



EXPOSURE

G.A. HAUSER

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Chapter One

“What can I say, Mona? He dropped out. After three years of law school, he just quit. Well, Lester and I knew it was too much to ask of him. You know Robin, he’ll always do his own thing. Do you believe him? Twenty-five years old and still acting like a little boy?”

“Dusty, you’ve tried everything. I don’t know why you just don’t wash your hands of him.”

“Because he’s my son, Mona. My son. I feel I’m responsible for him.”

“No. Dusty, I’m not going to let you keep punishing yourself for Robin’s actions. He’s not a child, regardless of how he acts. Stop picking up the pieces every time he gets into trouble.” A heavy sigh came from Mona’s end of the line. “Dear, he knows damn well that when the police call you to get him out of jail, you and Lester show up and bail him out. He knows all about the clout you two have in the courtroom. He uses it to his full advantage. Let him fall. He’ll never learn a lesson if you don’t.”

“Wait. I think I hear his motorcycle.”

“He still rides that horrible thing?”

“I have to go. I’ll call you later.” Dusty hung up and moved away from the telephone as if Robin would associate

it with her guilty conscience. Standing, fidgeting, Dusty tried to fix her hair and straighten her blouse, then busied herself with some bills as she heard the back door open.

When he stepped in, she raised her head to see him. Yes, she was biased because she was his mother, but he was so damn adorable, she knew that was the reason she always gave in.

~

Robin set his black enamel helmet on the floor by the back door, his black leather jacket on a chair. Only giving his mother's suspicious gaze a quick glance, he headed to the refrigerator to scavenge for some food.

"Where have you been?"

Rolling his eyes tiredly at the interrogation he received every day, Robin mumbled, "Out."

"What the hell do you do all day? You're not working. You're not going to school. How on earth do you expect to make something of yourself? Robin, look at me when I'm talking to you."

Slowly straightening his back, he glared at her and snarled, "Make something of myself? What the hell did you ever do other than get knocked up at sixteen and luck out years later by marrying a fucker with money? Don't talk to me about making something out of myself."

"Robin! Don't talk to me that way!"

"Just leave me alone." He poked his head back into the refrigerator.

"Fine! For your information, because of this attitude of yours, Lester and I had a discussion last night. He and I agree that if you don't get a job or get back into school by next September, you're out."

Meeting her eyes quickly, he asked, "Out? Out of what?"

"The house! This house." She waved her arms around.

He slammed the refrigerator door closed. "You'd throw me out? Onto the fucking streets?"

"You give me no choice. You're lazy, Robin. You

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should be more motivated to get out of here and find a job and an apartment.”

“Oh, screw you! You lived off welfare benefits my whole childhood.”

“I was a single mother in my teens!”

“Fine. Whatever.” He stormed out of the kitchen to his room, slamming that door as well.

Trying to calm down, Robin stood still in the middle of his bedroom and slowly inhaled a long, deep breath. When he opened his eyes, he was staring into the large mirror that set upon his rosewood dresser. His long, shaggy brown hair brushed the soft cream-colored cotton shirt he was wearing. The tail of that shirt was tucked into his black leather riding pants. He appraised his looks critically. “Christ, I am so sick of my life.”

If he was honest with himself he didn’t want to live with Dusty and Lester any longer either. It was time to go. Twenty-five was too old to be at home. He made a mistake. He should have tried to find work right out of high school instead of wasting his time in college.

Dropping back on the end of his bed, he rubbed his face wearily and wished he were motivated. But what the hell was he trained to do?

It was Lester’s idea for him to go to law school. He failed miserably. Was he stupid? Or just apathetic to the class work?

There was one thing he was motivated enough to do. He stood, dug through his nightstand drawer, and found a previously rolled joint. Lying back on his bed, he lit it up and inhaled the smoke deeply into his lungs. A feeling of lightness surrounded him. He needed to get a life. He just had to figure out what he was good for.

“Great speech, Kipp. With the election coming up next

November I think you should have no problem getting re-elected.”

Sitting back down at his place at the head table in the enormous banquet hall of the Sheridan, Kipp Kensington took a sip of water first before he replied, “Coming from you, Lester, it means a lot to me.”

“I mean it, Kipp, you have it all. You look great, your wife looks great. You tell the people exactly what they need to hear. What can possibly go wrong?”

The smell of cigarettes and scotch on Lester’s breath was slightly overwhelming. Kipp just smiled tightly and hoped, indeed, that nothing could go wrong.

A nudge from Kipp’s other side drew his attention. The reek of alcohol had permeated his wife’s breath as well.

When he tilted his head to her, she slurred, “They’ll want pictures. They always want pictures.”

“Just relax, Louise. You’ll be fine.”

“I need to check my face. Where’s my purse?”

As she dug around underneath her chair, Kipp hoped her intoxication level wasn’t too obvious. She had embarrassed him on more than one occasion by her drunken antics. Though she always promised him she wouldn’t drink, she never kept to her word.

When she nearly toppled over as she stood up, Kipp gripped her elbow to steady her. She immediately jerked her arm away and left the table. Like he was watching a train about to collide with a bus, he cringed and hoped she didn’t fall over on her way to the ladies’ lounge.

Lester whispered into his ear, “Is Louise all right?”

“Yes. Just a little tipsy. Nothing to worry about.” Kipp glanced around at the noisy conversations as the few hundred who were gathered began milling around the room between the conclusion of the speeches and the start of the meal.

“You should get her into rehab, Kipp. It’s not good for your image. She’s an attractive woman, but...”

“She’s fine, Lester. Don’t worry.” Yearning for a

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change in the topic, Kipp asked, "Where's your wife Dusty? I've yet to meet her. I'm surprised she didn't come here with you tonight."

"She's not a big fan of these meetings. I try to be selective which ones I drag her to."

"Oh?" Kipp lost interest in the conversation as he smiled and nodded at people who did the same as they passed him.

"Damn step-son is the problem," Lester muttered, sipping more scotch.

Kipp kept an eye on the entrance to see when his thin-skinned, alcoholic trophy wife would reappear.

Continuing his train of thought, Lester said, "Won't go to college, won't get a job; son-of-a-bitch is too lazy to do anything but sit around and get high."

Vaguely registering the conversation, Kipp spotted Louise making her way back looking slightly better than before she had left.

"Rides his damn bike all day, gets arrested at night when he picks fights in bars..."

"Hm? Sorry, Lester, you were saying?" Kipp stood as his wife took her seat again. Once she settled he sat back down politely.

"Just talking about my step-son. Never mind. Oh, Kipp, the photographers want you to go out for photos."

Nodding, Kipp took his wife's elbow to help her back to her feet. She glared at him behind everyone's back, then instantly smiled her prettiest smile for the camera as if she were on a catwalk.

As they were escorted out to the lobby, Kipp began to wonder what he really wanted out of life. He thought politics was the answer. Now, with the re-election looming, he just wasn't so sure any longer.

Glad to be walking through his door, Kipp loosened his tie and tossed his car keys on a table in the hall.

"You should be grateful I come to these events with you, Kipp."

"I'm tired, Louise. Can't we just give it a rest for tonight and go to bed?" Taking off his jacket, Kipp hung it up and then slipped off his shoes. When he glanced back at the doorway, Louise was giving him her version of the evil eye.

When did she turn into such a bitter woman? He remembered a happier time together. No, he wasn't "in love" with her, but she was a good companion and an excellent partner for what he needed. And what he needed was the appearance of a happy marriage for the campaign trail. She knew that. She used to be an eager and willing participant.

"I could ruin you." Her jaw jutted out as if she were some proud gamecock, but the wickedness in her demonic expression made it seem ridiculous.

"Again?" he sighed, sliding his tie out of his collar. "Do we need to go through this conversation every time you get drunk?"

"One comment to the press from me and your dreams of a lifetime political career are over."

"So? You would be out in the cold. Please don't threaten me, Louise. We made an agreement. Don't act as if this was sprung on you overnight."

"I must have been crazy to have agreed to it." She pushed her dyed blond hair from her forehead with the back of her hand.

"But you did. And it hasn't been all bad. You have enough money to go on fancy trips, wear expensive designer clothing, hobnob with the elite of society...please don't whine that you've been mistreated."

"I wanted a husband."

"I am your husband." He turned away from her and hung his tie up on a rack in the walk-in closet. He hated this conversation. It only materialized after functions where she drank in excess. At other times she was happy as a lark to

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flit around in either her Porsche or chauffeur-driven automobile and spend his money.

A sarcastic laugh escaped her throat.

When he looked back over his shoulder, she was gone. He sighed with relief and finished undressing.

After he was in bed with the lights turned off, he placed his hands behind his head and stared into the darkness, wondering, wishing...

Under his breath he mumbled, "It doesn't have to be like this...does it?"

Chapter Two

“Where are you going?”

“Out.” Robin picked his helmet up from the kitchen floor. His mother was making breakfast, wearing a pink robe and matching boa feathered slippers.

“Out where?”

“Just out.” As he shut the door behind him, he heard her shouting his name. Robin put his helmet on his head, inhaled the calm morning air, and straddled his Harley Davidson. As the engine ignited to a blast equivalent to a 747 jet, he felt instant satisfaction and relief. Pushing it off its kickstand, he drove away from the huge five-bedroom home, leaving behind the constant nagging.

Usually able to find solace in the ocean waves, Robin instinctively headed for the coast. As the land met the sea, he parked his bike and sat still, listening to the roar of the tide.

Resting his helmet on his leather-covered leg, the breeze blowing back his hair, Robin narrowed his eyes at the horizon and its calming endless line. Gulls dipped into the waves, gliding in the high air currents, effortless and free. He envied them.

Taking a case out of his jacket pocket, he removed a

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joint, stuck it into his mouth, and cupped his hands as he lit it up. Inhaling the marijuana into his lungs, he blew out a long, smoky breath and felt the stress once again leaving his body.

As the morning waned, people began to occupy the beach, taking advantage of the rough waves with surfboards and colorful wind surfing sails. A young man walked by, eying him.

Robin smiled sweetly, causing the man to pause and approach him.

“Hey.”

Robin laughed as he replied, “Hey.”

“Nice view.”

“It is. I’m enjoying it.”

“I wasn’t talking about the ocean.”

At the aggressiveness of the man, Robin widened his eyes in surprise. “Oh?”

The man looked around first, walking next to where Robin sat on the bike, relaxing with his feet up on the foot pegs. “I was talking about you.”

“I’m flattered.” Robin smiled shyly.

“Christ, you’re fabulous. Uh...you want to go somewhere?”

“Sure. Where?” Robin sat up and placed his feet back on the tarmac. “You want to get a cup of coffee?”

“Coffee? Uh, no. If you’re okay leaving the bike, there’s a little cave near a rocky outcropping right past that hill.”

Looking to where the young man pointed, Robin asked, “Rocky outcropping?” Taking his helmet and tucking it under his arm, he followed the man, imagining sitting on the beach and talking together. As they walked silently, Robin handed him his half-smoked joint and a book of matches. The man took it, lighting it up in the breeze.

Passing it back and forth while they walked, Robin tossed it away in the sand when the man gestured to a slight depression in the rocks that made a small cave. It was

obviously well known, judging by the graffiti and beer bottles littering the area.

Wondering why they needed such a hidden place to chat, once they ducked in, the man instantly wrapped around Robin's body and went for his mouth. At the consuming passion, Robin choked in surprise. "Whoa...I thought you wanted to just talk."

"Sorry, man, you really turn me on."

The leather of Robin's jeans parted at the zipper revealing his abdomen. When the man dropped to his knees, Robin felt reluctant to continue before getting to know him first, but a blow job was a blow job. As Robin leaned back against the rocky wall behind him, his cock was sucked expertly by a young man who had obviously had a lot of practice. Glancing down, Robin noticed the man was jerking off at the same time.

Imaging a cup of coffee and some breakfast afterwards to get to know each other, Robin once again closed his eyes and relaxed.

In his office downtown, Kipp went over his latest itinerary with Lydia, his PA, and nodded as he penciled it into his own diary.

"You're flying into Washington, DC, on Tuesday for the House Committee hearings on Wednesday, back Thursday for the Joint Rules Committee... Ah, oh, you have an appointment on Friday with..."

Rubbing his forehead, Kipp kept thinking of the rushing around and imagined time off instead but knew it was impossible at the moment.

Nodding, he gave Lydia an affirmative answer to let her know he was acknowledging her. When she was finally through, he looked up in expectation, imagining that she could continue to go on all afternoon. "That it?"

"Yes."

"Okay, Lydia, I've got it."

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“Anything else I can do?”

“No. Not at the moment, thank you.”

He waited until she left, sitting back in his chair, rocking it side to side as he tried to think. It was six months to the next election. It would only get worse from here. He had to find some time off. He just wished he had someone to spend it with. Louise was getting worse by the day.

Rubbing his eyes tiredly, he was dying inside. Celibate, hiding from his own shadow, what kind of a life was it? No one should have to be this alone.

As he pulled his zipper up, Robin watched the young man wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. “Uh, you want to get something to eat?”

A wry smile spread across the man’s lips. “No. Sorry.”

Robin followed him, carrying his helmet in his hand, his boots making deep impressions in the soft sand. “What’s your name?”

The man stopped and seemed to get aggravated by the question. “I have a girlfriend, dude. Sorry.”

Pausing to absorb the comment, Robin chased after him as he attempted to slip away. “What? You just wanted to give me a blow job? That’s it?”

When they reached the white cement sidewalk that separated the beach from black tarmac, the man replied callously, “I thought you were good looking. I don’t want a relationship, man.”

Watching him walk away quickly, Robin shouted out in frustration, “What the fuck do I look like? A sex toy?”

Though he was ignored by the man, two women that were passing giggled and responded, “Hell yeah! Ooh, baby!”

“Shut up!” he snapped at them, heading back to his bike to pout.

Kipp stood at a urinal, his mind wandering as it usually did, on his work, his home, his next trip...

An intern stood at the urinal next to him, and after greeting Kipp formally, the young man went about his business.

Distracted by the movement of his hands to his trousers, Kipp had to force himself to not look overtly and cause any suspicion to be thrown his way. It was bad enough the news was filled with politicians getting caught with their pants down, literally. He didn't want to join the ranks of the outcasts of society with his career in ruins. Trying not to attract any unwanted attention, Kipp finished, fastened his zipper, washing his hands in the sink. When he glanced into the mirror at the young man who was still standing at the urinal, he wove a delicious fantasy in his head, immediately disregarded it to stay in a safer place in his mind and left the bathroom.

"Your plane tickets, Senator."

Snapping out of his daydream as Lydia approached him, he took the envelope she handed him.

"Your car will be ready to pick you up at nine tomorrow morning."

"Thank you." Once she walked away, he glanced down at the paperwork and wished he had a traveling companion. Someone tall, dark, and handsome to play with in the expensive hotel suite while sipping champagne in the hot tub. Frowning despite himself, he stuffed the ticket inside his jacket pocket and returned to his office.

By three Robin was already inside a dark, seedy bar. Sacramento was full of them, and he had intentions of hitting each and every one before his demise. His gleaming motorcycle helmet sat on the scarred oak table, facing him, like a skull staring with blank eyes, as Robin contemplated a third beer. Tugging at the chain that connected his wallet to his leather jeans, he dug inside it to check his cash

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supply. When he looked up towards the bar in anticipation of standing and getting a refill, he noticed a man in his thirties, shaved head, heavy black Fu Manchu mustache, tattoos all over his neck and arms, and a nasty scowl accompanying it.

Wondering dully if he had a motorcycle as well, since he seemed like a biker, Robin avoided eye contact and made his way to the bartender with a five dollar bill at the ready in his hand.

Feeling a slight buzz from the combination of alcohol and cannabis, Robin used the bar ledge to prop himself up and waited to get the barman's attention.

"Faggot."

As that word made its way through his fuzzy brain, Robin blinked and turned to look at the scary man next to him. "Excuse me?"

"This ain't no gay bar. What are you doin' in here?"

"Get lost. Leave me alone." Robin waved at the bartender. "Excuse me, I'd like another beer?" He was acknowledged. Setting the bill on the counter, Robin felt the intense glare still permeating his skin and peeked over at the rude man. "*What?*" Robin implored. "Can't a guy just get a fucking beer?"

"I don't like faggots."

"No shit?" Robin laughed sarcastically. "What the hell makes you think I'm gay anyway?"

"All you pretty ones are."

"You think I'm pretty? And you're calling *me* gay?"

Robin laughed again and noticed the bartender coming towards him with his pint of beer. Just as he was handing the bartender the cash, the biker gripped him twisting him around. When a fist primed for a punch in the face came his way, Robin ducked and shoved the man backwards.

Instantly he was on the defending end of a raging battle. After giving a good slug to the man's cheek, the man threw Robin down to the dirty floor. He could hear the bartender shouting for them to break it up. Someone grabbed him by

the shoulders of his leather jacket and dragged him to his feet. Another patron had the shaven-head man in an arm hold, keeping him at bay. In fury, Robin broke free from his restraints and grabbed his helmet, storming out of the tavern and into the sunlight. Cursing under his breath in rage, he clipped the helmet to the sissy bar of his bike and climbed on the seat to ride sans helmet. Kicking the bike into its sonic roar, he ground his teeth and squealed the tires as he sped away.

The traffic was unbelievable. Kipp had been offered a driver but declined because he much preferred to be alone. Now, with the stress of the chronic jam, he wished he had. He didn't mind driving. He just hated sitting still on a freeway.

When the next exit came, he decided to veer off, hoping the side streets were clear and he could make better progress.

Exiting the ramp and merging onto a two-lane roadway, Kipp looked right and turned left quickly. Before he realized it, he was behind someone else who had stopped for another long line of cars at a signal and jammed on his brakes to stop.

As something hit his Harley from behind, Robin felt the bike lunge forward. To avoid crashing into the car in front of him, he turned the handlebars sharply to one side, causing the bike to fall on top of him.

"Fuck!" he shouted in anger, trying to get his leg out from being trapped under hundreds of pounds of metal and chrome.

"Oh, my god! Let me help you! Are you hurt?"

Robin managed to slide out from under the bike. With the help of the older man in a black business suit, he set it upright, shut off the engine, and wheeled it to the side of the

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road. As he assessed the damage to his beloved motorcycle, the other man pulled his Mercedes out of the lane of traffic and parked it behind Robin's bike.

Dropping down to sit on the curb and stare at the scratches in the chrome, Robin felt his throat close up and the tears coming to his eyes. It was too much. He couldn't handle anymore.

The distinguished man rushed to his side and crouched down beside him. "Let me call an ambulance. I'm so sorry. It's all my fault. I didn't realize the traffic had stopped."

Seeing the man take out his cell phone, Robin reached out to prevent the call. "No. I'm okay. Don't call anyone. I'm sure I'm over the limit, and I'll be screwed." Mortified that this refined man would see his tears, Robin tried to wipe at them discreetly.

After the shock of hitting the man on the motorcycle had subsided slightly, Kipp sat down on the curb next to him and looked at the bike sadly. "I take it it's your pride and joy."

"Yes."

Kipp stared at the young man's incredible profile and felt his insides burn. *Damn, you are amazing!* Kipp said, "Please, let me get it fixed for you. And I insist you get checked out in case you're injured."

"Didn't you hear me? I've had some beer! No! And I don't want to hang around here any longer in case someone has already called the cops about it. I swear I can't take one more thing."

"Please, let's go somewhere we can talk. I want to fix what I've done."

"Fine!" Robin threw his hands up in surrender as he stood off the curb.

Kipp took a quick look around the area. "Can you get the bike to that coffee shop over there?"

"Yeah."

Kipp waited as the man climbed on the Harley and started it up. The moment he was moving, Kipp hurried to his car and followed him, parking in the lot behind the café. His heart beating wildly in his chest, Kipp wanted desperately to get another look at the man and stare into his incredible sea-green eyes.

Meeting him at the door of the café, Kipp opened it and allowed him to go in first. "You want a coffee?"

"No."

"My treat. Please."

"Fine. Get me a coffee."

Nodding, Kipp watched as the handsome man walked to a table by the window and sat down. Instantly creating a fantasy about him, Kipp imaged they were having sex while the man was in his biker leathers.

Kipp was jolted out of his daydream by the barista asking him, "What would you like, sir?"

"Two coffees, please."

With a steaming cup in each hand, he walked to the tiny round table and set them down. "I didn't know if you liked sugar. I can get you some."

"No, it's fine. Thanks."

After Kipp sat down, he reached out cordially. "Sorry. Though it's a terrible way to meet someone, I'm Kipp. And you are?"

Taking Kipp's outstretched hand and shaking it, the other man said, "Robin. My name is Robin."

Not wanting to let go, Kipp gave his warm palm one last squeeze and said, "That's a very pretty name."

Robin's eyebrow raised. "Pretty?"

Feeling his cheeks heat up at his faux pas, Kipp cleared his throat and tried to get back to business. "I want you to get the bike into a shop and find out how much the damage will cost. Then I'll send you a check, cash, whatever you want."

"Okay." Robin sipped his coffee, blowing on it to cool it off.

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Kipp lost himself on Robin's mouth, licking his own lips in desire. "Are you local?"

"Yes. I live about a mile from here." Robin seemed to relax, stretching his long, shapely black leather-clad legs out under the tiny table.

Kipp eyed the posture and knew if he moved his knee an inch to the left their thighs would touch. It was something he was struggling not to do. "Great. That makes it easy. My office is close by as well. Look, I'm sure you get this all the time, but...Robin, if you don't mind me saying so..."

Robin's green eyes widened innocently. A contrast from the devilish leather outfit he was wearing.

"You...you're a..." Kipp reconsidered telling him how gorgeous he was, thinking it inappropriate suddenly. So, instead Kipp said, "Never mind. It's silly. So, tell me, what do you do?"

Robin leaned his elbows on the table as if making their conversation more intimate. "Well, nothing at the moment. I'm struggling with that. I quit law school, and now I have to decide what I want to do with my life."

"Quit? Why?"

"Look at me." Robin smiled sadly, opening his hands in a gesture of how obvious it was. "Do I look like a fucking lawyer?"

Biting his lip, his tongue, anything not to show this man how much he was salivating over him, Kipp assumed Robin was straight and had a Barbie Doll girlfriend who wanted a commitment and two point four children. "I don't know how to answer that question, Robin. I don't think lawyers have a certain look to them. Having charm and charisma is a plus in the business, not a minus."

Robin absorbed the compliment, sitting back to get a better look at this sharply dressed man. When was the last time he had an intelligent conversation with anyone? When

was the last time someone didn't want him immediately in the sack and yearned for conversation? "You think I'm charming?"

"Well, I've only just met you, but there is something special about you."

Smiling, trying to be humble in the wake of such outstanding praise coming from someone in a sharp designer business suit, Robin whispered, "It's funny how things happen."

"Oh?" Kipp's blue eyes sparkled with a wild light.

"I don't know. Never mind. It's stupid. Anyway, what do you do?" Robin leaned back across the tiny table again to be near Kipp, to catch a sniff of that enticing cologne he was wearing.

"Me? Oh, uh, nothing much. Just business..."

Nodding, respecting his need for discretion, Robin sighed deeply as he stared into Kipp's handsome face.

"Are you sure you're all right? That bike weighs a ton and it fell on top of you. I'm worried about you."

Rubbing his thigh, Robin replied, "I may get a bruise. Nothing's broken. I can tell that because I feel fine. Just a little tender on the muscle where the weight landed on me. I'm sure it's okay."

"You know..." Kipp leaned across the table so they were almost nose to nose. "You should have finished law school. I can tell you're an extremely intelligent individual. Any chance you can be tempted back to the books?"

His cheeks heating up, Robin chuckled softly, "Maybe if I had someone like you in my life that encouraged me rather than nagged me."

Kipp sat up, appearing surprised. "No one in your life encourages you? No lucky lady?"

Robin's blush didn't let up as he shook his head. "No. No one at the moment."

Kipp couldn't believe Robin didn't have a string of

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women attached to him. Was the attraction he felt mutual? Or just wishful thinking? “If you need someone in your life to encourage you, Robin, I would love to be that someone.”

“Really?” Robin blinked his eyes wide.

“Yes. I think it’s a person’s job to encourage others and give them the confidence they need to succeed. Why not? Do we have to be a drain on society? Always sucking the life out of it? Can’t a man do something nice for his fellow man?”

“Wow. You are so cool. Christ, Kipp, do you mean it? I mean, can I call you just to talk?”

“Of course you can.” Kipp thought about taking one of his business cards out of his wallet, wondering if the words “Senator Kensington” would petrify Robin. Instead, he slid his pen out of his pocket and wrote his private cell phone number down on a napkin.

When he handed it over, Robin said, “You sure your family won’t mind?”

“I only have a wife, and believe me, she doesn’t care what I do.”

“Oh? Not good at home?” Robin folded the napkin neatly.

“You don’t want to hear any of that, believe me.” When Robin reached out to touch his hand, Kipp froze. Those lovely long fingers caressed his skin gently.

Robin whispered, “I do, Kipp. I’m a good listener. You can tell me anything.”

As Robin’s warm hand lightly massaged his knuckles, Kipp began to go mad for him. Moving his leg finally, Kipp rested his knee against Robin’s thigh, waiting to see what effect it had.

Robin was hard as a rock. He didn’t want to give Kipp the idea he was attracted to him physically. After all, Kipp was a respectable businessman, married, successful. What would he want with a gay fling? And as far as Robin was

concerned, he'd had enough meaningless sex in his life. He wanted love. Deep, meaningful love. The earlier encounter with the quick blow job and the sharp, uncaring goodbye that came after, wounded him. It was so typical of the kind of contacts he'd had lately with men. It was maddening him. Was it too much to ask for someone to get to know him and genuinely like him?

Robin had never considered the possibility of an older man. Was that what was wrong with his previous attempts at love? The men he attracted were young and uninterested in a committed relationship. Would a mature man treat him differently?

When Kipp's leg rested against his thigh, Robin assumed it to be accidental, or a friendly gesture. He didn't want to get his hopes up and fall for this man. Did he?

Knowing the silence between them was growing as neither seemed to be able to touch and speak simultaneously, Robin felt frozen in place. Connected at the hand and leg, he didn't want to move or pull away, wondering when Kipp would. Both their gazes shifting between the connection of their hands on the table top, and their eyes, Robin felt his skin ignite and his heart rate began to climb. "Any time, Kipp. I mean that."

"Do you have a number where I can contact you?"

At the request, Robin had to move his hand. He reached out for that pen and slid his napkin in front of him to scribble on. "I still live at home. Maybe I can call you."

"Do you have a mobile phone number?" Kipp took the pen back when Robin handed it to him.

"No. I can get one. I will get one." Robin imagined hitting his step-dad Lester up for the money. When Kipp checked his watch, Robin asked, "You have to get home?"

"No. Not for a while yet. Why?"

Feeling shy again under the scrutiny of Kipp's intelligent stare, Robin shrugged, not answering.

"You...you want to catch some dinner somewhere?"

"Only if you're okay with it. I don't want to keep you

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from anything.” Robin moved his leg to press harder against Kipp’s knee, trying to convince him.

“Let me just make one quick call.”

Nodding, Robin watched as Kipp removed his cell phone from his jacket pocket and dialed, holding up his finger to Robin to be quiet.

In awe, Robin listened to one side of the conversation.

“Louise? It’s me. Look, something’s come up and I’ve got to work late. No. I don’t know. No, I’ll grab something here. No. Only a few hours.” Kipp sounded aggravated. “Yes, I do leave tomorrow morning for Washington. The car’s coming around nine. Okay? Good. See you later.”

When he hung up, Robin asked, “You’re leaving tomorrow?”

“Yes. It can’t be helped. Don’t worry.”

“Oh, no problem.” But he felt slightly hurt to be abandoned so quickly.

“Now, what would you like for your dinner? My treat. You have any favorite restaurants?”

“Uh...anything is fine. You choose.”

Moving out his chair, Kipp stood and waited.

Missing the warmth of Kipp’s leg, Robin rose up and followed him to the door. Once they were outside, Kipp said, “I know a small out of the way place that does great seafood. You want to leave the bike here?”

“No. I’ll follow you.”

“Okay.”

As Robin walked to his motorcycle, Kipp stared at his strut. The black hide hugged the curve of Robin’s ass and wrapped tightly around his long muscular thighs. Kipp wanted to strip everything off him and lick him all over. Chiding himself for lusting over a man most likely twenty years younger than himself, Kipp shook himself out of his trance and opened the door to his car. After a nod at Robin, he led the way to a secluded part of town where hopefully

no one would bother him.

Parking his car behind the tiny bistro, Kipp heard the engine of that powerful Harley and smiled to himself. *Not very discreet, is it?* He climbed out and watched Robin setting the bike up on its kickstand. When they met at the entrance, Kipp opened the door and waited for Robin to pass by, admiring his shape from behind. The scent of cooked seafood and sauce was divine as a host showed them to a table in the corner of the modest room. In the dim candlelight, they sat across from one another again and stared into each other's eyes like lovers.

After he set his helmet on the floor next to him, Robin took off his jacket and wrapped it around the back of his chair.

The waiter handed them each a menu. "Would either of you like a drink?"

A shy shrug was Robin's reply, so Kipp ordered a bottle of blush wine. When the waiter left them to decide, Robin's beauty kept distracting Kipp, and instead of making up his mind over the meal, he went into another fantasy deciding what he would like to do first if Robin was his to enjoy.

Clearing his throat awkwardly in the silence, Robin whispered, "What do you recommend?"

It snapped Kipp back to attention. He skimmed the selection quickly. "Lobster tails and prime rib steak."

"Okay." Robin closed the menu and set it down.

The waiter presented a bottle of wine. Kipp nodded, and the man poured two glasses. Before the waiter left, Kipp ordered the same meal for them both and handed the man the menus. Left alone once more, Kipp first scanned their immediate surroundings and found they were in no way going to be overheard, owing to the fact that the restaurant wasn't very crowded at the early hour. About to say something casual and unimportant, instead Kipp watched Robin's mouth as he sipped the wine, licking his lips after. The act was so subtle it made Kipp go instantly hard. The need for this man was driving him crazy. How long? How

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long had it been since he touched another man? Law school? He had been depriving himself since that first year when he and his roommate had a tiny fling, then parted out of fear of discovery. After that his publicist recommended he marry quickly. Louise was located for the job. From then on a sexless marriage and celibacy followed. He was about to explode.

"You okay?" Robin asked, obviously spotting his pensive mood.

"Yes. It's just been a long day."

"Tell me about it." Robin sipped his wine again, setting the glass down.

"I have to apologize again for hitting you, Robin. I am so sorry."

"Hm? Oh, no, it's not because of that. Never mind."

