're such a prick sometimes."

That *really* hurt. "You said yourself I was trying to pay you for sex."

"I said a lot of shit. I was pissed, okay? If you actually think about it, you know very well I've been with you because I wanted to be. But now that we had a fight you just cut your losses?"

Michael nodded. Maybe it was for the best. He'd been pushing the whole thing too fast. Maybe he had been trying to buy Kevin's affection.

"Fuck you, Michael. If I'm so unimportant, then you're right. It is over. Get out." Kevin crossed his arms and turned

## CAR WASH

his back.

Automatically his hand went out to touch Kevin, but he dropped it again. His head was still swimming and his heart pounding too hard. He didn't know what to think or what to do, but he guessed he needed some time. He moved toward the door and twisted the knob. "I'll come get you Monday at seven forty-five."

\* \* \*

"Are you sure you want to be here?" Gabby asked him, reaching across the table to grasp his hand.

Kevin blinked and gave her his best fake smile. Really he didn't know why he hadn't gone into acting. He'd been good at it in drama class.

They'd decided to go to dinner after Gabby's shift at the car wash. She'd even come by to pick him up and her mom was watching her kids. So, great, now he was dating chicks. Okay, so he wasn't *really* on a date with Gabby.

"Of course, I do," Kevin lied. He knew where he wanted to be on Saturday night and no offense to Gabby, but it wasn't with her. "I'm sorry. I'm sort of preoccupied."

She nodded. "Boyfriend trouble?"

"I don't have a boyfriend." Man, he sounded really pathetic. No wonder Gabby looked unhappy to be having dinner with him. He picked up his menu and forced cheer into his tone, "What are you going to have?"

"I'm torn between the enchiladas and the chile relleno."

Kevin let his gaze wander to the waiter walking past their

## CAR WASH

table. He wore tight black pants and a short Mexican-style coat embroidered with peppers and chilies. Unfortunately, even though the man had a fine ass, Kevin didn't even perk up a little.

"I think I'll go with the shrimp fajitas."

Gabby popped a chip covered in salsa in her mouth. She chewed and swallowed. "I thought you were seeing someone. No?"

"It didn't work out." He'd gotten the words out without choking on them. He was pretty proud of himself.

The waiter stopped by and they ordered their food.

Kevin reached for his margarita and took a large sip. "You wanted to tell me some big news?"

Gabby smiled broadly. "Yes, I met the new owner! He came by the car wash today and he's going to make me the manager. Can you believe it?"

"*You saw Michael?*" almost came out of his mouth like a desperate plea, but he stopped himself in time, and said instead, "Wow, that's great, Gabby. I hope he's giving you a big fat raise."

"I am getting a raise. He said I knew the car wash better than anyone, having worked there so long. God, he's so much better than Lewis. I can't wait until the change is completed."

"Yeah, it's too bad I got that other job." He gulped down the rest of his margarita, ignoring the pain in his head from drinking something icy so fast. He wanted another one. No ten more. Anything to dull the pain of being the biggest idiot on the planet. One day he'd learn to keep his mouth shut.

## *CAR WASH*

“Are you kidding? That is so cool. I’m so happy for you, Kevin. Everything is working out for both of us.”

“Uh-huh.”

“You start Monday, huh? Are you nervous?”

Only nervous that he wouldn’t make a total fool out of himself and jump Michael and beg for forgiveness. “Nah, I can handle it.” He stopped the waiter and held out his empty glass. “Can I get another one?”

## CHAPTER 7

Kevin decided to wait in the parking lot of his apartment building for Michael Monday morning. He felt since Michael was picking him up for the job it was the least he could do.

He'd spent Sunday evening trying to pick something to wear for his first day. It made him a bit girly, he guessed. He chose a plain brown pair of slacks and a white button-down shirt. Total geek clothes as far as he was concerned. At least he'd re-touched the red streaks in his dark hair. He probably shouldn't be wearing the little crystal stud in his nose or the small gold hoop in his ear either.

Kevin caught sight of the Maserati just as he turned his wrist to check the time on his watch. Right on time, of course.



## *CAR WASH*

Michael probably timed it to the second.

The car glided to a stop next to him and Kevin opened the door.

“Good morning,” Michael said.

“Morning.” Kevin slipped into the seat and snapped the seat belt.

Michael gestured to a paper cup with a lid. “I bought you coffee. I don’t know if you like it sweetened or with cream, so I got the packages and you can make it the way you like it. There’s a breakfast sandwich for you in that bag, too.”

Kevin glanced down at the fast food bag at his feet. A lump formed in his throat. Even now Michael was trying to take care of him. “Thanks.”

“I’d appreciate if you wait until we get to the office though. No eating or drinking in my car.”

“All right.” Kevin looked out the window as Michael pulled out of the parking lot. “Isn’t this really out of your way?”

“Yes.”

Michael’s tone chilled him and Kevin hugged himself. For a moment the humiliation and loneliness from when he was fifteen reared its ugly head. He pushed it away as best he could. He didn’t want to go down that road again. He’d gotten past that, hadn’t he?

“You look nice,” Michael said into the awkward silence.

