

Take Me Always

A Ravenous Romance™ Panamour™ Original Publication

Ryan Field

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www.ravenousromance.com

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This book is a work of fiction, and any resemblance to persons living or dead is purely coincidental.

Chapter One

The best idea Kadin Mulroney had in a long time came to him while he was preparing to return to his room. He raised his eyebrows and bent forward to touch his partner's hand. "I'm going to start a personal blog," he said, "I have a story to tell, and I think you're going to like it."

"A blog?" Gregory asked. He was wearing a red crewneck sweater with beige slacks and brown leather loafers. But he didn't know he was anyone's partner. He leaned forward in the chair and twisted his upper body sideways; his feet were crossed at the ankle, knees spread apart.

Kadin smiled and patted Gregory's soft hand a few times. His fingers looked longer and thinner now. "A personal blog is a diary or a journal, but on the computer instead of paper. Brandon taught me all about blogging the last time he came to visit from New York."

Brandon was the oldest of their three children. But when Kadin mentioned his name, Gregory looked out the window and stared at the grounds. The leaves were just turning red, yellow, and orange in Savannah, and the late afternoon sun was going down.

"I see," Gregory said. His eyes followed two squirrels chasing each other up a tall oak. His mouth was half open and he tapped his bottom lip with his finger.

Kadin knew Gregory didn't recognize him that afternoon. He was just a nice man who came to visit every now and then with chocolates and hard candies. "Yes," he said, "I'll start writing it tonight, and bring my laptop tomorrow and read it to you. I know

you're going to enjoy this story." He wasn't an expert with computers, but for a man his age, he was proud that he'd learned how to send e-mails and that he knew enough to read all his favorite newspapers online. His laptop also kept him connected to his family and the rest of the world.

Gregory tilted his head to the side and folded his hands on his lap. The blank stare wasn't as obvious today. But it was still there. "What's the story about?" he asked.

This was the first time he'd seen a hint of curiosity in Gregory's eyes in a long time. "It's a simple love story," Kadin said. "And it's about two handsome young men who lived in Savannah a long time ago." He didn't speak down to him, but he spoke more slowly than usual, keeping his voice low and even. And he chose his words with care so he wouldn't frustrate or alienate Gregory. He never knew what would set him off. He might start screaming, and tears could roll down his cheeks at any given moment. Sometimes it could be something as simple as the wrong chocolate bar. Once he'd thrown chairs around the sunroom because he couldn't figure out how to button his favorite cardigan sweater.

But now, Gregory smiled for the first time that day. "I think I'd like that," he said. Then he leaned forward so the nurse on the other side of the room wouldn't hear him and asked, "Are these guys good looking, too?" They were from a generation that didn't discuss these topics openly in mixed company.

Kadin laughed and said, "These two guys were the hottest guys who ever walked the streets of Savannah." He leaned in a little closer and said, "And they couldn't keep their hands off each other."

Gregory looked at the nurse, then back at Kadin. When he turned his head fast, a shock of sandy blond hair, now peppered with white, fell across his forehead. He cupped the side of his face with his right hand and asked, “Is there a lot of love in the story?”

Kadin leaned forward and whispered, “Plenty.” He knew Gregory was really referring to sex, but “love” was the polite way to phrase it. Gregory had always been a well-mannered Southern gentleman.

Gregory rubbed his palms together and smiled. “Ah, well...this sounds like it could be very interesting.”

Then Kadin tapped his shoulder a few times and turned to leave. It was getting late and he knew the nurses liked to get Gregory settled for the night by seven. He didn’t hug him or kiss him, because that kind of intimacy would seem out of place from a stranger. And that’s what Kadin was now, a total stranger. Gregory could recall some things that had happened in the past six months, but their past forty-five years together were now a blank canvas. “I’ll see you tomorrow,” he said.

Gregory stood up and shook his hand. “Thank you for stopping by,” he said, “You’re a very nice man. You do a good job here.” He thought Kadin was one of the staff. The day before, he’d thought he was one of the doctors.

After that, the nurse took Gregory to his room, and Kadin shuffled back to his room, passing nurses and technicians who were now the only friends he saw regularly. They smiled and nodded, murmuring things to each other when he was out of earshot. To most of them, Gregory and Kadin were a novelty. It wasn’t every day you met two gay men who had been together for more than forty years. Especially when you considered the fact that Kadin didn’t have to be there. When he’d finally decided to admit Gregory to

a nursing home, he'd voluntarily taken a room of his own so he could be near him at all times. Their three children had been against him living there, but it was the only way Kadin would agree to put Gregory in a nursing home.

He had no regrets. He slept well at night, because he still spent his days with the man he'd loved for the better part of his life. Sometimes they talked about the weather, sometimes they talked about the food, and sometimes they just sat there in silence staring out the window at squirrels. Kadin made sure Gregory's medications were always correct, that he ate decent, balanced meals, and that he was never alone. It didn't matter that he didn't know who Kadin was. All that mattered was that Kadin knew who he was.

But more than that, it didn't matter anymore that he was eighty and Gregory was only seventy; there were no more rules to follow. Gregory had many bad days, and some good days when he could actually remember some details of the life they'd shared. And Kadin didn't want to miss the good days.

Chapter Two

On Friday nights in 1956, Kadin Mulroney would secretly drive his red Cadillac convertible twenty miles north of Savannah to a small picnic area at the side of the road. He hired a babysitter to stay with his three children for a couple of hours, and he'd tell her he was going out with a few friends to see a movie, or that he was playing poker and he'd be back before eleven. He was always freshly showered and casually dressed in a white short-sleeved shirt. His thick black hair was always combed back and puffed a little at the top. And he smelled like lemony aftershave and peppermint chewing gum.

The picnic area was dark and private, with four gray, weathered picnic benches surrounded by tall, dense trees. There were usually five or six other cars in the parking area on any given night of the week. The men in the cars were various ages, but they all went there for the same reason Kadin went: to meet other men like themselves. Because in 1956, in the Deep South, the most important word for men who wanted to meet other men for sex was *discretion*.

One night in early November of that year, Kadin went there on a Friday night and pulled in at the end of the parking area near the last picnic bench. There was a chill in the air, but it was still warm enough to leave the windows open. He turned off the headlights and switched off the ignition. Then he lit a cigarette, leaned his left arm out the window, and sat back against the seat to wait. It was quiet for a while. There were only two other cars there. From what Kadin could see, one of them was empty and the other had fogged windows.

But twenty minutes later, an older, black Hudson pulled into the picnic area and parked in front of him. He couldn't see what the driver looked like, but he could see him adjusting the mirror and looking back.

Another fifteen minutes passed before the driver's door of the Hudson opened slowly and a young man stepped out. He didn't turn back and look at Kadin directly, but he did linger outside the car for a few minutes so Kadin could see what he looked like. He was wearing tight black pants, a plain white T-shirt and black lace-up shoes. He purposely crossed to the back window of his car and leaned all the way over to remove a smudge on the glass with his fingers. When he stretched his arm all the way out, the T-shirt rode up and exposed his bare waist. His pants were so tight, they hugged his firm, round buttocks. He arched his back and spread his legs, smiling quickly in Kadin's direction.

Then he stepped back from the car and stretched his arms all the way in the air. His body was thin and solid; he looked to be in his mid-twenties. He lingered there for another minute, then looked through the windshield and into Kadin's eyes. He put his hands in his pockets and walked toward the picnic bench closest to the woods. Kadin rubbed his jaw and watched. His heart began to race like it always did when he saw an ass he could hammer. When the guy reached the picnic bench, the only thing Kadin could see were shadows. The guy lifted his arms slowly and removed his T-shirt, then he leaned back against the picnic table and lit a cigarette. When he inhaled, he lifted his head high and blew out a long stream of smoke.

Kadin licked his lips and got out of the car; his penis already semi-erect. He lit another cigarette and started walking toward the picnic bench near the dark woods. By

the time he got there, the young guy had removed all his clothes—a very bold move, indeed. He was sitting on the picnic table stark naked, with a cigarette dangling from the side of his mouth, holding his erection. When he looked up at Kadin, he smiled and spread his legs. “Hey, buddy,” he said. His voice was a soft stage whisper, with an obvious feminine quality that sounded like a bad imitation of Marilyn Monroe. The cigarette was between his middle and index fingers, his arm was high, and his hand went all the way back with an exaggerated gesture.

Kadin smiled and stared down at his shoes. “Hey,” he said. His own voice was deep and strong, and he held his cigarette between his thumb and index finger. This was the first time he’d seen anyone so daring at the picnic area. Most guys usually just pulled down their zippers and dropped their pants to their ankles for a quick blow job. But this one was different—it was the first time Kadin had ever seen someone bold enough to strip naked next to a picnic bench. Evidently, he wasn’t shy about wanting a man that night and he was willing to go all the way to prove it.

The young guy jumped down from the bench and stood on his tiptoes, as if he were wearing invisible high heels. When he moved to where Kadin was standing, he reached out and pulled down Kadin’s zipper without asking for permission.

And Kadin didn’t object. First he cleared his throat and coughed. Then he spread his legs a little wider, took a drag from the cigarette, and looked up at the stars in the clear sky. The guy slipped his small hand into Kadin’s pants, pulled out his penis, then went down to his knees and started sucking him off.

Twenty minutes later, the young guy stood up and reached for his pile of clothes. He looked at Kadin, smiled, and said, "Thank *you*. I needed that. Do you stop off around here often?"

"Ah well, sometimes," Kadin said. "I've really got to be going now." He stepped back and lit another cigarette. He didn't want to open the lines of communication and he had no intention of getting to know him better. The picnic area was just for quick sex.

The young guy smiled and shrugged his shoulders, and Kadin started walking back to his car. "Then maybe we'll hook up again sometime," he said. "You're the *perfect* stud." He reached into his pants pocket and pulled out a small piece of paper, then jogged up to Kadin in his bare feet and said, "Here's my phone number in case you ever want to call. No strings attached, stud. Just fun and our little secret."

Kadin stopped walking and smiled. This guy's aggressive, but still innocent, attitude had an endearing quality he didn't see often. He took the piece of paper and shoved it into his pocket. "I'll hold on to this. Thanks."

"I'm Eddie," he said, then he stood on his tiptoes and kissed Kadin on the cheek. He was still naked, and he didn't seem to care. When he stepped back, he winked and said, "And there's no need to thank me. I should be thanking you for what you did for me tonight. It's not easy to find a guy like you in a place like this."

But that's not what Kadin's ex-wife had thought. She'd been killed in a car accident two years earlier, but she'd divorced him years before that, after their sex life had dwindled down to once every couple of months. And even then, he'd had trouble getting it up for her. He'd only married her because it was what he'd thought he was supposed to do. He'd tried so hard to make it work. They were married for ten years,

they'd had three wonderful children, and he'd provided for them all as a successful attorney. He'd loved her, but he'd never been *in* love with her.

He'd only been truly in love once in his life. It came to him later than most, the night of his thirtieth birthday. And because of that love, he'd been ruined forever. Nothing since could compare to it. It had been pure and natural and unexpected, the way love was meant to be. But it also changed his life in ways he never could have predicted.

When he got back to the car, he started the engine and put the top down. It was cool, but he liked driving with the stars above his head. He waved his arm at the stranger who had just blown him and pulled onto the road. As the car picked up speed, he sat back and spread his legs wider, holding the wheel with his right hand and the cigarette with the left. A familiar love song from an old film *Take Me Always*, started to play on the radio, and his thoughts wandered back to the first night he'd heard that song, almost five years earlier.

* * * *

It was the night of his thirtieth birthday: June 1, 1952, and a new film, *Take Me Always*, had just opened in town. The line outside the ticket booth was long. Young couples held hands and laughed, groups of teenage girls in crinolines and saddle shoes chirped and giggled, and older couples stood side by side, waiting to buy their tickets. It was a hot, humid night. Kadin could smell the buttered popcorn from the sidewalk, and the air was so thick and still, he could hear a car horn a few blocks away. Kadin stood there alone with his hands in his pockets, rocking on the balls of his feet. His divorce had just become final and he was venturing into the world for the first time in ten years as a single man.

The line moved fast, and when he was finally in front of the ticket booth, someone tapped his shoulder. He turned quickly to find Miles Rochester, an old friend from high school, standing there with two strangers. They were handsome young men, with fair hair and lanky bodies. One was slightly taller than the other. But the thing that made Kadin's stomach jump was that the shorter of the two had one blue eye and one green eye. He stared at Kadin with those magnificent eyes and smiled, then reached forward to shake his hand and said, "Hi, I'm Gregory Rochester and this is my brother, Evan. We're Miles's nephews from Atlanta." They didn't call him Uncle Miles, just Miles. They were only ten years younger.

It was an accidental meeting, and Kadin wound up sitting with them. But he didn't tell anyone it was his birthday.

They sat four across toward the back of the theater. Miles went in first, followed by Evan and Gregory, and Kadin took the aisle seat. When the lights went down and his arm brushed against Gregory's, he felt a tug between his legs. It started under his balls and traveled to the tip of his penis. The guy smelled like baby powder and spicy pumpkin pie, an aroma that caused Kadin's eyes to roll back each time he inhaled. When the film was over and the theme song, *Take Me Always*, began to play, Kadin took one long, deep breath just so he could remember the smell until he saw him again.

He knew he'd see him again, because he was already planning ways to get into his pants.

When they left the theater, the entire summer seemed to fall into place in one evening. Miles asked Kadin if he was interested in taking on a new intern at his law practice for a couple of months. Miles said Gregory, Evan, and their parents were

spending the summer with him at the family home. Their father, Miles's brother, was working on a project that involved a new strip mall near Savannah. Miles had already found an internship for Evan in an advertising office downtown, but he was still looking for something for Gregory. Though Gregory never formally accepted the internship, he smiled so wide when Kadin agreed to hire him that the small dimples on both sides of his face turned into valleys.

On Saturday morning, Gregory showed up at Kadin's office at nine o'clock sharp. He was wearing tan slacks, a white shirt, and a thin blue necktie. When Kadin saw how Gregory's ass bubbled out in the tan slacks, he turned away and clenched his fists. He wanted to reach out and grab it that morning. He wanted to throw him onto the desk and bend him over. But he also knew Gregory wasn't like other guys. He was special. He spoke with a deep, refined voice, and he had proper Southern manners. He didn't lisp and his wrists weren't limp. When he walked, he didn't wiggle his hips and sashay across a room. His feet hit the ground, and he tended to lope on his heels because his legs were slightly bowed.

For the first three weeks, Gregory performed all the tasks Kadin gave him without missing anything. He answered the phones, took clear and concise messages, and learned how to make a perfect pot of coffee. When he went to the post office, he returned immediately without stopping to chat with anyone. When he saw a file out of place, he re-filed it without thinking twice. He seemed to know what Kadin wanted before he even asked.

And Kadin watched Gregory without being too obvious. Kadin liked the way he bent down when he dropped something. He'd hike up his pant legs and squat down with

his legs spread wide. All Gregory had to do was accidentally touch his hand when he brought him coffee and Kadin would get a full erection. He had blue balls every afternoon. On his way home from work every night, Kadin had to jerk off in the car to release all the pent-up tension.

Then, one afternoon in the end of June, Kadin asked Gregory if he wanted to take a ride out to the country after work. He had a piece of property on the outskirts of the city he wanted him to see. Gregory agreed to go with a huge smile on his face. When they pulled into the driveway of a huge old plantation house fifteen minutes later, he pressed his palm to his chest and said, "This property is fantastic. It's a real Georgia homestead."

"I'm going to start renovating this fall," Kadin said. "It's been abandoned for a long time, and I want to make it come alive again. It's livable right now, but it needs sprucing up. The former owners were very old and hadn't done much in the past twenty years."

The old house was centered on fifty acres that butted up against a wide creek not far from a warm spring. It was red brick with white columns, white trim, and black shutters. The minute Gregory heard Kadin was renovating, he stared up at the front of the house and said, "It's perfect, except for one thing. A house like this needs white shutters on the first floor and black on the second. It's the way it should be. Whoever painted all the shutters black made a huge error."

Kadin smiled and said, "I'll make a note of that."

While they walked through the rooms, stepping over dusty, loose floorboards, swatting cobwebs away from their faces, the tone of their conversation skipped from their usual business talk to more personal, intimate matters. Kadin told him about his divorce

and his three children. He said his parents were both dead. He told him he'd married very young because he'd been pressured into doing it by his family, and he should have waited. But he also told him his children were the most important part of his life now, and that every sacrifice he'd made was all worth it because of them. He had no regrets about his life—except for the fact that he'd never really been in love.

They were on the second floor when he'd said that, in the master suite. Gregory looked up at him and smiled, then reached out in a cautious, awkward gesture, and held Kadin's hand. "I've never been in love either," he said, "until now." Then he lowered his eyes again and stared down at his shoes.

The second Gregory touched his hand, Kadin felt a growing sensation between his legs. He reached out with his other hand, pressed two fingers under Gregory's chin, and lifted his head. He stared into his eyes for a moment, then took a deep breath and stepped forward. When he leaned in closer to his face, Gregory parted his lips and closed his eyes. Kadin kissed his full, luscious mouth gently, then grabbed the back of his head and pressed his handsome face to his. His hair was soft and smelled like soap; his body was firmer than Kadin had imagined. The moment he stuck his tongue into his mouth, Gregory lifted his arms and wrapped them around Kadin's broad shoulders. He submitted completely. His body went limp; he leaned back and held Kadin's shoulders for support. And while Kadin was probing with his tongue, and tasting the sweetest mouth he'd ever known, he slowly walked Gregory toward the bed.

The abandoned bed was bare. But that didn't stop Kadin from lowering him onto the silky white mattress with yellowed edges. He dropped him slowly, holding the back of his head with one hand and the small of his back with the other. When he was flat on

the bed, Kadin climbed on top of him and pinned him there with his entire body. He kissed with more force; his tongue explored the inside of his mouth without leaving a section untouched. Instinctively, Gregory's legs went up and he wrapped them around Kadin's waist. Kadin reached down, placed his wide palm between his legs, and pushed him forward so he'd be in the middle of the bed. Gregory's body was pliable; he never resisted.

They kissed for a long time, then Kadin reached down and opened his own pants. When his nine-inch erection fell out, Gregory took it in his palm and rubbed it few times. Then he said, "I've never done this before with a man." His voice was soft, almost apologetic.

Kadin stopped kissing and took a deep breath. His balls were ready to erupt and his heart was racing. "I'm not going to force you into doing anything," he said. "If you're not comfortable with this, I'll stop. It's okay." He *would* have stopped, too, if that's what Gregory had wanted.

But Gregory gently pushed him with his fingertips and said, "Lie down on your back and close your eyes. I want to explore a little."

When he was flat on his back, Gregory stood up and removed his clothes. He dropped his pants with slow, calculated movements. He unbuttoned his shirt and let it fall off his shoulders to the floor. He saw Kadin was watching his every move, and knew he was enjoying it. When he pulled down his boxer shorts, his erection bounced a few times. It was almost as large as Kadin's, with smooth, silky skin and an acorn-shaped head. After he removed his shoes and socks, he said, "Now, close your eyes."

Kadin rested his head on the mattress and lowered his eyelids while Gregory got back into bed. Kadin's penis was still sticking out of his pants, pointing up and resting on his belt buckle. But there was bulge in his left pocket. Gregory tapped the bulge a few times and asked, "What's this?"

Kadin lifted his head and smiled. "It's a small jar of Vaseline," he said. He'd come prepared. He wasn't sure if he'd actually get into Gregory's pants that day, but he figured if he did, he'd need some kind of lubricant.

Gregory smiled and shook his head, then straddled his legs and bent forward. When he reached for the shaft with his nimble fingertips, Kadin's entire body jerked and his scrotum tightened. Gregory ran his fingers up and down the shaft a few times, then pulled his penis back and rubbed it across the side of his face. He ran the shaft back and forth on his cheekbones, then pressed the hard tip to the end of his nose and inhaled.

Kadin knew Gregory was examining all nine inches, and he wasn't going to rush him. If all he'd wanted to do that afternoon was fondle and play with his penis, this was fine with him. He could have remained in that position for the rest of his life.

But Gregory wanted to do more than just stroke and stare at his cock. When he opened his mouth and wrapped his warm, wet lips around the head, Kadin spread his legs wider and moaned out loud. He sucked the head with neat, gentle slurps, rolling the tip of his tongue in circles while he held the wide shaft with his right hand. A moment later, he slipped his penis all the way into his mouth and started bobbing his head up and down. He gagged a few times in the beginning when it hit the back of his throat, but that didn't last for long. A few minutes later, Kadin's hips were bucking and his dick was slamming Gregory's throat without a single hesitation.

Gregory sucked for a long time. His tongue and his lips did most of the work, and he figured out how to create a vacuum of pressure that made Kadin's toes curl. And he probably would have sucked him off to the finish—he seemed eager to please. But Kadin finally touched the back of his head and said, “Now it's your turn to lie down on the bed.” He knew if he didn't stop him soon, he wouldn't be able to hold back. And though he loved the thought of coming inside his mouth, he wasn't sure if Gregory was ready for that yet. Besides, he had other plans. Kadin was a true top man: he loved to fuck tight ass.

So while Gregory stretched out on the mattress face down, Kadin got up and pulled the jar of Vaseline from his pocket. He placed it on the edge of the bed and removed all his clothes. He pulled them off so fast, his foot got stuck in his pant leg and he almost fell over. His shoes flew across the room and landed out in the hallway, and his underwear wound up hanging from a curtain rod. When he was naked, he looked down and smiled. Gregory was on his stomach. His legs were spread and his tender feet dangled from the side of the bed. Kadin's eyes glazed over when he stared at his perfect, round ass. It was just as he'd imagined it would be: firm and ripe, with a long slit up the center.

Then he climbed onto the bed and mounted him from behind. Gregory's body was naturally smooth, with a fine layer of blond fleece on his calves. Kadin pressed all his weight on his back and whispered, “Are you sure this is okay? I don't want to force you to do anything on your first time.” But he was dying to get inside; his hips were already bucking and his penis was sliding up and down Gregory's ass crack. He couldn't wait to part his white legs and press the tip of his cock to the opening of his hole.

Gregory's eyes were closed and he was smiling. He nodded a couple of times and said, "I'm fine. I trust you. I've been dreaming about this since the night we met at the theater."

"I'll be really gentle," Kadin said. "I want your first time to be wonderful."

Gregory wiggled his ass and smiled. "I'm ready."

"You're sure about this?" he said. He was starting to have second thoughts. If Gregory's first time wasn't wonderful, he'd probably blame Kadin for the rest of his life. And Kadin didn't want that to happen.

Gregory laughed. "I'm sure. I want *you* to be the first."

Kadin reached for the Vaseline and removed the lid. He stuck two fingers inside and pulled out a thick gob. He spread it all over his dick first, making it slick and shiny, then he rubbed more around the lips of Gregory's hole. When he slipped his thick finger into the tight opening, Gregory's sphincter muscle clamped down and squeezed it hard. But when he slid his finger in and out with slow, careful thrusts, his hole started to relax and the lips parted with ease.

When he thought he'd opened him up enough, he pressed the tip of his penis to the opening and worked it inside. Gregory clenched the sheets with his fists and pursed his lips. Kadin knew he was in pain, so he whispered, "Just try to relax all of your muscles completely. Trust me, in a moment the pain will disappear."

Then he went all the way inside, with easy, tender advances. Gregory's eyes opened wide and he gasped for air. His hole was tense. The lips clamped down on his dick so hard, Kadin had to concentrate on not coming too soon. It was the softest,

sweetest hole he'd ever plugged. And Kadin had plugged his fair share of holes to know the difference.

When he started to buck his hips with a gentle rhythm, and his hairy legs rubbed against Gregory's smooth thighs, he couldn't stop moaning. He closed his eyes and slid in and out. It felt as if he'd entered a magic kingdom, or a box of the finest European jewels that sparkled and shined each time he went deep.

It didn't take long to open him up completely. When the initial pain seemed to have subsided, Gregory took a deep breath and sighed. At first he just lay there with his legs spread wide while Kadin hammered away. But then his legs bent at the knee and went up in the air. He stretched his arms all the way out and said, "Ah, don't stop. Please don't stop."

Kadin smiled and pounded harder. He didn't get too rough that first time, because he knew Gregory wasn't ready for serious slamming yet. But he didn't mind holding back either. Watching the expression of pure delight on Gregory's handsome young face was all Kadin needed that afternoon. And when he was finally ready to climax, he stopped moving for a moment and reached down to grab Gregory's dick, which was fully erect and dripping with pre-come. He was ready to explode, too. Kadin had been worried about that, and he wanted to know for sure that Gregory was enjoying this as much as he was.

"Don't stop," Gregory said. His voice was louder now, begging him for more.

"I won't," Kadin said. "But I want you to start jerking off now. I want you to come first."

He grabbed his dick and began tugging, and Kadin started fucking again. His dick slid halfway out, and all the way in, with blunt thrusts. His large balls slapped against Gregory's ass with clear smacks. It didn't take long after that. A few minutes later, Gregory grunted a few times and blasted his come all over the old mattress. Kadin felt the eruption—Gregory's prostate jumped and the lips of his hole clamped shut. A second later, while his hole was still rocking with post-orgasmic vibrations, Kadin climaxed with such force, he thought he'd popped a nut. He drained a week's worth of come into Gregory's body, stealing his virginity and claiming his beautiful body forever.

* * * *

Kadin closed the laptop and pushed it to the middle of the table. They were in the sunroom and it was getting dark outside. The nurses preparing for the night shift and their forced-chipper voices rose and fell with each breath Kadin took. He smiled at Gregory and said, "I'm afraid we'll have to continue the story later. I have to go back to my room and write another blog post—and you have to get ready for bed."

Gregory smiled. "This is a very interesting story," he said. "But they should have used condoms for safe sex. Kadin wasn't very responsible."

Kadin laughed. He suspected he'd probably heard something about safe sex on television earlier that week. He seemed to retain some current events, but only the ones that concerned him. "This was 1952," Kadin said, "There was no need to use condoms, unless you didn't want to get pregnant or VD. And Kadin was perfectly healthy."

"I see," he said, staring out the window for a while before he spoke again. "I'm just worried about the age difference. This thirty-year-old guy seems awfully mature for

this twenty-year-old kid. This guy's been around the block." Then he smiled and leaned forward so no one else would hear. "Talk about robbing the cradle. He sounds like bad news to me."

Kadin winked and tilted his head. "And he knew exactly what he was doing the entire time, too. But you'll see. He wasn't such a bad guy after all."

Chapter Three

They were with each other every day for the rest of the summer. Kadin finally told Gregory they'd actually met on the night of his birthday, so Gregory declared that day, June 1, their unofficial anniversary. They were careful about how they appeared in public, which wasn't easy because they were so much in love. In those days, no man was open about being in love with another man.

Every morning, except Saturday and Sunday when Kadin spent time with his children, they would arrive at the office early and have sex in the back storage room. Kadin was renting a room in town until the house could be renovated. Gregory couldn't get enough of him, and the office was the only safe place to play during the day. He was new to sex and Kadin spent hours doing things to Gregory's body that no one had done before. He taught him how to lie back and lift his legs in the air so they could kiss and fuck at the same time. Gregory spent a lot of time bent over a work table with his legs spread wide while Kadin rimmed his ass until it was raw. When it was time to fuck, Kadin's dick eventually slid into Gregory's body as if it had been sized to fit.