Robin picked up the wine glass again to drink. Seeing some slight nervousness in him, Kipp softened his tone. "Robin, I'm here for you. I know we've just met, but trust me, I am a good man to confide in. If you have something on your mind..."

After finishing the last sip in the glass, Robin set it down again and shifted in his seat. "Look, like you said, I just met you. I've been hounded by narrow-minded people lately, and I'm afraid if I say something, it'll turn you off of me. Okay?"

Reclining back in his chair, Kipp folded his hands on his lap to consider that comment carefully. He knew what he thought it meant. He just was wondering if it was more wishful thinking on his part. "Narrow-minded?"

"Yes." Robin peered around him as if he didn't want anyone overhearing. A couple was being shown to a table nearby.

Again Kipp paused, then he hissed, "You mean, homophobic?" When Robin's cheeks went crimson, Kipp knew he'd hit the nail on the head. "Are you gay, Robin?"

"No. I don't know. I almost got my ass kicked in a bar earlier today because someone thought I was." He ran his

hand through his thick hair, pulling it back from his face. After he did, the soft waves fell over his forehead again, covering one eye. "No. I'm lying. I am gay. You want to leave now? Are you disgusted?"

Smiling warmly, Kipp replied, "No, Robin. I am not disgusted." He was so excited, he could jump up and pump his fists into the air.

Robin seemed to be deciding if it was okay to open up since that cat was out of the bag. Leaning his elbows on the table to be able to speak softly, Robin breathed hoarsely, "I feel lost, Kipp. Lost. I can't seem to find a direction in my life and stick to it. And as far as relationships go, I'm a total fuck-up. All I want is someone to relate to me. To share things. I want someone to cuddle up with at night and exchange secrets with. You know, someone who is so close to you they want to do things with you. I want..." He shut his mouth and sat back, looking around again as if he were embarrassed to be babbling about 'feelings'.

Kipp was intrigued. "Why can't you find someone like that? I don't understand. You've got a lot to offer a partner. I can see that."

Anger flashed on Robin's face, followed by a look of resolve. He leaned back across the table. "Because they all think I'm some kind of plaything." Lowering his voice, Robin appeared to be struggling with the truth of his life. "Look, I know I'm not ugly..."

Kipp had to prevent the choke of amazement he was about to emit at Robin stating the obvious.

"But, Jesus, I'm a human being with feelings. I just attract one-night flings. Guys get what they want from me, then leave. I can't stand it."

Having a hard time hiding the fact that he was stunned, Kipp covered his mouth with his hand and stared as Robin began to fall apart where he sat. It was clear to Kipp this was a very serious problem Robin was dealing with and should not be trivialized.

Yet it was an odd dilemma for Kipp. Here he was. Fate

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had given him an incredibly gorgeous man who wanted a long-term relationship while Kipp was saddled with a pretend marriage he did not want. Life was very cruel indeed. “Come with me.”

Robin blinked and tilted his head in confusion.

Kipp repeated, “Come with me. Come to Washington with me.”

“What?” Robin gasped.

The waiter appeared with their meals before Kipp could answer.

Having to wait while they were served, Kipp was shaking with apprehension. Was he insane? Yes. Insane. Completely crazy.

When he could, Robin leaned across the table again to whisper, “Did you just ask me to go away with you? But you’re married.”

It was his turn to look around in paranoia. “No. Not in the way you think.”

“What other way is there?”

As the look on Robin’s face turned to suspicion, Kipp suddenly wondered if it appeared as a ploy to get them in bed together. They needed a more private place to talk. How could Kipp explain his situation over dinner with patrons moving in on all sides?

“It’s a long, sordid story, Robin. Eat your food. I’ll have to explain it after, when we’re alone.”

Giving a slight nod, Robin began eating his meal. He wanted to believe Kipp, to trust him, but what was going on? Backtracking over how they had come to this point, Robin tried not to get too excited, slowing himself down so he could think. This wasn’t the first ruse someone had used to take advantage of him. He was sick of being hurt and had promised himself he would proceed with caution from now on. But he wanted to spend time with Kipp. A man so distinguished looking and sharp it made his insides twist at

the thought of losing him. Losing him? He'd only just met him!

"I'm an idiot."

"What?" Kipp leaned over the table.

"Nothing." Robin devoured the delicious meal, all the while hoping this was not just a trick to get him in the sack.

They were just at the point where they were contemplating dessert or the check when a man approached their table with an outstretched hand.

As Robin gawked in awe, the man said, "Senator Kensington! So good to see you!" Whipping his head around to hear Kipp's reply in case this was a mistake, Robin choked at the information and froze as if instantly he would be arrested for lewd conduct.

"Stanley, how are you?" Kipp kept his cool, shaking the man's hand. "Stanley, this is my nephew, Robin. Robin, Stanley Olson, an old friend of mine."

Hearing the word "nephew" Robin kept his mouth shut, petrified he'd be interrogated and give up the charade.

"How's Louise? I hear your re-election campaign is running full steam ahead."

"Yes. It's going well. But it's still a few months off."

"Well, good luck to you, Kipp. I'll let you and your nephew enjoy your meal."

Robin felt if he moved a muscle, he'd give something away. It wasn't until the man left the table that he was able to breathe.

"Senator?" he gulped in surprise. "Did he call you senator? You're Senator Kipp Kensington?"

Kipp flagged down the waiter and asked for the check, not looking at Robin.

After Kipp signed his credit card slip and they were walking out the door, Kipp nodded goodbye to Stanley. They passed him by, leaving through the exit to stand outside.

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After he set his helmet on the seat of his bike, Robin crossed his arms over his chest and gazed at Kipp, waiting for his explanation.

Casually, Kipp leaned against the door of his Mercedes and tilted his head for Robin to do the same.

Walking closer, Robin rested back against the fender and stared at him expectantly.

"I thought it would scare you off."

"You lied."

"No. No, I didn't lie. I just didn't think I should just blurt it out."

Robin's arms were still folded tightly over his chest. His attention moved to the people coming and going from the parking lot. He and Kipp were in back of the restaurant and secluded at the moment.

After a deep breath, Kipp began, "Look, Robin, I'm gay as well. But unfortunately for a politician it's taboo. So, my publicist found me a wife. She's what they call in the business a 'walker'. She poses with me for photos. That's it. I'm sorry I said you were my nephew, but the way politicians are being caught and outted lately, well, it's something every gay man in the closet fears."

"Senator?" Robin repeated, still not believing his ears.

"Yes. Look, I understand if you want to run a mile. Believe me."

Softening, not wanting to move an inch, let alone a mile, Robin finally released his tightly crossed arms and turned his body so he was facing Kipp. "No. It's okay. I'm not going anywhere. But, you asked me to come with you tomorrow. How will I do that?"

"I don't know. It was just an impulsive idea. Never mind."

Robin imagined caressing Kipp's cheek softly, comforting him. "Can your nephew go?" When Kipp's eyes lit up, Robin laughed at his expression. "You realize no one will believe you."

Kipp smiled back. "I know. That's why it's a bad idea."

“You want to try anyway?”

Kipp faced Robin, leaning his side on the car. They were certainly close enough to touch, but not quite close enough to kiss. “You...you want to come to Washington with me?”

“If you want me there.”

When Robin snuck a touch of his hand, Kipp looked down at the contact. “I do.”

Robin shrugged.

Kipp took out his mobile phone and dialed. “Lydia? It’s me. Look, that flight tomorrow, any chance you can call the airline and get another ticket? Louise? Uh no. My nephew...yes...his name? Robin...”

“Grant...” Robin whispered.

“Robin Grant. I know it’s late notice, Lydia. Yes, I’ll be waiting for your call back. Okay.” He hung up and stuffed the phone into his pocket.

“This is insane,” Robin whispered.

“I know.” Kipp kept getting butterflies in his stomach. Either it would be fantastic or a nightmare. He just didn’t know which. But others had taken family members with them. It wasn’t that unusual. So what if his nephew wanted to see DC for the first time? Was it that suspicious?

Looking at Robin’s amazing good looks, he doubted anyone would fall for it, but in his mind it was worth a night, one long night together under the sheets without Louise around to discover them.

The mobile phone rang. Kipp pulled it out of his pocket and answered it. “Hello?”

“I’ve got you the reservation. I’ll send you the confirmation via email.”

“Great. Thanks, Lydia.” Kipp hung up, grinning at Robin. “Okay. We’ve got you a ticket.”

“Okay.” Robin nodded.

“How do you want to work this? I can have my driver

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pick you up at your house.”

“Uh...”

“No good?” Kipp shielded his face from the passing headlights of a car leaving the lot.

“No. Let me go somewhere else. How about the corner of Westfield and Second Avenue?”

“Okay.” Kipp wanted to kiss him. It was torture.

“What time?” Robin moved his hand to touch Kipp’s face, dropping it to his side as if reconsidering.

“Nine-thirty?”

“Okay.”

Then, knowing it was risky, Kipp took one last look around them, then pecked Robin’s lips quickly. When he opened his eyes Robin appeared to be still savoring it. “Let me go. I’ve got to pack.”

“Okay.” Robin stood off the car and backed away.

“Nine-thirty.”

“Yes.”

“If you change your mind, leave a message on my cell phone.” Kipp didn’t want to go.

“I won’t. I’ll come with you.”

Nodding, Kipp waved and climbed into his car. When he heard the Harley’s roar, he couldn’t help but smile. Muttering to himself, he said, “Well, Kipp, you finally lost your mind.” He watched the bike speed away into the night. *I’m not losing this man. No way.*

Robin parked his motorcycle in his parents’ driveway. The house was well lit from within. Carrying his helmet to the back door, Robin had to use his key to get in, then set his helmet on the floor and looked around for his mother. The smell of dinner still lingered in the air, but he could tell it had come and gone without him. Heading directly to his room, he took out a rucksack trying to decide what to pack. Since he wouldn’t have his bike, the leathers were optional. Instead, he found his best slacks and shirt, a suit jacket, and

even a tie. When was the last time he wore them? His grandmother's funeral?

Shaking his head at the thought, he looked up at his doorway when he noticed someone standing there.

"What are you doing?" Dusty asked.

"Uh, I'm just going away with a friend."

"What friend?" As he tried to roll up his things to shove into the pack, Dusty moved closer to watch him. "You're taking your suit jacket?"

"Uh, yeah."

"Don't do that. It'll crease it. I have a garment bag. Hang on."

Surprised she wasn't screaming at him as she usually did, Robin shook out the clothing and laid it on the bed neatly. While he was gathering his toiletries, Dusty returned and hung the suit jacket and slacks in the garment bag. "What's her name?"

"Whose name?"

"The friend you're going away with?" Dusty set the garment bag on the bed.

"Um, Sue." He finished putting a small bag of his toiletries together, trying not to meet her eye.

"Can I ask where you're going?"

"Her mom and dad have a place in Palm Springs."

"Nice. Are we going to get to meet her?"

"Maybe." He finished what he was doing, setting everything by the door.

"How long are you going for?"

"Just a couple of days." Robin sat on the bed, pushing his hair back from his face.

"Can I have an address or phone number for where you're going?"

"Come on, Ma, don't treat me like a baby." When she turned on her heels to leave the room, Robin shouted to her, "Don't worry about me, okay?"

Coming back, Dusty said, "If you don't return from your little trip with a potential job, you're out. I warned you,

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Robin.”

“Fine!” Robin threw up his hands as she stormed out again. Falling back on the mattress, Robin stared at the ceiling and wondered what it would be like to make love to Kipp.

Kipp parked in his driveway and sat for a moment after shutting off the engine, looking at his home; the luxurious new split-level house with the view of the beach. Though it should have made him proud, it left him empty. Hollow walls, loveless rooms, sterile beds, what was there to feel welcome about? Inside that little nest was a harpy. Regrets? Thousands. But what was he to do? He loved what he did for a living. Would the public vote for an openly gay politician? His publicist said no. *No way. You love this work? Keep hidden.* So he did. For twenty years he lied to the public and to himself. Was Robin his first step in moving in another direction? He couldn’t think that far in advance. It was too terrifying.

Louise pushed back the curtains, looking out at him from the living room window. Immediately he climbed out of the car.

As if he were already guilty as charged, he found her waiting, arms tightly crossed over her chest, glaring.

“I have to pack.” He walked past her to his bedroom. She followed.

“Were you really working late?”

“Yes. I had some loose ends to tie up before the committee meeting tomorrow.”

She seemed to relax slightly. “Fine. Whatever.”

Removing a suit from his closet, he was surprised to see her still standing there in his room. “You do anything exciting today?” he asked, trying to be civil.

“Had my hair and nails done...oh, and a facial.”

Hiding his sneer at her self-indulgence, he nodded, continuing to gather his things. Other wives volunteered for

charities, his? Facials.

“I was thinking about buying a new car.”

“Why? What’s wrong with the one you’ve got?” He paused, staring at her.

“It’s almost a year old. I want the newer model.”

In his head he echoed, *want, want, want...* in fury, but hid his expression from her. “Fine.”

“Good.” She turned to leave, pausing, saying, “Oh, my sister and her children are coming by while you’re gone.”

Instantly thinking of his real nephews, who were ten and seven years old, Kipp again nodded tacitly.

“Goodnight.”

“Goodnight,” he echoed, waiting until she vanished. Dropping down on the bed, he rubbed his face wearily, wishing things could be different.

Chapter Three

Lester lit up a cigarette as Robin set his suitcases by the door. "Are you being picked up?" He blew out a cloud of smoke.

"Yes." Robin found some courage to ask, "Uh, you have any money I could borrow, Lester?"

"Borrow?" he chortled.

"Yeah, I'll pay you back."

"With what?" Lester retrieved his wallet from his back pocket.

"When I get back I'll look for a job." Robin took the money Lester handed him.

"You know how many times I've heard that one?" Lester stuck his wallet back into his pocket and took his cigarette out of his mouth. "You know what your mother and I decided, Robin."

"Yeah. I do. You decided to throw me out onto the street." Robin stuffed the cash into his jeans and opened the front door, ready to leave.

"We did. You've had enough warning. We're done with you."

"Thanks, Lester. I knew I could always count on you."

"Don't even try to pull that guilt trip on me!" Lester

shouted as Robin walked down the front walkway to the sidewalk. "We gave you everything! I even offered to pay your tuition at law school."

"Yeah, whatever," Robin mumbled to himself and kept walking, not turning back.

A black limousine with tinted windows was waiting for him at the corner of Westfield and Second. Robin checked the time on his watch and hurried to meet it. The driver jumped out of the car and helped him place his bags into the trunk. When the driver opened the back door for him, Robin got his first glance at Kipp sitting, waiting for him.

"Am I late?" Robin climbed in quickly, and in seconds, they were on their way to the airport.

"No. Not at all." Kipp smiled warmly. "How are you? Did everything go all right?"

"Yeah, no problem." Robin relaxed on the large leather bench seat, his legs falling into a wide straddle. He noticed Kipp eying his tight blue jeans first before he made eye contact. "So, I'm your nephew?"

"Yes." Kipp faced forward. A glass shield separated them from the driver.

"Should I know any details? Like whose side? Who is the connection?"

"Well, since I'm an only child, you are the son of Louise's sister, Kate."

"Does Louise have a sister, Kate?"

"Yes."

"Does she have a son my age?" Robin noticed Kipp's expression harden.

"No. She has two young boys."

"Kipp," Robin chided, "we'll be discovered in no time! You have to do better than that."

Rubbing his forehead, Kipp said, "Okay, how about this...I have a step-sister from Idaho. You're her grown son. Okay?"

"Fine, what's her name?" Robin was growing very nervous.

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"I don't know. Make something up."

"Kipp!"

"Uh, Cheryl. Okay? Cheryl."

"Cheryl what?"

"Cheryl Grant!"

"Oh...okay. You want to tell me where in Idaho we're from?" Seeing Kipp's look of annoyance, Robin just threw up his hands in a helpless gesture. "Listen, Senator Kensington," he said forcefully, "The press will take one look at me and you will have to answer questions. It would help if we had our stories straight."

As if appraising him, Kipp gave him another once over. "Why did you have to be so fucking gorgeous?"

Robin hung his mouth open at the comment. "Wait a minute...don't tell me this is some fling because of the way I look—"

Turning to face him, Kipp replied, "I don't know why you find it offensive to be told you're good looking."

"There's more to me than my fucking face, Kipp! I have a brain, a personality."

"Calm down."

"Don't tell me to calm down. Look, maybe this was a bad idea. Drop me off."

Kipp panicked. He grabbed Robin's hand and held it tight. "I'm sorry. It's my own guilt and fear that's gripping me at the moment, Robin. Forgive me. I'm worried about this trip. I'm not ready to be exposed as a fraud yet and lose my job."

"Then why am I here?"

Seeing the innocence in those emerald eyes, Kipp melted. He kissed the back of Robin's hand and in a soft tone whispered, "Because I enjoy your company. Your conversation, your sense of humor. I want you with me."

Instantly Robin's hurt expression vanished. "I want to spend time with you as well, Kipp. But I'm scared to

death.”

“Well, I’ve already told my PA you’re my nephew. Let’s work on the background. But, when we get there, I’ll be in committee hearings all day anyway, Robin. I’ll only have you to myself afterwards, overnight. So most likely no one will see us together except to check in and out.”

“Okay.” Robin nodded.

“I’ll do my best to get us connecting rooms.”

“Oh, that’ll look good.” Robin laughed sarcastically.

“I can’t win,” Kipp sighed. At the sad sentiment, Robin’s hand found Kipp’s thigh. Kipp looked down at that hand first, then up into Robin’s eyes. He wanted to ask Robin if they could have sex, please. But after all the comments about Robin being used and abused, he was loath to ask it.

For the rest of the trip to the airport they worked out the details should anyone ask about Robin’s connection to Kipp. Though he knew any reporter worth their salt could find out it was a fake if they wanted to, he just hoped to keep Robin’s profile low during the trip, so he wouldn’t raise too much suspicion.

Even before they arrived, Robin was already getting strange looks. Seated in first class with this refined senator, Robin felt like a red sparrow among black hawks. Keeping his lips sealed in case he said the wrong thing, Robin looked out of the porthole to the earth beneath them as they took off for Washington, DC. While Kipp worked on a laptop computer, Robin dozed on and off.

After a long, dreary flight where they were afraid to speak and be overheard, a driver met them at their gate and took care of their luggage. Before they pulled up directly to the hotel lobby, Robin could tell Kipp was beginning to get cold feet. Shifting in his seat, wringing his hands, rubbing his face, all the signs were there. Robin leaned over the front seat to speak to the driver. “Look, could you drop the

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senator off first, drive around the block, and then drop me off?" When Robin checked Kipp's expression he found Kipp wasn't stopping him from giving the chauffeur instructions. The driver nodded.

"Okay, Robin," Kipp said as they pulled up to the well lit front entrance. "Just tell them your name at the front desk. It's all been arranged. I'll meet you later."

"Okay." Robin felt slightly light-headed from nerves.

The driver opened the back door, and Kipp stepped out, closing the door behind him so no one could see Robin still sitting there. Through the tinted glass Robin watched the driver helping Kipp with his bags. In a few minutes the man returned, pulling the car out into traffic. Robin leaned over the seat to talk to him. "Thanks, I appreciate it."

"It's okay."

"You...ah, do you drivers have any code of discretion you work under?"

"Don't worry about it."

"Thanks, man." Robin took a twenty dollar bill out of his wallet to hand to the man when he was dropped off. After a spin around the block, Robin's turn came. He handed the driver the cash, waiting as he helped him with his garment bag. Once he stepped into the lobby, Robin noticed a small, bustling crowd. Avoiding it, he made a direct line to the desk and checked in. Behind him someone shouted out Senator Kensington's name. Robin glanced over his shoulder just enough to be able to see without being too obvious. That crowd was a group of reporters surrounding Kipp and asking him questions about the meeting all the senators were gathering in town to attend. Robin swallowed down a dry throat and found the woman behind the desk trying to hand him a key. He took it and nodded without saying a word. A bellboy escorted him to the elevator, his two bags on a trolley. Over the heads of the reporters, a tall, proud senator met his eye. Robin ignited with excitement and couldn't believe he was lucky enough to find Kipp. As the elevator doors closed, separating them,

Robin checked his watch and wondered how he would kill the time before the senator was free to play.

Though Kipp was physically present in the conference room, his mind was elsewhere. A trip to Hawaii, a smooth soft beach, the sun setting, humpback whales breaching on the horizon, a pina colada in his hand, and Robin in a Speedo, tanned and oiled...

"Kipp?" the senator next to him asked.

"Hm?" He woke out of his daydream.

"What's your view on the hearing?"

As if the topic of the meeting didn't matter suddenly, Kipp checked his watch and answered, "I didn't realize it was so late."

"They should be breaking up about now."

"Right. Well, I'll call it a night." Kipp gathered some paperwork he had in front of him to place into a briefcase.

"You want to catch dinner somewhere?"

"No. No thanks, Harvey. I need some rest." He stood, nodded to the man, hurrying out, thinking about one thing. A leather-clad motorcycle rider.

Reclining on the bed in his hotel room, Robin flipped the channels of the television in vain looking for something to watch. The hours ticked by so slowly, he was punchy from checking the time. He nearly jumped out of his skin when the phone rang. Rushing to grab it, he said hello, his heart rate soaring.

"Robin? Kipp. I'm in my room. Let me just shower, and we can meet."

Whispering, as if someone might overhear, Robin replied, "You want me to come there?"

"Robin?"

"Yes, Kipp?"

"You see that door?"

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Robin sat up and looked around his room. "What door?"

"The one connecting our rooms?"

As if just noticing it, Robin realized there was an inconspicuous door standing almost at the foot of his bed. "That door leads to you? I tried it, it was locked."

"It isn't now."

Robin hung up the phone and sprinted to the door. When he opened it, he found Kipp sitting on his bed, the phone to his ear. "Wow..."

Kipp hung up the phone and smiled at him. "Wow?"

"I had no idea you were right here. How the hell did you do it?"

"Luck?"

"Clout more likely." Robin suddenly felt awkward. "Oh, sorry. You said for me to come after you showered." He made a move to go back to his room.

"Stay. I don't mind. Are you hungry?" Kipp took off his suit jacket and hung it up.

"I've been munching on the treats in the mini bar, but I could use a real meal." Robin stared at him as he removed his tie, unfastening the top button of his shirt collar.

"Order room service. Get anything you like."

As Kipp opened his shirt and peeled it back over his shoulders, Robin licked his lips unconsciously. The man was fit. Obviously still active in exercise or sports, Kipp's body was as solid as a man ten years his junior. A V-shaped section of dark hair divided his rounded pectoral muscles and drew a line dissecting his abdomen to his pelvis. Losing his train of thought, Robin mumbled, "Room service."

"Yes. Just call from your room. Once you get served, we can sit here and eat together."

Only a touch of gray at Kipp's temples gave any indication he was past forty. A thick head of black hair, piercing blue eyes, and a body...a body on him...

Robin had no idea that underneath that suit there was this incredible male torso. Robin bit his lip and hoped Kipp

would take off his trousers so he could see his legs.

Kipp waited. No eye contact was forthcoming. Robin was lost on him somewhere. Was he disgusted with a man that was old enough to be his...

Don't torture yourself, Kipp. Walking past Robin to the bathroom, Kipp carried his toiletry bag with him, pausing when he was at the threshold. "I'll be out in a minute. I think there's a menu in that folder on the dresser."

Robin gave a slight nod, not saying a word.

Lowering his head in defeat, Kipp closed himself into the bathroom and tried to get back to reality. Who was he kidding? What would a young man like that see in him? He was making a fool out of himself.

When the door opened, he spun around in surprise. A completely naked Robin Grant closed himself into the room with him. Kipp was so stunned he dropped his leather kit bag to the tile floor. "Robin?"

"I...I want to be with you."

Having tried to be polite and not look down from his eyes, Kipp decided that comment was an invitation and dispensed with protocol. Beginning at Robin's knees, he scanned slowly upwards to his long muscular thighs and hips. His cock was fully erect and large, his balls hanging low under it. His stomach was tight and firm, the skin tanned and smooth. Two lovely, rose-colored nipples stood at attention and very sparse chest hair covered a small patch on his sternum. But it was that face that captured him, that angular jaw, those high cheekbones, and eyes that could melt ice. Kipp didn't know what to do next. How long had he waited to touch a man again? Twenty years? The memory of his roommate flashed before his eyes. They were so young, so inexperienced, but it was satisfying. That much he remembered.

When Robin's hands reached out to open his trousers, Kipp didn't move. As they slid down to the floor with his

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briefs, he stepped out of them and nudged them aside.

“Oh, Senator Kensington...” Robin crooned, echoing in the tiled room.

Glancing down at himself, Kipp replied, “Too old for you, Robin?”

“Oh, hell no...get over here.”

As they wrapped around each other, Kipp felt as if electricity were passing over his length. The connection of their bodies was so stimulating, he almost forgot they could do more than simply embrace each other.

Squeezing him tight, Robin hummed happily, loving the feel of this man in his arms. After a moment to savor the naked body that overlapped his, Robin knew it was up to him to initiate the sex. After all, he was the one who went on and on about being a sex toy. Not to this man. No. Here he was adored and appreciated for more than just his body. Or at least it appeared so.

All day long he'd been dreaming of that mouth. The mouth that spoke the words to the world and made a difference to society. When their tongues touched, Robin moaned at the exquisite fire, Kipp's scent, his feel; it was so perfect, so right. As their mouths connected and the kissing became more passionate, Robin's hands wandered downwards. Gripping that penis in his hands, Robin felt his skin burst with chills. Instinctively he began working it, knowing Kipp needed, wanted to come. Kipp's hands gripped Robin's shoulders, his kissing reaching new heights of passion as their tongues danced around each others and they sucked hard on them to express their attraction. Hearing Kipp's deep voice echoing in the sterile, white room was worth everything he owned. Feeling Kipp's body tense, Robin quickened his pace. His hand moving along Kipp's shaft as if he meant to cause a fire with the friction, he was so hot from giving Kipp pleasure he was as weak in the knees as the senator was.

Kipp gasped when he came and pulled back from Robin's mouth to inhale deeply. Robin stared into Kipp's orgasmic expression and kept moving his hand slowly on his cock, now slick with come. Kipp's eyes opened, and he met Robin's gaze. Nothing was said. It didn't have to be.

When Kipp reached to grab Robin's cock, reciprocating the pleasure, Robin inhaled a startled breath, not knowing what to expect, thinking he was the one who would be giving, and giving gladly. Their mouths back together once more, lapping at each other as if they meant to devour each other whole, Robin spread his legs and pumped into those hot hands. His body going into a spasm of pleasure, Robin froze and clenched his muscles as the semen spurt out of him and those masculine hands prolonged it. His head resting against the glass shower door behind him, Robin tried to catch his breath. Kipp still lovingly toying with his genitals, Robin laughed from the relief. As he opened his eyes, he found the adoration he'd been yearning for his entire life gazing at him. The meltdown of his emotions almost left him in tears. How long had he waited for true love? A person that meant something to him, one he could trust, give to? Forever. He had waited forever.

Enjoying the stickiness of Robin's come on his fingers, Kipp couldn't stop fondling his luscious male anatomy. Caressing the creases where his balls met his thighs, Kipp kept running his hands under those heavy, soft testicles, enjoying the way they felt. And Robin spread his legs as wide as humanly possible to receive the handling.

"I love the way you touch me," Robin breathed sensuously.

"I don't want to stop." Kipp stared at his flaccid cock as it began to come to life again.

"Don't stop." Robin placed his hands behind his back to support himself as he leaned against the shower door.

Kneading him in his fingers like warm dough, Kipp was

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so enthralled with this part of the male anatomy, he was addicted. Becoming bolder, running his fingers behind Robin's scrotum to his ass, Kipp penetrated him, dipping the tip of his index finger in and then returned to feel Robin's balls and cock as if they were made of gold. "Can you come again?"

"Yes," Robin hissed, closing his eyes and tilting his head to the side.

Thrilled with the answer, Kipp kept up the stroking, ass, balls, cock, thighs, until Robin was inhaling deep, sucking breaths. Finally wrapping around its base, Kipp gave that long cock the friction it needed. Then he shoved his finger up Robin's ass and massaged inside. Once again, Robin was writhing with pleasure and shooting white spatters along the floor.

At his satiated groan, Kipp finally left that incredible cock and delightful set of testicles alone. After pecking Robin on the lips once, Kipp whispered, "Shower?"

"Ah, I need to sleep..." Robin moaned, teasingly.

"I think a shower will perk you up."

As he waited for Kipp to adjust the water temperature, all Robin could think about was getting Kipp's hands on him again. He wanted those hands. On him. All the time. Now. Later. No, now.

After they were both standing in the wet torrent, Robin grabbed Kipp's wrist and connected Kipp's palm back to his cock again.

"Another one?" Kipp asked in surprise.

"No. Later. I just love the way you touch me. Keep doing it. All the time."

"You got it, Robin." Kipp smiled, wrapping around him for another kiss, cupping his wet genitals again.

Robin groaned happily to himself, hoping at least this time, the relationship would last.

Chapter Four

Louise checked on the two boys as they played in the backyard. Looking over at her sister, Kate, where she sat at the kitchen table, she felt slightly envious, though Kate didn't have the wealth she did. "More wine?"

"Sure." Kate nudged her stemmed glass closer to the edge of the table.

Before she sat, Louise poured them another glass, placing the bottle down and seemed to deflate in the chair.

"The boys okay outside?" Kate asked, the wine at her lips.

"Yeah, they're fine."

"You look like shit."

Louise glared at her, then sighed, "I feel like shit. And I just got a haircut, manicure, and facial."

"Lucky you," Kate chuckled under her breath.

"I was thinking you were the lucky one."

"Me? Louise, what the hell's going on? You have everything you ever wanted, and you're still unhappy. I don't get it. Things okay with Kipp?"

"No. They're not okay." Louise knew she had signed a confidentiality agreement, but that didn't include sisters as

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far as she was concerned. "I just want kids, Kate. I see you and the boys, and I wish I could have a family."

"So? Won't Kipp let you get pregnant?"

Louise mumbled, "You know we don't sleep together."

After another sip, Kate replied, "Why not? The guy is gorgeous. What are you two waiting for?"

Louise rose up and returned to the window to see the two boys passing a football. "I'm not supposed to say anything about it."

"About what? Can't he father a kid?" Kate stood next to her so she could watch her sons as well.

"No. It's not that. Oh, Kate, I fucked up...I never should have married Kipp."

"Are you kidding me? Look at this house? You have everything you always dreamed of, Louise. Don't be like that. Just be happy for what you have. Kipp is such a nice guy."