“I look like a dork. But I guess it’s better than the car wash smock.” Kevin sighed and leaned back. “When I worked at my old job I used to spend a lot of money on clothes. I went

## *CAR WASH*

out a lot to this gay bar in West Hollywood. I don't go there much anymore."

"Why not?"

He shrugged. "Well, transportation's an issue. I could probably get some people to pick me up I guess. Most of that crowd doesn't know I lost my job though. Most of them don't much care. It's not like they were good friends or anything. Anyway, I didn't usually have to pay for drinks because a lot of guys would buy them for me whenever I went there. To be honest I didn't always like the way I acted while I was there." Kevin toyed with the hem of his shirt, feeling stupid for sharing all this information with Michael considering things.

"Yeah, it's best you stay away from those kinds of places. Guys are looking for an easy lay and they'll slip stuff into your drinks," Michael said. "I don't like the idea of you going there."

Kevin decided it was definitely time to change the subject. "You didn't tell me how much this job would pay."

"How much did you make at the car wash?"

"Minimum wage plus tips."

"And at your old office job?"

"Sixteen an hour."

Michael nodded. "Okay. How about twenty an hour?"

"Twenty?" Kevin repeated.

"Not enough? How about twenty-two?"

Kevin's mouth fell open. "For filing and inputting and stuff?"

"Twenty-five? Whatever you want, Kevin. Just tell me."

## CAR WASH

He closed his mouth and looked out the window again. "Twenty's fine. Maybe I could look for a motorcycle this week. They aren't as expensive as a car and you won't have to keep giving me rides. Besides, I still have my pink helmet."

The corners of Michael's mouth curved up. "Pink?"

"Uh-huh. It's dramatic."

"That it is," Michael agreed.

Kevin waited for Michael to make another comment about how he shouldn't get a motorcycle, but this time Michael remained silent. Oddly enough it depressed him further. Yeah, he was definitely an idiot. He'd thought for a moment when Michael brought him breakfast maybe the man did care about him and maybe there might be a chance they could talk about things and see each other again. *Stupid.*

\* \* \*

The week had gone by pretty fast. Michael could hardly believe it was already six-thirty on Thursday evening and he was once again, as he had all week, driving Kevin back to his apartment.

Damn, it was getting frustrating. Michael had hoped if he didn't push it, Kevin would come around. Instead, as the week progressed he'd become more distant. That morning when Michael had picked the younger man up he'd come equipped with a MP3 player and earphones. He had the damn thing on now, too.

His cell phone beeped and he said into his wireless earpiece, "Michael Bennett."

## *CAR WASH*

“Danny Bennett.”

“Hello.”

His brother chuckled. “How are things going in the love department?”

Michael glanced briefly at the man slumped in the passenger seat. Kevin’s fingers tapped to whatever likely obnoxious music he played on his device. “I can’t really talk about that case right now.”

“Is he there with you?”

“Yes, I’m on my way home right now. The plaintiff is being...difficult.”

Danny laughed again. “I see. I shouldn’t laugh, sorry. I know you’re having a rough time.”

“Yeah.”

“Why don’t you just talk to him? I know, I know. You’re giving him space. It’s all part of the Michael Bennett strategy. It’s not working though. You’re going to have to do something. If you still want him that is.”

He sighed, his gut twisting. “I do. I’m just not sure it’s going to happen.”

“Well, hang in there and call me later when you can talk.”

“Okay, bye.” Michael looked over at Kevin again and cleared his throat loudly to get the man’s attention. Blue eyes glanced his way. “Want to grab something to eat? Some dinner?”

Kevin took out the earphones. “Can’t. I promised to call Noah.”

Michael’s throat clogged. Did Kevin have another man in

## *CAR WASH*

his life already? He forced himself to ask casually, "Noah? Is that your boyfriend?"

Kevin shook his head. "No. Just an old friend. Once I hoped..."

When Kevin didn't continue, Michael found himself prodding. "Once you hoped?"

"I had a thing for Noah for a while, but he never really knew about it or encouraged it." Kevin's full lips twisted. "Sort of like you."

"Kevin."

"Anyway, Noah has a hot boyfriend named Charlie. They even live together now."

Michael pushed aside the jealousy and said, "Okay, so no dinner. That's fine." He pulled up to the curb in front of Kevin's apartment. "See you in the morning, Kevin."

"Good night." Kevin waved and headed toward his appointment.

\* \* \*

It was almost four o'clock Friday afternoon when an email popped up from Michael in his work inbox. The subject line read "Leaving early."

The week had gone by surprisingly fast and the job was really easy. He'd seen on the paperwork given to him that Michael had settled on twenty-two an hour. Ridiculously high for what he'd been doing, but he didn't mind the work and the people there were really nice.

Kevin bit his lip and opened the email.

## CAR WASH

“I have a date tonight, so I want to leave early today. Be ready at four-thirty.”

For a second, his vision blurred. A date? Michael had a date? He found it hard to catch his breath and his eyes burned.

*Fuck.*

Swallowing his pain, Kevin picked up the phone on his desk and called Noah. Last night he'd told Noah everything. He'd gotten a big lecture about hiding secrets from his old friend, but Kevin had felt so much better. “Hi, it's Kevin.”