But their relationship wasn't just about spectacular sex. They did other things, too. At the house in the country, Gregory organized intimate dinners and they sat on the veranda in candlelight and ate with soft music playing in the background on a battery-operated radio. They took long walks around the property on Saturday afternoons, and Kadin told him about his plans for a new barn where he would one day keep horses. He always brought Gregory home extra early so people wouldn't assume anything. When it was time to drop him off at Miles's house in town, Kadin always looked back and forth to

make sure no one was watching, then kissed him goodnight. He wanted to get out of the car, open the door for him, and walk him to the front door. But he knew he couldn't do that without arousing suspicion.

Later that summer, Kadin even brought Gregory to his ex-wife's house to pick up the children and they took a day trip to The Valdosta Snake and Wild Animal Farm. The oldest child, Marjorie, thought Gregory was cute, and the two boys, Brandon and Bryce, looked up to him like an older brother.

When they weren't talking about Kadin's dream of restoring the house, they talked about Gregory's plans to study architecture and design so one day he could open his own studio and create magnificent homes. He was going to graduate school in the fall and he was excited about it. One night he even brought his portfolio along to the old house and showed Kadin all his drawings from college. It was a hot, moist night in August, and Kadin suggested they take a walk down to the creek and go for a swim. The moon was so bright, there was no need for a flashlight. Gregory smiled and put down his drawings, then jumped off the veranda and shouted, "Last one in has to be the bottom."

Well. Kadin had no intention of being anyone's bottom, so he raced him across the lawn and through the woodlands to the edge of the creek. They arrived at the same time, with their hearts pounding, and while Gregory was laughing and pulling off his shirt, Kadin gave him a light push and he fell on the grass with his pants around his ankles. It took a minute for him to regain his balance, but by that time Kadin's pants were off and his huge penis was hanging semi-erect between his legs. He grabbed his cock, shook it in Gregory's direction a few times and said, "Last one in has to swallow *this*."

Gregory was standing by then, kicking off his shoes. He still wasn't completely nude, but the front of his pale blue boxer shorts stuck out like a tent with his full erection. He looked down between Kadin's dark, hairy legs and licked his lips. Then he pulled off his boxers and extended his arm to the creek. "After you," he said, "because we both know who is going to swallow that big thing."

When they were both in the water, Kadin kissed him on the mouth. There was no mistaking who was the dominant and who was the submissive, and so the sex between them was always easy and stunning. Kadin had never been much of a kisser, but with Gregory it was the best thing about sex. His mouth tasted sweet; his soft, full lips felt like little satin pillow cushions. When he stuck his tongue inside his mouth and rolled it around in circles, the head of Kadin's dick doubled in size. It was a weird feeling. He wanted to cover Gregory with his arms and protect him forever. But at the same time, he wanted to slap the sides of his face with his dick as hard as he could and then fuck him until he couldn't walk.

Gregory put his arms around Kadin's shoulders and jumped up so he could wrap his legs around his waist. Kadin placed his palms on Gregory's ass and pushed him up higher. Gregory's head went back while he licked his neck, then bit down hard and started to suck his soft skin. The sensation made Gregory's eyes flutter; his mouth fell open and his toes curled behind Kadin's back. A few minutes later, he pressed his palm to the back of Kadin's head and said, "Start jerking off now, then tell me when you're close to coming."

Kadin grabbed his dick with his right hand and started jerking off in the water while they kissed. He wrapped it around the wide shaft, with his thumb sticking up—it

was a habit of his—and kissed Gregory on the mouth at the same time. Gregory’s legs were still wrapped around his waist and now Kadin had two fingers up his hole, massaging his prostate. He jerked off and kissed his handsome face, with his tongue exploring his entire mouth, stopping every so often to suck Gregory’s tongue. And when Gregory reciprocated and sucked his tongue, Kadin’s balls tightened and he felt the beginning of a strong climax. So he slowed down and said, “I’m getting close.”

“Pull your fingers out now,” Gregory said, “I’m going underwater so I can do something else I think you’ll really like.”

He smiled and removed his fingers, then Gregory lowered both legs and slid down his body. They weren’t in deep; the water rose above Kadin’s waist. Gregory took a long, deep breath, closed his eyes and disappeared under the water. He went down on his knees to the sandy basin and pressed his palms on Kadin’s thighs. The next thing Kadin felt were his warm, tender lips sucking the head of his dick. Gregory took his entire cock to the back of his throat and sucked hard, pressing his tongue against the shaft with a sustained, powerful rhythm. His head went back and forth, and Kadin could see the ripples he was creating on the water’s surface.

A minute later, he came up for air. He shook his head and opened his eyes. “Jerk off now while I suck,” he said. Then he took another deep breath and went under again.

When he wrapped his lips around the head this time, Kadin held his dick and jerked off into Gregory’s soft mouth. He was so excited, it didn’t take long. He jerked fast; his thumb kept hitting Gregory’s cheekbone. His balls tightened. It took all of ten seconds for him to deposit a full load down Gregory’s throat. The orgasm was so intense, his legs wobbled and his toes gripped the sand. His gasped through his wide-open mouth

and his head jerked back in spasms. Then Gregory pushed his hand away and took Kadin's dick to the back of his throat to make sure he'd drained every last drop. He sucked hard for a few seconds, and rose to the surface again for air. Then he shook his head and took a few deep breaths. "Wow," he said, "that was really intense."

Kadin reached down to help him to his feet. When he was standing, he pressed his palms to the small of his back, pulled him closer, and kissed him again. Gregory's chest was still heaving and he had to breathe through his nose. His mouth was saltier than usual, but not because of the water. Kadin knew he was tasting a combination of their love: his own come mixed with Gregory's sweet saliva.

Kadin slapped his ass and said, "That was outrageous. I think my heart stopped when you were under the water."

Gregory lifted his eyes and said, "I thought you'd like it." He rested his head on Kadin's chest and licked his nipple. "It's getting late now. You have to get me home."

They dressed fast and ran back to the car. When Kadin looked at his watch, he frowned. It was almost one o'clock in the morning and he should have had him home by eleven. He'd been so careful all summer to get him home early, but they'd lost track of time. And in those days, a thirty-year-old man divorced with three children had to be extra careful not to arouse suspicion when he was sneaking around with a twenty-year-old guy. But Gregory didn't seem worried at all. He sat in the middle of the front seat until they reached the city limits, a contented smile on his face and his head on Kadin's shoulder, holding his balls in his palm the entire time.

When they pulled up to Miles's house in town, all the lights were on and Gregory's father and mother were waiting outside the door. The house had a large, semi-

circular portico, with two built-in benches on either side of a solid mahogany door. They were both sitting on the left bench, facing the driveway so they could see who was driving up to the house. When the car came to a stop, Gregory's father stood and put his hands in his pockets. His mother sat there, with her arms folded across her chest and her lips clenched.

"I wonder why they are outside this late at night," Gregory said. His clothes were still damp, his lips were still puffy from sucking Kadin's dick, and his hair was a mess. But more than that, when he turned to open the door and the interior lights went on, there was a huge purple-and-red love bite on his soft neck. It was too high to cover with a collar, and it was impossible to miss.

Kadin's stomach jumped and his head felt fuzzy. "I'd better get out with you this time," he said. "I'll make something up fast, because they don't look very happy about this." He knew they suspected something, and he knew he had to say something clever.

He got out of the car and smiled at Gregory's mother and father. His clothes were still damp and his hair was just as messy. "It's my entire fault he's back so late," Kadin said. "I had a little trouble with my boat and Gregory gave me a hand tonight. I'm really sorry. We lost track of time, is all." His smile was too forced and his voice rose with a fake lilt. Evidently, Kadin's good looks and smooth charm wouldn't work this time.

The mother stood and glared at him. She knew he was lying. "You'd better get into the house, Gregory," she said. When she noticed the love bite on his neck, her eyes bugged and she pressed her fingers to her lips.

Gregory opened his mouth to speak, but his father cut him off and said, "Do as your mother says." If he saw the love bite, he didn't react.

Gregory looked at Kadin and spread his arms out wide. He wasn't smiling anymore. His eyebrows were furrowed and he shook his head in disbelief. Kadin wasn't sure how he was going to react. So he just smiled and said, "Do as your mother says, Gregory. I'll see you at work tomorrow." He wanted things to remain calm. He wanted to show them he wasn't as bad as they thought he was.

Gregory slammed the car door shut and stomped up the stairs. He crossed past his mother and father with his head down and pushed the front door open. He slammed it so hard, his mother jumped forward and pressed her palm to her throat.

When he was inside the house, Kadin smiled again and said, "I'm really sorry. It was entirely my fault." Then he bit the inside of his mouth and prayed they'd believe him.

Gregory's father was staring at the floor. He took a deep breath and frowned; his hands were still in his pockets. "I think it's best if Gregory stopped working for you." He didn't give a reason, and he didn't look Kadin in the eye.

Kadin's heart beat faster and he couldn't catch his breath. He was about to ask why when the front door swung open and Gregory shouted, "This is ridiculous. I'm still going to work for him. I'm even thinking of moving down here permanently." His face was flushed and there were tears rolling down his cheeks.

His mother tried to put her arm around her son, but he jumped back and threw his hands in the air. "It's not Kadin's fault. He's only trying to cover for me. It's *my* fault I'm late." He was sobbing by then. His chest was heaving and his shoulders were jerking up and down. He tried hard to stop, wiping tears from his face. But he couldn't.

His father said, "Son, let's go inside now and put an end to all this. We're all tired." He reached out to touch his shoulders, and Gregory backed away and ran into the

house. This time he didn't slam the front door. They could hear his footsteps on the staircase, then an upstairs door slammed shut.

Gregory's mother went inside with her head down, and his father finally looked Kadin in the eye for the first time and said, "I think you should leave now."

Chapter Four

“That poor boy,” Gregory said. “He should have tried to cover up the love bite. And that poor Kadin fellow. I wasn’t sure I liked him at first, but I think I do now. He sounds very decent.”

Kadin smiled. “Gregory didn’t even realize the love bite was there. He couldn’t see it.”

They were outside that morning, sitting next to the rose garden on the grounds of the nursing home. It was still warm for that time of year, and Kadin wanted to take advantage of it. Gregory always seemed more responsive outside, away from the wheelchairs and the smell of antiseptic and the noises of the other patients. “Besides,” he added, “the parents already suspected something was going on between them. They just didn’t want to mention it aloud. The love bite only confirmed their suspicions.”

“Ah, well,” Gregory said. He stared at his sleeve, fascinated by a ladybug crawling up his arm.

One of the nurses came up from behind, tapped Kadin on the shoulder, and said, “Dr. Stern is ready to see you now to talk about the PSA test.” She reached down and took Gregory’s hand. “I’ll take you inside, sweetie, and you can work on your drawings while you wait for your friend.”

Gregory crinkled his eyebrows and tilted his head. “My drawings? Do I know how to draw?”

“Of course you do,” Kadin said, “You’re an architect. You’re the best there is.” Then he gave the nurse a look and stood. He knew she was taking Gregory into the

sunroom, where he would sit with a child's coloring book and a pack of crayons. As he turned to leave, Kadin tapped him on the shoulder and said, "I'll be back this afternoon and I'll read more of the story to you."

Gregory gave him a blank smile and flicked the ladybug off of his arm. "I'd like that."

Kadin shuffled into the building slowly, smiling at familiar faces he passed on his way to Dr. Stern's office. He could still get around without a cane in spite of the minor heart attack he'd had earlier that year. And the two knee replacements had been successful. If he watched his sugar intake and kept his weight down, the diabetes wasn't a problem either. He was holding his own, and he was proud of it.

When he walked into the doctor's office, the nurse told him to go into the examining room. The one good thing about the nursing home was that he didn't have to sit for hours in a doctor's waiting room like everyone else.

When Dr. Stern stepped into the room, his head was down and he was reading the results of Kadin's latest PSA test. He was a good-looking young man in his mid-thirties, tall and lanky, with a full head of wavy black hair that had specks of white. He looked like the kind of guy who rode an expensive bicycle on weekends, with tight shorts, a huge bulge between his legs, and a funny little hat. His hands were large and his fingers were long. Kadin imagined he had a nice thick cock. If Kadin had met him at the picnic area back when he was still single, he would have had Dr. Stern on his knees begging for dick.

"I do not like what I see here," Dr. Stern said. "Your PSA levels are elevated. Seven. We should talk about treatment to prevent the onset of anything serious." He put down the clipboard and looked at Kadin. "I'll explain the procedures and you can decide

what to do. I think in your case, it's a choice between radiation seeds or radiation treatment. Or you could just opt to remove the prostate altogether." His voice was even, a clinical monotone, as if he were reading from a book.

Kadin smiled. He hated medical talk and he'd been against the prostate testing in the first place. But he knew enough about prostates from listening to other people to know that a PSA level of seven was elevated, but not dangerous. "Or I could just not do anything and live out the rest of my life just like this."

The doctor gave him a look, and said, "I'm not sure I understand."

"I'm eighty-five years old," Kadin said. "By the time this develops into something serious, I could be ninety." He'd just read a report about this in a magazine and he knew this was a very slow-growing cancer. If the level had been higher, he would have done something. But with a PSA level like this, he wasn't going to go through anything that wasn't absolutely necessary. Gregory needed him. The love of his life might drift away forever if he wasn't there every day to keep him grounded.

The doctor smiled. "I have to tell you everything and give you all the options. It's my job."

Kadin smiled and stepped down from the examination table. "And I thank you for that," he said. "Now, if you'll excuse me, I'm going to have lunch with Gregory."

"I'll walk you out," Dr. Stern said. "I'm on my way to lunch, too."

On the way to the sunroom, Dr. Stern asked, "How is he doing?"

"Very well this week," Kadin said. "I'm seeing an improvement. I've been reading him stories from a blog I've been working on. They're really events from his own life, and he seems to be responding well."

Dr. Stern frowned. “You know he’s not going to get any better, and that eventually he’ll get much worse. Sometimes our imaginations can get the best of us, and we start to think they are improving when they really aren’t.”

They’d been telling Kadin this since the blasted disease had been diagnosed, and he was tired of hearing it. “I like to look on the positive side,” he said, then smiled and looked the other way so he could roll his eyes.

When they rounded the corner and stepped into the sunroom, Gregory’s head was bent over the table, and he was working on his drawings. There was a red pencil in his right hand and he was drawing something on the blank inside cover of the coloring book. The doctor and Kadin leaned forward to see what it was, and they were both surprised to see Gregory had just sketched a perfect drawing of the interior of the sunroom, complete with potted palms and wicker furniture.

Kadin gave the doctor a superior look and smiled. “Is that drawing my imagination?” he asked.

* * * *

When Gregory didn’t show up for work at his law firm the next morning, Kadin wasn’t surprised. But when he reluctantly drove over to Miles’s house at lunchtime to see if there was anything he could do to smooth things over with Gregory’s parents, he was shocked to find out they’d all gone back to Atlanta early that morning. Miles stood there shaking his head and told him he’d been just as shocked as Kadin. He also seemed embarrassed that Gregory hadn’t given Kadin any formal notice that he wouldn’t be returning. They weren’t supposed to leave for a couple of weeks. Evidently, Miles hadn’t been home the night before and Gregory’s parents hadn’t said a thing to Miles about what

had happened—or about the love bite on Gregory's neck. He was still as friendly as ever. He even gave him Gregory's address in Atlanta so he could write to him.

After that day, Kadin felt as if something had been ripped from the inside of his body. Food didn't taste the same anymore. All he wanted to do was sleep; his nights were spent drinking bourbon until he couldn't walk straight. The back room of his office, where he'd fucked Gregory over the work table so many times, now caused his stomach to turn. He only smiled when he was with his children, and sometimes even then it was forced.

A few weeks after Gregory left, Kadin took a year off from work and moved out to his house on the edge of town. He spent his days and nights renovating the old place with his own two hands. The physical work calmed him and tired him out so he'd sleep at night, and being there made him feel closer to Gregory. He even painted the second-floor shutters black and the first-floor shutters white, just as Gregory had suggested the first night he'd brought him there.

Kadin wrote him letters, one letter every day for a year. But he never received a reply. And at the end of that year, he dropped the last letter into the mailbox and decided to move on with his life. He went back to work and began practicing law again; he frequented the picnic area on Friday nights to have anonymous sex with other men. He also put the newly renovated house up for sale. He'd done a magnificent job. There wasn't a stick of furniture in the house, but the hardwood floors gleamed and the windows sparkled. He attached two elegant, crystal finials shaped like pine cones on both newel posts of the semi-circular staircase in the center hall. When the sunlight peeked through the front windows in the early morning, the crystal finials glittered with all the

colors of the rainbow. It was beautiful, but he didn't want to live there anymore.

Everything reminded him of Gregory and the summer they'd spent together.

When potential buyers came to see the house, they were all impressed with the work Kadin had done. They all made offers. But Kadin turned them down. He turned one young couple away because he thought the wife was obnoxious. He turned another middle-aged couple down because he didn't like the kind of car they drove. He wasn't about to sell his home to people who drove a foreign car.

It turned out to be a good thing he didn't sell the house, because a few years later, his ex-wife was killed in an automobile accident and he received custody of his three children.

The children brought the house to life again. Kadin filled it with furniture and stepped into his role as a single parent without complaint. Suddenly there were sticky fingerprints on the crystal finials, bicycles left out on the front lawn, and lights blazing in every window at night. There was always a pair of shoes lying in the upstairs hall, or a jacket hanging from a doorknob. He hired a full-time housekeeper who worked six days a week. She prepared the meals, did the laundry and minded her own business.

Life was full, but there was still something missing. At night, when the children were in bed, Kadin would sit on the veranda and watch the stars, always wondering what had become of Gregory. He'd sip his bourbon and smoke, fantasizing about how one day he'd see Gregory walking up the front path with a huge smile on his face. Then he would finally put out his cigarette, turn off the front lights, and go up to bed alone. He still slept on the same old mattress where they'd first made love.

He settled into a regular routine and he focused all his energy on his family and his work. The only real diversion he had was when he went to satisfy his strong, virile needs at the picnic area north of town on Friday nights. He didn't have to think there; all he had to do was pull down his zipper and stand still.

The night in 1956 when he met Eddie at the picnic area and took his phone number, he never expected to call him. Kadin never took anyone he met at the picnic area seriously. But Eddie was different. Kadin liked his submissive nature and his willingness to please. He also liked the fact that Eddie wasn't interested in anything permanent. He only wanted to bend over, spread his legs and get screwed.

But more than that, what Kadin liked most about him was that he was a real person, not a ghost.

Kadin was a strong young man with needs and desires he couldn't ignore despite his broken heart. So he called Eddie the first week after he met him and set up a date at a motel thirty miles north of Savannah. Calling Eddie was better than lurking around the picnic area in the dark hoping to meet someone. And it was better than sitting home on the veranda and wondering what had happened to the love of his life. It had been five years, and he still got an erection when he thought about touching Gregory's soft, firm skin. When he masturbated in the shower every morning, he closed his eyes and pictured Gregory's soft lips wrapped around the head of his penis. He had no way of knowing what had happened to him. His old friend Miles had been transferred and he'd moved to the West Coast a year after Gregory left town.

Eddie was thrilled Kadin had actually called. He told him he had to attend a costume party early that night and that he'd meet him at the motel by nine o'clock sharp.

But he showed up at five minutes to nine, wearing nothing but a short, black leather coat belted at the waist, and a pair of black pumps with six-inch heels. Kadin's eyebrows went up when he saw him standing there in the door dressed like that. He rubbed his jaw and laughed, then asked, "What kind of a costume party was this?"

Eddie moved into the room and Kadin shut the door. He sat down on the edge of the bed and crossed his legs. They were smooth and silky and the short coat rode up so Kadin could see the sides of his ass. "The kind of party where a big, strong guy like you would be a huge hit," he said. He spoke softly, with a Georgia accent—almost a stage whisper. "It was a private drag party, but I didn't want to show up in drag because I was meeting you, so I decided to just wear high heels and keep it toned down."

His leather coat was a man's, his hair was still combed like a man and he wasn't wearing makeup or jewelry. But when Kadin looked down, he saw Eddie was wearing long, fake fingernails. They curved down like claws and were painted vivid red. "I see," Kadin said. Though dressing up as a woman had never occurred to him, there was something very sexy, in a naughty-kinky manner, about the way Eddie looked. Kadin felt a twist between his legs and his dick began to grow. He imagined in a series of flashes all the dirty things he wanted to do to him. When he looked down at Eddie's shaved legs and saw the high heels on his feet, his eyes glazed over and he licked his lips.

Eddie smiled and uncrossed his legs, then stood up slowly and untied the belt on the black leather coat. When he opened the coat and let it slide down his shoulders to the floor, he was naked except for a skimpy pair of see-through, black lace panties. His dick was average in size, and it poked through the lace. He crossed the room and reached for Kadin's large hands. He walked well in the high heels; he didn't stumble or stagger once.

Then he lifted Kadin's arms up and slid his fake fingernails up beneath his white cotton shirt. He gently ran his fingertips around Kadin's hairy chest, and he scratched his stomach and his nipples until Kadin's erection started to stick out in his pants. When Eddie saw the bulge between his legs, he pulled his gentle hands out from under his shirt and reached down to unzip him. When his fly was open, he inserted his hand and tugged back and forth on the shaft of Kadin's dick.

Kadin's heart was beating fast and his face felt hot. The more Eddie stroked his cock with the red fingernails, the more Kadin wanted to fuck his brains out. He reached down with both hands and squeezed Eddie's lace-covered ass hard—so hard, Eddie jerked forward and fell into Kadin's chest. He massaged his firm ass cheeks in circles, spreading them apart and shoving his thick fingers into the lacy fabric.

Eddie sighed and lifted his other hand to Kadin's wide neck. He scratched it a few times with his red fingernails and said, "Fuck me, stud." Then he pulled Kadin's cock out of his pants and ran his nails up and down the shaft with a feather touch.

"Oh, baby," Kadin said. "I'm going to split you wide open now." The red nails on his rigid erection made his mouth water. He liked the way Eddie always called him "stud." He had the urge to force him down and manhandle him until he begged for mercy.

Eddie spoke in a light, breathy voice. He liked talking dirty with cheesy clichés. "Open me up, stud-horse. Put that huge piece of meat between my legs and nail me to the fucking floor."

But Kadin had a better idea. He grabbed Eddie's thin waist and pushed him to the side of the room to a low dresser. When his back was against the dresser, Kadin lifted him up and sat him down. "Lie back and lift those pretty legs up in the air for me, you

bad little high-heeled whore,” Kadin said, “I’m going to rip those fucking panties off now and fuck your brains out.” Then he bit his bottom lip and slapped Eddie’s ass hard. “Is that what you want, slut?”

Eddie went back and lifted his legs up high so he could throw them over Kadin’s shoulders. He rested the six-inch high heels on both sides of Kadin’s neck and said, “Oh yes, stud. I want to be your bad little slut. I want to be your fuck toy, stud.”

Kadin bit his bottom lip and grabbed the black lace panties. “I’m gonna get rid of these, slut.”

“Yes,” Eddie moaned. “Rip off my panties and fuck me hard.”

With one fast pull, Kadin tore the panties apart and ripped them from Eddie’s body. Then he threw them over his shoulder and leaned forward. Eddie’s legs went back until his knees were practically against his shoulders. He must have been double-jointed; he never complained. Kadin was bending him into a pretzel, the high heels pointed to the ceiling, and all Eddie did was beg to get fucked.

So Kadin spit on his penis and rubbed the shaft until it was wet and shiny, then pressed the tip to Eddie’s hole and slowly inserted it. His hole was wide open and ready to get fucked; he knew how to relax his sphincter muscle so a huge cock could slide into his ass with ease. He also knew how to make the lips of his anus wink and clamp down on the shaft. Kadin didn’t bother to remove his clothes. There wasn’t enough time, and he really didn’t care. He only wanted to get inside the little cock whore, get his big dick wet and come as fast as he could inside that tight, winking hole. When he plunged all the way inside and saw the look of pure delight on Eddie’s face, he knew he didn’t have to worry about being gentle.

He bucked his hips hard, and his dick went all the way in and all the way out. He placed his rough palms on the backs of Eddie's smooth thighs and pressed down harder. Eddie's mouth opened and his eyes rolled. He arched his back and spread his legs as wide as they would go. When the serious fucking started, Kadin poked his hole hard enough to cause the dresser to vibrate against the wall. Kadin felt his cheeks turn red and beads of perspiration trickled down the sides of his face. Each time Eddie's hole clamped down on his cock, he edged closer to orgasm.

They fucked like this for a few more minutes, then Kadin said, "I'm close. I'm gonna go off any second."

"Come inside me," Eddie begged. "Go, stud. Give it to me. Give it all to me." Then he grabbed his own dick and started to jerk off.

And with three slams that were so brutal, a lamp on the desk next to the dresser fell over, Kadin blew a stream of come deep inside Eddie's body. Eddie came a second later, all over his own chest, with Kadin's dick deep inside his hole. When Kadin looked down to see if he was okay, Eddie smiled and licked his own come off his fingers.

Eddie could have lay there all night with his legs spread wide, high heels dangling, and dick up his ass. But Kadin pulled out fast and went into the bathroom for a wet towel. He'd always lingered inside Gregory, enjoying the post-orgasmic sensations while staring into Gregory's two different-colored eyes. But with guys like Eddie, Kadin just wanted to get out and get cleaned up fast. Eddie had been nothing more than a quick, kinky release and now Kadin wanted to put his dick back into his pants and go home to his family.

This was all fine with Eddie. When Kadin came back into the room all zipped up and ready to leave, he stood from the dresser and crossed to the bathroom without saying

a word. When he came back out again, he put the black leather coat on, tied the belt into a perfect square knot, and shoved the ripped panties into his pocket. He crossed the room to the door where Kadin was standing and kissed him on the cheek. “You’re the best,” he said. “Don’t hesitate to call me anytime you need to get off.”

Kadin put his hand on Eddie’s waist and shook his head. “I’ll walk you to your car.” It was the least he could do. He’d just fucked him like a blow-up doll and he couldn’t offer him anything else but a smile and a little common courtesy.

* * * *

After that night, Kadin started fucking Eddie on a semi-regular basis. Eddie never wore the high heels or crimson fingernails again, but his legs went up in the air plenty of times and he always went home with red, puffy lips.

Then, in the spring of 1957, everything changed.

It was a Saturday night and Kadin was sitting out on the veranda enjoying the first warm spell of the season. The azaleas were about to bloom and the moon was full and brilliant. The house was quiet because the children were spending Easter week with his former in-laws in Florida. And he’d just won an intense, high-profile legal case; his skin crawled when he thought about being followed by TV reporters.

He was sitting back in a white rocking chair sipping bourbon when he noticed a strange car coming up the driveway. It was a blue Chrysler he’d never seen before. The car came to a halt at the end of the red brick walkway and the motor stopped humming. A young man opened the door and stepped out.

When he turned and walked toward the house, Kadin stood up and went to the front steps on shaky legs. He pressed his right hand against a white column for support and stared at him.

Gregory, five years older now, stopped walking and hesitated a moment. He was wearing tan slacks, a white shirt, and a rust suede jacket. His hands were in his pockets and he was smiling so wide, Kadin could see his gums.

Chapter Five

The morning after his parents caused the embarrassing scene with Kadin, Gregory flatly refused to return to Atlanta two weeks early. He kicked his suitcase down the hall and punched the bedroom door so hard, he broke the skin on his knuckles. He didn't want to leave without saying good-bye to Kadin first. He'd promised him he'd be there two more weeks as his intern.

But his parents were adamant about it and there wasn't much he could do. If he'd been in love with a woman, he would have begged and pleaded for more time. He would have been able to fight them without feeling guilty.