Louise let out a sarcastic laugh.

"No? Am I wrong?" Kate nudged her to sit down again.

Reluctantly joining her at the table, Louise gulped all the wine in her glass as if she needed the courage, then faced her sister's intense stare. "He's gay."

"What?" Kate choked. "Shut up. You don't know what you're talking about." She waved her hand, dismissing it as absurd.

"I signed a contract stating I would never tell anyone. We've never made love, Kate. Never slept in the same bed. It was all for money. Money and power. But now I'm regretting it." When Kate didn't say anything, Louise found her astonished expression. "You can't tell Bill!" she warned. "Promise!"

Shaking her head, Kate said, "No. I'm not buying it. You can't be right. Kipp is so masculine. No way. Maybe it's you. Maybe you just don't turn him on."

"Katie! That's mean. No, it isn't me." She grimaced at her in anger. "Look, I knew it going into the relationship. He's hiding his homosexuality because of the political shit.

Believe me, he's gay."

"Wow." Kate rubbed her forehead in awe. "Does he have a boyfriend?"

"No. That was another part of the stupid contract. Neither of us can cheat so we can't be caught. I'm going nuts. I need sex!"

"Are you kidding me? You can't sleep together and you can't go with someone else? Why the hell did you sign something as stupid as that? You know, Louise, Mom always said you were a little off in the head."

"Shut up! You think that helps?"

"You should divorce him." Kate topped up their glasses.

"I thought of that, but I don't get anything if I do."

"Don't tell me that was part of the contract as well?" Kate shook her head.

"I won't tell you then."

"You mean, like a pre-nuptial?"

"No, not like one, it *is* one." She lifted the glass to her lips.

"You're insane. Does money really mean more to you than a good relationship and a family?"

"It did. I'm not so sure anymore."

"I can't tell you how shocked I am. You've been married for what...ten years?"

"Nine." Louise finished the wine again.

Kate whistled, shaking her head sadly. "Mom will be so pissed off."

"You can't tell her!" Louise screamed. "I'm telling you if anyone finds out I'm dead."

"All right!" Kate held up her hands in defense. "But there has to be a way to get out of this unscathed."

"How?" Louise poured the last drop of wine into her glass.

"Look, if he is gay, he must be seeing guys. Men have to have it."

"He signed a contract."

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“Forget what he signed. I’m telling you, men have to have sex. So he is getting laid, Louise, believe me.”

Louise ground her teeth. “He better not be.”

“Where the hell is he now?” Kate looked around the kitchen.

“He’s in DC. He has to go there a lot.”

“Bet he’s got some guy there.”

Louise stood up and was about to hurl her stemmed glass at the wall when she reconsidered and drank the wine in it first.

“You should hire someone to find to find out what he’s really up to.” Kate stood up and took the empty glass out of her sister’s hand.

Louise stared back out the window at her nephews. She was so angry she could explode. All this time she had been loyal...except once with her personal trainer. Oh, and that other time with the landscaper. But only those two. Well, maybe there was that other time with the tennis pro...

“You okay?”

Twisting over her shoulder, trying to hide her guilt, Louise said, “You’re right. I should hire someone to follow him. At least then if he’s broken the contract, I can get out of this mess.”

“Yup.” Kate smiled, patting her back.

“And expose him for what he is...” she hissed wickedly.

“Oh my god...could you imagine the press when they find out Kipp Kensington is really in the closet? Oh, they’d have a field day.” She laughed.

“Oh, yes. It would be sweet revenge.”

“I never knew you could be so evil.” Kate grinned.

“Just wait. You have no idea.”

After they had dined on room service, Kipp and Robin lay naked together in Kipp’s bed staring contentedly into each others’ eyes.

"It's just something I've always wanted to do, Robin." Kipp's voice was deep and husky.

"It must be nice having such a set path to your life." Their legs were intertwined under the blankets. Their hands caressed one another gently.

"I suppose I never thought of it that way. My father was a politician, so it just made sense to go in that direction"

"I never knew my real father." Robin smiled sadly, touching Kipp's cheek, feeling the rough stubble of new growth.

"Oh? Why is that?"

"My mom got knocked up when she was sixteen." Robin lowered his hand to the mattress as he spoke. "She lived on welfare for most of my life."

"Really?"

"Yeah. She got lucky though. She met a rich fucker a few years ago, and he married her."

"A rich man married a welfare mother?"

At Kipp's curious expression, Robin added, "She's really pretty and obviously still young. They were set up by a mutual friend."

"How bizarre."

"I suppose," Robin sighed, fluffing the pillow under his head. "He's all right. We're not exactly great friends, but we don't hate each other."

"Have you thought of getting your own place?"

Robin averted his gaze. Kipp's warm hand cupped under Robin's jaw and urged him to look at him. "Well, Kipp, now that you mention it..." Robin tried to smile but failed. "They're kicking me out. They said they've tried everything to motivate me, and now I have to leave. So, I suppose I'll be looking for some minimum wage job when we get back."

"Like what? What can you do?"

Seeing the care in Kipp's expression, Robin felt like a little boy suddenly. "I can't do anything, Kipp. I'm not trained for anything."

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“Go back to school. Finish your degree.”

Robin was so sick of that argument, he dropped back to lay flat on the bed and stared at the ceiling, his bottom lip pouting out in frustration. “I’m not smart enough. I can’t do it.”

Kipp curled around him, connecting them under the sheets. “You are smart enough. Don’t underestimate yourself.”

“You don’t get it. I kept failing my classes. When I was called on, I never got the answer right. I felt like a complete moron.”

“I can get you tutors. We can get you through it.” Kipp yearned to make Robin feel confident and whole. It was the least he could do.

“Please...stop nagging me. I’ll get a job doing something else.”

“What would you like to do?” Kipp rested his head on his palm to be able to stare at Robin as he spoke. He nudged the sheets down so he could play with Robin’s nipples.

“I don’t know. That’s the problem. Christ, the only thing anyone wants me for is sex. Maybe I should be a gigolo.”

Stiffening in anger at the comment, Kipp replied, “I thought you hated casual sex.”

“But it fucking pays. Ya can’t get an apartment with a minimum wage job, Kipp.”

“Don’t be absurd. You will not be a gigolo. Look, let me help you. It’ll benefit us both if I set you up in an apartment. Then we’ll have a place to get together in town.”

Robin spun around to look him in the eyes. “What? You want to get me a place to live?”

“Yes. I insist.”

“I can’t let you do that. No.”

“What will we do then? How will we get together? Hm? Here, on my occasional trips to Washington? Is that enough

for you? It isn't for me. And sooner or later someone will wonder why my 'nephew' keeps tagging along. No, I'll get you a place to live. End of discussion."

The expression on Robin's face was of sheer amazement. When he leapt on top of Kipp and smothered him with kisses, Kipp burst out laughing.

"You're the best! Oh, Kipp, you are fantastic!" Robin shouted in joy.

With that hot male body wriggling all over him, Kipp's thoughts turned carnal in nature. "It's my pleasure, Robin. I know it's the right thing to do."

In a flash, Robin had whipped off the sheets and lay back on the bed with his legs spread. "Fuck me."

His eyes wide in amazement, Kipp thought he hadn't heard right. "Sorry?"

"My treat. As a thank you for your generosity."

"You...you..." Kipp pointed to himself, then to Robin in confusion. It was what he wanted to do, very badly, but he was letting Robin lead the way through this sexual relationship so Robin wouldn't feel used. "I...I..."

Robin burst out laughing. "Kipp!" Controlling his fit of hilarity, Robin asked, "Don't you want to screw me?"

"Yes!" Kipp responded enthusiastically. "Do you have anything...you know, rubbers?"

"Oh! Yeah, hang on."

Kipp watched him scamper out of bed, his nakedness too lovely to bear. Robin vanished through the connecting door, and Kipp heard him rummaging through something paper.

Peeking down at his crotch, Kipp was so up for the idea he was already imagining the heat of Robin's body surrounding him. In seconds Robin raced back, tossed a box of prophylactics and a tube of lubrication on the bed, then got to his hands and knees, wiggling his ass in the air.

"You sure?" Kipp didn't want to be accused of anything later.

"Yes. Come on, screw me."

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“Are you a virgin?” Kipp asked, knowing he, himself, wasn’t.

“Uh, why?”

Taking a rubber off the strip, Kipp opened it with his teeth, sliding it on his hard dick. “Just wanted to know if you know what to expect.”

“Oh. I know what to expect. Don’t worry.”

“Good.” Kipp suddenly wondered if he was the inexperienced one. He knelt behind Robin and opened the tube of lubrication.

Robin couldn’t wait. Just the thought of giving this wonderful man his body, sharing his most intimate places made him so excited he could spurt. Waiting, looking back over his shoulder, he couldn’t wipe the smile from his face.

“You ready?”

“Yes! Go for it.” Robin laughed. “Grab me when you’re in.”

“Okay.”

Feeling that hard cock slide inside him, Robin’s eyes closed, and he moaned in pleasure. As the bed shifted and Kipp set up behind him, Robin felt a hot palm clasp around the base of his own penis and it kept time with those deep, slow thrusts. Massaged from inside out, Robin lit up quickly. He wanted Kipp to come at the same time. “That’s it, baby,” Robin crooned, encouraging him. “Fuck me, fuck me good...”

Sex? Sex! Finally some intercourse! Kipp’s head was spinning. And what a man to have sex with! Gorgeous, sensuous, Robin Grant...oh, life couldn’t get any better than this! He would buy Robin three condos just to have this ass at his command.

Hearing those dirty words, the sound of Robin’s voice betraying his pleasure, Kipp felt his skin prickle with the

coming orgasm. Shoving in deeper, harder as the urge to give up his seed drew close, he had to force himself to keep his hand moving because the distraction of the orgasm was so consuming.

When Robin's clasping fingers helped him along, they both grunted in ecstasy. Even after Kipp had stopped pumping, it appeared Robin couldn't get enough and jerked Kipp's hand up and down his own cock

Finally sated beyond belief, Kipp pulled out gently and climbed off the bed to wash up. When he returned, Robin was smiling adoringly at him.

It was after midnight, and he had to get up early for one more day of meetings. As he shut off the lights and drew up the covers, Kipp snuggled close to this amazing man. "I adore you," he whispered into Robin's ear, spooning him from behind.

A contented purring sound returned to his ears as they both finally fell into a deep sleep.

"Yes, hello, a friend recommended you to me," Louise whispered, cupping the phone even though she was alone in her bedroom. "Uh, but it's extremely important I can count on your confidentiality. I think my husband is cheating on me. I need someone to find out."

"I would be happy to help. What's your name?"

"You can? Great. Yes, my name is Louise Kensington."

"Kensington?"

"Yes, Senator Kensington's wife."

Chapter Five

A morning wake-up call brought the men around to the conscious world. Kipp answered, heard the electronic voice and hung up, rubbing his face tiredly.

Next to him Robin stretched his back and yawned.

"I have to get ready. I have another full day of meetings ahead." Kipp sat up.

"Okay."

Pausing, Kipp then said, "Look, maybe it's a waste of time for you to hang around here on your own, only for us to fly out together tonight."

"You want me to go now?" Robin shifted so he could sit against the headboard.

"Well, it's up to you, but we have to be checked out of the room by one. I could arrange for you to stay longer."

"No. I'll go. Do you think I can get on an earlier flight?" Robin threw back the blankets in a move to get out of bed.

"Yes. That won't be a problem. I want you to head back to California and find yourself a suitable place."

"Anywhere in particular?" Robin located his clothing and set it on the bed.

"I don't know. Stockton? Santa Rosa? Someplace close to Sacramento."

"Okay." Robin nodded, looking slightly frazzled.

Smiling adoringly at him, Kipp wrapped him in an embrace and hugged him for reassurance. "Money is no object. Get something wonderful."

"What? Oh, come on, Kipp. I'll be reasonable."

Kipp kissed his rough jaw. "I know you will be." *Not like Louise*. "Let me call Lydia to get you on an earlier flight. Go shower." Robin pecked his lips first before he disappeared into the bathroom.

Taking a moment to compose himself, Kipp found his mobile phone and dialed his PA. "Lydia? I have a request."

Showered, packed, and standing in the lobby waiting for the driver, Robin tried not to look conspicuous as he stood around like a statue. The amount of staring he was enduring made him grind his teeth in annoyance. Kipp had left for his meetings, and not more than an hour later, Robin missed him, yearning for his company.

Finally someone shouted out his name. Robin waved at the man in the black suit and was helped with his bags.

Avoiding the small talk that usually accompanied the drive, Robin stared out of the window and hoped the flight wasn't delayed.

His head already pounding from the arguing going on on the floor of the Senate, Kipp checked his watch and wished he could have been on that early flight with Robin. The last thing he needed was this dreary day and a long night flight after it, but it couldn't be helped. Imagining Robin in a luxury apartment, somewhere they could make mad passionate love nightly, was enough to keep him going. That, and the memory of screwing Robin. That tight body, the heat of his ass, the feel of him quivering as he came, the

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sticky come spurting into his fingers...

"Kipp?"

"Hm?"

"They're addressing you."

Sitting up, Kipp spoke into the microphone, "Yes, Senator Wilson?"

"Your views, Senator?"

Trying to get his mind back to business, Kipp replied confidently about his views on the immigration problem and kept reminding himself he would be back home soon.

Driven right to his home, Robin checked the time and hoped his mother and step-dad were out. It was late afternoon on a Wednesday, so anything was possible. As he entered through the front door, he shouted out for his mother. Nothing came back. Thanking God he was on his own, Robin brought his suitcases to his room and then sat down at his step-dad's computer. Looking for apartments in the area, he bit his lip and tried to think of an excuse to tell his mother when she found out he was moving. Shrugging, knowing it didn't matter, he figured she'd just be happy he was gone. That was what they wanted anyhow.

After printing off a list of possibilities, Robin shut off the computer and grabbed his motorcycle helmet. Before he mounted, he noticed the damage again to the chrome and reminded himself to stop at a body shop as well. He couldn't stand seeing the scraped metal. Kicking the bike into its roar, he nudged it off its kickstand and took off down the road.

By five Kipp was exhausted. As his luggage was stowed in the trunk of a limousine, he checked his mobile phone for messages. No one had left any. He dialed his home and waited. When Louise answered, he said, "I'm on my way now to the airport. I'll be in late. I'll try not to wake

you.”

“Okay.”

“Is everything all right there?” He thought she sounded funny and tried not to be suspicious.

“Everything’s fine.”

“Okay, see you in the morning.”

“Bye.”

He hung up and looked at the phone as it shut down. A strange sensation rushed through his gut, but he disregarded it as nonsense.

It was a townhouse, not an apartment. There was no lobby, no one living on the second floor. Was it too much?

Robin liked the idea that he had his own front door. It was better than having a state senator coming into the mutual lobby of an apartment building with more than fifty residents to see him. No, that didn’t make sense. He needed his own front door and his own privacy. Kipp had to understand that.

“How much?” Robin asked in shock. “Holy shit. Uh, I need to get back to you on that.”

“I’m not holding it. If someone else wants it...”

“Okay. I get it.” Robin nodded, took a last glance around, then left, climbing back on his bike. It was the last address on the list and the best one. Now he just had to wait for Kipp to return so he could run it by him.

He headed home and found his mother’s car in the driveway. Sighing in annoyance at the interrogation to come, he parked the bike and took off his helmet, coming in through the back as he usually did. She was waiting for him.

“Hey.” He set the helmet on the floor.

“How was your trip?”

“Good.”

“Did you get a job?”

“No, but I will have an apartment in a few days. Can you just give me a couple more ‘til I’m out?”

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“Are you moving in with Sue?”

“With who?” Robin tilted his head in confusion.

Dusty threw up her hands in anger. “With the woman you just went away with! Robin, stop behaving like an idiot.”

“Oh! Right. Yeah. That’s it. I’m moving in with a girl.” Nodding, Robin walked passed her quickly to avoid more questions but his mother inevitably followed.

“How will you pay half the rent? Are you going to be living off the poor thing?”

“Why don’t you let me worry about that?” Robin kicked off his boots and threw his jacket on the bed.

As Dusty stared at him as he lay back on the mattress to rest, she shouted out as if she suddenly realized, “No! You’re not going to be some old lady’s kept boy!”

Shivering at the near miss of her deduction, Robin snarled in defense, “Shut up! Just get out.”

“Oh, that is truly beneath you, Robin. Using your body and your looks to get a place.”

“Mom, I said leave me alone.”

“You’re sick, Robin, sick. I hope I don’t know her. I hope you used some common sense for a change.”

As she left and closed the door behind her, Robin felt his head throb with guilt. Is that what he was? Kipp’s kept boy? No. It was more than that. He wasn’t just his fling on the side. No...

Curling into his pillows, Robin felt a tear roll down his face at the terrible thought. “Oh, Kipp, come back so we can talk...” He checked his watch and sighed.

By the time he made it to his own home, it was nearing one a.m. Kipp was beyond exhausted. Trying to be quiet so he didn’t disturb Louise, he crept to his rooms and set his bags down, then stripped, washed up quickly, and climbed in bed. Before he closed his eyes he imagined calling Robin in the morning and arranging a place to meet him. He hoped

Robin found a place to live, because he couldn't get enough of him and didn't want the lack of a place to meet keeping them apart. With the happy image of Robin's lovely face in his mind, Kipp fell fast asleep.

Chapter Six

First thing in the morning, Robin called Kipp's mobile phone number. Looking back at his closed bedroom door, dreading his mother listening in, or worse, coming in unannounced, he was relieved when Kipp answered.

"Kipp, it's me. I have to talk to you."

"Oh, yes. Uh, that would be fine. Let me arrange a time."

By the cool manner in which he was speaking, Robin realized Kipp wasn't alone. "When?" Robin whispered.

"Uh, yes, noon will be fine. How about our usual spot?"

"Usual spot?" Robin racked his brains. "Where the hell is that?" When Kipp stayed silent, Robin began to throw some ideas out to him, "Uh, the place you hit me?"

"No."

"The restaurant?"

"Yes! Very good. See you then."

When Kipp hung up on him, Robin felt the nerves in his body go haywire. Is this how it would be? Sneaking? "Crap," he grumbled and hung up the telephone. Checking his watch, knowing he had a few hours to kill, Robin decided to go to a body shop for an estimate on his bike.

Sliding his phone back into his pocket, Kipp endured the look of complete suspicion on Louise's face. Before she asked who it was he replied, "It was one of my interns."

"Sure, Kipp," she snorted.

Pretending to be indignant about her answer, he shot back, "I don't know why you're using that tone with me. I'm exhausted. I got back late last night and have to get to the capital in an hour. What do you do all day? Another facial? Another private tennis lesson? Give me a break, Louise."

She threw her hands up in a sarcastic gesture and said, "I'm not accusing you of anything. You go to your meeting."

"Thank you." He finished his coffee and stood, setting his cup in the sink. "I'll be home late."

"What else is new?"

He glanced at her with a tired look, then left.

He had been waiting in the restaurant parking lot for a half hour. Finally the black Mercedes pulled in. As Kipp parked, Robin rubbed his hands together nervously.

Once he had a look around the area, Kipp sighed and said, "Well? How did the apartment hunting go?"

"Good. I found a townhouse only an hour away from your office."

"A townhouse?"

Robin cringed. "I know it sounds extravagant, Kipp, but I kept thinking of you coming into a lobby of an apartment building with dozens of tenants around. How would you explain that? I just thought a private place was smarter. But, if you think it's too much—"

"No. You're quite right. I hadn't thought of that. Where is it? Let me at least go have a look at it."

Robin handed him a piece of paper with the address and

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rental price on it.

“Okay.”

“Oh.” Robin took another slip of paper out of his pocket. “Here’s the estimate on my bike.”

“Oh! Right.” Kipp read it. “You want cash?”

“I assume that would be the easiest.” Robin shifted his feet anxiously. He hated taking money from this kind man, but after all, Kipp did hit him.

Kipp checked his wallet. To Robin’s amazement, he handed over four hundred dollars in cash. Robin once again scanned the area in case they were spied, but the restaurant had just opened for lunch business and was empty at the moment. “Thanks.”

“No problem. Will you be without transportation now?”

“Oh, shit. Yeah. I think they said they could get it done in a week or so.”

“What will you do?”

“I don’t know.” Robin shrugged.

“Rent a car.”

“Yes. I can do that.”

“Have you looked into a cell phone yet?” Kipp checked his watch.

“No. I’ll do that today as well.” Robin wanted to touch him, embrace him.

“Just get everything taken care of and let me know how much you need.”

“I can’t keep taking money from you.” Robin rubbed his sweaty palms on his leather jeans. “I feel funny about it.”

A very serious expression came into Kipp’s eyes. Softly he whispered, “I want you to have it. I’ve been giving my ungrateful wife money for the last nine years and have gotten nothing from her, not even a kind word. As far as I’m concerned, Robin, you are worth much more to me than she is. I want to help you.”

A lump formed in Robin’s throat. “I’ll pay you back, Kipp. I promise.”

"I know. Don't worry." Kipp looked around the area and then back into Robin's eyes. "Are you free tonight?"

"Yes," Robin replied, his heart racing.

"Good. All right. Let me go look at the townhouse so I can get us a place."

"You...you want me to show it to you now?"

"No. I'll go there later. I don't have a lot of time now."

As Kipp checked his watch, Robin whispered, "I want to kiss you, but I can't."

A warm smile passed over Kipp's lips. "Later."

"Where?" Robin knew his mother's place was out of the question.

"I don't know. Let me just pick you up somewhere, and we'll figure something out."

"Okay."

"Corner of Westfield and Second at six o'clock?"

"I'll be there." Robin had to touch him. Slowly he reached out to stroke Kipp's arm.

"Great. We'll grab a bite and then decide where to go."

"Okay." Robin's hand dropped back to his side.

"See you then."

"See ya." Robin waited as Kipp climbed into his car and pulled out of the lot. Just before he mounted his motorcycle, he noticed another sedan pull out after Kipp's car had left.

"Gee, let me guess, Kipp." Louise clicked her tongue sarcastically. "You're working late?"

"I have asked you not to use that tone with me. When have I not had to work late?" Kipp knew it would be an argument over a simple phone call.

"Oh, come on, Kipp, how stupid do you think I am?"

"Please, Louise...don't get on that topic again. We have an arrangement, and I do wish you would just comply."

"Arrangement? What? You sleeping around behind my back?"

"I am not doing that." Kipp rubbed his face tiredly. *Was*

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it worth it?

“Fine. Whatever. I won’t be here when you get home.”

“Oh? Going out?”

“Yes. I’m going out and I most likely won’t be home until tomorrow.”

“Are you going to tell me where you are going?”

“No. Goodbye, Kipp.”

When she hung up, Kipp sat back in the driver’s seat of his car and stared out of the windshield. It hadn’t been this bad before. Now it was intolerable for them both. Was it time to throw in the towel?

The image of the press getting wind of his divorce and then his soon to be ex-wife standing with the reporters, now free of her contract to ruin him for life, haunted him.

What was so horrible about a gay man in the Senate? Why did it mean so much to the GOP that he had to hide his life? It was sickening. Shivering at the latest news of another Republican senator being caught doing naughty things with a male hooker, Kipp felt seriously ill at the thought of being the next victim of the tabloid press. “Oh, God help me,” he sighed, closing his eyes.

Checking the time, Robin stood on the corner of their designated spot and watched the traffic drive by. Having left his bike at the shop, he felt naked without it and hated being out of his leathers. His mother was driving him crazy with her constant badgering of questions, and Robin was about to crack under all the pressure.

The sight of that black car pulling over was a huge relief. He climbed in quickly, peering around to see if anyone took notice of it. After he put his seatbelt on, he twisted to smile at Kipp and found his pensive profile. “What’s wrong?”

“Nothing. What are you in the mood for?”

“Kipp...” Robin rubbed Kipp’s warm thigh through his slacks. “Is it your wife?”

“Yes. I don’t know how she does it, but lately she’s been more suspicious than usual.”

“Woman’s intuition?” Robin laughed, but his humor wasn’t appreciated. “Anything is fine. I’m not picky about food.”

Kipp nodded, still tight-lipped from his stress.

After they had parked in the lot of another tiny eating establishment that no one they knew could possibly find, Robin stopped Kipp from climbing out of the car immediately and said, “Is our relationship too much for you?”

As if something inside Kipp gave way, he exhaled a long sigh and smiled affectionately. “No. Don’t worry. She’ll get over whatever it is she’s come up with in her head the next time she has a massage and facial.”

Robin smiled sweetly at him, running his hand up that thigh to Kipp’s crotch, teasing him. “I know what I want to massage,” Robin hissed.

“Christ, I am so attracted to you, Robin. I can’t stop thinking about you.” Kipp cupped Robin’s hand and pressed it down against his hard-on.

“Want me to suck it?” Robin glanced around the parking lot.

“Not here. Later. Louise said she’ll be gone overnight. I think we may have my place to ourselves.”

“Cool.” Robin sat back, making a move to open the car door. When he twisted to look at Kipp, he found him waiting for his erection to subside before getting out. Robin smiled to himself and waited until Kipp said he was ready. Then they both climbed out together.

After they had ordered some food, Kipp leaned across the table to Robin and said, “I’ve paid the first six months rent on that townhouse. You’re right. It’s perfect; I’ve had my PA hire a decorator to get it furnished.”

Robin’s mouth dropped.

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Kipp loved the reaction, enjoying pleasing this man immensely. "Here are the keys." He handed Robin a set.

"Can you do that?" Robin took the keys

"Do what?" Kipp sipped his glass of ice water.

"You know, rent a place without someone knowing?"

"I can rent a townhouse, Robin. As long as I don't use government money, there are no laws against it." Kipp chuckled, shaking his head in amusement. "Don't worry about it. I keep my money in a separate account, away from Louise's prying eyes and greedy fingers."

"Okay, whatever you say, Kipp. I just don't want to do anything that could hurt you."

The waiter brought out their food, setting it down. They waited for him to leave and then Kipp addressed Robin's comment. "We'll be fine as long as we're careful. I just have to make sure Louise gets what she wants from my wallet and then she'll calm down again."

"I can't imagine being so money-oriented. I mean," Robin finished chewing his salad, then continued, "you need money to live, I get that, but not to be happy. You know?"

"Yes. I do know."

"I could be very content with just my bike and my leathers. I don't need anything else."

Kipp grinned at him mischievously. "Nothing else?"

Robin blushed and added, "Well, that and you."

Taking a bite of his goat cheese and leek tart, Kipp sighed. "I wish I could uncomplicate my life sometimes, Robin."

"Oh? Like in what way?"

Stretching out his legs under the table to be in contact with Robin, Kipp replied, "I don't know. Maybe chuck it all in and go away somewhere."

"Huh. That surprises me. I thought you loved your work." Robin reached secretly to touch Kipp's knee, giving it a squeeze.

"I do. I really do, when we make a difference. Lately I

feel like we've hit quicksand and no one seems to agree on anything. We stomp and rant at each other, head to head, party against party, and nothing gets accomplished. It's not like it used to be."

"You mean when the Republicans ruled the Senate and the House?" Robin smiled slyly.

Shaking his head at that devilish grin, Kipp said, "Ouch, hit a man while he's down."

"I don't care much for politics, Kipp. I think I would end up going postal. I hate constantly fighting."

"It does take a determined person to do it. I won't deny that."

"Enough small talk." Robin finished his salad and moved the plate aside so he could lean his elbows on the table. "Talk dirty to me."

Kipp laughed, avoiding Robin's green eyes modestly. "Not now, you bad boy."

"So? Your place after this? You sure the wife will be gone?"

"I don't know where else to go."

Robin dangled the new townhouse keys in front of him.

"There's no furniture there."

"So?" Robin stuffed them back into his pocket. "Beats getting caught."

Finishing up his dinner, Kipp nodded, "You're right. Why take the chance?"

After he paid the bill, they were out of the restaurant and back in Kipp's car on their way to the townhouse. Parking around the block, Kipp told Robin to go first, waiting a few minutes to go in after him.

When Kipp walked through the door, he could smell the new paint and carpet. "Robin?" he called out, walking around looking for him. He found him in an empty room that would soon have a bed in it. Pausing, Kipp stood at the doorway as Robin finished taking off his clothing. Once Robin was completely naked, he cupped his genitals and whispered, "Come and get it."

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Immediately Kipp went for him, embracing him. "I've died and gone to heaven," he hissed seductively.

"Oh, yes...you took the words right out of my mouth."

"Hello?" Louise held her hand up to her sister to wait while she answered her mobile phone. "Yes, this is Louise Kensington."

"Mrs. Kensington, it's Dylan, the PI you hired."

"Oh! Yes! Did you find anything out yet?"

"I think I have. I just wanted to verify it with you."

Louise mouthed to Kate, who had been eavesdropping, "My investigator." Then she said into the phone, "Go on."

"Last Tuesday and Wednesday Kipp was in DC."

"Yes. That's right."

"I found out from an inside source that his personal assistant booked him into adjoining rooms with his nephew."

Louise glanced over at the two young boys playing video games in the living room. "What? His nephew? That doesn't make sense."

"Does he have a nephew?"

"Yes. I'm standing in my sister's house looking at them." She made a puzzled face at Kate though Kate didn't know why.

"Did he take one of them with him to DC?"

"No! That's absurd...oh, wait a minute. He must have said the guy was his nephew to hide the fact that—that son of a bitch! I knew he was cheating on me!"

"I had the same feeling."

"Did you get this 'nephew's' name?" She tapped her foot, feeling like she would explode.

"Yes. Robin Grant. Name ring a bell?"

"No. It doesn't. I knew it. Well? Is that my proof?" She shook her head at Kate who was looking on sadly.

"No, not quite yet. I'll try and get some good photos. When I get them, I'll call you back."

"Where's this Robin guy live?"

"I don't think he has his own place. I haven't found him in any directory."

"When you locate him, I want to meet with him. You got it?"

"Got it."

"Thanks, Dylan." She hung up and threw up her hands in exasperation. "He checked into a hotel in DC with some guy he was claiming was his nephew! Give me a fucking break."

"Sounds like you got him, sis. I'd phone a lawyer."

"Son of a bitch...I knew it," she growled.

Kipp closed his eyes as Robin lapped at his cock hungrily. The orgasm was so intense, he thought his heart would burst out of his ribcage. The carpet felt rough to his naked buns as he blinked to stare at the ceiling, trying to recuperate. He raised his head to see Robin still enjoying himself with his tongue. Relaxing again, Kipp felt a nervous wave push aside the lovely sensation of Robin's mouth.

Both of them sated finally, Robin sat up to stare at Kipp's nude body. "Was it good?"

"It was excellent." Kipp reached for him to cuddle.