“Kev? What's up? You sound different. Are you okay?”

“No,” he admitted. “I...I really need a friend tonight. Can you—can you pick me up from work?”

“Of course. What happened?”

“It's stupid.”

“Tell me anyway.”

“Michael has a date.”

“Oh. I'm sorry, Kevin.” Noah sighed. “I'll be there as soon as I can. You can come over tonight. We'll make you dinner. Okay?”

Kevin closed his eyes, trying to not let his emotions get out of control. “Thanks. I'll see you in a few.”

After he hung up the phone, he typed a response to Michael.

“It's fine. I have another ride. Have a good time.”

He made himself hit send.

\* \* \*

Kevin accepted the beer from Noah's boyfriend, Charlie

## *CAR WASH*

Banks, with as much of a smile as he could manage. "Thanks."

Charlie nodded. "Are you sure you don't need something stronger?"

"I'd better not. I have a tendency to get weepy when I drink the strong stuff and I'm depressed already."

Noah came out from the kitchen and rested a hand on Charlie's back. "Everything okay?"

"Yes, you can stop asking me that." Kevin let himself check out the two men for a moment. They looked so easy and happy together. Noah with his all-American boy-next-door looks, and Charlie with his dark curly hair, deep brown soulful eyes and movie-star handsomeness. Still he knew Noah almost didn't get his happy ending with Charlie. "What's for dinner?"

"Pork chops, mashed potatoes and gravy, and green beans," Charlie answered. "I'll go check on it."

Noah smiled at his lover and then turned back to Kevin when he'd gone into the kitchen. "So what are you going to do?"

"I don't know." Kevin took a swig of beer. "I don't know if I can work there. I don't know what to do."

"Well, I'm still pissed at you for not telling me you got laid off and almost got kicked out of your apartment," Noah said. "But, listen, you can live in my house if you want. It's just sitting there empty now since I moved in here."

"I can't afford to pay much."

"You don't have to pay anything. The house is paid for. I'll also ask at my office. They might need someone."

## CAR WASH

“Hey, hon, can you give me a hand for moment?” Charlie called from the kitchen.

“Be right there,” Noah yelled back. He hugged Kevin. “Think about it, won’t you?”

Kevin nodded. “I will.”

“Be back in a second.” He gestured to the bottle in Kevin’s hand. “Need another?”

“Maybe. I’m gonna get some air.” Kevin smiled reassuringly and walked over to the front door. He opened it and stepped out into the balmy evening. From Charlie’s front porch he could see Noah’s old home a few houses away. Funny how Noah ended up getting together with the guy he grew up with. Looked like that wasn’t going to happen for Kevin.

His phone vibrated against his left butt cheek. Kevin pulled it out and flipped it open. *Michael*.

“Hello?”

“Hi.” Michael’s voice came out strained, raw.

“Are you all right?”

“No. You?”

Kevin closed his eyes. “No.”

“Kevin, I want to see you again. I’m sorry for our fight and sorry for how it’s been between us the last week.”

His heart pounding hard, Kevin whispered, “Really?”

“Yes.”

“What...what about your date?”

Michael’s laugh was bitter. “I didn’t have a date, Kevin. I wanted to get a reaction from you. I’d hoped you’d get pissed



## *CAR WASH*

at me or something.”

“We’re pretty stupid, huh?”

“I think so. Where are you?”

“I’m at Charlie and Noah’s having dinner.” Kevin paused. “Want to come here? I’m sure there’s plenty of food. And then, after, I could go home with you...” He held his breath, waiting for Michael’s response.

“All right, give me the address and I’m on my way.”

Kevin thought his heart would beat right out of his chest. He gave Michael the address, and then said, “Michael?”

“Hmm?”

“I’m sorry, too.”

## CHAPTER 8

Michael parallel parked his Maserati in front of the plain bungalow-style home with the address Kevin had given him. He got out and clicked the electronic locks and alarm. As he rounded the front of the car, the door to the house flew open to reveal Kevin.

His mood lifted instantly. Kevin still wore his boring black slacks from work, but he'd undone several of the buttons on his black shirt. Michael's pulse raced.

"Hi," Michael said.

To his surprise, Kevin flew at him, instantly drawing him into an embrace. The young man buried his face in Michael's throat. Michael's arms tightened around him.

## *CAR WASH*

"I missed you," Kevin whispered.

"God, that's good to hear. I missed you, too, baby. I'm sorry I'm such an ass."

Kevin leaned back to look at him, smiling. "I said some horrible things, too, but all that's over."

Michael ran his thumb over Kevin's plump bottom lip, suddenly anxious to get him home and into bed. He didn't suppose Kevin or his friends would go for that, though. Instead he brushed his lips across Kevin's. It was a tease, though. Definitely not enough. He lowered his mouth to the other man's again, deepening the kiss this time.

Kevin's arms encircled his neck, and he slipped his tongue inside Michael's mouth.

"Hey, hey, the neighbors might not appreciate you two making out on the front lawn," a man with dark, curly hair said from the porch.