But because he was a man in love with another man, he couldn't react at all.

His parents didn't even mention his relationship with Kadin. It was as if Kadin had never even existed. They said they were leaving Savannah for important business reasons that couldn't be ignored in Atlanta. And when Gregory suggested he could remain in Savannah for another two weeks with Miles and take the bus home, his father frowned and stared at the love bite on his neck. He said, "It's best this way, son. You're starting graduate school in three weeks and you'll have plenty to do back in Atlanta. I think it's best if we just forget about all this and put this summer behind us."

But Gregory didn't start graduate school three weeks later. A week after he went back to Atlanta, he went downtown and enlisted in the Army. He made the announcement to his mother and father at dinner the same night. His mother dropped her fork and his father almost choked on a piece of meat. This was during the early stages of the Korean War. He could have avoided the draft as a full-time student. But after the summer he'd

spent with Kadin, he couldn't go back to school as if nothing had ever happened. He missed everything about Kadin, from his musky smell to the way his penis tasted after a shower. All he wanted was to be in his safe arms again. And when Kadin didn't call or write that week, he just wanted to get as far away from everything and everyone as he could get.

His mother was livid; she had other plans for his future. She slammed down her knife so hard, she broke the dinner plate. Everyone stopped eating and placed their hands on their laps. His brother's eyes were wide; he stared back and forth between Gregory and his mother, anticipating their next moves. But Gregory's father thought about it for a moment, then said, "I think this might be a good thing. It'll make a real man out of you." His mother opened her mouth to protest, but his father lifted his hand, palm up, and gave her a look. "He can postpone graduate school until after the service. He needs to be around real men and he needs to be toughened. The military is the perfect place to do that."

The Army *was* difficult, but not as bad as Gregory had anticipated. Though he was still deeply in love with Kadin, he was now surrounded by good-looking, athletic young men who walked around naked and took showers together. And some of those men, he quickly discovered, were just like him. His father had been right; the military wasn't such a bad thing at all.

During his first week of basic training, a staff sergeant took a particular interest in him. His voice was deep and throaty. When he stood at attention, a round knob between his legs popped out of his uniform. He was tall and dark, with a broad chest and strong, powerful thighs. And he was one of those men, with a square jaw and chiseled features,

who looked even better with the mandatory Army buzz cut. When he noticed Gregory was having trouble keeping up with some of the bigger guys in basic training, he called him aside and offered to help him out late at night. His name was Sgt. Buck and he had a heavy New York accent that Gregory had always found very appealing.

Sgt. Buck ordered Gregory to report to his private quarters at nine o'clock sharp on a Monday night. Gregory didn't see how he could help him with basic training in his private quarters, but he wasn't going to argue with a staff sergeant. So he showed up at exactly nine o'clock and saluted him at the front door. Sgt. Buck asked him in and told him to relax. He was in his skivvies, he was wearing Army-green socks, and he was holding a half-full bottle of beer.

Gregory smiled and stepped into the small apartment. The walls were white with yellowed corners and the floor was covered with a faded brown carpet. It was sparsely furnished with a green plaid sofa and a black and white TV to the left, and a full-sized bed against the center wall. The far right wall had a kitchenette and a small, round Formica table with two vinyl chairs. The ashtray on the table was filled with cigarette butts, and the countertop was littered with empty beer bottles. When Gregory inhaled, the apartment smelled like sweat socks, underwear, and cigarettes.

"Can I get you a beer, buddy?" Sgt. Buck asked. When he went to the kitchen, he scratched his crotch and his balls jumped around in his boxer shorts.

Gregory blinked. He hadn't expected it to be *this* casual. "Ah, well, yes," he said. "I'd like that, sir." His hands were in his pockets and he stared at the ceiling. It was hard not to stare at Sgt. Buck's underwear, or the way his big balls were bouncing around. He didn't want him to know he was a homosexual.

For a half hour, they talked about a few of the challenges where Gregory was having problems and they drank beer. Then Sgt. Buck ordered him to strip down to his skivvies because it was easier to move around. When he suggested they get down on the floor together so he could show him the correct way to do push-ups, Gregory pressed his lips together and tilted his head. He'd always been good at push-ups, and he could have kept his pants on for this. But he didn't want to question a superior, so he removed his clothes and got down on the floor without saying a word.

Sgt. Buck went down to the floor next to him and positioned his soft legs so they would be straight and even. He ran his large hand up the backs of Gregory's thighs and pressed on them a few times to be sure they were solid. Then he got down on his knees and sat back on his haunches in front of Gregory's face. When he spread his muscular legs, the white cotton fabric of his underwear stretched and the fly opened up from the tension. Gregory's arms were spread out and his palms were pressed against the brown carpet. Sgt. Buck's crotch was only inches from Gregory's face and he could see his dark pubic hair through the opening of his underwear.

Sgt. Buck ordered him to do one hundred push-ups, and he complied without hesitating. He could have done two hundred if asked. Gregory wasn't built like a weight lifter, but he had strong arms. When his body started going up and down, his breathing increased. And when his breathing increased and he inhaled, he could smell the tangy aroma between the sergeant's legs. It reminded him of the way Kadin's crotch had smelled, but stronger. By the time he was on his twentieth push-up, he was sniffing back and staring right into his crotch at the opening in his boxer shorts.

“That’s it,” Sgt. Buck said. His voice was deep and masculine. “Keep those shoulders back and that stomach up high. You’re getting it, buddy.” Then he leaned forward and placed his palms under Gregory’s flat stomach for added support.

But when he leaned forward, his crotch brushed against Gregory’s lips. Gregory’s head went up and down while Sgt. Buck’s balls rubbed lightly against his face. He felt the outline of his dick on his chin. When Gregory didn’t pull back or abruptly turn his face to the side, Sgt. Buck placed both palms over his ears and pulled his face between his hairy legs. Gregory felt his semi-erect cock become fully erect within minutes, then it finally popped out of his fly and hit the side of Gregory’s face. It wasn’t as long as Kadin’s dick, but it was just as thick and solid.

Gregory stopped doing push-ups and stuck out his tongue. When he licked the shaft from the base to the head, Sgt. Buck squeezed his head and said, “Ah well, I knew you’d like this, buddy. I had a feeling about you the minute I saw you fall into line.”

Gregory didn’t speak. He’d only been with one man in his life so far, but he’d seen other men like Sgt. Buck, the strong rough ones, stare him up and down on the sly. He’d always backed away from them. It was as if they had radar; they knew all about him with one look. But he wasn’t going to pretend with Sgt. Buck. His own dick was sticking out of his underwear by then and he was fully erect. So he opened his mouth and sucked the sergeant’s thick Army cock to the back of his throat. It tasted saltier than Kadin’s dick and it didn’t have that sweet undertaste he’d come to love the previous summer. But it occurred to him that if he kept his eyes closed while he sucked, he could pretend he was sucking Kadin off instead of a staff Army sergeant. He could imagine these rough, awkward hands were Kadin’s gentle hands pressing against the sides of his head. He

could make believe he was about to swallow Kadin's sweet come instead of Sgt. Buck's hot, thick load.

He kept his eyes closed. It was sex for release instead of for love this time. And it wasn't a bad experience at all, just different. Sgt. Buck finally went back on the carpet and spread his legs wide so Gregory could finish him off. Gregory knew what he was doing by then. He wanted to please this strapping, attractive man in boxer shorts. He wanted to give him the kind of pleasure he'd remember for a long time. He sucked so hard, the sergeant moaned. Saliva dripped from the corners of his lips and his face ached with tension. But he never stopped, or hesitated, or gagged. He continued to jerk his own dick and suck until Sgt. Buck's strong legs began to wiggle up and down. He was all man, every last rugged, awkward inch of him.

"Ah, yes," Sgt. Buck said. "I'm close now, buddy." His deep voice went down an octave and his feet rubbed against the carpet.

Gregory looked up at him and nodded yes.

"I'm so close," he said. "I'm ready, buddy."

Gregory sucked faster. His head bobbed up and down and his lips slammed into his pubic hair. When he finally pressed his tongue hard against the shaft, the sergeant grunted a few times, jerked his legs, and blasted gobs of white cream into his mouth. He swallowed with a gulp and blew his own load all over the brown carpet a second later. Then he continued to suck it dry, while Sgt. Buck closed his eyes and put his hands behind his head, until the big slab went limp inside his mouth.

When it was time for him to put his pants on and leave, Sgt. Buck put his hand down his underwear and squeezed his ass a couple of times. “I think you should come back every Monday night for some extra help while you’re in basic training.”

Gregory smiled and spread his legs wider. “Yes, sir,” he said. “I’d appreciate anything you can do for me.”

* * * *

“Well. That certainly was a shock,” Gregory said. They were in the sunroom and it was late morning. He was wearing his red cardigan again. When he folded his arms across his chest, Kadin could see the elbows of the sweater were wearing thin. “I can understand Kadin’s needs and desires with that Eddie person, but I’m a little surprised at Gregory’s actions. He seems so refined and elegant. The perfect Southern gentleman. I never would have pictured him with Sgt. Buck, of all people.”

Kadin shrugged his shoulders. “He was devastated when his parents took him away from Kadin, and he was only trying to forget. Don’t be so hard on him.” His voice remained calm and even, but his insides still rumbled with pain when he thought about Gregory with another man.

“I guess you’re right,” Gregory said. “He kept thinking about Kadin while he was with Sgt. Buck the whole time. It’s really so sad when you think about it. I feel very sorry for them both.”

“Life was a lot different back then, especially in the South,” Kadin said, “There were no gay pride festivals. No one would ever admit to being openly gay, and if they did, people thought there was something wrong with them.”

“I can’t help feeling as if I’ve heard this story before,” Gregory said. He was now staring directly into Kadin’s eyes. He wasn’t looking out the window watching squirrels climb trees, and the moaning sounds coming from the old man on the other side of the sunroom didn’t distract him. “Could that be possible?”

Kadin smiled and looked into his eyes. He’d been hoping Gregory would recognize something in the story. “I’m not sure,” he only said. He knew from experience he had to be careful with questions like this. If he pushed him too hard to remember something, Gregory had a tendency to raise his voice and throw things out of frustration. It was best to let him remember the past on his own terms.

Chapter Six

The first few weeks he visited Sgt. Buck, Gregory would walk into the apartment, strip down to his skivvies and suck him off without saying much. But the third week, Sgt. Buck wanted more.

“Can I fuck you?” he asked. He was lying back on the bed wearing nothing but a white undershirt. His dick was already erect and he was playing with his bull-sized balls.

“Ah well, I’m not sure about that,” Gregory said. Though he hadn’t heard a word from Kadin, and whatever they’d had the previous summer was clearly over now, he still felt guilty about being with another guy. It really wasn’t cheating. But that’s how it felt.

Sgt. Buck grabbed his penis and squeezed it tight. “C’mon, buddy. I’ll go easy on you.” Then he winked and waved his thick cock back and forth a few times. “I think you’ll like it, too.”

Gregory thought for a moment and gave Buck a sideways glance, then kicked off his shoes and removed all his clothes. He moved to the bed and reached for a jar of Vaseline on the nightstand while Sgt. Buck stared at the way his naked ass moved without jiggling. He opened the jar, scooped out a clump of jelly, and rubbed it all over Sgt. Buck’s extra-wide dick. Then he pressed his hands on the sergeant’s chest and straddled his pelvis. He reached back and pressed the head to the lips of his anus while Sgt. Buck played with his nipples. When the head entered his body, there was a sharp pain and his balls tightened. He remembered to relax his sphincter muscle like Kadin had taught him. He took a deep breath and slowly sat back. When it was all the way in, he

threw his head back, grabbed Sgt. Buck's white undershirt, and started to ride up and down.

Sgt. Buck bent his knees and lifted his hairy legs. He fucked from the bottom, guiding Gregory's hips into his pelvis with his rough hands. Gregory leaned back against his hard thighs and rode faster. His head bobbed up and down and his shoulders rolled in circles. His own dick was fully erect now and he jerked it back and forth. A minute later, Sgt. Buck grunted a few times, bit his bottom lip, and shot a full load into his body. Gregory came a second later and sprayed white cream all over Buck's undershirt.

But he didn't sit there and rotate his hips in slow circles, and he didn't lean forward and kiss the sergeant on the lips. They'd both gotten what they'd wanted and they were both satisfied. Sgt. Buck slapped his ass a couple of times and said, "Thanks, buddy, that was good. You've got a nice ass."

Gregory pushed against his chest, let his dick slide out, and said, "You're welcome, sir." Then he fake-punched him in the stomach and laughed before he went into the bathroom to clean up.

They met like this every Monday night for the remainder of Gregory's basic training. Sometimes Gregory sucked Sgt. Buck's dick and sometimes he just splashed his balls around in his mouth for a while because he knew the sergeant liked it. But after the first time Gregory rode his cock, these hour-long encounters always ended with Sgt. Buck fucking him raw. The man was a natural stud. He fucked Gregory on his back with his legs in the air, over the kitchen table with his face pressed to the Formica, and inside the shower with hot water running down his face. He fucked him so hard in the bathtub one night, Gregory had a double orgasm and knocked the soap holder off the wall.

They didn't exchange knowing glances or tender moments. They didn't take walks in the woods and talk about their futures. The only romance they shared was Gregory's unyielding mission to please the sergeant's strong sexual needs and the sergeant's genuine respect for Gregory's kind heart and gentle spirit. He always thanked Gregory when it was over, and he always walked him to the door and held it open for him.

They became excellent fuck buddies and very good friends at the same time. Gregory looked up to the sergeant for wisdom and advice, and Sgt. Buck was always there to protect him from harm. When basic training was over and Gregory was supposed to be shipped overseas to Korea, Sgt. Buck pulled a few strings and got him stationed in Japan to keep him safe from danger.

The night before Gregory was shipped out, Sgt. Buck cooked him a steak dinner in the little apartment, and Gregory thanked him later by slowly licking his entire body, from the bottom of his feet to the top of his forehead, before they fucked. The sergeant fucked him on his back that night, with Gregory's legs wrapped around his waist. After they came, he shoved his dick into Gregory's hole as far as it would go, and he said, "I'm going to miss you, buddy."

Gregory reached forward and gently squeezed his huge biceps. Then he licked his lips and said, "Hmm...I'm really going to miss you, too, sir."

* * * *

In Japan, Gregory learned how to take shorthand, and he became a court reporter for the U.S. Army. He liked his job and he was good at it. For fun, he met a few other guys like Sgt. Buck who couldn't wait to bend him over and spread his legs wide. The Army food was awful, but he enjoyed the bathhouses in Tokyo. He liked relaxing in the

warm tubs while three or four Asian guys rubbed and caressed his naked body with oils and soaps. He learned all about dildos one weekend when he was on leave; he found a place where he could lie in a sling suspended in mid-air while someone slipped a fake cock in and out of his hole for hours. While they did this, and his legs were spread open, he closed his eyes, held his dick, and imagined Kadin's handsome face the entire time.

When he wrote his family back home, he always thanked his father for not talking him out of the service. "I've met some of the greatest guys here," he wrote once. "Guys I'll never forget. They made a real man out of me." He did this on purpose; he knew his father would smile when he read the letter aloud at the dinner table, never imagining his son was getting his hole plugged on a regular basis by guys in uniform.

He shipped porcelain vases and Asian objects of art to his mother. He sent his brother black-and-white photos of Japan that had thin, white borders with rippled edges. The time passed quickly, and before he even realized it was happening, he was on his way back to Atlanta and ready to begin a new life as a civilian again.

Back in Atlanta, Gregory wasted no time with school. He'd already been accepted to Georgia Tech's architectural school once, so all he had to do was enroll for the fall. He studied hard and focused on what he loved doing most: designing wonderful buildings. Going out and meeting other men wasn't all that important anymore, at least not as important as it had been in the Army. He wasn't a monk—he slept with a few guys from the dorms once in a while, a professor who liked to cruise the library's men's room, and two of the security guys who patrolled the parking lot while he was studying late. But school and career came first. He kept a dildo hidden in a loose floorboard under his bed, and that kept him satisfied when there weren't any men around.

Then he met Betsy Lampnick and everything changed. She was a plain, heavyset young woman with mousy brown hair that was cut bluntly at the base of her neck and usually pulled back in a tight bun. She had transferred from a school up north. She rarely wore makeup or jewelry except for a set of plastic pearls and a round circle pin on special occasions. Her outfits were either slim gray skirts with white cotton blouses and Peter Pan collars, or brown slacks and dark sweaters. The dressiest pair of shoes she owned had chunky, awkward, two-inch heels. Her eyeglasses had thick black frames and she always had a pencil above her right ear. Their friendship blossomed from casual laughs on the school steps to going to the movies every Saturday night.

They read the same design books, liked the same movies, and laughed at the same jokes. When he was with her, Gregory didn't feel obligated to be something he wasn't, and she didn't pressure him to do anything he didn't want to do. She seemed happy and content to be with him just as he was. Dinner and a movie on Saturday night was fine with her. In the 1950s, good girls didn't have sex before marriage. And Betsy was a good girl. But more than that—and unspoken—she seemed to know he was different from other men and she was fine with the fact that a marriage with Gregory would never be the fairy tale romance most women her age dreamed about.

Gregory's mother wasn't exactly thrilled that her son was seriously dating a Yankee, especially a lumpy one who didn't wear lipstick and get a permanent wave every three months. Betsy wasn't one of the girls. But his mother didn't object when Gregory announced to the family in November of his last semester of school—he'd graduated early because he'd taken summer courses—that he and Betsy were engaged to be married in June. He was twenty-five by then and there hadn't been a parade of pretty young girls

coming in and out of the house. Gregory's father smiled so widely, his dimples turned into wrinkles. He slapped his son on the back and congratulated him. His mother forced a smile, then pulled Betsy aside and promised to help her choose the proper wedding gown to suit her figure and help with the arrangements.

Then one night in April before Easter, while Gregory was sitting with his family watching the eleven o'clock news on television, Kadin's face appeared on the TV screen. One minute he was watching the local weather report, and the next he was staring at Kadin's strong chin.

Gregory's mother had been flipping through a wedding magazine and his father had been dozing off in a wing chair. His father sat up straight and blinked at the screen, and his mother dropped the magazine on the floor. Gregory's eyebrows went up and he clutched a throw pillow, then he leaned forward to watch. The reporter was interviewing Kadin about a legal case he'd just won down in Savannah that involved a serious crime. Kadin gave the reporter quick, sharp answers and continued walking to his car. He tried to smile and be gracious, but Gregory could see he didn't want to discuss the case on TV.

Gregory stared at Kadin's face for what seemed like endless minutes with his palm pressed to his mouth. When the report was over, he heard his mother sigh out loud, but he wouldn't look her in the eye. He sat there for a few minutes, rubbing his neck, staring at the television. Then he stood up and went to his room without saying a word.

The next morning, he met Betsy in her office. She worked part time for a design firm on Peachtree Road. She was working on plans for a new house when he smiled and said, "I have to go down to Savannah for a while, probably about a week or so."

Betsy put down the pencil and stared at him for a moment. "Is everything okay?" she asked. "You seem excited about something."

He bent down and kissed her on the cheek and said, "Everything is fine, dear. I just need to get away for a while. I haven't taken time off since I got out of the service. I just need some time alone is all." His voice was light and had a friendly lilt.

She tilted her head sideways and gave him a look. "Then take all the time you need," she said. "Just promise you'll call so I know you're okay down there."

"Of course I'll call," he said. Then he patted her on the shoulder and said, "You're the best."

* * * *

Kadin closed the computer and smiled. It was well past seven and the nurse was standing in the doorway of the sunroom with her arms folded across her chest, tapping her right foot. Everyone had eaten dinner and they were the last ones left. "It's time to wrap things up for the night," Kadin said.

Gregory was picking lint from his sweater and his lips were twitching. He looked up at Kadin with one green eye and one blue, and asked, "Do you have a car here?"

Kadin laughed. "A car?" His ten-year-old Cadillac was out in the parking lot, but he didn't drive it often. Once a week he went out and started it to keep the battery strong; once a month he went for a haircut. He hated to leave Gregory alone for more than an hour a day.

Gregory glanced at the nurse and leaned forward. "Yes," he whispered, "A getaway car, so you can sneak me out of here when they aren't looking and take me home."

“Why would you want to leave? They treat you very well here.” Kadin was afraid to ask where home was.

Gregory smiled and smoothed out a few wrinkles on his lap. “Ah, well, don’t get me wrong. You people run a fine hotel, and I’ve already told the manager you’re the best concierge I’ve ever met. I have no complaints at all. But I have this weird feeling there’s someplace else I should be. I feel like I’ve been on vacation too long and it’s time to go home.”

Kadin didn’t want to upset him. Gregory was biting his bottom lip now and that meant he was getting anxious. So Kadin smiled and said, “You ate a huge dinner tonight. Double what you usually eat.” He knew he had to change the subject. When Gregory got into moods like this, he usually wound up sobbing and banging his fists on the table.

But Gregory wouldn’t digress. He stared out the window and said, “I’m not exactly sure where I’m supposed to be, but there are children there. I remember children playing and laughing, off in the distance.”

Kadin stood up and nodded at the nurse. She walked over and smiled at him, then tapped Gregory on the shoulder. When she reached for Gregory’s elbow to help him stand, Kadin said, “Tomorrow I’ll read more of the story and you’ll feel much better. Right now we all need a good night’s sleep.”

Gregory stepped forward and reached out to shake his hand. His lips had stopped twitching and his hands were steady. “I just hope this story has a happy ending, because I’d hate to see these two nice guys disappointed again.”

Chapter Seven

When he looked down and saw Gregory standing on his sidewalk, the first thing Kadin saw was those unique eyes. He'd been thinking about them for a long time. He'd never stopped imagining them. They still sparkled. But in a way he couldn't quite pigeonhole, they'd lost some of their innocence, too.

Then Kadin let go of the column and put his hands in his pockets. They both stood there staring, each hesitating to see who would speak first. Kadin remembered the last time he'd seen him, driving home in wet clothes with his head on his shoulder. He'd been dreaming of the day when he'd appear on that front walk, but he'd always thought it was just the silly fantasy of a man approaching middle age.

And now that he was there, he didn't know what to say.

He remembered all the times they'd spent together that summer. Gregory had been so apprehensive about sex at first, but always willing to please. His thin, boyish body had filled out. He was a grown man now, with wide shoulders, a trim waist, and strong legs. His hair looked slightly darker and he wore it shorter.

Kadin took a deep breath and nodded fast, then he smiled and said, "Hello, stranger. You look good." He looked too good to be true.

Gregory continued to stare for a moment. He was smiling and his hands were still in his pockets. "Hello," he said. "You haven't changed at all."

His voice had the same soft, easy tone Kadin remembered. He ran his right hand through his hair and went down the steps. When he approached him on the brick sidewalk,

he was going to extend his arm to shake his hand. But he lengthened both arms and gave Gregory a hug instead.

Gregory wrapped his arms around Kadin's shoulders and rested his face against his broad chest. This wasn't one of those quick buddy-hugs between old college friends at a reunion, with pats on the back and rough, awkward jerks. This was a hug between two men who had been passionate lovers. He pulled Kadin closer, pressed his palms to his neck, and closed his eyes.

Kadin took a deep breath and squeezed him. He smelled like spicy aftershave and orange peel. It felt like he was hugging a real man now, not a twenty-year-old who was unsure of himself. But he was just as soft and pliable as he'd remembered. And for the first time in five years, Kadin felt complete again.

When Kadin stepped back, he looked him up and down. He took a shallow breath and sighed. Gregory was better looking than he'd remembered—if that was even possible. He felt a pulling sensation between his legs. Just holding him for that brief moment had caused his penis to become semi-erect. He wanted to rip off his pants, throw him down on the bricks and spread his sweet legs as wide as they would go.

Gregory looked up at the house and smiled. Then he took a deep breath and said, "The house looks good. It's just like I'd pictured it would look. Did you do it yourself?"

"Most of the renovations were cosmetic, and I had some help," he said, with a mixture of humility and pride in his voice. "But the house has good bones." Kadin smiled and stared back at the house. "White shutters on the bottom, black on the second floor," he said. "Someone a long time ago told me that was the way it was supposed to be."

Gregory laughed and shook his head back and forth. “You have a good memory,” he said.

Kadin looked directly into his eyes again and lowered his voice. “Not really. But I do remember the important things.”

Gregory looked away, as if staring into Kadin’s eyes had suddenly become too painful to tolerate. He opened his mouth and hesitated for a moment, then said, “Is it okay that I came here? I was worried it might be inappropriate or weird.”

Kadin knew what he was thinking: men didn’t go after other men like this in the 1950s. It just wasn’t done. “I’m glad you came,” he said. “But how did you know I’d still be here?”

Gregory shrugged his shoulders. “I didn’t know,” he said. “I saw you on TV the other night and I just guessed.”

Kadin smiled. “You’re all grown up now,” he said. It wasn’t just the way Gregory looked. When he spoke, his voice was calm and even. When he moved his arms, he lifted them with slow, graceful movements. He’d developed an edge that suited him well.

“Five years does a lot to someone,” Gregory said. “But it’s amazing how you look the same as you did five years ago.” He tilted his head and looked him up and down a couple of times. “To be honest, I was worried I might find a bald guy with a paunch.”

Kadin was thirty-five. He’d been noticing flecks of white near his temples and a few lines at the corners of his eyes. But he wasn’t going to ruin a compliment from the most attractive twenty-five-year-old he’d seen in a long time. So he smiled and said, “Thank you.”

Gregory looked at the house again and asked, “Do you live in this huge place all by yourself?”

Kadin knew he was asking this for a reason. He was trying to find out if there was someone in his life now. “No,” he said. “I live here with my family. They’re all in Florida for the week visiting grandparents.”

“I see,” he said. “Did you reconcile with your wife?” He didn’t look him in the eye this time. He twisted his lips, turned to the right, and stared up and down at the trunk of an oak tree, waiting for him to answer.

Kadin frowned. It wasn’t an extraordinary assumption. He sighed and said, “A few years ago, my ex-wife was killed in an automobile accident, and now I’m raising the children alone. They live here with me. I have a housekeeper. I’m not married or involved with anyone.” He wanted to tell him there hadn’t been anyone serious since the summer he’d met him, but it was too soon for that. He still wasn’t sure why Gregory had come to see him.

“I’m sorry about your ex-wife,” he said. “It must have been awful for the children.” Gregory had only met her once, the morning they’d taken the kids to The Valdosta Snake and Wild Animal Farm.

“It hasn’t been easy,” Kadin said, “but we’re doing okay now.” Then he bent down to pick up a bicycle lying on its side next to the front walk. He laughed and said, “It gets a little crazy sometimes, but we get by.”

Gregory looked into his eyes again and said, “They’re very lucky to have you for their father.”

Kadin didn't take compliments like that well. He was doing what he was supposed to do as a father, and even though it was difficult, he was enjoying every minute of it. So he changed the subject and asked, "How long will you be in town?"

"I'm not sure," Gregory said. "A couple of days, maybe."

Kadin knew Miles had moved away, and that Gregory didn't have any ties to Savannah. So the next question he asked was the one he'd been thinking from the minute Gregory stepped out of the car. "Why are you here?"

Gregory shrugged his shoulders and stared down at his shoes. "Ah, well," he said, "I wanted to see you again is all. I'm engaged to be married this June and I'm starting a new job in Atlanta, and I just wanted to touch base with you again." He hesitated between sentences, as if he wasn't telling the whole truth.

