



Wonderland

ADAM CARPENTER

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romance

Wonderland

A Ravenous Romance™ Panamour™ Original Publication

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A Ravenous Romance™ Original Publication

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Ravenous Romance™

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

PART ONE:

Richard & Marc

by Adam Carpenter

In this picturesque coastal village they call Wonderland, Alice doesn't live here anymore. Well, she certainly doesn't reside on Eldon Court, a quiet stretch of road that dead ends up against a rocky cliff and a lush view of the Pacific Ocean's crashing waves. On this exclusive street, five beautifully restored Victorian houses loom over the water. Inside three of these classic homes lived couples joined by a common lifestyle and the desire for privacy. Surprisingly they were all men; they were lovers and partners; property owners and contributing members of a vibrant seafront community. They were the residents of a street named Eldon Court in a village called Wonderland.

Currently two houses remained silent and unsold, and if there is any wonder as to why no one had snapped up these properties, well, let's just say Wonderland is bucolic and lovely, but also not without its secrets.

But new people came to Wonderland all the time, with such desirable houses on the market, there is little doubt they would soon be sold.

Yes, new neighbors were coming to Eldon Court.

And Wonderland would never again be the same.

* * * *

Sitting at the bar of the Bayside Hotel on the outskirts of Wonderland, Marc Anderson gazed lovingly at the man seated next to him, their eyes locking through the martini glasses held up to their faces. They drank intently, never once losing focus on what mattered most: the burning desire between them. A small candle flickered beside them in an otherwise dim room. They weren't alone but might as well have been. None of the other guests were paying them any mind. It was almost as if they were alone in this room, in this hotel, and this bar. This very moment.

Finally Marc set down his drink, the stinging effects of the vodka having traveled from tongue to gullet, and realized the glass was near empty. What next? Another round, or something a bit more intimate? He wondered what it would be like with him? The man at his side was the larger of them, dressed in a stylish dark blue suit and tie, even at this late hour. He still had the top button secured, as though afraid to let his hair down in such a public environment. But then he reached over with his hand to caress Marc's face. He knew he was cute, he'd been told that ever since his grandmother had pinched his cheeks as a child. His smile widened, and somehow words didn't seem necessary for what was to come next. Still, Marc leaned in and said, "I want you so bad, I can taste it."

Before the other man could reply, the bartender approached them, eyed the empty glasses and said, "So, you two need another round here?" He had thinning gray hair, complete with a ponytail, and his smoker's voice pointed to a man that'd lived a decent life on the hippie side of things. No distractions there, sorry pal.

The suited gentleman ran a hand through his dark hair and turned to the older barkeep. "No, thank you. I believe it's time we moved on. I've got a big appointment in the morning, need my rest." Then he paused and looked back at Marc. "Unless you want another?"

Marc shook his head. "I'm good. I know what I want."

"I like the sound of that."

"Get a room, guys, get a room," the bartender stated jokingly.

"The name's Rich. Richard in my business, but my friends have always called me Rich."

"So what should I call you?"

Rich answered the question by dangling a card key. "Oh, I think by night's end you'll have your own name for me."

They finished off the remnants of their Grey Goose martinis ("very dirty..." had been the request by the now-named Rich) and slipped a few extra bucks on the bar just because. At last they were ready for whatever the night held. Each other, no doubt. Rich eagerly took hold of Marc's hand as they exited the bar and entered the brightly lit lobby. Marc made an effort to reclaim his hand.

"Relax, no one cares."

Marc took in his elegant surroundings, looking at the smartly-uniformed workers behind the high oak desks and at the moneyed guests passing through the lobby, and realized how right Rich was. No one looked at them askance; like it was the most natural thing in the world for two men to be holding hands in public. Just what kind of place was this Wonderland? Living up to its name? Back east where Marc hailed from, you still got funny looks, smirks or worse -- nasty remarks. Marc exhaled as he came to the conclusion that maybe he liked this place.

Marc kept pace with his new friend, watching as the man inserted the card key into a slot right beside an elevator.

"Penthouse suite—this elevator goes directly into the room."

"Nice touch," Marc offered.

The two of them got inside the elevator where the button for the penthouse suite was already lit. Suddenly the doors closed and at last they were alone. Rich pinned him against the wall, instantly and violently pressing his lips to his. The kiss was hungry, born of a desire that had grown while they'd enjoyed their late-night cocktails. And speaking of, Rich's growing cock was pressed tight up against him, obviously turned-on. Marc groaned at both the feel of Rich's kiss and the sudden promise of what was to come. His hand encircled Rich's body, gripping his back and wanting nothing more than to tear his clothes off.

The elevator was fast and before anything further could be consummated, a ding sounded and the doors opened directly into the twentieth and top floor. They broke from their kiss at the sound of the doors opening; express elevators certainly had their advantages but also drawbacks. Still, it's not like anyone else would be requesting its services. Rich depressed the "stop" button and the doors remained open, the elevator all theirs.

Rich slid down Marc's lithe body, stopping at his crotch. A tightening in his jeans was hardly surprising, since the moment they'd met their attraction had been fierce. Marc knew what was to come next, and Rich did not disappoint. With a simple stroke, he unzipped Marc's jeans and let them fall to his ankles. The boxers, though, remained on. With his mouth wide and hungry, he slid his tongue inside the opening in the shorts, immediately tasting the musky scent. He licked a few stray hairs as he bobbed down for Marc's erection. Slipping the tip inside his mouth, Rich ran his tongue along the eyelet and kept at it until he could taste a bit of pre-come. When satisfied, he allowed Marc's shaft to slip out of the hole in the shorts, and that's when Rich went at him with enthusiasm. He sucked and he ate, licked, and devoured the entire shaft until it backed up against his throat.

Marc was lost in an ecstasy he could have only dreamed about two hours ago. As much as he enjoyed the main event, there was nothing like a fabulous blow job and, quite honestly, this guy was great at it. With his rough dark beard rubbing against the shaft, sensations rippled from Marc's spine to his toes. Pressure mounted and he became weak-kneed; he began to pant with a desire to release himself but also save himself for the night still to come. Rich clearly wasn't letting up, and Marc knew there would be no stopping himself.

"Oh...fuck..."

Rich drank him in, urged on by the passionate sounds emanating from above. His action was strong, fast, and determined. Just then he cupped Marc's tight balls in his hand and gave them a gentle squeeze. God, how had he known to do that? Seconds went by and then Marc's cock jerked again. Rich pulled away, watching as the hardened cock spilled its juice; he loved to watch a cock in action, how the size of the head expands until it can't hold back any further. He loved to watch the semen gather in a pool, whether on the floor or on his chest or anywhere it splashed. Finally, he looked up at Marc's expression, his panting chest, the expanding smile on his face, the look of devotion that settled over him.

