



Love Most Inconvenient 2

DJ Manly

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Liquid Silver Books
<http://LSbooks.com>

Email:
raven@LSbooks.com

Editor
Lynne Anderson

Cover Artist
April Martinez

This is a work of fiction. The characters, incidents and dialogues in this book are of the author's imagination and are not to be construed as real. Any resemblance to actual events or persons, living or dead, is completely coincidental.

Blurb

Love sometimes comes along when it's most inconvenient. In these three stories of inconvenient love, our heroes have more pressing problems than finding love.

In "The Planner," Vincent is left trying to find someone who can coordinate events at a business he ran with his partner, a partner who has run off with a younger man. David is looking for his dream, and he's not about to let Vincent turn him away.

In "The Boss," Steven is trying to figure out how he is going to face his new boss the morning after he did a drunken striptease for him. Not only is the new boss a hunk, he's not available.

In "Jupiter," Alex is sentenced to do community service at the school that he trashed, and is drawn to a guy who represents everything he despises. Alex is about to learn more than just retribution for his crimes.

Kinks: m/m; anal play and intercourse, rimming; toys; mild bondage

The Planner

Chapter One

"I know dick all about this stuff." Vincent Williams pushed his chair away from the desk. "Doug did all the fluffy stuff. I handled the books. How in hell am I supposed to run this place on my own?"

"He's giving you the opportunity to buy him out, Vince. I think it's a good move," Bradley Ross told him, giving him that attorney look. "Hire people, people who know how to do the ... ah ... fluffy stuff." He snapped his briefcase shut.

Vincent looked at his best friend. He and Bradley had been at university together. Actually, Bradley had been his first real fuck. But it would have never worked out between them. They were too much alike, both dominants with hard heads.

Two years out of university, Vincent had met Doug. He'd hired on as a part-time accountant for Doug's fledgling catering business, a business which had grown into one of the most successful special event planning enterprises on the East Coast. They'd built their company, Events, together, with Vincent crunching the numbers and Doug doing what he did best, charming the clients and throwing events that were talked about in the society pages and in *Lifestyles of the Rich and Glamorous*.

"I can't believe he's throwing everything away for a piece of ass." Vincent ran a hand through his collar-length black hair.

"Are you talking about you or the business now?"

The question hung in the air like a heavy shroud. Vincent closed his eyes for a minute. Five years of his life down the toilet. He'd been positive that he and Doug were forever. They'd had a great life, nice house, more money than anyone actually needed, fantastic sex—at least it had been fantastic to him. "I hope Doug gets what he needs from Andrew, because apparently he couldn't get it from me."

"Doug was an idiot for leaving you," Bradley said, his voice bitter. "One day he'll wake up and realize what he's done. I hope you're not stupid enough to take him back."

Vincent looked up at him. Bradley was standing there in his tailored navy suit and white shirt, his matching tie askew. He was getting those distinguished gray strands around the temples now, premature gray, but it suited him. "I'm surprised at you, Brad." Vincent smirked. "I thought you liked Dougie."

"He was a little shit," he muttered, reaching over and ruffling Vincent's hair. "You were too fucking good for him. You know I always hoped that we..."

"Doug," Vincent said, holding up his hand, "we're friends. Let's not ruin it. We'd kill each other. Besides, I'm through with this stuff."

"What do you mean, through with this stuff? You're twenty-nine years old, for Christ's sakes. What in hell are you planning on doing—joining the priesthood?"

"I didn't say I was taking a vow of chastity. I mean I'm through with relationships." Vincent stood up. "From now on, I'm a love 'em and leave 'em kind of guy."

"Oh, brother." Bradley rolled his eyes. "You'll change your mind. Now, should I draw up the papers? He's offering you a good deal. Grab it before he realizes what he's

giving away.”

Vincent sighed. “Okay. Send the papers over. I’ll sign them. But I still don’t know how I’m going to run this place without him.”

Bradley gave him a hug. “Simple. Hire someone to head up the planning team, and do what you’ve always done—boss people around. You’re good at that.” He smirked.

“Gee thanks, Brad. I think.” Vincent walked him down the carpeted corridor to the elevator.

“We’re on for Friday night, beer and pizza. Game starts at seven.”

“Yeah, okay.” Vincent sighed. “I’ll bring the brews.”

The elevator dinged and Bradley got on. “Keep the faith, sweetie,” he said softly. “The pain won’t last forever.”

The doors closed. Vincent stood there for a moment, studying his reflection in the gold mirrored door. He was six-four and in great shape, having installed a gym in the office four years ago for the staff. His black hair was thick, a little wavy, his brown eyes large and wide set. He had a square jaw, and one of those fashionable shadows. He knew he took himself a little too seriously sometimes, but was he really that bad? Doug had often accused him of being “such a man.” But they’d balanced one another. Doug was outgoing, flamboyant sometimes to the point of being outrageous. He thought with his heart, didn’t look ahead, was spontaneous and a little reckless. Vincent was the rational one, the levelheaded businessman. Maybe he was too unemotional. God, but he missed him. He missed the way Doug used to wake him up in the morning, lips caressing Vincent’s dick. He even missed that silly little song Doug used to sing to him ... *sugar is sweet, my love, but not as sweet as you...*

Everything had been good between them until Andrew had come to work for them. Vincent hadn’t trusted that little twerp from the minute he set eyes on him. Andrew looked like a blond angel, delicate, fine boned, with a soft, silky voice, and he’d always seemed eager to please. Too eager. Several times Andrew had walked into Vincent’s office and given him that come-on look. He had a habit of telling the staff stories about his one-night stands, and he didn’t spare any of the details, resulting in them being practically pornographic. Doug was enchanted by him. The customers adored him. Vincent couldn’t stand him. One day, a few weeks after Andrew had been hired, Vincent told Doug he thought they should let Andrew go.

“Let him go?” Doug had squawked, looking at Vincent as if he’d lost his mind. “Why in the hell would we do that? Andrew is doing a bang-up job. I’m thinking of promoting him.”

“He’s a sleaze.”

“Why, because he tells raunchy stories?” Doug laughed. “Lighten up. You’re so stuffy.”

“Stuffy?”

“Yeah. *We* should have sex like that.”

“He’s full of shit,” Vincent had protested. “Don’t tell me that you believe all that stuff? And even if any of it’s true, why in hell does he have to come in here and tell us all about it?”

“I like hearing about it,” Doug replied.

“Turns you on?”

“Well, something has to.”

“I thought we were okay in the bedroom. Is there a problem?”

Doug smiled at him. “No. It’s just that it gets a little old, you know? We need to spice it up.”

“Well, maybe it’s not just me,” Vincent threw back defensively.

“I didn’t say you, I said we. Now, can we drop it? I’m not firing Andrew.”

“Even if I don’t want him here?”

“We have to both agree, and I don’t. So the subject is closed.”

Little did he know that Doug was already fucking Andrew at that point. A few weeks later, he began to suspect something was going on. Then he found them together, and in Doug’s and Vincent’s bed, on top of that. He had stood there numb while Andrew hastily threw on his clothes and Doug sat cross-legged in the middle of the bed with his face in his hands.

On the way out, Andrew had come close to him and said, “If it’s any consolation to you, beauty, it was you I wanted to fuck all along.” If Andrew hadn’t hightailed it out the door at that moment, Vincent would have sent him flying across the room.

He and Doug had had one hell of a fight. They’d said some things that neither one of them could ever take back. Vincent had spent the rest of the evening drinking in a nearby bar, finally coming home in a cab, and somehow crawling to the sofa. When he’d awakened, he’d been almost prepared to forgive Doug, despite the pain and the betrayal. What would he do without his Dougie? But Doug was gone. He’d packed his clothes and left. There was no note, nothing.

At the office, everything was chaos. There was no one to take care of all the events Doug was coordinating. Barbara, the office manager, was in a spin. Doug’s departure cost the company thousands of dollars, not to mention that Vincent was stuck trying to appease and compensate an array of really pissed-off clients.

Finally, three weeks later, after Vincent had compensated the irate and temporarily suspended all activity, some attorney in Switzerland contacted Bradley with an offer to sell him Doug’s share of Events. This was the final death knell. Doug didn’t even have enough respect to contact him personally. Apparently he’d run off to bloody Switzerland with Andrew, prepared to throw everything away.

Vincent jolted out of his unwanted memories when he noticed Barbara standing beside him. She too studied him in the reflection of the elevator doors. Barbara was fifty years old, but with her boyish salt-and-pepper bob and her matronly gray suit, she looked sixty. She also had a mouth like a sailor. Without her, he would have closed the door on this place weeks ago.

“What in hell are you standing here for? Get over yourself, you’re beautiful,” she said.

“Why, thank you, Barbara, old girl”—he placed an arm around her slight shoulders and gave her a squeeze—“you’re not so bad yourself.”

She pushed him off. “Don’t get fresh with me. I want to know what’s going on. Are you buying this place, or aren’t you? If not, I’m expecting one hell of a severance package, cookie.”

He smiled faintly. “I guess I better buy it. I don’t think I could afford that.”

She followed him as he walked down the hallway. “You bet your ass you couldn’t. I don’t come cheap,” she told him. “And don’t think you can run this place on your own. You don’t know dick shit about planning parties, mister. So I better start putting out some

help wanted ads, don't you think?"

"Who do we still have on staff?" He turned to look at her.

"You, me. You laid everyone off except for a skeleton crew. We've lost some of the caterers. They're going elsewhere. And they're calling about their compensation packages."

"Well, call them back. Get as many of them as you can. Tell them if they come back, they'll all be paid for the time they missed."

She jotted everything down on her clipboard. "They'll like that."

"I'll make up an ad for a coordinator. We need one fast."

"Looks like you'll just have to coordinate, honey, until we find one. We got clients waiting, big ones. We need to get back on the horse."

Vincent nodded. "Okay, pick the most important clients and bring me a list. No weddings. I'm not doing any fucking weddings."

"Okay." She turned to go then paused, glancing at Vincent over her shoulder. "And boss, if it's any consolation to you, I didn't like that fucking asshole, Andrew. He was full of it. And no one can fuck the way he claimed."

Vincent's eyes widened for a second. "I didn't know you were listening to all those stories, Barb."

She shrugged. "Only when I was bored."

* * * *

Luckily, most of the staff came back. Barb put a full-page ad in the paper for a coordinator, and they were as busy as ever. Vincent was working like a crazy man. He signed the papers Bradley sent over and purchased Doug's share of the business, faxing everything to the bank and to Bradley's office. As he dealt with fussy clients and overcooked pasta salad, he almost regretted his decisions.

One night, several weeks after he became sole owner of Events, he found himself practically crawling to the elevator. He was beat. He really needed to find someone to replace Doug, and soon. He wouldn't be able to keep up this pace. He paused just before pressing the elevator button, noticing that Barbara was still in her office. "Hey"—he popped his head in the door—"I thought you'd gone home."

"I will soon," she said, punching something into the computer. "I just need to finish up these invoices."

"I really appreciate you picking up the slack for me, Barb," he said. "I haven't had a minute to check the books at all."

"You look beat. You should go home and get some sleep."

"I will. I'm just going to stop by the Crystal Room to check on the Bryant retirement party."

"I'm sure it's fine," she said with a wave at him.

"I think I'm going to hire a new secretary."

She looked up at him. "Why? You're not happy with my work now?"

"It's time for a promotion. You've earned it. You're my assistant now; how about a raise in salary, a new office, your own secretary. What do you say?"

She grinned. "I say you're using your head."

He laughed. That was Barb. "Any replies to the ad?"

She frowned. "Only ones you don't want to know about."

He sighed. "Damn."

"It won't be easy to replace Doug."

That hit home. He blanched.

"Oh God, Vince, I'm sorry."

He held up a hand. "I know what you mean, and I agree. Doug was good at what he did. What happened between us doesn't change that. Now, shut down the computer, and come on. You can finish that tomorrow. I'll walk you to your car."

In the parking lot, she reached up and touched his cheek. "You're a good man, Vincent, and one hell of a hunk. If you liked pussy, I'd take you home and give you a night to remember." She winked at him.

He threw back his head and laughed, gave her a hug, and held the door open for her as she slid inside. "Thanks, Barb."

"Now, go to one of those sweaty macho bars and get yourself laid. You deserve it."

"Not a bad idea." He nodded, lifting a hand as she drove off. He stifled a yawn and got into his car. He made a quick stop at the reception hall, spoke to the client, who was extremely satisfied, and then drove downtown to the gay district. He'd stop in and have a quick drink at the Iron Fountain, a bar that he and Doug used to drink at when they first got together.

When he pulled into the parking lot, he discovered that it wasn't called the Iron Fountain anymore. It was called the Love Tunnel. Go figure. That's what he got for settling down like an old married man.

He felt a little overdressed when he walked in and looked around. The place was packed with wall-to-wall men, many of them shirtless and wearing incredibly tight pants. The smell of leather was unmistakable. Some techno tune blared in his ears as he made his way to the bar, pausing to glance up at the naked dancer, who was strutting his stuff in a cage built like an intricate apparatus.

Vincent was wearing an expensive dark olive Armani suit, and he was already feeling the heat. He shrugged out of the jacket as he ordered a gin and tonic, grateful that at least he hadn't worn a tie. When two hands clamped onto his ass cheeks like a vise, he slopped his drink all over his pale yellow dress shirt. He turned around to face that dancer he'd spied jumping around in the cage, his considerable assets now barely covered by something which resembled a loincloth.

"Buns of fucking steel," said the dancer with a laugh, his long pale hair plastered to his head. His body was slick with the results of his exertion, and Vincent couldn't deny that it was a huge turn-on. At least, his cock seemed to think so. He held out his hand. "I'm Frankie. Guess I gave you a scare," he said, eyeing Vincent's shirt. "You should take that off."

Vincent took his hand.

Frankie pulled him forward and said in his ear, "God, you're so hot. I saw you from the cage, and I thought I'd better get down here and stake my claim. Almost every fucking guy in the joint is hard looking at you, baby. Come home with me."

Vincent was in shock. Was this guy shitting him? He glanced around. Some guy smiled at him; another winked. Damn. He laughed, put his drink down. "Where do you live?"

"I got a room across the street; convenient, eh?"

"Ah, yeah," Vincent said. "Don't you have to get back up there?" He looked at the

cage.

“Naw, Denis is going to cover for me. Come on baby, I can’t wait to get you out of that expensive suit.”

Frankie excused himself to get his clothes, then returned while doing up his shirt. Without a word, he headed for the door. Vincent figured he was supposed to follow. When they got outside, Frankie grabbed him and pressed him up against the wall, kissing him hard. He placed one hand on his cock and squeezed. “Oh yeah,” he said, backing away, “just what I thought. You’re hung, fully loaded, baby, just the way I like it. Come on.”

The dancer ran across the alley, whooping like a banshee; Vincent laughed, chasing after him, suddenly feeling like a teenager. They were both breathless when they reached the second floor of a shabby-looking building. At one of the doors, the dancer shoved the key in the lock, struggled with it a bit, then pushed the door open.

The light switched on. There was a single bed, a nightstand, a sink in the corner, and an old thirteen-inch television sitting on a bureau near the window. “The can is down the hall if you need to take a piss.” He whipped off his shirt, then rubbed his erection; his cock pushed against the confines of his tight pants. “See how hard I am?”

Vincent saw. This guy had a gorgeous body, perfect thighs, great chest, and an ass which probably could have made a fortune in underwear commercials. “Do you want me to dance for you?”

Vincent undid his own shirt and took it off. “No,” he breathed. “I want to fuck you.”

Frankie grinned as he slid his pants off, then came closer. “Even better.” He brushed Vincent’s hands aside and pulled down the zipper on his pants. “So, what do you do?”

“Anything you want.”

Frankie met his gaze. “Damn, if you aren’t a sight for sore eyes, and sexy. I actually meant for a living, not in bed, but you can tell me that too.” He pushed Vincent’s pants down over his hips.

Vincent stepped out of them. “I breathe work. Can we not talk at all?”

Frankie traced the outline of Vincent’s erection through the underwear. “Suits me, beautiful.”

“Take it out,” Vincent told him.

Frankie pulled the underwear down over Vincent’s cock. It bounced out of his pants, hard and straight. Frankie ran his thumb over the head, licking his lips. “Wow,” he said softly, “that’s better than in my wildest fantasies. I’m going to swallow you whole.”

Vincent put a hand on his shoulder and drove him to his knees. “Then go to it, baby.”

He watched as Frankie took his cock into his mouth, inch by inch, murmuring his pleasure as he did. A tongue lashed the circumference, dipping into the slit, lips drawing tight around the base. Frankie’s head went back, his throat opening, muscles working their magic. Vincent’s hand settled in Frankie’s hair, pulled.

He didn’t realize how much he needed this until now. He really hadn’t had the time to digest all the stress he’d been under the last few weeks. The man he thought he’d spend the rest of his life with had run off with a younger man, leaving him with a vacuum where his heart once was and a business that was damn near impossible to run without Doug’s expertise and charm. Vincent had been operating in survival mode, denying a deep hurt which burrowed down under his skin and took root in his gut. He closed his eyes. Finally, at this moment, he felt wanted again. He gasped, moaned something, and

felt his cock begin to empty into Frankie's throat. All that stress released suddenly. He grabbed the dancer's head and fucked his face hard, pumping into him as he shouted out his release.

Frankie relinquished his hold on Vincent's cock. He sprang to his feet, dragged him forward into his arms, and dug his tongue deep into Vincent's mouth. They stumbled together as Frankie moved his hands over him, pinching his nipples, roughly fondling his balls, bringing him again back to life.

Against the wall, Frankie lifted his arms over his head, pinning him there, gazing intently into his eyes. "You have a fantastic body. I want to taste it, every inch. Keep your hands like that, over your head. It's so sexy."

Vincent closed his eyes as Frankie licked down the length of his throat, slowly circling each nipple then kissing across his chest to his abs. One hand slowly stroked his cock, as the other snaked around to his ass and aggressively began to flirt with his anus.

Vincent grunted; he freed one hand from the wall to find Frankie's erection. Vincent grabbed his hips and swung him around so that Frankie was facing the wall. "Spread your legs," he told him, pushing his thighs apart.

Frankie was hyperventilating. "Fuck me," he urged.

"Not yet. Soon," he grunted, his lips on the back of Frankie's neck. "Lube, condoms. I don't have any."

"Nightstand," the other man grunted.

Vincent found them easily. He squirted lube on his fingers. One hand found Frankie's nipple, explored it, brought it to a peak; the other opened his ass and began to slowly twirl one slick finger around his entrance.

"Oh baby, yeah," Frankie grunted. "Oh yeah." His ass bucked out, brushing Vincent's erection. Vincent pushed his finger up inside, moving it in a way he knew would make Frankie even hotter.

"I want you to be ready," he grunted, pinching his other nipple until it stiffened beautifully. "I plan to fuck you for a long time."

"I'm ready." He ground his ass against Vincent's groin. "Come on."

He was practically pleading when Vincent pressed him to the floor and onto all fours. He ran his hand over Frankie's ass, reached around to torment his cock, teased his ass with the tip of his erection, then put on the condom and took him.

Vincent would make it damn good for both of them. He had always had great staying power; when he was hard, he was hard, and when he paced himself, slowed down just as he felt himself going over the edge, he could go for quite some time. Now, in and out, slow, fast, slower, faster, he did a dance with Frankie's ass which had the guy screaming, panting, and trembling all over. At the same time, Vincent handled Frankie's cock and balls, bringing him close, pulling back. He kept up the exquisite torture until the other man was incoherent. Finally he let go, bringing Frankie with him as he jerked to a jolting orgasm.

They both lay there in the aftermath, wet with sweat and cum, breathing hard, enjoying the utter sweetness. *There you go, Doug. I'll show you boring.*

Frankie glanced over at him from where he lay on the floor. "God damn," he whispered, "that was the best fuck I've ever had. And I'm not fooling."

"Thanks," he said. "You weren't so bad yourself."

Frankie perched up on his elbow and kissed his mouth gently. "Can I see you

again?"

Vincent sat up. "No."

Frankie narrowed his eyes. "Why not?"

"I have a new rule. I only do one-night stands. No more emotional attachment shit."

"Just to fuck, no pressure."

Vincent stood up and started to dress. "No thanks."

Frankie lay there watching him as he finished dressing. He didn't say anything.

Vincent raised a hand to him. "'Bye. Thanks. It was great."

Frankie nodded. "Yeah. Stay well."

"You too," he said before he left.

* * * *

When Vincent walked into the office the following morning, he felt a little tired. He hadn't slept much the night before. He poured himself some coffee from the caterer's kitchen, and dragged himself into his office.

At nine, his door flew open. Barbara came tearing in, jumping around like her butt was on fire. She was talking so fast, Vincent couldn't make out a word. He stood, held up his hand. "What's all this? Slow down."

He suddenly noticed that there was a strange young man hovering behind her, desperately trying to make himself known. Barbara was rather viciously elbowing him at every turn. "Vincent," she announced, quite breathless, "I'm sorry about this. This guy just walked right past the front desk, demanding to see you. I'll call security if—"

The young man in question finally succeeded in ducking in front of Barbara. He held out his hand, a beaming smile on his face. "David Samson. Mr. Williams, this is your lucky day. I'm the best damn thing that's ever happened to you."

"Is that so?"

Barbara looked as if she was going to slug the guy.

Vincent patted her shoulder. "It's okay, I'll handle this."

Barbara glared at David Samson then stalked out of the office.

"Looks like you've managed to alienate my assistant, Mr. Samson. What can I do for you?"

"David, please." He lowered his hand. "I'm here for the job."

"Job?" Vincent ran his gaze over him. He couldn't have been any more than twenty-two, his fair hair expertly streaked with highlights and falling over his forehead. He wore a silver cross in one ear and a stud in the other. He was dressed in wide-legged jeans and a loose-fitting burlap shirt.

"Yeah, you need someone to run this place, to coordinate all the fluffy stuff, and I'm just the one to do it."

Vincent's eyes widened. *Fluffy stuff*? He smiled faintly. "What exactly makes you think you're qualified for this job?"

David Samson took a folded piece of newspaper from his pocket. He spread it open on Vincent's desk. "Okay, it says creative, multitasker, experience in planning special events, managing staff, yada, yada, yada. I have excellent people skills, and I'm an artist on many levels." He gave him a beaming smile. "When do I start?"

He was standing terribly close to him. Vincent took a step back. "Do you have a résumé?"

“Sure.”

“Do you have a degree?”

“I have a college degree in English, and certificates in hairdressing, flower arranging, fast-food cooking, cake decorating, and heavy diesel mechanics.” He was counting them off on his fingers. “Oh, and I can do CPR in case anyone goes into cardiac arrest.”

“Heavy diesel mechanics?” Vincent narrowed his eyes. “How does that fit with the flower arranging and cake decorating?”

“Long story, hunky guy with great biceps, turned out to be a real disappointment in the sack.” He crooked his finger. “So, what’s the pay like?”

“Huh?” Vincent’s head was spinning.

“I’ll expect a raise in two years, paid vacations, and of course, medical and dental. That’s standard.”

“Mister...”

“David, please. And, by the way, I had no idea you were so gorgeous. I would have come by earlier, just to look at you.”

Vincent shook his head. “This is a joke, right? Bradley sent you to cheer me up.”

“Who’s Bradley?”

The phone rang. Vincent reached over and picked it up. It was an important client, a prominent politician. Vincent covered the receiver with his hand. “I have to take this. I’ll, ah ... get back to you. Leave your résumé with my assistant, and maybe we’ll call you for an interview.”

“That’s okay”—he passed Vincent an envelope—“look it over. I’ll wait in the lobby.”

“No,” Vincent said, but the blond had already left the office. A little flustered, Vincent returned his attention to the client on the phone. “I’m sorry, Mr. Monroe, I wasn’t saying no to you. What can I do for you today?”

“What in hell happened to Doug? Someone told me he’d left Events.”

“Yes, he’s gone, but nothing will change. Events is prepared to give you the same service you’ve always had.” They had catered all Monroe’s parties, birthdays, anniversaries, and holidays.

“But you’re not the fancy pants Doug is. You’re the accountant.” Monroe made it sound like a social disease. “Are you sure you’ll be able to handle my wife’s birthday party?”