Robin curled around him, placing his head on Kipp's chest. "It'll be great, Kipp. Once we have a bed we can spend all day screwing each other."

"Yes. Soon."

Robin leaned up to see Kipp's face. "You okay? You've gone very quiet on me."

"Just have a lot on my mind, Robin."

Clasping Kipp's hand tightly, Robin asked, "Can't you get a divorce, Kipp? Wouldn't it be easier than sneaking around, afraid of your own shadow?"

"I would if I could. Believe me. But even a divorced senator has problems in the polls."

"That's absurd."

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“It’s just the way it is.” When Robin rested his head back down on Kipp’s chest, Kipp ran his fingers through his thick hair. In some ways Kipp had prepared himself for lusting after this man, but not for anything deeper. The attachment he felt was making him uneasy, and he didn’t know why. Was it simpler to break off a sexual affair when you needed to? And more difficult to destroy one made of love?

Robin listened to Kipp’s heartbeat. It sounded too fast to be at ease after sex. He could imagine the stress Kipp was dealing with. As he inhaled Kipp’s cologne, Robin closed his eyes and pretended he and Kipp were in a permanent, strong relationship that no one could break apart. Forever, ‘til the end, they would be side by side to support each other, please each other, whisper secrets, share dreams... He wanted that with all his heart. Leaning up again to see Kipp’s face as he had closed his eyes to rest, Robin smiled sadly. “I don’t want to be responsible for ruining your career, Kipp. I couldn’t live with that.”

In a groggy voice, Kipp answered, “Don’t worry about it. Nothing’s going to happen.”

Famous last words. Robin closed his eyes as he rested his head back on Kipp’s chest.

Chapter Seven

By the weekend Robin had moved out of his mother and step-father's house, reluctantly giving his mother his address since she was threatening to disown him if he didn't.

On Monday furniture began to arrive and a very bossy woman named Crystal shouted at the movers where to put it. Robin had no idea the townhouse had become her "project" and didn't hang around long enough to see her irritating the poor men she was directing.

His bike back from the shop, Robin kept his helmet clipped to the sissy bars so he could feel the wind in his hair, and left the chaos behind. If he had to answer one more question about being Kipp's long lost nephew he'd spew.

Craving solitude and a joint, Robin rode west until the sea air blew against his face. Heading out from the townhouse in Santa Rosa, he hit Highway 1 and looked for a good place to pull over and enjoy the view. He ended up at the state park in Inverness, a place where he could relax and calm his jumpy insides.

Ever since this affair with Kipp began, he'd felt paranoid about getting caught. But both of them agreed the

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risk was worth the pleasure, so they didn't dwell on the negative.

Shutting the bike down, resting on it as he stared out at the dunes and waving tall reed grass, Robin closed his eyes as he listened to the gulls' call and the roar of the waves, one of his favorite pastimes.

The hairs rose on the back of his neck suddenly. Blinking his eyes open, he noticed a dark four-door car pull into the lot and park. Vaguely registering the look of the vehicle as familiar, he disregarded it in favor of not allowing anything to ruin this lovely place.

After admiring the scenery again, he glanced back at that car. A large telephoto lens came into view. Again, at first thinking the person was photographing the beautiful beach, Robin suddenly felt that lens trained on him.

"What the..." He stood off the bike and began heading for that sedan. Instantly the camera went down and the reverse lights illuminated. Rushing so he could see into it, Robin sprinted to catch the car before it vanished. Just before it did, he made out the profile of a man with dark hair. Then it was gone.

Standing in the middle of the parking lot, Robin slowly shook himself out of his stupor and headed back to his bike. As he sat down on it to contemplate what had just occurred, he tried to convince himself it was simply someone taking pictures of the scenery, and he shouldn't be afraid. But it didn't stop his heart from pounding painfully in his chest.

Kipp was once again seated in senate chambers in Sacramento listening to opposing arguments of the same old stalemate over and over again. It gave him a headache. Staring at some paperwork in front of him, glancing at it but not really reading it, he was interrupted by one of the messengers trying to look inconspicuous as he handed Kipp a note. Kipp thanked him, took the item, watching the young man scurry away to deliver another letter somewhere

else in the big room.

He looked at the plain envelope curiously, but before he could open it, he was addressed by the chairperson and ended up stuffing it into his jacket pocket to see to it later.

Louise wiped the sweat off her forehead with her wristband. The tennis racket limp in her hand after an hour of practice, she walked to where her bottled water was waiting for her and took a long drink.

"You are getting much better," her tennis instructor said, meeting her at the bench and using a towel to wipe his face.

"Thanks, Alfonso, it's because of you. You're amazing." She batted her lashes at him.

"Soon you will be a pro, like me." His teeth were pure white against his tanned skin when he smiled.

Peering around quickly, she whispered, "What are you doing later?"

"Nothing. I am at your command." He moved closer to her.

"Yum! Good. I want you to meet me back here at the club in a couple of hours. Let me get showered and changed, and we'll have a nice night together."

"Great. I will see you in the lounge at about..." he checked his watch, "seven?"

"Perfect." She grinned wickedly and followed him out of the court.

Kipp left the chamber carrying his briefcase to the parking garage. After he was seated in the driver's seat of his car, he reached into his jacket pocket for his cell phone to call Robin and felt the letter he'd been handed. Having forgotten it, he took it out and unsealed it, then read the short paragraph.

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Senator,

Please be my guest at a Republican gala at the Four Seasons Hotel. I look forward to seeing you again and discussing strategies for the upcoming election season.

Kind regards,

Lester Lewis

Campaign advisor

A card was included with the time, place, date, and directions. Setting it on the seat next to him, Kipp took his phone out of his pocket and dialed. When Robin answered his heart skipped a beat in excitement. "Hello, gorgeous."

"Senator," Robin replied.

"I'm glad you're home. Did Crystal get your place furnished?"

"She did. It looks like something out of a magazine."

"You sound disappointed." Kipp started the engine, anxious to see him.

"Well, it's not me, but then again, posters of Jim Morrison and Janis Joplin wouldn't be appropriate for such a swanky place."

"Aren't you too young to be a fan of those two? They're more my generation." Kipp laughed.

"You like the Doors?"

"You sound surprised." Kipp put the car in drive and left the parking area.

"Well, yeah...I am. I guess you're full of surprises."

"I'm also on my way. I'll be there in twenty minutes."

"I'll be waiting."

Kipp hung up, focusing on the drive. He couldn't help but feel the thrill in his veins. When was the last time he felt so happy and alive?

Louise put her lipstick on while seated in the car. Her new car. Her brand new, red hot Porsche. The valet opened her door for her, and she stepped out and dropped the key

into his palm. "Take good care of her."

"Yes, ma'am!"

Sauntering into the illuminated clubhouse on her stilettos, Louise knew she was fantastic and now wanted everyone else to know it. She was no shrinking violet, no frumpy old housewife. Oh, no. Not her.

The employees greeted her enthusiastically. She nodded to them each as if she were the queen. Diamonds glittered from her long painted fingers, a boa of feathers adorned her neck. Seeing Alfonso's face was worth everything she owned. Well, maybe not. Not everything.

As his tanned skin radiated with delight, she knew they were getting frowning looks for their impropriety. She was past caring. If anyone asked, they were discussing her tennis lessons. End of story.

He hooked her arm and escorted her into the grand dining room. Immediately she was shown to a table and offered champagne. While Alfonso ogled her cleavage, she scanned the room and found the turned up noses of so many political spouses it made her smile. *Yes, girls, I'm having fun now. You can stick to your dull lifeless husbands. I'll play with this handsome tennis god.*

"You look divine." Alfonso kissed her hand gently.

She loved the raised eyebrows. For the first time in nine years she felt free. "I feel divine. Order me some caviar."

"But of course!" He laughed and waved at a waiter.

While he was occupied Louise heard her ringtone sounding from her purse. Opening her bag, she put the tiny phone to her ear. "Hello?"

"It's Dylan. I've got some photos I would like to show you."

"Excellent! Where are you?"

"In my office. Where are you?"

"At the club. Can you meet me here?"

"What time?"

She checked her gold watch. "How about an hour, in the lobby?"

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"I'll be there."

"Are the photos any good?"

"I'll let you be the judge of that."

She said goodbye and hung up, slipping the mobile phone back into her pocketbook.

"Everything all right?" Alfonso asked.

"Perfect. Absolutely perfect. Now, where's the champagne and caviar?"

Robin was freshly showered, shaved, and dressed to seduce. Since the conversation was about Mr. Jim Morrison earlier, Robin decided his leather pants were in order. Spending extra time on his hair, he managed to get it as full as a lion's mane and even used some eye-liner he had bought for the occasion to line his eyes. As he stared into the mirror in the bathroom he struck a few poses, naked from the waist up, and loved how wicked the make-up made him look. "Right. Now let's see how much of a Morrison fan Senator Kensington is."

Kipp parked around the corner, hurrying to the townhouse. Using his key he entered the living room and instantly heard music playing. As the eerie melody of "The End" floated in the air, a vision in black leather appeared in the hall.

"Holy shit..." Kipp breathed out loud, still holding his keys in his hand as he stared.

"Hello, Kipp."

"Jesus Christ..." Kipp fumbled to get his keys into his pocket. "Look at you."

Robin put his hands on his hips and pushed out his pelvis as if showing Kipp how excited he was. Kipp could see his erection right through the black cow skin. Slowly crossing the space between them, Kipp took in every inch of this black leather rider, his mouth watering for a taste.

When he was close enough, Kipp reached out first to Robin's face, drawing him in for a kiss. The moment their tongues touched, Kipp felt his knees go weak. "Oh, Robin, you are incredible."

"Take me. Make me yours," Robin urged, pushing his hips into Kipp's. Robin held Kipp's hand and led him to the bedroom. Lit candles all over the room made flickering shadows that danced along the new designer paintings and window coverings.

As he fell into this fantasy, Kipp allowed Robin to undress him, starting with his suit jacket and tie.

Very gently, Robin removed each item of Kipp's clothing, setting it respectfully on a chair, until Kipp was standing in only his blue cotton briefs. It was all Kipp could do to allow Robin to complete his task. He kept wanting to grab him, manhandle him, get him on that damn satiny bed and lick him from head to toe. When it seemed as if Robin was at the point where he was going to allow Kipp to do just that, Kipp first kissed Robin's lips, then lowered to suck on his right nipple, nipping it and lapping at it until it was as hard as his own cock. The left nipple was next on the menu. When that too was erect, Kipp leaned back to stare at them, loving the look of this half-naked god in leather pants. As he ran his hands on both sides of Robin's face, into his thick brown hair, Kipp began walking them backwards to the bed. When Robin's legs hit the mattress, Kipp shoved him back on it.

Robin fell with a bounce, and Kipp stared at him again, taking him in all at once.

Kipp noticed some things had been set out on the nightstand. Everything had been prepared for them. It was all so easy.

Climbing on the bed between Robin's leather legs, Kipp smoothed his hands up each thigh until he came to Robin's crotch, then he covered his hands over that mound of throbbing manhood and groaned in yearning. Having teased himself enough, Kipp yanked down Robin's zipper

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revealing nothing but skin underneath.

Yes, he felt like a plaything, a toy again. But for this man? It was perfect. He wanted to be the tool of absolute pleasure for him. There was nothing Robin wanted more. Why? He couldn't say. Maybe it was the idea of pleasing a senator. Maybe he, too, could be seduced by the power and charm of this handsome man. But whatever it was, all he wanted to do was spread his legs and beg.

When suddenly Kipp flipped him over onto his stomach, Robin gasped at the abruptness. His leather pants were yanked down his ass to his thighs. "Oh yes!" Robin laughed. "Go for it, baby!"

As Robin waited and watched, Kipp slid on a rubber and then slathered slippery lube everywhere. Robin was so hard from it he was ready to spontaneously combust.

The minute that hot cock penetrated him, Robin felt as if he were floating. Slick hands searched and located his hard-on where it protruded like a pole from his black leather pants. Then the ride began. With both of Kipp's hands on his cock, Robin pumped in time to the thrusting of Kipp's hips and jammed his dick as hard as he could into those tight palms. In record time, Robin came, arching his back. Behind him Kipp gave a deep, masculine grunt of ecstasy, shuddering deep inside him.

Both of them sweating and gasping for air, Robin dropped down on the mattress with Kipp on top of him. Panting, getting back their breath, he heard Kipp's voice in his ear, "You are absolutely fantastic."

Laughing and groaning at the same time, Robin replied, "Oh, Christ, Kipp, you took the fucking words right out of my mouth."

Louise waved to Dylan. He nodded and hurried over.
"Oh, Dylan, this is Alfonso."

“Hey. Nice to meet you. Uh, where do you want to go to see these?” Dylan showed her an envelope.

“How about in that lounge? It’s very private.” When Dylan paused, Louise asked, “What’s the matter?”

“You want Alfonso in on this? I thought it was strictly confidential.”

“Oh, don’t worry about him. He’s fine.” She winked at her tennis pro lover.

The three of them sat down at a table out of the way by a picture window. It was dark outside so the feeling of confidentiality surrounded her. After Dylan looked around discreetly, he handed Louise the photographs under the table. She also took a quick peek of the area, sliding them out of their envelope. “Who is that?”

“That’s the man the senator called his ‘nephew’.”

Louise was stunned. And jealous. “Are you sure?”

“Yes. Positive. Look. Here’s one of them standing together in a restaurant parking lot.”

Alfonso leaned over to try and get a look. “Don’t leer at him, Alfonso! It’s insulting.”

“Leer? I am not leering! Who is leering?”

“I can see you drooling over him,” she accused, then got back to flipping through the photographs angrily. “Where the hell did he meet him? I can’t believe this!”

Dylan covered his inappropriate amused smile. When Louise glared at him, Dylan shrugged, saying, “Look, it’s not my fault he’s a handsome guy.”

“Robin Grant? That’s this guy’s name? Robin?” Louise felt her temper rising to boiling point. Not only did Kipp cheat on her, he cheated on her with a model! Unfair! The guy was supposed to look feminine. Fat. Weak. Not like that!

“Yes. Robin Grant.”

“Where does he live? I want to know where he lives,” she demanded. She felt Alfonso trying to look at the pictures again and slapped him in the chest with them, saying, “Here! Get excited over them. All you pretty ones

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are gay anyway.”

He didn’t argue, taking them to look at more closely.

Dylan seemed to be trying not to laugh. It was infuriating her. “I think he lives in a townhouse in Santa Rosa.”

“You think?”

“I’m almost sure. I’ll get you the address once I verify it.”

“You do that.” She turned around to Alfonso and found him enthralled. “I don’t believe this! Gee, Alfonso, you want to take one home to jerk-off over?”

Raising his head quickly, his cheeks going crimson, he handed her back the photos, not saying a word in denial.

“Anything else?” she snapped at Dylan.

“Nope. That’s it for now. Sorry to be the bearer of bad news.” Dylan stood up.

“Yeah, whatever. You just get back to me with his damn address.”

“Why?” Alfonso asked, “What will you do?”

“I just want to talk to him, that’s all.” She gestured with a rude wave of the hand for Dylan to leave. He nodded and left.

Alfonso shook his head sadly at her. “Talk? Since when would you only want to ‘talk’ with a man who looked like that?”

“Shut up, will you just shut up?” she screeched, covering her ears. When she opened her eyes, there on her lap was the most incredible looking man she had ever seen.

Chapter Eight

“What do you mean you’re not coming?” Kipp fussed with his cufflinks.

“Why the hell should I go with you?” Louise snorted, watching as he struggled to get his cuffs done with one hand.

“Because that’s the agreement! You are to be seen with me at these dinners, Louise. Look, I don’t ask much of you—” Her sarcastic choke cut him off. Glaring at her, he continued with a stern voice. “You knew what to expect when you entered into this agreement. You’ve been fine for nine years. Suddenly, you’ve become very difficult. What’s going on?” As he stared at her, waiting for an answer, it appeared to him she had something on her mind she wasn’t saying. “Why the sudden shift in tempo, Louise?”

Throwing up her hands dramatically, she shouted, “I want a real family, Kipp! Kids. A man who I sleep with in the same bed.”

“You said you didn’t want any of those things when we discussed it. Remember? You said you weren’t the maternal type and all you needed to be happy was power and money. Remember that conversation, Louise? It was in the presence

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of both our attorneys. Please. I need you to come to this gala with me. It will look very queer if you don't."

Making a noise in her throat of disgust, she said, "How appropriate."

"Fine. I'll say you're ill. Fine, Louise." He couldn't get his cufflink on and slammed it down on the dresser.

A wave of guilt passed over her. She had agreed to it all. She had. She just didn't know she would change her mind. "Here. Give me that stupid thing."

Kipp handed her the cufflink.

As she clipped it into his stiff white cuff, she felt so jealous of him, it made her ill. Holding back the information until the right moment to spring it on him, Louise wanted so much to point her finger at him and shout, "I know!" But it wasn't wise to show her hand yet. She wanted something more. She just didn't know what.

"There. Give me the other one." She held out her hand.

"Thank you." He handed her the second cufflink. "Are you sure I can't tempt you to come. It's at the Four Seasons, and they usually put out a fantastic meal."

"I don't have enough time to get ready now." She dropped her hands to her sides after she finished the second cuff.

"I'll wait. Take all the time you need."

"I don't have anything to wear." She was deciding whether to go. It was always fun to mix with important people, flirt with frustrated husbands, make-out with a waiter in the cloakroom...

"Sure you do. You have a lovely selection of gowns."

"My hair's a mess." Seeing he was about to throw in the towel, she said, "Give me a half hour."

"Fine."

As she left the room, she turned back to look at him once, then lowered her head as she walked down the hall.

Dusty fussed with her hair and lipstick, staring into the bathroom mirror. Lester was fixing his bowtie, a cigarette hanging from his lip. When she finished preening, she turned off the light and hurried to the phone on her nightstand.

"Who are you calling?" Lester asked, checking his watch.

"Robin. I just want to see if he's free to come. I hate leaving him out of things like this."

"Oh, come on, Dusty. Forget it. He's not interested." Lester blew out a cloud of white smoke.

"Let me just call him."

Lying on his bed daydreaming, Robin heard the phone and jumped to grab the extension near him hoping it was Kipp. "Hello?"

"Robin, it's your mother. Look, I know it's last minute, but how about coming with Lester and me to the dinner tonight?"

Robin sat up. He knew Kipp was going to some dinner as well. Could it be the same one? "A dinner? Where?"

"The Four Seasons. Interested?"

Looking around the empty bedroom, Robin imagined a night with Kipp. Even if he couldn't be by his side, he could still be in the same room as Kipp was. "I don't have my tuxedo here."

"You want to come?" Dusty gasped.

"Sure, why not?" Robin wondered if it appeared odd. He usually argued, shunned, and cringed at the mention of anything political.

"I'll bring your tuxedo with me when we pick you up. I'm glad you're coming, Robin. Does Susan want to come as well?"

Robin froze, trying to keep in mind that he was supposed to be in a relationship. "No. She's working late."

Exposure

"You never told us what she did."

"Uh, she's a cop. She works nights." Robin hoped that excuse would work for all sorts of occasions. After all, cops worked holidays and weekends.

"A cop? What on earth? You and a police woman?"

"Don't start on me, Mom, I'll reconsider."

"Fine! We'll be there in a few minutes."

"Okay." Robin hung up, hopped off the bed and checked to see how he looked in the dresser mirror. "Shave," he told his reflection, and hurried to the bathroom.

The driver let them off at the main entrance. A noticeable presence of armed security guards was on duty to protect the famous and infamous politicians. Kipp climbed out of the back of the car first, reaching to help Louise stand on her ridiculously high heels. What he used to consider pretty had deteriorated into something cheap and gaudy. Maybe it was that overconfident attitude Louise emitted when modesty and grace would have made her more appealing. Whatever it was, he hoped she stayed sober enough not to embarrass him. As a reminder, Kipp whispered, "You promised you wouldn't drink."

"I did not." She hooked his arm as they walked into the lobby together.

"Then promise me." Nothing but a sarcastic laugh returned in reply. Kipp suddenly regretted urging her to join him.

The moment they were inside they were rushed by fellow politicians wanting to greet them and exchange views on strategies for the coming election year. Though Kipp knew this was protocol, he was already anxious to get the night over with and meet with Robin to crawl into his bed.

The ballroom was aglitter with silver and gold. Streams of balloons and shimmering ribbons adorned the corners and ceiling. Tables surrounded a dance floor and a live band

was playing ragtime music.

Seeing the man who had offered the invitation, his new campaign manager, Kipp crossed the gap to him with an outstretched hand. "Lester, so good of you to organize this event."

"My pleasure, Kipp, my pleasure." He reached out his hand to Louise. "Nice to see you again, Mrs. Kensington. You must be very proud of Kipp. He's going to run over any opposition he encounters. His supporters love him."

Kipp held his breath and looked over at her as she did her best not to grimace in disgust.

"Oh, yes. Everyone *loves* Kipp," she said dryly.

Not wanting the conversation to deteriorate, which it usually did when Louise was around, he touched her shoulder and said, "Oh, look, dear, there's Mona Robinson. Why don't you go say hello?"

As she rolled her eyes predictably, Kipp sighed with relief when she walked away.

Lester lit up a cigarette and asked, "Things not going well at home?"

"No, they're fine. Just fine." Suddenly, he noticed a fantastic young man in a tuxedo staring at him.

As if Lester just realized where he was looking, he shouted out to a woman and Robin to come over for an introduction. "Kipp, let me introduce you to my lovely wife, Dustin. Dusty, this is Senator Kipp Kensington."

Kipp tried to pay attention to the petite, pretty lady, but his eyes kept being drawn to Robin, stunned to see him there.

"And this is my step-son, Robin."

As Lester completed the introduction, Kipp's jaw dropped. *You're Lester Lewis' step-son?*

"Nice to meet you, Senator." Robin squeezed his hand. "I'm a big fan."

Shocked couldn't describe Kipp's reaction. When Robin tickled his palm discreetly with his middle finger, Kipp blushed.

Exposure

“Kipp?” Lester took the cigarette out of his mouth. “You all right?”

“Yes.” Kipp recovered and took his hand back from Robin’s shake to try not to make it seem obvious they knew each other. “I...I was just heading to the bar for a drink.”

“I wouldn’t mind one.” Robin smiled sweetly.

As Robin made a move to walk with him, Kipp felt the sweat break out on his skin. “I’ll see you later, Lester. Nice meeting you, Dusty,” Kipp stammered, nodding his head like a puppet.

When they were a few paces away, Kipp whispered out of the corner of his mouth, “What are you doing here?”

“I wanted to see you. We don’t have to hang out.”

“I had no idea you were Lester Lewis’ step-son!” Kipp glanced around to see if anyone thought simply being in this incredibly handsome man’s company seemed inappropriate.

“Didn’t I say that?” Robin asked sincerely. “It doesn’t matter, does it?”

They stood in the line for alcohol. Kipp felt as if he was having a heart attack. He repeated because he couldn’t quite believe it, “You’re Lester Lewis’ step-son?”

Appearing annoyed, Robin hissed, “What the hell difference does it make?”

“He’s my new campaign manager.” Kipp had to force a smile when someone said hello to him, then it fell again quickly. “What if he suspects something?”

“If you stop acting like you’re having a coronary, he won’t figure it out. Geez, Kipp, get a drink. Calm down.”

Finding himself standing in front of the bartender, Kipp ordered a double shot of scotch and almost swallowed it down in one gulp.

Robin tried to understand why Kipp was so stressed out. He wouldn’t do anything that would compromise him. He wasn’t that stupid.

Ordering and receiving a beer, Robin sighed and said,

“Right. I’ll make myself scarce. Sorry, Kipp. I thought it would be cool to hang out at one of these stupid things because you were here. I’ll leave you alone.” Seeing the anxiety on Kipp’s face, Robin walked away to avoid any suspicion being attached to his lover. But inside he was devastated. He imagined they’d share secret smiles, meet in the men’s room for a quick feel. Now? He wished he had brought his bike so he could go home.

Her second glass of wine already in her hand, Louise couldn’t even hear herself think in all the noise. The acoustics were terrible, and the band was playing some sentimental waltz too loudly.

“Are they serving dinner yet? I am hungry,” Mona moaned.

Louise tried to look back at the tables to see if any food was being set down in their absence. When she gasped in shock, Mona jumped.

“What is it, dear?”

“Nothing. Speak to you later, Mona.” Making a direct line across the crowded room, Louise couldn’t believe her eyes. Under her breath she kept muttering, “It’s him, it’s him...” Before she collided with the remarkable looking Robin Grant, she paused and searched for Kipp. If Robin was here, Kipp surely must have known. But why did he insist she come along then? Finding Kipp leaning over a very short bald man, trapped in a conversation, seemingly shouting in his ear, Louise laughed to herself at his predicament, then continued to where she had been heading.

After this beer, I get a taxi home. Finishing the rest of his ale, Robin looked for a spot to set the glass down when a woman with dyed blond hair and a low-cut gown pushed her way to stand directly in front of him. It was so aggressive, he shook his head in annoyance. “Jesus, lady,

Exposure

make it any more obvious why don't you? Maybe you should slow down on the juice."

"You're Robin Grant, aren't you?"

"What's it to you?" He moved his eyes over her cleavage, her golden necklace, and then back to her heavily painted eyelids.

"I don't believe it."

"Don't believe what? Who the hell are you?" Robin began thinking she was crazy and looked around for an excuse to leave. When she reached out and grabbed his crotch he choked and shoved her hand away. "What the hell's the matter with you?"

"Hung like a fucking horse. Figures."

"Lady, you're nuts! Get away from me!" He quickly set his empty beer glass on a passing tray so he could have two hands free to defend himself.

Kipp couldn't shout loud enough over the noise to even attempt to be heard by the old man who was stone deaf. Losing the strength to keep trying, wanting to scream at him to get a damn hearing aide, he looked over the man's shining dome and died inside. Louise and Robin were involved in a conversation. It was his worst nightmare come true. "Excuse me," he told the little man, "I must see my wife about something."

"Eh?" the man said.

"Stop groping me! What the hell's the matter with you!" Robin felt as if he was battling a spider.

"Meet with me. Tell me where I can find you."

"No! Get lost!"

As Kipp fought his way across the chaotic room, feeling more and more like a salmon moving against the flow, he

thought he caught some rage flash across Robin's face. "Oh, no, what the hell is she saying to him?"

Body-slammed by a drunken woman dancing with her husband like a maniac, Kipp stopped himself from swearing at her in case she was someone important and raised his jaw to his target. When he looked back up, they were gone. He stood in the spot they had been and searched around in frustration.

"Leave me alone!" Robin kept moving out of the ballroom.

"Wait! Please. Just meet with me one time."

"No! You're insane. I'll tell one of these security guys you molested me. Back off!"

Louise watched in vain as Robin left the lobby and vanished into the night. When she felt a hand on her arm suddenly, she jolted in surprise and spun around. "Oh, Kipp. What do you want?"

"What were you doing? Just now?"

"Doing? Nothing." She smiled wickedly, knowing he must have seen them together.

"Where did that man go?"

"Man? What man?" She batted her lashes innocently. As he bit his lip, afraid to say the name they both knew, she laughed out loud. "I don't know which man you're talking about. I'm starved. Let's see if they're serving dinner yet, Kipp."

As she sauntered back into the ballroom, she looked over her shoulder to see her husband staring through the large plate glass doors.

Robin walked a few blocks away from the hotel and paced. As he scuffed his heels on the pavement, he heard the sound of his new mobile phone ringing. Figuring it had to be Kipp, he took it out of his jacket pocket. "Hello?"

Exposure

“Where are you?”

“I left. Some weird chick was all over me.” He looked back in the direction of the hotel.

“That ‘weird chick’ was my wife.”

“What?” Robin gasped, “Sick! Why was she pawing at me? Does she know about us?”

“She’s not admitting it, but she must. Why else would she do that?”

“She grabbed my fucking dick, Kipp!” Hearing Kipp’s silence on the other end, Robin kicked at a stone on the sidewalk and sat down on a low brick wall in front of a closed butcher shop. “She’s a loon. I can’t believe that’s what you’re stuck with.”

“What did she say to you? Did she mention anything about us seeing each other?”

“No. She just asked me if I was Robin Grant. Then she started copping a feel of my dick.” He flicked a pebble off the wall and looked around the empty street.

“She gets that way when she’s drunk. Sloppy. Horny and sloppy. Maybe she doesn’t know we’re having an affair. Maybe she just saw you as fair game and wanted to get into your pants.”

“Whatever.” Robin leaned over his lap and felt the exhaustion creeping up on him.

“Are you on your way home?”

“I have to get a cab. My mom and Lester drove me. They don’t even know I left the party.” Robin ran his hand through his hair, getting it out of his eyes.

“You want me to take you home?”

“How the hell will you do that?” He sat up, looking back in the direction of the hotel again.

“I’ll tell her I’m not feeling well. I’ll think of something.”

“Okay. If you think it’s a good idea.”

“Meet me back at the parking lot. I should be out soon.”

“Okay.” Robin hung up, using the opportunity to tell his mother he was going home early.

"Where's Robin gone to? They're serving the meal, Lester. Have you seen him?"

"He's probably in the bathroom smoking marijuana." Lester crushed out his cigarette and drank down his rum and cola.

"Stop it. He told me he gave that up."

"Yeah, right."

"He's dating a cop, Lester. He can't smoke pot anymore. Oh, there he is."

"Hey." Robin leaned across the table to her.

"They're serving. Sit down."

"No. I'm going home. I'm beat."

"How will you get home?" Dusty looked back at Lester who was scrutinizing his step-son's appearance.

"Cab. See ya."

When he walked off, Lester snarled, "Red eyes, told you."

"Lester, cut it out. He's just tired."

"Whatever you say, Dusty."

A second later Kipp was leaning over the table to Lester. "I have to go, old man, I'm feeling slightly under the weather."

"Oh, sorry, Kipp." Lester stood up and reached out his hand. "We'll be in touch."

"Yes. Of course. Nice meeting you, Dusty."

"Bye!" She waved, then said to Lester, "He's a strikingly handsome man, isn't he, Lester?"

"Hm? Who?"

"Kipp."

Giving his wife a sideways glance, Lester pulled out another cigarette and lit it up.

"Where are you going?" Louise shouted when she noticed her husband leaving.

Exposure

“Home. I don’t feel well.”

“You want me to come with you?”

“No. Here,” he handed her some cash, “get a cab home. Stay. Enjoy yourself.”

When he left Louise looked around for Robin and didn’t see him anywhere. The familiar dark cloud of suspicion once again loomed. Instead of letting it ruin her evening, she locked her sights on an attractive waiter and followed him into the hall.