Kevin blushed and ducked his face against Michael. He laughed and closed his hand over Kevin's and pulled him to the porch.

The man stuck out his hand at Michael. "Charlie Banks. I've already guessed you're Michael Bennett."

Michael shook his hand. "Yes. Nice to meet you, Charlie. Thank you for making room for me at dinner."

"No problem. Noah always says I make too much food. Come on in."

Michael followed Charlie in the house and he noticed, with no little satisfaction, Kevin didn't let go of his hand. Dinner couldn't go fast enough.

## *CAR WASH*

“Can I get you something to drink?” Charlie asked. “Beer? Wine? Wine Cooler?”

“Sure, how about a wine cooler?”

“Be right back.”

Just as Charlie disappeared into the kitchen another man came out. He was very well-groomed with short cropped light brown hair and a square jaw.

“Noah, this is Michael,” Kevin said.

Noah gave him an appraising look. “Noah Riggins. Nice to meet you.”

Michael couldn’t help but notice Noah did not offer to shake his hand. His lips twitched. Apparently he wasn’t all that popular with Kevin’s old friend.

“Dinner’s just about ready, so why don’t you two sit at the table there.” Noah gestured to the dining room table already set for the meal.

“Come on,” Kevin said, tugging him forward. “You can sit next to me.”

They seated themselves and shortly after Charlie came to the table with Michael’s wine cooler and plates of food. The other two men soon seated themselves and for a few minutes they all ate in companionable silence.

“So, Michael, I have a question for you.” Noah took a sip from his beer bottle and smiled.

“Okay.”

“Kevin said you cheated on your last boyfriend. Do you make a habit of that?”

“Noah!” Kevin yelled.

## *CAR WASH*

Charlie made a sort of choking noise that sounded like he tried to muffle a laugh.

Noah seemed unfazed by both their reactions. "Well?"

"Uh, hon, maybe it would be better to leave that between Kevin and Michael," Charlie suggested.

"It's all right, I'll answer." Michael set his fork and knife down. "I'm not proud of what happened with Felix. It was a difficult relationship." His gut twisted, remembering the old pain. "The short version is this. Felix was the son of a client I probably shouldn't have become involved with in the first place. He could be very charming, though. Anyway, we did become involved, eventually he moved in with me, and it became quickly clear he was a drug addict. Nasty stuff like heroin. He stole money from me. Had drug parties at my house without my knowledge. It was pretty bad. One night we had a big fight, I left and went to a gay bar. I drank too much and had a one-night stand with the bartender. The relationship was going down fast anyway, but that definitely killed it. I'm not proud of it, the guilt ate at me like you can't imagine, and I certainly believe I've learned my lesson."

"I see." Noah nodded.

Michael couldn't have cared less whether Noah saw or not. He was more interested in Kevin's reaction. Kevin was quiet and seemed pretty interested in whatever was left on his plate.

Charlie cleared his throat. "Why don't you help me clear the plates, Noah?"

"Okay." They rose, picked up dishes, and disappeared into the kitchen, leaving him alone with Kevin. Not alone enough

## *CAR WASH*

as far as he was concerned.

"Is everything all right, babe?" Michael grasped Kevin's hand, and ran his thumb over the warm skin there.

"Yeah."

"Only?"

Kevin met his gaze, swallowed. "When we had a fight, did you—"

"No, I didn't," Michael said. "And I wouldn't. Not ever, Kevin. I did learn my lesson with Felix and that was a different relationship and I was a different person then."

Kevin smiled a little. "Okay."

He sighed. "I know our fight last week has you thinking. The truth is, I really hate fighting. I know that sounds crazy considering I'm a lawyer and I fight and argue all day long. Maybe that's why it bothers me so much on a personal level."

"Michael, people fight sometimes. We'll probably fight again, to be honest." Kevin leaned over and gave him a quick kiss. "I'm sorry for what I said."

"I know. But there is some truth to it. I do want to take care of you and buy things for you. I can see how that could be perceived as trying to buy your love. I'd give you anything you wanted in the world if I could." Michael glanced away when he realized just how sappy that sounded. It was true, though.

"Hey." Kevin smiled when Michael looked back at him. "You do know it's normal to have disagreements sometimes in a relationship? It doesn't mean it's over or we hate each other. Right?"

## *CAR WASH*

“Right.”

“And another thing,” Kevin said. “I know you want to take care of me and all that, but you should talk to me about decisions and stuff that affect me. Okay?”

Michael nodded. “Okay, I will. Or I’ll try to.”

“I really want you to take me home, but we should help clean up. And I should probably tell Noah to lighten up on you.”

“He’s just protecting you.”

Kevin laughed. “Yeah, I know, but I’m a big boy now.”

Michael stood. “I’ll help Charlie with the dishes. He seems less hostile.”

\* \* \*

“Hey, sorry about Noah busting your chops,” Charlie said a short time later, handing him a wet plate to dry. Noah and Kevin were in the living room looking at some website on the computer. “He’s very protective of Kevin.”

“I noticed. I don’t mind. He sort of brings the protective instinct out in me, too. By the way, have you considered joining the twenty-first century with the rest of us?”