“Of course. No problem. I’ll send you the form; just fill out your preferences and have your secretary get that to me as soon as possible. If I remember correctly”—Vincent slowed his speech as he frantically punched the name Monroe into his laptop with one hand—“your wife, ah ... Janet, was born on the tenth of January.” Damn. That didn’t give him a lot of time. “Where would you like to hold the event? We can arrange for a banquet hall.”

“No. I want it at the house,” he said. “And you have a good memory, Williams. Send me the form. I’ll drop it by personally tomorrow. Who’s coordinating the parties now that Doug is gone?”

“Ah, oh, I have a new guy,” Vince lied, “wonderful. I’m sure you’ll love him.”

“Well, I hope he’s good. Doug was a natural,” Monroe said, and clicked off.

Vincent sighed, slumped down in his chair, and closed his eyes. A few minutes later, he left his office to check on the kitchen. They had several buffets to deliver that evening

and the kitchen was in full swing. John Burns was his head chef, an absolute genius. Doug had stolen him away from a very expensive restaurant in the city three years before.

“Hey boss,” he said, stirring a dark chocolate sauce on the stove, “what’s up?”

“Is everything under control?”

“Great. I’m glad to see you got a new guy.”

“New guy?”

“Yeah, that Dave fellow, he’s super, the staff loves him already. Not snippy like Doug.”

“I didn’t hire anyone yet,” Vincent replied, then got angry. “Was he in the kitchen?”

“Hey, what’s the problem? He was in here a few minutes ago. He said he was the new planner. I thought—”

“Where did he go?” Vincent growled.

“He said he’d be in Decorating if we needed him.”

“If you needed him. God damn it. Who in the hell ... the nerve of that guy.”

“So, you didn’t hire him, or what?” John shouted after him as Vincent marched down the hallway to Decorating.

Anna Philburt ran Decorating. She had a staff of nine under her, people who could turn a bare room into a fantasy. As Vincent neared the office, he heard Anna laughing. One of the junior workers brushed past him suddenly, bumping into him. “Sorry, sir,” he said, “I didn’t see you there, Mr. Williams. I need to get to the supply room. Do you think we have any red velvet for Cupid?”

“Cupid,” Vincent mouthed, but the young guy didn’t wait for a reply. He just raced off down the hallway. Vincent shook his head.

“That’s wonderful,” Anna was saying when Vincent walked into the room. That David guy was standing next to her at a long table. They were both studying a magazine.

Anna looked up when she noticed Vincent. “There you are,” she said, her ruddy face animated, “where did you find this guy? He’s a bloody genius.”

Vincent met David’s gaze. “I don’t believe you.” He pointed at David. “I never gave you permission to wander around here. Why in the hell are you telling everyone you’re the new planner? I never gave you the job.”

“Vincent,” Anna said, “you’re joking, right? He’s perfect.”

“You see?” David beamed. “I’m perfect.”

“You’re a nut job. I haven’t even had time to read your résumé. Did you ever do anything like this before?”

“No, but I know I can do it. This job was made for me. Just give me a chance,” he pleaded, moving closer.

Vincent noticed that John had come into the room. He walked over and stood beside Anna. They both gave him a look which said quite clearly they wanted this guy.

“He’s just come up with the most wonderful idea,” Anna said. “A client wanted something very special for their wedding and stag, and since it’s on Valentine’s Day, David suggested a Valentine’s wedding. Isn’t that wonderful? They’re two guys and they want a bit of the wild, so we’re going to do costumes for hunky male cupid strippers.”

“Cupid strippers?”

David came over to show him a picture in a magazine. “Yes, with red velvet hearts covering their—”

“I get the picture. What client are we talking about?”

"A new one." David grinned. "Samuel Green of Caress Music is marrying Tee Armstrong."

"The rock star?"

"Yeah," Anna said. "He's great, eh? Wonder if we'll get free tickets to his next concert now."

John came over to join them now. "My cousin went, said it blew him away."

"It's going to be the event of the decade. Green wants to go all out. He said spare no expense. Isn't that what he said, David?"

With everyone talking at once, Vincent couldn't get a word in. If he'd had a gun, he would have shot it off. Finally, he shouted loud enough to get their attention. "You," he pointed at John, "back to your sauce, and you," he pointed at David Samson, "come with me."

"I can see the steam coming out of the top of your head," David said with a chuckle as he followed Vincent back into his office.

"Close the door," Vincent demanded.

David closed the door and came to perch on the edge of his desk.

"Are you for real?"

"Want to feel?" He batted his eyes at him, then erupted into laughter.

"You seem to think that this is some kind of a joke!" Vincent glared at him. "Can't you see how angry I am?"

"I do see one thing." David grinned. "You're really drop-dead gorgeous. I'm not kidding, and especially when you get angry. You get this crease right—"

"Okay, enough. Did you answer the phone at the front desk?"

"No."

"Then how did you end up talking to this Green guy?"

"He's not actually green."

"Don't mess with me." Vincent narrowed his eyes. "I'm not in any mood to fool around right now."

"Aw, damn. I'd probably enjoy that, and a lot."

Vincent couldn't help but notice that he had the cutest smile. And right now, this David guy wasn't in the least intimidated by him. He was one cocky guy.

"It would be like a fringe benefit, so to speak, and boy, what a benefit, better than paid vacation." His gaze was on his groin.

"Stop that," Vincent muttered. "Answer my damn question."

"I called his office," David replied with a shrug.

"You called his office, just like that?"

"Yep. I read about it yesterday; the announcement was in the entertainment section. So, while I was waiting for you in the lobby, I called him on my cell phone and asked him if he had anyone lined up to plan his wedding. And he said no. So I volunteered us."

"Us?"

"Events. He wants a stag too, for the gay crowd, and a more conventional wedding for everyone else, but he wants it around Valentine's Day, since that's when the wedding is. I suggested strippers. He liked that. Not at the wedding, of course."

Vincent just stared at him.

"I figured since you were going to eventually come to your senses and hire me, I might as well get started right away. It's going to be a big job. What do you think about

pink sweetheart roses in the church?"

Vincent started to laugh. This guy was absolutely outrageous.

"Vincent? Pink roses?"

"You're not going to take no for an answer, are you?"

David hopped off the desk and grinned. "Nope."

At that moment, Barbara walked in. She gave David Samson a hostile look. "Oh, you're still here." She wrinkled her nose.

"Yes," Vincent interjected, bowing his head in David's direction. After a slight pause, he said, "Meet the new planner."

Barbara rolled her eyes. "You've got to be kidding."

David beamed. "You mean it?"

Vincent shrugged. "I'll take you on a trial basis."

Abruptly David let out a whoop and threw his arms around him, practically knocking him over. He planted a huge kiss right on his mouth, then released him.

Vincent was once again speechless.

"You won't regret this," David said.

Barbara looked a little stunned as well.

After Vincent recovered, he said to Barbara, "Give Mr. Samson the forms to fill out, and the contract."

"For how long?" she sniffed.

"Two months," Vincent said.

"Two weeks would be a better bet," Barbara muttered.

Vincent smiled faintly. "Two months, Barb." He looked at David. "After you're finished, come back here to me, and I'll orient you."

"Sounds kinky." David winked. "Wait until I tell my friends what a hottie my new boss is. They're going to cream their tighty whities."

Barbara sighed. She grabbed his elbow. "Oh good Lord," she muttered, "come on. Didn't anyone ever teach you to speak proper English?"

"He's an English major," Vincent told her dryly.

David gave her a great big smile. "Top of my class."

"Were you the only one in it?" Barb mocked as she dragged him out of the office.

Vincent heard David laugh then say something about colloquialisms, to which Barbara replied that she "knew what a colloquialism was, for Christ's sakes..."

Vincent put his face in his hands and sighed. What had he done? He knew nothing about this guy. But he was desperate, and Samson had gone to great lengths to get this job. He was bold; he'd say that for him. Maybe that kind of character would be exactly what Events needed.

* * * *

Twenty minutes later, David sat quietly in the chair opposite him, waiting patiently while Vincent punched in the final figures on the balance sheet.

"So," David said suddenly when Vincent closed his laptop, "what happened to the other guy?"

"What other guy?"

"Doug. I used to see his picture in the paper all the time. He was the cream of the crop. Wasn't this his business?"

“It was our business.”

“Ah.”

“What, ah?”

“He was your fuck bunny.”

“He was not my fuck bunny. He was my partner, in business.”

“And in bed.”

Vincent eyed him. “None of your business. I need to show you where everything is, and set you up in a routine.”

“I’m not so good with routines, but I’ll try.” He smiled. “So Doug wasn’t too bright, I guess.”

Vincent stood. “Back to Doug?”

“Why would he leave you?”

“I told you, that’s not your business. Let’s get a few things straight, okay? You work for me, and that’s it. I’m your boss. No personal questions, and no buddy-buddy.”

“No fucking either?”

“And especially not that,” he snapped.

“You don’t like fucking?”

“Of course I like...” Vincent scowled. “Never mind. You’ve got the balls of—”

“I know what I like,” he said, smiling, “that’s all. Anyway, if you change your mind, let me know.”

“I won’t.”

“So, you’re going to abstain?”

“David! Do you want to learn this business, or not?”

“I do. I’m sorry. I have a habit of saying exactly what’s on my mind. It gets me into trouble sometimes.” David followed him down the hall.

“I can imagine. You’re not going to do that with the clients, I hope.” Vincent glanced at him.

“I’ll try to be good.” He grinned sheepishly.

“Let me show you around.”

Chapter Two

David was pretty quick. Be it specific departments or administrative stuff, he caught on right away. Not to mention that he charmed everyone he met, except for Barbara. But by the end of the first week, he was even starting to wear her down.

He jumped headfirst into the job as if he'd been made for it. And it was clear that he loved it. He got along better with the staff than Doug had, and Vincent was already receiving rave reviews from satisfied clients.

The birthday party for the politician's wife went off without a hitch. Several of the staff met with Vincent and David after the party to celebrate their first major success since Doug's departure.

"You know, I was worried there for awhile," Barb told him as she sipped on her vodka tonic. "I wasn't sure we'd stay afloat without Doug."

Vincent patted her back. "Thanks for the vote of confidence," he teased.

"No, I mean, you're a great boss, Vincent, a wonderful manager, but you're not a planner." She looked over at David, who was joking around with John, and grinned. "He's good, and he's such a sweetie."

The new administrative secretary, Fawn Allan, lifted her drink suddenly at Vince. "Too bad he's gay. I'd take him home and cuddle him all night."

Vincent shook his head. "Get him drunk and give it a try," he told her.

"Ha, ha," she laughed. "You get him drunk and give him a try."

"Although," Barb mused, lowering her voice in his ear, "the way I've seen him looking at you, you could skip the getting him drunk part."

Vincent shook his head at her.

"This Valentine's wedding is going to be so great for the company." Barb poked him in the side. "It will put us right back there on top."

"Cupid strippers," he said with a shudder.

"Please the clients, plus, it's so romantic," Fawn piped in, downing her drink.

"Cupid strippers?"

"No, silly, a wedding on Valentine's Day," she said with a laugh.

"Valentine's Day is a commercially created holiday for lovesick puppies," Vincent muttered.

"Boss! How can you say that?" Fawn sounded outraged. "Barb, don't let him get away with that."

"What'd he say now?" David asked, coming over to stand beside them.

Vincent shook his head. "Never mind. Don't tell him. He'll make a big deal out of it."

"He said Valentine's Day was for puppies." Barb ignored Vincent's plea for silence.

"Thanks," Vincent said.

David lifted an eyebrow. "Puppies, eh? Vincent, I'm sure deep down you are a flaming romantic."

"Flaming?"

David laughed and hugged Fawn, who came over to stand beside him. "Don't you love that word?"

Fawn kissed his cheek. "I do."

"It's right up there with prancing," Vincent muttered.

"Give him the right guy, and he'd be the first one out to buy chocolate condoms and flowers." David looked at him.

Barb just about choked on her drink.

"You've got to be kidding." Vincent laughed.

"He likes to say that a lot," David retorted, reaching over to ruffle Vincent's hair.

"Hey," Vincent said, slapping his hand away, "don't touch."

"He says that a lot too," David complained.

Fawn giggled. "You two are so cute together."

"That's my cue to take off," Vincent said, saluting everyone. "Great job, guys. Have a good weekend."

When he got to the parking lot, he was surprised to see David standing by his car.

"Hey."

Vincent inserted his key in the lock. "What?"

"What do you mean, what? I need a ride."

"Get Fawn to take you. She lives in your neighborhood."

"I don't want Fawn. I want you." He met his gaze over the car. "Besides, Fawn isn't ready to leave yet. She's checking out some hot guy with a big dick playing pool."

Vincent shook his head. "Get in. You'll have to remind me where to get off."

His car roared out of the parking lot and into the street.

"Has it been that long?"

Vincent glanced at him. "Huh?"

"You don't remember how to get off." David grinned.

"Very funny, ha, ha."

"Thank you. This is a nice car, by the way. Not the kind of car I'd expect you to drive."

"What? Guys like me only drive crappy cars?"

"No, but more conservative ones. This is a Mustang, a vintage one, at that. Must have cost a pretty penny. I would have chosen another, though."

"What? Hot pink?"

David laughed. "Do they make hot pink ones?"

"I sure as hell hope not. Oh damn it," Vincent muttered, spotting the emergency vehicles up ahead, "there's an accident. We're going to be tied up in traffic." Vincent checked his watch. It was almost nine o'clock.

"You can take that exit there," David pointed. "It seems to be running pretty smoothly."

"Yeah, but that's not the right exit, is it? That's actually closer to my house."

"Speaking of your house, you got a sofa?"

Vincent looked at him sharply. "Absolutely not."

"What? You got something against sofas?"

"No, but..."

"You're afraid to let me sleep on your sofa. Afraid you'll lose your virginity in the middle of the night?" David was chuckling. "It's a little late for that, isn't it?"

"Keep on laughing, but you're not spending the night at my place."

"Then be prepared to get home late," David pointed. "Check it out."

Vincent swore under his breath. They were down to two lanes. Several more emergency vehicles were wailing their sirens in the distance. With one abrupt turn of the wheel, he swerved into the far lane and turned off.

David said nothing while Vincent told himself that having David spend the night was not a good idea. The car sped along the highway, and before he was even aware of it, he was turning into his driveway.

David got out of the car, whistling under his teeth as he surveyed the house. "Wow. This is nice."

"Thanks," Vincent said. The house was a two-story stone bungalow, surrounded by trees. Doug had chosen it, and Vincent had approved of his choice when he saw how private the house was. He loved all those trees. He unlocked the door and walked in.

"Vincent, this is sensational. What a great house." David was twirling around in the entrance. "Doug's choice?"

Vincent scowled at him.

"What?" David crossed the hardwood floor into the living room and threw himself down on the white leather sofa. "I'm not supposed to mention him?"

"I didn't even know you knew Doug."

"I'm his replacement, aren't I? And he was part owner of Events. It was always his picture with the ads in the paper. Why didn't you put your picture in the ads? You're so much better-looking than he is."

"I'm a behind-the-scenes kind of guy," he muttered, surprised that David found him better-looking than Doug.

"You're going to have to loan me a toothbrush and a pair of underwear for tomorrow."

Vincent kicked off his shoes and walked over to the bar. He poured himself a glass of soda water and threw some ice and a wedge of lemon in it. "Want a drink?"

"No thanks."

"But you want my underwear though." Vincent smirked, raising an eyebrow as he took a healthy swallow of his drink.

"Or, what's in them."

Vincent just about choked on his soda water. "Repeat?"

David laughed. "Calm down. I won't attack you."

"Thanks." He came and sat down in the chair opposite David.

"So, what was he like?"

"What was who like?"

"Doug?"

"Why this sudden interest in my ex-partner?"

"Ex-lover too."

"Thanks for reminding me, again."

"Did you love him?"

"None of your business."

"Why'd he leave you, just for the sex?"

Vincent glared at him. "Why are you assuming he left me because of sex?"

"That's what Andrew told me."

"Andrew?" Vincent stared at him. "You knew Andrew too?"

"Vincent," David said, sitting up straight, "I'm going to tell you something. I don't

want you to be upset.”

“Upset? Why would I be upset?”

“It’s about Andrew.”

“I know all I need to know about Andrew, thanks.”

“He’s my ex.”

Vincent’s jaw dropped. “He’s your what?”

“Doug dumped you for Andrew, and Andrew dumped me for Doug. Now close your mouth, sweetie, you’re giving me ideas.”

“Why in the fuck didn’t you tell me?” Vincent stood. “You acted like you didn’t know anything about ... shit, David, what’s your game?”

“I don’t have any game.” He shook his head. “I really envied Andrew working at Events. He had my dream job. When he left me for Doug, I needed a job, and there was an opening. That prick left me with a lot of debts. Anyway, I was also ... well...”—he lowered his head—“curious.”

“Curious about what?”

“About you.”

“About me? I’m not the one who took off with your boyfriend.”

“Andrew said you were really hot.”

“Huh?”

“I knew Andrew was messing around. I thought it was with you because when he came home that first night, he kept going on about how hot his boss was. I finally told him to shut up.”

“He meant Doug.”

“No, he didn’t mean Doug. He meant you. He described you a T. But he said you were, ah ... stuffy.”

“Stuffy?”

“Yeah, you know, straight, but not in a sexual way.”

“Yeah, yeah, I get it. That’s because I made it clear I didn’t want to fuck him.”

“He did come on to you then!” David gasped. “I knew it. That bastard!”

“He gave up fast. Then he turned his attention to Doug.”

“Yeah, and it turns out it was Doug he was doing. Anyway, I just gravitated to Events. I always knew somehow I belonged there. It’s weird. I’m sorry I didn’t tell you who I was before. I figured you wouldn’t have hired me if you’d known. I suppose I’m fired now?”

Vincent shook his head. “No. You’re not fired. Besides, who in hell am I going to get to do a Valentine’s stag party?”

“You got a point there, and I got the stripper lined up.”

“This just feels weird, that’s all,” Vincent shook his head. “Two losers, our lovers taking off with each other—wow.”

“You’re not a loser, Vincent”—David got up and walked over to him—“and I’m not either, at least I don’t feel like one right now. I feel like just about the luckiest guy alive at the moment. Doug is the loser. He has no idea what he’s lost. He left you for a guy who isn’t even good enough to shine your shoes, and believe me, I know.”

“Thanks,” Vincent said, feeling suddenly uncomfortable with David’s closeness. This guy didn’t seem to have any sense of social distance.

“I never believed him when he said you couldn’t fuck.” He stood back.

“What?” Vincent gasped. “That little bastard said I couldn’t fuck?”

“Well, he said you couldn’t fuck very well. In fact, if I remember correctly, he said you couldn’t even get it up.” He met Vincent’s gaze, then started to laugh. “You should see your face.”

“You liar! He never said that.” He made a lunge for him.

David let out a holler as he jumped out of reach. He turned and raced off down the hallway.

When Vincent caught up to David, he was standing in the entrance to his bedroom, his chest heaving a little, his eyes shining. Vincent froze.

He couldn’t remember ever seeing anything so beautiful.

“Come on, Vince,” David coaxed softly, “prove it, prove you can get it up.”

Vince’s mouth went dry, his cock awakening. He found himself laughing a little uneasily. “Don’t be ridiculous, David. This is…” he began, but his words were suddenly buried under the pressure of David’s mouth. David placed his hands on Vincent’s waist and yanked him closer.

Vincent froze, unsure of what in hell was happening but David’s persistent kisses were heightening his desire, hazing his thoughts with sudden, unbidden lust.

David murmured something appreciative in his throat as one hand began to finger Vincent’s cock through the material of his pants. Vincent sucked in some air and clasped David’s ass. He couldn’t deny what a turn-on it was to finally massage those delightfully hard, rounded globes. David had a great ass, something Vincent hadn’t exactly been immune to. This move incited David’s enthusiasm. Hastily, he opened Vincent’s zipper. Their mouths separated then moved together again, this time more aggressively. David pushed Vincent’s pants and underwear down off his hips. Vincent stumbled over them, kicking them away, and propelled David into his bedroom.

David separated himself from Vincent just long enough to strip off his shirt. He threw it aside, crooked his finger at him, then pulled Vincent’s sweater over his head. He ran his hands over Vincent’s chest. “God,” he breathed, lowering his lips to one of Vincent’s nipples, “you’re so buff. God, what a body.”

He licked and nibbled at his nipple while fingering the other. Vincent reached for the snap on David’s jeans.

Impatient, David brushed Vincent’s hands aside and pulled off his jeans and underwear. He stepped over them and reached for Vincent’s hand, pulling him over to the bed. They fell there, David pulling Vincent on top of him, devouring his mouth as he wantonly ran his hands over Vincent’s hard, smooth flesh.

Vincent was hard as a rock. He rutted his hips into the mattress, grasping David’s wrists and pinning them up behind his head. He dragged his erection across David’s stomach, feeling David’s cock, now fully erect, leak precum onto his thigh.

David grabbed hold of the rungs in the headboard with both hands as Vincent moved up over him, licking a trail with his tongue, laving his nipples, reaching down and capturing his mouth with his, his tongue meeting the other man’s in a sensuous tango. Vincent straddled David’s shoulders, running his cock along his lips.

David licked his lips then moved the tip of his tongue around the head of Vincent’s cock. Vincent teased him for a moment, pulling back, dragging his cock over his chin, across his cheek. David moaned.

“I’m going to fuck that beautiful face of yours,” Vincent breathed, “then that

beautiful ass is mine.” Unable to hold back any longer, he pressed David’s forehead back into the pillows and lowered his cock into his open mouth.

David’s fingers tightened around the headboard rungs. He murmured with pleasure as he enveloped Vincent’s cock in his mouth, taking it deeper until Vincent felt as if his cock was tightly enveloped in a velvet vise. The pressure David was putting on his shaft was absolutely delectable. This boy knew how to blow.

Vincent’s head fell back. “Ahhh,” he breathed, as he felt the muscles of David’s throat perform magic. “Oh God ... baby ... yeah ... yeah...” he shouted, pulling back and pumping out his release. He pounded his fist into the mattress a few times and fell off David. He lay there, his chest heaving out of control. “Um, damn, damn.” He licked his lips, his body convulsing slightly.

David wasn’t finished with him. He began to kiss Vincent from his foot up to his thigh, licking the cum off his balls, and pressing his lips against the length of his shaft. He leaned over him and slowly circled his nipples with his tongue then joined his mouth deeply with his. “You have a beautiful cock, Vincent. I want it,” David whispered, looking down into his eyes. “I don’t think I’ve ever wanted a man to fuck me as much as I want you right now. Vince, your name is like music to me. Fuck me. Fuck me long and hard, and then oh so slowly.”

All the time David talked, he stroked Vincent’s cock, bringing it back to life.

“Lube and condoms are beside the bed,” Vincent said, watching as he leaned over and took out the stuff.

David opened the lube and spread some on his hand. On his knees, he reached behind, lubricating himself. As he did, his erect cock did a seductive dance in front of Vincent’s eyes.

“You’re so hot,” Vincent whispered, reaching out and flicking his thumb over David’s left nipple.

“Um,” David encouraged, “do it. Play with my nipples and my cock while I use the lube. It’s such a turn-on. You’re such a turn-on, Vincent.”

Vincent rose to his knees, his gaze taking in David’s naked body moving sensuously in front of him. He pinched David’s nipples with both hands.

“Yeah, oh yeah. I like that. Do it some more. Make them really hard.”

Vincent played with them some more, reaching down occasionally to stroke David’s cock, which was already leaking precum.

“I’m so turned on,” David breathed.

So was he. He ripped the condom open and rolled it onto his cock.

David’s gaze was focused there. “So hard, so big, make it hurt good, baby.”

“Turn ... around,” Vincent told him, his words now coming in intervals. “I want you now. I want to take you now.”

David smiled at him, turning around on the bed.

Vincent grabbed his hair and pulled him backward into his arms. He lifted David’s arms and put them up around his neck.

David moaned as Vincent went to work on his nipples, lowering his mouth to his neck, kissing him gently, rolling those hard tips between his fingers and thumbs. One hand moved over David’s belly as he fondled his erection, handled his balls. His cock slapped against David’s ass. “You have the greatest ass,” he groaned, his hands now opening his ass cheeks, two fingers flirting with his opening.

“Fuck me.” It came out almost like a scream, David’s ass crashing against his cock. “Vincent, please.”