When he said he was engaged, Kadin's stomach turned. But he forced a smile and said, "Congratulations. I hope you'll both be very happy." Kadin knew what Gregory was doing. He was trying to be something he wasn't just to please his family and society. Kadin had done the same thing, and he knew it never turned out well.

But his smile must have appeared forced, because Gregory looked at him as if he was reading his mind., "I know what you're thinking, and it's not like that. Betsy, my fiancée, and I are more like brother and sister, if you know what I mean. We have an unspoken agreement, and she's fine with that. She doesn't expect anything but companionship. We're both architects and we have a great deal in common. You'd like her."

"I'm sure I would," Kadin said. He didn't know how to respond to the fact that Gregory was getting involved in a loveless marriage. He knew guys from the picnic area

who were in marriages like that. They lived simple, contented lives and everyone was happy on the surface. But it was really none of his business, so he changed the subject and said, “I’m glad you finally became an architect. I always wondered about that.”

Gregory’s expression became serious again. He frowned and said, “I didn’t go right back to school. After we left so suddenly that summer, I enlisted in the Army and went overseas to Japan. I needed time to think and I needed to get away from my family.”

It sounded as if he was dropping hints, allowing Kadin to probe. Kadin had never fully comprehended how devastating it must have been for him the day they forced him to leave Savannah. So traumatizing that he’d dropped out of school and joined the Army. But then he laughed at the thought of Gregory in the Army. He had always been so delicate and refined. Trying to picture him in fatigues wasn’t easy. “Did you make any, ah, really good friends while you were in the service? I hear there are a lot of good-looking guys there.”

Gregory squared his shoulders and gave him a blank stare, as if that wasn’t any of his business. He said, in a proud, defiant voice, “I made several very good friends, all attractive men with strong hands. But nothing you’d call serious.”

He knew Gregory was talking about sex with other men. He was telling Kadin in a subtle way that he’d experimented more than once. He wasn’t ashamed of it, but he wasn’t bragging and he wasn’t about to go into any details. Kadin appreciated his honesty and smiled. He hadn’t been a saint either—far from it—and he certainly wasn’t going to tell him about his trips to the picnic area for anonymous blow jobs, or about the time he’d fucked kinky little Eddie in high heels. So Kadin scratched the back of his head a couple

of times and looked to the left. “Do you have time to take a short walk down to the creek?” he asked.

Gregory smiled and raised one eyebrow. “I think I have time for a quick walk.”

Kadin lifted his left arm all the way out and said, “After you.”

They walked in tandem to the creek. The natural dynamics between them hadn’t changed. Kadin was still the one who held the door open and Gregory was still the one who went in first. And while Gregory led the way, Kadin stared at his ass all the way down to the creek. His hands were in his pockets, and when the beige cotton fabric stretched across his backside, his firm buttocks rounded and bubbled like the smooth ass on a nude bronze. Kadin’s penis grew with each step he took. He had to reach down into his pants when Gregory wasn’t looking and adjust his erection so it would point up—a penis as big as his pointing down could be painful.

When they were next to the creek, Gregory closed his eyes and inhaled the early spring. Then he turned and faced Kadin. “It’s just as I remember it,” he said, “It’s the one place where I’ve always felt completely relaxed.”

Kadin smiled and put his right hand in his pocket so he could hold his dick down. It was fully erect now and he didn’t want Gregory to see it sticking out of his pants. When he looked up at the trees, just beginning to come to life with pale green buds, he sighed, realizing how lucky he was to live there. He didn’t have a favorite time of year there. Each season contained its own glorious miracle.

Gregory bent down and picked up a few small stones. He pitched one and it landed in the water. There was a soft plunk and the smooth surface rippled out in perfect

circles. Then he pitched another and said, “Are you sure it’s okay that I came down here? I’ll just leave right now if it’s not okay. I don’t want to intrude in any way.”

Kadin stared at the back of his head and said, “Of course it’s okay. Why would you even ask that question?” He saw Gregory was serious now. He was holding something back and Kadin wasn’t sure why.

Gregory dropped the stones and straightened his shoulders. Without facing him, he lowered his voice and said, “Because you never wrote or called. I sat there and waited for a week, thinking surely you’d at least send a letter. But there was nothing. I couldn’t eat or sleep. I thought about calling you, but I was terrified you’d give me a lecture about how it was best that I went back to school and forgot all about you. I was terrified you’d tell me I was just a kid with a crush and I’d forget all about you in time, or that I was going through a phase. Because that’s what my parents were thinking. So I waited for you to make the first move, and that never happened. I couldn’t talk to anyone about it. I wasn’t sure what I was feeling. I’d heard about men who fell in love with other men, and they wound up in mental hospitals. So I joined the Army and ran away from everything.”

Kadin’s erection began to shrink. He opened his mouth to speak, but Gregory turned around and faced him. He wiped a tear from his face and tried hard to steady his trembling lips. Then he looked Kadin in the eye and said, “All you had to do was call or write and say something. I wasn’t expecting much.”

Kadin stepped forward and shook his head back and forth. “You never received any of my letters?”

“What letters?”

He grabbed Gregory's shoulders and shook him gently. "I wrote you every single day for one solid year," he said. "I wrote the first letter the day you left. And by the end of that year, when you didn't reply, I stopped writing. I felt like an old man making a complete fool of himself...the old married guy chasing after the cute young stud who wasn't interested anymore. I was so utterly devastated I took a year off from my practice and buried myself in renovating the house. And I have never written anyone else a letter since then."

"I never received any letters," he said, shaking his head. Then he raised his eyebrows and sighed. "It must have been my mother who took them. She was always the first one at the mailbox."

Kadin pulled him closer and pressed his palm on the small of his back. He didn't care about old letters or the past. Gregory was a man. He was here in his arms now, and that was all that mattered.

Gregory's body went limp and he wrapped his arms around his shoulders. Then Kadin's hand went down and he squeezed Gregory's ass hard. He pressed his nose into his soft neck, took a deep breath and said, "I'm so glad you finally came home, babe."

Then he grabbed his ass with both hands and they kissed. When Kadin shoved his tongue into his mouth, it was still as soft and sweet as he'd remembered. He gobbled his lips and sucked his tongue. A warm sensation passed through his body and the world stopped moving. While he explored the inside of his mouth, he took deep breaths through his nose because he was on the verge of panting. His heart raced and his penis grew to a full-sized erection again. When he bucked his hips forward and pressed it into his groin, Gregory lowered his left hand and placed his palm on the shaft.

He rubbed it up and down while they kissed, then pulled his head back and said, “Let’s go back to the house.”

Kadin stuck his tongue out and licked his lips with two quick strokes. He said, “You’re really going to think this is weird, but I still have the same mattress from our first time.”

“The old mattress with the yellow corners?” Gregory asked. “That’s actually a little disgusting, if not creepy.” Then he licked the tip of his index finger and ran it down the length of Kadin’s torso. “You’re a very peculiar man sometimes.”

Kadin shrugged and tilted his head sideways. “I couldn’t get rid of it, and it really wasn’t that old. Maybe it is creepy, but I’ve been sleeping there every night since you left. Don’t worry, I had it thoroughly cleaned and fumigated a long time ago.”

Gregory smiled a real smile for the first time since he’d arrived, as if knowing this one simple fact about an old mattress somehow validated all the pain he’d been through. He pushed Kadin off his body and said, “I’ll race you. Last one back to the house has to be the bottom.”

They ran fast, Kadin pulling the back of Gregory’s shirt the entire time. When they reached the front door, Gregory purposely slowed down and said, “After you,” so he wouldn’t be the first one in the bedroom. They kicked off their shoes and pulled off their socks in the front hall and went barefoot up the grand staircase. Kadin had to hold his crotch because his erection was rubbing against his pants. Halfway up the stairs, Gregory unzipped his pants and let them drop on a middle step. He pulled off his shirt and his underpants at the top of the stairs and ran into the master bedroom naked. Kadin was

already flat on his back on the bed. By the time Gregory jumped up on the mattress and straddled his waist, he had an erection, too.

“Close your eyes,” Gregory said.

When his eyes were shut, Gregory lifted his shirt and pulled it over his head. Then he moved forward a little, rubbed his ass against Kadin’s naked stomach a few times, and reached back to unfasten his pants. He pulled at his belt buckle and yanked the zipper down. Kadin’s dick was so hard, it stood up from his underwear fly all by itself. While he moaned, Gregory turned around in the opposite direction so he could press his ass to Kadin’s face. Then he straddled his body again and rubbed his ass against the rough stubble on Kadin’s chin.

When Kadin grabbed his hips and pulled him toward his face, he arched his back and spread his legs wider. Kadin stuck out his tongue and licked the lips of his anus. Gregory threw his head back and moaned out loud, then he bent forward and sucked Kadin’s penis all the way into his mouth.

They remained in this position for a while, with Gregory sucking and Kadin licking. When it was time to get up, Gregory lifted his legs to turn and Kadin said, “There’s Vaseline in the top drawer of the nightstand.”

He spread the slippery lube all over Kadin’s penis, then reached back and spread more on his hole. He tossed the Vaseline jar to the other side of the bed and wiped his hand on his chest. Kadin adjusted his body and rested his head on the mattress. He closed his eyes and smiled when Gregory straddled his pelvis and grabbed his penis. When Gregory spread his legs and sat back, and his erection went all the way inside, Kadin smiled and said, “I’ve missed you so much.”

Chapter Eight

Kadin walked with Betsy and Clem down the wide, antiseptic hallway toward the sunroom, where Gregory was probably still staring out the window at gorgeous young landscapers cutting the lawn. Clem was a retired schoolteacher, and the woman with whom Betsy had been living for the past twenty-five years. She was a tall, thin woman who wore pantsuits and tailored shirts, and her salt-and-pepper hair was cut short with a small, wavy fluff at the top. Baseball season was her favorite time of year, the Phillies her favorite team. These two were a dying breed: two respectable old maids living in a conservative brick colonial off Peachtree Road in Atlanta. They drove a gray Chrysler minivan and sold antiques in a co-op downtown. When Betsy introduced Clem to anyone for the first time, she always referred to her as her good friend. No one ever gave them a second thought.

The weather was warm and the sun was bright; a few of the handsome, sweaty landscapers had already removed their shirts. It was mid-morning. Kadin had left Gregory in the sunroom so he could greet Betsy and Clem at the main entrance. They drove down to Atlanta two or three times a year to visit an old design client of Betsy's, and they always stopped to visit Kadin and Gregory on their way home.

They hadn't been down in six months. Betsy smiled as they veered around a technician pushing a metal cart filled with white cotton linens. But her shoulders were squared and she held her purse tight to her chest as if she were ready for battle. Clem followed them, her lips pinched and her head down.

When they reached the sunroom, Betsy hesitated at the door and asked, “Have there been any changes since the last time I was here?”

Kadin smiled. “It’s hard to tell. Some days he’s better than others.” He hated when people asked that question. If there were any changes, they always happened when no one was around. And they were always so small, only Kadin would notice them anyway.

They walked into the sunroom and crossed to a table near a large window. Betsy herself hadn’t changed much over the years. Her hair was gray now, but she still wore it pulled back in a bun. She was thinner, but still wore long gray skirts and simple white blouses. In all the years Kadin had known her, he’d never seen her wear makeup or jewelry. He hoped this visit might jolt something in Gregory’s mind.

But when Betsy stood next to him and Kadin tapped his shoulder, Gregory turned his head, gave her a gracious smile, and asked Kadin, “Is this a friend of yours?” Clem stood a few feet back, as if she wasn’t with them.

“Yes,” Kadin said, “It’s a very dear, old friend, Betsy. She stopped by to pay a visit on her way back to Atlanta.” Then he turned back to where Clem was standing. “And this is *her* good friend, Clem.”

Gregory smiled and extended his arm to shake Betsy’s hand. He smiled and nodded at Clem. “It’s nice to meet you both.” He didn’t have a clue that Betsy was the woman he’d once asked to marry him. He had no idea he’d been her good friend for more than forty years, or that he and Kadin had shared wonderful, memorable times with Betsy and Clem as couples. They’d taken vacations together, and Kadin and Gregory had spent long weekends at their home in Atlanta many times.

Betsy forced a smile and shook his hand. "It's nice to meet you." Then she looked back at Clem, bit the inside of her mouth, and tilted her head to the side.

"Betsy is an architect," Kadin said. "She visits one of her old clients here in Savannah a few times a year. And Clem is a retired teacher."

"Ah, well," Gregory said, "An architect and a schoolteacher. Isn't that nice?"

He'd tilted his head and his eyebrows had gone up for a second, leaving Kadin to wonder if he'd recognized her. But then he turned toward the window again and said, "There's one landscaper outside who looks so familiar to me. He's the tall one, with dark hair and hairy legs."

Kadin looked at Betsy and shrugged. "It's actually a very good day." He didn't tell Betsy or Clem this, but the landscaper Gregory was talking about looked just like Kadin had looked when he was younger. From a distance, they could have been long-lost brothers.

Betsy tried to appear animated, but her lips clenched tight into a thin horizontal line above her chin rather than a smile. Clem wasn't much of a talker under normal circumstances. She stood there with a blank smile, hands in her pockets, leaning forward and staring to the far end of the sunroom as if waiting for a train to arrive.

They didn't stay long. They sat down at the table for a half hour and made small talk with Kadin. Betsy clutched the arms of the chair. Her fingers twitched and tapped the black vinyl surface. She couldn't seem to find a comfortable place to keep her feet still. She'd cross them at the ankle, re-adjust herself in the seat, and tap her toes on the floor. Then she'd repeat this five minutes later, crossing her feet in the opposite way. Clem nodded and smiled a lot, but she kept picking at the leather strap of her wristwatch.

Gregory listened to them with a polite expression on his face, but he stared at the shirtless landscapers the entire time. When an older woman on the other side of the sunroom moaned out loud, Betsy jerked forward and pressed her palm to her throat. Gregory looked at the woman and frowned, then lifted his hand and said, "I'll take care of this. You just have to let them know who is boss, is all." He turned toward the old woman on the other side of the room with a pleasant expression, and shouted, "Shut the fuck up!" His voice was loud, with a deep, horrific bellow that almost sounded artificial. Then he faced the window again and smiled down at the landscapers.

Betsy's eyebrows went up and she gave Clem a look. Gregory had never been a loud, obnoxious man. And he'd never been profane.

Kadin laughed and said, "It's nothing. He doesn't like when they moan." This was nothing new to Kadin. But poor Betsy looked as if she were about to fall off her chair.

When both women finally stood to leave, they shook Gregory's hand and said goodbye. He never turned from the window. He just extended his arm to them and went through the polite motions. In the lobby, when Clem went out to bring the car around, Betsy hugged Kadin and asked, "How are *you*? This can't be easy."

He smiled. "I'm fine. I'm where I'm supposed to be right now. I have no doubts about that."

"I'll call you," she said, "and we'll be back in a few months. Maybe we can go out for dinner next time. I think it would be good for you to get out." She didn't say, "get out of here," but he knew that was what she meant.

He shrugged and said, "We'll see."

When they were gone and Kadin returned to the sunroom to read more of the story to Gregory, he smiled at Kadin and said, “Your friends are very nice women. But some lipstick certainly wouldn’t hurt.”

“They *are* a bit plain,” Kadin said, laughing. “But they are very nice people.”

“Plain isn’t the word,” Gregory said, “The tall one looks like she goes to a barbershop to have her hair done.”

Kadin laughed again and opened his laptop. Gregory never would have said something like this about Betsy or Clem five years earlier, even if that’s exactly what he’d been thinking.

* * * *

After they had sex, Gregory spent the night. They skipped dinner and went right to sleep. He rested in Kadin’s arms, with Kadin pinning him to the bed most of the night in a spoon position. Kadin locked his arms around his soft shoulders and buried his lips in his neck. Gregory closed his eyes and snuggled into him. He didn’t complain when he draped his hairy leg over his smooth hips; he didn’t squirm or wiggle when his penis pressed into the small of his back and he bucked his hips.

In the morning, they both woke with wood between their legs. Gregory was on his back by then and Kadin was practically on top of him. Before Gregory even opened his eyes, he lifted his legs, spread them wide and wrapped them around Kadin’s back. He threw his arms around his broad shoulders and sighed. “I like waking up like this,” he said. “Let’s do some more right now.”

Kadin didn’t hesitate. His erection was solid and he was ready to go all over again. He climbed on top of his body and reached down to direct his penis between Gregory’s

legs. His anus was still slippery from the night before, and Kadin's penis just slipped inside, with little effort. When it was all the way in, Kadin grunted a few times, bucked his hips, and said, "How's that?"

Gregory placed his palm on the back of Kadin's head and ran it through his thick, dark hair. "It's perfect," he said.

He nailed him to the bed again, bucking his hips slowly at first, building a steady rhythm that eventually caused the top of Gregory's head to bang against the headboard. He kept his feet crossed at the ankle, pressed to Kadin's back the whole time. He held his biceps for support. In this position, they could kiss, too. Kadin liked this part the most. He'd never kissed anyone else this way, especially when he was fucking. Kissing, for Kadin, was the most intimate part of sex, and it wasn't something he did when he went to the picnic area. Gregory kept lifting his head and sticking his tongue out for more. A few times Kadin pulled back and smiled, teasing him so he'd stick his tongue all the way out.

He hammered hard—the bed frame wobbled and the headboard slammed against the wall. Kadin kicked the covers off and they fell on the floor in a heap. His legs rubbed against the bare mattress while Gregory rocked beneath him. Eventually, Gregory came without touching his penis at all. Kadin came a second later, with a loud grunt and a few firm slams.

Kadin didn't pull out right away. First he kissed Gregory on the lips, then he smiled and slapped his thighs. "I like that," he said. "I've never seen that happen before."

Gregory squeezed his biceps and said, "You hit the right spots this time. It doesn't happen all the time. But when it does happen, I can't even begin to tell you how

wonderful it is. It's like my entire body is exploding from the inside out. You should let me do it to you sometime, so you'd know how it feels."

Kadin laughed and kissed him again. "Ah, well, we'll see about that." He'd never been anyone's bottom. The thought of getting fucked turned his stomach and softened his penis.

"You're right," Gregory said, pointing his toes. "Why ruin a good thing? The way things are right now is just fine with me."

After that, they showered together and Gregory rubbed Kadin's entire body with soap and a wet cloth. He stood there while hot water ran down Kadin's body, catering to him as if he were the attendant in a bathhouse. He started with his face and worked his way all the way down, with light, even strokes, until he was on his knees and rubbing the cloth between his legs. He took longer with Kadin's balls. He soaped them up, rinsed them off, and kissed them a few times. Then he sucked them into his mouth and started to hum. His lips were soft and his mouth was warm. The humming created a vibration that made Kadin clench his fists and jerk back against the white tile. Kadin smiled. He'd been married for ten years and his ex-wife had never done this to him. She'd licked his balls and she'd played with them on occasion. But she'd never actually gone down on her knees and worshipped them like Gregory was doing now. Only a gay man could understand the pleasure this gave another man. For Kadin, it was a form of romance combined with sex that could not be faked or imagined.

When they stepped out of the shower, Gregory pulled dry towels from a shelf and got down on his knees. He dried Kadin's feet first, and slowly worked his way up to the top of his head.

Later, when they were both dressed and in the kitchen, Kadin made coffee and toast. He wasn't much of a cook. The toast was burnt and the coffee was too strong. But neither one was paying attention to food. Now they had to talk.

"When are you going back to Atlanta?" Kadin asked. His voice was soft and he hesitated a few times.

Gregory shrugged his shoulders and stared down into his coffee cup. "I don't know. I need to be alone for a while and think things through. Everything happened so fast. I wasn't sure what to expect when I drove down here, but I knew I had to drive down anyway. I'm engaged to be married. I still have a life in Atlanta." He ran his fingers through his hair and took a deep breath.

"I'm not giving you any pressure," Kadin said. "But I can speak from experience. Marrying a woman will never work for you. You'll never be complete. I don't care how understanding and wonderful the woman is. I know I'd rather be alone than stuck in a loveless marriage."

Gregory finished his coffee in one gulp and stood from the table. "I'm going back to the motel. I need some time alone. I'll take your number and call you later."

Kadin walked him to the front door and held it open, then handed him his phone number. It was a cool, breezy morning and the sun was shining. It looked as if the lawn and the trees had become greener in just one night. Spring happened fast in Savannah. By noon it would feel like summertime. When Gregory stepped onto the front porch, he turned back and gave Kadin a hug. "I'll call you. Please be patient with me. I might not call until tomorrow."

Kadin kissed him good-bye and said, “I will. I’ve been waiting for five years. A few more days can’t hurt.”

Chapter Nine

When Kadin went into the nursing home sunroom the next morning, the nurse was removing a tray of food from Gregory's table. The scrambled eggs were dry and cold, the grapefruit surface was glistening with dissolved sugar, and Gregory hadn't eaten anything. He sat there with his head down, staring at his legs and picking invisible pieces of lint from his navy blue slacks. It was pouring outside, a heavy autumn rainfall expected to last all day and into the early evening.

Kadin pulled out a chair and put his laptop down on the table. He smiled and said, "It didn't look like you were hungry this morning." He could tell by the dark expression on Gregory's face that this would be one of those days when Kadin would have to work extra hard to keep him alert.

"I'm not a breakfast person," Gregory said, then rolled his shoulders slowly. "I'd prefer just coffee. But this hotel keeps bringing me all this food every morning, and I keep telling them I'm not paying for it. I just hope there are no mistakes when it's time to go home and I get the bill for all this."

Kadin smiled and tapped his shoulder. "I'll take care of everything, and I promise you won't be charged for anything you didn't order," he said. He was smiling because Gregory never had been a breakfast person. All his life, the only thing he could ever tolerate before noon was a cup of black coffee. It occurred to him that maybe the stories he was telling were helping him remember. So he sat down, opened the laptop, and said, "You'll feel better after you hear what happens next."

"I will?"

“Yes, you will,” Kadin said. “I’m sure it’s something you never would have expected.”

* * * *

After Gregory left to go back to the hotel and think about his life and the important decisions he had to make, Kadin went into his office off the living room and worked until mid-afternoon. It was one of those Saturdays in spring when everything came to life and people felt the urge to do something outdoors. But he didn’t want to leave the house in case Gregory called. He was hoping he’d call by three o’clock so they could plan to go out to dinner that night, but the phone didn’t ring. By four Kadin couldn’t stand it anymore and he went out for a walk near the creek. He sat on a rock for a long time, pitching stones into the water while he thought about the past five years. He should have gone after Gregory back then. He should have driven to Atlanta the next day and told him how much he loved him.

At seven that night, he made a sandwich and went outside to sit on the veranda. He’d just resigned himself to the fact that he probably wouldn’t hear anything from Gregory until Easter Sunday morning when he heard the crackling sound of rubber against gravel and saw a car coming up the driveway. He stood from his rocking chair and walked to the front steps with his hands in his pockets. The huge smile on his face faded when he saw it wasn’t Gregory’s blue Chrysler pulling up to the front walk. It was Eddie’s huge black Hudson.

Eddie turned off the motor and got out of the car. He wasn’t wearing pants; just an oversized white dress shirt with tails that covered his private parts, and short black

pointy boots with Cuban heels. He walked slowly, with a half smile and one eyebrow raised. His legs were smooth and shiny, as if he'd just lathered them with bath oil.

Kadin put his hands on his hips and tilted his head to the side. "Are you supposed to be here tonight?" he asked. But he was only being polite. He knew Eddie wasn't supposed to be there. Kadin never forgot about plans like this, especially when it involved Eddie actually coming to his home.

Eddie gave him a naughty smile and said, "I just thought I'd surprise you tonight. I know your family is away for Easter week and I hated to think of you spending all this time alone, stud. Just think of this as a visit from the Easter Bunny." Then he laughed, turned around, and bent all the way over with his legs spread wide. He wasn't wearing underwear. He flashed his naked ass in Kadin's face and wiggled it back and forth a few times.

"Eddie, get in the house right now," Kadin said, "Suppose someone saw you do that." His voice was low and stern. He looked up at the light blue ceiling and closed his eyes while Eddie sashayed up the steps and into the house. He shouldn't have shown up uninvited this way. It was presumptuous and it crossed the line of their agreement involving casual, no-strings-attached sex. Evidently, Eddie hadn't been paying attention. Kadin knew it was time for a serious talk.

When he went into the house, Eddie was in the living room putting a small forty-five record on the hi-fi next to the fireplace. A sexy Marilyn Monroe song started to play and Kadin's heart began to beat faster. By the time he entered the living room, Eddie was doing a striptease dance, unbuttoning his white dress shirt very slowly. He pulled it open and let it fall from his shoulders. But he wasn't naked. He must have slipped on a kinky

pair of white lace panties while Kadin was still outside. And on his upper body, he was wearing what looked like an old-fashioned corset—black leather with black leather laces, contrasting the white panties. But it wasn't exactly a corset. It laced up the front with crisscrosses like a shoe, and had eyelets on both sides. It reminded Kadin of something he'd seen women wear in period films.

Kadin spread his arms out. "What on earth are you doing?" he asked. He had to almost shout because the music was so loud.

Eddie danced over to him and said, "I'm doing a little dance for you, and then you're going to throw me down and rip off my bodice." With his lisped voice, it sounded like he'd said, "*Bloodless*."

"*Your what?*"

"My bodice," he said in a breathy stage whisper, puckering his sexy lips and shaking his head.

"Oh *shit*."

Then Eddie smiled and ran his hands down his thin, shapely torso. "This is called a bodice," he said, referring to the corset-like top. "And you're going to throw me down like a naughty little wench, bend me over and spread my legs, and rip it off my body while you ravage me, stud." Then he kicked off the boots with the Cuban heels and went down on the floor. With his back arched and his ass up high, he crawled to where Kadin was standing and started licking his pant legs.

Kadin looked down and stared at Eddie's hot, round ass. This was exactly the sort of kinky thing he probably would have liked if Gregory hadn't shown up at his door. But it wasn't something he ever would have planned on his own or, for that matter, asked

anyone to do. Kinky sex wasn't necessary for Kadin, but when someone with a cute little body like Eddie presented it before him, he knew he wouldn't have turned down the opportunity to rip off a pair of tight lace panties and plug a soft, warm hole.

Kadin continued to stare, shaking his head back and forth. His penis was already growing and he didn't even *want* to get aroused. Eddie did this to him—it was purely sexual and animalistic, with no romance or love whatsoever. But he also knew this desire to dominate someone softer and weaker was one of his innate, fundamental flaws and he didn't want to give in to the temptation anymore. He only wanted Gregory, the love of his life. This sex just for the sake of sex had to stop.

So he stepped back, raised his hands in the air, and said, "Eddie, we can't do this anymore. You're going to have to put your shirt back on and go home now." His voice was kind and filled with respect. He didn't want to degrade him in any way, because the one thing he'd always appreciated about Eddie was his complete lack of inhibition about sex and sexual fantasies. But he wasn't in love with Eddie and he wanted him to leave.

Eddie ignored him, especially when he reached up between his legs and discovered Kadin's penis was almost fully erect. He licked the fabric of his tan slacks, pressing his tongue against Kadin's hidden erection. "It doesn't look like you really want me to leave," Eddie said.

But Kadin stepped back again and said, "Stop it now, Eddie. I'm really serious. I don't want to do this anymore. Things have changed." He was talking about Gregory, but he didn't want to go into details with Eddie. Their agreement didn't call for personal discussions.