"You better not be done," Marc said, his heart returning to a steady beat.

Rich answered with action, leading him to the king-size bed. They kissed passionately as Rich grabbed at Marc's body-hugging clothing. His t-shirt tossed aside, Rich's mouth found heated nipples wanting...needing to be sucked. As he did so, he ran his hands down the smooth, muscular chest, and the slim belly. He threw Marc onto his back and removed the boxer shorts, a knowing smile crossing his face. Marc could tell the man liked what he saw, a body glowing from the moonlight shining through the open windows. Shadows only heightened the experience, both revealing and covering what was soon to be his.

“Fuck me now,” Marc urged. “Get that damn suit off and fuck me.”

He could tell Rich needed no more incentive, nor further words.

Rising off the bed, Rich went over to the desk, where he draped his suit jacket over the chair. Marc held his gaze as he pulled at his tie, unraveling it with snake-like movements. The tie slithered out of his hands and onto the desk’s surface. Then came the top button of his shirt, followed by the second. With teasing motions that had Marc practically salivating, Rich undid the rest of the buttons and pulled the shirt open. There lay exposed a thickly-furred chest, whirls of black hair covering him from neck to belly.

Christ, Marc thought. He had a big thing for hairy chests and this guy had one of the best he’d ever seen.

But there was more to the show. The pants came off next, and at last Rich slid his shorts and socks off. The impromptu striptease was complete, and from the look of it none too soon. A huge cock, thick like a can and jutting out from a nest of curly hair, practically had him coming right there and then. Marc knew he’d met just the right guy to satisfy his every whim, desire, and fantasy.

Rich climbed onto the bed, his hairy body hovering over his prey. Both men stared at the other, words lost amidst the palpable tension in the room. Good tension, exciting tension. Tension demanding release. Rich leaned over to the bedside table, and from a drawer he withdrew a fresh condom and a small bottle of lubricant. With a quick easy motion he spread the lube over Marc’s tight ass, and then expertly unleashed the condom over his ready member.

At last, he lifted Marc’s legs into the air and positioned himself for a swift, energetic entry. The tip of his cock made initial contact, and with a slight push he deeply entered his waiting ass. He pressed further, further still, until his entire piece of meat had been swallowed

up. Rich gazed down at Marc, who was willing him even deeper, urging him further by wrapping his legs around Rich's hairy ass.

"Fuck me now, fuck me you beast," Marc said, running his hands over Rich's chest, relishing the sexy, downy feel of the thick fur. It was surprisingly soft for such a thicket. "God, I haven't wanted anyone more than I want you. Right now. Take me, take me...uh, uh...oooh."

Marc felt the first touch of penetration, felt his ass expand to welcome the entire length of cock. A sensation of fullness ripped through him. Rich was fully inside him, deeper it seemed than any man before him. Just then Rich began to thrust again and again; he thrust harder, faster, the slick motion eliciting excited groans from the man beneath him. Marc's eager ass took every inch of the thick cock while his hands grabbed at his back, digging into muscular flesh.

Marc could hear their grunts fill the room, virtually taking over from any lingering sound; not even the crashing of waves against the shore could be drowned out by the power of their sex. Rich continued to fuck him, fast and furious. He lifted his body while not losing his edge, continued to pound at the willing ass. Marc reached up, again running his hands through the thick chest hair, grabbing at it.

"Yes, give it to me. Harder, faster. Go man, fuck me...."

As Rich screamed out, a sudden explosion ripped through his body and he bucked once, twice, then a third, and fourth time. Marc felt every move, every thrust, felt the tip of the cock grow inside him, bringing him to his own new height of sexuality. This man, this sexy hairy fucking beast, had been just what Marc needed. With his own cock brushing up against that furry belly, it was just moments later when he too came, a second time for him in just a short while.

Marc felt the weight of the man that collapsed on top of him, the strained breathing, and the racing heart. He struggled for his own lungful. Both of them waited until their bodies had reached a normal level again, and finally Marc looked up and saw Rich staring right at him. Rich leaned down and planted a surprisingly tender, deep kiss on his lips, almost like this wasn't their first time.

In fact, it wasn't.

"Was it like you remember?" Rich asked.

"Better."

"Tell me," Rich said, settling onto his back, staring up at the ceiling.

Marc's body slid in next to him, his fingers playfully toying with chest hair. "The night we met, sure I was attracted to you and wanted to go to bed with you. And yes, tonight was a near copy of our first time, complete with the two martinis and a blow job in the elevator. You wearing a fancy suit, me casual as ever. But even though we had the details right, you still can't recreate that initial passion, not after six years of being together and knowing certain things, expecting certain...feelings. Our first night was all about sex; tonight we did just as we did then but with more feeling. Our cocks weren't the only things in sync, our hearts were."

Rich leaned in, kissed him. "You're good with words, you know that?"

Funny, words chose just this moment to escape from Marc's lips, as though caught by the swaying wind outside and carrying them away. Moonlight fell behind a cloud and Marc suddenly found himself shivering. Not even the heat emanating from Rich's body could help.

"Hey, what's wrong?"

"Just wondering...you know, about this move."

"It's the right move, Marc."

“Wonderland, makes me feel like I’m about to head to a tea party. Is this really where we’re meant to end up? I mean, a tiny town on the Pacific Coast, is it really better than anything that Manhattan had to offer us?”

“New York is over. That part of our life is over,” Rich said, his voice sounding hollow in the darkness.

“Maybe it’s the night; maybe it’s the unfamiliar surroundings. For me, the idea of Wonderland is completely new. You, though, you grew up here, Rich. You know what to expect. Tell me, can you honestly say we’ll be happier here than we were in New York?”

“Marc, do me favor--for a few days? Let’s not have any mention of New York. Why not just enjoy this change of scenery. Come on, admit it, you like what you’ve seen of the town so far. And last I heard, you weren’t exactly complaining about the sex we just had. If those walls could talk, jeez. Tonight, this morning? See, things are already looking up.”

Marc had to admit one thing, the sex had certainly been better here. But then again, it had been practically non-existent for the last year, so right now he’d take anything. Rich’s love-making had been feverish since they’d arrived, almost as though they were newfound lovers, just as they’d re-enacted tonight.

But that was life with this renewed, recharged man. It had all changed the moment Rich came home from work one day and announced he’d lost his job and that they were moving away. Since then he’d been a new man, taking charge of everything. And not that Marc was complaining, especially about their fierce coupling, the truth was he had no real idea what the reason was for the sudden change in their life.