Vincent chuckled softly, removing his fingers, fitting the head of his cock between David’s ass cheeks and pressing up inside of him. They both let out a gasp of pleasure at almost exactly the same time. Vincent ran his palms over David’s chest and brushed against his cock while moving in and out of his ass. At first he went in and out slowly, then speeded up after a few minutes, then willed himself to slow down again. He was entranced, held spellbound by the magic of being inside this beautiful man, mesmerized by the sounds coming from David’s chest, sounds he was evoking with the rhythm of his hips, the friction of his cock, the movement of his fingers over David’s flesh.

Vincent began to pace himself, regulate his breathing, prolonging the time when his cock would vibrate its orgasmic relay into David’s pulsing receptacle.

David cried out; Vincent stroked his cock, his fingers curved around his shaft. David’s milky cum streamed down between his fingers as Vincent pushed him onto his hands and knees. His breathing came hard; their bodies were slick with sweat. He couldn’t hold on any more; he clutched David’s hips and hammered his release into his ass.

They both collapsed onto the bed, Vincent on top of David, his lips moving gently against the other man’s shoulder. They lay there for the longest time, dozing maybe, losing total track of time. Vincent felt a peace he hadn’t known in a long time, a relaxing completeness which propelled him into a darkness where sleep seized him, and didn’t let go until the morning.

Chapter Three

When Vincent opened his eyes, David was holding his hand. The younger man lay beside him, his face turned toward him, looking at him with an expression which seemed almost innocent, pure. He smiled. "Good morning, gorgeous," he said.

Vincent blinked. The sun was coming in the window. He couldn't help but smile. "What time is it?"

"Only seven."

Vincent withdrew his hand. He stretched, pausing suddenly when he noticed the way David was staring at him. "What?"

"What? You don't see what I see. Damn it, Vincent, did you have to be the kind of man with the potential to rip my soul in two?"

"Don't talk nonsense." He got out of bed. "I think you should get dressed, take a shower if you want."

"I need your underwear, really." He laughed. "I've already had what's in them."

"You're a real comedian."

"Yep, I missed my calling. Let's take a shower." He got out of bed.

Vincent looked away from his nakedness. He was already halfway to hard.

David came up behind him and slipped his arms around his waist. "I love a man who wakes up like that. Let me take care of it for you." His fingers moved over his shaft.

Vincent sucked in some breath. "David, I..." He was squeezing Vincent's shaft now, feeling it as it expanded in his hand.

"David, you what?" David whispered, kissing his shoulder. "David, I want you. Say it."

"This wasn't a good idea."

"Damn it, baby," he sighed, his lips moving over his back, his hand now seriously stroking his dick, "it felt like the best damn idea I've ever had. Man, you can fuck. That was the best fuck I've ever had."

Vincent squirmed in his arms, his cock betraying his best intentions. He moaned softly. "David," he pleaded.

"Yes, baby"—he moved around to the front of Vincent's body and went to his knees—"I'll fix it. I'll make it all better." Two hands captured his buttocks; a ready tongue licked around the head of his cock, jutting in and out of his slit, then David's mouth opened wide and enveloped his cock. He met Vincent's eyes as he sucked.

Vincent's hand settled in his hair, pulling gently as he ejaculated into his mouth. "Ahhhh...yessssssssssssssss."

David kissed up his thigh to his stomach, rose to his feet, and licked his nipple slowly. Vincent fondled David's cock in return, then slid his mouth down his hairless chest to the base of his cock.

David let out a sigh of pleasure as Vincent sank to his knees and started licking his shaft. He petted his hair urgently as Vincent began to blow him. "I want you to fuck my ass in the shower. Oh God, Vince, I can't wait to have you inside me again." He pushed Vincent backward onto the floor. He spread Vincent's thighs and began to go to work on getting him hard again.

Vincent's hips rose to David's mouth, his cock responding, stiffening, standing straight up within minutes. David reared back, wiping his lips on the back of his hand. "In the shower. I want your cock in the shower."

Vincent got to his feet and followed him like a man possessed.

David stepped into the shower and started the spray, nice and warm. He grabbed a bar of soap and began to lather Vincent's cock. Vincent moaned. David moved his slick hands over his nipples too, then reached around and inserted two slippery fingers up into Vincent's ass. "Do you like to be fucked with my fingers?"

"Um, feels good." He turned around and placed his palms on the tile.

"Spread your legs wide," David instructed, leaning down and opening him with his tongue then inserting his fingers again. He moved them in and out. Vincent responded by moving his hips in time with David's thrusting, his cock so hard it hurt.

"Beautiful," David whispered, "so fucking erotic."

Vincent turned and pulled David into his arms. He kissed him passionately, sliding his hands all over him, tormenting his cock, kissing his nipples.

"Now," David urged, pulling away, water streaming over the hills and valleys of his delectable flesh. He turned around and juttied his ass out, leaning forward against the wall. "Fuck me, Vincent. Go, baby. I want you so much."

Vincent groaned in response, seizing David's hips and slamming into him, hard and fast, both of them heaving, breathing heavy, their bodies wet, hair plastered to their foreheads.

David whimpered, "Oh God, yeah," as Vincent jerked him off violently, his own cock releasing its load like a dam suddenly breaking. They gravitated into each other's arms, holding one another until the rush of orgasm eventually subsided.

Vincent pulled back first, rational thought beginning to invade his mind, warning him. Dammit, he'd sworn to himself this would never happen again. It hurt too damn much when it was over. He was through with love.

He reached for a towel, stepped out of the shower. "Go ahead," he said, without looking at David, "I'll go after you." He didn't wait for the answer. He walked back into the bedroom, and glanced in the full-length mirror. He saw a young man, serious beyond his years, still struggling with what was left of his broken heart. Doug's leaving had left him feeling vulnerable, unloved, a failure. He'd loved him as best as he knew how, and yet Doug had left him for a guy he'd known for only a few months. And this thing with David; it was a mistake. Vincent couldn't love like that again. He couldn't take more heartache. Not to mention that David was once Andrew's lover.

When David emerged from the shower, he looked as if he wanted to say something. Vincent brushed past him and headed into the bathroom. "Underwear is in the drawer, help yourself," he called out. "I won't be long. I'll treat you to breakfast before we go to the office."

David had left the shower running for him. He stepped under the spray and washed, shampooing his hair. When he shut off the shower, he noticed that David was in the bathroom, already half dressed. David held out a towel to him, feeling his jaw. "I can wait to shave, I guess."

Vincent nodded, taking it from him and beginning to dry off.

David's gaze followed the path of that towel. Vincent could feel that gaze, warm, penetrating. "You're beautiful. If I didn't tell you that last night, I meant to."

“You did,” Vincent replied, “several times. Thanks. You’re pretty cute yourself.”

“But?” David said, looking at him intently.

“But?” Vincent laughed uncomfortably, skirting past him and going over to his bedroom closet.

“You want to say something?” David probed, watching him as he took down a pair of light khaki dress pants.

Vincent looked at him. “Not me. It seems that you do, though.”

David picked up his shirt.

Vincent shed the towel and pulled on underwear and his pants.

“I didn’t come here with any expectations last night,” David announced.

“Didn’t you?” Vincent regretted saying that as soon as the words came out of his mouth. It sounded resentful. David shrugged into his dark green shirt.

David responded with a mixture of hurt and anger. “No, I didn’t. What happened, happened, although I won’t be a hypocrite and say I hadn’t thought about it, wanted it.”

Vincent did up his shirt silently.

“Aren’t you going to say anything?”

Vincent sighed softly. “What do you want me to say?”

“Something, anything.”

Vincent looked at him. “Okay. I enjoyed it. It was great. But it can’t happen again.”

David looked away. After a few seconds, in a steady voice which sounded very controlled, he asked, “And why is that?”

“I had one love. It’s over now. It was tough to deal with his leaving me for another guy. I don’t want to go through that again.”

“So, no more sex for you?” David scoffed.

“I didn’t say that.”

“Okay, sex is in, but not with me.” Those words were ice-cold.

“David, I don’t want this to screw up our working relationship,” Vincent said, his voice sounding pleading. “And you know what? I think it already has.”

David looked at him now, his expression overly bright. “Hell, no. No worries. It’s okay. I get the message. You’re ready and willing to fuck anyone, except for me. This was a one-time thing. Let’s put it behind us, right?”

Vincent sighed. “I’ll get my car keys and we’ll get going. Where do you want to have breakfast?”

“Look, let’s skip it, okay? I’m not very hungry all of a sudden. I’ve got a lot of work to do today. Valentine’s is coming soon.”

* * * *

The days went quickly. Vincent buried himself in his work and avoided being alone with David. When Bradley showed up one afternoon, Vincent was sitting at his desk, lost in his thoughts. He hadn’t realized that Bradley had been standing there for almost five minutes.

Vincent looked up.

Bradley laughed. “A dollar for your thoughts.”

“Oh, they’re not worth that much.”

“So, what’s up?” Bradley asked, coming over and taking a seat on the other side of the desk. “I’ve haven’t heard from you in weeks. You missed the poker game at Carl’s

house.”

“I know. Work, and more work. Sorry. I meant to call you. How long you been standing there anyway?”

He laughed. “A few minutes. You didn’t tell me you hired a new planner.”

“Yeah. His name is David.”

“You didn’t tell me he had a killer ass either.”

“Yeah, well, a little tough to work that into a conversation, especially since I haven’t seen you to tell you I even hired him.”

“I’ve been busy too, buried under legal documents. Look, my friend, I came by to tell you that Doug is back.”

“Back? Back where?”

“In town. He and Andrew have broken up.” He raised an eyebrow.

Vincent didn’t say anything.

“What? No gloating?”

“Did you see him?”

“He came to my office this morning, whining, with his tail between his legs. I almost slugged him one. Apparently”—Bradley threw his hands up in the air—“he’s come to his senses. He’s going to beg you to take him back. He says he still loves you. And, he wants to buy back his share of Events. He says he sold it under duress.”

Vincent was in shock.

“He came to ask me if he had any recourse. I want you to know that everything is legal. This place is yours. He signed the agreement, accepted the deal. I told him as much. Don’t let him try and—”

Vincent held up his hand. “I’ll handle it.”

Suddenly David appeared in the door. He glanced at Bradley. “Oh, excuse me. I thought you were alone. Vincent, when you’re not busy, we need to talk. We have a problem.”

“Okay,” Vincent said. “I won’t be long.”

“So,” Bradley mused, getting up and walking over to the door. He glanced appreciatively after David as he walked off down the hall. “Damn,” he said, grinning. “Don’t tell me that is not distracting.”

“Bradley, focus. What were you saying?”

“Please tell me you got to taste that?”

Vincent gave him a look.

“What? If you don’t want him, I’ll take him.”

“Never mind,” Vincent said.

“Ah, possessive, eh? So, he is yours?”

“He’s my employee.”

“Introduce me.”

“He’s not for you.”

“How come?”

“What about Andrew?” He stood. “You said they broke up. Is Andrew back as well?”

“I assume so.”

“I have to warn David.”

“Warn David?”

“David is Andrew’s ex.”

“What?”

“It’s a long story.”

“Oh my God. Do you want to do dinner tonight? You can tell me all the sordid details.”

“Maybe. I’ll call you at six, let you know if I can get away.” He walked Bradley to the door, trying to quell his one hundred questions, then went in search of David.

David was in the costume department.

When Vincent walked in, David turned around and held up a satiny piece of red material cut into the shape of a heart. “Come here,” he instructed.

Vince glanced at him warily. “What?”

“Is this too small for you?” He brought the material down and pressed it against Vincent’s groin.

“What in hell are you doing?” Vincent demanded, slapping David’s hand away.

“We need a stripper.”

“What?”

“We lost our stripper for our Valentine’s stag. I’ve got the word out but it may be too late to get another one. It *is* for Valentine’s Day. So, can you do it?”

“Me?” Vince waved his hands in the air. “Forget it. I’m no stripper.”

“You don’t actually have to take everything off. In fact, you’ll be left with this at the end, so it’s not total nudity.”

“What happened to the stripper again?”

“He’s got mono.”

Vince rolled his eyes. “Well, find someone else. They all can’t be booked.”

“Maybe not, but he has to fit the description the client asked for. Come on, Vince, it will be great PR and—”

“He has the body for it,” a voice added suddenly.

Vincent didn’t turn around. He’d recognized the footsteps, and knew that voice like it was his own. He closed his eyes.

“Hello, Vince, how are you?”

David’s eyes widened. He looked at Vincent. “You have nerve,” he said, glaring at Doug.

“Can you leave us please, David?” Doug asked. “I need to talk to my partner.”

“He’s not your partner,” David replied, his voice hard, “in any way.”

“It’s okay, David,” Vincent said, “leave us. I’ll get back to you on this. We’ll find someone.”

“Damn,” Doug sneered at David, “guess you’ve lost your opportunity to see Vincent without his clothes.”

David came up close to Doug and looked him in the face. “Yeah, that’s what you know.”

“What in hell did he mean by that?” Doug demanded as soon as David had left the room.

Vince finally gathered the strength to look at him. “Doug, what are you doing here?”

“We need to talk.”

“Talk about what?” Vincent walked across the room.

Doug followed. “I’ve been a fool. I love you. I want to come home. I want things to

be the way they were.”

“It’s a little late for that, don’t you think?”

“Did you know that David and Andrew...”

“Yes, I know.”

“Andrew still has feelings for David.”

Vince looked up sharply. “How do you know that?”

Doug shrugged. “It’s not important.”

“Did he say that? Did he say he was going to try and win David back?”

“What do you care?”

“I ... I should warn David, that’s all.”

“Warn him about what? David loves Andrew. David wouldn’t stop calling Andrew on his cell when we were in Europe. He’d take him back in a heartbeat. I’m sure that’s what is going to happen. And you know what, I don’t care. I only want you.”

Vincent stood there, stunned. How could David have made love to him like that when he still had feelings for Andrew?

“Vince?”

Vincent glanced at him.

“I’m not expecting you to take me back today. Can we have dinner, talk? I want to start over. I’ll do anything to win back your love. I’ve missed you so much.”

“You need to go,” Vincent said. He was shaking inside.

“Are you going to give me the opportunity to...?”

“I’m not giving you anything. Go, Doug, leave, and don’t come back.”

He walked across the floor, his heart in turmoil. Was it true that David had been calling Andrew in Europe? If Doug was telling the truth, he couldn’t help wondering how long this had been going on. Maybe it had only been in the beginning, when Andrew first left.

All this turned in his mind as he went looking for David. He finally found him in the kitchen. David was looking at pictures of wedding cakes with the bakery chef. Barbara was standing there too, pointing out this and that.

“I like that one too, Barb,” David said, “but it’s not the right shape for a heart.”

“I’m free now,” Vincent said from the door. “Come to my office when you’re finished.”

David looked up and nodded.

Vincent walked back down the hall; Barbara chased after him. “Vince.”

“What is it?” he asked, glancing at her.

“I have some new invoices for you to sign and ... did I see that asshole Doug here a while ago?”

“You did.”

Barbara followed Vincent into his office. “You told him to take a long walk off a short pier, I hope.”

“Not in so many words, but don’t worry.” He sat down in his chair and held out his hand. “Where are the invoices?”

“I’ll get them. And the new stock came in, and there’s a problem with that supplier again. We’re short on flour and shortening. John is kicking up a fuss.”

“I’ll call them,” he said, running a hand through his hair.

“Okay, I’ll get the invoices,” she said, bumping into David on the way out. “Hi

sweetie,” she said.

“Hi Barb,” David replied, but his voice lacked his usual spirit.

“Close the door,” Vincent said.

David closed the door and came in. He didn’t sit down. He stood looking at him. “Is this about the stripper?”

“No. It’s not about the stripper. Did you call Andrew in Europe?”

“What?”

“Doug says you repeatedly called Andrew when he was in Europe.” Vincent’s voice rose.

“And you care?”

“You lied to me. I can’t trust you.”

“I didn’t lie about anything. And it’s not any of your business who I called, or didn’t. You don’t even want me. I’m nothing to you.”

“David,” Vincent said, “I never said you were nothing to me.”

“You want Doug? Well, he’s back, on his knees. Go ahead. He wants to be in my place, in this job and in your bed. Let him. I sure hope he can make you happy finally, because apparently I can’t.”

“I never said I was taking Doug back.”

“You will.”

“No, I won’t.”

“Then who do you want? You don’t want me. You don’t want Doug. I thought you still loved him.”

“I don’t love him anymore.”

David lowered his head. “You don’t love me either.”

Vincent swallowed. “I thought we decided to...”

“You decided. You decided everything. I had no say in it.”

“Did you call Andrew in Europe, or not?” He turned his back, looked out the window.

“Yes,” he said. “I called him.”

Vincent closed his eyes. “Why? I thought you said he was no good?”

“He is no good. God damn it, Vince, he owed me money. I wanted him to ... oh, you won’t believe me, anyway. It doesn’t matter.”

“Tell me. I’ll believe you,” Vincent said, turning around.

“He owed me money,” David said, looking at Vince. He actually took a step back when Vincent came closer. “Don’t,” he whispered. “I’d rather you didn’t touch me at all.” Tears sparked in his eyes.

“I don’t understand. What did I do? I thought everything was okay between us. We’re friends, right?”

The tears ran down his face. “I can’t work here anymore,” he said softly. “I’ll stay until after the Valentine’s thing, then I’m giving my notice.”

Before Vincent could say anything, David tore out of the room.

Vincent stood there stunned, not sure what had just happened.

Barbara came in. “The invoices,” she said. “And what in fuck is wrong with you?”

“Nothing.” He held out his hand, “I’m fine. Barb,” he said. “David wants to leave. You need to convince him to stay.”

She looked at him. “No, *you* need to convince him to stay.” She sighed, drew closer.

“He’s in love with you, you blockhead. I see it every time he looks at you. Take a chance. You’ve been miserable ever since you took him home that night and fucked his brains out.”

Vince’s eyes widened.

“No need to pretend with me, kid. I’ve seen it all. Forget that shithead Doug, and take a chance. He’s the one, stupid.”

“I took a chance, and look where it got me.”

“You backed the wrong horse, that’s all. David did too, with that Andrew idiot. Andrew really worked him over, left him in debt. And he’s been prowling around again. He sent David flowers today.”

“Flowers?”

“Yep. David threw them in the trash bin.”

“Good.”

“Vince, you’re made for each other. Valentine’s is coming up. Come on, show him how you feel. You’re head over heels yourself. He’ll stay if you convince him you want him. Do something romantic.”

Vincent smiled. Slowly, he nodded. “Okay.”

“Okay?” Barb’s eyes widened. “You mean, you’re listening to me?”

He nodded.

“Hallelujah!”

Vincent laughed.

“So, you going to tell him how you feel?”

“I’m going to do better than that.”

Chapter Four

The following days before Valentine's Day were hectic, what with the final preparations for the big stag party. There were also the regular parties to handle as well. When David once again mentioned the stripper problem, Vincent told him he'd taken care of it.

"But the client has very strict specifications," David persisted. "Dark hair, tall, with your physique, muscular and ... he has to look like you."

"Don't worry," Vincent said, "he will look exactly like me."

David wrinkled his nose. "Okay."

On the morning of Valentine's Day, David was frazzled, running around from department to department. Vincent wanted to laugh when David rushed into his office at four o'clock and yelled, "Where have you been?"

"I had some errands to do. Why?"

"You are going to be there tonight?"

"Of course I am. I'll stop by after everything gets started."

"I need that stripper. He has to be fitted and I have to make sure he can get into that cake."

"He'll fit in the suit and the cake. Don't worry."

"Does he know the location, what time to be there?"

"David," Vincent said, "it's all going to work out. I'm taking care of that. I'll have him in the cake, dressed and ready to rock and roll."

"Okay," he breathed.

"Everything will go off without a hitch, tonight, and tomorrow."

"It's big, Vince."

"I know. Now go and check on things. I'll see you later."

David walked to the door. He paused. "Vince?"

"Yep?"

"What I said about leaving, well, maybe, I mean, I like my job, and..."

"We'll talk about that later."

He nodded and left the office.

Vince checked his watch. He had butterflies in his stomach. He locked up his office and walked into the lobby. "Well," he said to Barb, "it begins."

"I wish I could see his face tonight," Barb smiled. She got up from behind her desk and hugged him. "You big lug."

He laughed. "Thanks. Now, pray I don't make an idiot of myself."

"You've worked so hard."

"Did you get everything?"

"Everything will be there."

"You're the greatest," he said as he stepped onto the elevator.

"Damn right," she called out, "and don't you ever forget it."

* * * *

When the knock came on his door at home, Vincent was surprised to find Doug standing on his doorstep. *Oh no, not now. I don't have time for this.* "What do you want, Doug?"

"Is that any way to speak to me?"

"Actually, it's better than you deserve," he grumbled, looking over Doug's shoulder to see a car drive up. "You've got to go. I have stuff to do."

Doug's eyes widened when a perfectly toned blond-haired god wearing a Lycra bodysuit walked up the steps. "What in hell is this?"

Sin Malone gave Doug an uninterested glance and then smiled at Vincent. "Hey babe, ready?"

"Sure," Vincent said, "come in. Give me a sec." He nudged Doug out the door, and stood with him on the stoop. "Listen, you've got to go. I told you, I don't want to see you anymore."

"You're dumping me for that?"

"You dumped me, remember, and it's not him I want, believe me."

"There's someone?"

"No one you know, now go. Get out of here."

"What exactly is that guy doing here?"

Vincent walked back inside. "Dancing," he said, and closed the door.

Sin Malone had been an exotic dancer for ten years. Sin put on some of the music he'd brought with him and began to warm up. Vincent did the same, going through the stretching routine he'd showed him. "Are you nervous?" he asked.

"Scared shitless."

"This David is a lucky guy."

"I'm the lucky guy. I was just too dense to know it. I'm plunging into this all the way. I need to show him I really mean it. He knows this isn't my style, so I figure he'll believe me if I go to these lengths."

"Sweetie, you're gorgeous. You could have been a dancer."

Vince laughed. "After tonight, I'll dance for him in the bedroom, that's it."

Sin chuckled. "Okay, let's do it, stud. Come on baby, strut your stuff!"

"I don't know about this," Vincent said doubtfully, holding up the red silk, heart-shaped G-string.

* * * *

When Vincent arrived at the club he went immediately to the back room to begin his transformation. The client, Sam Green, knocked on the door of the dressing room a few minutes later. He had a huge grin on his face. "So, you're really going through with this after all?"

Vincent nodded with a faint smile. "Well, I guess, if I don't chicken out."

Green had been wonderful about all this. "Come on, Vincent," he said, "you've gone this far, you can't back out now. From the moment you called me and told me about you and David, well, I was so thrilled to be a part of this. And you know that Tee will be so happy when he finds out. It's a real Valentine's event. Love, love, and love."

Vincent laughed. "Yeah, well." He placed the material against his groin, looking up as John entered suddenly, wheeling in the big cake.

"Hey, boss," he said, grinning. "David is here, by the way."

"You didn't say anything?"

"Of course not. Anyway, I got to get back to the kitchen. The back room is filled with red roses like you asked, and we received the Swiss chocolate."

"Good. I know David likes real chocolate."

"You remember how you get in and out of that thing, right?" John asked.

Vincent nodded. "I think so."

John laughed and waved. "Oh, and you look pretty cute. If I wasn't straight..."

Vincent laughed. "Get out of here."

Sam came over then and shook his hand. "Good luck, Williams. I've seen him, your David; he's a cutie. Great ass."

Vince nodded. "Yeah, I know."

"I'll leave you to get naked. And I can't say I'm not looking forward to ah ... you're a hunk and you're hung. Tee will love you."

Vincent laughed, and gave him a little salute. "Events aims to please."

Samuel Green blew him a kiss and left.

Vincent stripped off his clothes and put on the heart-shaped G-string, drawing the string up in back. He rubbed his skin with some of that oil Sin had given him. He placed his hands on his hips and looked at himself in the mirror. He looked pretty hot but he felt absolutely ridiculous. He hoped to hell David still wanted him. He walked over to the fake cake and opened it in back. Someone would come to wheel him out into the middle of the floor. When he was ready, he had only to push the lever and he'd rise out of the top on a little platform. There were steps going down the back. He looked at the clock, and waited.