Eddie smiled and got up on his knees, totally ignoring him. The music stopped for a moment before the Marilyn Monroe song started to play again. He'd left the hi-fi on so the record would continue to repeat. He was still on his knees when he reached forward and unzipped Kadin's slacks as fast as he could. The tip of his erection popped out of his fly and Eddie reached for it. He pulled it all the way out and wrapped his lips around the head.

For a moment, Kadin closed his eyes and sighed. He was a sexual man. Eddie's soft lips felt so good; he liked the way he gave head. And Eddie knew how to suck hard without stopping or complaining. But then Kadin lifted his hands and literally jumped back. He grabbed his penis and shoved it back into his pants. "I'm fucking serious, Eddie," he shouted. "We're not doing this now, or ever again." Then he turned away and ran his palm through his hair. "You really should have called first. I would have explained everything to you then, before you went to all this trouble. We're not going to be seeing each other anymore."

Eddie stared between Kadin's legs, where his penis was betraying him. So he stood up and put his arms around Kadin's shoulders. "Just fuck me once again, stud. And I'll leave and never come back. Just one good fuck while you tear off my bodice, for old time's sake."

Kadin sighed and placed his hands on the small of Eddie's back. "I'm sorry, kid," he said, "It's not going to happen tonight or ever. I'm not fucking you anymore and I'm not ripping your *bloodless* off."

"It's called a *bodice*," Eddie said, reaching down to stroke his dick.

Kadin didn't care what it was called. Eddie wasn't getting the message. If that meant he had to be mean, he didn't care anymore. But then he heard the front door slam shut and the sound of footsteps crossing through the entrance hall. When he turned his head to see who was in the house, Eddie was still holding him and rubbing his crotch. His head was pressed to his chest and his eyes were shut. The music was still playing, and he only cared about getting into Kadin's pants.

And now Gregory stood in the living room doorway, holding two bags of groceries in his arms, staring at them with his mouth wide open. A second later, he dropped the bags on the floor and stepped back. He continued to stare, pressing his right palm to his stomach.

Kadin pushed Eddie away and faced Gregory. "This isn't what you think. I wasn't doing anything. He showed up unannounced and he was just leaving." Then he turned to Eddie and said, "Tell him it's the truth. Tell him you were just leaving, and that I didn't ask you to come here." Kadin had never cheated on anyone in his life. He'd never even cheated on his ex-wife. He'd waited until after they were divorced to start visiting the picnic area.

Eddie was buttoning up his white shirt. Most of his body was covered now. But the fact that he wasn't wearing any pants didn't make him the most convincing source. When he opened his mouth to speak, Gregory kicked the torn grocery bags across the living room floor and ran out the front door. A package of pork chops landed on the sofa, a can of creamed corn rolled under a side table, and a head of romaine lettuce sailed through the air and fell on top of Eddie's head.

Kadin pointed to Eddie and said, “You stay inside until I come back. And turn off that goddamned music.”

Then he ran outside to stop Gregory from leaving. His penis was still semi-erect and it hurt when he ran. But he wasn’t going to reach down and hold it in front of Gregory. Gregory was about to reach for the door handle, but he dropped his keys. When he bent down to retrieve them, Kadin pressed his hand against the door and leaned over him. “I know this looks bad,” he said, “But I can explain. Eddie is just a friend, nothing more. Please don’t leave. Not like this. Let me explain first.”

Gregory stood up and pushed him away. He was stronger than he looked, because Kadin almost fell back. “He sure is a *good* friend.”

“He’s someone I get together with once in a while,” Kadin said. “I’m not a monk. He’s a good fellow, but there’s nothing between us other than sex. This is the first time he’s ever shown up without calling. He wasn’t supposed to be here tonight. I know it’s bad timing, but you’ve got to believe me.” He moved in closer and reached out to hold him in his arms. “I’d never do anything to hurt you or ruin things between us. I’ve waited so long to be with you again.”

But Gregory pushed him back again and opened the car door. “And what the hell was that outfit? Is that the sort of thing you like?” He slammed his hands on the steering wheel and shook his head. His face and neck were red and a huge vein bulged at the top of his forehead. “God, I feel like such a fucking fool.”

“Ah, well,” Kadin said, “I didn’t ask him to wear *that*. I’d never ask anyone to wear something like that.” He thought for a moment and rubbed his jaw. “Eddie is a little different...flamboyant. He likes kinky things sometimes.” He rubbed his jaw again,

deciding to keep to himself the time Eddie had worn high heels and black lace panties to the motel room.

“Well,” Gregory said, “I hope you and Eddie will be happy with all your kinky little adventures, because I’m leaving.” Then he started the car, put it into gear, and pulled into the driveway so fast the back end of the Chrysler fishtailed and knocked the mailbox over.

* * * *

“What happened after that?” Gregory asked. He was sitting forward on the end of his seat, waiting for more.

But the nurse came to take him for routine blood work and Kadin had to stop reading. “You can hear more later after you’ve had your tests and your dinner,” she said.

“That’s right,” Kadin said, “After dinner, I’ll read some more.” He was tired for some reason. “And I’m going to take a nap while you’re having your tests.”

Gregory stood up and slowly walked to the wheelchair, which was mandatory for anything involving a medical procedure. He sat down in the chair slowly and folded his hands on his lap. He looked up at the nurse and asked, “Did you ever hear of something called a bodice?”

Kadin gulped with a hard swallow and looked out the window to watch the steady rain.

“A what?” she asked, releasing the safety brake with her right foot. Her head went back and her lips twisted to the right.

“A bodice,” Gregory said, as she turned the chair around. “I’ve never heard of it either, until today.” He gripped the arms of the chair and shook his head. “Someone was

wearing one in the story this nice man is telling me.” He hadn’t referred to him by his name in over a year. It was always, “this nice man,” or “the kind fellow who works here.”

The nurse lowered her eyebrows and gave Kadin a look. He shrugged his shoulders and smiled. “It’s like a corset,” he said.

She shook her head and laughed. “And I thought I’d heard it all around here.”

Chapter Ten

In the late 1950s, Betsy Jayne Lampnick was a plump, easygoing young woman with thick ankles and lopsided eyeglasses that hung from the end of her nose. She liked being a “miss.” Her tailored clothes were simple, her dishwater brown hair was always pulled back in a tight bun, and she never showed much interest in men. As an architect and designer, she knew she’d never become famous by creating great monuments that garnered worldwide attention. But she liked to draw and she knew her limitations. She deserved credit for this: she was perfectly content to spend the rest of her life drawing up plans for flat strip malls and tacky-tacky subdivisions filled with identical little boxes called split-levels.

She loved cats, but couldn’t keep one because she was allergic. If a cat so much as crossed her path, her face tripled in size and her throat closed. So she collected tiny porcelain cat figurines made in Japan. She kept them lined on neat pine shelves all over her one bedroom apartment in downtown Atlanta. Her favorite was a white Persian with almond-shaped eyes that sparkled when the morning sun hit it at just the right moment.

Her only other passion, besides the porcelain cats, was reading mystery novels. Her nightstands were stacked with books. The novels that filled the shelves of two living room walls were organized in alphabetical order, never mixing paperbacks with hardcovers. She didn’t cook much; her books were stacked against the backsplash on the kitchen counter and they lined the top of her stove. She read fast: three mystery novels a week. But more than that, she belonged to a well-known mystery novel club and wrote monthly reviews for their newsletter under the pen name Lynn Gerry.

She gave her character, Lynn-Gerry-the-book-reviewer, an interesting life, too. In the bio at the back of the monthly newsletter, Betsy made her a successful lawyer who worked at a fictional firm in Des Moines, Iowa. And she wrote her reviews with a pithy, snarky voice she never would have had the courage to use in person as Betsy Jayne Lampnick, the mousy, frumpy architect.

When she thought about what Lynn Gerry might look like, if there really *had* been a Lynn Gerry, she pictured a plump woman in her late forties, with sensible shoes and tweed suits—a soft, ripe tomato balanced by two thin toothpicks. She’d live alone; she didn’t need a man. She’d have an expressionless face as round as the hubcap on an old Ford and straight, flat black hair that showed she wasn’t interested in frilly, feminine things.

Betsy’s book reviews boldly reflected her unyielding personal taste, and her conscious—she always knew what she was doing—dislike of the male sex organ. Her mission in life was to protect the world from what she considered trashy mystery novels with too many sexy, smutty scenes. She loved mystery novels with strong, sexless women and very weak men, and she reviewed them well. But if she read a mystery novel where there was a strong, sexy male character, she verbally tore it to shreds. She took passages from the book and displayed them out of context on purpose. Beneath the passages, she’d write sardonic comments to make readers laugh at the author. If she couldn’t find a fault in a book she didn’t like, she created one just for the sake of writing a bad review. Sometimes, though she’d never have admitted this out loud to anyone, she enjoyed writing the bad reviews far more than she enjoyed writing the good ones.

So with all this experience in reading and reviewing mystery novels, it was no wonder Betsy started to wonder about why Gregory had gone all the way down to Savannah with such little notice. She'd developed a keen sense of knowing when something wasn't right, thanks to mysteries. She always trusted her instincts.

When she tried to phone him at the motel where he was staying in Savannah, the phone rang endlessly. She called on Friday evening, and later again on Saturday afternoon, but no one answered. She could have called first thing in the morning, but she didn't want it to look as if she were checking up on him. He might have misunderstood, and she didn't want him to think she didn't trust him.

Gregory was the only man she'd ever met in her life that she'd even consider marrying. He came from a good family, they shared a love for good design, and they never argued. She didn't want to ruin a good thing. He didn't try to put his hands down her shirt or up her dress; he couldn't have cared less about having any intimate, awkward relations with her that involved private body parts or the exchange of bodily fluids.

Up north, when she was still in college, she'd dated a guy who couldn't think about anything but getting into her pants. When they went to the movies, he always tried to put his hand on her knee and slide it up her dress. Or he'd yawn, lean back in his seat, and casually place his arm around her shoulder so he could squeeze her breast. And she wanted none of that; she always smacked his hand and told him to behave.

But the more she turned him down, the more he tried to get into her pants. The last time she saw him, they were in the front seat of his car after a dinner date. He turned off the motor and kissed her on the mouth. The kissing wasn't so bad at first, but when he put his arms around her and stuck his tongue inside her mouth, her eyes opened wide and

her body went rigid. She wanted to gag and spit out the window. But she didn't back away at first, because she thought this was something she was supposed to be doing. She figured if she just sat there and pretended to like it, he'd get bored and stop in due time. But when he gently took her soft, clean hand and pressed it between his legs, and she felt his hard, filthy organ poking through the fabric of his slacks, she pushed him back, jumped out of the car, and ran back to the women's dorms as fast as she could.

She didn't date anyone else until she met Gregory.

The only thing Betsy Jayne Lampnick hated more than a mystery novel without a strong female protagonist was the male penis. With Gregory, she didn't have to worry about kissing with tongues, hot, sticky embraces, or holding a disgusting erection in her spotless, delicate palm. In all the time they'd dated, he'd never once pulled down his zipper and asked her to touch the ugly thing. When he kissed her, it was on the cheek and not the mouth. He even suggested that when they were married, it would be best to have separate bedrooms. What more could she ask for in a man? Gregory was perfect for her, and she didn't want to lose him.

But she was worried about this new turn of events. When Gregory didn't answer the phone at the motel in Savannah, Betsy went to see his mother.

She dropped by the house on Saturday evening with a credible excuse: to show her fabric swatches for bridesmaids' dresses. If it had been up to Betsy, they would have had a sensible civil ceremony at city hall and there wouldn't have been any bridesmaids, ornate flowers, or limousines. She hated anything wasteful and frivolous and extravagant. But she knew Gregory's mother was excited about a large wedding, and Betsy didn't want to cause any problems. She'd wait until after the vows to set things straight with *her*.

She didn't stay at Gregory's house long. His mother took the fabric samples and smiled. But she was too animated; she barely invited Betsy into the front hall. Her voice was loud and nervous, and her sentences ran together with an upward lilt as if she were hiding something. This alone made Betsy suspicious. Gregory's mother knew something and she wasn't going to share it.

Her suspicions were confirmed when Gregory's mother said, "He just loves Savannah. He's always talking about it. He spent a summer there and had to get back for a little harmless springtime visit. His father was originally from there, you know."

"I see," Betsy said. But she didn't see at all. In all the time she'd known Gregory, he'd never mentioned Savannah, not once. He'd never mentioned he'd been there, or that his father was from there. If he'd been so in love with it, he surely would have mentioned this "harmless" fact at least a few times? "I just thought it was a bit odd that he'd leave now, being that tomorrow is Easter Sunday and all. You'd think he'd want to be here with his family."

His mother held her stomach and forced a laugh. "Ah, well, Betsy darling," she said, "that's Gregory for you. He's never been one to observe the holidays. He never even sent us a Christmas card or a birthday card the entire time he was in the Army. When he was in the service, aside from a few letters and trinkets he sent home, you would have thought we didn't exist."

The next morning, Betsy packed a small bag, a few mystery novels, and had the oil and tires checked. She wore a plain beige dress with flat ballerina slippers to match, because it was a holiday. Then she drove down to Savannah to surprise her fiancé on Easter Sunday. She sat close to the wheel, hunched over, and drove with her forearms.

She hadn't even left the city limits of Atlanta when she noticed her heart was beating faster and her legs were tingling. She felt like a character in one of the mystery novels she reviewed.

If she'd had enough talent to write a mystery novel of her own, this was exactly how it would have begun.

Chapter Eleven

When Gregory had first been diagnosed with Alzheimer's, the children had rallied to support Kadin. Brandon flew down from New York, Bryce drove down from Washington, D.C., and Marjorie flew out from Los Angeles with her husband and three children. They helped Kadin and Gregory get through that first week of dismay and shock, then went back to their lives.

Kadin had appreciated their support. He loved them all dearly. But he was glad when they'd finally left. He knew they'd meant well. But Brandon kept rubbing his jaw and shaking his head, telling him he had to prepare for the future. Bryce had asked him about his long-term nursing home insurance options, "for when the time comes." And Marjorie had wanted him to put the house up for sale and move to Los Angeles so he wouldn't be alone when "the inevitable happens." She was being tactful, but Kadin knew what she meant.

He wasn't ready to just give up. He'd waited once for Gregory to return to him, and he was prepared to do it again.

Kadin smiled and listened to all of them, but didn't commit to anything definite. They didn't understand. All he wanted to do was hold on to what he had left of his life, the only real life he'd ever known. His life hadn't begun until he'd met Gregory, and he wanted to take each second he had with him and squeeze as much from it as he could. Hope was all he had.

So when he saw his family crossing the nursing home grounds toward his table, he closed his laptop and stood to greet them. It was a breezy Sunday afternoon. There

were still a few leaves left on the trees that had refused to fall before their time. His children had all gathered in Savannah for the weekend because they hadn't seen him since Easter, and now they were on their way back to their homes and families. Marjorie had cooked everyone a wonderful dinner at the house on Saturday, and he'd joined them when he knew Gregory was safe in his room for the night. But he didn't spend the night in his own home. After dinner, he hugged and kissed them goodbye and went back to his room in the nursing home so he'd be there in the morning when Gregory woke.

This was the first time the children had seen Gregory all weekend. Kadin had thought it was best not to disrupt his routine and to keep their visit short. The smallest occurrence could set him back for days. When Kadin stood and stepped away from the table, Gregory turned to see who was approaching. He stared up at the three grown children he'd once loved like his own with the same polite smile he gave to all complete strangers. His hands were folded and his feet were crossed at the ankle. He looked good that day, in his red cardigan and black slacks.

Kadin hugged each one, then turned to Gregory and said, "These are my children. They came down for a quick visit and they're all going home this afternoon." He always hoped Gregory would remember at least one of them.

Marjorie's eyebrows went up and she extended her arm to shake his hand. "I'm Marjorie," she said. Her eyes darted back and forth to her brothers, but Gregory didn't notice her confusion.

He didn't get up either. But he extended his arm to her and said, "It's very nice to meet you, dear. Your father runs a wonderful hotel here."

Marjorie hesitated for a moment and looked him in the eye, then pulled her arm back and clutched her purse hard. She gave Kadin a look and lowered her head fast.

“And these are my two sons,” Kadin said, ignoring Marjorie. “Brandon and Bryce.”

They just nodded and smiled.

“It’s nice to meet you both,” Gregory said. Then he stood up and smiled at Kadin. “I’m going inside now to play the guitar so you can visit with your children. It was nice to meet you all. You’re a fine family, indeed. I wish I’d had children.”

Marjorie grabbed Brandon’s arm and forced a smile. But there were tears welling in the corners of her eyes.

As he turned to leave, Kadin said, “I’ll be in shortly, and I’ll read more of the story.”

“That would be nice,” Gregory said.

When he was gone, Marjorie hugged her father and said, “He didn’t even have a clue. It kills me to see him like this. It’s as if he’s someone completely different now.”

“When did he learn to play the guitar?” Brandon asked. His hands were in his pockets and he was still watching Gregory walk back to the sunroom. Brandon had always been the sturdy one. But even *his* voice sounded a bit shaky this afternoon.

Kadin smiled. “He doesn’t play. He’s going back to sit at a table and draw.” He didn’t tell them about the crayons and coloring books.

Bryce frowned and shook his head. “I wish you’d reconsider living here and move back home. I really worry about what this might be doing to you. You can still visit him

often, but at least you can be in your own home. And we can hire a housekeeper to look after you.”

Kadin waved his arm and smiled. The last thing he needed was some nosy housekeeper watching his every move. “I’m just fine. When I’m with Gregory, I am home.”

* * * *

After their argument about Eddie, Gregory sped down the driveway. Kadin ran back into the house and told Eddie to leave. He kept his voice soft and his words were kind, but he made it clear he wasn’t interested in seeing him again. Eddie frowned, but he finally said he understood. Eddie even kissed him goodbye on the cheek before Kadin grabbed his car keys, ran out the door, and jumped into the Cadillac convertible to find Gregory.

He’d lost him once in his life and he hadn’t bothered to go after him. He wasn’t going to make that mistake twice.

When it finally occurred to him he didn’t even know where Gregory was staying, he was speeding toward town. So he decided to check out every hotel and motel within the city limits. The roads were empty because it was the Saturday night before Easter. He had to drive past three hotels and two motels until he finally spotted Gregory’s blue Chrysler in the parking lot of The Eagle Motel. He pulled up next to his car on an angle and turned off the motor. The Chrysler was parked in front of room 16, so he got out of the car and knocked on the door.

But no one answered. He knocked a few more times, then decided to try room 17 next door. As he turned to leave, the door to room 16 opened and Gregory said, “I figured I’d better come out, so you don’t start knocking on every door here.”

Kadin tilted his head and said, “That was a good idea, because that’s exactly what I was about to do.” Then he squared his shoulders and took a deep breath. “Can I come in?”

Gregory stared down at his shoes. His face wasn’t red anymore and the large vein in his forehead had gone down, but his eyes were puffy. He sniffed back and said, “I don’t think that’s a good idea.”

Kadin smiled and spread his arms; he extended his hands palms up. He had nothing to feel guilty about, and he wanted to prove this to Gregory. “I won’t stay long. I promise. I just want to talk to you so you fully understand what happened back at the house. Then, if you want me to leave, I will.”

Gregory took a shallow breath and opened the door wider. He stepped to the side and said, “You can come in for just a minute.”

Kadin came through the doorway fast. It was a basic motel room, with one double bed, a wall of Formica built-ins, and a bathroom in the back. The carpet was orange and the bedspread was olive green. He sat on the edge of the bed and Gregory sat on a Danish modern chair in front of the desk.

Kadin confessed everything. First he told him Eddie had shown up unannounced earlier. Then he told Gregory all about his little excursions to the picnic area north of Savannah. He told him that’s where he’d met Eddie, and a few other guys, and he made no apologies. He didn’t go into any graphic details about what he’d done with these guys,

but he emphasized that he never been emotionally involved, and that Gregory was the only man he'd ever loved. His voice was soft and low. He looked directly into Gregory's eyes and never stammered or hesitated once.

When he was finished, he looked at Gregory. "And now that you're back," he said, "I'll never go to a place like that picnic area again."

Gregory thought for a moment and sighed. He said, "I believe you. And, just so you know, I haven't exactly been a saint either."

Kadin stood up and crossed to the chair. He placed his fingertips under his chin and lifted his head up higher. "I don't want to talk about the past anymore. What's done is done." The last thing he wanted to listen to were the sexual adventures Gregory had had in the Army. The thought of another man even touching Gregory's body made Kadin's stomach jump.

The only way to remove these images from his mind, the pictures of rough guys in uniform spreading Gregory's legs wide, was to re-claim Gregory's body once again. He belonged to Kadin now, and Kadin wanted to prove it. So he spread his legs wider and pulled down his zipper. Then he placed his palm on the back of Gregory's head and pushed his face between his legs. Gregory didn't resist the pressure. He lifted his hands and pressed his palms against Kadin's thighs. He ran them up and down, with slow strokes. Then he stuck out his tongue and slipped it into the open fly of Kadin's underwear and licked his pubic hair. His head went up and down at first, then with rapid, hungry jerks. His eyes were closed and his tongue was hanging from his mouth when Kadin finally pulled the back of his head and said, "Let's get out of these clothes."

Gregory reached into his pants and pulled out his erection. He wrapped his hand around the shaft and said, “After we’re naked, I want you to lie back on the bed and let me do all the work this time. I might not be kinky and into weird clothes, but I want you to know I’m just as good as that Eddie person.”

They removed their clothes fast. When Gregory dropped his pants and bent over to remove his shoes and socks, Kadin grabbed his erection with his right hand and slapped the shaft against the palm of his left. The way Gregory’s back arched made his balls tighten. When he looked at his firm bubble ass, his heart raced. He wanted to press the tip into the long, deep crack and run it up and down. He wanted to ram it inside, hard and fast, and take back what he’d almost lost all over again.

But Gregory had different plans. When he was naked, he pushed Kadin back to the bed. He sat down slowly, with his hairy legs spread wide and his penis still in his hand. “Now lie back so your legs hang over the end of the bed,” Gregory said, “and close your eyes.”

Then Gregory went all the way down to the floor and kissed Kadin’s bare feet. He kissed each toe, then went back kiss them a second time. He wasn’t sloppy. He kissed quickly; his lips hardly touched skin. When he was finished with Kadin’s toes, he ran his tongue up both insteps and licked his ankles. His legs took a long time: he licked each one, rubbing the sides of his face against the muscles on his calves. And when he finally reached his upper thighs, he buried his face in his crotch and lapped the soft spots on both side of his balls.

Kadin’s entire body jerked. Gregory grabbed his erection and started licking his balls. When he sucked both balls into his mouth, Kadin moaned and threw his arms back.

Gregory's cheeks puffed out and he took short breaths through his nose. He ran his tongue across the bottoms of Kadin's balls and started to suck. He stroked his penis lightly while he did this; his fingers barely held the shaft.

By the time he finally sucked Kadin's entire erection into his mouth, Kadin was edging. When Kadin saw Gregory's cheeks indent and his lips puff out, he knew he was sucking pre-come. Kadin always had tons of pre-come. But Gregory didn't mind. His head went up and down fast, and he he swallowed and gulped and hummed. Each time the head hit the back of his throat, his eyelids fluttered. He knew how to create intense suction with very little noise. He was fast and efficient; it felt like soft, wet fingers wrapped around his dick.

The faster Gregory's head went up and down, the closer Kadin got. His toes curled and his feet arched. When he knew he was ready to blast a load, he grunted a few times, held back, and said, "I'm really close." He wasn't sure if Gregory wanted him to come that way. He was hoping that was what he wanted, but he figured he'd better ask first.

Gregory continued to suck him off, nodding his head up and down at the same time. Then he reached down and grabbed his own erection and started jerking fast. He wanted this to happen. He wanted Kadin to explode inside his mouth.

Kadin spread his legs wider and pressed his thick fingers into his crotch. He grunted a few times and lifted his head from the mattress. His penis went off and filled the inside of Gregory's mouth with white cream. At the same second Kadin shot his load, Gregory jerked his own all over the orange carpet between his knees.

Kadin reached forward and placed his hands on top of Gregory's head. He continued to suck until he was certain he'd drained every last drop left in Kadin's balls. He didn't stop sucking until Kadin's penis began to shrink inside his mouth.

When Gregory was finished, it slid out of his mouth and he smiled. "I'm glad you followed me back here tonight," he said. "I wasn't sure you would."

He was still on his knees. Kadin sat up straight and pulled him closer. Then he bent down, kissed him on the lips, and said, "I learned my lesson the first time you went away."

Gregory rested his head on his lap and said, "It's all in the past now."

"I'm curious about one thing," Kadin said. "If I had come running after you when your parents dragged you back to Atlanta five years ago, would you have come back to Savannah with me?"

Gregory kept his head on his lap. He sighed and thought for a minute. Then he lifted his eyebrows and said, "Yes. I would have gone back with you. I would have done anything you'd asked me to do."

Chapter Twelve

They didn't spend the night at the motel. Gregory left his car in the motel parking lot and rode home with Kadin. They went right to bed and fell asleep in each other's arms.

When Kadin woke up alone and opened his eyes on Easter Sunday morning, he smelled bacon coming from the kitchen. He scratched the top of his head and sat up on the edge of the bed. Then he rubbed his eyes a few times to adjust them to the bright morning sun that was pouring through the front windows. He put on a pair of boxer shorts and a white T-shirt and headed downstairs.

When he entered the kitchen, Gregory was fully dressed, with his hair combed and his face shaved. He was standing over the stove, turning thick strips of bacon over in an old cast-iron skillet. He turned back and smiled at Kadin. "I have omelets warming in the oven and the bacon will be done soon. I wish I were more of a breakfast person. But I only like coffee in the morning." To his right, on the counter, there were two thick slices of warm bread, pan-fried in melted butter.

Kadin walked up to him and kissed him on the back of the neck. Then he rubbed his hands together and said, "I'm starved." But he was starved for more than bacon and eggs, because his hand went down to Gregory's buttocks and he started to squeeze.

"Knock it off," Gregory said, "and go sit down and I'll pour you a cup of coffee." He smiled and pointed to the kitchen table.

Kadin ate everything while Gregory sipped his coffee. They talked as if all the empty years that had passed between them had never existed. A few times, when Kadin began a sentence, Gregory finished it without giving it a second thought. Their voices

were slow and soft and easy; it was as if they'd never been apart. Kadin told him about the recent complicated trial he'd been involved with and how stressful the past year had been on him. He mentioned his children and how difficult it had been when they'd lost their mother. Gregory put his coffee on the table and stared into his eyes while he spoke. When Gregory stared down at his lap and told him about his vapid life back in Atlanta, which consisted mostly of school and work, Kadin smiled and reached out to touch his hand.

Two hours later, Gregory insisted on cleaning up while Kadin went upstairs to shower and shave. Kadin kissed him on the cheek and said, "When I come down, I'm going to take you somewhere really special. I think you'll like what I have planned."

When he came downstairs an hour later, Kadin put his hands on his hips and smiled. The entire first floor of the house smelled like pine soap and water. The kitchen sparkled. Gregory had a damp rag in his hand and he was putting frying pans back in the closet next to the stove. And he didn't just clean up the mess he'd made with breakfast. He'd put away all the half-eaten cereal boxes that had been haplessly lined across the top of the refrigerator. The stainless steel trash can next to the stove that had been marred with dried tomato sauce was now clean and shiny. He'd polished the smudged toaster and wiped down the entire stove. He'd even organized the spice shelf so all the labels were facing the front. He was wiping down the counter next to the sink with Dutch Cleanser when he noticed Kadin standing in the doorway. He shrugged his shoulders and said, "I hope you don't mind. I cleaned up a little."