“Excuse me?”

Michael laughed. “I can’t remember the last time someone did dishes by hand.”

Charlie smiled and shrugged. “There’s usually just the two of us. Anyway, Kevin acts like he doesn’t care and that he’s always perky, but Noah knows he hides behind that. He came in here pretty depressed before you called him. Then he lit up

## CAR WASH

like the It's A Small World Ride at Disneyland."

"That bright, huh?"

"Yeah. Believe me, I have experience with my boyfriend's friends not liking me." He handed a cup to Michael.

"What? Are you kidding?" Michael couldn't imagine that. Charlie seemed like the nicer of the two as far as he was concerned.

"Trust me, dude, there are plenty of people out there who despise me." Charlie chuckled. "The truth is when Noah and I first got together I was a big giant jerk to him. I came very close to losing him."

"Really?"

"Uh-huh. I'm sure all his friends would dearly love for Noah to dump me." Charlie drained the sink. "But I'm lucky. Noah loves me. Listen, I know you're anxious to get out of here to have hot make-up sex, so go ahead and take off."

"Are you sure? We could hang around a little longer."

"Nah, go on."

Michael nodded, actually quite relieved. He knew Kevin might want to spend time with his friends, but Michael just wanted to spend time with Kevin.

\* \* \*

Michael glanced at Kevin, reclining in the passenger seat, as he took the freeway onramp. "You do know I'm taking you to my house, right?" He'd almost said our house, but decided it was too soon after making up to push it that far.

"I expected that."



## *CAR WASH*

“Do you want to stop at your apartment for your things?” He decided he would push it that far. He wanted Kevin to know he expected they’d spend the weekend together at the very least. They had some catching up to do.

“No, I don’t want to waste the time. I want to be naked and in your bed as soon as possible.” Kevin grinned.

“Sounds like we want the same thing.” Michael watched him for a moment, unable to completely push away his concern. “You look really tired. Are you feeling all right?”

Kevin sighed. “I am tired. I haven’t slept well all week.”

“Is it the job? You’re not worried, are you? Because I hear you’re doing great. Everyone really likes you and thinks you are very smart.”

“No, not the job.”

“You’re not getting harassed by the apartment people? Or that bastard Lewis?” Michael would tear them apart if that was the case. All of them.

“No, Michael. It’s none of that. I couldn’t sleep because I was upset over you.”

“Oh.” He reached over and squeezed Kevin’s hand briefly. “I’m sorry. I’ll make it up to you all weekend. You can sleep the whole weekend if you want. Well, other than when we’re having sex.”

Kevin laughed. “Glad you qualified that.”

“You’re not still worried about my cheating, are you?”

“Will you stop worrying? I’m not. Everything’s good. I just want to get to your house already.”

Michael grinned. “Sorry. I don’t know that I’ve ever had a

## *CAR WASH*

normal relationship before so it's going to take some getting used to."

"Really? Even before your screwed up relationship with Felix?"

"No. I dated and had sex, but I wasn't really in any committed relationships before that one." He took the exit for the canyon. "How about you?"

"I had a couple boyfriends for longer than a minute, but nothing serious. I saw this guy Tad for about two months, but we didn't live together or anything. He was bi-curious."

"Well," Michael said, blowing out a breath, "I hope you realize I'm thinking long-term here. I know we've only been seeing each other a short time and part of that we weren't together, but I want you to know, Kevin, I really like you. A lot."

Kevin wore a soft smile. "Good. I really like you a lot, too."

\* \* \*

By the time Michael got Kevin home and into the bedroom, they'd both already started removing their clothes. Kevin had pulled off his shirt as soon as he pulled the car into the garage.

Kevin stripped completely and made a beeline for the bed. He flopped down on the big fluffy comforter and rolled around. "I do love this bed."

"You're going to be spending a lot of nights in it," Michael promised. He stepped into the bathroom for the box of

## *CAR WASH*

condoms and the bottle of lube. His cock rose in anticipation of what was to come. A long, leisurely fuck. He wanted to take his time.

Michael set the supplies on the bed, then knelt on it, covering Kevin's nude body with his own. "Kiss me."

Kevin's languid blue eyes met his gaze and he parted his lips for Michael's kiss. He brushed his mouth across Kevin's, light, tentative, teasing. He loved those lips. Kevin's lids lowered and he pressed deeper, opening his mouth for the intrusion of Michael's tongue.

Michael framed Kevin's jaw in his hands, drawing their mouths hard against each other. His heart leapt and his pulse raced as Kevin's hands roamed freely down his back and over his buttocks.

He broke the kiss for just a moment, staring down at Kevin. His lover's eyes fluttered open and Kevin smiled. Hell, he was falling deep.

"Okay?" Kevin asked.

"Yes, very okay." Michael kissed him again, nibbling on his lip.

"Hey." Kevin stopped his exploration of Michael's body, his hands cupping Michael's cheeks. "You have any toys?"

He raised an eyebrow. "Toys?"

"Uh-huh. Like a dildo or a butt plug." Kevin's eyes were full of mischief. "Do you?"