When he heard some noise, he quickly got into the cake. He couldn't risk the chance that David would be the one to come and get him. It would ruin everything. As it turned out, it was two of the waiters hired to serve that night. "Is the guy even in there?" one asked, knocking on the cake.

"Yeah," he said from inside, "I'm in here. Just ah ... wheel me out, okay, into the middle of the floor. Are there a lot of people?"

"Oh yeah," one said. "It's packed, most of them loaded, and horny."

"Terrific," he muttered, closing his eyes. "And David, the head planner, is he out there?"

"Who?"

"Your boss!"

"Oh yeah, the cute one. He was," the other one said.

"Hey," another voice said, "can we see you? Are you naked?"

"No, you can't see me. And if you want to keep your jobs, you'll just wheel me out there now," he snapped.

"Okay," one said, and he started to move.

David, you better damn well be out there.

He heard a drum roll; the crowd, which had been boisterous and noisy, quieted. Someone yelled out, "Yeah!"

The music he'd requested began to play, a really raunchy rock tune called *I Want Your Sex Forever*. He took a deep breath, and pressed the lever. As he rose to the top, he told himself to do as Sin told him, to imagine that he was dancing for only one man in the room, the man he really wanted. *"Imagine you've picked him out of a crowd; he doesn't*

know you. But you want him. And by the end of the night, your dancing will seduce him totally, make him yours forever."

Vincent arrived on the top of that cake, strutting across it like a pro. He shimmied down the steps and began dancing, imitating all the moves Sin had taught him. The crowd whooped and hollered but Vincent hardly heard them. His eyes scanned their faces for David. Where was he? David. He moved his hips seductively in front of the rock star Tee Armstrong, who reached up to trail his fingers over Vincent's chest, blew him a kiss. Vincent moved on, flexing his muscles, showing off his ass, winking to the men in the crowd and driving them wild. Then, he saw him.

David had come out of the crowd to stand at the edge of the dance floor. His eyes were wide. He looked like he was in shock. Vincent moved over to him, dancing in a way which left nothing to the imagination in terms of the movements his hips were doing. The crowd stood on its feet; people whistled, hooted, and hollered. Vincent winked at David, and stood aside.

Two men wearing tuxedos and pulling a wheelbarrow loaded with red roses and chocolate came into view. They bowed to David and left the wheelbarrow in front of him. One of the men handed Vincent a small box and a microphone.

The music died.

David blinked, looked at the roses, and then at Vincent.

Vincent's hand shook. It took him a moment to speak. "David," he said. "Today is Valentine's Day, and although I've never been much of a romantic, I've discovered that all I needed was the right inspiration. I love you." He opened the box. "Tomorrow, when Sam Green and Tee Armstrong say their vows, will you say yours with me?" He passed him the open box with the gold band.

David stared at the box.

There wasn't a sound in the hall.

"You're not on your knees," David said, his voice trembling, eyes brimming with tears.

Vincent began to kneel, but David reached over and pulled him up straight and into his arms. "Oh baby," he whispered against his ear, "you don't have to be on your knees. You've just made me the happiest man alive."

Some whispers went through the crowd.

"What did you say?" someone demanded. Everyone laughed.

David squeezed Vincent tight then released him, giving him a tap on the ass. "I said yes," he shouted out. "Wouldn't you? Look at him."

There was applause.

David embraced him again and kissed him passionately. There was more applause.

"Now, there's one other thing you can do for me, sexy," David murmured in his ear.

"Something else?" Vincent cocked an eyebrow. "Good Lord."

David laughed. "You can put some clothes on before these men in here eat you alive."

"On one condition?"

David grinned. "What's that?"

"Come with me?" he invited. "This stuff has made me so damn horny. I want to ravish you."

"Yum, I get to have the stripper?"

“You bet,” Vincent growled in his ear.

They started to make their way through the crowd, stopped by well-wishers along the way. Green and Armstrong, the happy couple, were more than impressed with Vincent’s performance. “Can I rent you out for parties?” Tee teased.

“Forget it,” David said, pulling him closer. “He’s not for rent.”

Vincent laughed. “My stripping days are over, it seems.”

“I didn’t say that,” David countered.

Samuel Green passed Vincent a key. “Use the room down the hall, number six. You’ll have privacy there. It’s empty.”

Vincent thanked him. They walked quietly arm in arm back to the room, David twirling one of the roses in his hand. Once inside, David ran his gaze over him, and shook his head.

“What?” Vincent asked.

“You must really be in love.” David giggled. “This is not your style at all.”

“I am, I am in love, madly, and completely,” Vincent said, grabbing him and tickling him, kissing his neck.

“Okay.” David pushed him away roughly and walked over to the bed. “Now I want the real show.”

“Oh, come on,” Vincent said, laughing.

David fell on the bed, balancing on his elbow. “I started seeing some really interesting moves out there. Who taught you those?”

“I’ll never tell.” He grinned.

“So, take off that heart thing that’s driving me senseless, and do it slowly. Finish the show, stud.”

“If I’d known how demanding you were”—Vincent shook his head, laughing—“I would have thought twice before proposing.”

“Oh, I plan to get a hell of a lot more demanding. Wait.”

“I don’t have any music.”

“I can hear the music from down the hall.”

“Aw.” He nodded. “Okay, whatever you want.” He started to move, the muscles in his biceps flexing, his hips swaying, backside clenching. He exaggerated, hamming it up some.

David was laughing, and only sobered when Vincent removed the Valentine loincloth thing and threw it on the bed. David picked it up and took it between his teeth.

“Oh baby,” he grunted, “come to Daddy.”

Vincent laughed as he crawled seductively onto the bed.

David pulled him down into his arms. He kissed him hard. “Did you mean it? Do you really want to be with me forever, say our vows tomorrow with Samuel and Tee?”

He nodded. “Yeah. I really mean it. I thought for sure you’d believe me after tonight.”

“Oh, I do baby. I believe you. And I want to. I want to be with you forever.”

Vincent settled down into his arms, undoing his shirt. “Good, so get out of those clothes.”

“I’ve missed you so much,” David moaned, crushing his mouth against his again.

“The last time we were together, the memories tortured me every night, kept me awake, kept me hard.”

Vincent nodded, taking off David's shirt. "Me too," he said. "I'm sorry. I was a little gun-shy after Doug. You coming along when you did, well, it was damn inconvenient."

David laughed. "That's one way to put it. You know," he said, turning serious, "Doug wants you back."

"Well, he can't have me." Vincent grinned and kissed a trail down David's chest as he fumbled with his pants. "And Andrew can't have you either."

"He sent me flowers. I threw them out."

"I know." He looked up, grinning, then yanked David's pants down.

"What do you mean, you know?"

"I know everything." He licked his shaft.

David placed a hand in his hair. "Oh yeah?"

"Um, yeah."

"Like what, for instance?"

"Like ah, right now, your cock is really hard."

David swatted him. "Like it takes a mind reader for that."

"How about"—Vincent swirled his tongue around David's cock—"right now, you're thinking that you'd like to get me in the shower, and wash all this gunk off my body. And that maybe, just maybe, I could be persuaded to fuck you in there."

David pretended to consider that. "Ah ... yeah, that's it. You are so good." He pushed Vincent aside and jumped off the bed. "When your stripping days are over, we can rent you out as a psychic."

David chuckled as he followed Vincent into the bathroom. He lingered at the door, watching him as he turned on the shower. "What are you doing way over there?" David asked him suddenly.

"It just struck me, you know, I really did dance in that silky heart thing."

David gave him a sympathetic look as he came over and wound his arms around his neck. "Oh, I know, honey." He kissed his lips gently. "And you're just going to have to live with that."

Vincent laughed softly. "I wouldn't have done that for anyone but you."

"I know. That's why I'll never doubt that you love me. Now, get in that shower and show me how much."

Vincent dipped down and scooped David up in his arms.

David struggled. "Hey," he yelped as Vincent carried him over to the shower, "what are you doing?"

"I'm carrying you over the threshold."

"You're crazy!"

"Yeah, I know," Vincent growled. "I'm crazy about you, baby."

The End

The Boss

Mac took a sudden step back. "Whoa. That's not who I think it is, is it?"

Steven peered through the window at the man who was standing in the boardroom: tall, dark wavy hair, incredible blue eyes. He swallowed hard, scarcely daring to breathe. *No, no, fate couldn't be that cruel, could it?*

"What if he recognizes me?" Mac blurted, clutching Steven's arm. He pulled him aside, out of view of the window.

Steven tried to gather enough saliva in his mouth to articulate words. "Recognize *you*? Are you insane? You're not the one who..."

"You're right." Mac relaxed and released his arm. "He probably won't even remember that I was there. You're the one who made an idiot out of yourself and pranced around naked in front of him. You're in deep shit."

"Gee thanks," Steven sneered. "How could you have let me do that?" He shook his head in desperation then lowered it as several of his coworkers walked by on their way to the boardroom. "There has to be some mistake," Steven groaned. "He can't be the same guy."

"Maybe he's not the new boss. Maybe he's just the ... I don't know ... janitor?"

"Janitor? Right. He's the janitor, Mac, dressed in an Armani suit."

"Maybe he's union."

Steven fell back against the wall, face in his hands, in no mood to appreciate his friend's attempt at humor.

"Steve, we gotta get in there. The meeting has already started. We're late."

"Why did I allow you to talk me into doing that?"

"Don't blame this on me." Mac pointed at him. "It was your birthday and you drank way too much. I didn't tell you to—"

"Oh shit ... shit," Steven muttered, clutching his stomach. "I ... I can't ... I have to..." He made a dash for the bathroom, and locked himself into one of the stalls.

He leaned against the bathroom door and searched his pockets for some aspirin, trying to keep down the bile. He was going to lose his job. He just knew it.

He closed his eyes, his mind rewinding to last night. Yesterday had been his twenty-fifth birthday. Mac had called him at three that afternoon, insisting they go out to celebrate. He'd been relaxing in front of the television watching the ball game.

"No thanks," Steven had told him. "I don't want to feel like crap tomorrow. You know we're meeting the new boss for the first time. First impressions are important."

"One drink," Mac coaxed. "Come on, how often do you get to be twenty-five? Your life is slipping away, Steve. You're not even going to get laid on your birthday."

Mac was the only other gay man at the advertising agency, at least that he knew about. From day one, they'd become good friends.

"How do you know I won't get laid? I might," Steven had replied indignantly.

"Get real. You and Frank have been over for almost six months, and there hasn't been anyone else since. Come on, let's go to Sights. I hear they have a new dancer and he's really hot. It's two for one on Sunday."

Sights was a gay strip bar in the Village with the atmosphere of a pub. You could go for a drink and a game of pool, or just sit and watch the dancers. He and Mac had been going there off and on for almost two years. There's where he'd met Frank. What a

mistake that had been.

"Okay, but just one drink. I have to go to my mother's for dinner first. Come for cake if you want and then we'll head on over."

The club was hopping even for a Sunday, and once Steven got there, he was glad he'd decided to take Mac up on his invitation. After all, it was his birthday. They took a table down in front by the stage where they could watch the show, and Mac began ordering drinks.

"Happy birthday, friend," Mac said as Steven picked up the glass in front of him and stared at it.

"What is it?" He took a sip, making a face.

"Zombie."

"It tastes like fruit punch."

Steven couldn't remember how many of those drinks he put down. All he knew was, they went down so easy. He had no idea what a punch they would pack. By the time he'd finished the fourth one, he was wasted. He watched the dancers waltz on and off the stage, as if in a dream. He screamed, yelled and whistled, feeling higher than a kite.

Suddenly Mac turned into a philosopher. "Ever worry," he asked, "that you're going to be an old, lonely old queer, and you won't have ever done anything wild and crazy?"

Steven settled back in his chair and sighed. "Sometimes," he said, looking around.

"What crazy, insane thing would you do right now, if you could?"

Steven's gaze was suddenly riveted to a man sitting at the bar, a glass cradled in his hand. He was facing the stage, casually watching the dancer gyrate to some rock tune. Steven's head spun and even though he couldn't see him clearly, he knew he was beautiful, poised there on the bar stool in his black jeans, his thighs slightly open. Steve concentrated for a second on the light blue shirt he wore, rolled up at the sleeves, revealing his strong, tanned forearms. When the man turned in his direction, Steven caught his breath. He wasn't a man at all. He was a god. His dark hair fell over his forehead in a slight wave, and he bet that his eyes were blue, bluer than any eyes he'd ever seen before, and in Steven's drunken state, they seemed to glow. "Funny," he'd said aloud, "even from over here, I can tell his eyes are blue. They're sensational. He's sensational."

"Whose eyes are blue?" Mac leaned closer to him.

"That man at the bar, tall, broad shoulders, sensational body. Yum, I could eat him."

"Oh yeah." Mac nodded. "I see him. A hunk. Go get him. He can be your birthday present. Take him home and screw the shit out of him."

"No way," Steven said, laughing. "I'm not that drunk."

"Yes, you are." Mac laughed. "Tell me, if you could lose all your inhibitions suddenly, what would you do to Mr. Scrumptious over there?"

He'd stared at that guy dreamily, muttering something like, "You'd be shocked."

"Shock me. Tell me, exactly what you would like to do with him?"

"I ... ah..." He gave Mac a bold look then glanced over at the stage. "I'd get up there on that stage and I'd strip just for him, drive him crazy, make him so hard, he'd be begging for me."

Mac had howled with laughter.

Steven groaned suddenly, his eyes snapping open. He looked around the deserted bathroom. Had he really gone ahead with it? Had he really gotten up there on that stage

and ... *Oh my God*. He was going to kill Mac. How could he have let him do that? All those Zombies and then he'd ... he'd ... no ... no ... no. That hadn't been him last night. Who in the hell was that uninhibited sex maniac?

Steven hadn't even noticed when Mac went over to the bar and spoke to the bartender. He didn't see him ask the guy in the black jeans what his name was, either. All he knew was, ten minutes later, Henry, the owner of Sights, was at the microphone, announcing the next act. "We have a special treat for you tonight. We have Steve, the birthday boy, who wants to come up on stage and dance, especially for Rob, that great-looking hunk sitting over at the bar."

Mac had pulled him to his feet before he even realized what in hell was going on. It might have been the crowd clapping and stomping its feet, or the look of astonishment on that stranger's face, but whatever it was, Steven stumbled up onto that stage and began to dance. He could hardly remember what happened after that. Did he really take off all his clothes? He may have even fallen at that guy's feet. All he knew was that when he opened his eyes, he was on Mac's sofa, feeling like he just got hit with a truck. He had awoken Mac, insisting he take him home so he could shower and change before going to work. They both arrived at the agency two minutes before nine, coffee in hand, wondering how they were going to get through the morning with their heads feeling like battered footballs.

Now this! That blue-eyed hunk who'd been dressed in jeans last night was the same guy wearing the Armani suit in the boardroom—his new boss. And if he didn't remember the drunken fool who'd made an idiot of himself the night before, it was going to be a bloody miracle.

Steven hung onto the bathroom door as he pushed it open. He literally swung off of it for a few seconds. He stood in front of the mirror for as long as he could stand to look at himself then slashed some water on his face. He knew he had to go in there, although right now he'd much rather have faced a pack of man-hungry lions.

He glanced at himself in the mirror again and winced. His dark blond hair, which usually was full and layered, looked flat, and his skin was a sickly shade of gray. God, he couldn't drink.

He tried to press the wrinkles down in his light green shirt, but was not successful. He straightened the waistband on his black pants and wondered if he should have worn a tie. Hell, not wearing a tie was the least of his worries. Could he hope the new boss had been just as wasted as he'd been last night?

As he walked down the hallway toward the conference room, he felt as if he were walking the last mile. That door loomed closer and closer and something started clawing at his gut.

He heard laughter and froze. His hand clutched the door handle. Before he could go in, the door opened from the other side. Steven took a step back. Suddenly, he was face-to-face with the last person he wanted to see. And his eyes were blue. Oh God, they were so blue. "Hell ... hello." He stuck his hand out stiffly, averting his eyes. "I'm, ah ... my name is ... ah..."

"Steve, Steven Hillary," the man informed him, taking his hand.

"Yes, ah, that's it."

"I'm Rob Taylor." Taylor shook his hand briefly, then released it.

"I know, I mean ... good to meet you, sir. How did you ... know my name?"

He smiled. "You were the only one on my list not at the meeting."

"Yes, I'm sorry. I was sick. Ah, upset stomach."

"Are you better now?"

Whoa. This guy had a killer smile. Steven didn't remember him being this good-looking. No wonder he'd felt compelled to whip off his clothes. "What?"

"Better?" The boss lifted a dark eyebrow. "Are you better?"

People were coming out of the room now, smiling, some stopping to thank the new boss. Steven was grateful for the distraction.

Mac came over. "You okay?"

Steven nodded, taking the opportunity to move away.

"He probably doesn't even recognize you," Mac said discreetly.

Steven looked over at Taylor. He was talking to Nancy Hill, one of the junior partners. "I sure as hell hope not. Tell me exactly what I did."

"Ah, maybe it's better you don't know." Mac looked around uncomfortably.

Steven winced. "Was it that bad?" He started walking toward his office.

"I rather enjoyed it; that is, until you fell between his legs."

"Then I really did that? I fell between his ... oh God."

"It's okay. He caught you. You were the envy of every man in that bar. Our new boss is a looker."

"Don't say anything else. This is all your fault," Steven accused as Mac followed him into his office.

"My fault?"

"You're the one who told the owner I was going to dance on stage, you asshole."

"You didn't have to get up there," Mac said, sniggering.

"All that nonsense about how we die without ever really living and ... shit, you know I can't drink. How many did I have?"

"I don't know, six..." He shrugged.

"Six? Jesus Christ!"

"Don't worry," Mac said, laughing, "I'm sure he didn't recognize us. It was dark in there."

"Yeah, well..."

Both men whirled when they heard a deep male voice say, "Where did Mr. Hillary go?"

Steve swallowed. "I'm here, sir," he said, throwing Mac a dirty look, and walked back out into the hallway to meet him.

"Ah, Steve," Rob Taylor said, "could you come down to my office, in about fifteen minutes? I need to talk to you about something."

"Ah, yes sir." Steven swallowed.

As soon as he was gone, Steven looked helplessly at his friend. "This is it. He remembers. I'm fired."

"You're not fired. Maybe he just doesn't want people to know that he was in a gay bar."

Steven nodded sickly.

* * * *

Steven stood in front of the boss's office. They were in the process of taking down

the nameplate of the former boss, who'd taken his retirement.

The door was open but he knocked quietly anyway. Rob Taylor was sitting behind his desk. He looked up as Steven poked his head in the door. "Yes, Steve, come in," he called, motioning with his hand. "Sit down." He returned his attention to the file in his hands.

Steven noticed the exercise equipment which sat over in the corner of the room. The office was going to look somewhat different from when Turner was in charge. Steven sank down into the huge leather chair, twirling his fingers together. Maybe it would be better if he just came out with it. "I can explain."

Taylor looked up. "There is nothing to explain. I happen to like it. In fact, I like it a lot."

"Ah..." Steven's heart hammered in his chest. "You do? I mean, you did?"

"Damn right." He threw the file on the desk. "It was hot, fresh, sexy, just what I'm looking for."

Steven was speechless.

"I was disappointed that you missed the meeting," Taylor went on. "I was really looking forward to seeing you there."

"You were?" Steven blinked. He leaned forward. "We don't have to tell anyone about it. I won't say a word."

"On the contrary, I want everyone to know about it."

"What?"

He stood. "This is a new age, Steven. We need to conquer our fear, push the limits, be on the cutting edge." He was standing beside him now, looking down.

"I'm not sure what to say." He felt as if he'd just stepped into the twilight zone.

"Steve"—Taylor put a hand on his shoulder—"you're one of the key people working on the Costner bathing suit campaign."

"The Costner ... ah." Steven narrowed his eyes. "Yes, the Costner campaign. I'm responsible for the graphics on the television spots now. We did the underwear thing for them last year. Is there a problem? If there's something you don't like, we could—"

"I like your ideas." He walked back over to the front of his desk and flipped open a file folder. "I see here that you proposed a different direction."

"Mr. Turner felt that it was a bit too..."

"Gay?" Taylor raised an eyebrow, a twitch of a smile on his face.

Steven felt himself blush. "No, I ... I mean, just a little too much sex, I guess."

"Well, Turner's gone now." He closed the file. "It's exactly what we need. Sex sells. The idea is fresh, seductive. Costner is in the business of selling underwear and swimwear, not flannel pajamas. We need to appeal to the gay male market, where sex is front and center, and to straight women, cultured, sophisticated women who aren't afraid to sexually objectify men. Lord knows, straight men have been doing it to women since time immortal. This is about sexual liberation, and freedom of expression, boldly proclaiming what one wants in bed and how they want it."

Steven was speechless.

Rob Taylor walked over to the window. He wasn't wearing his jacket, and damn, those tailored pants clung to all the right spots in all the right ways. "I want to see those ideas again in more detail," he announced. "Starting now, you're in charge of the Costner account."

Steven's eyes widened. "In charge?"

"Yes." He turned around. "Put a team together for my approval. I want the names on my desk by tomorrow morning."

Steven stood. "Yes, sir. Thank you, sir."

"I'll expect a first draft presentation in two weeks' time. Set the meeting up with my secretary."

"I'll do that." Steven headed for the door, breathless.

"And Steven," his boss said, just as he'd reached the threshold of the office door.

Steven sucked in some breath. He didn't turn around. "Ah, ye ... es, sir?" *Please, please...*

"We're going to need to call a meeting with the new team, pronto, by week's end. This campaign is priority. Right now, it is one of our biggest accounts, with the potential for growth. We have been entrusted with only ten percent of their market advertising. I want it all."

Steven let out his breath. "Of course; I'll get right to work on that."

As he walked down the hallway, he was in a state of shock. Not only had Rob Taylor not even mentioned what had happened last night, he'd put him in charge of his own ad campaign. The only explanation Steven could come up with was that Rob Taylor didn't recognize him as the guy who'd made an asshole out of himself the night before. He'd been panicking for nothing.

* * * *

Mac couldn't stop laughing. "I can't believe it. I guess it paid off for you to strip and fall between his legs. Now you're running your own ad campaign."

Steven shook his head, sipping his coffee in the shop across the street. "I told you, he didn't recognize me. It was dark in that place, thank God."

"Maybe he decided it was better not to mention it." Mac grinned.

"Will you give me a break here?" Steven threw up his hands. "Don't play with my head."

"Believe what you need to, but Stevie, old boy, you really did make quite a splash last night. I can't believe he doesn't recognize you. He didn't appear to be drunk."

"Did I take off ... all my clothes?" Steven winced.

"Ah, yep. Bare-ass naked. You have a great bod."

Steven put his face in his hands. "Did I paw at him?"

"You tried to kiss him. That's when you fell between his legs. He caught you, pulled you to your feet. Then I took you home."

"Don't tell me any more." Steven put up his hand. "Please."

"You asked. That's why I can't believe he doesn't—"

"Drop it," Steven snapped. "Even if he does remember, he's got too much class to mention it."

"Maybe he's the one embarrassed. He might be in the closet."

Steven shrugged.

"Aren't you getting a sandwich?"

"Oh no. I can't eat, too excited, not to mention, my stomach is rocking and rolling. More coffee, though."

"I like him." Mac nodded. "He's going to be a good boss. Not to mention that he's

delicious to look at.”

“He’s dynamic, young, willing to take a risk. And yeah”—Steven grinned—“he’s hot. I can’t believe he put me in charge of that account. Willis is going to freak.”

“Willis thinks his shit doesn’t stink. He’s going to have to come down off that pedestal Turner had him on.” Mac stood. “Well, if you’re not getting a sandwich to take out, let’s get back in there. I gotta look keen on the first day.”

“You’re on the team for Costner bathing suits, by the way,” Steven informed him as they crossed the street to their office building.

“Oh, okay, great. Thanks.”

“Mac, you’re the best when it comes to computer graphics, and from the sound of it, Taylor is expecting results. He wants all of Costner’s accounts.”

“Well, sounds like a lot of late nights,” Mac muttered, raising his hand as he walked off in the direction of the computer department.

Steven retreated into his office and settled down to the task of picking his new ad team. He wouldn’t mind the late nights, if he got to spend them with Rob Taylor.