Kadin smiled. He knew he wasn't the best housekeeper and he wasn't insulted. He kept things neat, but he was ready to admit his pitfalls. And the woman he'd hired to

help out wasn't much better. She was great with the kids, the most important thing, and she cooked decent meals. But she never went beyond sweeping and dusting. "This kitchen hasn't looked this good since the house was renovated," Kadin said. "Thank you."

Gregory stretched out the damp rag and hung it over a bar on the over door. "It's such a wonderful house. It should sparkle and shine all the time."

"Well, we're taking the horses out today," Kadin said, "There's someplace really special I want to show you."

"You actually have horses?" Gregory said. "I remember when you told me you wanted them for the barn. It seems like yesterday."

Kadin shrugged his shoulders and put his hands in his pockets. "It cost me a small fortune to have the old barn torn down so I could have a new one built, and I couldn't leave it empty." Then he frowned and stared down at his shoes for a minute. "There were times when riding on the property was the only thing that kept me going."

Gregory hadn't been on a horse in a while, but he settled into the saddle quickly. When they left the barn, it was a bright, warm afternoon. They rode down to the creek at a slow pace, then turned left toward the far north end of the property. But an hour later, when they reached a clearing in the woods, Kadin noticed that the skies were turning dark and cloudy. "I hope it's not going to rain," he said.

Gregory shrugged as if he didn't care. "Where are we going?"

"It's just through the clearing," Kadin said, pointing straight ahead. "There's something you have to see."

The horses walked through a cluster of tall pines toward a vast, open meadow. When Gregory looked out, he reined in the horse. His eyes opened wide and his mouth fell open. First he pressed his palm to his chest, then he looked at Kadin and said, "I've never seen anything like this. It's like something from a Hollywood movie."

"It happens once a year, about this time," Kadin said. "I found it the first year I lived here by accident."

He was talking about the meadow, which was filled with an endless carpet of wildflowers in the most vivid, bright yellow he'd ever seen. "It doesn't last for long," Kadin said. "Once summer starts, it all turns green again. But I wanted you to see it."

Then there was a loud rumble in the sky above them. When Gregory looked up, a few heavy drops of rain fell on his face. "It even looks beautiful without the sun," he said.

Kadin smiled. "We can come back again, but right now I think we should head back to the house." He looked up at the sky and frowned. "This looks like a bad storm coming."

But when they turned to leave, there was another flash of lightning, followed by a loud crash. The horses jerked and whinnied. The wind picked up and the tall, ancient trees above them began to sway, the top branches clicking and rubbing together. Kadin sidled up to Gregory's horse and said, "You'd better ride with me. Don't worry about your horse. He'll follow us back."

Heavy drops of rain began to fall. Gregory dropped the reins and grabbed Kadin's arm. He lifted his left leg over Kadin's horse and sat behind him in the saddle. He put his arms around Kadin's chest and rested his head on his back. Large, heavy drops of rain

fell all at once. The water dripped down their faces and saturated their clothes. Gregory held him tight and said, "This is much better."

They galloped home at a faster pace, Gregory's horse close behind. Kadin knew his property well, and he knew how to ride, so they returned in half the time it took them to get out there. Gregory held onto him as their strong, wet bodies bounced up and down in the saddle. Kadin had a full erection the entire time. He knew Gregory did, too. He could feel it pressing into the base of his spine.

When they finally reached the barn, the rain was still falling and the wind hadn't let up. Kadin jumped off the horse first and held Gregory's hand so he wouldn't hurt himself when he jumped down. Then he put the horses back in their stalls and wiped them down fast. When he turned to face Gregory, he saw him leaning back against a wooden post beside a huge pile of hay, with his arms folded and his feet crossed at the ankles. His clothes were soaked. They hugged his soft body. Kadin could see the imprint of his chest muscles through his white cotton shirt, and the outline of his full erection through his tan slacks. He looked like a Tom of Finland model. Evidently, he wasn't wearing underwear.

Kadin looked him up and down and licked his lips. Then he smiled and said, "You look like a very dirty guy, standing there like that."

Gregory stuck out his tongue and slowly licked his bottom lip. He tilted his head and said, "Maybe I am a dirty guy."

Kadin's heart began to beat faster. The outline of his own erection was bursting through his wet, brown slacks. "What would your mother say now?" he asked, reaching down to adjust his dick so it would point up.

Gregory grabbed his white shirt and ripped it open with one pull. Small white buttons popped off and landed with soft clicks on the dusty barn floor. He opened his wet pants, pulled down his zipper, and said, "I couldn't care less what she thinks. It's time I started to live my own life."

Kadin was wearing a black pullover shirt. He yanked it off fast and kicked off his suede boots. He didn't take his eyes off Gregory's wet body for even a second. When his pulled down his pants and stepped out of them, his penis jerked a few times in excitement. He'd never met anyone who could make him this hard from across the room; it felt as if his balls were about to explode. He almost fell on the floor when he pulled off his socks.

When Kadin was naked, Gregory smiled and turned all the way around. He wiggled his hips a couple of times and slowly lowered his pants. "Now I'm going to be a *really* dirty guy," he said. "You have no idea just how dirty I can be."

By the time Gregory stepped out of his pants and kicked them across the floor, Kadin's hands were wrapped around his small waist. Kadin was breathing heavy and he was squeezing two soft pieces of flesh at the tops of his hips. So Gregory arched his back and spread his legs wider, then backed into Kadin's erection and bucked his hips slowly. "How dirty do you want me to be?" Gregory asked.

They'd never really explored dirty talk during sex. When they'd been together that first summer, Kadin had put him up on a pedestal and treated him with care because he'd been so young and inexperienced. He didn't want to push him into anything too soon back then. (For most homosexual men, and Kadin knew from his own experience, sexual exploration didn't begin until their early twenties.) Then, when they'd reconciled

recently, Kadin still treated him as if he were a fine crystal object that could shatter at any moment.

But now he saw everything differently. Gregory was an adult with strong sexual needs that had to be fulfilled.

So Kadin grabbed his penis and slapped it on Gregory's ass crack as hard as he could. "You can be as dirty as you want to be," he said. "Don't hold back. I love you and I want you to have whatever you want."

"I want you inside me," Gregory said, in a stage whisper. "Right now. I need to feel you in my body. I've never loved anyone like I love you."

Kadin smiled. Even when Gregory wanted to get fucked hard, he was still too polite and refined to actually say it out loud. Eddie would have screamed, "Fuck me hard, stud!" But not Gregory. So Kadin smiled and said, "I don't have any Vaseline out here. Do you want to continue this in the house?"

Gregory reached back and held Kadin's erection in his palm. "No. I don't want to go inside. I want to do it right here in the barn. Use your own saliva. I'll be fine. You don't have to be gentle. The stronger you are, the more I want you."

Kadin's eyebrows went up and he closed his eyes. He liked the idea of doing it in the barn. It satisfied his kinky nature. But whenever Gregory touched his penis, he had a problem locating his voice. He'd fucked guys before without Vaseline or any other lubrication. But he didn't want to hurt him in any way. "Are you sure?" he asked. There was nothing he wanted to do more than poke Gregory's tight hole that very minute, but he wanted to know it was okay.

"I'm sure."

“Then hold onto the wooden post and spread those legs,” Kadin said.

While Gregory braced for the mount, Kadin spit into his right hand and rubbed saliva all over his penis. Then he spit again and rubbed more around the opening of Gregory’s anus. He even inserted his finger and pulled it in and out a few times. He knew this would help open him up. When he did this, Gregory’s body stiffened and his head went back. He took a deep breath and said, “Yes, Kadin. Ah, yes.”

He inserted the tip of his penis with easy, gentle pokes. Gregory squeezed the wooden post hard with one hand and bit down on the side of his fist with the other. But when the initial pain subsided and Kadin was deep inside his body, Gregory sighed out loud and said, “Ah, yes, Kadin. Give me more. Please don’t hold back.”

After that, Kadin didn’t hesitate. He hammered him for so long, his knees started to wobble. The rhythm was constant and the slaps against Gregory’s buttocks were loud. When they were both finally ready to climax, Gregory held his own penis and said, “Tell me when you’re ready so we can come together. I want us both to come at the same time, always.”

A moment later, Kadin said, “I’m gonna come, babe. I can’t hold back anymore.”

“Yes,” Gregory said. “Keep going, Kadin. Don’t stop.” Then he started jerking his own penis faster so he could climax at the same time.

When they were spent, Gregory stood up straight and turned to face him. He put his arms around his shoulders and kissed him on the lips. “That was wonderful,” he said. “I never thought I’d be able to feel this way again.” Then he closed his eyes and rested his head on his chest.

Kadin held his waist and pulled him closer. “You’re amazing,” he said. “You never stop surprising me.”

Chapter Thirteen

When the storm passed and the rain finally let up, the skies cleared fast and the sun came out. It was five-thirty in the afternoon, and they'd already showered together and taken a short nap. "I'm starved," Kadin said. "We haven't eaten anything since this morning."

They were lying in a spoon position on top of the bedspread in Kadin's room. Kadin was wearing a T-shirt and white boxer shorts, but Gregory was naked. All his clothes were still at the motel, and the ones he had were hanging in the bathroom to dry, not to mention that he'd ripped the buttons off his shirt. He could have borrowed something from Kadin, but being there in his arms this way was more fun. It felt naughty and sexy and dangerous. Kadin's arms were wrapped around his shoulders and one long, hairy leg was over his smooth body. His leg was heavy, and the weight felt good. Gregory ran his fingertips up his strong forearm and said, "I'm sure all the stores are closed on Easter Sunday. I have to get back to the motel to get my car and my things. Maybe there's a restaurant open in town."

Kadin waved his hand and pulled him in tighter. "I have all kinds of food in the freezer," he said. "You have to be prepared with kids around." He bucked his hips into his ass a few times and kissed the back of his neck. "We'll go over to the motel, and come back here for dinner."

So he lent Gregory a shirt and they drove back to town with the top down. The parking lot at the motel was almost empty. There was only Gregory's car, and a small green Nash Rambler, occupied, parked two spaces away. When he saw the Rambler,

Gregory stared down at the dashboard and sighed. Kadin pulled into a spot next to his car and shut off the motor.

Gregory frowned and said, "Prepare yourself."

"Why?"

"That's Betsy's car," he said "My fiancée. She must have followed me down here."

"I'll stay here and wait," Kadin said. His expression turned serious. His eyebrows furrowed and his lips tightened. "If you need me, I'm here."

Gregory shook his head and said, "Calm down. You don't know Betsy like I do. She's here because she's curious, not because she's the jealous type ready to fly into a rage. I told you, we already have an understanding, and she knows I'm not sexually attracted to her."

"Are you sure?"

Gregory touched his hand and smiled, then opened the door and slowly got out of the car. He knew Betsy very well. They'd been best friends for a while. And he wasn't angry about her following him to Savannah. In a way, it made things easier. He took a deep breath and almost smiled when he knocked on the passenger-side window. She was sitting behind the steering wheel with her back straight and her half-glasses on the end of her nose, reading one of her beloved mystery novels.

She jumped back at the sound and dropped the book on the floor. But when she turned to see who was knocking, she smiled and reached across the seat to open the door. She looked brighter that afternoon in her good beige dress. She'd even put on a thin layer of pale pink lipstick, the only shade she owned. He got into the car and sat down. There

wasn't a passionate kiss or a peck on the cheek; not even a casual handshake. This is how it had always been with them. When they greeted each other, it was more like they gave each other an invisible punch on the arm. Betsy wasn't a fan of handholding and kissing in public. He'd never as much as put his arm around her waist. When she saw other couples do unnecessary, physical things, she usually frowned and clucked her tongue. "Look at them," she'd say. "Joined at the hip. Pitiful."

"There you are," she said. "I've been waiting for a long time. When I saw your car, I knew you'd have to come back sooner or later." Her knees were locked together; she sat close to the steering wheel. When she leaned over to pick up her book, she held her skirt down against her legs so her dress wouldn't ride up.

He smiled. "What are you doing here?"

She placed the book on the seat and said, "I wanted to surprise you for Easter Sunday. I hated the thought of you being down here all alone."

He tilted his head. He knew she was lying. She'd never been religious, and she thought holidays had been created for the sole purpose of a few greedy people making money. "But I'm not alone," he said. "I'm with a very good, old friend. He's waiting in the car over there."

She looked to the right and saw the Cadillac parked next to his car. The top was down and Kadin leaned against the door with his chin in his palm. She stared down at her lap and smoothed out her skirt a few times, even though it was already perfectly straight. "Things have changed," she said, "haven't they?" It came out like a rhetorical question, as if she already knew the answer.

He took a deep breath and rubbed his chin. She'd only needed one look at Kadin to know. Betsy wasn't one to waste words. "Yes," he said. "I'm not coming back to Atlanta."

"I see."

"You're a wonderful woman," he said, "but I'm not the right man for you. We'd both wind up miserable in the end. You deserve better than that."

She sighed and removed her glasses, then she looked him in the eye and said, "That's ridiculous. You're the perfect man for me. I think it's more like I'm not the right woman for you. But I understand. I'm really not taking this personally. When you said you were going to Savannah, I had a feeling." She gave him a knowing look and tilted her head.

He turned to face her, staring directly into her eyes. She seemed to know what was happening without actually saying it out loud. In the 1950s, people didn't discuss these things. Partly because there weren't any acceptable words to discuss them, and partly because it would have only made things more painful. "I've known Kadin a long time," Gregory said. "We met the year I graduated from college and my family spent a summer down here." He knew she understood. He'd already told her he was different from other men. He had a feeling she was different from other women, but he wasn't sure about that.

"Your mother isn't going to like this," Betsy said. "Maybe you should think it over for a while. I'll be patient. I still think we can have a nice, comfortable life together."

But now that Gregory had found Kadin again, he didn't want a nice, comfortable life anymore. He wanted to be in love, he wanted all the passion he'd missed in the past five years, and he didn't want to settle for less. "I'll deal with my mother," he said. "I'm a grown man now and she has no control over me. Kadin is a very proud, dignified man."

Betsy smoothed out her skirt again, then turned to face him. "Thank you for being so honest. I wish you luck, because it's not going to be easy. I'm glad I came down here today."

He reached out and rested his hand on top of hers. "I'm glad you came down, too," he said.

After that, Betsy followed them back to the house. She had been planning to drive back to Atlanta, but Gregory insisted she spend the night. Kadin was awkward about it at first, but he knew how to sit back and listen. He cooked frozen crab cakes and French fries while Gregory showed her around the property. At the dinner table, she was quiet. She kept staring at Kadin and raising her right eyebrow. But he eventually charmed her with his soft voice and his dark, good looks. When he told her he'd been married once and was now raising three children, she pressed her palm to her throat and gave Gregory a look. Betsy wasn't the motherly type—she tolerated other people's children, but never fully understood why they needed to have them around. And when Kadin told her he was the same attorney who had just won that recently publicized case, she dropped her fork on her plate.

Evidently, he was nothing at all like she'd expected a homosexual man to be.

Kadin and Gregory showed no outward affection in front of her. They knew the rules: they were still years away from knowing and understanding words and phrases like

“gay” and “coming out of the closet.” Back then, if there was a gay party, it didn’t mean the men were dancing with each other. It meant everyone was having fun.

They didn’t touch or exchange knowing looks, and they didn’t give her cause to think they were anything other than two best buddies who were very fond of each other. It was best that way; she knew all about them without having to see or hear anything that would have made her uncomfortable.

When she left on Monday morning, she shook Kadin’s hand and said, “It was nice meeting you. I hope we can be friends in the future.”

He smiled and nodded. “I hope so too,” he said.

Gregory walked her to the car and opened the door. “I’m sorry things didn’t work out as planned,” he said.

She forced a smile and said, “I’m sorry, too. But Kadin seems like a good man, and you and I will always be good friends.”

“He is,” Gregory said. “I’ve always known that.”

She sat down behind the wheel and looked up at him. Then she smoothed out her dress. “But three children? Are you prepared to deal with all that?” When she said the word *children*, her face scrunched up and she shook her head fast.

He shrugged and said, “I’ll figure it out somehow.”

When Gregory watched her pull away from the house, a light, easy feeling came over him.

Later that night, when they were out front, Kadin in the love seat and Gregory swaying back and forth in the rocking chair beside him, Kadin said, “I’ve taken this week

off. I've canceled all my appointments until the kids come home so we can spend every minute together."

Gregory stopped rocking and looked at him. "I've been thinking about the children," he said. "How are we going to deal with them and our relationship?" They couldn't be ignored. You didn't just move a virtual stranger into kids' homes without an explanation.

"The same way we're going to deal with everyone else," Kadin said. "We're not going to explain ourselves to anyone. You're going to move in here and we're going to live our lives. I'll introduce you as a very good, old friend who has come to stay for a while." He reached out and held his hand. "As long as we keep a semblance of dignity at all times, no one will have reason to question us."

Gregory frowned. "We'll have to have separate bedrooms," he said. "I've been thinking about that, too. We can't share the same bedroom with three children in the house."

"It's a big house," Kadin said, "You can take the guest room next to my room. There's already an adjoining bathroom, and when the kids are asleep, you can come to my bed, or I'll go to yours." Then he laughed and said, "And you can escape my snoring, in case you haven't noticed it."

Gregory smiled. Kadin had already thought of everything. His mind must have been turning in circles all weekend, planning their future. "What if they ask questions?"

"We'll handle them as they come up," Kadin said. He squeezed his hand and looked into his eyes. "We're not doing anything wrong. We're two decent people who finally found each other after many lonely years. There's nothing to feel guilty about."

Gregory sighed. "Wait until I tell my parents, especially my mother. When she hears I'm not going back to Atlanta, trust me, it could get very ugly."

Kadin grabbed his leg and said, "Right now we have the rest of the week, and it's going to fly by fast. We'll deal with your family, too. Why don't you take off your pants now and sit down next to me?"

"Right here, on the front porch?" he asked.

"No one's coming up the driveway at this hour, and if they do, we can see the lights in the distance," Kadin said. He patted his lap a couple of times, and said, "C'mon."

Gregory removed his shoes and socks first, then he unzipped his slacks and pulled them off with his underwear. When he took off his shirt and he was naked, his penis was semi-erect. Kadin stared at him and his glazed eyes moved up and down. So Gregory climbed up on his lap. Kadin leaned back, stretched his legs out and crossed them at the ankle. Gregory straddled Kadin's lower body and put his arms over his shoulders. Then he leaned forward, arched his back, and kissed him on the mouth.

"I should get undressed," Kadin said.

"Keep your clothes on this time," he said. "It's sexier this way."

When he felt Kadin's large, strong hands rest on both sides of his ass, he stuck his tongue into his mouth as deep as it would go. Kadin rubbed his soft skin, squeezing hard each time Gregory sucked on his tongue. Gregory had had his share of men in the Army, and a few more after that in Atlanta. But none of those men could make his heart beat as fast as Kadin could. None of them could make his penis hard with the touch of one finger.

And that's all it took with Kadin. He only had to touch Gregory lightly and he became aroused.

But he wasn't touching him with just one finger that night. He ran his hands all over his body while they kissed. He rubbed the inside of Gregory's thighs, squeezed the backs of his legs, and spread his ass cheeks as wide as they would go. When he finally touched his anus with the tip of his finger, Gregory's head went back and he moaned.

"You like when I do that, don't you?" Kadin said, "You really like it when I touch you there."

His finger slowly circled the opening. Gregory's eyes were closed and his mouth was open. "Ah, yes," he whispered. Then he lowered his ass to his hand and started to rock back and forth.

"You're very naughty tonight," Kadin said. "Sitting on my lap naked, seducing me this way."

"Wait until you see what I'm going to do to you," Gregory said. "You'll never be the same again."

A minute later, his hand went to Kadin's fly and he pulled down the zipper. Kadin uncrossed his feet and spread his legs wider. Gregory reached into his pants and held the shaft of his penis. He was hard, just as hard as Gregory was. So he went down on his knees and started to lick the base of Kadin's shaft. He pressed his tongue against his thick vein and licked up toward the head. When he reached the head, he wrapped his full lips around it and sucked back fast.

Kadin's legs moved back and forth while he sucked. He put his hands behind his head and locked his fingers together. Gregory's mouth opened wider and he sucked it all

the way to the back of his throat. He kept it there for a moment without moving his head. He shoved his tongue against the bottom and applied more pressure. The fabric of Kadin's pants was rough against his lips. When he inhaled through his nostrils, he could smell the masculine dampness between his legs. Kadin moaned a couple of times and grabbed both sides of his face. He held his head in his palms and pulled it deeper into his groin.

Gregory sucked him off until Kadin was ready to explode. He always knew when he was ready, because his right leg stretched out and wiggled, and pre-come began to drip from his opening. He could taste the salty flavor, so he swallowed back and sucked harder for more. Kadin would have been perfectly content to come like this. Gregory knew he was a man who loved getting head. But Gregory wanted more that night. He wanted Kadin inside him again; he wanted the man he loved to fill his body with that love.

So he lifted his head and let the penis fall from his mouth. It fell back against Kadin's belt buckle. Then he climbed back up on his lap and straddled his waist so he could slip it inside and ride it.

Gregory moved slowly, with his back arched and his ass high in the air. For an instant, he thought about poor Betsy. She was probably back home now, in her bed, reading another mystery novel. She would have been shocked to see him doing these sexual things to Kadin. She would have opened her mouth and covered it with her hand to hold back the horror. And she would have been especially shocked to see how he could take Kadin's extra-large penis all the way to the back of his throat without gagging.

But the thing that would have made her fall off the porch was when he pressed the tip of Kadin's penis to the opening of his anus. She would have blacked out cold, if she'd seen him sit back and take all nine inches with a huge smile on his face. He'd already prepared for this ahead of time. While Kadin had been clearing the dinner dishes from the table, he'd been upstairs in the bathroom pre-lubing his hole. He'd lathered it with Vaseline inside and out so that when he and Kadin were ready, all he had to do was stick it inside and ride.

Kadin wasn't surprised. He didn't even notice his hole was already slick. He was enjoying himself too much to care about details. So Gregory placed his hands on his shoulders and rocked his hips back and forth. Kadin moaned and held his waist. He helped guide his body back and forth to create more friction. Gregory concentrated hard and tightened the lips of his anus. They clamped down hard on Kadin's shaft, and he started going up and down on his lap. The springs in the love seat started to squeak; he rode fast and kept his hole as tight as possible.

Gregory had strong legs and he was double-jointed. Riding Kadin's penis this way wasn't difficult for him. Actually, he preferred doing it this way, because in this position the shaft hit his prostate in such a way that his entire body began to tighten with pre-orgasmic sensations. He maintained a constant rhythm, up to a certain point. Whenever Kadin came close to orgasm, he slowed down and changed the pace. He knew how to keep him on the brink of climax indefinitely. He wanted the moment to last. He liked riding him and wanted to postpone the climax until Kadin couldn't take anymore.

But Kadin finally took a deep breath and said, "I'm so close, babe. Just go a little faster now."

He smiled and rode faster. “Come inside me,” Gregory whispered.

Kadin moaned out loud and slapped his ass. “Here it comes, babe. I’m coming.”

He slapped his ass again and shouted, “Ah, yeah.”

Gregory held his own penis and jerked off. They both came at the same time.

Kadin exploded inside his body. Gregory jerked out a load so powerful, it flew into the air over Kadin’s head and landed on the window behind the bench. He’d always been one of those guys who really shot a powerful load; it wasn’t just a metaphor with him. When there was a big dick up his ass pressing against his prostate, he shot even farther. If the window hadn’t been there, there was no telling how far it would have gone.

After they came, Gregory sat down on Kadin’s lap and continued to rock back and forth. Then he kissed him on the lips and said, “I love you so much.”

Chapter Fourteen

A nurse was taking Gregory's blood pressure when Kadin went into the sunroom on Monday. They took his vitals twice a day. They would have taken Kadin's, too, if he'd let them. But he didn't think it was necessary. It was already after ten thirty and he was usually there by nine.

He was late because he'd been writing another blog post early that morning. He'd missed writing over the weekend because of the visit from their children. But he knew Gregory wouldn't notice. His concept of time was usually driven by his meals and his sleeping patterns, not his entertainment.

When Kadin entered and crossed to where Gregory was sitting, he placed his laptop on the table and forced a smile. But on his way there, his head had been down and he hadn't bothered to say good morning to anyone in the hallway. He always felt down after seeing the children. Their serious expressions and their frowns and sighs remained in his head and weighed him down for days afterwards. He knew they worried about him, and there wasn't much he could do about it.

But he couldn't let Gregory see this dark mood, so he leaned over the nurse's shoulder to read Gregory's blood pressure, and said, "Looks good today." His voice was animated and his hands were on his hips. Gregory's vital signs were normal. Physically, Gregory didn't have a single problem that caused concern.

The nurse laughed and said, "It's probably better than mine." Then she pulled the strap off his arm and asked him, "How are you feeling today? Any complaints?"

Gregory tilted his head and looked up. She was one of those nurses who had a tendency to shout at the more advanced patients when she spoke. She meant no harm, but from the way his eyebrows lowered and scrunched, he made it obvious she was annoying him. So he pointed to a tray of breakfast food on the table and said, "I've already said I'm not paying for anything I didn't order and won't eat in the morning. I don't know why you people don't write these things down."

She put her hands on her hips and said, "Breakfast is good for you. It's the most important meal of the day." She was joking with him. But he wasn't laughing.

Kadin lifted his palm and gave her a look, then said, "You're not being charged, Gregory." Then he said to the nurse, "Could you please take his tray away now? He's had his coffee." He winked at her, only pretending to be stern so Gregory would think he was watching out for him.

She shook her head and lifted the tray. She smiled at Kadin, then turned to Gregory and said, "I'll be back later today to check up on you."

When she was gone, Gregory folded his hands on his lap and watched out the window. The sky was overcast and the grounds were empty. "Looks like rain," he said. The corners of his mouth turned down and he sighed. He was always better on sunny days.

Kadin opened his laptop and smiled. "Once you hear the rest of the story, you won't care about the weather."

Gregory faced him and said, "Ah, well, the story. I'm curious about one thing."

"What's that?"

"Was the woman in the story, the fiancée, a lesbian?" he asked.

Kadin blinked at him and smiled. He was never sure how much information Gregory retained from day to day, or if he'd retained anything at all. "No one was ever really sure," Kadin said. "In those days, people didn't discuss things like that out in the open."

* * * *

On the Wednesday after Easter, Gregory and Kadin were in the barn preparing the horses to go out for a late afternoon ride when they heard a car pull up to the front of the house. The barn was off to the right side of the house, beyond the back walk. They could hear tires cracking on the gravel, and a flock of black birds flew out of the tall oak near the gate. "I'll go see who this is," Kadin said. "I'll be right back." He patted Gregory on the ass and kissed him on the cheek. Gregory was wearing a tight pair of tan slacks. When Kadin saw him throw the saddle over the horse, he couldn't resist a quick feel.

Kadin walked on a slate path to the side of the house. There was a long, black Cadillac sedan parked out front. He heard the motor switch off, then watched a pale, middle-aged woman get out of the car and shut the door. She wore a tailored navy blue suit with a short Chanel jacket. Her navy high heels matched her purse and her blond hair was pulled back in a tight French twist. She didn't see Kadin approaching her when she stared up at the front door and sighed.