Why exactly had they come to Wonderland? Were they running from something, or to something? Someone?

“Come on, let’s get some sleep,” Rich said, suddenly sounding all formal and business-like. “We have a busy day tomorrow.”

* * * *

“Rich North, is that really you? What a sight for sore eyes. Get over here and give this girl a hug.”

Her name was LeeAnn Lehman, and she came at both of them with open arms and a smile wide enough to challenge the Golden Gate Bridge. Short, dark hair bobbed behind her, and at last her small body encircled Rich. Marc looked on, happy for Rich but also feeling slightly left out. He guessed he’d have to get used to that—at least while Rich played the role of the prodigal son. Marc would play the dutiful, if not scandalous role of lover.

“LeeAnn, you look fabulous, you really do,” Rich said, as they pulled back from their heartfelt reunion. “Business must be booming.”

“Hey, when you dabble in real estate in such a prime location as Wonderland, you can’t help but be a bit successful. People love living Coastside.”

“Dabble? A bit successful? When did modesty become you? Before or after you bought that Porsche I see parked out front?”

LeeAnn laughed, smacking Rich playfully on the arm. “Enough about me, aren’t you going to introduce me?”

“Oh, oh yeah...I’m sorry. LeeAnn Lehman, I’d like you to meet my partner, Marc Anderson. Marc, meet the girl that got away.”

“Yeah, got away because you let me,” LeeAnn said, taking Marc’s hand in hers. “It’s so nice to meet you.”

“Thanks, you too,” Marc said, again sizing up the woman before him. She was pretty but not beautiful, but what she lacked naturally she made up for with a buoyant personality. Marc decided he was silly for having his guard up. This was an old friend, no threat at all. “So, you’re not shocked at Rich’s choice of...”

“What? Lover? Significant other? Hardly. I should know -- I was Rich’s prom date back in the day and, well, let’s just say I wasn’t seeing any action that night. We doubled-dated with my friend Becky and her boyfriend Parker.”

“And how do you know Rich got some?”

“Because Becky and I stood guard over the coatroom while Rich and Parker got it on.” She laughed again, an aggressive sound that filled up the small real estate office. Rich looked on sheepishly while Marc tried to imagine the scenario. “Really, it’s great to see you both, and I can’t wait to show you around Wonderland. It’s a special place and I know the ideal house is waiting for you. We can leave anytime you’re ready.”

“No time like the present, eh?” Rich asked.

As LeeAnn led them back outside the office and into the blinding sunshine of a wondrous Wonderland morning, Marc slipped his hand into Rich’s. “Parker? I don’t believe you ever mentioned someone named Parker before.”

“Jealous? Of someone I made out with once on a gymnasium floor?”

“Not jealous, just curious. I mean, you know all about Dominick.”

“Dominick was your first love, the man you lost your virginity to, and whom you lived with for three years. Parker and I exchanged spit after we’d knocked back a few glasses of spiked punch. Come on, let’s not dwell on the past, we’re here to find our future.”

Funny to find a future in the place which forever held your youth in its memory banks. For now, Marc let it go, and instead concentrated on the task at hand. As they drove through town in their rented Acura, LeeAnn's stories were peppered with "remember the old whatever...well, it's now a whatchamacallit..." and Rich reacted with suitable surprise, as though so much of the town failed to look familiar. But of course it did, because Marc listened to stories about summer nights down by the beach, fall hikes along the rocky shores, and other sorts of seasonal remembrances.

Marc drowned out half the chatter, concentrating instead on the village itself. Located about thirty miles south of San Francisco, just off the Pacific Coast Highway, Wonderland was ideally situated above a series of rocky bluffs, called "the five hills of wonderful views." Folks around here called it Coastside, LeeAnn had said. It had a long-held tradition of isolation from big city life, and thankfully from exploitive commercial development. Wonderland existed in its own time period and went about life at its own pace. Its soundtrack was the warm waters of the Pacific, the receding tide and crashing waves an oceanic symphony.

Just then Marc realized he'd completely zoned out to the point where both Rich and LeeAnn were looking at him. They were stopped at a red light and from their expressions they seemed to be waiting for an answer to a question. Problem was, he hadn't heard it.

"Sorry, guess I got lost in my thoughts," he said. "Seeing the sights of this little town, it's hard to imagine our previous life..."

Rich's eyes narrowed at the mere suggestion of New York.

"Anyway, what were you asking?"

"I was just wondering what you do for a living. I know Rich worked in the finance industry. Is that where you guys met?"

“No, we met at an art gallery. I’m an artist—painter mostly, though I do like to try other mediums.”

“Wow—a creative guy. How did you ever meet a guy who probably worked twenty-four/seven? I mean, I haven’t met many investment brokers but my sense is they don’t hobnob with the artistic set.”

Marc laughed. “Very true. Surprisingly, Rich’s company sponsored a gallery showing—not my work, trust me. I’m small potatoes. The wife of the CEO wanted some exposure and in typical Wall Street fashion they bought their way into an otherwise exclusive world. Artists hate people with money except when that money is used to help the artistic community.”

“And my boss demanded his team players to attend the opening,” Rich inserted. “I went, dreading the entire evening. Thankfully the wine was decent and plentiful. Next thing I know, I’m flirting with this guy who looked like he hadn’t bought new clothes in years and was proud of it. *‘Style is here’* Marc informed me that night, and pointed to his heart. He was refreshing to talk to, no bullshit, and before I knew it we had moved onto the Soho Grand to talk over a couple of martinis.”

“Yeah, and Mr. Big Spender here sprang for a room.”

“Wow—whirlwind,” Lee Ann said. “Good for you guys for taking a chance. You’ve been together ever since?”

“Ever since,” Rich and Marc said in unison.

LeeAnn let out a sarcastic groan. “God, you gays make me sick. These days seems I can’t get past a second date. Though of course most of my friends are gay, so that kind of limits the dating pool.”

“Really, there’re a lot of gays in Wonderland?” Marc asked.

“Honey, given our proximity to San Francisco, it’s a wonder Wonderland ain’t all gay.”

By now they had driven out of the quaint district called “Down Wonder,” the lowest lying part of the village which also happened to be the town center. Small businesses and mom and pop stores populated the streets. Marc couldn’t remember seeing a single chain store, no McDonald’s or Best Buy or Home Depot. When he commented on that, LeeAnn explained that those stores did exist, but outside the zoning of the village proper.

“The zoning committee is very protective of its charters,” she said. “Closer to the PCH you’ll see them—in case you’re craving a Big Mac.”

Marc shuddered at the thought.