Although Steven didn’t see much of his new boss the first week, Taylor didn’t neglect to let him know that he was impressed with his work. Taylor’s secretary sent Steven a memo with the minutes of the first team meeting, and on the bottom, Taylor had personally written “Good job, Steve,” and signed his initials.

On Friday afternoon at the end of the second week, Taylor walked into Steven’s office and closed the door quietly behind him. “Got a minute?”

Steven tensed, feigning a confident smile. “Of course, sir.”

“Call me Rob, okay?” He leaned over the desk. Steven could smell his intoxicating aftershave. He had a rough shadow on his jaw today, and his hair looked a little shaggy on the edges. It was sexy as hell. Everything about him was sexy, and male, oh so male. Steven unconsciously licked his lips. Suddenly he could imagine Rob Taylor out of that expensive suit, wearing only a pair of skimpy briefs—a pair of Costner’s sexy underwear—umm, fully erect and...

“Steve?”

“Ah, Rob, sir. Yes?”

“You left me there for a minute.”

“Sorry. What can I do for you?”

“I wanted to apologize to you. I’m sorry I haven’t had more time to spend with you this week. It’s been crazy.”

“Oh, sir, I fully understand. I’m flattered you’ve given me so much freedom on this account.”

“Rob.”

“Sorry, Rob.”

“I have confidence in you, Steven. I only back winners.”

“Thank you.”

“I just wanted to tell you that I’d like you to stay late for the next few weeks. I want to personally review the daily progress of the team because the president of Costner wants a presentation in two weeks. It has to be perfect. I want you to come to Boston with me when the time comes.”

“Me, sir? I mean, Rob.”

“Is there a problem?”

“No, I ... of course, I’ll come.”

“Good.” He straightened and smiled. “Have a good weekend. Rest up. We’ve plenty of work to do next week.”

When Mac came into his office a few minutes later to see if he was ready to leave, Steve was sitting behind his desk in a daze. “I’m going to Boston.”

“What?” Mac asked. “I thought we were going to dinner.”

“Yeah, yeah, but Rob asked me to go with him to Boston.”

“Rob, eh?”

Steve grinned. “He wants me to do the presentation with him for Costner.”

“Congratulations.” Mac slapped him on the back. “Wow, a lot of people are going to be jealous.”

“Um.” Steve nodded. “Next week, I have to stay after work with him.” He grinned.

“Because you’ve been a bad boy,” Mac teased.

Steve laughed as they walked to the parking lot. He gave Mac a playful shove. “Shut up.”

“You’re not falling for him, are you?”

“Would you blame me?” Steve unlocked the door to his car.

Mac got into his own car, glancing at him out the window. “No. But you don’t know anything about him, and he is the boss. Be careful.”

“Meet you at the restaurant,” Steve said, getting into the car.

Mac honked and roared out onto the street.

* * * *

The office cleared out quickly on Monday at five o’clock. Steven found himself with butterflies in his gut when Rob walked by his office, poked his head in, and said, “Ready?”

Oh yeah, he was ready, he thought as he walked down the hall to the boss’s office. He’d been having hot dreams about Rob Taylor all weekend, and chastising himself for them in the morning. Mac was right; Rob was his boss, and he’d given him a fantastic opportunity to move ahead in his job, a job he loved. He wasn’t about to do anything to screw that up. But Rob Taylor was so gorgeous, he could have stopped traffic, and few people in the office were immune to his charms. The secretaries seemed to swoon when he walked by. They were all aglow when he took time to stop and ask them how they were.

Steven tried not to focus on how hot Rob looked, with one leg casually raised to rest on his desk. He’d discarded his tie, which was slung over the leather sofa; his jacket hung on the coat rack. His deep mauve shirt was opened at the collar, exposing the column of his throat and the top of his chest. All his clothes were tailored, closely fitting his luscious muscular form, the shirt now straining across his chest as he paused and stretched his shoulders back. “Steve,” he said suddenly, “didn’t see you there. I took the liberty of ordering us some supper. Hope you like Chinese.”

“Love it.” Steven nodded, tearing his gaze away from Rob Taylor and glancing out the window. “It’s going to rain.”

“We’re expecting a storm,” he replied, clicking open his laptop and tapping the keyboard. “I’m not sure about this slogan,” he said suddenly, all business again, his eyes on the screen.

Steven came over behind his desk to peer at the screen over his shoulder. As he did, Rob turned a little in his chair, his arm brushing Steven's hip. Steven moved back a little. Rob Taylor didn't seem to be aware of the contact. "Why is the guy turned to the left?"

"We tried a frontal and found it didn't really show the product. The focus was more on the ... well ... our model is ... ah..."

"Hung?" Rob offered with a smirk, his eyebrow raised.

"Yeah."

"It's okay to use that to sell the underwear. It's a direct connection to sexuality, bold but effective, especially with the gay male consumer."

"Ah, yeah, okay." Steven nodded. "I thought it might distract the consumer from the product."

Rob turned to glance at him. He smiled. "Did he distract you from the product, Steve?"

Steven smiled, a little embarrassed. "Kind of."

Rob laughed. "You need to throw away your inhibitions, Steve, your old-fashioned ideas. Maybe I need to ply you with alcohol. What was it you were drinking that night in the bar, anyway?"

Steven stiffened. "I ... oh God, I can explain. I..."

Suddenly, Rob reached out and grabbed Steven's wrist, pulling him forward, directly in between his legs. "Steve. Don't worry. Your secret is safe with me." He entwined his fingers with his. "I was flattered. Only I wished you hadn't have been so loaded. I might have given you a birthday to remember."

Steven's heart hammered in his chest. He was searching for the right words to say when the phone buzzed on Rob's desk. Rob released his hand and picked up the receiver. Steve stepped away from the desk. He walked over to the window and tried to catch his breath. *He knew. He had known all along. And he seems to like me. Wow. No, this can't be happening.*

"Food's on the way up," Rob said suddenly.

Steven turned around and looked at him. "I thought you'd be angry."

"Why?" He cocked his head to the side.

"I made quite an idiot out of myself that night," Steven muttered.

"It was your birthday. It was no big deal. Besides"—he grinned—"it made my night."

"I won't do it again."

"Ah, too bad," Rob said. "I was hoping you would."

Steven opened his mouth to speak but Rob put up a hand. "I'll be back," he said, getting up and strolling to the door. "The delivery guy is at the door of the outer office. I locked it."

Steven sank down on the sofa as soon as he left. His head was in a whirl, not to mention what was going on with his cock. Rob was his boss. He wasn't sure if Rob was intending for them to ... was he? Should he? Could he stop himself even if he wanted to?

"Here it is," Rob said, "nice and hot."

Steven looked up. He was nice and hot, very hot. Suddenly the food didn't hold very much appeal. His gaze slid down Rob's chest to his pants, and settled there.

Rob set the food down.

When Steven's gaze moved back to Rob's face, he realized that Rob was looking

right at him. "Hungry?" There was a seductive edge to his deep voice, which was as smooth as silk.

Rob was standing right in front of him suddenly.

Steven didn't think. He instinctively reached for the zipper on Rob's black suit pants. "You look so sexy in that black suit with that purple shirt," Steven said, moving the zipper down oh so slowly. He wanted to savor every second of it. "Let's not go too fast," he whispered.

It was like a dream. He pushed the pants down over Rob's hips, then pressed his face against his cock, which was definitely being restrained against its will in the white briefs. He grabbed the front of Rob's briefs with his teeth and pulled the briefs out and off his cock, freeing it.

Rob's hand settled in Steven's hair; he laughed a little. He sounded breathless.

Steven reached around and pulled the briefs down, smoothing his palms down over the hard, round globes of his ass. He let Rob's cock brush over his lips, across his cheek, and heard an involuntary moan escape his own lips. Rob's fingers tightened in his hair and pulled as he pressed his hips forward.

Steven licked the length of his shaft. Rob tasted exactly how he dreamed he would. His cock was perfect and Steven closed his eyes as he opened his mouth and wrapped his lips around the circumference of it. He took it inch by inch into his mouth and lowered himself at an angle to accept it deeper into his throat.

Rob knelt, knees bent against the sofa to accommodate Steven's effort. "Oh yeah," he breathed. "Um, yeah."

The sound of Rob's voice stirred his arousal. His cock was close to bursting out of his pants. His hand reached down to undo his own zipper but Rob's hand brushed it away and undid it for him. "Um, um, yeah ... okay, okay," Rob said, backing off, "stop. I don't want to come yet."

Steven released his cock, glancing up at him. Rob undid his shirt and threw it aside, then immediately went to his knees in front of him. It was a weird sensation, having Rob Taylor on his knees. He couldn't say he didn't like it. And suddenly, he forgot all about it as Rob hastily pulled off Steven's pants and underwear then moved his lips up his calf to his inner thigh, all the while very lightly fondling his cock.

Steven squirmed on the sofa, his breathing coming hard and fast. "I'm going to..."

"No," Rob said, laughing, licking the precum off the head of Steven's cock, "not yet." He reached up and placed his hands on both sides of Steven's face then moved forward and kissed him full on the mouth. Hot, passionate kisses followed, with Rob's hands moving up over Steven's belly to his chest where he undid his shirt and laid it open. Rob's mouth left Steven's and trailed down Steven's chest to his left nipple, which he laved and nibbled at, all the while stroking his cock just enough to keep him on the edge. Oh God, he was a pro. Not to mention absolute eye candy to look at.

In a rush of passion, Steven moaned and pushed Rob back to the floor, tearing his own shirt off and pressing the full length of his naked body against Rob's. Rob grunted as Steven took his mouth hotly, his grateful hands getting their feel of his gorgeous body. He was so hard and muscled, his flesh smooth and practically hairless. His cock bobbed against Steven's stomach, demanding attention. "Turn around, get on your knees," Steven told him.

Rob grinned at him and did as Steven asked. "You're going to give me carpet burn,"

he joked.

"Baby, I'm going to give you a hell of a lot more than that," Steven growled, reaching underneath Rob to play with his erection and his balls, while the other hand spread his beautiful ass cheeks and teased his anus with his index finger. "I want to fuck you," he groaned, pressing his lips against the small of his back. Steven opened him further and began to rim him with his tongue.

If he'd had any inhibitions where Rob was concerned, they had completely left him. He was under his spell completely, entranced by his beauty and incensed with lust.

Rob's body was shaking, his cock already showing signs of surrender.

"Damn, I don't have any..." Steven was saying. "God, I want you."

Rob scrambled up to his feet and went to his desk. He grinned at Steven as he held up a row of condoms.

Steven stayed on his knees, a smile growing. "Come over here with those. No time to tease me."

Rob chuckled. He tossed him the row, and came back to kneel in front of him.

Steven ran his hand down over his luscious chest. "You think we'll need all these?"

Rob kissed his mouth succulently. "We might," he sighed.

Steven laughed, struggling with the packaging. Rob took it from his hand and tore it open with his teeth. "Lie down," Rob said, "on your back. I'll put it on you."

"You better hurry," Steven breathed, lying on his back. "God, you're so sexy. Watching you tear open that package just about made me..."

"Shush," he said, reaching down and kissing his mouth again as he stroked Steven's cock and slowly rolled on the condom. Suddenly, Rob straddled him, his knees on either side of his hips.

"You're going to...?" He'd never fucked a guy like that.

"Just relax," Rob said, his fingers wrapped around Steven's shaft. He positioned himself over Steven's cock and then slowly began to swallow it with his ass. He smiled down at him as he did. "Close your eyes," he said.

"No," Steven murmured, gasping with the pleasure of it. "I don't want to miss a minute of this." Watching him was close to being a religious experience. He was in heaven, his cock was in heaven. He was in love. "Oh God, Rob."

Rob began to move, sending sensations to his cock which he couldn't even begin to describe with words. He began to shoot, his head falling back. He shouted, "Go, go Steve, fuck me. Fuck me hard. Let it go, baby. Give me all of it."

Steven held onto Rob's hips, holding him still as he rammed up into him, a dizzying sense of euphoria gripping him as Rob's cock shot up into the air. "Holy Mother of God," he shouted.

Rob was grinning as he backed off of Steven and laid his head on the carpet. Once Steven had recovered, he crawled over beside him and looked down into his face. He traced his lips with his finger. "You seem pleased with yourself. I don't remember this being part of my job description."

"You mean the old boss never kept you late and fucked your silly?" He pretended to look shocked.

Steven laughed. "That's a troubling thought." He lay there, his shoulder touching Rob's, wondering if this had really happened. "Am I awake?"

"I hope so," Rob replied. "We need to do some work." He was already standing.

Steven glanced up at him, watching as he pulled on his underwear and pants. "Was this a good idea?"

"I don't know," he said. "Was it?"

Steven sat up. "Not fair. I asked you first."

Rob smiled at him. "You know, I've wanted to make love to you since you threw yourself into my arms at that bar."

"I thought I threw myself between your legs?" Steven smirked.

"A little of both, actually."

"This is a little delicate."

"Why, because I'm the boss?"

"Yes."

"You think that's why I put you in charge of this account?" He did up his shirt.

"I didn't say that."

"But you were thinking it."

Steven shrugged. He got to his feet and began to dress.

"Do you think I'm a stupid man, Steve?" He met his eyes.

"Of course not." He shook his head. Rob felt like his boss again suddenly.

"I wouldn't put someone in charge of an account just because I wanted into their pants. I've never had to bribe someone to fuck me."

"Oh shit, Rob, I didn't mean that." Steven held out a hand.

"No worries. Just remember, your job, and what happened here tonight, it's separate."

"Is it possible to keep it separate?"

He shrugged. "We'll see, won't we?"

"Is this a..." Steven swallowed.

"Is this a what?" He walked over to the table and began to open the bag with the food. "We may have to warm this up a bit in the microwave."

"Rob," Steven said, coming closer, doing up his shirt, "is this a one-time thing?" He waited. He really didn't want to know the answer. He was afraid of the answer.

"I don't know," Rob said, meeting his gaze. "I really enjoyed being with you. I'm attracted to you. I admire your talent, your dedication to the job. I genuinely like you, Steve. Let's take it one day at a time, okay?"

Steven nodded. It wasn't exactly what he wanted to hear. "I'll help you warm up the food."

* * * *

On Tuesday, Steven was anxious all day, anticipating the time when everyone would go home and he would be alone with Rob. He hadn't seen Rob today. Rob was busy, in meetings, and when Janis, Rob's secretary, called him at four and said that the boss wouldn't be back today and that he could go home at the scheduled time, Steven was extremely disappointed.

Wednesday wasn't any better. Steven saw Rob briefly in the morning, but only to say hello when he passed him in the hallway. Rob was in deep conversation with someone on his cell phone and he seemed distracted. He nodded at him but walked right past. Around eleven, Steven thought up an excuse to see him, but when he stopped by his office, Janis said he had to fly to Denver.

“Denver?” Steven echoed.

“There was an emergency of some kind with his daughter. He said he’d be back next Thursday.”

“Daughter?” Steven croaked.

Janis gave him a strange look. “Yes, daughter. Eight years old, I think. Why?”

He shook his head. “No reason. Thanks anyway.” He wandered off with no particular destination in mind.

A few minutes later, he ran headlong into Mac. “Hey, dream boy, I got a problem with—Hey, what’s with you?”

“He’s got a daughter,” Steven said.

“Who has a daughter?”

“Rob, I mean, Mr. Taylor. The boss.”

“I thought he was gay.”

“Oh, he’s gay,” Steven muttered. “He’s also a lying bastard with a family back in Denver.”

“He could be divorced.”

“Yeah. But he never said anything, you know.”

“Why should he?”

Steven looked at him, then away.

“Oh my God.”

“Don’t say anything.”

Mac followed him into his office. “You fucked him.”

Steven sighed. “Close the door.”

“You fucked him.”

“Stop saying that.”

“Well, how else am I supposed to say it? Was he good?”

“He was fan ... never mind, none of your business.”

“So, is he hot for you?”

“I don’t know. He was that night, but I haven’t seen him since then and now this.”

“Steve, a lot of gay men have kids. It doesn’t mean anything. Maybe he came out after he got married or...”

Steven nodded. “Let’s go to lunch. I’m not going to worry about it right now.”

But he was worried. In fact, he couldn’t seem to think of anything else. Damn it. He should have never had sex with him.

Next Thursday, Rob was back. He called a meeting in the morning with all the project heads. He wanted an update on their progress. He looked tired, tense. He didn’t seem to have a lot of patience. When Rob looked at Steven, Steven wasn’t quite sure what to say. He’d been slacking the last few days, his mind elsewhere. One of his team members was out with the flu and they had been having some software problems.

Rob put his hands on his hips. “Well?” he probed.

Steven resented his demeanor, bristled at that arrogant look on his too handsome face. “What do you mean, well?” The words came out of his mouth before he had time to think about them. *Shit.*

Rob looked taken aback. The other project heads froze, holding their breaths.

There was complete silence for a few seconds then Steven blew up. “While you’ve been prancing off to Denver, doing God knows what, some of us have been dealing with

computer glitches and—”

Rob put up his hand. He looked around the table. “That will be all,” he said then turned back to Steven. “You, stay.”

There was not a sound as the others shuffled out. Rob walked over and shut the door of the conference room. “Do you care to explain why in hell you decided to talk to me like that?” His blue eyes darkened with anger.

Steven swallowed. “I didn’t think.”

“You didn’t think? What in hell was that ... prancing off? I did not prance off. Who in the hell do you think you are?”

Steven lowered his head. “You could have told me you had a daughter.”

“Why? It’s really no one’s God dammed business. We fucked once and you think I should tell you my entire life?”

“It meant nothing to you then?” Steven swallowed.

“I never said it meant nothing. I said we’d take it slow, see what happens. I don’t owe you anything. But God damn it, you owe me a fucking update on your progress for this account.” Rob pointed at him. “I want it on my desk, first thing tomorrow morning. Is that clear?”

He nodded.

“Good,” Rob said. He walked over to the door and swung it open. It hit the wall with a bang.

Steven closed his eyes.

* * * *

Mac sat beside him in the bar, watching as Steven sipped his drink. “The entire office is abuzz.”

“I don’t give a shit.”

“What in hell possessed you to talk to him like that, Steve? You could lose your job.”

“I don’t know. I just...” He shook his head.

“You’re in love with him.”

“No, I’m not. I don’t even know him.”

Mac shook his head. “Doesn’t matter. I think it was love at first sight. I think that if it had been anyone else in that bar, even with that much booze in you, you wouldn’t have done what you did that night.”

“I feel used. I don’t think it meant the same thing to him as it did to me. What in hell is wrong with me? I should have said no.”

Mac put an arm around him. “Never mind. Concentrate on your job. You’ll get over him.”

Steven nodded, but he wasn’t convinced.

* * * *

The next week came and went. Steven put the report on Rob’s desk but he didn’t get any response. He assumed it was all right. Rob didn’t ask him to work late. In fact, he seemed to be avoiding him altogether. Steven wondered if the trip to Boston was off now.

One evening just before he was getting ready to leave, he heard some noise down the

hallway. It sounded as if someone was crying. Steven walked hesitantly down the hallway. He stopped just outside Rob's office and stood stock-still.

There was a woman crying. And he could hear Rob trying to comfort her but he seemed distraught himself. "They're doing everything they can," he said. "I've got the best doctors working on it. It doesn't matter what it costs, Monica, I'll pay all the bills."

"She can't die," the woman said, coughing.

"She won't. I won't let her die. The doctors said that..."

Steven backed away from the door. My God. Someone was dying? Was this Rob's family, his wife and child? Even if he felt Rob deceived him, he didn't want anything bad to happen to his daughter. He swallowed, feeling petty and foolish for his jealous outburst. He turned and hurried down the hallway.

The next day, Steven was surprised to see Rob walk into his office. He slumped in the visitor chair and gave him a faint smile. "Hi," he said.

Steven nodded at him. "Hello."

"We do need to get back to this campaign. I've managed to stall Costner for two weeks."

"Then the Boston trip is still on?"

He nodded. "I was pleased with the report last week. But we need to work faster. Can you stay tonight?"

Steven nodded uneasily. "Of course."

"See you at five," he said.

* * * *

When Steven walked into Rob's office that evening, Rob was sitting back in his chair, his eyes closed. His tie was askew and he looked disheveled, tired.

"Can we get right to it?" Steven cleared his throat. "We can skip supper. I'll eat at home if you don't mind." That night after they'd made love, they had sat together eating. Rob had reached over and licked plum sauce from his mouth. They had laughed about that. God, he'd been so happy being with him like that, touching his dark hair when they were working. Rob had even kissed him good night in the parking lot, a long, deep, sensuous kiss. It had stayed with him all night.

Rob lifted his head. "Of course," he said. He rubbed his eyes and leaned forward to look over his computer screen. "Did you update this yet?"

"Yes." Steven nodded. "We made the changes. I hope you like it."

"It's good," he said. "I think we need to decide on which slogans should be used with this ad in particular."

Steven nodded again. "We have five. The team is split over the first two."

"I like the second one personally," Rob said, looking over at him. He paused. "Are you planning on standing ten feet away from me all night?"

"Yes, actually."

"Okay." He sighed. He ran his hands through his hair.

Steven felt a rush of compassion for him. "I'm sorry about your little girl."

Rob glanced at him. "How do you know about Madison?"

"I overheard you in here with your wife yesterday. She's sick, isn't she?"

"Yes, and Monica is not my wife."

"Oh, well, the mother of your daughter."

He didn't say anything.

"What's the matter with her?"

"She's got leukemia."

"Oh God, Rob, I'm sorry." He walked over to him and placed a hand on his shoulder. He had no intention of ending up in his arms, but Rob stood up and Steven moved into his embrace. Rob hugged him tightly and then his lips moved to Steven's neck and then to his mouth. When Rob started kissing him, Steven lost control. Common sense and rational thought never stood a chance. Rob's passion grew to a feverish pitch as he propelled Steven against the wall and proceeded to undo his pants. He sank to his knees and lifted Steven's cock out of his pants. Steven's head banged up against the wall as Rob started to seriously suck him off.

The groans and grunts coming from both of them sounded inhuman. Rob brought him to the edge, then stood and flipped him around. With his pants around his ankles and Rob's hands moving over his cock and his nipples, he was humping the bloody wall. He heard the drawer open and suddenly he realized Rob was going to fuck him right there. "Rob," he began breathlessly, "don't."

Rob wrapped his arms around him. "Please," he pleaded with his lips against his ear. "I want you, Steven. I need you right now. Please, let me love you."

Rob's hand wrapped around his cock, squeezing, while his other hand flirted with Steven's opening, inserting a digit and moving it up past the first ring of muscles.

Steven moaned, his breathing growing shallow as Rob fucked him first with his finger and then with his cock. The motion from Rob's hips suddenly drove him into the wall. His teeth rattled; his entire body tingled. He shouted something. It was absolutely mind-blowing. He exploded with a powerful orgasm, his cum running down the wall in streams. Rob uttered a groan; his entire body shuddered then went limp, and for the longest time he didn't move. He stood there, holding onto Steven.

"Rob?"

His head stayed on Steven's shoulder for a moment. "Wait," he said softly. "Give me a minute." He uttered what sounded like a sob, then he cleared his throat and moved away.

Steven waited a minute before he turned around, assuming Rob needed some privacy. His mind screamed *I love you*. But he wouldn't say it. When he turned around, Rob was doing up his pants. Rob didn't look at him. "You're going to rip out my heart," Steven said.

Rob looked at him now.

"I don't know why I said that."

"I don't know why you said that either. It's not my intention."

"You're in a lot of pain. I'm happy that I could..."

"Don't." He put up a hand. "It wasn't about that entirely. Don't do this, Steven. I'm not able to handle it right now, okay?"

Steven nodded. "Let's get to work."

"Good idea."

They worked together several nights over the following two weeks. Rob didn't try to touch him again and Steven didn't mention it, but he was suffering. Rob was suffering too, presumably because of his daughter. Apparently there had been no change in her condition. The doctors were hoping for a miracle.

When Steven got on the plane to Boston, he had already made his decision. After this campaign was over, he was leaving his job. He was doing so with a heavy heart but he was desperately in love with Rob, and he wasn't about to get over it. He knew if he stayed, he'd end up making love with Rob again and again. Rob had never promised him anything, nor had he explained about his family situation. He had only himself to blame for this. Madison's mother was staying in Rob's house now. Everyone at the office knew about it. It looked like they were back together.