Michael laughed and struggled up from the bed. "Be right back."

"Hurry!" Kevin practically bounced.

## *CAR WASH*

He padded barefoot into the bathroom and opened the cabinet under the sink. He took out a small cardboard box and brought it back to the bed. He handed it to an all-too-eager Kevin.

Kevin rattled the box, peering in, picking through the items inside. "Oh, cool! You have butt plugs in all sizes." He picked up a big fat one and stared at it and then Michael.

He took it out of Kevin's hand and threw it back in the box. "No way. You are not putting that one up my ass."

His lover pouted, but then giggled. He held up a much thinner one. "How about this one, babe?"

Michael glanced at it. "That'll work."

Kevin took the box and leaned over the side of the bed, displaying his ass, and stuck the box on the floor. Then he turned back to face Michael. "All right, this is how it's going to work."

Michael smiled. "Oh, really, brat? How is that?"

"You can wear this while I wear you."

He rolled his eyes. "Funny." He tumbled Kevin to the mattress. He crushed the younger man's lips under his, thrusting his tongue in to probe Kevin's warm, moist mouth.

"Mmm," Kevin made a sort of humming noise. He pushed up underneath Michael, rubbing his erection against Michael's bare thigh.

"Getting a little anxious?" Michael said against his lips.

"Well, it has been a week. Over really. And, God, you're really hot."

That sent a powerful jolt of lust from his rock hard cock to

## *CAR WASH*

his brain. "Ah, baby, you're the hot one." He reached between their bodies and stroked Kevin's length.

Kevin gasped and reached for the bottle of lube Michael had left on the edge of the bed. He still held the butt plug, which he now sloshed lube all over. When Michael tensed, anticipating pain, Kevin bit his lip.

"We don't have to if you don't want to."

Michael smiled and smoothed the frown lines from his lover's face. "No, it's all right."

"Have you ever?"

"Not really. I have those for the enjoyment of my lovers. But I'm willing to try."

"You've always been a top." Kevin nodded.

"Yes, I have. Have you always been a bottom?"

"Uh-huh. I have been curious though." Kevin kissed him. "If you are sure, lay on your back for me and bend your legs."

Michael did as Kevin asked.

"Spread 'em a little."

Michael laughed, but parted his legs. Before Kevin had a chance to ask, he lifted his ass just a bit. "Like this?"

Kevin's hands caressed his thighs, his thumbs tracing along the sensitive skin. He sat cross-legged in front of Michael's bent legs. He held up the plug. "Does it look lubed enough?"

Michael leaned up to check out the plug. "Hmm. Better stick a little in my ass with your fingers, too."

Kevin's eyes widened and he got all bouncy again. He grabbed the lube again and also tossed a condom packet at

Michael. "Put that on."

"You're getting a little bossy," Michael said. He tore open the wrapper and rolled it over his hard cock.

Kevin gave him a heart stopping smile and then wiggled his slicked fingers at Michael. He stopped himself from rolling his eyes at the younger man's theatrics.

A finger slowly pushed into him. Michael inhaled a little at the penetration.

"All right?" Kevin asked, his face worried.

"Yes, more."

Kevin pushed his finger all the way in and moved it around. "I'm going to add another." He did.

"Fuck." He gritted his teeth at the burn.

"Too much?" Kevin's voice was anxious.

"No." He blew out a breath. He peered at the plug, glad it looked considerably thinner than Kevin's dick. "Okay, I'm ready for that."

"You sure?"

"Yes."

"Relax, babe," Kevin said, placing a kiss on his knee. "It'll hurt if you're all tense."

Michael nodded and forced himself to relax. Kevin slowly—very slowly—began to insert the plug in his entrance. For a second he clenched up.

"Easy, Michael, relax," Kevin soothed.

The butt plug went farther in, past his muscle, the sting gradually going away. Kevin angled it just a little, sending a renewed jolt of lust through Michael.

## *CAR WASH*

“Ah, shit.”

Kevin grinned. “Good?”

“Yeah. Need to be inside you. Ride me.”

His lover re-slicked his fingers and inserted them in his ass, preparing himself for Michael’s cock. Kevin scrambled up Michael’s body, straddling either side of him. Their gazes met, held. Michael’s breath caught at the love he saw in Kevin’s eyes.

He gripped Kevin’s hips and lowered him down, his lover opening easily to Michael’s penetration.

“God, I do love that.” Kevin gasped. He thrust up and down on Michael’s cock, fucking himself hard and fast.

For a long time, Michael just let him set the pace, but then his own body reacted, his cock twitching inside, the plug in his ass moving with the motions of his body. He pumped up even as Kevin pushed down.

“Unh,” Kevin moaned, long and low. Cum squirted from his cock, dribbling over Michael’s stomach. “Michael!”

Michael’s balls tightened. He dug his fingers in, pushing into Kevin again and again. His release burst forth so powerfully he almost saw stars.

Kevin collapsed on him, lying on his chest, panting heavily. Michael’s arms closed around him, drawing him close. In a moment he would remove the plug and clean them up, but for now he just wanted to enjoy their reunion.