“You’ll do just fine here in Wonderland. There’s plenty of originality here. Perhaps too much reliance on Lewis Carroll characters, but that’s what you’re gonna get with a town so named. If you visit the Mad Hatter’s Bar and Grill, they serve beer out of tea cups.”

With Rich driving and LeeAnn navigating from the front seat, Marc just sat back and watched the countryside around them. LeeAnn had mentioned she had a special place she was taking them to, a house she’d already earmarked for them. When they had made the appointment with her two weeks ago, she had marveled at the timing but wouldn’t say anything more. You just had to see the place, and if they liked it then she’d give them further details.

About a mile later, LeeAnn advised Rich to make a left turn and head up the hill. A sign indicating “Historic Wonderland” was just up ahead.

“Oh no,” Rich said suddenly, his face lighting up. “You’re not taking us there...”

“Yup, I am,” LeeAnn said.

“But, those houses have been off the market for...decades.”

“Things change in Wonderland.”

Marc watched the volley between them, growing more confused with each toss. “Uh, you guys want to share? What are you talking about? What houses? Where are we headed?”

Both Rich and LeeAnn exchanged eager looks, like parents ready to spring a spectacular Christmas gift on their child. Marc hated surprises but was intrigued enough to play along for now.

“We’re going to your new home, Marc. Trust me, you may as well start making up mailing labels. Because Eldon Court is just where you guys need to live. Talk about making an entrance back into Wonderland society, everyone will be green with envy. Except of course the guys who already live there.”

“Uh, guys? What is this, some gay enclave?”

LeeAnn grinned widely. “Actually, yes. Not in any segregation kind of way. It just kind of happened naturally, wonderfully. But that’s why we call our town Wonderland.”

Just then the Acura turned a corner and a signpost indicated they had landed on Eldon Court. Marc felt like they just fallen through the rabbit hole. An entirely new world opened up to them. Lining the street stood five of the most spectacular Victorian style homes he’d ever seen. Architecturally they were beyond stunning, with gabled roofs and turrets, wraparound porches, and expansive lawns.

“Oh my God,” Marc said, “which one is ours.”

* * * *

Eldon Court was a short road that came to a dead end at the edge of a rocky cliff. Beyond it laid the Pacific, and gazing backwards you could see the low-lying village. To say the entire setting was picturesque was to give understatement to such a word. Breathtaking was more like it, which proved quite literal the moment they stepped out from the car. Fresh ocean

air filled their lungs but somehow Marc still struggled to catch his breath. He looked around, spun around, drank in the wooded tracts that kept Eldon Court from being visible from the main road, and stared at the lovingly restored homes that lined the western edge of the street. He could only imagine the view from the backyards, clear and endless swatches of sky and sea. Did this place really, truly exist, and if so, how was it that one of these houses was actually available for purchase?

LeeAnn urged them to follow her. "Let me show you which one I have in mind for you."

"Which one? You mean there's a choice?"

"Not exactly," she said, and then said no more.

"Hey, Rich, what's the deal with this place? Obviously you knew about Eldon Court -- the moment she mentioned it you started driving like a wild man to get us here faster. What, are we in competition with someone else? Is she trying to drive up the price? This just strikes me as...odd. I mean, come on, real estate agents don't show you the perfect house the first time out. I assumed we'd be living at the hotel for a couple weeks at least..."

"Hey Marc?"

"Yeah?"

"Too many words."

Marc shut up, but that didn't mean his mind had. He watched as Rich ran to catch up to LeeAnn, wrapping his arm around her as she led him toward the house at the end of the lane. Who was this man? The buttoned-up executive from New York who could appreciate spontaneity so long as it was written on the calendar with two weeks' notice was suddenly like a kid in a candy store knowing he could have any sweet thing he desired. The transformation was hard to believe. Marc had seen Rich through stressful times in their life, shaky financial

situations which had eventually led to complete burnout. Even getting dressed this morning, Rich had forewent the suit and tie look, opting instead for blue jeans and blazer. He looked so handsome and right now, happy too. Marc knew he shouldn't question happiness, but he couldn't help but wonder if somehow their roles had reversed. Which would make him the worrier.

"Hey, slowpoke, come on."

Marc picked up the pace, his feet hitting the gravel driveway. He looked at the "For Sale" sign staked into the front lawn, which suddenly made it all real. Yes, this house was available and if Rich's enthusiasm was any gauge, they would be putting a down payment on the place before you could say "*Welcome to Wonderland.*" Excitement growing inside him, he bounded up the steps and took his place at Rich's side. LeeAnn was handing over the key to the front door and Rich quickly took possession of it.

"Just follow the yellow brick road, huh?" Marc said.

"Wrong childhood fantasy," Rich said.

"Is that what this is, Rich, a fantasy out of your childhood? What's the deal, how is it a house like this is available?"

"Don't be so suspicious, Marc. Now come on, let's go inside and get the first peek at our new home."

"You're that sure this will be ours?"

"Oh, I'm one hundred percent sure."

The address was Number Five Eldon Court, all spelled out, LeeAnn explained. Just a bit of tradition that went back nearly one hundred years when the original builders and settlers wanted to establish their own exclusive enclave. Over the past couple of decades, ownership of

the houses had changed hands several times, but the families who sold them always maintained an interest in who came to take possession of these very wanted properties. LeeAnn further pointed out that Number Five had only come back on the market a month ago.

“You mentioned one of the other houses?”

“Oh, yes, Number Two. No one lives there right now, its owners haven’t decided what they want to do with the house. They live out of the country and have no plans to return to Wonderland, so I’m doing my best to coax them into letting me handle the sale. With the exception of your direct neighbors at Number Four, I’ve been the exclusive agent on these properties.”

“Nice deal for you,” Marc said.

“I’m a native Wonderlandian, and with that comes certain benefits,” she said with a hint of mystery to her voice. “Now, enough chatter. You two have a look around. Take your time, enjoy yourselves.”

They needed no further prodding. Rich slid the key into the rusty lock, and finally the door swung open, and the house emitted a slightly musty scent. Neither of them said anything, they just took that first step into the house and as though on cue, they both let out a sigh of utter satisfaction. A winding staircase greeted them first, an enticement to the upper levels of the house. But before they ventured upwards, they began to explore the main level. The rooms were large and plentiful, with a living room, den, dining room, a kitchen complete with breakfast nook, and off to side of the house, a room that could serve as an office.

“Oh, Rich, this house is huge—so much room for just the two of us.”

“I don’t know about you, but after the three room apartment in Manhattan I’m ready to spread my wings a bit.”

Marc was unnerved a bit at the mention of their previous home, currently up for sale back east. If Rich didn't want to discuss their former life, how come he could bring it up when it suited him?

"Remember last night? Imagine that, but in each and every room of the house?"