Robin stared down at his shoes, tired of waiting to go home. Finally, the black Mercedes appeared. The passenger side door swung open for him. He climbed in and slouched low in the seat, his legs in a wide straddle.

“Maybe we should cool it for a little while, Robin.”

Not realizing how much it would sting, Robin tilted his head over to Kipp and felt completely crushed.

Kipp glanced over at him quickly as he drove. “I’m sorry. With the news that you’re Lewis’ step-son, and with Louise in the know somehow, I just think if we take a little time off to step back and—”

Robin wiped discreetly at a tear before it fell. With the comment from Kipp cut short, he had a feeling Kipp had seen him dabbing at his eye.

“Robin?”

Knowing if he tried to talk right now he’d cry, Robin bit his trembling lip and crossed his arms tightly over his chest. He never thought he could feel so hurt. Yes, it was a doomed relationship from the start, but still, he loved this man. The thought of being without him, even for a small break was agony.

“Robin, please say something.”

Through a cracking voice, Robin said, “What do you want me to say?”

Hearing that pain, Kipp fell apart. He pulled over and shut off his headlights. "Oh, lover, what the hell am I going to do?"

When Robin finally faced him, Kipp could see the two shimmering rivers running down his cheeks. It killed him. Immediately, he wrapped Robin into an embrace and crushed him against his body. The gesture seemed to worsen Robin's tears. As Robin fought desperately to regain his composure, Kipp kissed his teary face, his hair, his mouth, feeling his own emotions overwhelming him. "I knew this would happen. I knew it."

Shaking his head, Robin didn't respond.

Kipp buried his face into Robin's fragrant hair and whispered, "I love you so much."

Suddenly, in a sharp reaction to the comment, Robin shoved back from Kipp with wide watery eyes and seemed as if he was pressed back against the passenger door in horror.

"What?" Kipp asked in shock.

"You love me?"

Not knowing what was wrong, Kipp nodded slowly, his eyes connected to Robin's wild gaze.

"What the hell am I supposed to do now?" Robin cried. "Huh, Kipp? What the hell am I supposed to do now?"

"Do? I don't know what you mean?" Kipp's heart was breaking at seeing Robin in so much pain.

After what seemed like an eternity, Robin sobbed, "What am I supposed to do with that love? Huh, Kipp?"

Kipp just sat there, stunned.

Finally, Robin whimpered, "What am I supposed to do when I love you too? Huh? What am I supposed to do?"

His heart exploding with pleasure at the admission, Kipp wrapped around Robin again and rocked him as he cried. Kissing his neck through his long hair, Kipp fought desperately with his own tears to try and think of a solution.

Exposure

She was surprised to see the Mercedes in the driveway. Paying the cab driver, Louise staggered up the path to her front door and took out her key from her purse. As she did, she noticed her mobile phone was still on. Before she switched it off, she checked her messages. Alfonso had called, and she had one message from Dylan. He relayed Robin Grant's home address to her. She was so delighted, she almost screamed in joy. Biting back her thrill, she opened the door and hurried to her bedroom to copy the information down on a piece of paper. Passing Kipp's closed bedroom door, she gave it a very wicked look.

Chapter Nine

Knowing Kipp was in joint rules hearings all day, Louise enjoyed a pedicure and chatted on her mobile phone. “So, Alfonso, sweetie, what do you say?”

“I think it is not a good thing.”

“Oh, come on, pookie, for me. *Please?*” She checked her long, red fake fingernails as she spoke.

“Why do you want to do this?”

“I don’t know. For fun?”

“Let me think about it.”

“You do that. I’ll call you back in an hour.” She hung up and grinned demonically, then snapped at the girl doing her toenails, “Hey! Easy! It’s not a damn hoof!”

Robin looked through the course information Kipp had left in his attempt to lure him back to law school. Just the sight of the case law classes made him cringe. “I can’t do it, Kipp.” Instead, he searched the want ad section in the newspaper, but the selection of minimum wage jobs left him cold. Rubbing his head in agony at having to make a decision, Robin had one thing he did want to do. Ride his

Exposure

Harley.

Slipping on his leathers, he checked the time, knew Kipp wouldn't be by for a few hours yet, and left the townhouse.

"There he goes! Quick! Quick! Follow him!"

Alfonso shook his head at the folly and put the car into drive.

Setting the bike up on its kickstand, Robin tried to tame his hair from the windy ride and headed to the entrance of the tavern. The Sixties design and low overhanging ceilings felt slightly claustrophobic after the open highway, but there was something he liked about the novelty of the place. Inside, the reek of cigarette smoke was ever-present. It was dim and crowded, just the kind of place to feel anonymous and be left alone. He sat at the bar and unzipped his leather jacket in the warmth of the room. When the bartender set a coaster down in front of him, Robin ordered a beer.

Trying not to be manic about checking the time until Kipp would phone, Robin decided to lose himself in the baseball game on the tiny screened television hovering over the bar and drink until Kipp's long awaited call. Since their declaration of love, and Kipp's reassurance that they could keep seeing each other as long as it was even more discreet than before, Robin felt confident that somehow things would work out.

A man sat on the barstool next to him and ordered a mixed drink. Robin glanced over at him briefly, seeing his tanned skin and dazzling smile. Being polite, Robin smiled in return, moving his attention back to the baseball game.

"Excuse me, do you have the time?"

Robin twisted to face the man and looked at his watch. "It's six-twenty."

"Thank you. Uh, can I buy the next round?"

Rolling his eyes tiredly, Robin replied, "No, it's okay."

"I insist. I'm new around here, and it is the custom where I come from."

Trying to humor the man, Robin nodded, saying thanks, looking back up at the TV when some of the men shouted as the batter struck out.

Absorbed in the game for a few minutes, when a commercial break came, Robin realized his fresh beer was sitting on the bar. Moving his empty aside, he raised the glass and thanked the tanned man.

The man's white teeth appeared as he tapped Robin's glass in a toast.

Thinking of leaving after this glass, Robin didn't want to give his admirer any ideas that there could be any type of tryst between them. When the game came back on, he twisted to face the television and sipped his beer as he cheered.

A wave of dizziness passed over him. Robin shook his head to clear it, and checked the time. It was only six forty-five. Kipp wouldn't be calling for another hour or so. Why was the time moving so slowly?

Another deep swallow of beer and he set the glass on the bar and felt the cold sweat break out on his forehead. The small wave of dizziness was slowly working to a feeling of passing out.

"You okay?"

The tanned man touched his shoulder. Robin spun on the stool to see him. The man wore a look of concern. Robin shook his head to clear his vision again and rubbed his eyes.

"You don't look so good, my friend."

Robin narrowed his stare on the man's mouth, then looked at his almost empty beer glass. "What did you do?" Robin whispered as he felt the walls moving in on him.

"You need some fresh air."

Against his will he was nudged off the stool to his feet. He could barely control his legs as they took his body weight. Other men were looking at him as if he were a

Exposure

sloppy drunk, needing to dry out. In his head Robin was asking them for help, but it never passed his lips.

The strong, darkly-tanned man escorted Robin outside, holding him around his waist.

“Let go of me!” Robin managed out of a closing throat. He had a myriad of thoughts, none of which he was able to act on. Call Kipp, call the cops, scream for help, fight. But whatever was traveling through his veins was so potent he knew just the pleasure of walking wouldn’t be possible in a few seconds.

He was shoved into the back seat of a car. Falling sideways as his muscle control left him, Robin forced his eyes to open and looked to see the back of a woman’s blonde head as she drove them out of the lot.

Kipp checked the time. Counting down the minutes until he was out of the meeting and in his car, he recalled the long conversation he and Robin had after the disastrous gala dinner. Neither one of them could face the idea of breaking it off. So, that wasn’t an option. But to his insistence, they would cut down the time they spent together to two nights a week. That was it until Louise cooled off, and he could divert attention away from Lester Lewis finding out he was screwing his step-son.

It wasn’t a great option, but it was the best they could do until one of them came up with a better solution. His biggest dilemma was Louise. He wondered if he just told her to go and have a discreet affair, if that would be enough to satisfy her. But have children with her? That would be impossible in more ways than the obvious.

Muttering under his breath, Kipp snorted, “She’s already been sleeping around on me. What difference does it make? As long as the press doesn’t find out.” He needed to call his publicist to see what he recommended. Until then, he would sneak to Robin’s place twice a week. Looking back at his watch again, he wondered if time had

completely stopped or what.

Robin was lying on a bed in a seedy motel room. Completely incapacitated, he couldn't move a vocal cord, let alone a limb. But he recognized the blonde. Oh, yes. Kipp's nasty wife. That much he knew. What the hell they wanted from him, he couldn't guess.

"Hurry. I don't know how long those stupid sedatives last," she ordered, "Let's go!"

Alfonso stood still, looking down at Robin. "I don't like this. It's not good."

"Pookie," she purred. "Just a few incriminating photos for hubby. *Please?*"

"What do you want me to do?"

"Get him undressed and pretend to do something with him. I'll take the pictures from behind you so no one will see your face. Then I'll send them to Kipp anonymously, and he and this guy will be finished, right? Then I'll send them to the press with the photos Dylan took of Kipp and Robin together and say it's Kipp and Robin doing sexual things together. Then when he's proven to break the contract, I'll sue for divorce and get half his money. Okay, pookie? And then you and I will take a nice long world cruise. Okay?"

"How will I look like Kipp? Hm? That doesn't make sense."

"Will you hurry before he wakes up?"

Hearing every word they said, Robin closed his eyes tightly and fought with the paralyzing drugs that were in his body.

Finally in his car and heading for Santa Ana, Kipp dialed Robin's home phone first. He left a message on the answering machine, trying his mobile. When his service picked up, Kipp grew slightly aggravated. "Robin, I'm on

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my way to your place. I should be there in an hour. See you soon.”

“He’s waking up! Quick, do something!”

“What?”

“Tie him up!”

“With what?”

“Use this! Hurry! Stuff this into his mouth. Shit, come on, hurry!”

Parking in his usual spot around the block, Kipp walked briskly to the door and used his key. The entire townhouse was dark. “Robin?” Expecting candlelight in the bedroom and a sprawled naked man with a seductive gaze, Kipp entered the room and found it empty. “Shit. Where the hell are you?” Kipp picked up the phone and tried his mobile again. When the service connected he said, “Robin, I’m here at the townhouse. Where are you?” Suddenly, Kipp wondered if something had happened with his bike. After all, it wouldn’t be the first time he was hit.

The anger was quickly replaced by worry. Hurrying out to the parking area, Kipp looked for the Harley, checked the garage and didn’t see it.

His head was killing him. Robin forced his eyes to open and looked around the empty room. Jerking at his hands, he felt the bonds on his wrists and heard the headboard creak. Chewing on the gag in his mouth, he tried to spit it out but couldn’t. He shouted a couple of times through it, but knew it wasn’t loud enough to be heard. Raising his head with an effort, he stared down at his exposed body and cringed. As the drugs diluted in his blood, he began twisting on the mattress to free himself. Gathering up his strength, he roared as much as he could with the gag in his teeth and

arched his back pulling at the thin boards of the cheaply made bed. Hearing the wood crackle and give way with a loud snap, Robin broke the post he was tied to and unwrapped the binding towel from his hands. Yanking the rag out of his mouth, he gasped for breath and sat up, trying to figure out where he was.

Sick with worry, but running out of time, Kipp left the townhouse, leaving a note for Robin to call him no matter the hour that he returned. As he walked to his car, Kipp heard his cell phone ring. Scrambling to get it out of his pocket, he answered it anxiously.

“Kipp?”

“Robin! Oh, God, I’m so glad it’s you. I’ve been worried sick! Where are you?”

“I’m at Sacramento General.”

“Oh, no. I knew it. You fell on your bike. Oh, Robin.” Kipp felt ill.

“No. I didn’t fall off the bike.”

Slightly disoriented, Kipp just said, “I’m on my way.”

When Kipp rushed into the hospital he was directed to a room in the ER. Stopping short, Kipp was horrified to find a uniformed officer standing there. Clearing his throat, he approached him confidently and asked, “Is everything all right, officer?”

“Who are you?” he asked skeptically.

“A friend of Robin’s. Can I see him?”

“Yes. Maybe you can convince him to tell us what happened to him. We know he’s been assaulted, but he won’t talk about it.”

“Assaulted?” Kipp pushed past the swinging doors to see Robin lying in a hospital bed. Rushing to his side, he grabbed Robin’s hand and asked, “What happened? Robin, what’s going on?”

Exposure

Raising his head off the pillow, Robin looked around first. It appeared Robin was trying to control himself and not shout in rage. "Your fucking wife and one of her fucking playmates drugged me!"

"What?" Kipp thought he may pass out from the shock. "Louise?"

"Yes. I was having a fucking beer in a bar and the fucking guy put something in it."

"Oh, God, Robin..." Kipp was devastated.

"They knocked me out, took me to some crappy hotel off Interstate 5, and molested me!"

Kipp didn't know what to think. It didn't sound like Louise, or did it? "Are you okay? Did the doctors check you out?"

"Yes. They did a fucking rape kit on me, Kipp!"

"Oh, God, no."

"I told them I didn't think I was raped, but they insisted." Robin took a deep breath and let his head drop back on the pillow.

"The cop outside said you aren't talking to them."

"What was I supposed to do?" Robin choked. "If I implicate her, it implicates you."

"Why is he here?"

"Someone called the manager when I broke free. I guess the sound of the bed breaking was loud enough to go through the wall or something. Well, the woman came in and found me. I was still pretty groggy, so she called the fire department, and then they called the cops. I was brought here in a fucking ambulance."

Wiping at his eyes roughly, Kipp whispered, "Can you leave? Are they through?"

"I don't know. I just want to go home and shower."

"Let me see if I can get you out." Standing, trying to compose himself, stifling the homicidal thoughts for the time being, Kipp asked a nurse if Robin was now allowed to leave. She said she would check, and left the room.

When Kipp stood at his side again, Robin said, "My

bike. I left my bike at the tavern, and I need to get it.”

“Not tonight. I need to get you home.”

“No!” Robin roared, “I get my fucking bike now!”

“Okay, calm down.” Kipp didn’t know what the hell to do. But he knew that he had to get Robin what he needed first, then he would strangle his idiot wife.

Robin was silent in the drive to the tavern except for his directions. When they pulled into the lot and the Harley was still there, undisturbed, Robin appeared so relieved he looked ready to cry.

Knowing Robin was in no shape to ride, Kipp’s protests fell on deaf ears. He followed Robin closely to the townhouse, where he parked his pride and joy in the garage. Disregarding discretion, Kipp didn’t leave his car around the block. What did it matter now? Louise was obviously on to their affair. His political fate was in the hands of a complete lunatic.

Watching Robin closely as he unlocked the front door and entered the calm interior of the townhouse, Kipp turned on a light and locked the door behind them. Without a word or backwards glance, Robin walked directly to the shower.

Kipp threw his keys down on the side table and loosened his tie. Boiling in anger now that the worry for Robin’s health subsided, he picked up the telephone and called home.

“Hello?”

“You wicked bitch.”

“Kipp? Is that you, honey? It’s late. Why aren’t you home?”

Hating the venomous sarcasm in her voice, he growled, “What did you do to him? Huh? What did you and your lackey do to him?”

“To whom? I don’t know what you’re talking about?”

“Don’t play that game with me. Why? Why did you harm him? What the hell’s the matter with you?”

Exposure

"You know, Kipp, I still don't know what you're talking about. Harm who? Are you talking about a man you know? On a very intimate level?"

"We had an agreement! There was no need to bring Robin into it like this. He's innocent. What did he do to deserve that? Hm? Did you and your boyfriend rape him, you filthy whore?"

"Filthy whore? Now that's the pot calling the kettle black. You know, Kipp, you're talking to someone who has your political career by the balls. I think you should be nicer to me."

"What do you want? Hm? What do you want?" He was panting.

"A divorce, and half...no, make it three-quarters of your assets."

As his career flashed before his eyes, he rubbed his face in agony.

"Need some time to think about it? I understand. It's a big decision." The condescending tone she used was killing him. "Meanwhile, I'll get some photographs I took developed. Did you know I'm a photographer, Kipp? I bet you didn't know that about me. And some men are very photogenic. Very! The camera just loves them—"

"Shut up! You think you're amusing? You make me sick the way you talk about what you've done to him. You had no right to involve him in our disputes. No right! If he goes to the police about this, you'll be charged with kidnapping and assault. I would love to see you rot in jail for what you did."

"See me in jail?" she laughed, "If he goes to the police, you may as well go to the press about it now. If he accuses me of harming him, then that outs you I'm afraid. Good luck with all your decisions, Kipp dear. I'll sit on this for a little while, while you think long and hard about it. Ta ta!"

When she hung up, he slammed the phone down and cursed at her under his breath.

Robin stood under the hot water, trying to feel revived. With his fingers, he checked to see if he was raped. He just couldn't remember. He didn't feel anything raw there. Convinced he hadn't been, he rested his hands on the tiled wall and allowed the water to batter his head and face. In some place in his mind, he wanted revenge, but in his heart, he wanted peace. Maybe there was some common ground in between.

Seeing movement outside the sliding glass doors, he found Kipp's silhouette. Shutting off the water, Robin wrung out his hair, pushing back the door. Kipp was standing with a towel ready for him.

"How are you feeling?"

"Tired." Robin stepped out of the tub and was helped to wrap the towel around his shoulders.

"I'll bet." Kipp rubbed a smaller towel through his hair. "You want anything?"

"Just sleep. My head is really hurting."

"Can you take an aspirin?"

"I'd rather not take anything right now. I just need to sleep."

"Do you want me to stay? Or?"

"Stay. Please."

When Robin gripped Kipp's arm, Kipp nodded. It was the least he could do. Leaving Robin to finish up in the bathroom, Kipp checked the late hour but called his trusty PA from his mobile phone anyhow. "Lydia? I'm sorry it's so late. Something has come up, and I won't make it into the office tomorrow. I can be reached on this number if it's urgent. Thank you." He hung up and scuffed his weary feet to the bedroom to undress.

Robin was climbing under the covers, naked, curling into the pillows.

After he had shed his suit, Kipp cuddled warmly behind

Exposure

Robin, kissing his wet hair. Tomorrow was another day.
And they had time to get some peace tonight and sleep.
Tomorrow. Tomorrow.

Chapter Ten

Dressed in her tennis whites, Louise searched the courts for Alfonso. Checking her watch, seeing he was late, she grumbled under her breath and stormed into the clubhouse to find him.

She located him in the sport's shop talking to someone about purchasing a racket. Tapping her foot anxiously, she glared at him when they caught eyes. He excused himself from the man and walked over to her, touching her shoulder to pull her aside so they could speak privately.

"What's going on?" she spat. "You were supposed to meet me on the tennis courts fifteen minutes ago."

"I'm no longer giving you lessons."

"Oh? Why the hell not?"

He glanced around in paranoia, then whispered, "What you did was wrong. I feel very guilty about it. I don't want any part of you."

"Is that right?" She arched her back, in indignation. "So sorry to tell you, babe, but you are a part of it. So get out on the courts and do what I pay you for."

"No. Find someone else. I'm through with you and your dirty business."

Exposure

As he tried to walk away, she grabbed his shirt. In his ear she growled, "You think you can tell me what to do?"

Alfonso stiffened, looking away from her.

"I can ruin you. You're quick to wash your hands of this business. But what did you do with your hands yesterday? Huh? I saw you. I know you got off on it."

"Get away from me." He jerked out of her grip. "Just leave me alone."

As he escaped her, she crossed her arms in frustration and bit her lip.

When Robin awoke, Kipp was there, lying on the downy pillows staring at him. Stretching, coming back to the conscious world, Robin fluffed up the bedding under his head and stared back.

"How are you feeling, Robin?" Kipp caressed his hair gently.

"Fine. That headache is finally gone."

"I've been awake most of the night thinking about what to do."

"Kipp," Robin shook his head sadly, "don't do anything rash. I'm okay."

"Robin...this was grossly unfair to you, and she should be punished for it."

Dropping back so he was facing the ceiling, Robin sighed deeply. "I don't think they did very much to me, Kipp. I can remember most of it. I don't want you to ruin your career over it. It's exactly what she wants."

Scooting closer so they were connected under the sheets, Kipp said, "Well, some of my thoughts were about my career, Robin. I'm a fraud. I've been living a lie, and it's unfair to my constituency. I'm really struggling with it."

At the seriousness of the conversation, Robin rolled over to get a good look at his lover's eyes. "No, Kipp. Please. I can't be the one responsible for ruining the career of one of the most respected senators in California."

Smiling at the irony, Kipp said, "Respect? Hardly. I've done nothing to earn it."

"Stop it. You see what she's done? She's succeeded, Kipp. If you throw in the towel, she's succeeded in your ruin. Don't let her get that satisfaction."

"She'll ruin me anyway. She's blackmailing me now, Robin. With the photos she took of you from the motel, I fear she will expose both of us, but in different ways. I can't let her humiliate you that way. I can't."

Though he was touched by the concern Kipp showed, Robin wasn't sure he cared about his own reputation. What on earth would he suffer from a nude photo of him appearing somewhere? Yes, it would be embarrassing, but he had nothing to gain or lose by it. "Kipp..." Robin cupped his handsome, sad face. "Don't. Whatever you're thinking, don't. Just strike up a bargain with her. You want a divorce anyway. Don't blow a long career in politics over some stupid pictures."

"I don't deserve you." Kipp smiled, though Robin could see it was full of pain.

Reaching out for a kiss, Robin connected to his lips and savored the closeness. When he felt Kipp backing away slowly, Robin tilted his head curiously.

Kipp whispered in response to that gaze, "I don't want to hurt you. Do you need some time to recover from your ordeal?"

"Kipp, all they did was take photos. I'm sure of it. The guy, the one she brought with her? He was very gentle with me. It was like he was an unwilling participant."

Sitting back, Kipp asked, "What did he look like? Can you describe him?"

"Uh," Robin closed his eyes to think, "tanned, good looking, dark black hair slicked back...athletic...oh, and very white teeth."

Tapping his finger to his lip to think, Kipp replied, "I bet it's someone she met at the club. I'll check into it."

"Meanwhile...I'm not a victim of any sexual assault,

Exposure

Kipp. So, don't treat me like one."

"I just care deeply about you. I can't help it."

Robin smiled in delight. It was what he longed to hear. "I adore you."

It was Kipp's turn to light up. "Come here, you," he purred, wrapping his arms around Robin.

When Kipp's mobile phone rang, he tilted his head to the sound and whispered to Robin who was snuggled in his arms, "Let me see who that is."

Robin nodded, releasing his embrace of Kipp. Climbing out of bed, seeing the time on his watch and knowing it was nearing noon, Kipp found his phone in his jacket pocket and answered it. "Hello, Lydia."

"Senator, I was just wondering if you could call Lester Lewis back. He called this morning, and it sounded as if he needed to speak to you."

"Did he say what it was about?" Kipp looked back at the bed to see Robin's rapt attention.

"Something about the amount of funding you will need to raise in order to publicize your campaign. I think he's trying to gauge a number. I didn't want to say anything without your involvement."

Relieved it was work related and not step-son related, Kipp exhaled a deep sigh and sat down on the bed to finish the conversation. "Right. Okay, Lydia. I'll get back to him tomorrow."

"Are you ill, Senator?" she asked in concern.

"No, just taking a day off to rest. I'm not sick, but I am tired." He felt Robin rubbing his back warmly.

"I understand. I've canceled all your meetings."

"Thank you."

"Oh, one more thing..."

"Yes?" He tilted over his shoulder to smile at Robin.

"There was a man who had made inquiries about the townhouse you rented. He said he was an insurance adjuster

and you had called him.”

Kipp’s smile faded. “Insurance adjuster? Did he leave a name?”

“Mr. Smith.”

Rubbing his face in frustration, Kipp suddenly realized how Louise had garnered all her information. A private detective. “Look, Lydia, I didn’t call any adjuster. From now on could you refrain from giving out any more information about the townhouse?”

“I’m sorry, Senator. I had no idea. Was it some nosy reporter?”

“Most likely,” he sighed unhappily. “Anything else?” As he listened to her answer he heard the doorbell ringing. Jerking his head back at Robin, he had images of anything from police to the press to PIs.

Robin climbed out of bed and slipped on a pair of his blue jeans. He held his finger up to Kipp, signifying to wait there, and left the bedroom, closing the door behind him.

Before he answered his door he looked out of the window. Seeing who it was, he shook his head and opened the door. “What do you want, Mom?”

Dusty shoved inside and handed him a casserole dish with a lid. “I made this for you and Susan. Is she here?”

Before she moved any further into the house, Robin blocked her path. “She’s not here.”

“Well, at least let me put this in the refrigerator. You can warm it up for her tonight for her dinner. I bet she comes home very hungry. That’s a very hard job for a woman to do.”

Following her into the kitchen, Robin watched her inspecting the contents of the room and then the fridge. “What are you doing?”

“There’s not a lot of food in there, Robin.”

“We eat out a lot. Can you leave now?”

“You’re not even going to offer me a cup of coffee?”

Exposure

This is the first time I'm inside your home. I haven't even had a look around."

"And you won't." Robin tilted his head to the front door.

"Don't be rude." Dusty put the casserole into the refrigerator, then stood like a sentry with her arms crossed over her chest.

"Mom, I don't have any coffee, okay? Can you just go?"

"I don't understand you, Robin. I thought we had a good relationship between us. Why are you behaving this way to me?"

"Good relationship?" he laughed. "Mom, you kicked me out. If I didn't have this place to live in, I'd be up shit's creek!"

"We wouldn't have let you live on the street, Robin." She waved her hand as if the idea was ridiculous.

"You could have fooled me." He looked over his shoulder at the hallway, wondering what Kipp was up to. "Look, can you just go?"

"Well, if you don't have any coffee or food in the house, what if I take you to a pancake house for brunch?" She checked her watch. "It's almost noon, Robin. We can call it lunch."

"Not today. How about I call you and let you know?" Since she wasn't leaving on her own, Robin reached for her arm and began urging her to the front door.

"I don't understand you. If Susan is at work, and there's no food in the house..." she paused and then said, "Wait a minute..."

"Goodbye, Mom." Robin kept her progressing to the door.

"You've got another woman in there!" She pointed down the hall. "You're already cheating on your new girlfriend with another woman? Oh, come on, Robin! This poor girl was nice enough to invite you into her brand new home. The damn furniture is so new it hardly looks sat on."

She pointed. "She's a hard working cop, and this is how you treat her? You cad."

"Please stay out of my life. Okay? You wanted me out. You got me out. Now you're trying to run my life again. I don't want to sound cruel, Mom, but you haven't led a model life. So stop judging me and please, just go."

"What did I ever do to you?" she shouted defensively. "I was a good mother. You never went without food or shelter. You had clean clothing. Don't make it sound like I didn't do my job."

"You got knocked up at sixteen and lived off the government," he accused. "Don't bring all that up now. Just go." He opened the front door for her.

Full of fury, she warned before she went, "You better be good to this Susan woman, because if you ever need me or Lester for anything, you can forget it. That's it, Robin. Done."

Though it stung, he tried to put up a brave face. "I can't help what you think of me. It's just not how it seems, that's all."

"Oh?" She put her hands on her hips. "How does it seem then, Robin? I'm happy to hear your explanation."

"Maybe next time. Not now. Not here. Okay? Just cut me some slack."

"Goodbye, Robin. Have a nice life."

As she stormed off, Robin moaned, "Come on, Ma." When she slammed her car door and vanished, Robin shut his front door and stood for a moment, absorbing the argument.

Kipp emerged from the bedroom fully dressed in his business suit. When he found Robin by the front door, looking even more forlorn than usual, he reached out to him. Robin fell against him and cuddled in his arms.

"Life isn't easy, Robin, is it?"

"No, Kipp, it isn't easy," Robin groaned.

Exposure

“We just make the best of it and decide things as we go along.”

“And most of my decisions have been crap.”

Kipp separated from him to see his expression. “Including the decision to be with me?”

As if he had something to say, but reconsidered, Robin just shook his head.

“Look, I need to go and see Louise to get this whole mess dealt with. Will you be okay?”

“If I’d have known you were leaving, I’d have gone out to lunch with my mom.”

“I’m sorry, Robin. I can stay. I just feel as if I need to confront her and do something about this situation.” Kipp petted Robin’s hair back from his face. “Does your mother have a cell phone? Can you call her and ask her to come back?”

“Whatever.”

“I can stay if you need me to.” Kipp waited, trying to get Robin to meet his eye.

After a long exhaled breath, Robin said, “No. You go. You do need to meet with Louise and see what she’s going to do.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes.”

Kipp hugged Robin again, kissing his neck. “Call me if you want me to come back at once. Otherwise I’ll be back here in a few hours.”

“I’ll be okay.”

“Just rest. Get back into bed and rest.”

“Don’t worry. Go on, go talk to her.”

Kipp took one last good look into Robin’s eyes to be sure, kissed him and left the townhouse. Keeping his head down, trying not to look around to see if anyone was watching, he made for his car quickly and drove off.

Once he disappeared, Robin felt empty inside. He hated

when Kipp wasn't with him. Scuffing his feet to the phone, Robin dialed his mother's mobile number and tried to get her to come back.

When Kipp pulled into his driveway, his wife's new Porsche wasn't there. After flipping dully through the mail, he went to his room to change his clothing and checked the time. It was nearing one. Getting an idea, Kipp wondered if he could locate those photos. Pausing, listening for any sound outside, Kipp hurried to Louise's bedroom and began searching her drawers.

Digging around clothing, paperwork, jewelry, he wasn't having any luck. Opening the closet door, he scanned the contents and couldn't imagine where to begin hunting in the huge assortment of garments. "I'll bet she's got them with her. I know her. She won't take the chance I'll find it."

The distinct sound of the front door alerted him. Rushing to get out of her room, he met her coming through the door and knew it looked obvious which direction he'd just come from.

The constant smirk on her face infuriated him.

"Hello, Kipp dear. Find what you were looking for?" She sauntered in, moving past him to the kitchen.

"Where are they?" He followed her, watching as she took a bottle of wine out of the refrigerator and poured herself a glass.

"Where are what?" she replied innocently, raising her glass to him in a mock toast.

Again he checked his watch. "It's only one in the afternoon, and you're already drinking? What's wrong with you?"

Instead of answering, she gave him a tired look. After downing the glass in one slurp, she asked, "Is that all you have on your mind? My alcohol consumption?"

"Sit down. Please." He gestured to the kitchen chair.

She plopped down on it in annoyance and refilled her

Exposure

glass.

Joining her, he leaned his elbows on the table and tried to speak civilly though it took everything he had. "Right. Now, I know you want a divorce."