Rob was late that morning. He barely made the flight. By the time he had walked onto the plane, Steven was practically frantic. He was never so relieved to see anyone in his life. "I thought you were going to miss the flight," he said, mystified to see the expression on Rob's face. He was beaming.

"I'm sorry," he said, settling in the seat. "I have good news. Madison is responding well to this new treatment. The doctors think it's going to work this time."

Steven hugged him tightly. "Rob. I'm so happy for you and Madison's mother. That's great news."

"I've been at the hospital all night with Monica. They just got the results."

He talked a bit more about the treatment and then closed his eyes. Rob slept most of the way while Steven looked out the window, so tempted to cover Rob's hand with his own. He refrained, digging his nails into his palm instead.

When they arrived at the hotel, Steven held his breath until he heard that they had separate rooms. On the way up in the elevator, Rob eyed him, a quizzical look on his handsome yet unshaven face.

"What?" Damn, he was too sexy for words, especially when he was unshaven like that.

"Nothing. It's just that you looked so anxious at the desk. Relieved to find out we're not sharing a room?" He lifted an eyebrow.

"No, I ... I didn't think about it really."

"You're a liar. Actually, our rooms adjoin, in case you—" He stopped. "But you won't."

"What are you talking about?" Steven fingered the key in his hand.

"Lately, you've been ... I don't know." He shook his head. "I thought maybe we had something."

Steven shook his head. "You are fucking unbelievable." The elevator dinged and the doors opened.

Rob followed Steven down the hallway. Steven stopped in front of his room. He was furious, sad, confused. He struggled with the key, just wanting to get inside, away from Rob.

Rob suddenly put his hand over his. "Stop. You're going to jam the key in the lock."

Steven yanked his hand away. "I don't want to fight with you, especially not here. This is an important meeting. We need to focus on—"

"How can I focus when all I can see is you?"

Steve looked at him, his mouth agape. "You better speak to Monica about that." He made a final attempt with the key and the door opened. He hauled his bag inside, closing the door behind him. When he turned around, he gasped. Rob was standing there by the bed, the door between the rooms open.

"So, I'm to have no privacy?"

"You want me to leave, say so."

"Leave."

"You can't just throw things at me then run away. Now, what in hell does Monica have to do with how I feel about you?"

"She is the mother of your child. She's been living in your house." Steven pointed at him. "You looked shocked. You didn't think I knew that, did you?"

"That's not why I'm shocked. I'm shocked at what a gossip mill the office is. I'm sure they're talking about us too."

"I don't give a damn. Madison is going to be fine. She needs her father."

"And she'll have him. I'm not going anywhere. Actually, Madison will come to live with me part-time, now that her mother is dead."

Steven narrowed his eyes. "Monica is dead?"

Rob shook his head as he sat on the edge of the bed. "No. Caroline is dead. She died three years ago. Cancer. That's why I was so scared when Madison got leukemia. It took Caroline fast."

"Wait. I'm totally confused. Isn't Monica Madison's mother?"

"Yes."

"And you're her father?"

"I am."

"And who is Caroline again?"

Rob stood. "Steve, Caroline and Monica were together, a couple. I went to school with Monica. We were best friends. When she fell in love with Caroline, they wanted to have a child. They asked me to donate the sperm. When Caroline was alive, I had minimal contact with Madison. It's the way she wanted it. She was the birth mother. After she died, Monica was devastated. She asked me to take a more active role in Madison's life. I agreed and fell in love with my little girl. We have shared custody. When Madi got sick, Monica agreed to let me bring her out here where they have the latest medical treatment. Why in the hell would you think I was married? I'm gay, for God's sakes."

Steven met his gaze. "I'm so sorry, Rob. It all makes perfect sense now."

"Why didn't you say something? Why didn't you just come out and ask me instead of assuming the worst?"

"You were in such a bad mood and I thought..."

"That I was a married man fooling around."

"Rob, I..."

He turned and left the room, closing the door between them.

"God damn it!" Steven bellowed at the top of his lungs. "Damn it, Rob. I love you."

The door opened again. Rob stood there, looking at him. "You what?"

Steven flushed with embarrassment. "Nothing. I'm just letting off steam."

Rob smiled at him.

"What in hell are you grinning about?"

"I thought I heard you say that you loved me."

"I didn't exactly say that."

"Oh yes, you did."

"I said, I'd love to knock you on your ass."

Rob took a few steps toward him. "You'd love to do what to my ass now?"

“You need a hearing aid,” Steven accused, but his resolve was wavering. A smile was threatening.

“Oh really?” He came closer, reaching out for his hand. “I don’t know about the hearing aid, but I do need you.”

“Rob”—Steven bit his lip—“don’t say things you don’t mean.”

“It’s not my style to say things I don’t mean, or to do things I don’t mean.” He was standing close enough now to kiss him. “Now, say it again.”

“Say what?” He was already lost in those eyes.

“Say I love you, God damn it.”

“I love you God damn it.” Steven swallowed, tears pricking his eyes. “Don’t make me say it again.”

“I will make you say it again. I want you to say it over and over to me for the rest of my life. How does that sound?” His voice was soft, strained. “I love you, Steve. I tried to fight it, but I’ve lost the battle. Kiss me, will you?”

Steven reached out and smoothed back his hair. He ran a hand over Rob’s rough jaw. “Yeah,” he said, “okay, I guess I can do that.” He planted both hands on the sides of his face and kissed his mouth.

Rob put his arms around him and held him close. “You’re not getting a promotion,” he whispered in his ear.

“I don’t need one.” Steven kissed his mouth again. “All I need is you, right about now.”

“Well,” he said, stepping away from him, “I’d love to oblige, but we have a presentation to give in about two hours and I have to shower and shave and change my clothes. We need to eat. And it takes at least a half hour to get to Costner Inc.”

“Do you think they’ll mind if we’re late?” Steven pleaded.

“Aw, personally, yes.” He grinned.

“Are you always going to be the levelheaded one?”

“Someone has to be.”

“Rob?” he said as Rob walked back to the adjoining room door.

“Yeah?” He glanced back at him.

“I’m the happiest man alive today because of you.”

“Just wait until later,” he said, winking at him, “I’ll make sure you’re ever happier.” The door closed.

Steven paced a few minutes, looked at the clock. Oh, what the hell. Rob might be the levelheaded one, but this was no time for practicalities. Steven walked to the door between the suites and pulled it open. He smiled as he heard the shower running. Rob was humming. Steven stripped off his clothes and left them on the bedroom floor.

Rob looked around in surprise when he saw Steven pull back the shower door.

“Don’t say anything, boss. I know. You said we didn’t have time. And you know”—he smiled, letting his gaze travel the length of Rob’s delicious naked form—“I thought about it and I decided that we did have time after all.”

Rob smiled as Steven backed him up against the tile. “Is that so?”

“Um, it’s so.” He ran his hand up over Rob’s chest, pressed his lips to one of his nipples and licked the water off of it.

“You do realize you’re being insubordinate?”

“So fire me,” he taunted.

“Don’t be cheeky.”

“You know, I think I was in love with you the moment I saw you, even in my drunken haze.”

Rob’s hands moved down over Steven’s back to his ass. He squeezed his ass cheeks gently and pulled him closer, capturing his mouth with his. They kissed hotly then Rob pulled Steven around and pressed his chest against the wall of the shower. “You’re beautiful, Steven. And I think I loved you too the moment you fell between my legs in that bar.” He laughed, nibbling his ear as he inserted a finger up inside him and slowly rotated his digit.

Steven was panting. He smiled into the tile, grunting as Rob pressed his erection up in between his ass cheeks. “How are we going to work this boss-employee thing anyway?” he teased. “Do I always have to play the submissive?”

Rob grabbed his hips and began to enter him slowly. “Oh, I don’t know. You don’t seem to be minding it at the moment.”

Steven moaned with pleasure as Rob’s cock pushed up inside of him.

“And if you’re a really good boy,” Rob breathed into his ear, “I might just let you play boss sometimes.”

Steven started to laugh softly but his laughter transformed itself into pleading as Rob began to fuck him nice and slow. He was driving him wild. Steven’s hands tightened into fists against the wall and he banged them gently until Rob picked up the pace, fondling his cock all the while.

They came almost at the same time, Rob’s arms folding around him as he leaned back against his chest, turned his head, and sought his lips. They kissed tenderly for a few minutes then Rob released him. “You’re a naughty boy,” Rob accused, rinsing off then stepping out of the shower.

“Guess you’re just going to have to punish me, boss.”

Rob laughed. “Later. Now, get dressed, you’ve got the presentation of your life to give, baby.”

Steven sighed good-naturedly. “Back to business, eh, gorgeous?”

Rob waited until Steven got out of the shower. He wiped his back off with the towel then he wrapped him in his arms, kissing his neck.

“Hey boss, thought we were in a hurry?” Steven teased, turning around in his arms.

Rob looked at him thoughtfully. “We are, but this is more important all of a sudden. We’ll get to the meeting in plenty of time. But first I want to tell you one more time that I love you. And if sometimes I forget, and I get too wrapped up in other things, remind me, okay? You’ll always be the most important thing in the world to me, you and Madison, of course.”

Steven swallowed hard. “Thanks, baby. Do you think Madison will like me?”

“Madison is going to love you, almost as much as I do.”

“I’m pretty happy.”

“Oh yeah?”

“Only one more thing would make me happier.”

“What’s that?”

“A raise, a bigger salary? I have connections now. I’m doing the boss.”

“Will you do that dance you did for me in the bar that night?” Rob grinned.

“Will it get me a raise?”

“Of course, but not monetary.”

Steve laughed. “A bigger office?”

“Maybe.” He grinned, leaving the bathroom.

Steven stood there for a few moments with a smile on his face. “Well, in that case...” he mused.

The End

Jupiter

Chapter One

The truth was, the moment the judge brought down that gavel, Alex really didn't care what his sentence was to be. He had been severely depressed for months, and the medication he was on made him feel numb. "Ten months community service at Jupiter," the social aid lawyer said into his face. He appeared to be pleased about that for some reason.

Jupiter was an advanced institute of knowledge for the creatively gifted, and during the summer, Alex had broken into the school and done some heavy-duty property damage. Jupiter was several miles outside the city limits. He'd been drinking heavily and riding around on one of his friend's old scooters when he saw that ritzy, white school of the arts. Suddenly, he was filled with such rage. A few days later after he'd sobered up, he went downtown and turned himself in to the police. Now, several months later, here he was, being sent back there again.

The lawyer led Alex from the courtroom. Alex's mother and younger sister followed at his heels. "Did you take your medication?" his little sister asked softly, moving up beside him and sliding her hand into his.

He looked down at her a moment. "Yes, Jesse," he said. Her eyes were bright with unshed tears. He squeezed her hand. "It's okay. Everything will be okay." They'd buried Manny, and been through two court proceedings in the last year, one of which saw the sentencing of his brother's killer. Jesse was only fourteen. It was too much.

"Why do you have to go away?" she whined. "And why don't you come back and live at home, Alex?"

He shook his head. "I can't now. I won't be far. I'll see you."

They stopped at the end of the corridor. He'd been living in a rooming house for the last few months. It seemed he and his mother didn't have anything to say to each other any more.

"The fact that you managed to complete high school went good for you," the lawyer said suddenly. "You do understand that you're not to associate with members of that gang and..."

"Yes," he said, nodding. He had no interest in seeing any of them ever again.

"I wasn't sure you were listening in there," the lawyer said. "You seemed to fade out and ... maybe you should have your meds adjusted."

Alex's gaze was on his mother, who stood looking out the window. Manny had been the best of them. He had been her hope for a better life. Now, he was dead. And it was his fault. He doubted she'd ever forgive him. He doubted he'd ever forgive himself.

Alex had gotten himself involved with the Rebeldes—or the Rebels, as the white folks called them—not because he wanted to be in a gang, but because he'd developed a crush on their leader. Slade was in his class at school—that is, when he bothered to show up to class at all. In Alex's eyes, it seemed Slade could do anything. He had power and money. He had everything that Alex's family had to struggle so hard for every day. When Slade spoke, people listened, and that was what Alex was really attracted to. Somehow Slade picked up on the fact that Alex had this crush on him and he played it, had fun with

it, flirting with and teasing him. Alex began to hang out with the gang, although he was never officially a member. He followed Slade around like a puppy, and began to get into trouble at home. He didn't do his homework; he didn't respect his curfew. His older brother Manny started to get on his case, and one night, Manny cut his class at the local college, and went looking for him. When Manny found him with the Rebels, he was furious. Alex had been warned time and time again to stay away from these guys. Alex was embarrassed when Manny treated him like a child in front of the guys. He told his brother to go to hell, and there was a fight, a fight that got out of hand and ended with his brother lying on the pavement in a puddle of blood. Slade had murdered his brother right in front of him. Since then, Alex had never been able to close his eyes without seeing all that blood.

His little sister was hugging him now. His mother turned in his direction, but seemed to look right through him. "*Llámeme si te necesitas algo*," she said, but she didn't sound like she meant it. Guilt twisted in his gut. Even if he did need anything, he knew he wouldn't call home. She stopped in front of the lawyer. "Thank you for all you've done," she said. Then she tugged on Jesse's arm. "We have to go. I took off two hours from the hotel today. I have to get back to work."

Alex watched them walk away. His mother had worked her fingers to the bone to raise the three of them. His father had died a year after Jesse was born, crushed under some fallen debris on a construction site. Manny was going to be someone. He had such dreams. He was working and going to community college. He was going to take them out of the tenement life, buy a house somewhere. "One day, you won't have to work," he'd told their mother.

"You start Monday." The lawyer broke into his reverie, glancing at the elevator.

Alex looked at him, startled. "What?"

"You have to keep reporting to the parole officer. Remember you have an appointment tomorrow afternoon. You'll have all the details then. I believe you'll stay right there at the school; it's too far to travel every day. It's out of the city so you won't have a chance to meet up with any members of that gang."

Alex glanced out the window. The lawyer kept rattling on.

"You know, you're damn lucky, Villanueva."

"I am?" He turned around now.

"You don't get it, do you? You're an adult now. At your age, the judge might have sent you up."

"Why, because Juniper is a white ass rich school, and I'm just a poor Spic?"

"Precisely," he said with a nod. "Good luck. You're going to need it with that attitude."

That white lawyer could talk about attitude. He didn't have to live it. Even though he was born in this country, somehow he knew he'd always be just a Spic ... or a speck, as his friends like to joke ... insignificant.

* * * *

His friend Jose was waiting for him outside the courthouse. Alex took a breath when he saw him. The air was heavy, the pollution seeming heavier today in the heat. He tore the tie away from his throat and opened the buttons of his white cotton shirt. Jose had stuck with him through all of this, in spite of the way Alex had treated him, practically

ignoring him when he began hanging out with Slade. Jose would never know how grateful he was for his friendship; however, he'd never be as grateful as Jose wanted him to be. "Hey," he said, coming down the steps now to greet him.

"How did it go?" Jose looked worried.

Alex smiled. He threw an arm around his plump shoulders and gave him a squeeze. "Thank God for meds."

"Come on, Alex," he said, pushing him away, "don't fuck around. I assume it isn't jail 'cause you're not in cuffs. What did the judge say?"

"Chill, my friend. It's okay. Community service. I got to see the parole officer about it."

"Community service?" Jose echoed, scrambling after him down the street.

"At Jupiter." It finally sunk in when he said it.

"Jupiter?"

Alex stopped and looked at him. "Stop echoing me, man." He laughed a little. "What's with you?"

"Did your lawyer tell 'em what was happening with you when you trashed that place? Did he say...?"

"He did, and I suspect that's why my ass is not in the joint. But look, they don't care about all that stuff. I did the crime. I have to do the time. It's not so bad. At least I'll get out of this city."

"How long?" Jose had fallen into step beside him.

"Ten months."

"That's long. When you have to leave?"

"Monday."

"Come stay with me. Don't stay in that boarding house place anymore."

Alex glanced at him. "I ... I'll see you on the weekend, okay? I got stuff to do. I have to see my PO and my shrink. Let's do something Saturday."

Jose nodded. "Okay. You get to come home on the weekends or what?"

"I don't know. I'll tell you when I do."

A few minutes later, they went their separate ways. Jose hopped the bus. He had a small apartment downtown, close to the garage where he worked. Alex walked the rest of the way to the boarding house. He lay down on the bed in his room and closed his eyes. He hadn't slept much last night. He hadn't slept much in months. *You stay away from those guys ... they're trouble ... criminals ... the principal called ... where were you ... Alex ... you're messing up man, you're messing up ... Manny ... Manny ... wake up, Manny ... oh God ... oh God...*

He woke up like he usually did, soaked in sweat and shaking all over. The sun had gone down, and the heat had lifted. He reached for the bottle of pills on his nightstand and popped one into his mouth. It was okay. Everything would be okay now. He closed his eyes again and tried to sleep.

* * * *

"Why the Jupiter?"

It was a good question. "I ... I don't know."

"Did you know you'd end up there when you started off that night?"

Alex looked at his parole officer as if he could help him find the answer, then the

words came out of his mouth without any conscious effort. “We used to joke about that place.”

“Who is ‘we’?” Jason Carter reeled back in his padded chair.

“Manny and I. When he was young”—he swallowed—“he liked to sing. He used to dream that he’d go to Jupiter, become a big star.”

“Is that why you chose Jupiter then?”

“Maybe.” He sighed. “It was there, and I felt this rage ... I wanted to break something ... I ... the shrink already asked me what it represented to me ... we all know what that is.”

“Privilege. White society.”

He shrugged.

“You don’t really hate white people.”

“I don’t hate anyone. I hated waking up in the morning in that dump, with garbage all around me and watching my mother work herself into the ground ... and I see those people ... ah ... you won’t understand.”

“You have to change your attitude, Alex.”

“I’m trying.”

Jason Carter opened a file on his desk. “I’m not saying all is fair out there but wallowing won’t do you any good. You need to make your own way. Do you understand your sentence?”

“I have to return to the scene of the crime, to make amends.”

“How do you feel about that?”

“How am I supposed to feel? I’m resigned to it. No choice. I want out of this city. At least I’ll get to breathe some good air.”

“You’ll be under the supervision of a Mark Delaney. He’s the director of janitorial services. There’s a room for you there at Jupiter in the staff quarters. You’ll be given your board, and a small amount of money for necessities, provided by the state. I have some money for you today. Your bus fare is included this month.”

He nodded. “Do I get to come back, or am I supposed to stay there on the weekends too?”

“The state will pay your fare home for Christmas, but as for—”

Alex put up a hand. “I doubt I’ll be missed at Christmas.”

Jason nodded. “How’s the depression?”

“Doc wants to decrease the medication. I don’t feel ready.”

“I’ve set up an account at a pharmacy in Jupiter so that you can get your prescription filled.” He handed him an envelope. “Your money, bus ticket, and papers for your medication are in there. Don’t lose it.”

Alex took it with a nod. Jupiter was also the name of the small town connected with the school.

“Any questions?”

He shook his head and stood up.

“Delaney will report to me once a week. Any problems and...”

“There won’t be any problems,” Alex said.

* * * *

The bus trip took a little over two hours. Alex got off on the main street of Jupiter,

and looked around him in disbelief. Although he had been at the school, he'd never been in the town itself. He put down his bag and looked around him ... a grocery store, post office, pharmacy, town hall, and a host of other little businesses peppered the street. Directly in front of him was the Jupiter Eatery, which also served as the bus terminal. When he turned around, his gaze immediately riveted to the Jupiter Advanced School of Knowledge for the Creatively Gifted, or JAS, as many people called it. It stood up on a small hill surrounded by green.

Alex checked his watch. It was after ten o'clock. He was already late. He picked up his bag and headed up the road in the direction of the school.

* * * *

"What's your name?" The security guard at the gate eyed him critically.

"Alexjandro Martinez Villanueva."

"Are you on the list of new students?"

"No. I'm the guy who trashed the place," he said, meeting his eyes. "I'm here to meet with a Mister, ah..."

"Delaney. Wait here, and I'll tell him you're here."

A few minutes later, a man came walking down the road. He was in his fifties with a balding head and sharp blue eyes. "Mr. Alexjandro Martinez Villanueva? Open the gate up, Frederick." He motioned his hand at the guard. "Come on in."

Alex walked cautiously through the gate. Delaney grasped his hand. "Welcome to JAS. How old are you?"

"Twenty-one."

He nodded. "Well, come on then, Alex ... or do you prefer...?"

"Alex will do fine."

"Call me Mark. Come on, I'll show you where you can store your stuff."

* * * *

We'll be the Villanueva Brothers ... Martinez ... Alex ... Martinez ... oh ... we'll be rich ... rich and famous ... Manny ... Manny...?

Alex blinked his eyes open. It was past seven o'clock. Mark would be here soon. He threw his legs over the side of the bed. The room was nice. The bathroom was down the hall. And right now, he was the only one sleeping in the staff quarters. The other workers wouldn't arrive until the following week.

In the shower, he rested his forehead on the tile and tried not to dwell on the irony. His brother had dreamed of being a student here. They were going to start a band, be famous ... the famous Martinez Brothers ... or Villanueva ... didn't matter. They debated that no end. It was only when they grew older and realized that there was no money to go to Jupiter School that all talk of it came to an end. Manny opted for computer science courses at the local college, and waited tables in the day. He'd worked his way up from busboy to waiter finally, and he was making good tips. He'd gotten A's in his college courses, and he took everyone out for pizza that weekend.

Alex wiped the water off his face and turned off the shower. Slade had been a mistake, the biggest mistake of his life. There'd been nothing attractive about him. He was just a hood with attitude, and in the end, he hadn't even gotten a decent kiss,

although he'd been on his knees enough. He was tired of being on his knees. He'd never get on his knees for any guy again. He would pay his debt, and get the hell out of Los Angeles, and try to live with what he'd done.

He dried off, pulled on a pair of jeans and an old T-shirt. Mark had been very clear yesterday. His job for the next two weeks would mostly be outside. They needed to whip the grounds into shape before the students came back in two weeks. That meant the grass needed to be mowed, weeds trimmed, and flowers tended to. The buildings had been cleaned for the summer already, but Mark said they needed some touch-ups before the students came back. "It gets dusty," he explained. In September, more janitorial staff would arrive. Until then, they were on their own.

Alex prepared his breakfast in the small kitchen—toast with jam, and instant coffee—then he walked outside to meet Mark, who was driving up the road. "You're punctual," he shouted as he jumped out of his truck. "I thought I was going to have to shake you awake."

"I don't sleep much," he said.

Mark Delaney slapped him on the back. "Come on, I didn't get a chance to show you where the supplies are. Remind me to give you a key. We keep it locked. Don't want students going in there ripping off stuff."

"Why would they?"

"They play pranks. University students, you know ... initiation and stuff. You'll see. The first week they're here, it's registration ... no classes, so it's party time in the dorms."

They worked hard outside planting flowers until lunchtime. Mark showed Alex how to drive the lawn mower. They ate together back in the small kitchen. Mark brought food from home, rich stew and homemade bread. "Try some of the wife's pound cake," he told Alex.

"Oh God, Mark. I'm stuffed. You're trying to kill me."

"Got to eat. You burn the calories in this job. You're skinny enough."

Alex laughed. He'd never thought of himself as skinny. He was five-eleven, one hundred and seventy pounds, slim but well muscled. Older people always thought he was skinny. He took a piece of the cake. It was delicious. "Your wife is a good cook," he said. They drank some murky coffee then returned to work.

The week passed quickly. Alex found he didn't have time to dwell on anything, and that was good. He took fewer pills and slept soundly but he still dreamed of Manny ... and that Friday night, he dreamed of Slade. It was so real, as if Slade was in the same room with him. He handed Alex a knife, and said, "Kill your brother. Go ahead. Kill him. You killed your brother, Alex."

He was glad it was the weekend and Mark wasn't coming. He didn't sleep all night. He finally fell back to sleep around noon, and was awakened by Mark at two. "Get up, kid. You're coming for supper."

Mark's wife was nice. They had a great supper, and then Mark drove him back to the school. It finally struck Alex how nice Mark was being to him in spite of who he was and what he'd done. He paused before he got out of the truck. "You know..." he said, looking at him, "I really appreciate everything and I..."

"No sweat," Mark said.

"You know, you never asked me about why I...?"