Marc leaned in, kissed his lover while caressing his cheek. "Such a sweet talker."

"Come on, let's check out the upstairs."

Marc followed, pinching Rich's ass as they trekked up the creaking wooden staircase. Rich howled with pleasure, and suddenly the two of them were laughing. As though the higher they climbed inside the house, the lighter their heads grew. They came to a landing and began to explore the second level. Three bedrooms, including a master suite that came with its own deck. Rich opened the double set of doors to the deck and at once a strong breeze flew in from the ocean, filling the house with a renewed sense of life.

Marc came up from behind and encircled his arms around Rich's. Together they gazed out at a view that was nearly indescribable. The property's back lawn was large, and came with a hot tub. Beyond was a rocky bluff. They noticed a path cut through the rocks, no doubt leading down to the water's edge. And then there was the ocean itself, which just stretched on for forever.

"Can this really be ours?" Marc asked.

"If you want it."

"I do, I do, I do."

"Nice words," Rich said, leaning in for a kiss. "But let's check out the third level, see what's up there."

They clambered up the staircase which led to the top floor, and that's when Marc's heart truly soared. Upstairs, the walls had been broken down to create one giant room, and a portion of the roof was all glass, showering the room with the brightest sunlight.

"A studio," Rich said.

"An artist's studio," Marc said, wonder filling his voice. "Imagine—the easels, the paints, my canvases all over the walls. It's the most perfect work space imaginable and...Rich...a house like this, so perfect for us and so ideally located, how can we possibly afford it?"

"Just leave those details to me -- it's part of our agreement. You concentrate on your art, I'll handle the finances."

Turning to the man with whom he shared his life, Marc planted the most deeply romantic kiss he could conjure. Rich responded with a sudden burst of passion. They knew they had all the time in the world. LeeAnn was waiting patiently and would completely understand that they got lost inside this great house.

"Fuck me, Rich. Right now," Marc said in between kisses. "I want to feel you inside me, right now."

"Yes, I want you too."

Marc unzipped his jeans and slid them down around his ankles. Then he removed his shirt and tossed it to the dusty floor. He felt Rich's cock suddenly sliding against his ass, felt the cool touch of a tube, and heard the rip of the condom. Like a boy scout, Rich was always prepared.

Using his strong, wiry arms to support him against the windowsill, Marc's eyes focused on the spectacular view outside the window as Rich came at him from behind. With one forceful motion, Rich's thickness was inside him.

"Oh yeah, that's just what I needed...oh Rich...."

Rich fucked him hard and fast, his motions strong and nearly violent. Marc took every inch, groaning wildly with each forceful thrust. He could feel Rich's chest against his back, the thick pelt threatening to leave him rug-burned. He urged Rich on with words and actions and cries of wonder. At last Rich exploded and Marc followed seconds later, and the two held the moment, savoring the sensations and the memory. They wanted to always remember this first moment, this first orgasm within the walls of the place destined to become their home.

Finally they realized they had to return downstairs and let LeeAnn know what they were thinking. No doubt they were flushed and slightly disheveled, but neither cared. As Rich explained as they walked down that beautiful winding staircase, there was a reason she hadn't joined them on the tour.

"Three's a crowd," he said.

Back outside, LeeAnn greeted them with a wide smile. "So, how was it?"

"Perfect," Marc said.

"We'll take it." Rich's announcement was loud, as though he wanted the world to know it. Or at least the other residents of Eldon Court.

LeeAnn nodded her approval. "I knew you would. Welcome home, guys. I know you're going to love it here."

* * * *

They were getting ready to return to Down Wonder when Marc asked if he could stay behind.

“You sure, Marc?”

“Oh, absolutely. You guys deal with the paperwork, I just want to get a feel for the street. You two know all about Eldon Court and Wonderland and everything else that come with living in this town. Give me a chance to explore on my own.”

“That okay with you, LeeAnn?” Rich asked.

“It’s fine. Here, take the key. Rich will come back for you when we’re done. Then we’ll all go have a celebratory lunch and a couple of drinks. What do you say?”

“Sounds perfect,” Marc said.

Not that he was glad to see them go, but he was being truthful about wanting a few moments to himself. Staring back at the house, he tried to let it sink in that this wondrous place would soon be his. His and Rich’s. For the first time since this crazy notion of moving to the West Coast had come up, Marc was finally feeling that everything would be okay.

Marc set off down the street, walking past the other houses that lined it. They were all beautiful in their own right, but Marc was suddenly feeling proprietary about his own home. He walked the length of Eldon Court, noticing that three of the other homes looked alive, filled with life, and for a moment he wondered about the people who lived inside those walls. People, he mused. Men, he corrected himself. He remembered what LeeAnn had said about the other couples who lived on Eldon Court, and Marc realized there would be no worry about a gay couple moving to the neighborhood. Not if all of us who live here are gay. What a strange street, what a strange situation.

As he started back toward Number Five, Marc's feet brought him to a stop before the darkened house that was Number Two. The lawn needed work, and some discarded furniture waited for pick up or decay, whichever came first. This house had a lost look to it, as though it had been abandoned—and abandoned quickly. Yes, Marc thought again, Eldon Court had some mystery to it.

Just then he noticed he wasn't alone. On the steps of Number Four, a man was watching him. Marc might have shivered at the idea of being watched but realized he was being ridiculous; that was East Coast paranoia talking. Really, the man was holding a cup of coffee and reading a newspaper. If either of them had cause for alarm, it was him. Marc was the stranger.

"Howdy," the man suddenly said.

"Oh, uh, hi. How are you?"

The man started down the steps, walking the length of his lawn until he came to the street. Marc took in his appearance. He wasn't overly tall or intimidating-looking, probably five foot nine, had brown hair going to gray. Might have been mid-forties, maybe less. He was in good shape and wore, in addition to khaki pants and a button-down shirt, an affable smile.

"Edgar Newcastle, how do you do?"

"Just fine. I'm Marc Anderson."

The two of them shook hands. "So, you were looking at Number Five, were you?"

"More than looking."

"That so?"

"Yes. My partner and I—Rich is his name, Rich North—we're moving in, I guess."

“Well, well, they finally sold that old eyesore. Guess you’ve got a lot of work ahead of you. Good luck with that. You new to Wonderland?”

“I am. Rich isn’t. He grew up in Wonderland.”

The man nodded. “Well, I hope you both will be real happy here on Eldon Court. Be sure to drop by once you’re settled. Jack and I would be happy to tell you a bit of history about our fair street. Be nice to have some fresh faces on the block.”

“You lived here long, Edgar?”