“You’re amazing,” Kevin whispered. “I’m so glad we’re together.”

“Me, too. More than you know.” He tightened his hold.

*CAR WASH*

“Man, I’m tired.” Kevin yawned. “I love you.”

Before Michael could respond, he heard Kevin’s soft snores. “Love you, too.”



## CHAPTER 9

*Two months later*

Kevin twisted his hands in his lap, glancing apprehensively at the large two-story house. It was a familiar sight. The Bennetts had lived there when he and Danny grew up together. He'd spent many days and nights there.

But never as their oldest son's lover.

Michael turned off the ignition in the Maserati he'd just parked in the driveway and turned to Kevin with a smile. He rested a hand on Kevin's bare leg. This being Independence Day, Kevin had chosen to wear flag shorts, a blue T-shirt and a red crystal star stud in his nose.

## *CAR WASH*

"Are you all right, babe?"

"Uh-huh. Just nervous."

"I don't know why. They're not strangers, Kevin." Michael squeezed his leg.

"Well, sort of they are. I mean, it's been nine years since I've been here. I was just a kid last time. And now...well." He shrugged.

"You're the most important person in my life," Michael said, leaning over to place a soft kiss on his lips. "Everything will be fine, babe. They always liked you before."

"I wasn't sleeping with their son then. Or their brother." Kevin sighed. "You lucked out."

"Yes, I did." Michael smiled, reaching over to tuck a lock of Kevin's hair behind his ear.

Kevin blushed. "I don't mean with me."

"But I do."

"What I meant is you don't have to really deal with my loser family. I don't have any siblings, Dad's safely losing his money to slot machines in Vegas, and Mom's probably praying for both of us now in Illinois. We never have to see either of them if we don't want to."

"Sweetheart, they're your family, I'm damn sure we're going to see them eventually. Now, come on, you're just stalling. We have to get out of the car."

"O-Okay."

Michael took both of Kevin's hands in his. "They will love you. And you know why?"

He shook his head.

## *CAR WASH*

“Because I do.”

Warmth and a bubbling happiness enveloped him. Kevin smiled. He wanted to hear the words. He knew Michael loved him, but this was the first time he'd said so. “You do what?”

Michael kissed him. “I love you.”

Kevin threw his arms around Michael and squeezed. “I love you, too.” He nuzzled Michael's neck.

“Stop that or you'll embarrass both of us when we go in there with full-blown erections,” Michael admonished.

Kevin instantly pulled away, mortified. No way could he let that happen. He opened the passenger door and scrambled out.

Michael got out from his side, locked the car, then came around to Kevin and snagged his hand in his and led him to the front door.

Kevin had tried to convince Michael to dress in patriotic attire similar to his, but Michael wouldn't go for it. The closest he got was pulling on a pair of blue jeans and a maroon T-shirt. Kevin had offered to sprinkle some of the white pixie dust he'd put in his own hair over Michael's, but his lover had given him a most emphatic no.

The door opened even as they approached it and Michael's mother, Pamela, stood in the doorway. “I was beginning to wonder if you two were ever going to get out of that car.”

Kevin blushed, but Michael merely laughed.

She opened the screen door wide. “Come in, come in. Your father's starting the barbecue. Danny's already on his second beer.”

## *CAR WASH*

Michael tugged Kevin into the house. He turned to his mother in the front hall. Kevin noticed she wore a red knit dress with firecracker earrings in her ears. He couldn't help but approve.

"Mom, you remember Kevin Flaherty. And Kevin, of course, you remember my mom."

"Hello, Mrs. Bennett," Kevin said politely.

"Come here, Kevin. Why so formal?" She pulled him into an embrace, much to his surprise. "My goodness, it's been ages. You've gotten so handsome, too. No wonder you won Michael over."

Kevin felt his cheeks go hot as she released him. "Uh, thanks."

She waved her hand. "Look at you. You are so adorable. You even put red streaks in your hair for the day."

Michael chuckled. "Actually, Mom, he always has those. But I agree, he is cute."

"Oh." She laughed, and then studied Kevin's hair. "Is that flour in your hair, honey?"

"No, ma'am. Pixie dust."

Michael rolled his eyes. "Yeah, he offered me some, too. Come on, babe, let's go find the rest of the family. You want a beer? Wine? Lemonade?"

Some time later, after they'd eaten their fill of burgers and dogs, Kevin stood on the backyard deck, beer in hand admiring the garden Michael's father carefully tended. The back door slider was open and he could hear talking and laughing from within. It had been a good day.

## *CAR WASH*

Later, there would be fireworks. Kevin knew the fireworks from the local high school could be seen from the Bennetts' backyard. He'd spent many Fourth of July holidays there.

Danny came up behind him and handed him another bottle of Budweiser. "You all right out here?"

"Yeah. Just remembering all the times we spent out here." Kevin nodded toward the big tree in the yard where once they'd climbed. "Remember when we begged your dad to build us a tree house?"

"I sure do. He never did, either. Probably just as well. He's never been that good with tools and stuff."

"I heard that," Mr. Bennett yelled out from within the house.

Kevin and Danny both laughed.