Kadin cleared his throat and said, "Can I help you?" But he knew who she was now without having to ask. When he saw her almond-shaped eyes and the way she stood so perfectly still and stoic, he remembered her face. It all came back to him in a flash. He remembered her from the night he'd brought Gregory home late that first summer they'd met, the night before they'd dragged him back to Atlanta against his wishes. She'd been

standing in front of Miles's house with her arms folded across her chest that night. She didn't bother to make eye contact with him, but he'd never forget her expression of disgust and contempt.

She turned and looked directly into his eyes, clutching her purse to her stomach. "I'm Monica Rochester."

He nodded and smiled. "I'm Kadin Mulroney." She hadn't aged since he'd seen her last.

"I know who you are," she said, squaring her shoulders. "I'm here to see Gregory." His voice was soft and direct.

"He's in the barn," Kadin said. "I'll get him." Then he left her there and went back to the barn.

When Kadin told him his mother was outside waiting to see him, Gregory's face fell and he punched a stack of hay next to the horse's stall. He didn't want to go at first, but Kadin explained to him calmly and rationally that the best thing he could do was to go out and face her. He hesitated for a few minutes, but finally agreed to go as long as Kadin went with him. "I'm not going through this again twice in my life," he said. "I'm old enough to know what I want now, and I'm not going to let her change my mind. I'm not going back to Atlanta with her this time."

They met her at the front gate, then Kadin led them into the house. There were no hugs or kisses between mother and son. He took them into the living room and asked her, "Can I get you something?"

She gave him a quick smile and said, "I'd like to speak with my son alone, please." She wasn't being rude; her voice was agreeable and her tone was easy.

Kadin was fine with that. He didn't really want to be there. This was between Gregory and his mother. So he started to back out of the room. "Then I'll just go into the..."

But before he had a chance to finish his sentence, Gregory said, "No. I want Kadin here." He tilted his head and gave Kadin a stern look.

Kadin stopped. Monica let out an exasperated sigh and said, "Very well. I just thought it would be easier for Mr. Mulroney."

Kadin smiled. He didn't want to make things worse than they were. "Please, call me Kadin. Let's all sit down." He looked at Monica, extended his arm toward a pair of tall white wing chairs next to the fireplace, and said, "Please."

Kadin and Gregory sat on the sofa that faced the fireplace. Of all the things Kadin could have imagined about his life, he'd never have imagined a scene like this. The fact that she'd even bothered to show up there at all was shocking. Most mothers in the 1950s wouldn't have wanted to deal with the situation at all. They would have resigned themselves to the unspoken inevitable, and severed their ties from a distance.

But Monica wasn't there to cause a scene and argue, and she wasn't there to sever ties. She sat down, crossed her feet at the ankle and said, "I've spoken to Betsy. I know the wedding is off, and that you've decided to remain here in Savannah indefinitely."

"Permanently," Gregory said. He lifted his chin and raised one eyebrow in defiance, then asked, "Why did you come all the way down here?"

She opened her navy purse and pulled out an envelope. She handed it to Gregory and stared down at her feet. She stumbled for words a few times, then said, "When we returned to Atlanta, letters began to arrive from Savannah." She looked at Kadin and

tilted her head. “I knew who they were from, so I threw them away without reading them, and never gave them a second thought.”

“You just threw away my mail?” Gregory asked. He stretched out his arms and looked to Kadin for support.

But Kadin smiled and said, “Just listen to what she has to say without getting emotional.” Then he looked at Monica and said, “I have three children of my own. I probably would have done the same thing.”

She sat back straight in the chair and said, “I thought I was doing the right thing. Then when you left for the Army, the letters continued to arrive: one each day for an entire year. I was amazed.”

Gregory lifted the envelope she’d handed to him. It had been opened neatly with a sharp letter opener. “Then what’s this?” he asked. “I thought you said you threw them all away.”

She sighed. “All but this one,” she said. “It was the last letter to arrive. Of course, I had no idea at the time it would be the last letter.” She looked at Kadin and said, “I opened it and read it. I’m not proud of this, but I was curious.”

Kadin smiled. He shrugged and said, “Don’t give it a second thought. I would have done the same thing in your position. I’m not embarrassed by anything I wrote in those letters. You could have read them all, and they would probably have bored you to death.”

Kadin wasn’t stupid man. He’d known what he was doing when he’d sent those letters to Gregory. He’d also known one of Gregory’s parents might open them and read them. So he never wrote anything that would be embarrassing or in bad taste. Given the

nature of their relationship, because they were two men, he'd known he had to be careful. He'd wanted respect from Gregory's family back then, and nothing else. His letters weren't filled with the typical romantic words and phrases you'd find in a letter from a lovesick man. He didn't write about how much he missed their passion and how he couldn't live without him in his arms at night. Instead, Kadin wrote about their unusual, wonderful friendship. He wrote about his plans for the future and his goals as a lawyer; he even went through all the details about how he'd renovated the house and how he was hoping Gregory could offer him some design advice. He wrote about many practical, everyday things that happen to people, to gain their respect and to keep his connection with Gregory alive. But he never once wrote a single line or word that couldn't have been read aloud at any Sunday church service.

"Why did you save this one?" Gregory asked. His voice was calmer now. He was genuinely curious. "Why did you drive all the way down here to give it to me now?"

"It felt like the right thing to do," she said. "And I wanted to see where you were living." She looked around the room quickly, then said, "Now that I've given you the letter and I've seen this fine home, I'm going to head back to Atlanta before it gets too late." Then she stood from her chair and evened out her skirt.

Kadin stood and said, "You're sure I can't get you something?" He knew she wouldn't ask for anything, but he still offered.

Monica waved her hand and walked to the front hall. "I'm fine." Then she turned back to face Gregory. He was standing now. "Gregory, walk me outside." She smiled at Kadin and said, "It was good seeing you."

"You, too."

When she was gone, Gregory walked back to the kitchen where Kadin was opening a bottle of beer. He was still carrying the letter in his hands. "I'm going to take a walk down to the creek to read this," he said. "I'll be back in an hour or so."

Kadin leaned back against the counter and took a hard swallow of beer, then said, "Take your time." He remembered almost every word he'd written in that last letter, and it made him smile to think that Gregory was finally going to get a chance to read it after all these years.

Chapter Fifteen

In the late afternoon, the rocky creek seemed to mellow as yellow rays from the warm sun poked through the tree trunks. The still surface glistened and the downstream currents were smooth and exact. In the distance, an unseen bird was chirping something that sounded like “cheeseburger.” One couldn’t find a more peaceful place in the world to sit quietly and think.

When Gregory sat on a flat rock at the edge of the creek, he was still holding the letter in his hand. The last letter Kadin had sent him that year. He stared at the top edge and ran his fingertips across the opening. It had been so carefully sliced; the thin slit across the top of the envelope was straight and even. He pulled the letter out slowly. The plain white stationery felt thin and watery now. It smelled a little like the mothballs in the back of his mother’s winter closet. It had been folded directly in half, and the seam was sharp. When he opened it and looked down, Kadin’s large, bold script jumped from the white paper in dark, blue ink. He took a deep breath and started to read.

Dear Gregory,

This is probably the last of my letters...at least for a while. I know, I’ve been writing every day for a year now, but most of those letters were short and only mentioned my daily activities. I just wanted to keep in touch with you, even if it was just a few lines about a broken hot water heater on Monday or a new set of tires for the car on Friday. I’ve always had a great deal of respect for you as a human being, and as a man. This letter, I hope, will sum that up. I hope it will also secure the fact that we’ll always be the best of friends, no matter what happens.

The renovations with the house are wrapping up at the end of this week, and I've decided it's time to go back to work. I haven't practiced law for almost one year now, and I'm starting to miss my office. When I became a lawyer, I did it with a purpose: to help other people and to protect the great laws of this state and this country. Taking a whole year off was good for me. It gave me time to focus on the house and think about my life. I've spent a lot of time getting to know my children better, and I'm thankful for this. But it's time for me to get back to the world again.

There are still things to do with the house, but it looks wonderful and it's livable now. In a few months, I'm having a new barn built and by this time next year I'm hoping to have at least three horses. Maybe someday this house will also be a home. I hope you have a chance to see what I've done. I took your advice about the shutters: black on the second floor and white on the first.

I even managed to save that old mattress from the former owners in the master bedroom. You probably don't remember the one I'm talking about. Why would you care about something like that? But it was the only thing left in the house when they moved out. I had it checked out and fumigated as a precaution. But it really was in good condition. Besides, with all the money I've spent on renovations, it was nice not to have to buy a new mattress, too.

At first, this past year seemed to move so slowly, especially September. And now, as I write this letter, it's just another flash that has passed me by. I'm assuming it's been the same for you, too, and that's why you haven't found time to write back. But that's okay. I understand completely. You're obviously very busy with school and your life. And

I'm very glad you are. This is how it should be. You are young and you have your entire life ahead of you.

So I'll say goodbye for now. As I said, this is probably the last letter you'll receive from me. But I wanted you to know I will always think well of you, and you'll always be a great friend. The older I get, the more I understand how lucky I was to have found your friendship. Life is funny sometimes. You start out with more friends than you end up with, because as the years go by, you begin to realize that you're lucky if you've been able to find at least two good friends in a lifetime. And you are one of mine.

If you ever need anything, I'll be there as fast as I can. You can always count on me unconditionally for anything you need or want. So don't hesitate to let me know if you're ever in a bind. And don't be shy about it either. I know you have a great deal of pride, but don't let pride ever get in the way of good friendship. As I said, good, unconditional friendship doesn't happen very often, and when it does, we have to hold onto it as tightly as we can so it won't slip away.

I'm looking forward to the future, for the first time in a long time. I'm moving ahead with my life. I'm truly blessed to have children. They keep me humble, they make me laugh, and they are my best achievement in this world. I hope some day you'll have children of your own so you'll know how this feels.

So, until we meet again, I wish you well.

Best regards,

Kadin

Gregory read the letter again, then folded it in half and put it back in the envelope. He picked up a rock and threw it into the creek. He smiled and put the envelope in his back pocket.

He'd always believed in his heart that Kadin hadn't let him down, but now, with this letter, he had proof. It wasn't a love letter—at least, not like most love letters between heterosexual lovers. And he was glad it wasn't. If his mother had read about their sex and their passion for each other, she wouldn't have been able to understand. Their true feelings would have sounded dirty and obscene, taken out of context. But with this letter, focusing on their friendship and respect for each other, the only conclusion she could have come to was that Kadin Mulroney was a very good, decent man who cared about his work and his family and his home and who knew how to cherish a good friend. And Gregory was the one true friend he'd ever had in his life.

Gregory also knew how to read between the lines. When Kadin mentioned in the letter that he was using the old mattress from the former owners to save money, Gregory knew it was code for something else. He'd really saved that mattress because that's where Gregory had lost his virginity, way back on that calm summer night, when they'd made love for the first time. He'd wanted Gregory to know that. Gregory remembered how tender and articulate Kadin had been with him. He'd been so careful to make sure Gregory wouldn't feel any pain. It had only hurt for a split second, and then he remembered the sensation of complete and utter pleasure when Kadin slipped into his body for the very first time. As a lover, no other man had ever been able to compare to Kadin Mulroney. And no one ever would.

He stood from the rock and walked back to the house. He felt lighter than he'd felt in ages. There was a cool breeze coming down from the north. It was too late to go for a ride on horseback, and too early for dinner. So when he reached the house, he walked into the front hall and looked for Kadin. He had plans for the evening that were better than riding or eating. He heard the shuffle of feet in Kadin's study off the kitchen. He went around to the back of the house and found Kadin fooling around with the rabbit ear antennae on the television set. He presented himself in the doorway and said, "I'm back. I think I'll go upstairs for a quick nap before dinner."

Kadin turned the right antenna to the left and stared at the fuzzy screen. He smiled and said, "Okay."

Then Gregory yawned and said, "I think I'll take off all my clothes, leave them on the hallway floor, and just stretch out on the bed for a while. Don't let me sleep more than one hour."

When he'd said he was taking off all his clothes and stretching out on the bed, Kadin's head went up and his hands froze on the antennae. He looked at him and smiled. "You dirty guy. You should at least play it safe and fold your clothes. And put on a pair of shorts to cover that pretty little ass of yours. When there's a man like me in the house, there's no telling what could happen."

Gregory smiled and unbuttoned the top button of his pants. "I'd rather be naked and messy," he said. "And I know how to handle a man like you, Kadin." Then he licked his finger, ran it across his bottom lip, and turned to walk up the back stairs in the kitchen.

He undressed in the hallway outside the master bedroom, leaving his clothes scattered across the shiny wooden floor. Then he loped into the bedroom, placed a jar of

Vaseline from the nightstand on the edge of the bed, and fell across the mattress face down. He spread his legs and arched his back; his arms stretched forward and his feet hung off the end. When he was comfortable, and he knew the Vaseline was within his reach, he heard Kadin's heavy footsteps clunking up the front stairs. He closed his eyes and smiled. He knew Kadin would follow him up.

His big feet pounded across the hall and into the bedroom. He stopped for a moment in the doorway and said, "I thought I'd come up and take a quick nap, too. But you're on the middle of the bed and there's no room for me. I'm a big guy and I need my space."

Gregory arched his back and smiled. "Well, then, you have two choices. You can either go sleep in the guest room, or you can just lie down on top of me, because I'm not moving." He lifted his right leg higher and wiggled his ass a few times. He was already erect, but Kadin couldn't see that.

"But I'm all messy and soiled from the barn this afternoon," Kadin said. "I should really take a shower first." His voice went down and his tone was almost sinister.

Gregory reached for the jar of Vaseline. He opened the lid, stuck two fingers inside and pulled out a thick wad of yellow grease. Then, while Kadin watched, he reached back and pressed those two slick fingers between his ass crack. He opened his legs wider and spread the jelly around the lips of his anus. He even inserted both fingers all the way to make sure the opening was greasy and smooth. He bit his bottom lip and slid them in and out slowly so Kadin could see what he was doing. "We can take a shower together after our nap," he said. He pulled his fingers out of his hole and wiped

the excess grease on his ass rounds. Then he smiled and said, “Unless you’d rather not get on top of me right now. You don’t have to, if you don’t want to.”

Kadin laughed and rubbed his palms together. “You’re a very naughty guy,” he said. “I know what you want. And I’m going to give it to you.”

Gregory knew what Kadin wanted, too. But he didn’t say it out loud. “I don’t know what you’re talking about,” he said. “I just want to take a quick nap is all.” Then he reached back and slapped his own ass a couple of times. He knew this was Kadin’s favorite position in bed. Kadin liked to dominate him and pin him down against the sheets so he’d have total control.

Kadin’s eyes were wide by then. He sucked in his bottom lip and bit down hard. When he kicked off his dirty shoes and pulled off his socks, they landed on the other side of the bed. His shirt flew out into the hall and landed on Gregory’s pants, and his own pants were down around his ankles so fast, he had to shake his right leg to kick them off altogether. He jogged up to the bed, holding his erection so it wouldn’t bounce around, and climbed up on the mattress from the end. His hairy legs rubbed against Gregory’s smooth calves and he placed his large hands on both sides of Gregory’s shoulders. By the time he mounted him and rested his body weight on Gregory’s back, his penis was fully erect. It landed in the middle of his ass crack and he bucked his hips forward to secure it in place.

Kadin’s muscular body was heavy, and his hairy armpits smelled like perspiration and sexy, musky spices. Gregory inhaled and smiled, submitting to his strength completely. Kadin put his solid arms around Gregory’s shoulders and engulfed him. He held tight, clamping his hands together in front of Gregory’s chest. Then he buried his

face in Gregory's neck, under his left ear, and whispered, "In case I forgot to tell you today, I'm in love with you. I'm in love with every part of you. You're the most beautiful human being I've ever known."

"I'm just as in love with you," Gregory whispered. "I've always been in love with you."

Kadin's hips slid down and the tip of his penis reached the opening of Gregory's anus. He poked around a couple of times, then parted the lips and inserted the tip. His erection was already covered with lube from Gregory's ass crack. He went deep with one easy stab. When he plunged forward, shoving it as deep as he could, his head went down and he kissed him on the mouth at the same time. Then he lifted his head again and said, "Someday, when I'm on my deathbed, I'm going to remember how soft and magnificent you are. When I'm inside you this way, it feels as if my dick has been wrapped with layers of soft, wet silk. I know that sounds dramatic, and I've never said it to anyone else, but it's true."

For Gregory, it was a little different. Kadin's penis felt like a huge beer bottle that was ready to explode at any moment. He didn't say this aloud, because it wasn't quite as romantic and tender as what Kadin had revealed, but that was how it felt. It opened him wide and filled him to the point of distraction. When it was inside his body all the way, and Kadin's pelvis was pressed to his body, Gregory wanted to clamp down and hold on to it there forever. But more than that, he wanted to please Kadin and give him all the pleasure he deserved. He knew Kadin was a very sexual man, with strong needs and passionate desires, and he didn't want to let him down. "I could stay in this position all night...forever," he said.

But Kadin wanted more. His hips began to rock and his shaft rubbed back and forth against Gregory's prostate. His large arms remained around his shoulders. He held him with a firm grip and only moved his pelvis and his legs. The bed went up and down and the springs started to squeak. He hammered so hard, the middle of the mattress started to sink in. Gregory closed his eyes and took deep, heavy breaths. His erection rubbed against the sheets while Kadin's penis stimulated his prostate. A climax from deep down in the center of his body was growing so fast, he couldn't catch his breath.

A few minutes later, Gregory said, "I don't think I can hold back any longer." His initial instinct was to reach down and grab his penis, but Kadin was still holding him and he couldn't move his arms.

"Let go, babe," Kadin said. "I'm ready, too."

After that, Kadin's hips moved up and down with such speed that the slaps and cracks against his body grew close together and it almost sounded like someone was applauding them. Kadin's penis hit all the right spots and Gregory's erection began to swell against the sheets. He took a deep breath and clenched his fists to prepare for the climax. His head went up and his mouth opened wide. Then his feet arched at the exact moment his penis erupted. His body jerked beneath Kadin's weight; the harder Kadin rammed his hole, the more he wanted.

When Kadin came a second later, Gregory experienced another orgasm that made his prostate jump just as much as the first one. He came a second time, and he'd never even touched himself once. He'd never experienced these internal orgasms with anyone else. Only Kadin.

After Kadin came, he fell on top of Gregory and continued to rock his pelvis in half circles with a smooth, even rhythm. Gregory's body went limp; his ankles dropped and his feet dangled off the end of the bed without support. Kadin remained erect for a long time after sex, and that only made the post-orgasmic vibrations even better. Gregory took a quick, shallow breath and said, "You're unbelievable, Kadin."

Kadin continued to rock. "So are you," he whispered. "And the part I like the best is right now, after it's all over and I'm just lingering inside your body this way. I hope I'm not too heavy."

Gregory smiled and kissed his arm. "You're fine," he said, "Let's stay this way for as long as we can."

Chapter Sixteen

“On Wednesday, my mother told me she’d pack my things and send them down here in a few weeks,” Gregory said. “She thought it was the best way to handle the situation for now, being that my father isn’t thrilled about the way things have turned out.”

He was sitting at the kitchen table in his bathrobe, finishing his second cup of coffee. It was mid-morning on Friday. They’d both been up since seven, but Kadin woke with a powerful erection and Gregory didn’t want to see it go to waste.

“You can borrow anything that’s mine,” Kadin said, “And whatever you need, we can buy in town.” He only wore boxer shorts. He was on his third cup of coffee and his dark hair was sticking up in the back. The children would all be back on Sunday, and he wanted to take advantage of this privacy. It wasn’t going to last.

Gregory sighed. “I still have to make a phone call,” he said. “I was supposed to take a new position with a design firm in Atlanta in June.”

Kadin smiled and touched his hand. “Use my study to make the call,” he said. “I’m going upstairs to take a shower in a few minutes.”

“Thank you,” Gregory said, “But now I still have to think about what I’m going to do down here in Savannah. I don’t have any contacts and it’s going to be hard to get established.”

“I’ve been thinking about that, too,” Kadin said. “After you make the phone call and you’re dressed, I want to take you into town. There’s something I want you to see.”

An hour later, they got into Kadin's car and put the top down. It was a hot day, and the afternoon was only going to get worse. Kadin smiled all the way into town, but he refused to tell Gregory where they were going. Gregory's face was pinched with worry about the new life he was beginning, and Kadin hoped his idea would ease things. He wanted to please Gregory as much out of the bedroom as he did in the bedroom. And so far, Kadin knew, he was winning in bed—but he wasn't sure about everything else. And he didn't want to lose him all over again.

When they reached the downtown business district, not far from the historic district, Kadin swerved to the right and parked in front of a tall, narrow building under two flowering dogwood trees. A woman pushing a baby carriage down the sidewalk smiled at them, and a middle-aged man walking a large poodle tilted his head in their direction. The windows were dark and the building looked empty. The exterior was white, painted brick with pale blue shutters the same color as Gregory's Chrysler. It had four floors and a front entrance on the left. The building on the right was a small antiques dealer, and on the left, there was a jeweler. Two doors down, there was a quaint little coffee shop with outdoor tables.

In the first floor window of the vacant building, on the bottom right, a red-and-white sign read, "For Rent." Kadin smiled and gestured to the vacant building. "What do you think of this?" he asked.

Gregory shrugged his shoulders and said, "It's very nice." Then he gave Kadin a confused look. "I don't understand. Are we going to that small café over there?"

Kadin couldn't stop smiling. He nodded toward the building. "I was thinking that

this might make a great location for a design studio. You could take over the entire building, and fill the first floor with fine antiques.”

Gregory looked at the building again, with his lips pressed together and his head moving up and down. “Oh, Kadin,” he said, “It’s a great place. But starting something like this takes a lot of money, and I’m not prepared for that kind of investment right now. I don’t even want to guess what renting a place like this would cost.”

“Suppose you had a serious investor to help out,” Kadin said.

“I don’t understand.”

“I own the building,” he said. “I bought it a year ago as an investment property and I haven’t been able to rent it out. To be honest, I’ve always wanted to have a small side business with antiques. We could take two trips a year to Europe to buy merchandise, and fill the place. And while you’re building a design firm of your own on the upper floors, the money we make with the antiques on the main floor can pay the overhead.”

Gregory continued to stare at the building. “I really do love it,” he said. “It’s a perfect location. But are you sure you want to get into something like this? It’s a huge commitment.”

Kadin wasn’t surprised. Gregory had always been the cautious, responsible type. He filled his car with gas when it reached the half-full level and he closed all the windows in the house at the hint of a dark cloud. So Kadin smiled and said, “I’m not going to be doing anything,” he said. “You’re going to be doing all the work. The building has just been sitting here empty for a year. I’ll lose money if you *don’t* do this.”

“It has always been a dream of mine to open my own design firm,” Gregory said. “And with a shop downstairs, I can focus on interiors, too.” He looked away from the building and stared into Kadin’s eyes. “Are you sure about this?”

“Yes, I’m sure,” he said. “I’ve actually been thinking about it since you arrived, but I didn’t want to spring it on you too soon.”

Gregory opened the car door and said, “Then let’s go inside and take a look. I can’t wait to get started.”

Kadin hadn’t seen Gregory this eager since the first summer he’d worked for him as an intern at the law firm. His eyes sparkled, and he smiled so wide, Kadin could see his gums. Gregory passed through the empty rooms, heels clicking against the old wooden floorboards, gazing at every corner with thoughts of the future. When he noticed a windowless wall on the right side of the first floor, he said that was where the main desk would go. He thought the second and third floors would be excellent for conferences with potential design clients. And on the fourth floor, when he looked out the front windows, he thought the light was perfect for a drawing room where he could create new designs.

“I’m glad you’re so excited,” Kadin said. “I wasn’t sure how you’d feel about this.” He didn’t want him to think he was trying to control or dominate his life. He only wanted to do that in bed—not anywhere else.

Gregory stepped across the room to where Kadin was standing next to a rear window. He put his arms around his shoulders and rested his cheek against his chest muscle. “I’ve never been happier in my life,” he said. Then he looked him in the eyes, opened his mouth, and kissed him on the lips.

When they went downstairs, they had lunch at the small café up the street and introduced themselves to the owner. She was a small, dark-haired Frenchwoman who reminded Kadin of Edith Piaf. Her hands and feet were tiny, and she had a habit of clutching her long gold necklace with her left hand when she spoke. She welcomed them to the neighborhood and wished them the best. She also made a point of mentioning something about the owners of the antique shop next door to them. “They are two wonderful older gentlemen,” she said in broken English, “and they’ve been together for more than thirty years. You’ll like them very much, I’m sure.” She didn’t say whether or not they were more than business partners, but the intimation was there.

After lunch, they headed back to the house for another afternoon ride. But when they pulled up to the end of the driveway, there was a familiar black Hudson parked in front of the gate. Gregory gave Kadin a look. He sighed and said, “I’m not sure what he wants now. I thought I made it clear he wasn’t supposed to come back here anymore.”

Gregory tilted his head and lifted his right eyebrow. “Well, evidently, he wasn’t paying attention.” He sat back in the seat, squaring his shoulders and biting the inside of his mouth.

“Calm down, babe. I’ll take care of him,” Kadin said. “He’s really not a bad guy.”

When they got out of the car and walked up to the front of the house, they saw Eddie sitting on the porch swing. He was wearing a loose white dress shirt and black short pants so short and so tight, it didn’t look like he was wearing any pants at all. His long, shapely legs were shaved smooth. It was only May, but they were already a downy bronze color and covered with lotion. On his feet, he wore black leather half boots, with a

three-inch Cuban heel. He was sitting on one end of the swing, legs spread wide. The left one was hanging over the arm and dangling back and forth.

When he saw them approach, he smiled and said, "Hello, boys." His lisp seemed more pronounced that afternoon; he spoke with his breathy Marilyn Monroe voice.

Kadin sighed and stared down at his boots. Gregory was standing a few feet behind him, watching quietly. "What can I do for you, Eddie?"

He stood from the porch swing and came down the stairs. The white shirt covered his shorts. It looked as if he were wearing a short dress instead of a shirt. Kadin had always loved to watch his long, silky legs when he dressed like this. He was a shameless slut, a human sex toy who couldn't wait to be abused. The high-heeled boots had always made Kadin's penis erect. If he'd seen him this way a month earlier at the picnic area, he would have bent him over a table and fucked his brains out. But now, with Gregory by his side, those legs did nothing for him.

"Eddie," Kadin said, "you probably should go home now. I told you I'm with Gregory now, and nothing is going to change that."

Eddie smiled and passed by him. He stood next to Gregory and said, "I know that. I'm not here to get anyone upset or mad. And I'm really not trying to cause any trouble. I just thought I'd pay you *both* a visit on a hot spring afternoon." He stood closer to Gregory and placed his palm on the small of his back. Then he looked him up and down and said, "He's really cute, and I was thinking maybe we could all have a little fun together this afternoon. I'll take good care of you boys. I'll swing from the trees if you want."

"Ah, well," Kadin said. He couldn't believe Eddie was suggesting a three-way.

Gregory just stood there looking at him with a blank stare.

Then Eddie unzipped his shorts and took them off fast. He stepped out of them and pushed them aside on the brick walk with his high heel. He arched his back and said, "I have a feeling we could all have a lot of fun." He looked Gregory in the eye, then lifted his white shirt all the way up so his beautiful bare ass was exposed. It was just as bronze and silky as his legs. He'd been lying around in the nude somewhere. "And there's nothing I won't do to please you both," he said to Gregory. "Go ahead, handsome. You can touch if you want. Feel free to use both hands."