“Ten years. Jack and I are the longest tenured tenants these days,” he said. “And you and Rich, you’ll be the new boys on the block.”

“Sure, but I don’t think we’ll hold that label for long, not with that other house vacant. Surely that one will go as fast as ours did.”

A shadow darkened Edgar’s face, and he used his coffee cup to disguise it. Then he said, “Oh, I don’t think anyone will be coming to stay at Number Two, not for some time. It’s the only house on Eldon Court still owned by the original family, and even though they’ve moved on, they still haven’t been able to part with the old place. Some memories, you just can’t bury.” He sipped at his coffee again, and then said, “Well, we’ll see you real soon, Marc. Looking forward to getting to know you. You’re real cute, and from what I could hear, your man Rich looks after you very nicely.”

Edgar returned to his house then, leaving Marc, despite the sunshine, slightly chilled. Just what had he meant by those comments, about memories unearthed at Number Two, and also about Rich looking after him? Did he mean that in a financial way, or had he heard something else? Had he heard them having sex in the third floor studio?

Marc took hold of his cell phone and speed-dialed Rich. He got the voicemail.

“I’m ready to be picked up. Whenever you’re ready, I’ll be waiting on our front porch.”

Our porch, he thought, hanging up the phone. He settled on the steps, gazed back down the street, at houses both darkened and vibrant, at the woods that stretched out in front of them, and listened as the water crashed against the rocks below.

For better or for worse, Marc knew one thing. He had a new home, and a new life.
Wonderland, here we come.

* * * *

Moving day took place on the second Saturday of June, just ten days after Marc and Rich had first laid eyes on the house on Eldon Court. The deal had been closed remarkably fast, not that anyone was complaining. Marc, for one, couldn’t wait to move out of the hotel and get on with their lives. Rich had already begun his new job as the assistant manager of the Wonderland Savings Bank, admittedly a step down for someone who had made his fortune buying and selling amidst the crazy world of Wall Street. But that’s what Rich said he wanted, to get back to his financial roots and become more involved in the daily business of his clients. Marc wasn’t one to question. At least, he was still bringing in a paycheck. Unlike himself.

But that was all going to change. After the move, once the studio was set up, inspiration would hit him full force and before long he’d have a creative output that would rival anything he’d ever done. And with a town like Wonderland, divested of corporate nonsense, no doubt there was a tendency toward things cultural. If there was an artistic community here, Marc would find it.

But he was getting ahead of himself. For now, he stood on the porch of Number Five, checking his watch and wondering just where that moving van was. It was eleven in the morning and they had been assured by the company that the van was already in San Francisco. The

drivers would be making their way down the coast that morning. Impatience settling over him, Marc had only himself for company. Rich had gone into town to buy supplies.

See, this is why people smoke, Marc thought. It gave them something to do while waiting to do something else.

Prior to today, they had actually spent very little time at Eldon Court, taking advantage of their vagabond status by enjoying weekend trip to both San Francisco to the north and Monterrey to the south. They had eaten in Chinatown one weekend and watched as the seals played on the rocks while walking the boardwalk and dining on fresh Alaskan salmon during another weekend. Those were special, memorable weekends, and Rich had promised more.

“With the bank job, it truly is one of those Monday to Friday, nine-to-five things you hear about. So our weekends will be ours, and there’s no telling where we can go. It’s a whole new life, Marc, an exciting time for us both.”

A quick check of his watch showed only five minutes had passed since he’d last looked.

A sign of activity down the street caught his attention. The garage door of Number Three was rising, and from within its sealed confines emerged a Jeep Cherokee. He could see the faint outline of two people inside the front cab but otherwise they were too far away to truly get a look at his other neighbors. He’d only met Edgar so far, though truth to tell they hadn’t exactly been visible themselves yet on their new street. That would all change, of that Marc was certain.

He watched as the Jeep peeled off down the road and disappeared around the bend. Its engine could still be heard though, and obviously the two of them were off for a day of adventure. For Marc, it would be a day of unpacking, if the truck ever decided...a rumble down the street broke into his pessimistic thoughts and suddenly there it was, the big moving van that had come from all the way back east.

“Finally,” he said.

As he waited for the van to pull into the driveway, he phoned Rich and left him a voicemail saying their stuff had arrived and it was time to get home and get busy. He smiled at the words he’d just spoken and finished the message by saying, “Home, you hear that, Rich? I said our home. That sounds so good.” He hung up just as the van turned off its engine and the two husky men emerged.

“Richard North?” asked the driver.

“Oh, he’ll be right back. I’m Marc Anderson, his partner.”

Both men glanced at each other, then shrugged. “Okay, whatever. So, you want us to get started? Been a long drive down the coast and we’re eager to put some miles on our trek back across the country.”

“Oh yeah, I’ll help direct what goes where.”

And so it began, the moving of the remnants of their former home into the structure which would form the fabric of their life. For the next hour, Marc acted as a guide, instructing what pieces or boxes went where, whether kitchen or living room, or upstairs to the bedroom. His art supplies, he stated, went all the way up. Under the warm October sun, the men busied themselves, sweating through their T-shirts, their muscles bulging over the heavier objects. Marc had to admit moving day had some nice benefits as these two fit men were quite the attraction.

Apparently, not only for himself. On the porch of Number Four, Edgar had stepped out for his own private viewing. Marc waved over to him and received a friendly wave back. Marc felt good about that, enjoying that sense of neighborhood, even if it was still with the only person

he'd met and not someone new. *Patience*, he cautioned himself, *they were going to be residents of Eldon Court for a long time to come, why rush things?*

Just then another car sped down the street. Marc turned to see Rich's new toy, a 1968 red Mustang, which he'd bought just the other day. With the top down, Rich's dark, wavy hair fluttered in the wind and with sunglasses he looked very nearly like a movie star. *He certainly looked hot*, Marc thought, *Yes, he's hot and he's all mine, and tonight we will christen our house with a long, energetic round of wild sex.*

"Sorry I'm late," Rich said. "But, I was picking up some necessary stuff for tonight."

"Tonight?"

"Yes, for our celebration." Then he leaned over and pressed a passionate kiss on Marc's lips. "Because baby, we're gonna rock this house tonight. I'm gonna fuck you so hard, our neighbors will definitely know we've arrived."

"Oh, they already know," Marc said, taking a backward glance at Number Four.

But Edgar was no longer watching, as though he'd vanished into the famed San Francisco mist.

* * * *

One small detail had not yet been taken care of before moving day: the electricity. The power company had been booked and the soonest appointment was Monday. So for now, Marc realized they would be living in the dark at night. But, as he wandered down the stairs at eight o'clock after a refreshing shower, somehow he didn't seem to mind having no power.