"So, this is a little awkward, huh?" Danny asked.

"Yeah. I'm sorry, Danny. That's mostly my fault. I shouldn't have stopped being friends with you just because of my problems with Michael."

Danny nodded. He looked a lot like his brother now, Kevin noticed, although not quite as good-looking and quite a bit shorter. "I understood then. I understand even more now. He tells me you're living together, too. I'm really glad about you and Michael being together. I never would have thought it would have happened, though."

Kevin smiled and took a sip of his beer. "Me either. Funny how quirky life can be sometimes. But I love him and he loves me."

"I know. I think it's great." Danny paused to drink from

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his own beer. "You are going to come up to Stanford for my wedding, right?"

"Wouldn't miss it." He held up his beer and clinked it to Danny's.

"Hey, you," Michael said later, coming up behind Kevin just as the fireworks were about to begin. He wrapped his arms around Kevin and pulled him close. "I have something important to ask you."

Kevin leaned back against him. "Hmm, yeah?"

The sky lit up around them with blue, red, and yellow fireworks.

Michael kissed the top of his head. "Will you marry me?"

Kevin froze, his breath caught in his throat and then seemed to stay there, clogging it. His fingers gripped Michael's arms tight.

Michael turned him around to face him. His brown eyes were intense and the fireworks reflected in them. "I love you so much. Whether it's just a ceremony or whatever the legalities are. I know I want to be with you forever. Please?"

Kevin's eyes burned with tears. He tried to get the word out, but it stuck in his throat. He cleared it and then tried again. Finally, he gave up and nodded, flinging his arms around Michael's neck.

Michael clasped him hard to him. "Good. And now you'd better turn around. You're missing all the fireworks."

Kevin nodded, kissed him, and then turned back around to face the sky. He still couldn't seem to speak, so he just leaned back against Michael watching. Never in a million years

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would he have thought he'd get to marry Michael Bennett. The man of his dreams. Sometimes the fairy tales really did come true.

"Hey," Michael whispered in his ear. "Tomorrow I want you to come somewhere with me. Okay?"

He tensed immediately. "Where?"

"Nowhere bad, I promise. It's good. From now on, it's always good." He squeezed Kevin. "Say it again, Kevin."

He knew what Michael wanted. "I love you, Michael."

\* \* \*

It was just barely light when the Maserati pulled into the car wash driveway. Michael stopped the car and they both got out.

Kevin wondered why Michael wanted to bring him there of all places. Maybe because that's where they'd met again after all the years apart? He didn't know. He waited.

Michael had brought his briefcase. He set it on the hood of the car, carefully Kevin noticed, and snapped it open. He withdrew papers and handed them to Kevin.

"What's this? A prenup?" Kevin joked.

Michael smiled. "Funny. No, Kevin. It's the deed to the car wash. It's yours."

His heart thudded almost painfully in his chest. "What?"

"I bought this place for you. It was always for you." Michael came to stand directly in front of him. "I want to protect you and take care of you always. Everything I have, everything I own, it's all yours, too. But, this car wash, I want

## *CAR WASH*

it to be yours only. It brought us together. If you hadn't lost your job and got hired by Lewis here, we never would have met again. I can't imagine how empty my life would have been without you in it, and I'm so glad I don't have to."

"God, are you trying to make me cry again?" Kevin laughed shakily. "This, this is so cool. I can't believe you'd do this."

"If something happens to me—"

Kevin hugged him tight. "Don't even say that."

"Shhh. I want you to be okay, no matter what. No matter what the laws are at the time or what's going on with family or friends, I want you to be safe and secure if something happens to me."

"I don't want to think about that."

"I know. And it will be a long time," Michael assured him. He tilted Kevin's face up to kiss him. "Love you."

"I love you. If I'm lucky, I'll go first," Kevin said fiercely.

Michael shook his head. "I couldn't handle that." He wiped a tear rolling down Kevin's cheek. "Anyway, this is supposed to be a happy moment. Want to go to breakfast?"

"Uh-huh." Kevin glanced back at the Maserati and then grinned at Michael. "Hey, have you ever thought about us having sex in your car?"

Michael looked horrified. "Are you kidding? I don't want sexual fluids on my seats."

Kevin kissed Michael's jaw. "Don't worry, babe. I know this car wash that will detail it, no questions asked."



## SHAWN LANE

Shawn Lane believes love and passion know no boundaries. Shawn writes both erotic love stories involving men in historical or contemporary settings and interracial romances between men and women. Shawn is always looking for new stories and new characters to create while holding down life in California.

\* \* \*

**Don't miss *Pulling Away*  
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*Noah and Charlie grew up in the same neighborhood. They'd always been friends, though never close. When Charlie is left alone after the death of his family, however, Noah is the only friend that sticks around after Charlie practically becomes a hermit.*

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*Finally, Noah's dream comes true when his friendship with Charlie changes to include sex, but each time they are together, Charlie pulls away afterward. Every time Noah tries to get through to him, Charlie grows even more distant. Then Charlie tells Noah's disguised Internet persona that he doesn't have a boyfriend, merely a neighbor with whom he has sex.*

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