“Look kid, you made a mistake ... that’s all. I can see you’re a good guy. Making mistakes is never a problem ’cause we all do that. It’s just the repeating of them that gets a little sticky.”

Alex nodded slowly.

“Don’t be late Monday morning. We got a lot of work to do. I need you.”

“Thanks, Mark.”

Chapter Two

That morning it seemed that everyone was descending on Jupiter. The staff as well as the students began to arrive, and it was stressful. Mark gave him a slew of orders, and he found himself running around all day. Alex met all these new people he'd be working with, and suddenly the staff quarters where he slept was bustling with activity. "Staff meeting tomorrow morning at ten," Mark told him that day before he left. "Don't worry, it will be less hectic tomorrow."

That evening, Alex took a walk around the grounds. There were three buildings designated as dorms. One was for students, one for teaching staff, and the other for the domestic and janitorial workers. Many people, including the teaching staff, lived on the campus due to the isolation of the school. By nine o'clock, the campus was quiet, except for the student dorm, which consisted of a multitude of small apartments and rooms. There, the lights were on, and music screamed out of the windows. Right beside the student dorm, just around the corner, was the student pub/café. There was a terrace, and Alex noticed that it was filled with people. He kept his distance. He turned around, prepared to go back to his living quarters when he met three young men coming up the path. The one on the left captured his attention, causing him to pause and look back at him as he passed ... possibly because he was so tall ... or more likely, because he was so beautiful.

None of them looked at him. Of course, they wouldn't, not with *Jupiter Maintenance* written across his shirt. He stood there, his gaze following them as two of them headed to the café, but the third, the one who caused him to stop and stare, turned in the other direction and walked to the student housing. Long black hair, sharp features, almond-shaped brown eyes ... tall ... body lithe, graceful, a dancer perhaps.

Alex shook himself and walked on. He smiled. It was the first time in a long time he'd bothered looking at any guy more than once. "I'm still alive," he whispered aloud.

"I hope so," someone said with a laugh. "I don't care to bump into any undead things out here."

Alex looked up in surprise to see a young guy standing there, wearing a T-shirt matching his own.

"Hi, I'm Antonio. Didn't mean to freak you."

"Not freaked." He shook his head. "Hi."

"Hey. You're new." He pointed to his T-shirt.

"Yes. You too?"

"No. I worked here last year. You arrive today?"

"No. I was here helping Mark for the last few weeks and..."

"Oh," he said.

"You heard?"

"Rumors. No problem," Antonio began. "I..."

"I went through a bad time," Alex said. "I'm paying for it. You don't have to worry. I'm not dangerous."

"I was hoping you might be." He grinned, then winked at him. "Call me Tony."

Tony was good-looking enough, but Alex had no intention of complicating things

here.

As if reading his mind, Tony said, "I'm not looking for romance, but sometimes it gets a little cold up here at night, you know?"

"Ah..."

"If I misread you ... it's just that I saw the way you were looking at Jacob."

"Jacob?"

"Jacob Williams. Gorgeous, great ass ... long black hair. You just passed him."

"Oh." He wasn't quite sure what to say.

"I figured you were into guys. No worries. Everyone looks at Jacob that way."

"Where's he from?" He shouldn't be asking. He shouldn't care.

"LA. Graduate student, last year. And yes, he's into guys ... I'm sure of it, but he's all business, destined to be a star. Sings, dances, acts, plays piano. With those looks and that body ... well ... anyway"—Tony lowered his voice—"if you want a closer look, ask Mark if you can clean up in the fitness center early in the morning. He works out then."

"I ... ah ... it won't be necessary," Alex said, beginning to walk. Tony walked along beside him.

"Why's that?"

Alex laughed slightly, then paused to look at Tony. "He's way out of my league. He wouldn't give someone like me a second look. No point in wasting my time. Besides, I'm not here for that."

"You could be right, but you're pretty cute."

Alex blushed a little. "Tony, I..."

"We can be friends, can't we?"

"Sure." Alex nodded. "I can always use a friend."

"You and me both. Okay, friend, how about sharing a cup of that shitty instant coffee with me?"

Alex nodded with a grin. "You're on."

* * * *

Tony turned out to be a lot of fun. They sat up talking far later than they should have that night, and he introduced Alex to many of the other workers. However, when Tony stood with him at the door to his room, it became uncomfortably clear what was on his mind. "You can pretend I'm Jacob Williams if you want," he teased.

"Ha, ha." Alex poked him in the arm.

"He spoke to me once."

"Who?"

"Jacob Williams, stupid."

Alex grinned. "Oh yeah? What did he say? Kiss me, you fool?"

"I wish." Tony took a breath and leaned back against the wall. "I was cleaning the shower room, and he had just come out of the shower with nothing on but a towel."

"You lie."

"No, it's true, and he said, 'we need towels in the locker room.'"

Alex laughed. "How romantic."

Tony laughed, then propelled himself off the wall. He looked Alex in the eye for a moment. "I won't push, but just remember, Alex, I find you..."

"Yes, I know," he said, shoving him away. "Me too. Go to bed before you get us

both into trouble.”

“Night, Alex.”

Alex turned around, his key in the door. He watched Tony disappear around the corner, then went into his room.

* * * *

The meeting Mark had the next day with all the maintenance staff made Alex aware of how busy he was going to be. It was far more difficult to clean now that the buildings were filled with people. The good news was that he was working with Tony; the bad news was that he was responsible for washing the floors just about damn near everywhere. He had a huge ring of keys suddenly, and he didn't know how he was supposed to figure out where they all went. “Don't worry,” Tony told him, “I'll help you out. In a few days, it will become second nature.”

He was becoming fast friends with Tony, although given the reason Alex was working at Jupiter, he wasn't sure how Tony really felt about him. He decided he'd eventually talk to him more about it, but he wasn't prepared to yet. He was ashamed of what he did, and he deeply regretted going off the deep end like that, but Mark kept telling him “put it behind you,” and that's what he was trying to do.

Jupiter fascinated him and he was beginning to see an entirely new world in front of his eyes. When he walked into the main building the following morning, there was music everywhere. Students were singing in some rooms, playing musical instruments in others ... even in the hallway. He went to his closet and pulled out his cleaning cart. He checked the piece of paper he had shoved into his pocket where he'd written down which areas he was supposed to clean, and when. He wasn't to interrupt classes or disturb the students, and Mark coordinated everything to correspond with that.

Suddenly he heard someone somewhere begin to sing a song he knew, one he and Manny had sung on many occasions. A piano suddenly chimed in, and Alex found himself humming along. He was carried away for a moment, weighed down in a distant memory. It was sadness which had overcome him when Tony came walking toward him, keys twirling around his wrist. “Hey,” he said. “You lost?”

Alex nodded. He was lost, lost without his big brother. “I loved him. I didn't mean for it to happen.”

“What?” Tony blinked.

“Ah, oh shit, I'm sorry. I didn't realize I was talking out loud. I'm sorry, Tony. What were you saying?”

“Are you okay?”

“Sure. I wrote all this stuff on a list, now I can't read my own writing.” He laughed.

Tony grinned. “No worries. You start in the auditorium.”

“Auditorium?” He sighed.

“Yeah, is there a problem?”

“No.”

“Remember, there's no regular class in there now but there might be some people rehearsing. They have a big show at the end of the term, and they use the auditorium often. So, just be as quiet as possible. Empty the garbage, and sweep around the upper level, but leave the stage alone for now if they are rehearsing. You can come back and do it later. Do you have a copy of the schedule?”

“I had one, but...”

“Here”—Tony passed him a folded paper—“I don’t need mine. I have mine memorized, same as last year.”

“Thanks,” Alex said, taking the paper.

* * * *

Alex pushed his cart along the hallways of Jupiter, pausing to glance into the offices of various professors. “Drama, Coaching, Ballet, Modern Dance, Ballroom, Writing, Producing, Directing, Music-Voice, Music-Percussion...” It went on and on. Finally, at the end of the long hallway, he paused, hearing voices repeating practiced lines.

Quietly he opened the door to the auditorium a little wider and slid his cart inside. He knew this place, of course. It was where he had broken props and ripped costumes in two. The windows he’d broken had been repaired already; new curtains hung at the stage.

“Is that all you think I am ... what’s between my legs?”

Alex grinned, squinting at the stage. There were two people onstage: a woman and—Alex suddenly realized the male voice belonged to none other than Jacob Williams. There were three other people in the auditorium. One was on his feet in front of the stage, a clipboard in his hand, and two others, both females, sat in the front row.

The female on stage said something Alex couldn’t make out, then laughed. “That last line of yours threw me, Jake. Sorry. Can we start again?”

“Get your mind off what’s in between Jake’s legs, Cassandra,” one of the women called from the front row. Laughter erupted again.

Alex smiled then told himself that he’d better get to work. No one noticed him so he guessed he wasn’t disturbing anyone. He took out his broom and began to sweep, his eyes on the stage. Jacob Williams’s deep, male voice was intoxicating, and his beauty even more so. He absently picked up the metal garbage can, still watching Jacob, and quietly emptied it into his own trash bag. Then he put it back down, but not in the right place. He went to sweep again and his broom came into contact with the metal garbage can. Just as Jacob Williams said, “You say you love me, why don’t you—” Alex hit the garbage can with his broom, and it went crashing down the aisle toward center stage. Alex froze, his eyes closed. *Shit.*

Everyone stopped, their eyes on Alex as he came scrambling down the steps after the can, mumbling that he was sorry. By the time he arrived at the landing, Jacob Williams had jumped off the stage and picked up the trash can. “Here you go,” he said, meeting Alex’s eyes with a grin on his face.

Alex swallowed. “Ah, thanks. I’m sorry, I...”

“No problem.” He shrugged.

Alex was just about to walk back up the steps when the young woman on the stage spoke up. “Hey,” she said, peering at his name tag, “aren’t you that guy who vandalized the drama department, broke some windows and...?”

Alex’s jaw dropped. “I...”

“Cassandra,” Jacob said, “let’s get back to it, okay?”

“I don’t know about anyone else, but I don’t feel secure with those kinds of people around,” she mumbled.

Alex looked down at the floor, his fingers tightening on the garbage can. “I’m sorry for the noise,” he called out, “it was an accident.” He practically ran up the stairs,

grabbing his cart at the top and pushing it out of the auditorium. In the hallway, he paused, thankful that it was empty. He took a moment to swallow the humiliation. Did everyone know? Well, at least now he was certain of one thing, Jacob Williams did. And for some reason he couldn't explain, that's what bothered him most of all.

* * * *

Later that day, Alex told Tony everything. Tony was very sympathetic. "I'm sorry about your brother," he said. "That's got to be tough."

Alex nodded, suddenly changing the subject to talk about what had happened to him in the auditorium. "I felt so stupid," he said.

Tony laughed. "Don't worry about it. Who was there?"

"Jacob Williams, of course, and some horrible girl called Cassandra."

"Cassandra Field, red hair?"

"Yes. Fire red."

"Her mother is a professor here in the music department. That's why she probably knows about you. She thinks she's something. She's had eyes for Williams for a long time, but she doesn't seem to get anywhere. I'm pretty sure he's gay ... at least I keep hoping," he said with a laugh.

"It doesn't matter now if he is or not. He knows why I'm here, not that it would have made any difference. Guys like that ... well ... I'm not in their league."

"Hey, don't sell yourself short, Alex. You're a doll. I'd grovel at your feet if you'd let me."

Alex laughed. "Go to bed, Tony. And thanks for the ear."

"No problem. Things will be all right, Alex. Just give them some time."

As hard as Alex tried, he couldn't sleep. He kept thinking about what that girl had said, about how she didn't feel secure around people like him. And about Jacob Williams, who handed him that garbage can without blinking an eye.

Finally he gave up and went for a walk around the campus. It was surprisingly quiet for this time at night. It was not unusual for some of these students to party well past midnight, even with classes looming the next day.

When he rounded the corner near the dorms and saw Jacob Williams walking in his direction, he almost turned and ran the other way. But it was too late; Jacob had seen him.

He lifted a hand. "Hello, Alex."

"How do you know my name?" Alex asked him suspiciously.

"It's on your shirt." Jacob pointed to his name tag as he leaned against a tree. He didn't look as if he was in a hurry to move on.

"Oh, yeah," Alex said uncomfortably, looking around.

"Looking for a way to escape?" Jacob asked with a laugh.

"Why would you say that? You know I can't leave here."

"I didn't mean escape Jupiter, I meant escape me." Jacob met his gaze.

Alex cleared his throat. "No, I, well, I have to get back. I've got an early morning."

"Want to go for a walk?"

Alex blinked. "What?"

"A walk? I always go for a walk around this time, right before bed. You can join me if you like."

"Join you?" He laughed.

“Suit yourself,” Jacob said, moving away from the tree.

Alex hesitated, then turned and followed him.

Jacob seemed to know Alex was behind him because he said, “It’s pretty down by the lake.”

“I probably shouldn’t be going down to the lake with you this time of night.”

Jacob laughed. “You’re supposed to be the dangerous one, remember?”

“I’m not.”

“You’re not what?” Jacob asked him, taking a path off to the right that led down to the water.

“Dangerous.”

“Oh.” He stopped and gave him the once-over. “Too bad.”

Alex narrowed his eyes. “What’s that supposed to mean?”

He laughed. “Nothing. Relax, Alex. I won’t bite you.” He began to run, then suddenly Alex realized he was taking off his clothes on the way.

“What in hell are you doing?” Alex looked around him, trying not to focus on the fact that Jacob Williams was now stark naked.

“Going swimming,” he called back over his shoulder. “Come on, Alex. Don’t be chicken.”

“We could get into trouble for this.”

“I hope so.” He laughed, trudging into the water.

It was a hot night, and the water did look damn tempting. “Oh what the hell,” Alex said, laughing, watching Jacob splash around in the water. He stripped off his shoes and socks and then his uniform, and plunged into the water.

“Hey,” Jacob pointed at him, wiping his wet hair out of his face. “You left your underwear on.”

“So?” Alex taunted in return, feeling himself blush. “I’m not a nudist.”

“You’re shy,” Jacob accused, laughing, “a prude maybe?”

“I’m not a prude,” Alex protested as Jacob hit him in the face with some water.

“Are too,” he teased.

Alex made a grab for him. Jacob ducked out of his grasp.

They laughed like two boys, finally wrestling and struggling in the water. Jacob was strong, his muscles like tightly wrung cords. At one point, Jacob pulled Alex close to him and looked him right in the eyes. Alex could feel almost every inch of his naked body against his. He didn’t realize that he had a hard-on until Jacob Williams swam back to shore and got out of the water, shaking his hair.

The moonlight shining down on his naked, glittering flesh was indescribable. He was mesmerized, held prisoner by the other man’s beauty. Alex wasn’t sure if Jacob was simply immune to the effect his nakedness was having on him, or if he was deliberately taunting him. Jacob put his hands up into his hair suddenly, smoothed it back from his sublime face as he arched his back, which propelled his semierect cock forward in a sensational display of masculinity. Jacob’s chest looked as if it had been sculpted from marble, his nipples brown and stiff from the stimulation of the water. Alex couldn’t look away. He literally groaned as he came out of the water, his hand awkwardly in front of him.

Jacob dropped down into the sand, spreading out his limbs and placing his hands under his head. “You’re hard,” he said.

Alex began looking wildly around for his pants.

"You should dry off first. If I was you, I'd take off those shorts," Jacob said.

"No, I..." Alex faltered. "Must have been the water," he muttered. "It does that to..."

Jacob laughed.

"What? What are you laughing about?"

Jacob raised his head. "What are you getting all hot and bothered about? No biggie. Want me to take care of it for you?"

Alex's eyes widened. He stared at him. "What?"

"Come on, Alex. Don't play games." He smiled at him faintly. "I see the way you look at me. It's okay. I think you're pretty cute. If you'd come closer, I could show you how cute I think you are."

"Sure," Alex sneered, "fuck the janitor, eh? You don't even know me, rich boy."

Jacob sat up all the way now. He narrowed his eyes. "You don't know me either."

"Oh yeah, I do. I know all about boys like you. You think I'm a bad boy; exciting, isn't it?" He began to put his pants on over his wet shorts.

Jacob laughed.

"What's so funny?"

"A couple of things," he said. "But right now, it's you trying to do up your pants over those dripping wet shorts."

Alex growled in frustration and stripped off his pants again. "Forget it," he muttered.

"And you want to know what else is funny?" Jacob asked, reaching for his jeans.

"You're going to tell me."

"Only if you want to hear."

"Enlighten me, rich boy."

"Stop calling me a rich boy." Jacob glared at him. "I'm far from that. And you're far from being a bad boy. Actually, you know what's funny? You probably haven't done anything more than suck a dick or two. Hardly qualifies you as a bad boy."

Alex sucked in some breath. How could he know that? "You'd be surprised what I've ... done," he blurted.

Jacob did up his jeans. He took a few steps closer. "Oh yeah? Ever been rimmed?"

"Ah sure, a lot of times."

"What was it like?"

"Hot, good, orgasmic."

Jacob laughed. "You don't even know what in the hell that is."

"So you think I'm just the ignorant Spic janitor boy, is that it?"

Jacob sobered. "You've got quite a chip on your shoulder," he said, pulling his T-shirt over his head.

"Just what did you invite me out here for exactly?" Alex eyed him.

"Truly, right now, I really don't know," he said, walking past him.

Alex stood there for a minute, stunned. He wanted to say he was sorry but he wasn't quite sure what he should be sorry for. After a few seconds, he ran to catch up with him. "Jacob?"

Jacob turned around. "Yeah?"

"I had no right to judge you. You're right. I don't know anything about you, or about, ah ... rimming. I'm sorry."

“Would you like to?”

“Would I like to what?” Alex found himself smiling. “Know more about you, or the ... ah ... rimming part?”

Jacob laughed. “Both.”

“You do know why I’m here, don’t you?” Alex probed as they walked side by side.

“You did some shit. You’re working it off. Look, Alex, I don’t know why you did what you did. I guess you had your reasons. Are you planning on doing something stupid like that again sometime soon?”

“No.”

“Good, because I’d like to graduate.”

“What about that red-haired girl?”

“Cassandra?”

“Yeah, that one. She’s afraid of me.”

He laughed. “She’s a little superficial. She doesn’t mean anything by it.”

“I hear she wants to get into your pants.”

“Alex,” he mocked, “you shock me.”

He laughed. “I doubt that. So, are you two...?”

“Alex, I’m gay. What in hell do you think I’m doing out here with you at this time of night? I want to get laid. And I’m not looking to Cassandra for that.” He gave Alex a meaningful look.

“Why me?”

“You’re hot. You’re not a student here. And I think you might be interested. Are you?” Jacob stopped in front of the pub and looked at him. “Interested?”

“You’re not shy, are you?”

“Nope, but it appears that you are. How about this? Wait fifteen minutes, then if you want to spend the night with me, come to my room, room six in dorm eight. I’ll leave the door unlocked. If you don’t come, I won’t bother you again.”

“You’re not bothering me,” Alex said softly. Jacob’s eyes were so beautiful, deep brown like chocolate. He felt as if he could drown in them. He couldn’t believe this guy wanted to be with him.

Jacob was walking away now. Alex watched him go, still in a dream. He couldn’t go to his room, couldn’t spend the night making love to someone like Jacob. It wouldn’t be real. It could never be anything more than a stolen night of sex in his dorm room. But if that was all he could have...

He paced for at least ten minutes in front of Jacob’s dorm room. He knew nothing about how to please someone like that. It was obvious that Jacob had much more experience than he did in these matters. *And what in the hell was rimming?*

Chapter Three

The door was open, just like Jacob said it would be. A stream of moonlight streaked across the floor. Suddenly he felt a hand on his shoulder and the door was pushed shut. Alex jumped, his heart pounding in his chest. "I knew you'd come," Jacob whispered, soft lips caressing Jacob's cheek. Fingers crawled down his flank and across to his groin. His zipper was tugged down. "Take them off," he urged. "And this time, the underwear too." He chuckled.

Alex covered Jacob's hand, and squeezed. "Jacob, I..."

"It's okay, Alex," he said softly, "everyone has a first time."

He closed his eyes.

"I'll help you," he said, coming to stand in front of him and pulling his damp jeans over his hips.

Alex heard them drop to the floor. He closed his eyes tighter when the underwear fell as well.

"Soaked to the skin," Jacob muttered. "Good thing you are taking these off." He unbuttoned the shirt slowly.

Alex could hear himself breathing deeply now. The tip of Jacob's tongue suddenly touched one of his nipples. Alex shivered. "What ... are you doing?"

"Making love to you," he said softly, pushing the shirt off Alex's shoulders. "Come here." He grabbed his arms and led him over to the bed. "Lay down."

Jacob really didn't give him time to comply. He pushed him down on the bed and quickly straddled his hips. He grabbed Alex's wrists and pushed them together. "You're so hot, Alex. I'll try to go slow, but if I lose control, tell me to go easy, okay?"

"I..." He really didn't have any idea what he was talking about at that moment, but by morning, he would.

Jacob was kissing him in a way he'd never been kissed before, arousing him completely, putting thoughts in his head he didn't think possible. He moaned back into the pillow when Jacob's teeth grabbed his nipple, tongue dancing over it, making it ache. Jacob laved both nipples, played with them, tormenting Alex to the point where he lost his shyness and began to participate, rather more forcefully than he could have imagined. "Suck my cock," Alex urged. His fingers threading through Jacob's silky hair, he pressed his head downward.

Jacob chuckled, his tongue licking a trail down Alex's stomach to his cock. He swabbed Alex's cockhead with his tongue then fastened his lips around the middle of his shaft and sucked, as if he were sucking the juices out of a fine piece of meat.

Alex's hips rose in the air. He didn't want to come but if Jacob kept that up, he was going to.

Suddenly, Jacob engulfed his cock in his mouth.

Alex gasped as his cock disappeared into Jacob's mouth and touched the back of his throat. Alex just about lost his mind as Jacob began to deep throat him. He let out a cry, his entire body going into orgasm. He came in Jacob's mouth; Jacob swallowed his cum, then backed off, milking him with his hand.

Alex lay spent, this feeling completely new and absolutely addictive. "Jesus."

Jacob came and snuggled down beside him. "You like that?"

"Ah, yeah," he breathed. He could hardly speak.

"Wait until you get a taste of rimming."

Alex turned his head to look at him. A total and absolute beauty. The guy was smiling, and he hadn't done a thing for him. Alex reached out, trembling. He wanted to touch him so much. When the tips of his fingers moved over the head of Jacob's cock, he swallowed hard. "I've only dreamt of guys like you."

Jacob lifted his hips, pressing his cock against Alex's hand. "Don't dream, experience it. Taste it. Touch me, Alex. I want you."

He wants me. It's a dream. I have to be dreaming.

Jacob reached up and placed his hand on the back of Alex's neck. He drew him down to his mouth and kissed him again. Alex was on his way to being erect again. His fingers curled around Jacob's erection as he kissed his jaw, his throat, his nipples, licking his skin down to the base of his cock.

Here was something he did know how to do. He took Jacob's cock into his mouth and closed his eyes, savoring the taste of him, sucking and licking and swallowing until Jacob's cock trembled in his mouth, filling it with his pleasure.

When Jacob urged him over onto his stomach, he wasn't sure what was going on. He was nervous about the possibility of going further, although somehow his body craved the idea of Jacob's cock invading his ass. However, something else invaded his ass suddenly: Jacob's tongue. It danced a teasing tango around his anus then delved up inside of him, touching places he never knew existed.

The sounds coming out of Alex suddenly sounded less than human. "Jacob," he pleaded, "I can't ... I can't..."

Jacob's tongue continued to dance in and out of him; one hand reached under him to fondle his balls.

Alex pumped his body's response into the mattress, muffling his cries in the pillow.

"Now you know what rimming is." Jacob chuckled beside his ear.

When Alex felt as if he could breathe normally again, he turned onto his back. "I thought you were going to..."

"Fuck you?"

"Yeah."

"You're not ready for that yet."

Alex rose up on his elbow, looking down at his face. "I want you."

Jacob smiled. He reached out and stroked his cheek.

"I'm terrified, but I want everything."

"Not tonight," he said softly. "It's late. I have an early class tomorrow. Soon," he sighed, his eyes closing. He reached out and pulled him close. Alex found himself with his head on Jacob's chest, not realizing that he too, was falling asleep.