The make-shift living room had been transformed into a place of flickering shadows, with numerous lit candles randomly stationed. In the center of the room, amidst half-empty boxes and the spare pieces of furniture, Rich awaited him on the floor. Sitting not just on the hardwood

floor, but on a flannel blanket. A picnic of gourmet cheeses and breads was set around the blanket. In Rich's hands was a bottle of champagne, which he proceeded to open the moment Marc entered the room.

The loud pop of the champagne cork was like a battle cry, the official announcement that change had come to the house at Number Five Eldon Court. It also signaled a night of romance for them. Marc smiled widely, holding his hand to his chest.

"Oh, Rich...when did you..."

"That's why I was late getting back this morning, I stopped at this amazing store Down Wonder, where they had all these yummy cheeses and fresh crusty bread. I also stopped and picked up a cooler and some ice and...well, plenty of champagne."

"I think I just fell in love with you all over again."

Marc settled down on the blanket, where he kissed his partner. Their tongues entwined and the heat between them rose as Marc felt the roughness of Rich's scruffy face. He hadn't shaved in two days and the prickly beard was hot against his skin. Yes, it was going to be a long night filled with passion. Marc felt his cock begin to swell, pushing against the loose fabric of his pants. As they pulled away, their eyes locked with a mutual passion. They knew they could wait, though, the bubbly awaited them.

Rich poured the crystal liquid into two champagne flutes which he'd somehow been able to find in one of the kitchen boxes. The bubbles danced in the candlelight; Rich and Marc clinked glasses, gave each other one more kiss, and then drank. Maybe it was the cool air coming through the open windows, the fresh smell of the ocean coming off the rocks, or perhaps the sudden lack of stress in their lives, but the champagne tasted light, fruity, and of course intoxicating. They easily finished their glasses, only to quickly refill them.

For the next hour, Marc and Rich enjoyed their gourmet feast, tasting the three cheeses and debating the merits of each: the Brie soft and buttery: the Stilton strong and willful: the Gouda deep and smoky. Along with the freshest bread they'd ever tasted, they fed each other and savored each bite, drinking it all down with more bubbly. They were getting slightly drunk.

Leaning against the pillows, a silly-acting Rich attempted to drink from his glass but it all ended up spilling down his chin and onto his shirt.

"Ooops..." he said. "Whatever shall we do?"

Aha, it was game-playing time, Marc realized. "Oh, here, let your Marc help you, poor thing." Crawling over, Rich wiped the champagne from Rich's jaw, ran the cloth over his neck and began to dab at the shirt. "Oh, I think it may need to soak. Here, let me do this." And just like that, Marc had grabbed hold of Rich's shirt. He tore it open, buttons flying into the corners of the room. Neither cared, this wasn't exactly a new game to them.

"Oh, I think you got some champagne on your chest," Marc said. "We'll need to soak that up, too."

With that, Marc climbed atop his lover, lowering his head to the nape of Rich's neck. With his eager tongue, he licked at the remnants of champagne, enjoying the slight change in taste as the drink mixed with Rich's natural, musky scent. Rich's groans urged him on, lower, where his mouth sought out nipples buried beneath his chest hair. Taking a quick sip from his own glass, Marc swirled the bubbles before again licking those jutting nipples. Rich emitted sounds of intense pleasure, and so Marc continued to lick and to suck, passion overtaking thought. Pulling back up, he gazed down at his sexy lover, at the chest which heaved with pent-up desire. Marc grinned at a sudden thought; he took the remaining champagne from his glass and poured it over Rich's chest, the liquid dampening the thick hair.

“Ooooh,” Rich exclaimed. Marc had hoped the mix of heat from his skin and cold from the bubbly would elicit such a response and he was not disappointed. Bending over, he began to lap up the champagne, his face happily getting lost in the dark thicket. By now his cock was harder than a rock and threatening to rip through his pants. He felt Rich’s hands grabbing at those pants, sliding them down his legs. Marc was headed down, too, his tongue chasing after the delicious trail of hair that journeyed down Rich’s taut belly. Taking the waistband of the pants in his teeth, Marc pulled them down, exposing his great cock.

There, the two of them finally naked and illuminated by the candlelight, they forgot all about the champagne and pungent cheese. They’d found their own form of intoxication, their own food for sustenance. Passion override all sense of time or place, their kisses erupting into a frenzy of feeling and touching, power and desire. Their groans filled the room, wafting up the stairs and out of the windows, caught by the gentle currents of the wind.

In the closing darkness, Rich whispered “Marc, you’re the sexiest, most adorable man...ever. The fact you changed your life for me, came all this way with me...”

“I am you, you are me,” Marc said.

“Yes, you’re right, we are one.”

“Make us one. Let me ride you, babe.”

“You sure...?”

“Shh...”

With Rich laying flat on his back, his cock standing straight up, condom already encasing its thickness, Marc straddled his lover and with a quick motion began to slide his moist ass down around the waiting head. A tightness hit him as the powerful cock attempted a deep entry. With his fingers entwined in Rich’s chest hair, pulling at it for support, he finally opened up fully and

allowed Rich's cock to finally make its way in. He immediately began to buck. Marc slid up on the cock and back down on it with a force he knew was more controlled by the champagne he'd consumed than his own will.

With his eyes closed, Marc moved wildly, his body taking control. He gave himself fully to the moment, with each fierce thrust and his own mounting pressure. He could hear his own shouts of pleasure filling the room, could hear Rich's words, too, urging him deeper, harder, faster.

Just then Marc's cock exploded, with ropes of come shooting all over the black hair of Rich's chest. But he continued to move, continued to fuck his lover, waiting, wanting, for that sensation of an orgasm rocketing deep inside him. Faster he moved, faster still, sweat sliding down his chest and words escaping his mouth.

"Yes, yes, fuck me hard, fuck me now, fuck me forever...yes...."

He felt Rich's orgasm, a powerful quake that nearly shook the house. The massive head of Rich's cock grew, nearly fucking Marc with an energy all its own.

At last Marc allowed himself to open his eyes, and instead of looking down at his lover, he stared out the window. And a quick yelp of surprise came from his mouth. *What was that?* What did he just see there? Something in the window, a set of eyes, the shadow of a face? *What...no, that was crazy...* His eyes were still blurred with sweat and drained with sex, they couldn't possibly have seen what they'd seen...could they?

"Hey, what's up?" Rich asked, rising up on his elbows. "Hello, earth to Marc? Hey, you okay there?"

"Oh, yeah, yeah, sorry. Just...wow, that was intense. God, I can't remember the last time we did that position and I...I guess I just got lost in the moment."