Gregory looked down at Eddie's bare ass and raised his eyebrows. Then he gave Kadin a look and said, "Eddie, you seem like a nice guy. Really, you do. But it's not going to happen. If you'd like to put your pants back on and be our friend, that's fine. But Kadin and I are a couple now, and we're not interested in anything more than your friendship."

Eddie frowned and said, "I could suck you both off real fast." He reached down and grabbed Gregory's crotch and said, "I have a feeling there's a nice sack of meat between your legs, handsome."

Kadin laughed. He knew how persistent Eddie could be when he was really horny. "Eddie, c'mon. Let go of him and put your pants on now."

Eddie frowned again and lowered his shirt. He released Gregory's penis and said, "Very few men ever tell me to put my pants *on*. Usually they're trying to rip them *off*." He bent over to pick up his shorts. He got down on his hands and knees and spread his legs so the shirt rode up to his waist and they could actually see the opening of his anus.

It was totally shaved and ready for action, a little pink flower-bud begging for two hot men with big dicks.

“Put your pants on now, and get up,” Kadin repeated. Eddie really didn’t mean any harm, and Kadin wasn’t mad. But he also knew he had to treat him like a naughty little puppy sometimes.

Eddie grabbed his shorts and stood. He pouted, his eyebrows furrowed. But he didn’t put his shorts back on. He slowly walked back to his car and said, “If you guys change your minds, you know how to reach me. Don’t hesitate to call any time.” Then he went back to his car, opened the door, sat down behind the wheel, and tossed his shorts into the back seat.

When he was gone, Gregory said, “He really is a very attractive guy, Kadin. He reminds me of an effeminate James Dean. Are you sure you didn’t want him to stay? I know of other couples who do that sort of thing, and if it’s really something you want, I’ll be more than happy to agree to a three-way.”

Kadin smiled and ran his palm through his hair. He wasn’t sure if Gregory was testing him. He could have been. Gregory was smart that way. But it didn’t really matter, because Kadin wasn’t interested in anyone else. And he wasn’t interested in a three-way. “He’s not half as attractive as you are,” Kadin said. “I’d rather not be one of those couples who do that sort of thing. The thought of another man getting into your pants when I’m in the same room makes me crazy.”

Gregory smiled. “Ah, well, so you’re the jealous type.”

“Damn right,” Kadin said. Then he rubbed his jaw and asked, “Did you *want* to do a three-way with him?” His voice became low and serious.

Gregory gave him a look. “Why on Earth would I want to do a three-way with Eddie, or anyone else, when I have the man of my dreams standing right in front of me? I’m afraid it’s just going to be the two of us from now on. So you’d better get used to it.”

When they went out to the barn to get the horses ready to ride, he proved it to him. While Kadin was reaching for a saddle, Gregory dropped to his knees on the barn floor and buried his face between his legs. His hands squeezed and massaged his thigh muscles; he chewed the fabric of his pants and licked the front of his fly. Kadin looked down and smiled, then he spread his legs apart and pulled down his zipper. “Take off all your clothes, too,” Kadin said.

Gregory undressed on the floor, tossing his clothes onto a pile of hay. When he was naked, he slipped his hand inside Kadin’s pants and pulled out his penis. It was already hard; it stuck out of his fly and jumped a few times. Then he reached inside and carefully pulled out his testicles. He grabbed them with his fingertips, one at a time. Kadin had big, dark balls—they hung out of his pants and rested against the beige fabric. He wrapped his right hand around Kadin’s shaft, and sucked one ball into his mouth. Kadin’s eyes rolled back and he moaned out loud. “Ah, babe,” he said, “that feels so good. I love it when you do this.”

So Gregory opened his mouth wider and sucked the other one into his mouth. His lips puffed and his cheeks bulged. He closed his eyes and took quick breaths through his nose. Kadin felt his tongue press up on his ball sack while he sucked. He pulled both testicles forward and stretched the sack as far as he could. When Kadin looked down and saw Gregory looking up at him with one blue eye and one green, and a mouthful of testicles, he got so excited almost squirted a load all over his face.

But he held back because Gregory gently removed his balls from his mouth and began licking the bottom of his shaft. He held Kadin's penis up with two fingers and licked the thick vein from bottom to top. Then he licked the sides and the top. When his penis was shining with saliva, Gregory opened his mouth again and sucked it into his mouth. He sucked gently at first, making no sounds at all. Then the sucking became more intense, and he began to groan. When he took it to the back of his throat and his lips were against Kadin's pants, he pressed his tongue against the shaft and sucked even harder. He never gagged once. He took every inch and moaned with delight.

Kadin placed his palm on the back of his head and pushed it forward. He felt the tip of his penis hit Gregory's throat hard. Part of him wanted to cradle his head, and part of him wanted to shove it hard. When he looked down to see Gregory's face filled with his erection, all he saw were his magnificent blue and green eyes. They were the eyes of the love of his life. "I'm getting really close," he said. "Can I come this way?" He always asked.

Gregory slid his penis out, just partially. He stopped at the end and left the head inside his mouth. He reached for Kadin's right hand and guided it toward Kadin's penis.

Kadin smiled and grabbed his dick. "I know what you want me to do now," he said. "I like that. This reminds me of that time in the creek, that summer we met."

Gregory's eyebrows went up and his lips puffed out. He grabbed his own dick and began to suck just the head of Kadin's penis. Kadin closed his eyes and started jerking off while Gregory continued to suck the head. He was jerking off into his lover's mouth, and he planned to fill it with as much of his love as he could. He jerked so fast, the end of his fist banged into Gregory's lips.

A moment later, Kadin grunted and blasted a stream of love all over Gregory's tongue. The moment it landed on his tongue, Gregory busted his load on the barn floor. He kept the head in his mouth for a long time, and Kadin watched him swallow. When he finally stopped jerking, he let go of his penis and rubbed the top of Gregory's head. Gregory took the whole thing into his mouth again and sucked the last drops. By the time he finally released it from his mouth, it was shrinking back to its normal size.

Kadin watched as Gregory carefully lifted his semi-erect penis with two fingers and placed it back inside his pants. He put his balls back, too, making sure they were neatly arranged in his underwear. Then he pulled up his zipper and said, "I think I'm in love with him, too." He was joking about Kadin's penis.

Kadin reached down to help Gregory up. When he was standing, he pulled him close and grabbed his ass with both hands. He slapped it a few times and said, "He's just as in love with your lips." Then he pulled the back of Gregory's head and kissed him so hard, his arms went limp at his sides.

Chapter Seventeen

The summer before Kadin decided to move into the nursing home with Gregory, he sold the design studio in downtown Savannah to a nice young couple from Los Angeles. It was an unconventional lease/purchase arrangement. Kadin didn't mind holding the mortgage, because the couple didn't have enough money to buy it outright. Besides, he liked them both and knew they'd continue to build the successful business Gregory had begun many years earlier.

Their names were Jim and Rob. They were both in their late thirties, one tall and dark and the other small and fair. After fifteen years of fighting Los Angeles traffic and working as full-time set designers in the film industry, they'd decided to give up the smog and move back to the south to be closer to family in Atlanta (but not too close). They lived on the third floor of the building and ran the design studio and antique shop from the first and second. They stopped by the nursing home once a month to personally hand Kadin a check and to pay them both a quick visit. In five years, they'd always paid in full and on time.

They weren't supposed to visit until the first of the month, but that month they decided to come a few days early because Thanksgiving fell on the twenty-eighth. When Kadin looked up from his dinner plate and saw them enter the dining room, he smiled and waved them to his table. Then he tapped Gregory on the arm and said, "Looks like the boys are here early this month." He'd been hoping they'd stop by. Kadin and Gregory didn't have many good friends left, and their children were scattered in different places with their own families.

He knew Gregory liked Jim and Rob, especially Rob, the tall, dark one. He didn't always remember them, but whenever he saw good-looking Rob, his eyes opened wide and he smiled for the rest of the day. And he'd been having a rough Thanksgiving Day so far. The nursing home's Thanksgiving dinner wasn't exactly haute cuisine. The turkey was dry, the gravy was too thick and tasted like it came from a can, and the mashed potatoes were lumpy. The vegetables were bland and mushy, and the pumpkin pie was sugar-free—healthier, they said—and tasteless. But more than that, because it was a holiday, dinner started early, at four in the afternoon. “Low end and completely unacceptable,” Gregory had said on his way to the dining room. “Who do they think would sit down to eat a proper dinner at four o'clock in the afternoon?”

Kadin stood as they approached the table. Gregory was trying to smooth out his paper napkin, grumbling and scowling about how shoddily things were run around there. But when he looked up and saw Rob standing over him, he dropped the flimsy napkin on his lap and smiled as wide as he could. Then he extended his arm and said, “It's so nice to see you today. It makes this awful dinner seem bearable.” He nodded at Jim, but he kept staring and smiling at Rob.

Kadin raised an eyebrow and gave Rob a knowing look. Then he tapped Gregory on the shoulder and said, “It's not that bad. It could be worse.”

Gregory shrugged. “I guess I expect too much. All the decent hotels are gone now.”

Rob was carrying a delicate white orchid that had been carefully arranged in a low Imari dish. They never visited empty-handed. If it wasn't a special gold box of Gregory's

favorite chocolate, it was a small, fine trinket from the antique shop. He placed the arrangement beside Gregory and said, "This is for you. I hope you like orchids."

Gregory's cheeks flushed and he sat back and pressed his palms together. "It's magnificent," he said. "Orchids and roses are my favorite. And the Imari bowl looks very old."

Kadin sighed. Gregory could remember orchids and roses were his favorite flowers, and he still knew what Imari porcelain was, but he couldn't remember that Kadin had been his life partner for almost fifty years or that he had three grown children.

They sat down at the table and Kadin ordered coffee. While Rob distracted Gregory with talk about hotels, Jim slid a white envelope next to Kadin's water glass. Kadin picked it up fast and shoved it into the inside pocket of his tweed sport jacket. He didn't want Gregory to know it was a payment for the business. Gregory had been running the firm right up to the day he was diagnosed with Alzheimer's. He never asked about the business, but Kadin wasn't sure how he'd react if he knew he'd sold it.

The conversation was simple. They talked about the weather, a little politics, and how so many new homes were popping up outside Savannah. A half hour later, Jim looked at his watch and frowned. "We have to get moving," he said. "We're expected for dinner at Phil and Dan's. It's a sit-down dinner for ten, so we can't arrive too late."

Gregory ignored him. He was talking to Rob about how they over-landscaped the grounds. "Highway robbery," he was saying, "the way these greedy landscapers just show up to mow a lawn that doesn't even need to be mowed."

Kadin smiled. Back when he and Gregory were their age, men like them didn't get together for dinner parties openly, at least not where *they* lived. It was all so casual

and comfortable now. Where had he been while everything changed? Now they went out to dinner in large groups, hung rainbow flags all over the shops in town, and talked about getting legally married. He and Gregory didn't even share the same bedroom until their youngest child moved out of the house.

Then Jim touched Rob's arm and gave him a look. So Kadin stood up and made it easier for them to leave. Gregory thanked Rob three times for the orchid and gave him a long hug. He only nodded at Jim to be polite, then told Rob to come back any time he wanted.

When they were gone, Kadin said, "You sure are fond of Rob. I hope Jim doesn't get jealous."

Gregory blushed and waved his hand. "Don't be obtuse. He's a nice, smart boy and I enjoy talking with him. In a way, he reminds me of that young man in the story you've been telling me."

Kadin laughed. "Well, that's good to hear."

"Why?"

He picked up his laptop and said, "Because we're going into the sunroom now, and I'm going to finish the story tonight."

* * * *

Kadin went to the fishmonger Saturday evening and picked up two lobsters he'd ordered earlier that week. On the way home, he stopped at a liquor store for his favorite champagne. The children were arriving on Sunday afternoon, and this would be their last night alone in the house for a very long time. He wanted it to be special, a night Gregory would remember for the rest of his life.

When he pulled up to the house, it was after seven thirty. Gregory's car was parked on the side. Kadin wasn't sure he'd be home yet. He'd gone into town at five o'clock to take the measurements of the windows in the new building. He told Kadin he wanted simple, tasteful white panels with tie-backs perfectly measured so that each long window would look the same from the outside as well as the inside. Kadin smiled at the thought of him holding a tape measure and pulling a pencil from his mouth to take notes. He already knew he was a perfectionist because Gregory had been his intern. And now he knew Gregory would make that old building as wonderful as it could be.

He grabbed the lobsters and champagne and got out of the car. He was going to use the back door, but he stopped when he heard music coming from the front of the house. So he turned and headed toward the front door. When he reached the steps, he smiled and shook his head. Gregory had turned on the hi-fi in the living room, and *Take Me Always* was playing. It was their song, from the movie they'd seen on the first night they'd met. He hadn't heard it in years. Until that moment, he hadn't been sure Gregory even remembered they had a song of their own.

When he went inside, Gregory was in the formal dining room setting the long Chippendale table for dinner. There were new candles in the silver candle holders, white linen napkins, and a sparkling crystal vase in the center of the table held a dozen pink roses. Gregory was wearing light linen slacks, a white dress shirt open at the collar and a black dinner jacket. He turned with a silver knife in his right hand and said, "Just leave those things in the kitchen and I'll take care of them. You go upstairs and get ready for dinner."

"I like the music," Kadin said.

Gregory smiled and placed the knife to the right of the plate. “Ah, well, it’s just a song from a movie I saw a long time ago on a hot summer night.”

Kadin crossed to where he was standing and kissed his neck. “You look wonderful, babe,” he said. “Maybe we should go upstairs first and eat a late dinner. The song you’re playing is getting me hard.” But it was more about the way Gregory looked. The black jacket and white shirt made Kadin’s heart beat faster. He wanted to throw him down on top of the table and rip the linen slacks from his body.

But Gregory pushed him back and smiled. “No. We’re having a decent, civilized dinner tonight,” he said. “You’re going to shower and get dressed for it. And shave, too. I’ve laid your clothes out on the bed.” Then he ran his fingers across his cheek and said, “I like the stubble, don’t get me wrong, but tonight is special.”

Kadin put the champagne down on the table and grabbed Gregory’s ass. Gregory pulled back and pointed to the center hall. “Dinner is at eight thirty,” he said.

The dining room window was open, and a large yellow butterfly flew into the room. At first, Gregory jumped back and ducked, because he wasn’t sure what it was. Then it landed in the center of the table, on two roses that were close together, and they both laughed. It remained on the roses for a minute, flapping its wings slowly, then flew right out the window again. “That butterfly on the roses is like me on top of you,” Kadin said. “I just want to get on top of you and flap my wings.”

Gregory smiled. “Go up and get ready now. You can flap your wings on top of me all you want later on.”

While Kadin showered and dressed, Gregory took care of the entire meal. He prepared mashed red-skinned potatoes with boursin and scallions, a simple green salad

with French dressing, and boiled lobster. By the time Kadin came downstairs, the house smelled like sweet brown butter. He'd taken longer than usual, shaving and grooming so he'd look especially good for Gregory that night. He'd even found the small scissors in the medicine cabinet and trimmed the dark patch of hair above his penis. It was getting dark outside. The candles in the dining room were lit and the table glistened and shimmered.

He went into the kitchen and said, "Everything looks wonderful." He felt as if he were in an elegant restaurant downtown instead of his own home. Gregory had chosen his outfit. He'd left his white dinner jacket, his black slacks, and a white shirt out on the bed. Kadin still had moments when he couldn't believe this was all happening and that Gregory was here with him now. There were times when he felt like pinching himself to make sure his life was real.

Gregory turned from the stove and stared at him. He was melting butter for the lobster in a small pot. He smiled and said, "You look good tonight. I should dress you up more often. But then I'd have to worry about everyone else looking you over."

Kadin's heart started to beat again. He felt a tug in his balls. He wanted to jump on Gregory's back, lube him with melted butter, and mount him on the kitchen table. "I think you should *undress* me more often," he said. Then he spread his feet apart and grabbed a handful of fabric between his legs. He shook it in Gregory's direction and said, "Why don't you put some melted butter on this, babe, and lick it all off?"

Gregory tried hard to remain serious, but he couldn't stop the corners of his lips from going up. "Go open the champagne, and wait for me in the dining room," he said. "This is going to be a special night."

They ate slowly. Gregory stared into his dark brown eyes and laughed at all his jokes, and he couldn't take his eyes off Gregory's full, round lips. Kadin said it was the best dinner he'd ever had, and he was amazed at how Gregory could take something as simple as a potato and turn it into something so spectacular. Then Gregory poured champagne and toasted their future. "To us," he said, "and to all the wonderful days ahead of us."

Kadin lifted his glass and clinked it against Gregory's. He looked into his eyes and said, "And to you, my love."

When dinner was over, Kadin said, "I'll take care of clearing the table. You've worked hard today." He knew Gregory liked things neat and clean. In the short time he'd been there, he'd never gone to bed with dirty dishes in the sink or a stove that wasn't shining.

But Gregory stood up and placed his napkin on the table. Then he leaned forward and stuck his tongue in Kadin's ear. He licked it and said, "Tonight we're going to leave everything just like it is. I'll take care of it in the morning."

Kadin's penis started to grow. He wanted to fuck him right on top of the messy dining room table. "That sounds awfully dirty to me," he said. "You know how I like that."

Gregory stepped back from the table and stretched his arms in the air. "That's because I have some very dirty things planned for you," he said. "Now you make sure the candles are out, the lights are off and the hi-fi is playing our song before you come upstairs. I'll be in the bedroom waiting for you with a big smile."

* * * *

Then Gregory went upstairs to the bedroom and left him alone. He took care of everything, including setting the hi-fi so the record would continue to play without stopping. Fifteen minutes later, he went upstairs and walked into the bedroom. The entire room was lit with more candles than Kadin had ever seen burning at one time. Gregory must have scrambled to light them all. There had to have been more than a hundred. They lined the tabletops and dressers; a large candelabrum rested on a fern stand next to a window.

And in the corner of the candlelit room, sitting on a white wing chair near the front window, was Gregory.

He'd removed all his clothes except for the black dinner jacket. He was smiling and his legs were hanging over the arms of the chair. When Kadin looked at him, he stood up slowly in his bare feet, and pulled the hem of the jacket down to the tops of his thighs. "Would you like to dance?" he asked.

Kadin smiled and his mouth opened halfway. Then he extended both arms and said, "I'd love to."

Gregory crossed the room slowly. The black jacket covered his private parts. His naked legs looked smooth and delicate. He walked into Kadin's arms and put his palms on his shoulders. Kadin placed his hands on the small of his back and they began to dance. Kadin was the lead. Gregory's face rested on his chest and he followed his moves with grace. They rocked back and forth very slowly, while Kadin's hands inched down his back. When Gregory lifted his arms higher so he could wrap them around Kadin's shoulders, the dinner jacket went up and his bare ass was totally exposed.

Kadin spread his fingers and cupped Gregory's naked ass. He danced and squeezed and massaged at the same time. Gregory sighed and spread his legs wider.

"This is nice," Kadin whispered. "But you know what would be even nicer?"

"What?"

Kadin stopped dancing and stepped back. Then he reached for the lapels of Gregory's jacket. He spread them apart and lowered them over his shoulders. The jacket fell to the floor. He stared at his naked body, licked his lips, and whistled back. Then he smiled and said, "That's much better now." He wanted to mount that body. He wanted to climb on top of him and flap his wings. But more than that, he wanted to slap his firm buttocks, open it wide, and shove his penis in as deep as it would go.

Gregory lowered his head and lifted his eyes. "Pull down your zipper," he said.

While Kadin yanked his zipper, Gregory went down on his knees. He spread his legs, arched his back, and reached inside Kadin's pants. When he pulled out his penis, he opened his mouth and stuck out his tongue.

He sucked him off for a long time, until Kadin finally grabbed the back of his head and said, "Get up now." He didn't want to come this way. He wanted to fuck Gregory on his back with his beautiful legs up high and over his shoulders.

Gregory followed orders well. Kadin knew there was nothing he wouldn't do to please him. He stopped sucking and stood up. His lips were puffy and wet. Kadin placed his left arm on his back and bent down to secure his right arm behind his knees. Then he lifted him up and kissed him on the mouth. Gregory's head went back and he put his arms around Kadin's shoulders. Kadin carried him to the bed, with his tongue buried deeply inside his mouth the entire time.

When they reached the side of the bed, Kadin lowered him to the mattress. He placed him in the middle of the bed and reached for the jar of Vaseline on the nightstand. “Grease yourself,” he said, “while I get out of these clothes.”

He undressed fast, watching Gregory lift his legs so he could lather petroleum jelly all over his bottom. When he was naked and Gregory’s hole was slick and ready for him, he climbed up on the bed and lifted Gregory’s legs as high as they would go. He held his calves and spread them wide. Gregory closed his eyes and threw his arms over his head.

When he inserted the head of his penis into Gregory’s hole, his heart was pounding and his chest was heaving. He plunged inside fast and went deep, without taking time to open him up and prepare him for the intrusion. Gregory’s body jerked and he clenched his fists. Then he looked up at Kadin and smiled. He said, “Yes...ah, yes. I love you so much.”

After that, Kadin shoved a pillow under Gregory’s back so his ass would be higher, and he fucked him. He pressed down on the back of Gregory’s thighs and pinned his knees to his shoulders. The bed rocked with such force, and the headboard banged the wall behind them so hard, that a small picture actually fell off the wall. When Kadin went deep, his heavy balls smacked the bottom of his ass. He didn’t stop fucking this way until they both came at the same time. Gregory jerked and shot all over the headboard; his toes curled and his tongue stuck out from the side of his mouth. Kadin came with such a powerful orgasm, his entire face contorted and turned red. It was so intense that his balls jumped up and he had to reach down and press them back into his scrotum.

Kadin pulled out and fell on top of Gregory's body. Then he put his arms around him and kissed him on the mouth. "When I'm on top of you like this," he said, "I never want to let you go." Their song was still playing down in the living room. Suddenly, Kadin was filled with a sense of elation. He wanted to turn him around and fuck him all over again. But he knew he'd have to wait at least a half hour.

Gregory ran his hands up and down his strong back and said, "I just wish I'd been able to read all of your letters," he said. "You're the only man I've ever loved."

Kadin reached down between his legs and cupped the soft skin of his buttocks in his palm. "I'll write more for you, I promise. We have the rest of our lives."

Chapter Eighteen

Kadin closed the laptop and sat back in his chair. They were the only two left in the sunroom that night. It was well past eight, but because it was Thanksgiving, the nurses had decided to let Kadin read to Gregory longer than usual.

“And that’s the end of the story,” Kadin said, folding his arms across his chest. His head was tilted to the side and he smiled. He knew the nurse would be there soon to take Gregory to his room, where they would medicate him and put him to bed.

Gregory stared down at his lap for a moment, then asked, “Did they stay together?”

“Oh, yes,” Kadin said, “for the rest of their lives. Those two guys were inseparable. And they had wonderful lives, too.” The sunroom doors were open and the hallway was silent. It was his favorite time of day. Even for a discreet gay man like Kadin, being surrounded by so many straight people all the time wasn’t always easy. The cultural differences alone often left him shaking his head more than once. There had been many times when he’d wished for an all-gay nursing home. Everyone here meant well; they all thought they understood because they’d seen TV shows like *Will and Grace* and *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, but none really had a clue. It was like giving birth to a child. Unless you’ve actually done it, you have no idea what it’s like.

“How did that song go?” Gregory asked. “The one in the story, *Take Me Always*.” He was looking at the ceiling, tapping his lips with his index finger, as if trying to remember the words.

Kadin cleared his throat and sang a few bars. He wasn't much of a singer, but he knew all the words by heart. And at night, when he was alone in his room, the simple melody would often repeat in his head.

"It sounds so familiar," Gregory said. "I know I've heard that song before. Sing it again, please."

Kadin leaned forward and sat on the end of his seat. He smiled and his eyes grew wide. Then he took Gregory's soft hand and held it in his palm. When he sang the song again this time, he looked directly into his eyes.

After a few bars, while Kadin was still holding his hand, Gregory's eyebrows went up and he said, "I remember. The story was about us, wasn't it?"

He took a deep breath and smiled, then he held his hand tighter and said, "Yes, babe. It was us."

"Kadin," he said, "I remember that night, and the letter you wrote. I remember our song, and the movie we saw the first time we heard it. It was your birthday, but you didn't tell me until weeks later."

Kadin's eyes became watery, but he was still smiling. "I knew you would," he said. "I knew if I read you the story, you'd remember."

"I want to hold on," Gregory said, "I want to keep remembering. Don't let go of my hand. I love you so much. Don't let me forget." His hand started to tremble and his voice rose to a higher pitch.

"Don't get too excited," Kadin said, "You're fine now. I'm here with you, and I'll always be here with you." Then he placed his other hand on his knee and squeezed it a few times.

“I love you, Kadin,” he said. He spoke fast, as if he wasn’t sure he’d have enough time to get the words out of his mouth.

Kadin looked at the doors to make sure no one was coming into the room, then leaned forward and kissed him on the mouth.

And in an instant, Gregory pulled back with a dramatic jerk. He looked down at his knee, then at his hand. “Why are you touching me like this? What’s wrong with you?”

Kadin’s shoulders dropped and the corners of his mouth went down. “It’s me, babe,” he said. “It’s Kadin. Don’t let go. Just hold on a little longer.” He’d waited so long for this moment.

But Gregory jumped up from the table and pulled away from him. When he knocked over a chair, it caused a loud crash. He backed into a window. His hands began to tremble and his eyes bulged with fear. “Don’t touch me. I don’t know you. I want to go home now. I don’t live here.”

A second later, two nurses and the staff doctor came running into the room. They cornered him in front of the window and held his arms down at his sides. Kadin tried to help, but when he stood up, Gregory only became worse. He was hunched over and his entire body began to tremble.

The doctor gave him an injection and said, “You’re fine now. Just calm down.” He gave Kadin a knowing look.

Tears rolled down Kadin’s face. “He came back,” he said. “He remembered everything. It wasn’t for long, but he knew me. He called me by my name.”

The doctor took a deep breath and sighed. “We’re going to take him to his room now and let him get some rest. It’s been a long day.” His voice was patronizing. He didn’t believe Kadin.

The tranquilizer had already begun to work. Gregory’s head was bent forward and his arms were now limp. When one of the nurses placed her palm on his back and guided him past the table, he began to shuffle with cautious paces. And as they walked him across the sunroom, toward the exit, Kadin started to whistle the melody of *Take Me Always*. He had to concentrate hard, because tears were still falling down his face and his lips were still trembling.

Suddenly, Gregory stopped walking. The confused expression disappeared and he straightened his back and squared his shoulders. He turned to the nurse on his right and said, “If it’s all the same with you, I think I’d prefer to have Kadin walk me back to my room now.”

Both nurses looked at the doctor. The doctor smiled at Kadin, then raised his eyebrows and nodded yes to the nurses.

Kadin stopped whistling and stood from the chair faster than he’d stood up in years. Then he crossed to the middle of the sunroom and looped his arm through Gregory’s. They started walking and Kadin said, “I told you, babe, I’ll always be here for you. I’ll get you situated in bed, and tomorrow morning I’ll start reading to you again.”

“Will you read the story about us?” Gregory asked. “I probably won’t remember anything by then, but you never can tell.”

Kadin nodded and said, “Yes, babe. I’ll start the whole story again, fresh from the beginning.”

When they crossed through the door, Gregory looked back to see where the nurses were. Then he leaned into Kadin's shoulder and whispered, "We've been lucky, haven't we?"

Kadin smiled. "Babe, thanks to you, I'm the luckiest man in the world."

THE END

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