"Correct." She waved the glass around like a flag as if she were already bored with the conversation.

"And you want a large settlement."

"Correct again."

"How about five hundred thousand?" When she laughed and drank more wine, Kipp felt his blood beginning to boil. "You give me a figure then."

"Two million."

"Two million? I don't have that kind of money. Be reasonable, Louise."

"How much is your career worth to you?"

"How did you come up with two million?" He couldn't believe she was drinking the second glass of wine so quickly.

"My attorney came up with it. He said something about nine years of my life invested in this sham marriage, half your house, half your retirement income, half your savings, half your—"

"All right, I've heard enough." After a moment he asked, "What did your attorney say about the original contract we signed?"

"He said you broke it when you stuck your dick into a man."

"Don't be crass, Louise. It isn't necessary." He waited for an apology but just received a smug glance. "Did you mention all of your indiscretions? The liaisons you thought I was unaware of? Like the little fling you had with our gardener? Oh, and what about that tennis instructor of yours, hm?" When her face went crimson at the mention of that man, Kipp had another thought.

"I didn't do anything with those men! I've been faithful to you. Whatever you heard, it was a lie."

"Is that the man you had help you kidnap Robin? That

tennis player? What's his name?" Her face contorted with so much anger, he knew he must have hit the nail on the head. "I bet the police would convince him to confess and implicate you. What do you think?"

"Shut up." She finished her wine and emptied the rest of the bottle into her glass.

"Why did you do it, Louise? Why?"

"To ruin you!" she shouted, already beginning to show the signs of intoxication he loathed. "You son of a bitch! Where did you find him? Huh? Why do you deserve to be with a guy like that when I sit around and wait for something good to happen to me? You made my life miserable."

Something in him broke. As if the soul had been drained from him, he became limp in the chair. "You're right. I'm sorry."

It took a minute for her to hear him. When she did she tilted her head and said, "What did you say?"

"I said you're right. Maybe I have. I thought years ago we had an understanding. We talked in great length about this arrangement. We had our lawyers working together to get an agreement we could both live with. You were very excited at the prospect of never having to work as a hairdresser again and to live in a big home, rub elbows with influential people...but not any longer, I see. Maybe it was too much to ask of a woman."

As if the comments were shocking her, she sat staring at him. Then finally, she slurred, "It was what I wanted. I didn't want kids. I didn't want to work. I was sick to death of cutting hair. I hated my life."

"It wasn't all bad, was it, Louise? You've had some nice trips abroad. You always had a fancy sports car to drive, jewelry to wear. You pampered yourself. You made friends with other politician's wives. You're a member of a prestigious club. You did all right. I never harmed you. Never asked you to do anything you didn't want to do. Did I?"

Exposure

Managing to get to her feet, she swayed and then shuffled through the cabinets for more alcohol. A bottle of red was her next victim.

Watching her dig out the cork with a corkscrew, Kipp could only shake his head sadly at her alcohol problem. It had been consistent throughout the marriage. The AA pamphlets were tossed out before they were read.

Once she had accomplished her task and filled the glass she was using to the rim, she sat down again, almost missing the chair, and stared with blurring eyes at him. All he wanted to say at that point was, "Get some help," but he knew it would enrage her. It always did. "Can we come to an agreement, Louise? Does it have to be two million? I can't afford that. I don't know how your lawyer came up with those numbers. Why was he talking about my retirement money? I can't even get at it until I'm fifty-five."

"I don't care."

"I know you don't care. You care about money. Money. Is that all that life boils down to for you? Are you that shallow?"

"Don't lecture me. If you don't agree to my terms, I'll expose you. Oh, and Robin as well." She snickered. "But his exposure will be of a different kind."

His calm demeanor began to get tested. "Leave Robin out of this. This is between you and me."

"Nah, he's involved now as well. Sorry." She gulped the burgundy down as quickly as the chardonnay.

"No. I draw the line there, Louise!" He pointed a finger at her in warning.

"Draw the line?" she scoffed. "What line? Come on, Kipp. I hold all the cards, or should I say 'photos'. Just give me what I want and I'll burn them. Or maybe I'll have them framed for my bedroom wall. Where did you say you met him? Yum!"

His blood began to boil. Images of striking her, wrapping his fingers around her throat came into his mind. "I will not bargain with him. He is not part of the

negotiations! If you continue to abuse him, I'm not going to give you a damn thing."

"Tough." She shrugged, the ever-present glass at her lips. "I'll send them to the *Times* or something. You wouldn't be the first Republican caught up in a gay scandal. Not hardly!" She laughed. "All you fuckers are in the closet."

Hating the fact that she had so much power over him, Kipp rubbed his jaw in frustration and tried to think. Wasn't there any way out of this?

Trying to buy some breathing space, Kipp asked, "I need to talk to my lawyer about the money. How much time are you giving me?"

"I don't know..." She batted her lashes coyly. "How much time do you need?"

"A lot. I need a chance to deal with this." Seeing his anguish amused her, he inhaled and tried to calm down so he wouldn't give her the satisfaction of seeing him in agony.

"Poor baby. So much on your mind...you should have a drink. It'll relax you."

Rising up from the table abruptly, sick of dealing with her, he knew living there was going to be impossible. But he was stuck, wasn't he? He couldn't stay and he couldn't leave. On reflection, maybe he knew this arrangement would end badly. It was unwholesome right from the start. Was he getting what he deserved? Was this payback for living *the lie*? The *homosexual in the closet lie*?

As he glanced down at that look of superiority, knowing being near her was intolerable, he wondered how long it would take the press to get wind of them living apart. Trying not to clench his fists and punch something, Kipp headed to his bedroom with intentions of packing some items in order to stay at the townhouse until something could be resolved. Before he did, he decided to check with his publicist and lawyer first. Closing his bedroom door, he took his mobile phone out of his pocket and sat on his bed.

Exposure

"Hello, Bryan? It's Kipp. I'm in a jam, and I need your advice."

"Do you want more coffee, Robin?" Dusty asked as she flagged down the waitress.

"No, I'm fine." He ate the last bite of his sandwich and pushed his plate away. As the waitress topped up Dusty's cup, Robin gazed solemnly out of the window, wondering how Kipp was making out in his meeting with Louise.

"I'm glad you asked me to come back, Robin," Dusty said as she stirred cream into her cup. "We shouldn't be enemies. We used to be so close."

"Things change, Mom. What can I say?"

"Yes, but you've settled down now. You have a nice girlfriend. She's shared her beautiful place with you. It's coming together nicely for you."

Robin stifled a grimace at how wrong she could be.

"I do hope you're planning on working and not living off of her. It's not right, Robin."

"I am planning on it. I just have to decide what to do."

"You want me to ask Lester if he knows of anyone needing help?"

Considering the idea, Robin nodded, knowing that had been offered previously and he hadn't explored the option. "Okay."

The reply seemed to excite Dusty. She sat up and rubbed her hands together in glee. "You know, Robin, Lester has always said he could get you work. You've just been very reluctant to let him help you."

"I know. I just felt lost, Mom. After failing law school, I felt like a complete fuck-up. I just didn't have the confidence to do anything else."

"You know, this girl Susan has done so much for your self-esteem. I can't wait to meet her."

Robin didn't answer, looking out the window again at the passing traffic to avoid his mother's eyes.

"Anyway, Robin, I did have one more thing to ask you."

"What?" He didn't turn to face her, watching the selection of cars that stopped for the traffic lights and counting how many went speeding through the red.

"Lester thinks you still smoke pot. Do you?"

Instantly, he connected with her gaze, surprised she knew he did. He had thought he kept it hidden, like so many other things in his life. "He said that?"

"Yes. He said you may have smoked during the gala dinner because your eyes looked red."

It was another aspect of his life Robin had given a lot of thought to. He knew what Kipp's views would be if he was aware he did dabble with drugs a little. "I've given it up. I won't smoke it anymore." It was the right thing to do. Get cleaned up, get a job, and grow up. It was as if he had an epiphany, a New Year's resolution in June. Whatever it was, he vowed he would change. He wanted to be the kind of man Kipp would admire, not a burden he had to deal with.

Dusty reached out to touch his hand. "I am so proud of you."

Trying to smile, Robin wondered how proud she would be if she knew he was having an affair with married Senator Kensington. When his cell phone rang, he jumped out of his skin. Not used to owning one, he quickly took it out of his pocket and read the electronic display. He rose up, told his mother he'd be one minute, and dashed out of the café to talk out of her hearing range. "Kipp!"

"Hello, Robin. How are you feeling?"

"I'm okay. What happened with Louise?"

"It wasn't very good, I'm afraid. Both my publicist and lawyer advised me not to move out. They said that she would then claim the place by default and lock me out of my own home. And of course, the press would know immediately that something was happening. My publicist wants to work on some kind of reason for the split that

Exposure

sounds benign.”

“Oh, I get it. I suppose it makes sense. But how will you deal with living with that witch?”

“I have no idea. Where are you? Are you on your bike? I can hear traffic in the background.”

“No, I’m still with my mom. You want to meet me somewhere?”

“I have one last stop at the office to take care of first, then I can meet you at the townhouse. But, I’m sorry, Robin, I can’t stay overnight at the moment.”

Though he was disappointed, he said, “I understand.”

“So, see you in around two hours?”

“Yes, okay, Kipp.” Robin hung up, turning on his heels to go back inside the restaurant. When he found his mother standing behind him, he choked in shock.

“Kipp?” she asked sharply.

“What are you doing? Why are you out here listening to my conversation?”

“I paid the check and figured we’d leave. You said Kipp. Were you talking to Kipp Kensington?”

“Uh, yeah. He’s trying to find me a job.” Robin felt the sweat break out on his forehead and hoped that he sounded convincing.

“Oh?” Her expression softened. “Senator Kensington said he’d help you find work? That was really nice of him, Robin. Why didn’t you mention it? Did you meet at the gala dinner? You know, Lester is his new campaign manager. He’s a very nice man, that Kipp. I think he’s extremely handsome, but don’t tell Lester. When I mentioned my views at the dinner, I think I made him jealous.” She giggled, hooking her elbow through Robin’s to walk with him back to her car. “Where to? How about shopping to buy a nice gift for Susan?”

Rolling his eyes in agony, Robin was dragged to her car.

Stopping at his office to check with his PA to see if anything needed doing, Kipp found Lydia with her ear to a phone and a pile of notes on her desk. Multitasking, she continued her conversation and handed Kipp his messages and mail at the same time. He smiled at her in appreciation and sat down behind his desk to sort through anything that was pressing. Scanning the sticky notes and then the envelopes next, he came to one with just his address on it and no return address. Using a silver opener, he sliced the seal and unfolded the one page letter.

Senator Kensington,

I am writing to inform you that someone has acquired incriminating photographs of your lover. This person is going to use these photographs to blackmail you. I wanted you to know this because you are a good man. I don't want you to lose your job. Please meet with me at the below location and time to discuss this problem.

Signed,

Concerned

Kipp should have been getting used to the nauseating stress that continuously seemed to be running through his body lately, but he wasn't. It still made him ill. Checking his watch, Kipp rose up, stuffed the letter into his jacket pocket, and headed out. He had less than an hour to meet the person who had written the letter. He only hoped it wasn't a trap.

Finally free of his mother's meddling, Robin entered the townhouse with one task foremost on his mind, getting rid of something. Kneeling next to his nightstand, he dug out an enamel-coated cigarette case and emptied the remaining joints into his hand. With them firmly in his fist, he crushed them up and stood over the toilet, dropping them into the water, flushing them down. After he washed his hands, he

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felt so good about himself, he sat down at the kitchen table to write up a rough draft for a résumé. Once that was done, he flipped through the pages of the phone book, sat with the telephone on his lap and dialed.

“Resume-works, can I help you?”

“Yes, hello. My name is Robin Grant, and it says in your ad that you help people with their job applications.”

“Yes, we do.”

“Cool. I don’t have a computer right now, but I can use one at someone else’s place though.” He thought of his mother’s house.

“That would be fine.”

“Okay. So, do I just put all the info down on an email?”

“Yes. List everything you feel is pertinent to a job.”

“Okay.”

“Let me give you our email address. Ready?”

“Yes, I have a pen. Go ahead.” He copied the email address down.

“What sort of employment are you looking for?”

“I don’t know. Can you just do a generic résumé?”

“Yes. We could work something out for you. What’s your address and phone number?”

Robin gave her his home information. “Okay. Thanks again. Bye.” Robin looked at the email information, scanning his scribbled résumé quickly. Sadly, it didn’t show much work experience. What had he ever done? He didn’t even have a paper route when he was a boy. Sighing in defeat, he mumbled, “I suppose some law school is better than none.”

Kipp parked his car in the specified lot at California State University. Wondering how a student got this information worried him. Just as he was getting anxious from waiting too long, another car pulled in, and he instantly recognized the occupant getting out. Climbing out of his car in anger, he stormed over to the man and

confronted him. "You!"

"Senator, let me explain." Alfonso held up his hands in defense.

"You son of a bitch! You assaulted Robin. How dare you come here to confront me? I should have you arrested."

Alfonso seemed to deflate, resting back against his car. "I am so sorry. I will pay the price. I just can't stand the guilt anymore."

Clenching his fists, Kipp fought with himself to calm down as students paraded back and forth across campus. It was obvious why Alfonso chose to meet him there. Too many witnesses were wandering around. "So? Now that your conscience is bothering you," Kipp crossed his arms over his chest, "what do you want me to do? Absolve you?"

"No. I just needed to warn you. Your wife has a screw loose, Senator. She scares the crap out of me. She's very unstable."

"You don't have to tell me that," Kipp scoffed. "Why did she get you involved?"

"She needed an accomplice. I was stupid enough to go along. But she didn't tell me it was going to be so nasty." He shivered in exaggeration. "I know she wants to get a divorce. But the way she's going about it..."

Kipp asked bluntly, "You and Louise have had an affair, haven't you?"

"I won't lie to you. Yes. I am so sorry, Senator. But, she made all these excuses as to why it was justified. She said you and she didn't even sleep together. That you knew about her men and didn't mind. She did a lot of convincing before I agreed to it."

Kipp leaned back on the car beside him, rubbing his face tiredly.

Alfonso stared at him sadly. "It's not easy for a gay man in politics, is it?"

"No. It's not." Kipp focused his eyes on the distant college sports stadium.

"I feel badly for you. This man, Robin Grant, he is a

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treasure. It is too bad you cannot walk proudly down the street with him."

Kipp turned slowly to stare at Alfonso. "What did you two do to him, exactly?"

"Nothing!" Alfonso reacted defensively at first, then lowered his hands and admitted, "All we did was take photos. That's all."

"You drugged him!"

Cringing, Alfonso didn't meet his eyes.

"You drugged him, took him against his will to a shady motel, stripped him of his clothing, then photographed him naked and you call that nothing?"

"Yes, I am guilty. Phone the police. I will turn myself in." He held out his hands as if Kipp would handcuff them together.

Exhaling, staring again out in the distance, Kipp didn't know what to do anymore. It was as if he was losing the resources to deal with this effectively.

"You want me to try and get the photos back?"

Spinning around to look at him, Kipp whispered, "Can you do that?"

"I can try."

"Where does she keep them?"

"I have always seen them in her purse. She carries them with her."

Kipp rubbed his jaw as he pondered the possibility. "What about the negatives?"

"Yes, negatives, photographs, yes. In her purse."

Turning to face him full on, Kipp made sure Alfonso met his eyes before he said, "Please. I am begging you. Get them from her."

A big smile shined on Alfonso's face. "I will try my best."

"Here. Here is my mobile phone number if you succeed." He handed him a business card. "Be quick about it because she's been threatening me. I feel like I'm running out of time."

"I will. Let me try." He put the card in his wallet.

Before he let him go, Kipp said, "What you did was wrong, but I do appreciate you trying to help out now. I know Louise can be a very intimidating woman."

"Mama mia, yes she can," Alfonso laughed uncomfortably.

"All right. Let me know if you have any luck."

When the man held out his hand, Kipp took it and shook it, then climbed back into his car. As he turned on the ignition, he prayed Alfonso would succeed. He could use a bit of success right about now.

Alfonso found her propping herself up on the bar in the club. Standing back, watching her, he was looking for the right moment to approach her.

With clumsy fingers, Louise opened her purse, removed her lipstick and reapplied it to her already bright ruby red mouth. Smacking her lips together when she was done, she dropped the lipstick back into her purse.

Alfonso cringed as this mad woman tried to appear attractive.

"Yoo hoo! Oh, yoo hoo!" she waved, batting her eyelashes at the bartender.

Just as the bartender nodded to her that he would get her another, Alfonso sat down next to her. She seemed to sense it and turned around to see him. Her lip curled in a sneer. "What do you want?"

"To apologize. I am sorry, baby. Please forgive me."

"Get lost."

Alfonso's eyes darted to her gold lamé purse, then back up to her glossy-drunk stare. "I was wrong. I should never have said those things to you. You were right to do what you did."

"You loved it!" she gushed. "You got off on touching that fantastic creature's dick. Don't even try to deny it!"

Looking around nervously because of her volume,

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Alfonso put his finger to his lips to hush her. "You don't want these snobs to hear our secrets, darling, do you?"

"You like women too, don't you, pookie? Or are all you incredibly handsome men gay, Alfonso? Pookie, you like sex with ladies, don't you? We made love and it was nice, wasn't it? You think I'm pretty, don't you?"

"Yes, you are gorgeous. Why don't we go somewhere and make mad passionate love?"

"Ooh, yes! That's more like it. See, I knew you were attracted to me. I knew I was the reason you did what you did. Not because you thought that Robin guy was attractive. Yes, make mad passionate love to me. But not 'til after this one drink."

The bartender had set her fresh gin and tonic down on the counter. When Louise opened her purse to get some cash, Alfonso peered in to look.

"If you really loved me, you would offer to pay."

He jumped into action and removed his wallet, setting a ten dollar bill on the table. She grinned happily and snapped her purse closed again, raising the glass to her lips in pleasure. "What are you having? You can't let a lady drink alone."

"Ah, I'll just have a white wine spritzer." He told the bartender when he came to pick up the money.

"You're such a lightweight." Louise slurped at the drink noisily. "Where do you want to go? My husband's been 'advised' not to leave me in possession of the house. Morons. I want him out. I need to live there on my own. Maybe I should change the locks."

Alfonso checked the time anxiously. Louise noticed it and sneered sarcastically, "Got a date? Am I keeping you?"

"No!" he responded quickly. "I am just hungry for your love."

"Mm," she hummed, smearing lipstick all over his cheek as she kissed it sloppily.

When she went back to her G and T, he wiped at the mark with his napkin discreetly.

Tapping his fingers, he watched her nurse the cocktail. When she finally was down to sucking ice cubes, he began shifting his weight on the barstool, indicating it was time to go.

“One more.”

“No, dearest. No more. Let’s make love now, and we can get another drink later.”

“One more. There’s no rush. It’s early,” she slurred, trying to read her watch.

“But I cannot wait. You are too irresistible.” He grasped her arm and stood up, trying to pry her off the stool.

“Am I?”

“Yes. You’re the most attractive woman on earth. Come, lover, have your way with me.”

“Ooh, yes!” she sang, almost falling to her knees when he got her to her high-heeled feet.

Taking her purse from the counter on the pretext of helping her, he tucked it under his arm and escorted this drunken fool out of the lounge.

By the time he got her out of the club and into his car, she seemed to have passed out in the front seat. The moment she had closed her eyes, he opened her purse and rummaged through it, frantic when the item he was searching for was not there.

“Looking for something?”

He choked and threw the purse on the seat between them. “I was looking for a tissue. I need to blow my nose.”

“Oh?” She handed him one, dramatically taking it from out of the purse, as if proving it was obviously in it.

He wiped his nose, thanking her.

“I took them out of there.” She raised a suspicious eyebrow at him.

“Took what out of there, darling?” Placing his key in the ignition, about to start the car, her hand stopped him.

“Why do you want them?”

Thinking on his feet, he sighed deeply, admitting, “I have a confession to make.”

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“What?” She crossed her arms over her chest, appearing more sober every minute. He was beginning to think she was a much better actor than he.

“I...I am attracted to him. I want to take one of the photos. Can I?”

Throwing up her hands in amazement, she shouted, “What is it about all you pretty ones?”

“Please. As payment for helping you?”

“Fine.” She climbed out of his Corvette.

Scrambling to follow her, he realized she was headed to her Porsche. As she sat sideways in the passenger seat, opening up the glove compartment, she handed Alfonso the envelope and said, “Just pick one.”

The minute the entire packet was in his hands, he peeked in, making sure the negatives were there as well. His heart was pounding in his chest as he handled them. “Just one? There are so many good ones.”

“Don’t get cute. Just one. Come on. Hurry up. I want another drink.”

Taking one step back, he slid the envelope into his inside jacket pocket and closed the button, sealing them against his body. Knowing she would get crazy, he tried to prepare himself for a physical fight over them.

Busy in the rearview mirror, reapplying her thick lipstick and fluffing up her hair, she reached out her hand when she was done preening. “Decide yet?”

Alfonso took another look behind him, taking another step back.

“What are you doing? Where are the pictures?”

“I am going to hold onto them for safe keeping.”

The minute her inebriated mind caught up, she stood and screamed a bloodcurdling shriek, holding out her hand. “Give them to me!”

“Goodbye, Louise.” He turned on his heels and hurried to his car. The sound of her wailing cry echoed through the evening air. Without looking back, he jumped into his car, locked the doors, and sped out of the parking lot just as she

was about to pound his window violently.

With the photos in his possession, he took a deep breath, tried not to think of that woman now plotting his murder and raced to find a place to pull over and call Kipp.

“Hello, lover,” Robin crooned, kissing Kipp as he came through the door of the townhouse.

“Hello, baby, you okay?” Kipp crushed against him in an embrace.

“I’m great. Now, I want you to stop treating me like I’m fragile. I’m in need of a good, hard, hot screwing.”

Kipp laughed softly. “Am I doing that?”

“Yes.” Robin held his hand and escorted him to the bedroom. “Get naked and fuck me, will ya?”

Trying to put the intruding thoughts of his horrible wife out of his mind, Kipp took off his jacket and set it on the chair, unraveling his tie. As he did, Robin stripped off the only two items he was wearing quickly, jeans and a cotton shirt. Naked, he jumped into bed, waving the strip of condoms at Kipp like a red flag to a bull.

Chuckling under his breath at the gesture, Kipp finally removed all his layers of clothing and joined him. They immediately wrapped around each other and rubbed skin on skin, groaning at the delight.

“I want your dick up my ass.”

“You’re such a romantic,” Kipp teased.

“I think that’s a very romantic thing to say. I would love someone to say that to me.”

Kipp wrestled with him playfully. “You are too wonderful, you know that?”

“I’m wonderful, and horny. Where’s the lube?”

Sitting back as Robin reached for the tube, Kipp rolled the condom on himself and watched Robin as he squeezed out a blob and then ran his hand over it, coating the rubber.

When he was through, Robin got to his hands and knees in anticipation. Wanting to show Robin how much he loved

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and appreciated him, Kipp kissed and caressed his bottom first, running his hands over it, then he surrounded his waist to get a good grip on Robin's large erection. Getting himself on target, Kipp pushed in, inhaling deeply at the sensation of hot penetration, relaxing and working them both at the same time.

"That's it, ride me like a pony, Kipp. Oh, yeah..."

"You...are...so...wonderful..." Kipp panted in time with his thrusts. The minute he heard Robin's pre-orgasm gasp, Kipp rammed into him deeply, the sensation of pleasure rushed over him all the way down to his toes. Feeling Robin's cock pulsing in his palm, Kipp closed his eyes and savored every inch of this man, inside and out. After a long moment to recover, resting his head on Robin's back, he sat up, looked down at their connection and felt so much attraction and love for Robin it was overwhelming. Pulling out slowly, Kipp made a quick stop at the bathroom to wash up. When he returned, Robin was glowing, smiling contentedly. Just as Kipp climbed under the blankets for some much needed kissing and snuggling, his mobile phone rang. About to disregard it, Kipp had second thoughts and reached for his jacket as it lay on a chair.

"You mind?" he asked Robin.

"No. It could be important."

"Thank you. I'll only be a minute. Hello?"

"Senator? It's Alfonso."

"Yes!" Kipp sat up in excitement.

"I've got them."

"I can't believe you did it so quickly," he shouted, then said to Robin, "Good news."

"When can I give them to you?" Alfonso asked.

Kipp checked his watch. "Hang on." Cupping the phone, he said, "Robin, Alfonso has the photographs."

"What? Who? You mean the guy who—"

"Yes. I wanted him to get them from her. Now he says he has them."

"And?"

"He wants to meet to give them to me."

"Okay."

Kipp got back on the line. "Okay. Where?"

"Name it."

"There's a gas station right before the entrance ramp to 101 in Santa Rosa. Southbound. Okay? Give me twenty minutes."

"I'll be there."

Kipp hung up and leapt out of bed.

"How did you do it?" Robin began getting dressed.

Kipp paused and looked over his shoulder in surprise.

"Are you coming with me?"

"Yes. Why?"

"I just didn't know how you'd feel seeing Alfonso again." He buttoned and zipped his fly.

"I need to. Just to say what I have to say. You know?"

Kipp slipped on his shirt quickly. "He helped us out. Say it to him after I have the photos in my hand."

"Don't worry."

Robin was very ill at ease, to say the least. This man drugged him, then touched him after undressing him. He felt violated and yearned to say something in retaliation for the act. Imagining it in his head a hundred times, Robin felt his body tensing up like a panther, ready to strike.

The gas station was nearly empty. Two cars were at the pumps filling up. One car, a silver Corvette, was parked away from the mini-mart and gas pumps. Kipp pulled up next to it, nearly window to window.

Robin caught the anxiety in the man's eyes at seeing him there.

"You have them?" Kipp asked sternly.

"Yes." Alfonso reached across the gap between cars and handed it to Kipp.

Kipp only glanced at them briefly before he passed them to Robin.

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As they exchanged details of how the photos were obtained, Robin reluctantly looked at them. Seeing his naked body so vulnerable, he cringed in anger. Before he could prevent it, he was outside the car and making a direct line to Alfonso's car.

"Robin!" Kipp shouted.

"Get out," Robin snarled at Alfonso. "I said get out!"

A resigned look came to Alfonso's face. He shut off his car and climbed out. Kipp immediately did as well.

The minute Alfonso was standing on his own and unprotected, Robin rushed him, grabbing his shirt and shoving him back against the Corvette's fender as Kipp watched silently.

"What did I ever do to you?" Robin roared in agony.

"Nothing. I am forever sorry. I am so sorry. Please. I don't know what to say to make up for what I have done."

"You drugged me!" Robin shouted. "Stripped me and left me tied to the damn bed!"

"I know. It is unforgivable. I cannot say enough how sorry I am."

When the tears threatened, Robin just grew angry at himself for the weakness. "You humiliated me!" Hearing his voice crack, Robin felt so helpless he could scream.

"I will turn myself in," Alfonso cried. "Let me pay for my crime. I cannot sleep at night. Please. Punch me. Hurt me like I hurt you. I deserve it. I will not defend myself or fight back. Go! Hit me! Get out your anger!"

But Robin's fury just dissolved to self-doubt and pity. He shoved Alfonso away, covering his face to hide his tears.

Behind him, Alfonso crouched down to beg his forgiveness, whispering, "Believe me. I have punished myself for this. Even if you are too kind to do it, too gentle, I have done it for you. I can't even show my face anymore. I am sick about it. You are a beautiful, sweet man. You did not deserve it. I am sorry. Forgive me. Forgive me."

Hearing it like a priest at confession, Robin lowered his hands and looked down at the sobbing man. "Fine. I forgive

you. Now leave me alone.”

Before he left, Alfonso approached Kipp and said, “If I can do anything, I am at your disposal. I will give evidence against her. You have my word.”

“Thank you,” Kipp replied softly, staring at Robin in concern.

As the Corvette drove off into the night, Robin felt the light, warm wind drying his wet cheeks. A loving hand led him back to the Mercedes. Once he was seated in it and on the way back home, Robin stared down at the envelope in disgust, wanting to burn it.

They walked through the door together, but Kipp knew he had to get home. He just dreaded it.

Robin moved through the house as if he were numb. The bathroom door closing him in, Kipp heard Robin using the toilet and took the opportunity to look at the photos properly for the first time. The mixture of feelings that washed over him was unexpected. Jealousy? Lust? Anger? Empathy? All wrapped up in a bow of sadness. One by one Kipp set them into the fireplace, lighting each corner on fire before placing them in the grating. Hearing Robin returning into the room, he twisted over his shoulder to see him.

Robin crossed the room and stared down at the photos as they curled up and turned black.

“They’re gone now, Robin.”

“Yes.”

The one word reply was tipped with so much exhaustion, Kipp rose up and said, “Go to bed. I’ll call you in the morning. Please. Get some rest.”

“Okay.”

Kipp kissed his lips, turning to look one last time, seeing Robin staring at the dim flames.

Expecting the worst when he arrived home, Kipp

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sniffed Louise out before he retired to his bedroom and found her out cold in hers. A bottle of whiskey was on the floor beside her, and she was still in her dress and high heels. Shaking his head at her state, he closed his door, set a chair in front of it in case she got any nasty ideas, and undressed for bed. He wished it was over now. But he knew better. It was just the beginning.

Chapter Eleven

“Yes, this is Lester Lewis, I’ve been trying to get in touch with Senator Kensington, but he hasn’t returned my calls.”

“I’m sorry, Mr. Lewis. I can check with his PA to see if she knows if he’s getting your messages. I’m not the regular secretary. I’m just a temp.”

“Can you see if his PA has any other numbers available for him to be reached?”

“Let me check, hang on. Oh, wait, I just found his information in her Rolodex. Ah, his mobile number is...”

“Yes. I have that one.”

“Okay.” She rattled off his home and office numbers.

“Never mind. I left messages at all of them.”

“Wait. There’s one here that’s penciled in. How about this one?” She gave him the last number.

“Okay. Thanks. If you could, can you just write a note somewhere the senator can see it, and hopefully he’ll call me back.”

“Okay, Mr. Lewis.”

“Thank you.” He hung up and looked at the one number he hadn’t tried. Dialing, he heard it ringing and sat back in his leather seat behind his desk.

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“Hello?”

“Yes, I’m...Robin?” Lester asked in confusion. “I must have dialed your number by mistake.”

“Oh. Okay. Did you get the message from Mom to look out for a job for me?”

“I did. I couldn’t believe it. You serious about it? I don’t want to call in any favors if you’re not.”

“No. I’m serious. Please, Lester. I could use the help.”

“Okay.”