* * * *

When Alex opened his eyes, he was alone. He stretched and yawned, his eye catching sight of the alarm clock. "Ten o'clock?" he cried. "Oh fuck." He jumped out of bed and began to hastily put on his clothes. Jacob was nowhere to be seen. Damn. He was late. Mark was going to kill him.

Alex raced to his supply closet, suddenly remembering that he had no keys, so he ran

back to the staff quarters and grabbed the keys. Mark was standing outside when he ran back out.

“Where in hell have you been?”

“I ... ah ... fell asleep down by the lake.”

“You slept by the lake all night?”

He nodded. “I’m sorry, Mark. It will never happen again. I’ll work late tonight to make it up.”

He sighed. “Go on. Get to work.”

Alex didn’t catch so much as a glimpse of Jacob all day. He must have been hidden away in some classroom somewhere. At seven o’clock, he finally finished, and locked his cleaning supplies away in the closet.

He wasn’t sure how good his work was today. He had been really distracted, thinking about Jacob all day, wondering what it would be like to fuck him.

He was halfway back to staff quarters when he heard someone calling his name. He stopped and looked around. Jacob came jogging up to him. “Hey,” he said.

“Hey.” Alex felt a little shy suddenly.

“So, want to go somewhere?”

“Where?”

“I know a place, the attic room where they keep the props. You have the key. It’s on the third floor at the end of the hall.”

“Okay.” Alex nodded.

“Meet me there in a half hour.”

Alex opened his mouth to say something but Jacob went running off.

Alex would have met him anywhere.

Jacob was waiting by the door when Alex arrived, a bunch of stuff in his hands.

“What’s that?” Alex asked a little shyly.

“You’ll see.” He laughed.

Alex ran his fingers over the ring of keys that were clutched in his hand. He took out the passkey for the classrooms.”This should be it.”

He inserted the key and turned it. The door creaked open.

Jacob pushed past him.

“We could get in trouble being up here.” Alex walked into the room and narrowed his eyes, trying to make out the room in the darkness.

Suddenly, candlelight illuminated the room.

“Naw,” Jacob said, on his knees on the floor, lighting more candles. “No worries. No one will know.” Alex could see various costumes and furniture piled here and there.

“Help me get that mattress over there, and bring it to the center of the room,” Jacob said, jumping up.

Alex’s heart was pumping hard in his chest. He was anxious, excited, and horny, all at the same time. As he laid the mattress down on the floor, he paused to look across at Jacob, who was holding the other side. Jacob smiled at him. “I haven’t thought of anyone else but you,” Jacob said. “I want you, Alex.”

Alex swallowed, nodded. “Me ... me too, I mean, I haven’t...”

Jacob walked across the mattress and held out his hand. Alex took it in his. “Kiss me,” Jacob whispered.

Alex pulled him closer, murmuring his pleasure as their lips met. The kiss deepened,

and Jacob began to undress him slowly, kissing every inch of gradually revealed flesh. When Alex was naked, Jacob knelt on the mattress, his palms moving up over Alex's thighs, his mouth pressing against Alex's aching sex. "You know, they all think you're a god," Alex breathed, his eyes closing as Jacob began to lick his cock. "Why would you want to be with me?"

Jacob reared back, met his gaze. "Stick around and I'll show you." He grinned. He took Alex's hand and pulled him down to the mattress. "I want this to be our place, Alex. I want to make love to you here, every night. Will you come?"

Alex lay back as Jacob straddled his hips. "Oh yeah, I'll come."

"I'm going to make you come now, baby." Jacob kissed his mouth hard, palming his nipples. He reached over on the floor and dangled condoms in front of him. He put them down and squeezed something onto his hand from a little tube. "Chocolate lube, mmm."

Alex laughed. "Seriously?"

"Yep." He moved back off Alex's hips and lifted his legs up onto his shoulders. With one smeared finger, he flitted up between Alex's ass cheeks. Alex moaned as Jacob's finger slid in and out of his ass. "Now two," he said softly. "I need to open you up a little."

Alex bit into his lower lip. "Are you going to...?"

"Do you want me to? Do you want me to fuck you?"

Alex looked into those beautiful eyes. Two fingers began to do some serious work in his ass. His cock throbbed. "Yes," he breathed. "Oh yes."

"It might hurt a little at first. I'll go easy." He withdrew his fingers, wiggled up closer. "I want to fuck you so bad, Alex." He wrapped his fingers around Alex's cock and squeezed. At the same time, Alex felt the head of Jacob's hard cock push against his anus. "Look at me," he whispered.

Alex melted into his eyes, his smile, the pure pleasure on his face as Jacob pressed his cock past the first ring of muscles. "Oh God, you're tearing me apart," he groaned.

"Do you want me to stop?"

"No. Go on," he grunted. "I want to feel you there." He turned his face into the mattress and groaned. It felt as if a red-hot poker were being stuck up his ass. He felt stretched to an impossible capacity, then something released inside of him, relaxed, melded around the invader and hugged it tight.

"Yeah," Jacob called out. "Oh yeah, baby, baby, you feel incredible, so good. Move with me. Come on. Yeah, that's it ... that's it."

Alex began to move his hips to Jacob's cock dance, establishing a delicious rhythm, until Jacob held him still and pumped his release into him. At the same time, Jacob jerked Alex's cock into a frenzy, causing them to both shoot at the same time.

Jacob was far away suddenly, or appeared to be. He lay on his back on the mattress, staring at the ceiling, his chest heaving. Alex reached for his hand, and Jacob took it in his. "I have no words for that," Alex said softly, watching how Jacob's dark hair gleamed in the candlelight. "Was it okay?"

"Okay?" Jacob smiled, turning his head to look at him. "Baby"—he rolled over beside him—"that was truly inspired. I want you to like it."

Alex pulled his lover on top of him. "Oh, I don't think that will be a problem."

"Do you want to fuck me?"

Alex swallowed. "Ah, yeah. Can I? I mean..."

“Of course.” Jacob smiled. “Give me some time to ... ah...” He looked down at his spent sex.

Alex nodded. “I can help.”

“Oh, yeah? Tell me how.”

Alex laughed. “You’re a tease. You really want me to tell you?”

“Tell me, and then show me.”

“Okay,” Alex said, laughing. “You want me to talk dirty to you. Well, the first thing I’m going to do is kiss that sensational mouth of yours, and at the same time, I’ll run my hands all over you, play with your nipples, lick and bite them, suck your balls, fondle your cock and maybe, if you’re good, I’ll do to you what you did to me ... that rimming stuff.”

Jacob grinned. “I think I’m ready to be shown.”

Alex laughed again, and rolled on top of him.

It was almost three in the morning before they left that room. Alex was tired in the morning, but deliriously happy. He couldn’t stop thinking about how he’d fucked Jacob, and how he wanted to fuck him again tonight.

They met at the same time for the next two weeks, their lovemaking growing bolder and kinkier as time went on. Jacob joked that they both spent their time thinking up what they were going to do to each other every evening.

This particular Saturday night, Jacob had blindfolded him with one of those masks they put on criminals about to be shot. He stripped off all Alex’s clothes and left him standing in the middle of the floor, then he dragged something across the floor. “What are you up to, Jacob?” Alex laughed a little uneasily.

“You’ll see. Okay”—Jacob grabbed his arm—“sit in the chair.”

Alex was plunked down in the chair. Suddenly, Jacob lifted his arms and slapped handcuffs on his wrists, attaching them to some kind of bar overhead. “Spread your legs wide,” he instructed.

“Jacob.” Alex laughed.

“Come on, it will be fun. I plan to drive you wild.”

Alex did as he asked, and Jacob secured his ankles to something else.

“Don’t wiggle, because one of your ankles is tied to a chair.”

“If I do the splits, I’m in trouble.”

“I won’t let you do that,” Jacob said.

Alex could imagine Jacob removing his clothes. He licked his lips.

“You look so hot.”

“Why can’t I see you? I love the sight of you naked.”

“All in good time.”

Alex felt the lube hit his anus which, due to his spread thighs, seemed rather vulnerable and exposed. It was cold and he squirmed a little.

“Still,” Jacob told him, “I’m going to lube you good, baby, then I have something for you that’s going to send you to heaven.”

“Your cock sends me to heaven.”

“You’ll get that too.” Jacob’s finger worked around Alex’s asshole, teasing him until Alex was pleading. “What do you want, baby? Tell me.”

“Put it in, your finger, your cock, anything.”

Jacob dipped the tip of his finger inside then pulled out.

“Jacob, please.”

“I’ve made you into a real slut,” he said with a laugh, taking hold of both nipples and tugging on them.

Alex grunted.

Jacob played with his nipples some more, ignoring his anus for a while.

Alex’s cock was in desperate need.

Suddenly Alex heard a buzzing noise, like a motor. “What’s that?”

“You’ll see. Your ass is going to love it, baby.”

The round, smooth object hit Alex’s ass, vibrating. Jacob didn’t waste any more time. He began to push it up inside of him. Alex’s teeth chattered. He let his head go back. Jacob pushed it deeper and turned it up a speed, at the same time nibbling on his nipples, tugging them with his teeth.

Alex cried out something unintelligible as his cock released his load straight up in the air. Jacob took off the blindfold and crawled onto his lap. He began to kiss Alex’s mouth, his throat. He undid Alex’s wrists, and both men fell together on the floor, laughing like two fools.

That night, they lay together on that mattress that Jacob had now covered with a soft blanket, and talked. Alex told him about Manny. He shed a few tears as he talked. Jacob listened carefully. “He knew that you loved him. You were being a rebellious teenager. You thought you were in love. That’s powerful.”

“I was a damn fool. I know what love looks like now, and that wasn’t even close.”

Jacob stared at him, his eyes wide. Alex suddenly realized what he’d said.

“I mean ... I didn’t mean ... I meant to say that...” He sat up.

Jacob pulled him down beside him again. “You in love with me?”

“If I say yes, will they have to sweep my heart up in little pieces?”

Jacob smiled and shook his head. “I don’t think so.”

“What does that mean?”

“I means I love you back.”

Alex lay stunned for a moment. “This isn’t supposed to happen.”

“No? And why not?”

“I don’t deserve this.”

“Whether you deserve it or not, it’s the truth. I love you, Alex.”

Alex drew him close, kissed him deeply. “I love you, Jacob. I really do. It’s freaking me out.”

For some reason, that made Jacob laugh.

Chapter Four

With all the time he'd been spending with Jacob, Alex hadn't had much time for Tony. He didn't notice how cold Tony had been acting lately. One day as he was finishing up his work in one of the bathrooms, Tony walked in and just stood looking at him for a moment, not saying a word.

"Hey, Tony. What's up?"

"If anyone knew, you'd be in deep shit."

"Knew?" Alex felt his stomach turn into a knot. "What are you ... what do you mean?"

"About you and Williams, fucking in the attic. You play some pretty kinky games in that room."

"You pervert!" Alex accused. "Have you been spying on us?" He threw down his mop.

"I have to have some fun. It's obvious that you don't consider me to be good enough for you. I'm not like Williams, with his big cock and charming smile. He's using you, Alex. He could never love someone like you, bring you home to his family."

"He loves me."

"You're dreaming. He's never given me the time of day, and I would have let him fuck me anyway and anyhow. I want in."

"You want in where?"

"With the two of you. I want some fun."

"I'll never let you touch him," Alex said menacingly.

"Wow, you got it bad. Possessive, aren't you?" He pointed at him. "Tonight, I want to join you."

"No."

"Yes. Or I go to the director. You'll be out of here, Alex, your community service out the window. They might even throw you in jail. You'll never see Williams again."

"You wouldn't do that."

"Yes, I would."

"Tony, I can't let you ... I mean, Jacob would never go for it, the three of us."

"You don't know unless you ask him. Ask him." He left the bathroom.

Alex closed his eyes. This couldn't be happening.

* * * *

Alex could tell the second Jacob clued in that something was wrong. "What?" Jacob asked, his smile fading.

"We can't do this anymore."

"Do what anymore?"

"Meet here, like this."

"Why not?"

"Tony knows. He wants to..."

"He wants to what?"

“He wants a ménage ... the three of us, or he’s going to stool on us.”

“That little fucker. I’ll kill him.”

“No.” Alex took his arm. “Don’t. If this gets out, I could go to jail. I’m not like you.”

“What does that mean?”

“I’m not a good little rich boy. I’m here to pay a debt, a criminal from a...”

“Oh stop it, Alex,” Jacob sneered. “Not once did you ask me about my family. You think you know so much about my background, that somehow it’s a given that I’m some rich kid.”

“Are you trying to tell me that we’re alike?”

“No, but maybe we have more in common than you think. Did you know that I was here on scholarship?”

“Your family doesn’t pay?”

“No. They have scholarships here if you’re lucky enough to win one. My parents are divorced. My biological father used to be a biker. He’s been in and out of jail. When he and my mother reunite it’s like the Fourth of July. First, they can’t keep their hands off each other then they try to murder each other. My high school drama teacher was responsible for making me try out for a scholarship here. Primarily I accepted it because I wouldn’t have to live at home anymore.”

“Jacob,” Alex groaned, “I’m sorry. I’m so sorry.”

“Never mind that. What are we going to do about Tony?”

Alex hung his head. “I don’t know. I think we may have to cool it for awhile, no more meetings. Even if Tony goes to the director, he’d have to prove it, right? It’s my word against his.”

Jacob nodded. “Okay. I’ll do it for you.”

“There’s only two more months left on my community service.”

Jacob gave him a sad smile and opened his arms. “I miss you already.”

* * * *

Alex was so lonely without Jacob. He threw himself into his work, hoping to catch a glimpse of him during the day. Sometimes he would, but it was always from a distance. Tony had stopped speaking to him, so if he’d gone to the director to tell him about Jacob and him, Alex had no way of knowing. He stuck to his work, held his breath that he didn’t get called to the office, and counted the days until his sentence was over.

One evening he went into the auditorium to clean up the stage. He often found it hard to sit still at the end of the day. Work was the only thing that made being away from Jacob bearable. As he swept the floor, he paused to look out into the audience. He could imagine the place being filled with people, with him and Manny performing, like they used to pretend to when they were boys. He closed his eyes and thought of Jacob, his smile, his body, his sex. He wondered if they’d pick up where they left off, or if Jacob would pretend like it never happened. He closed his eyes and imagined holding him as he began to sing a song about loss and sadness.

When he heard the applause, his eyes snapped open. He froze when he saw Irene Benet walk down the aisle toward the stage. She was head of the music department. “That’s wonderful, Alex,” she announced, looking up at him. “I had no idea you could sing like that.”

“You ... you thought that was good?”

“It was great. I could train a voice like that. Why don’t you consider applying here?”

“Me?” He laughed.

“Did I say something funny?” She perched on the edge of the stage.

“I couldn’t afford to come here.”

“We have scholarships.”

“Yeah, but you have to be good.”

“You are good.”

He blinked.

She jumped down to the floor. “Come by my office tomorrow. I’ll give you the form to fill out. Deadline is in three weeks.”

Before he could say anything, she was gone.

* * * *

Alex spent a lot of time staring at that application form. He wanted to talk to Jacob, ask for his advice. He’d know what to write. Did he really want to come here to Jupiter? Did he want to sing? The answer was yes. Since he’d been here at the school, he’d fallen in love with it. He’d fallen in love with a lot of things.

The minute he sneaked up to Jacob’s room, he knew it was a mistake. He had only three weeks left to go, and he was risking it all. He creaked the door open and softly called out Jacob’s name. The room was empty. He was disappointed as he made his way back to the staff building.

The last thing he expected was running into Tony on the way. “He’s out with someone else,” Tony said as he came up to him. “Forget him, Alex. Spend the night with me.”

Alex looked up at him. “You lie. I don’t believe it.”

“Do you really think a guy who looks like that is going to wait around? He went into town to get laid.”

“Fuck you,” Alex cried and ran past him up the road. He didn’t sleep all night thinking about what Tony had said. He was right. How could he expect Jacob to wait around? He was a criminal, a criminal who had gotten his own brother killed.

* * * *

When Mark saw Alex the next morning, he shook his head. “What in hell happened to you? You look terrible.”

“I didn’t sleep much.”

“That’s obvious. You’re on the last stretch now, Alex; don’t mess it up.”

Alex nodded. He went into his room to get his keys. He stared at the form for a minute then reached over and scrunched it up in his fist. On the way out the door, he threw it into the garbage.

He wasn’t ever going to be a student at Jupiter, and he wasn’t ever going to be Jacob’s, either. That day he didn’t pause to see if Jacob was around; he kept his nose to the grindstone and finished all his chores. The following morning, however, he ran right into Jacob in the hallway. Jacob said something to him but he walked right past. They had no business in each other’s lives.

“Alex,” Jacob said, following him around the corner to his closet, “what’s wrong

with you?"

Alex avoided looking at him. "Jacob, all that stuff before, forget about it, okay?"

"What stuff?"

"That stuff ... us, you know." Alex didn't wait for a reaction. He walked into his closet and switched the light on.

When the door closed, he stiffened.

"Alex, what's wrong?"

Alex turned around. Jacob was so close to him, he could feel his breath. "Don't do me any favors, okay? You don't have to feel like you owe me anything just because we fucked."

Jacob's mouth opened but he didn't say anything for a minute.

Alex turned his back, rearranged his cleaning supplies.

"I love you, Alex."

"No." He was trembling.

"Yes," Jacob said, placing a hand on his arm and propelling him around. "I miss you so much. I want you. The only thing that keeps me going is knowing that eventually, I'll get to touch you again."

"You don't mean that."

"Yes, I do. Look at me. Look into my eyes, Alex. I love you."

Alex swallowed. He was about to say something when he heard Mark calling his name. "Oh shit," he said, "get behind me."

Jacob moved into the corner.

Alex opened the door. "I'm here," he said.

Mark narrowed his eyes. "What are you doing in the closet with the door closed?"

"It just closed. Need something?"

"I'm out of black garbage bags."

"Here," he said, shoving a package at him.

"Okay, thanks," he muttered and walked off down the hallway.

Alex heaved a sigh of relief. "Now," he said as he turned to Jacob, "get out of here. You're going to get me into trouble."

"Only if you tell me you love me."

"Oh, for..." But he was smiling. "Okay, I love you. Now go."

Jacob grinned and ducked out of the closet.

Alex watched him go, then on impulse, he jogged around the corner and caught up to him. "Jacob?" He was breathless.

"Yeah?" Jacob looked at him.

Alex lowered his voice. "Have you been with ... anyone else?"

Jacob smiled tenderly at him then shook his head.

Alex beamed, standing there for a little while, letting the pleasure of Jacob's answer wash over him.

He no longer cared what Tony said. He believed Jacob. He believed that Jacob was waiting for him. He had to.

One night as he was lying in bed thinking about what Jacob's skin felt like, he realized that he had made a serious error ripping up that application. He jumped out of bed and checked the calendar. The deadline was yesterday.

On the final day of his sentence, his parole officer showed up at Jupiter. He told Alex

all the things he had to do in order to ensure his release. At the end of the meeting, he came out into the main room of the staff quarters and found Mark with some of the others standing around. "What's all this?" Alex asked.

Mark stood aside to reveal a huge chocolate cake. Written on it was "Happy Freedom, Alex."

He laughed, hugging Mark, and some of the others. As he went to cut the cake, the door opened. He looked up with surprise to see Jacob standing there. Alex looked at Mark, then back at Jacob. Mark came over and bent his head next to Alex's. "It was bloody obvious. Go get him."

Alex laughed, walking over to hug Jacob.

"Congratulations," Jacob said, "or whatever it is you say on these occasions. I have a gift for you."

"What's that?" The only gift he wanted was Jacob.

Jacob opened his backpack and handed him an envelope.

"What's this?"

"Open it."

Alex looked around. "How come everyone seemed to know what's going on here except me?"

"You're not always that bright, Alex," Jacob teased.

Alex punched him playfully then opened the envelope. He read the words once, then twice. "What does this mean?"

"It means you have an audition to prepare. And if you pass it, you got your scholarship," Jacob told him.

The others had evacuated the room suddenly. "But I threw the form away. How did you know about it?"

"Irene told me. When I found out you didn't hand in your form on the morning of the last day, I filled it out for you, so to speak." He laughed. "There are still some things you need to fill in. I didn't have all the information I needed."

"I can't believe it."

Jacob smiled. "I was hoping you'd be, ah ... very grateful." He winked.

Alex grinned. "Oh, I will be. Name the time and place, baby."

"Tonight. I took the privilege of renting us a room at the Town Inn. Meet me there at eight o'clock, room six, and don't be late."

All the other staff came back in and Alex began serving cake. Finally, after filling up on cake, Alex asked Mark where Tony was.

"He quit this morning."

"Oh. I hope it wasn't because of me," he said before he could stop himself.

"Why would it be?" Mark asked.

"No reason." Alex shook his head.

Later that evening around six, Mark was nice enough to give him a lift into town. "I guess you'll be leaving us soon."

"Right after the audition next week."

"So I may see you around next year."

"I hope so."

Mark stopped the vehicle in front of the hotel. "I'll miss you, Alex."

"I'll miss you, Mark. I couldn't have done this without you."

Mark slapped him on the back. He smiled. "Have fun."

Alex nodded and got out of the truck.

Jacob looked surprised to see Alex standing outside the hotel when he arrived. He got out of the car, waved off the young woman driver, and strode up to him.

"The redhead?" Alex raised an eyebrow.

"Yep."

"She wants into your pants."

"I know." He nodded. "But you're the only one I want in my pants."

Alex reached out and squeezed his hand. "Can we go up?"

"Oh yeah," he replied, grinning. "We'll both be going up."

Alex shook his head, calling him a dirty boy.

When Jacob took Alex into his arms and kissed him, it felt like the first time. Except this time, he knew exactly what he wanted and how to get it. He undressed Jacob and pressed him back to the mattress, kissing his mouth hotly and exploring his flesh with his lips and his fingertips. Jacob played the passive lover for some time before he rolled Alex over onto his stomach and started to rim him like crazy.

Alex placed his forehead against the pillow and let the pleasure take hold until he could stand it no more and Jacob mercifully began to lube him. He was halfway up the wall before Jacob rolled on a condom and took him, none too gently.

They fell together, Alex playfully complaining that he wouldn't be able to sit down the next day. Jacob took his hand and kissed it. "I'm sorry," he said, "I got a little carried away. I forget that it's been a while."

"I love your getting carried away, Jacob." Alex looked into his eyes and kissed his mouth gently. "I can't believe we're finally together."

"It's been awhile. It was worth the wait."

"Thank you, baby."

"For what?"

"For loving me, waiting for me, filling out that stupid form when I was too stupid not to."

"Not stupid, scared."

"I may not get it."

"You won't know if you don't try."

"And what if I do? You'll be gone, graduated."

He nodded. "I have a part in a Broadway play. It starts in two months. You'll have time off from school; me too. We'll see each other."

Alex nodded sadly. "I don't want to be away from you."

Jacob pulled him close. "We'll always find our way back together. I promise."

Alex laid his head on his shoulder and sighed. Somehow he believed that to be true. Jacob had given him the courage to change his life, to see beyond his past mistakes, to start over. After the audition, he'd go home, see his mother and his sister. Maybe if he could forgive himself, his mother would forgive him too. If he got into Jupiter, so be it; but if not, well, he'd find something else to do with his life. Somehow he had the feeling that Jacob would be there for him always, and that was all that really mattered in the end.

The End

About the Author:

D.J. Manly is first and foremost a writer, but is also a college professor, a small business operator, and a sociologist who works as a consultant on research projects. D.J. is a proud Canadian who lives in French Canada, and is fluent in both English and French. Human rights are a great concern, and D.J. longs for a peaceful world free of sexism, racism, and homophobia.

D.J. writes for the pure love of writing, and always with the reader in mind. If D.J. doesn't enjoy reading it, it won't be written. Great characters, great sex, and a great love are the elements you'll find in D.J.'s work.

There is nothing quite as exciting as beautiful men falling in love. Come taste D.J.'s work, but be careful—you may become as addicted to reading it as D.J. is to writing it. One reviewer wrote that reading D.J. can give you "third degree burns in an air conditioned room." That says it all.

E-mail D.J. any time with questions or comments. Visit D.J. online at www.djmanly.com

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