“I’m using Mom’s computer to get assistance with a new résumé, so that should be done soon.”

“When you get it done, get me a few copies.”

“Great. Thanks, Lester!”

“Goodbye, Robin.” He hung up, then redialed the phone number again. When Robin answered, Lester was completely puzzled. “Robin?”

“Is that you again, Lester?” he laughed.

“I don’t get this.” Lester stared at the numbers he had written.

“Don’t get what?”

“Well, I called Senator Kensington’s PA to get a good phone number where he could be reached, you know, because I’ve tried his cell phone and home phone and he never gets back to me. So, she gave me this number. But it’s your number. Does that make any sense to you at all?” Lester waited, trying to get his cigarette pack out of his pocket. “Robin?”

After a protracted silence, Robin replied, “I don’t get it either.”

“Oh, well, she must just have given me the wrong information. I just don’t get why your home phone number would be on Kipp’s PA’s Rolodex.” Silence followed. “Anyway, I’ll put out some feelers, Robin, and get back to you.”

“Thanks, Lester.”

He hung up and shook his head, setting the paper down, lighting a cigarette. When his office line rang, he answered

it.

“Hi, honey!”

“Hi, Dustin. What are you up to?” He blew out a cloud of smoke, making rings.

“I was just checking my email when I noticed Robin’s résumé was back from the agency who was helping him. Can I just email it directly to your email box and you can print it off at work? It would save a little time.”

“Sure. You remember the address?”

“Yes, of course I do.” She laughed.

“Oh, I just spoke to Robin a second ago.”

“Did he call you?”

Lester flicked his ash into an art deco style ashtray with a naked woman dancing on it. “No, ironically, I called him. I must have misdialed or something. I don’t know. It was weird.”

“Why?”

“I called Kipp’s PA to get another number for him, you know, because he’s been really remiss at getting back to me. I could swear she gave me Robin’s home number...Dusty? You still there?”

“Kipp? Kipp Kensington?”

At her odd tone, he laughed nervously and took another hit off his cigarette before he asked, “Yes, why?”

“Oh, no.”

“Oh, no, what?” He sat up straight.

“I went out for lunch with Robin the other day, and he got a call on his mobile. After I paid the check I headed outside to meet him and he was talking to Kipp on the phone.”

“Why on earth would Robin be talking to Kipp?”

“He said it was about a job, but you know as well as I do the rumors going around about that senator.”

“Rumors?” Lester snubbed out the half-smoked cigarette. “Those were ages ago. Way before he got married.”

“So?”

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"He's not gay, Dustin." Lester shook his head at the absurdity.

"Then why does his PA have Robin's home number? Why haven't we met this mysterious Susan? Hm? I have a bad feeling about this, Lester."

"You can't be serious."

"I am. And I think if we sit outside Robin's new townhouse, we might just see what's going on over there."

"This is absurd. I have to get back to work. I'll see you at home."

"Okay. I'll email his résumé to you now."

"Okay. Bye." Lester hung up the phone and pivoted his chair to the computer screen. As he connected on line, he thought more deeply about the implications and then grew pale. "No. It can't be. Please, God, not Robin and Kipp!"

Kipp shifted the chair he had used to barricade his door away from it so he could leave his bedroom. Listening for any sign of life, he headed to the kitchen, filled the coffee carafe and started the drip to brew. Turning on the small portable television that was suspended under the cabinet, he set it for CNN and watched the news as he prepared some toast.

A few moments later Louise appeared, still in last night's clothing, her lipstick smeared on her face. "Christ, Louise, look at you." He shook his head. "Go into rehab. Dry out."

"Shut up. Get me a cup of coffee." She dropped into a chair, moaning and rubbing her head.

He stood up and poured her a mug and set out the milk and sugar for her. Sitting back down, he sipped his own cup, when she whined, "Why is that on so loud?"

Using the remote, he shut the television off. With the room quiet, he stared at her as if she were some tragic figure from a Shakespearean play.

After consuming the coffee black when she usually

liked it sweet and creamy, she cracked one of her eyelids open to mumble, “So, you got Alfonso on your side. You fucking, pathetic, queer bastard. How did you do it, Kipp? Hm? Money? Promises you’ll never keep?”

“No. Would it amaze you that some people don’t need money to do the right thing? I didn’t recruit him. He volunteered.” Kipp tried not to gloat. “He was disgusted by what you made him do and was trying to fix it.”

“It don’t fucking matter. My PI still has some photos of you and Robin together. And neither you nor Alfonso can get your hands on those, so it don’t fricken matter.” It appeared to Kipp that Louise was trying to motivate herself enough to get up and refill her coffee. Instead she just held out her cup to him.

“Your PI?” he replied, standing up to get the pot. “Yes, I had a feeling you hired a private investigator. How low can you go, Louise?”

The moment he set the coffee mug down in front of her, she cupped like it was honey from heaven and brought it to her over-painted, smeared lips. “Yes. He took some photos of you and Robin hanging out together. I don’t know where the hell you were, but who cares? So, keep the naked ones. I got some more. Better ones. More incriminating ones.”

“Why are you doing this? Let it go, Louise.”

“I told *you*...” she droned on, “I...*want...a...family*.”

“Does everyone have to pay dearly for your wants and needs?”

“*Yes*.” She pushed her uncombed, matted hair back from her forehead and slurped her coffee noisily.

“We can’t go on like this, Louise.”

“Two mill.”

“What do you need two million for?” He finished his coffee and sat back, slouching in the chair.

“Ah, let me think...a boob job, lip implants, ah, hair weaves...”

“You have to be kidding. First of all, you don’t need two million dollars for that. Secondly, why? You’re an

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attractive woman when you're sober, and you don't need any of those things to look nice."

"I *want them*..."

"I wish you'd go in for some therapy. You need some self-esteem and respect."

"Me? Are you joking? If anyone needs a therapist, it's you! You're the homo living as a homophobic Republican. Which way did you vote on same sex marriages, Kipp? Hm? You lying hypocrite."

"I abstained."

"Sure you did. You didn't abstain from anal sex though, did you?"

"Louise, refrain from allowing this to get ugly again."

"Two million. Let's see. I'll even give you a deadline this time. I get two million dollars, a divorce, and the new car by July Fourth, and I won't go to the press. Deal?"

He stood up and set his empty cup in the sink. "You have your lawyer call mine. Okay, Louise? I'm not going to negotiate with you."

"Where are you going? I'm not finished talking to you yet."

As he left he muttered, "No, but I am finished with you." Taking his briefcase with him to his car, he sat in the driver's seat and turned his cell phone on, backing out of the driveway on his way to Robin's place. Moments later the tiny mobile phone rang. As he stopped for a red traffic light he answered it. "Hello?"

"Senator?"

"Yes?"

"It's Lester. Lester Lewis."

"Oh, hello, Lester. I'm truly sorry I haven't returned your calls. I've been extremely busy. What can I do for you?"

"Well. I have kind of an awkward question to ask you."

"Oh? I'm all ears." Kipp couldn't imagine what could be awkward about running a simple campaign.

"It's about my step-son. Robin."

A horn sounded behind Kipp as he froze, not seeing the light turn green. He pulled over because trying to come up with some excuse and drive at the same time wasn't possible. Once he'd stopped the car, he said, "Sorry? What did you say, Lester?"

"Are you and Robin seeing one another?"

"Whatever gave you that idea?" Kipp felt once again like he was having a heart attack. How on earth was he going to keep surviving all these heart palpitations?

"I'll tell you what gave me the idea, Kipp. I called your PA for another phone number for you. As you know, I wasn't getting through to you on your other lines. She gave me Robin's number as a contact number for you. Don't you think that's a little odd?"

Kipp was going to kill Lydia. "There must be some kind of mistake, Lester. I assure you Robin's number is not a contact number for me."

"You're sure? You're sure you don't want to tell me something before I find out elsewhere? I need to know now, Kipp. I'm about to start raising funds for your re-election."

Cursing under his breath, Kipp repeated, "There must have been a crossed line somewhere. Look, Lester, I'm on the road at the moment. Can I ring you back at a later time?" He had no intention.

"Oh, sure, Kipp. Just make sure you do it soon. I need to get this show on the road, and I can't keep having you delay it and put me off."

"Yes. I understand. I'll ring you." Kipp hung up and immediately dialed Lydia's number. When she answered he could hardly control his anger. "Lydia, I told you that number was for you only!"

"What? What number? What are you talking about, Kipp?"

"Lester Lewis just called me and he said you gave him the number to the townhouse. How could you! I had strict instructions about that."

"I didn't, Kipp, I swear! I never would have given out

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that number. You told me it was private and to only use it in an emergency.”

“Then who did?”

“I’ll find out. I will, Kipp. Meanwhile, I’ll get it out of my Rolodex. It won’t happen again.”

He hung up and threw the phone down on the seat next to him. “What now? What now?”

Robin answered the door, wondering if Kipp forgot his key. When he opened it, he stared into the face of his stepdad. “Lester?”

Crushing out a cigarette butt on the front stoop, Lester entered the townhouse forcefully, looking around as if inspecting every inch. “Christ, it is true.”

“What’s true?” Robin stood near the door, hoping when Kipp showed up that he could signal him to go away without Lester realizing it.

“I know, Robin. You can stop hiding it.” Lester dropped down on the leather sofa in the living room.

Caught off guard, Robin stood before him, his arms crossed over his chest and asked, “Stop hiding what?”

“You and Kipp! I know about you and Kipp having an affair.”

Afraid to admit anything, Robin took one last look out the front door before sitting down next to him.

“How did you guys even meet?” Lester asked, but it came out more like a complaint. “Was it through one of our dinners? A mutual friend? How the hell did a refined man like Kipp Kensington get involved with a complete fuck-up like you?”

“Hey! I’m not a fuck-up. I’m just a little confused.”

“Shut up and answer my questions.”

“Did...did Kipp admit it?”

“Yes,” Lester said quickly and boldly, like a dare.

“Wow. I’m surprised he did.”

“Then it is true? Oh, come on, Robin. What on earth are

the two of you thinking? You know what this can do to Kipp's career? If it got out, he'd be finished. Done. Unemployed."

"I know." Robin lowered his head and rubbed his hands together nervously.

"I can't believe I have to say this to you, but you have to behave like the sensible one. Break it off with him. Robin, he's got a fantastic chance for a second term, and after that he was going to make a bid for the presidency. You're going to blow it all for him. Twenty years of working towards his dream and you—a lazy pot-head—are going to ruin all that!"

"I swear, Lester, I don't want to do that. I'd never hurt him like that."

"Good. Then move back home and end it."

When Lester stood up as if he had accomplished what he had set out to do, Robin added, "But I love him."

Spinning around, a look of sheer disbelief on his face, Lester exclaimed, "How the hell can you love him? Are you nuts? You mean you love his money?"

"No! I resent that." Robin stood up to confront him. "Look, we know it'll be hard, and we have to keep it quiet, but we don't want to break up."

"You have no choice!"

"What does that mean? I have choices. Kipp has choices. We choose to be together."

Lester closed the gap between them and pointed a warning finger into Robin's face. "If you honestly love him, then get the hell out of his life. And fast."

Robin's heart breaking a little at the reality of the comment, he tried to stand his ground and shook his head. "It's up to Kipp."

"Kipp's not thinking with his head. He's using some other organ to control his actions. Obviously, he has some sick attraction for Harley Davidson riders."

"Hey! That's not fair. It's not just about sex. We really get along great."

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“Sure you do, Robin. You think Kipp is after your brilliant mind? Use your head for once. You’re a romp in bed. And it’s not worth Kipp losing everything he’s worked for, for so long, for an impulsive fling in the sack with a leather-clad hood!”

“I’m not like that anymore.” Robin took great insult.

“No? Did you sell your bike? Toss out your leather pants? Give up weed?”

“I did give up the weed. I’m clean. I swear.”

“Sure you did.”

“I’m not lying!” Robin raised his hand. “I’m not smoking that shit anymore. Hey, I got a résumé together, didn’t I? I asked for help looking for a job, didn’t I? I’m going to make something of myself. I’ll show you I can do it. Kipp said I’m not stupid. He has faith in me. Not like you, Lester. You know how many times you’ve told me I was a dumb shit? You even asked me if I’d taken my ‘stupid pills’! Remember? It was because of those kinds of horrible comments that I quit law school. You think I felt confident to get through my classes when every night I came home to study I had you in my face telling me I was too much of an idiot to succeed? With Kipp’s support I will be something. You’ll see.”

“Make something of yourself? Are you kidding me? All you’ll make of yourself is a name, the notorious name of the man who brought ruin to one of the finest men in politics.”

“Stop it, Lester. I mean it.” Robin felt the tears welling again at the thought of harming Kipp in any way.

As Lester moved to the door, he warned, “Stay away from him. If his wife finds out, she’ll go ballistic. If you love him, leave him the hell alone.”

Just as he was about to storm out, Kipp showed up at the door.

Seeing Lester Lewis behind the glass door shocked him. Since the cat was most certainly out of the bag, Kipp

entered the living room and closed the door for privacy behind him. "Lester," he breathed out in a reluctant greeting.

"Kipp." Lester shook his head sadly at him. "What the hell do you want with a troubled juvenile delinquent?"

"Hey!" Robin shouted in defense.

"He's not like that, Lester." Kipp could see the devastation on Robin's face. *Hasn't he been through enough?*

"You don't know him like I do," Lester argued, patting his shirt pocket for his cigarettes anxiously. "He smokes pot, he likes to get his dick sucked by strange men, and he rides a fucking Harley. Enough said, Kipp."

"That's a crude underestimation of a man I have grown very fond of. You should be ashamed of yourself talking about him that way. You're supposed to be a step-father to him. It looks as though he could have done a lot better than you."

"Don't make this about me and him, Kipp. It's about you losing your career. Is *he* worth that? Is that money-sucking leech worth you losing everything?"

Robin flinched when that finger pointed in his direction rudely again.

"I'm afraid he is, Lester. And your nasty comments about him are uncalled for."

"You're both nuts!" Lester shook a cigarette out of his pack anxiously. "You're both thinking with your dicks not your heads. Is he that good in the sack, Kipp? Is it so magnificent that it's worth everything you've worked for? You have to be kidding. Even a highly trained hooker with all the tricks in the world isn't worth that."

"You couldn't be more misguided, Lester. You're very wrong about the relationship Robin and I share. Very wrong indeed. We're thinking with our hearts, our souls, our minds. It's not the cheap affair you are making it out to be."

Throwing up his hands, Lester made his way back to the door. "Whatever, Kipp. But don't blame me when you're

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outed for it. I wash my hands of you. Get a new campaign manager. I can't even imagine running your campaign."

"Okay, Lester. If that's what you want." Kipp glared at him.

Before he left, Lester looked from one man to the other, then muttered as he lit his cigarette, "I have no idea what you see in each other. It's fucking sick."

"Get lost!" Robin shouted, slamming the door once he had gone.

After a moment to recover, Kipp reached out for Robin. They embraced each other for comfort. Kipp felt so weary from all the fighting he was doing, he just wanted some peace.

"What are we going to do, Kipp?" Robin moaned. "What are we going to do?"

"Stay together. Through hell or high water." Kipp tried to sound strong, but inside he was petrified.

"Why do I feel like that's the hard way?"

"Because it is, Robin, it is. Everything out there is trying to pull us apart at the moment." Kipp kissed his face and attempted to give him a brave smile. "But we know what we have. Let's try and deal with it one day at a time."

Robin closed his eyes and rested his head on Kipp's shoulder. "I love you, Kipp. So much. You're the only one who has faith in me."

"I do have faith in you. You're a remarkable man. Just hang on. We'll get through this." Kipp tightened his embrace around Robin, burying his face in his long hair. *Somehow we'll get through it.*

Chapter Twelve

Robin sat in a lobby wearing a gray business suit, the job application he had just filled out and his résumé in his hand. Nervous, trying to keep his palms dry for that handshake greeting, it had been so long since he was in this position, he thought he would fall on his face. Pushing his hair back from his eyes, knowing he most likely should have gotten his hair cut, but couldn't do it. He cleared his throat and tapped the papers on his leg manically. Finally, someone opened a door and invited him in.

Robin smiled, extended his hand, walked past the secretary who was giving him a strange look, and followed the heavy-set, dour man into his large, polished office. He was invited to sit down and did, crossing his legs, then uncrossing them nervously. Setting the paperwork he had down on the desk, he mumbled, "Here's the application and my résumé."

"Oh, fine, Robin. Thank you." The man picked it up and read it all carefully.

As he did, Robin scanned the contents of the room and hated the sense of claustrophobia working in an office-type environment would give him. The employment agency that

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had been helping him with his résumé had arranged the interview for him. Lester wasn't going to do his part anymore, and Kipp couldn't. Though he wasn't qualified, the agency offered it for him to give it his best shot.

Finally, the man set the paperwork down and scrutinized him carefully. "You list Lester Lewis as one of your personal references."

Robin felt his mouth go dry and prayed his mother's influence would force Lester to give him a good one. "Yes. He's my step-father."

"I know Lester very well. He's a good man. But we usually don't like family being listed as references."

Since it wasn't a question, Robin didn't say anything.

"Why do you want this job, Robin?"

"I need the work. I have three years of law school behind me, and I figured—"

"Why didn't you finish school?"

Knowing that question would continue to plague him, Robin had rehearsed the answer. "I intend to continue the studying along with a job and finish my degree at night."

"I see."

After another few awkward moments, Robin was beginning to think this was just some act to be able to say he had given this long-haired dude a chance when the man obviously had no interest in hiring him.

"Well, I have a few more applicants to see first. But I should be making a decision in a few days."

As the man stood, so did Robin. Another handshake later and he was standing outside the office wondering why he bothered. It was obvious that this type of work was not suitable.

Defeated, knowing damn well this useless search for a job in the white-collar world would frustrate him, Robin opened the top button of his shirt and loosened his tie as he headed out into the summer sunshine. Finding his bike parked close by, he straddled it, missing his leathers. He paused, looking at the cloudless blue sky and wishing he

could find a career he could live with. He started the engine, revving it up, pushed it off its kickstand and headed out, thirsty for a glass of beer and a chance to think about a career he could be proud of.

Sitting in his lawyer's conference room, Kipp, Louise, and their respective representatives haggled over the settlement.

"The idea of two million dollars is out of the question," Kipp's lawyer stated. "So we need to put that behind us and come up with another, more reasonable figure."

Louise snorted in annoyance. "I'm not willing to negotiate. Look, if you don't give me what I want, I go to the press."

"That's called blackmail, Louise," Kipp shouted.

Both their lawyers tried to calm them down.

Kipp rubbed his forehead in agony; all he wanted was for Louise to go away quietly. Was that too much to ask? In the close room, her perfume was overwhelming. Her cleavage hanging out of the lowest cut blouse he had ever seen her wear, her make-up padded like a mask over her face, and her hair teased in some style that made her appear a few inches taller than she was, Kipp thought she looked like a porno actress. The booze was taking its toll on her beauty, and she was using every tactic she could muster to pretend she was still young and vital. Perhaps to some men she appeared enticing. To him? Like a whore. But he knew her personality.

"It's not blackmail if it's the truth, Kipp." She found an emery board in her purse and filed at a nail as if to show him how relaxed she was. It was unnerving to watch. "I think you can come up with the money. Look, my lawyer wouldn't come up with that figure if he didn't think you were worth it."

"I think he came up with that figure because you invented it."

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Kipp's lawyer raised his hand in a gesture of silence. "We're not getting anywhere like this."

Louise replaced the emery board with a tube of lipstick and used a compact to apply another layer to her already grotesque clown mouth. "It's his fault. I'm being reasonable."

Rising up in fury, Kipp shouted, "That's it. I can't negotiate with her when she's like this. Drunk again, Louise? Had a few at lunch?"

"I resent that!" she ranted. "He's always using alcohol as his excuse to belittle me. I only drink in moderation, like everyone else does. He always accuses me of being some kind of alchy!"

"Sit down, Kipp," his attorney urged.

"We're not getting anywhere, Bryan," he answered, trying to lower his voice and soften his tone.

"Well, that's the purpose of this meeting. To try to get somewhere."

Kipp reluctantly sat back down. When Louise gave him a superior smirk, he cringed and crossed his arms over his chest, wishing he had the guts to hire a hit-man.

His necktie hanging loosely around his shirt collar, Robin took off the suit jacket, laying it on the barstool next to him, and rolled up the sleeves of his cotton shirt in the warmth of the room. The iced beer tasted sweet and the music was loud and throbbing in the small tavern. Live athletics was being broadcast on a big-screen television. Men running sprints, jumping hurdles, with bodies on them to make any man jealous competed for medals. Since it was still quite early on a Monday, there were very few patrons in the room. Robin felt some of the tension leaving him as he relaxed, watching the TV. He knew Kipp was in a meeting with his lawyer and would most likely call him when he got out. Waiting all day to see Kipp was tiring. Robin knew he had to find a more constructive way to spend his days. A

job. He needed a damn job. Going over every career he could imagine in his head, an idea did occur to him, but he just didn't know how much it would pay. A motorcycle instructor. He could teach people how to ride a motorcycle and get their license. Couldn't he do that?

At a break in the action on the televised field, a news report updated the headlines. Focusing in on the newscaster's voice, Robin flinched as the face of the last Republican senator who had been caught with a male prostitute was paraded in front of the cameras. With microphones shoved in his face, the poor man denied he was gay and promised not to resign, instead he would go into rehab.

"Rehab?" Robin scoffed out loud. "Rehab for what? Being gay? That's absurd."

The bartender, who had been watching the broadcast, overheard him and leaned over the bar to say, "Sickening, isn't it? I don't get it."

Studying the man's dark beard and receding hairline before he answered, Robin replied, "It depends I guess, on your sensibilities."

Instantly, the look of suspicion crossed the man's face, backing away from Robin as if he had the plague. Robin went back to his beer and the news broadcast, knowing Kipp would eventually be in a similar position if he didn't do something about it.

Resigned not to allow his lover to be the next media victim, Robin set the glass down and climbed off the stool. "Right. That's it. It's the only way."

His head aching, Kipp stood at the office doorway with his attorney, knowing they hadn't gotten anywhere in the negotiations. "I can't give her anymore, Bryan. You know that."

"It's up to you. I can't make that decision for you. She's going to expose you if you don't meet her terms. I can see

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that from the vindictive quality of her attacks on you. It's only a matter of time."

Rubbing his face, Kipp nodded, "I know. Let me think about it. I'll call you." Waving as he left, Kipp stood at the elevator waiting for it to reach the ground floor. Louise's toxic threats echoing in his head, living in fear of getting exposed in the press, it was all coming to a head and he had to make a decision.

The minute Robin arrived home from the tavern, he found his mother standing at the townhouse door waiting for him. Grumbling under his breath, he parked his bike in the driveway, opened the garage, wheeling it inside. After he pulled the garage door shut, he stood straight to see her stiff assertive posture and furious expression.

Walking right past her, he muttered, "Leave me alone, Ma," as he went to the open the front door with his keys.

"Kipp? An affair with a married senator? Robin, how could you?"

Tossing his suit jacket down on a couch, he kept moving to his bedroom, intent on changing his clothing. She was right behind him.

"What were you thinking? You know what this could do to his career? Is this his house? Was Susan all just a big lie?"

"Yes. Okay? I made her up so I wouldn't have to deal with this." He threw his trousers on the bed and slipped on a pair of tight faded jeans.

"You're both insane!"

"I know. Go away." Walking around her as if she were a barrier in the middle of the room, Robin found a T-shirt in a drawer and pulled it over his head.

"Robin!"

"What?" he shouted in anger. "What do you want from me? I'm going to end it with him, okay? Will that get everyone off my fucking back?"

“Good. Do it quickly before someone finds out.”

“I will. Goodbye.” He placed both his hands on her shoulders from behind and began directing her to the front door.

“Robin! Stop pushing me. What will you do? Where will you live?”

“Goodbye,” he moaned and shoved her outside, closing the door on her protests.

Retiring to the relative peace of his bedroom, Robin fell down on the bed and crushed the pillows under his chest. He knew what he had to do to save Kipp. He just had to find the courage to do it.

Kipp was on his way to Robin’s townhouse when his mobile phone rang. Dreading it every time it went off, he cringed and flipped it open when he saw it was his publicist. “Hello, Merv...what’s going on?”

“Can you talk?”

“Yes, I’m in the car.” Kipp stopped for a red light and sighed as he waited for the bad news. It was always bad lately, wasn’t it?

“I heard a rumor, Kipp. I think someone might be snooping around your personal affairs.”

“Louise hired a private investigator, Merv. She had me followed.” Kipp accelerated when the light turned green.

“You have to be kidding! You guys signed a contract. She can’t do that!”

“She has. What do you want me to do? Any suggestions?”

“Lay low for now. Nothing’s gone public. We’ll go to press with some photos of you and your wife at the gala dinner. I’ll get it into the paper as soon as possible to try and get people off the scent. You know the name of this PI guy she used?”

“No. I’m getting very nervous. I have a bad feeling it’s going to blow any day, Merv. I can feel it.”

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“Well, we can try damage control, Kipp, but with the last two senators outted and humiliated in public in less than two months, well...”

“Shit...shit, shit, shit...” Kipp parked in front of the townhouse and shut the engine.

“Look, any chance you and your wife can be seen in public strolling arm and arm somewhere?”

“No. Not a chance. She’s out to extort two million bucks from me.”

“Holy shit! What a mess. Well, I have one last resort to keep your homosexuality hidden.”

“What’s that?” Kipp stared at the front of the townhouse sadly.

“We can fabricate a heterosexual affair. I can find someone to act as the mistress, and we can get her in front of the press admitting you two had a fling. If we do it before Louise exposes you, we can say that all this homosexual business your wife is spouting is sour grapes.”

“Oh, Christ,” Kipp moaned at the thought of a fake mistress.

“If we beat her to the punch, it may make her accusations look ridiculous.”

“Any other options?”

“Not if you want to get re-elected. And to be honest, Kipp, even if you admit you’ve had an affair with a woman. Cheating on your spouse? Well, that don’t sit too well with the religious right.”

“No, of course not. So, either way I lose.”

“Maybe. We can put as much positive spin on this as possible. Look, your record up to now is impeccable. Everyone loves you. Maybe if you just act shy and humble over having a one night fling with a woman, people won’t be too harsh to judge you. But, Kipp, an affair with a man, well...”

“I know. You don’t have to say it.”

“You just let me know if you want me to get that story out for you. Do it soon. It’ll at least be a diversion to throw

Louise's accusations out of kilter."

"Okay. I'll think about it, Merv. Thanks." He hung up and climbed out of the car slowly, feeling very tired and drained from all the lies.

Robin waited for Kipp to come in. Watching him sitting in his car talking on the phone, he had no idea what mood Kipp would be in, but he knew it wouldn't be good.

Opening the door for him as he walked up the path, Robin waited as Kipp passed by him, then he locked the door behind him. Without a word, Robin crossed his arms over his chest and studied Kipp's body language. It was as defeated as his own.

Sighing unhappily, Robin said, "Kipp, we have to talk."

Kipp tossed his suit jacket on the couch and sat down next to it, loosening his tie.

Robin rolled the hassock up in front of him and sat down on it, leaning over his knees to speak quietly. "I've had a long time to think about what's going on, and I just wanted to say, I'll leave and you can get on with your life and career. Okay?"

Waiting for a response, Robin felt an emotional tidal wave looming but promised himself he would be strong.

Kipp's blue eyes met his. "You're leaving me?"

The pain he read there killed him. Reaching out to hold Kipp's hand, Robin replied, "I can't ruin you. I can't."

"So, you'll just disappear? Out of my life forever?"

Tilting his head curiously, Robin wondered if that was a request or a question. "If it means you can still do the job you love, yes."

"I thought..."

When Kipp's voice broke, Robin felt like wailing in pain, but bit his lip as hard as he could to stop the flood of tears he knew would follow. "I would rather die than cause this much trouble in your life, Kipp. I can't stand the fact that I am the entire reason for all your problems."

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Shaking his head softly, Kipp whispered, "No. You're not. Far from it."

"But..." Though he fought so hard to prevent it, the tears began to sting his eyes. Who was he kidding? He couldn't stand the idea of them being apart. "But it's because of me, our affair, that you're even going through all this misery." He dabbed at the corner of his eye.

"Come here."

Robin moved to sit next to Kipp on the couch and savored Kipp's arm around his shoulders. After Kipp kissed his cheek, he said, "You are the one thing in my life I can rely on. I don't want to lose you. If I did, then all this chaos and fighting would be in vain."

"But, Kipp..." Robin moved to sit up and protest. Kipp held him firm.

"You know something, Robin? I did at one time feel that this line of work was a calling. Like something I was meant to do. I imagined being some knight in shining armor who rides to the rescue of the weak and down trodden and being their champion. What an idealistic fool I was. I suppose every young lawyer aspires to be something more, something important. Maybe make a name for himself. Living here in these great United States, anyone can do anything if they set their mind to it. I actually imagined running for president one day. I promised myself I would always strive for that as my ultimate goal. Even if I never sat inside the White House, it was the feat of a nomination that mattered. What senator hasn't thought about that sooner or later? But after a while working in his game, I can see the reality of it. I didn't fix anything. I wasted tax payers' money by sitting in committee hearings that never got anything accomplished, argued with Neanderthals about human rights and immigration, dealt with a party that is stuck in the dinosaur era, yet I'm unhappy with the far left political agenda of the Democratic Party. I'm a loose cannon to the GOP. They don't trust me on some core issues, like abortion or gay marriage. They know I'm pro

both.”

Robin sighed deeply and rested his cheek on Kipp’s shoulder.

“So, there I sit on the senate floor, shouting out my opinion to deaf ears, listening to the same old debates that have echoed through those halls since the Eighties and Nineties. We write off all our costs, make the public pay for our eccentricities, all the while keeping a cap on minimum wage. It’s a sick game.”

“You sound as if you’ve had enough.”

“Maybe I have. But then something happens and you feel vindicated. If you are the one deciding vote in something crucial, your voice is heard and you make a difference. I live for those precious moments, Robin. That’s why I do what I do.”

“Oh, Kipp,” Robin whined, “what the hell are we going to do?”

“There’s only one way to neutralize Louise’s threats.”

“Oh?”

“Yes. But, I need your backing.”

Robin sat up as if he were a soldier ready to follow his commander into battle. “Anything.”

“Good. Here’s my plan...”

Chapter Thirteen

Louise sat with a glass of wine in her sister's kitchen. It was the peak of summer and the boys were outside, swimming in their pool with their father. Inside, the air was kept cool and comfortable, and with the wine chilled to her liking, Louise felt very content.

Kate came into the room wearing her swimsuit. "Why don't you go out and have a dip? It's beautiful outside."

"What? And mess up my hair and make-up?" Louise choked. "Forget it! You go. I'll just sip this lovely wine and watch the soaps."

"I don't want to leave you sitting in the house all by yourself."

"I'm not alone. I have Mr. Blush to keep me company." She held up her glass.

"All right. Suit yourself. We'll come in for some snacks in an hour or so."

"Okay." Louise smiled and when Kate left through the back door, Louise focused her attention on the television and used the remote control to turn it on and flip channels. Smiling wickedly, she hummed to herself as she channel-surfed trying to find something of interest.

Footage of the San Francisco Gay Pride Festival was being broadcast live on a news station. Louise shook her head at the men in elaborate costumes and immediately imagined Robin Grant naked, cursing at Alfonso under her breath for stealing those precious photos. Tipping more wine into her emptying glass, she waved her hand and mumbled, "What a downer. All those men wasted."

"And now the headlines. Yet another Republican senator has been implicated in a gay-sex scandal..."

Louise set her glass down and rubbed her hands together in excitement. "Oh, Kipp, I can't wait for that to be you one day."

"Fifty-eight year old, Wyoming State Senator Bud Polkison has had allegations made about a reported secret affair with a gay man in his twenties. The senator hasn't been addressed by reporters yet for his statement, but news came to us that he was asked to resign from his position..."

"Oh, this just gets better and better!" Louise gulped more wine. "Just think, Kipp, very soon, that will be you."

"The senator's office refused to comment, saying the allegations were untrue, and that this may be the product of a wife who is suffering from prescription drug abuse."

"What?" she screamed. "That's crap!" She gulped the rest of her wine and poured more. "He better not use that excuse with me. I'll kill him."

"The senator's publicist has released a statement that the senator is not available for comment at this time."

"Chicken!" Louise shouted at the television, clicking it off when they went onto the next story. Taking the bottle with her, she hurried out of the back of the house to the pool shouting for her sister to come over to her.

Kate climbed out of the water and approached her. "What?"

"I just saw a clip on the news about that senator from Wyoming. I can't wait for Kipp to be involved in the next gay sex scandal. How cool will that be?"

Shaking her head, Kate sighed, "It's sad. Not cool."

Exposure

“Whose side are you on?”

“There are no sides, only losers.”

Louise watched in shock as Kate walked away from her. Shrugging to herself, she went back into the house where she wouldn’t melt from the heat, to finish her wine, counting down the days until she could either get her two million or ruin Kipp.

“I don’t recommend it, Kipp.”

“Look, Merv, I don’t care anymore. It’s what I want to do.”

“I wish you wouldn’t be so rash about it. Just wait a few days.”

“No. I’ve made my decision.” Kipp looked over at Robin, who was listening to the telephone conversation patiently.

“But no one in the Republican Party has ever showed up there before! That’s the Democrats’ home ground. You can’t be serious!”

“Watch me.” Kipp hung up his cell phone and smiled at Robin, “You ready?”

“I am.”

Holding Robin’s hand after climbing out of his car, Kipp wove his way through the screaming crowds that lined the street. Loud bands were playing jazzy tunes, the percussion drums echoed off the tall buildings.

“This way.” Kipp kept them weaving around floats and flamboyantly dressed boys with ostrich-feathered headgear and little else.

A grand stand with commentators was set up to narrate the passing stars and dance groups for the television audience at home. Kipp released Robin’s hand when he approached the small staircase that led up to the podium.

Robin’s heart was pounding in his chest. It was mad!

Insane! And utterly amazing. Watching as Kipp tried to shout into someone's ear his intentions, he was greeted with enthusiastic nods of the heads and led to the top of the stage.

The master of ceremonies interrupted the commentary to make an announcement that was going to be broadcast live over the airwaves, as well as throughout the streets over the public address system.

"May I have your attention! A very special guest has arrived to honor this day of Gay Pride. It's a momentous event since a Republican representative has never even showed his face at one of our festivals before. So, let's all hear it for a very courageous man. Senator Kipp Kensington!"

A roar of applause rang out. Robin's eyes began to water he was so proud.

Kipp waved his hands to quiet the crowd and then leaned over to shout into the microphone over the cacophony of noise. "Ladies and gentlemen, and those of you in between..." A huge burst of laughter followed. "It is an honor to be your representative in the California State Senate." Another clamor of applause followed. Kipp gestured to hush everyone again so he could be heard. "But I have a confession to make to all of you—"

"Here it comes," Robin mumbled.

"I have been living a lie. I have covered up my sexuality by marrying a woman I do not love, and as a matter of fact, one that despises me, in order to continue working for the people I do love." Instantly, the street was buzzing. "But no longer will I hide in the closet. I am very proud to announce that I am gay and now open about it. I realize this will no doubt jeopardize my long political career, but it is worth it."

An explosion of cheers rang out so loudly, Robin had to cover his ears. Tears of joy were running down his cheeks.

"I feel free for the first time. Free to be myself. And free to love."

Exposure

When Kipp reached out to Robin in the mob, Robin's eyes blinked open in awe. Slowly he made his way through the tightly packed spectators and parade participants to those stairs.

"I know after this announcement I will be forced to resign," Kipp continued. Shrieks of protest followed instantly. Kipp quieted them down again with hand gestures. "But to make my confession complete on this special day for gay culture and pride, I'd like to introduce you all to my lover, Robin."

As the noise grew to ear-piercing decibels, Robin felt Kipp's hand drawing him nearer. When Kipp cupped his face and kissed him, Robin wrapped around him in pure joy.

There, on national television Kipp Kensington and Robin Grant proclaimed their love. Alfonso, sitting in the lounge of the club, watching the sight on the tube in awe, while the astonished crowd held their breaths, began shouting and pumping his fist into the air. When he turned around to see the rest of the people in the room, he realized he was the only one happy about the announcement in this haven of right-winged conservatives. He blushed shyly and kept his eyes on the set.

The master of ceremonies took over the mike once again. "We are very proud of you, Senator, for having the courage to come out this way. It took a lot of guts, and we just want you to know, you've got a lot of fans in the crowd right now. If you want to switch parties, you may even find yourself re-elected!"

Another eardrum-shattering roar erupted from the enormous crowd.

Waving like the diplomat he was, Kipp shouted, "Thank you! All of you for your support!" Continuing to wave as cameras flashed all around them, he and Robin took their

G.A. Hauser

place among the parade floats and walked hand in hand, grinning like proud peacocks, and shaking hands as they went.

Chapter Fourteen

Louise parked her Porsche outside the club. She was well over the legal limit but managed not to hit anything on the drive there. Making her way to the lounge, she felt as if the room had gone completely quiet around her. Wondering why, she stifled her wicked grimace of contempt for them and their snobbish attitude and sat down on a padded barstool. The bartender avoided direct eye contact but still managed to get her a rum and cola when she asked.

Sensing someone sitting on the stool next to her, she found that white grin and mumbled, "Oh, it's you."

"Poor, Louise. It's all over now."

"Over? I don't think so," she snorted. "I haven't even started yet."

He stared at her strangely. "Don't you know when to quit?"

"Quit? Are you kidding? I gave him a deadline. He has to hand over two million dollars or I tell everyone he's a faggot. Then, I'll hand over the photos of the two of them from the private investigator. Oh, and speaking of that, I don't need those stupid naked pictures of Robin to do Kipp in, so there." She stuck out her tongue at him.

"I feel truly sorry for you. You are a bitter young woman. I hope you get what you deserve."

"Oh, shut up and leave me alone."

"My pleasure."

After he left she shook her head in annoyance and sucked on her drink. A small television was playing over the bar with the sound off. She could see the parade was still being covered and looked away without interest. Scanning the room to see if anyone she knew was there, she gasped to see it was suddenly empty. "What the fuck? Where did everyone go?" Twisting back to the bartender, who was doing his best to avoid her, she shouted, "Hey, you! Did someone pull the fire alarm? Where did everyone go?"

"Go home, Mrs. Kensington."

"Go home? Why should I go home?"

"I'm surprised you can show your face here after what happened."

"What? What the hell are you talking about?" She felt disoriented. Maybe someone had found out about Kipp without her doing it. Could she be that lucky? Could someone else get the blame and all she would be left with was money, influence, and sympathy?

Two drinks later, she still had the room to herself but didn't care anymore. When a male voice called her name, she smiled and tried to spin on the barstool to flirt.

"Are you Mrs. Louise Kensington?"

Through her blurry vision she came to focus on a man in a suit. "Who's asking, cutie?"

"You're under arrest, ma'am, for suspicion of kidnapping and assault."

"What?" She gasped as a man in uniform stood her up on her two shaky feet. "This is ridiculous! I want to see my lawyer!"

As the handcuffs were placed on her wrists and her arms were secured behind her back, she screamed for her lawyer and that she knew her rights.

Exposure

Behind her, on the television screen, the latest news was being broadcast. A very happy state senator was beaming at the camera, apologizing for hiding but not for his homosexuality as the crowd cheered in support.

After a long day and night of dancing and partying with the mob at the festival, a very relieved but weary couple entered the townhouse together. Kipp turned on the light and tossed his keys on the table. Robin was behind him, yawning tiredly.

"I need a shower. It's been a long, eventful day, Senator." Robin smiled.

"Let me just get undressed, and I'll meet you in the bathroom."

"Okay." Robin kissed his nose, saying, "I'm very proud of you."

"Thanks." Waiting for him to leave, Kipp found his mobile phone and checked his messages. One urgent one from Lydia drew his attention. He dialed her number, knowing it was late, but she was used to his late calls.

"Lydia, it's me."

"Hi, Kipp. I saw your broadcast. You were fantastic. I can't tell you how excited I was to see you come out. You're my hero."

"Thank you, Lydia. But I doubt the rest of the Republican Party is in agreement with you."

"I got a call from your lawyer, Bryan. He said they've taken Louise into custody, but her lawyer had her released on bail. They booked her for kidnapping and assault. Bryan said that Alfonso has given a statement and they've granted him immunity to prosecution."

"Fine. Just let it shake her up a little. Then when she's sober, I'll drop the charges on condition of a divorce on my terms and her getting into AA."

"I think she'd prefer those options to jail time."

"I hope so. She's a very peculiar woman. Who knows? She might want to sit in a cell and talk to herself all day."

"Oh. I did take a few other interesting phone calls while you were busy."

"Did you?"

"Yes. One was from a publisher who wants to write your story."

"Oh?" Kipp laughed, "And the other?"

"A Democratic campaign manager. He said if you switch parties, he's certain you'll win in the coming election."

Kipp broke up with laughter and said, "Can I get back to you on that?"

"Sure, Kipp. Get some rest."

"Goodnight, Lydia." He hung up the tiny phone and set it down next to his keys. When he looked up a gorgeous long-haired, naked man was smiling at him devilishly. "Hello, there..." Kipp approached him.

"Come here often, sailor?"

Wrapping around this naked dream, Kipp smiled, feeling complete for the first time in his life. "Did I tell you I loved you today?"

Putting on a thinking face, Robin replied, "Why no. I don't think you have."

Kissing his cheek in a loud smooch, Kipp whispered seductively, "I love you, love you, love you."

Robin lit up with laughter and hugged Kipp, rocking him side to side. "Happily ever after at last...who would have thought?"

"I do love those kinds of novels." Kipp parted from the embrace and then cupped his hands over Robin's genitals. "Especially the sexy ones."

"Ooh, yes!" Robin cheered, then found Kipp's mouth for a long passionate kiss.

Exposure

Louise sat on a chair in her sister's kitchen, staring into a glass of wine. Standing up slowly, she poured it down the sink and rinsed the glass. "Touché, Kipp. You finally convinced me to get off the booze." She raised the empty glass up in a toast. "The better man won."

The End

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Book One of G.A. Hauser's
MEN IN MOTION SERIES:



Turn the page for a sneak peek...

MILE HIGH

Divorced accountant Owen Braydon spends his weeks working in Los Angeles and his weekends in Denver with his daughter. Straight-laced and mild mannered, he normally looks at the weekly flight to and from Denver as an opportunity to get some extra work done. But then he found himself on the same plane as the luscious Taylor Madison.

Texas-born Taylor is from Denver, but for several months he's been flying back and forth to Los Angeles where he works as a project manager on a major construction job. Charismatic and confident, Taylor is a man who knows what he wants and isn't afraid to go after it. The second he lays eyes on bi-curious Owen, he knows he wants him.

What starts out as a smoldering no-strings-attached initiation into the Mile High Club quickly turns into a weekly ritual that both men look forward to over all else. Soon their desire for one another deepens and both men find themselves wanting and needing more.

When a possible change in work assignments threatens to end what they have, both men are faced with a decision. Can the heights they soared together in the air be maintained on the ground? Only if Owen and Taylor are willing to cast aside their doubts, open up their hearts, set aside all inhibitions, and go the extra mile.

Chapter One

“Okay...let me go. I’ll never catch my plane if you don’t stop talking.” Owen Braydon rubbed his face tiredly, looking down at his leather suitcase that sat by the front door. “Jenna, I have to go! Goodbye.” Hanging up the phone, Owen made sure he had his keys and his plane tickets, then grabbed his bag and jogged out to his car. Checking the time on his watch, he cursed his ex-wife and her constant nagging even though they had been divorced for a year. If it wasn’t for his daughter, Leah, he wouldn’t be making the trip.

Trying not to be distracted by his frustration and anger, Owen drove to LAX in the traffic, mumbling profanity under his breath at his slow progress. Finally parked in the long-stay lot, he jogged to the check-in desk after locating his flight on the monitor. Handing the heavily made-up female clerk his ticket and checking his bag, at last he felt unencumbered, as if he could finally relax, and walked calmly through the security check-point.

Once he was on the other side of the metal detectors, seeing he did actually end up with a spare minute or two after all the rushing, he made for a lounge and sat at the bar.

“Can I have a glass of white wine, please?” He took a few dollars out of his wallet.

He sipped the crisp chardonnay, feeling some of the tension leave his body. Owen looked at his reflection in a mirror behind a wall of bottles of alcohol. Taming his hair and fixing his shirt collar, he straightened his back to improve his sagging posture and tried not to think about everything he had on his mind.

“Yes, I’d like a glass of that lager. The one on tap.”

Owen turned his head to see a man ordering a beer beside him. Doing a quick appraisal, Owen estimated him to be in his mid-thirties, six-foot tall, and possibly nearing two hundred pounds of solid muscle. Looking away as the attractive man caught him staring, Owen returned his attention to his drink and checked on the time once more.

Sucking the rest of the wine down, he set a tip on the counter, then stood, intending on waiting at the gate until boarding. As he was about to leave, the handsome man, now seated at a small table with three high bar stools surrounding it, met his eyes. They smiled politely at each other. Owen wondered what his life story was. He often did that.

As people came and went around him, Owen invented their intimate details in his head. For example, the woman behind the desk at the check-in with her heavy make-up and long, painted nails. Well, she was simple to assess. At the clubs every night, getting tipsy, dancing wildly, her lipstick smeared on her face, until some poor fellow took pity on her and brought her home either to sleep or to screw.

The vignettes amused him. He didn’t have what anyone would call an exciting life as an accountant, so why not live his fantasies and tell tales in his head to keep life that much more interesting?

As he walked down the crowded concourse to his gate, Owen tried to imagine the handsome man’s story. *Well, he’s so damn good looking he’s either an actor or a model, has a gorgeous wife and a couple of kids, lives in a house in*

Mile High

Beverly Hills. Or he's gay and has an Adonis named Sven, waiting for him naked in their private spa.

Chuckling to himself, Owen hoped that the latter was the case. It made that handsome fellow more wicked and taboo, more interesting. And the thought of some ordinary man on the street being completely and utterly gay, always got a rise out of him. Though he'd never had a gay experience, he had always been curious what it would be like to dabble in the "dark side". Even while he was married, he had secretly admired the men on the television screen, allowed Jenna to watch shows that might have been threatening to the average husband, like romantic comedies or movies where her heartthrobs had nude scenes. In his head he'd say, "Oh yes", or "Yum!" at their naked torsos and bottoms, but kept his face straight for her and the public. He was a "happily married man" after all. *Tsch, tsch! Don't get caught drooling over naked men!* He smiled. "Well, you're not married any longer. Bring it on!" he joked with himself as if suddenly a hoard of attractive guys would come out of the woodwork and seduce him. He shook his head at the irony because he felt very ordinary, had a boring job, and was sadly approaching his late thirties. What could possibly happen this late in his life to make it exciting and fun? Nothing.

Seeing he still had a few minutes before the plane began boarding, Owen sat down with the crowd of exhausted patrons to linger until his assigned row was called.

That man from the bar approached their waiting area. Owen stared at the way he walked. Confident, masculine, solid, and very sure of himself. *Wow*. Owen felt his skin prickle. Whoever owned him must enjoy him. *What a fucking bod!*

When their eyes met again, Owen felt his face flush at that warm smile. It was as if drinking in the same lounge gave them something in common. Owen returned that amiable expression with more enthusiasm than earlier. He even nodded his head to give his greeting more authenticity.

Again his internal dialogue took wing. *Where are you sitting, my handsome friend? In first class? Coach with the rest of us peasants? My row?*

It was good fun. Owen was relieved someone was there to pique his interest for the arduous two and a half hour flight. As he gazed around the waiting area, he found nothing else of note. A very average looking bunch of human beings surrounded him; the usual assortment of crumpled businessmen, worn-out women with screaming, bratty children, and overweight tourists in gaudy prints who talked too much.

The boarding process finally began. Owen stood up with his pass in his hand, joining the droll line as the woman in a dark uniform checked their information before letting them through. Twisting around to see where his male friend was, he was happily surprised to see him standing in the same line. *Well, at least you're close by.*

Moving down the narrow gangway to the opening of the airplane, Owen showed a flight attendant his ticket stub and was directed to his seat.

Finding it next to the window on the left side of the plane, Owen sat down and made himself comfortable, staring out at the runway and the action of loading luggage and departing flights.

After a few moments, he was about to pull a magazine out of the seat pocket in front of him when he noticed that handsome man sitting on an aisle seat one row up and diagonally from him. Again they caught eyes and smiled.

Hello! Oh, this just keeps getting better and better.

That gaze lingered; Owen was able to see those light eyes were blue. The man turned back around in his seat and took out a magazine to browse through.

Owen had to calm himself down. The tingles passing over his body amazed him. Stretching out his legs in the tight confines of the seat, Owen looked out at the tarmac again in order to gain some control. *Gay, gay...oh, yes, gay. You don't look at another man like that for no reason.*

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Or...perhaps he just thought I looked familiar. Was that it? Did he think he knew me?

Owen's spirit slightly deflated. Maybe the man just thought he looked like someone he knew. Maybe that was all it was.

The head flight attendant got on the intercom and began the monotone announcement of their destination, blah, blah, blah. Owen noticed them closing the cabin doors and was relieved he had a vacant seat next to him. Fastening his seatbelt, he flipped through a SkyMall magazine with little interest, thinking some of the contraptions were absurd. Two hundred dollars for ear-hair clippers and toe-jam cleaners!

The plane jolted slightly as it backed up. Owen stuffed the magazine into the pouch and made sure his mobile phone was off for the flight. Yearning to lie down and sleep, he looked down at his lap, his sky-blue faded jeans and his sensible leather shoes, wishing he could push the seat in front of him forward and move it ten inches away from his poor, aching knees.

They were next in line for take-off. The always-confident voice of the captain came over the PA and calmly told the staff to take their seats. From where he was sitting, Owen could see only part of the handsome man's left leg and left arm as it rested on his armrest. No wedding ring, but he did have a gold ring on his pinky finger. Was that another gay sign?

Owen felt the G-force from lift-off and waited for the plane to level out and the seatbelt sign to click off so he could get a cocktail.

The ding-ding of the signal finally sounded and Owen could see some movement in the front of the plane as the attendants got their cart loaded. Taking a five out of his wallet, Owen blinked in shock as the man he'd been eyeing moved out of his seat and sat right next to him in the vacant one.

"Hey," he whispered in a deep voice.

Owen was so shocked, he almost didn't answer. Completely agog at the boldness, he cleared his throat and croaked, "Hi."

"You mind if I sit here?"

"No! No. It'll be nice to have the company." Owen felt his skin cover with chills and his cock go rock hard at the overt act. *Wow!* Could his life finally be getting some excitement? Or was the accountant destined for boredom eternally?

Getting a closer look at this amazing man's face, Owen admired his square jaw, dark shaven stubble, incredibly blue eyes, and thick chocolate-colored hair that was long enough to cover his ears and brush his denim shirt collar. Owen lost himself on his sideburn, which was cropped short, halfway down his ear. Perfect. Absolutely perfectly groomed and smelling divine.

"I'm Taylor. Taylor Madison," the man said as he extended his right hand.

"Owen Braydon," Owen replied, taking that warm hand and squeezing it. The grip was electric and communicated something sexual as if they were screaming at each other their attraction.

"Business trip?" Taylor took back his hand slowly.

"No. Uh, I have a young daughter in the Denver area. I visit every weekend."

Nodding, Taylor looked down at Owen's lap. Owen wondered if he was checking his hand for a wedding ring, or maybe his crotch for a hard-on. He didn't know which but hoped Taylor liked what he found.

The attendants finally made it to their row with the cumbersome cart. "Would you like a drink?"

Owen nodded. "White wine, please."

"I'll take a beer, thanks." Taylor handed her a ten-dollar-bill and pushed Owen's hand away when he offered money.

As she set a small bottle of wine on Owen's tray table, he wondered if she realized there had been an empty seat

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next to him and now it was occupied. She didn't seem to care.

When she left, Taylor poured his beer into the provided glass.

Owen said, "Thanks, I'll get the next round."

Laughing softly, Taylor replied, "All right."

"So." Owen cleared his throat, trying not to sound nervous. "What's the reason for your flight?"

"I'm a project manager on a construction site." Taylor sipped his beer and licked his lip after.

Detecting a slight accent, Owen nodded, gazing at Taylor's mouth, trying to decipher where he was from. "You...you travel often?"

"I will be. The closer it gets to completion, the longer I have to stay." Taylor set the glass on the tray in front of him and boldly placed his hand on Owen's thigh.

Owen thought he would combust. It was so outrageous, so daring, so unbelievable, he froze under its heat. In his ear came a breathy whisper, "You're fantastic looking, you know that?"

Swallowing his anxiety, Owen knew he wasn't ugly, but *fantastic*? That was quite a compliment coming from a man who was Owen's ideal description of a male model. As the vision flashed through his mind of Taylor posing for designer briefs in front of a fashion photographer, under the concealment of the tray Taylor's hand caressed Owen's thigh muscle over his snug-fitting, faded blue jeans.

"Shit. Can we get thrown off the plane for this?" Owen craned his neck up to see where the drink cart had gone.

All Taylor did was chuckle softly.

Sucking the wine down so quickly it went to his head, Owen set the glass next to the empty bottle and snuck his hand on top of the one on his thigh, holding it tightly. Once Taylor had finished his beer, he placed Owen's empties on his own tray, folded Owen's tray up, and shook out a dark blue flannel blanket after taking it out of its flimsy plastic bag.

As Owen looked on in complete awe, Taylor pushed the arm up that was separating them, yanked the screen down over the window to provide some darkness, and spread the blanket over both of their laps. "Christ," Owen breathed, "you've obviously done this before."

Under his breath, Taylor replied, "Uh, no. I never have. I just figured it'd be best to be discreet."

"No shit!" Owen looked around but none of the other passengers appeared interested, too busy drinking their drinks and nibbling peanuts.

"Oh. Sorry. Was I getting the wrong vibe from you?" Taylor sat back from him.

"No!" Owen answered, then lowered his voice. "No. Right vibe, just a little nervous."

"Are you gay?"

"Uh..." Owen didn't know how to answer that question in order not to turn Taylor off. "How about bi-curious?"

A big grin appeared on Taylor's lips. "That'll work."

The stewardess appeared next to their row to clear the empty bottles. Owen was going to order them another round, but when Taylor clipped his tray back up behind the seat, Owen decided perhaps he had something else in mind. Something more enjoyable than booze.

The blanket was spread out neatly to cover both their laps.

Owen tensed when Taylor's left hand moved towards his crotch area. Frozen, not knowing how to react, Owen waited hoping no one was aware of what they were doing. Taylor caressed Owen's cock, his hot palm cupping it gently. Stifling a groan, Owen spread his legs wider in the tight space, truly astounded at what was going on under the blanket.

It was forward, wild, and had to be quick. They only had two and a half hours in the air. It wasn't as if they could have some long wooing courtship and relationship. This was a one-time act of groping that he was sure would be a fond memory once they had landed.

Mile High

That hand managed to get his fly undone. The moment Taylor's fingertips hit the skin of Owen's pelvis, Owen closed his eyes in reflex and couldn't believe the sensation of thrills and chills coursing down his back and neck at this daring deed.

The minute Taylor felt how hard Owen was, he lit on fire. Taylor had spotted him at the check-in area in the terminal and had hoped Owen was going his way. When Taylor found him in the same waiting lounge, he couldn't believe his luck. The smiles, the lack of a wedding ring, it was too good to be true. The attraction he felt was immediate. Taylor considered himself picky when it came to men. He was sick of the cocky, self-absorbed types that only wanted what they could get and gave nothing. Owen seemed sweet and kind. His shyness was refreshing to Taylor. Shy, modest, and good looking? A rare combination indeed. Usually, the handsome ones were arrogant. Not this one. This man was gentle, almost bashful.

"Christ, you are amazing," Taylor hissed behind a clenched jaw. "I'll meet you in the bathroom."

"What?" Owen opened his eyes with a blink. "Bathroom?"

"Yeah. Wait a couple of minutes, then come back. Knock if they're both occupied to see which one I'm in."

As Taylor removed the blanket from his lap and unbuckled his belt, Owen quickly zipped up his fly. Panting in anxiety, he watched Taylor's tight ass as he climbed out of the confining seat and walked to the back of the plane. Owen couldn't catch his breath. What on earth was he doing? Was he totally insane? Nothing like this ever happened to him. He was the boring, down to earth type with no sense of adventure and too much anxiety to enjoy a wild fling. Or was he?

Waiting, checking his watch, Owen rubbed his face and kept asking himself what he was doing. “Oh, what the fuck. Life’s too short.” He tried to recall his last meaningless sexual encounter. Sadly, it was with his ex-wife and too long ago to remember. He didn’t date. He had no time to date. Between work and his trips to Denver, when did he have time? Besides, who’d want to date a man with all his baggage—an ex-wife and a small daughter in another state? It was too much to ask of anyone.

Counting down in his head like a child about to play hide-and-seek, Owen felt he needed to give the correct amount of time between he and Taylor standing up. He unbuckled his seatbelt and boldly made his move to the rear of the plane. Peering at the faces who spied him as he went Owen wondered if anyone knew what the hell he was about to do. Did he?

Seeing the weary attendants busy in the galley behind the bathrooms, Owen almost chickened out. Both toilets were occupied. Swallowing for courage, he picked one out of the two and rapped on it. The door immediately opened, and he sighed with relief at getting the right one.

Instantly, Taylor dragged him into the miniature compartment and bolted the door. It was so tight they were standing an inch apart with Taylor’s calves nudged against the commode behind him.

When Taylor’s hands cupped Owen’s face, Owen felt his skin burst into chills. Those lips were approaching. *I’m going to kiss a man! I’m about to kiss a man!* “Holy crap!” he said out loud before he realized it.

Taylor stopped right before their mouths connected and met Owen’s eyes. “You don’t want to do this, do you?”

Did he? Owen’s heart was pounding like he’d just run a marathon, his skin was covered in goose pimples, and most importantly, his cock was throbbing so much it was painful. “I must want to because I’m so hard I could spurt.”

Taylor’s eyes lit up, and he broke up with laughter. Owen laughed with him at the same time as he was trying to

Mile High

shush him. It took a moment for them to calm down. "Oh, forget it. You only live once. Get over here."

"Over where? I haven't gone anywhere." Taylor kept laughing, pointing to the cramped space.

"I mean go ahead and kiss me." Owen stood nose to nose with Taylor, daring him.

Once again, Taylor cupped Owen's jaw gently, drawing Owen to his mouth.

The thoughts that passed through Owen's head were so numerous it made him dizzy. From the idea that no one in the world would believe he had done this, to the amount he was turned on, to the impulse of telling someone, or never telling someone, and reliving it when he was lying in his bed alone at night.

Clicking back to the present, absorbing the fact that a man, *yes, a man*, was kissing him, his tongue entering his mouth, Owen was so excited he wondered why he didn't act on that bi-curiosity previously. Of course, he had been married and wasn't the type to stray. So that answered that question.

Owen returned the favor by moving his tongue into Taylor's mouth. Shaking himself out of his stupid thoughts to actually enjoy the kissing, Owen boldly reached into Taylor's thick dark hair and drew him even closer, letting him know he was doing okay and all systems were go.

The plane's soft listing had them rocking side to side to keep their balance.

When Owen felt Taylor's hands go for the front of his jeans again, he parted from the kiss and looked down to watch.

"Okay?" Taylor asked.

"Okay... Ah, what are you going to do?"

"What do you want me to do?"

Owen looked back at the closed door. "How long you think they'll go before knocking and making sure nothing's going on?"

"Don't worry. They won't do anything until we get

closer to Denver and have to return to our seats.”

“You sure?” Owen had no idea why Taylor was so confident if he hadn’t done this before.

Taylor stopped opening Owen’s zipper. “You’re too nervous. It’s okay. I understand.”

In the tight space the plane shifted again and Owen fell against Taylor’s chest. Taylor set him upright.

“What were you going to do, you know, if I hadn’t stopped you?” Owen didn’t refasten his jeans, dying to know what was on offer.

“Suck it.”

About the Author:

Award-winning author G.A. Hauser was born in Fair Lawn, New Jersey, USA, and attended university in New York City. She moved to Seattle, Washington where she worked as a patrol officer with the Seattle Police Department. In early 2000 G.A. moved to Hertfordshire, England, where she began her writing in earnest and published her first book, *In the Shadow of Alexander*. Now a full-time writer in Ohio, G.A. has written dozens of novels, including several best-sellers of gay fiction. For more information on other books by G.A., visit the author at her official website at: www.authorga.com.

Also by G.A. Hauser:

Leather Boys (Men in Motion Book Four)

Driving Hard (Men in Motion Book Three)

Cruising (Men in Motion Book Two)

Mile High (Men in Motion Book One)

The Boy Next Door

When Adam Met Jack

To Have and to Hostage

Giving up the Ghost

Capital Games

Secrets and Misdemeanors

Naked Dragon

Love you, Loveday

The Kiss

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