“Come here,” Rich urged, and Marc did as asked, snuggling in tight next to the man who had just made powerful, passionate love to him. Never before had he felt so needed and so loved, so secure...

But that wasn't necessarily true. A chill shuddered its way through his body. Realizing Rich's eyes had closed and that perhaps he needed a nap before they had another round of love-making, Marc stole another look back at the window. This time he saw absolutely nothing.

But had he really seen something there?

And what would that something have been? Only one thing came to mind: a person, watching them in the midst of sex. There were few choices as to who that person could have been.

My God, Marc thought, *What kind of neighbors have we got here on Eldon Court? A voyeur, deliberately spying on them, or was it simply innocent, a random happenstance where the person had gotten transfixed by what he was witnessing.*

Marc reminded himself to double-check the locks and close the windows on the first floor before they went to sleep. Somewhere, out in the darkness of the night—their first night in their new home on a new street in a new town, a person of unknown identity had violated them.

LeeAnn's word echoed in his mind: “As beautiful as is Wonderland, it's a place not without its secrets.”

Marc settled back into the protective hold of his lover, safe for now.

Tomorrow was another day. Tomorrow their new life truly began.

He wondered exactly what awaited them in this place called Wonderland, and just who these neighbors were. Friends, enemies, or somewhere in between? Part of him looked forward

to getting to know them and the other part felt something far more insidious. Quite frankly, Marc feared for everything he held his dear: his home, his lover, his very life.

What next?

PART TWO:

Jack & Edgar

by Curtis C. Comer

In an amazingly short time, a mere month, Number Five Eldon Court sold, and again it was another gay couple who moved onto the quiet street. LeeAnn, the realtor, had called with the news one afternoon that she was showing the house to an old high school friend and his partner, who were relocating to Wonderland from back east. Edgar jokingly asked LeeAnn if she was an agent for PFLAG, and reminded her that there was still one other vacant house on the street. Maybe she would consider bringing in a lesbian couple to spice things up? In the ten years that Edgar and his partner, Jack, had lived on Eldon Court, a total of three other gay couples had moved in, making it their home. The three original families on the block -- the Cummings, the Greens and the Tylers -- over the course of seven years, had decided to move out. The big houses were simply too much for the elderly couples to maintain. After years of living on quiet Eldon Court, Jack and Edgar found that they were suddenly the only family on the street. That was before LeeAnn Lehman took over as realtor and, slowly, the houses had begun to sell. First, three years earlier, Number Three Eldon Court had sold to a young couple named Aaron and Paolo. Two years later, Number One sold, this time to a man named Sawyer, who eventually met and invited Dane to live with him. Ironically, Aaron and Dane turned out to be brothers, a situation that neither Jack nor Edgar could fathom.

Meanwhile, Number Two Eldon Court, still sitting empty and neglected, remained as much of a mystery as ever.

* * * *

He recalled the day the new neighbors came to Eldon Court. With Jack at his Down Wonder yoga studio, Edgar was home alone, working on his manuscript upstairs when he heard the sound of car doors outside. Grateful for an excuse to pull himself away from the troublesome chapter, he stood from his seat and walked to the front of the house to peer out the window. He didn't recognize the car parked next door, but saw LeeAnn walking arm and arm with a tall, darkly-handsome man. Following closely behind was, Edgar assumed, his partner. So these must be the newbies, Edgar thought. The tall one was probably her old high school friend. Edgar let the drapery in his hand fall and walked downstairs to the kitchen to make a fresh pot of coffee. He was slightly envious of the couple next door, his memories of moving into a new house were already ten years old.

Edgar suddenly realized that he hadn't shaved or showered all day and decided to get cleaned up. He knew that a shower might be just the ticket he needed to clear his head, a way to get rid of the writer's block he was encountering. While the coffee was brewing, Edgar climbed the stairs and shed the t-shirt and sweatpants that he usually wore on his day off. In the bathroom, he shaved and hopped into the shower. As he lathered up, shampoo in his hair, he cocked an ear toward sounds coming in through the open window. He quickly rinsed off and turned off the water. Straining to hear better, he smiled, amused to hear that his prospective new neighbors were obviously having sex. He quickly toweled off, with the unintelligible yet unmistakable sounds of sex drifting in the window, and went into the bedroom to get dressed. He chose a blue button-down shirt and khaki pants and went back down to the kitchen, where he poured himself a fresh cup of coffee. He had just walked back into the living room and picked up that morning's newspaper from the coffee table when he heard car doors again. Again, his

curiosity got the best of him and he walked back to the window. The three were standing in front of the house and, for some reason, LeeAnn and the one Edgar assumed was her old friend got into the car and drove away, leaving the third man behind. He looked up and down Eldon Court as the car sped away and then slowly began walking up the street. Edgar tucked the paper under his arm and carried his cup of coffee out onto the porch. The new arrival looked like he might have been in his thirties although, at his age, Edgar was beginning to have difficulty telling the difference between who was in high school and who was actually old enough to be in college. The young man was slim and good-looking, and Edgar watched silently from his spot while he checked out the other houses on Eldon Court. When the younger man turned around and began walking back in his direction, Edgar decided it might be a good idea to introduce himself, and he took a couple of steps down the stairs leading to the front walk. The young man stopped in front of Number Two, clearly marveling at the decay he was seeing. He visibly started when he looked up and saw Edgar standing on the steps. Not wanting to look like some old creep, Edgar greeted him.

“Howdy,” Edgar said, instantly hating himself. *Had he actually said howdy? Was he Jed Clampett?*

The young man seemed not to have noticed and introduced himself as Marc Anderson, explaining that his partner, Rich, had indeed grown up in Wonderland. As expected, Marc asked about the empty house at Number Two Eldon Court. After brief chitchat and a loose invitation for the new neighbors to ‘drop by’, Edgar excused himself and went inside, leaving Marc standing on the street. *Hell, he thought, maybe it will be nice to have another gay couple on the street, after all. Strength in numbers, and all that,* he mused.

When Jack got home a little later, Edgar greeted him at the door with a beer.

“Interesting news,” he said. He had decided not to force his partner into a guessing game, so he came right out with it. “We’re going to have another set of queer neighbors.”

He quickly explained what he had seen as Jack took off his jacket and stowed it in the coat closet by the front door.

“Fresh meat,” Edgar said. He wagged his eyebrows and smiled wickedly at his partner.

“I’m watching you,” retorted Jack, who playfully swatted Edgar’s ass before walking back toward the kitchen.

The truth of the matter, however, was that Jack wasn’t entirely joking. Although he didn’t distrust Edgar, he knew that his partner was only human and he was aware that Edgar still checked out other men with regularity. And that was fine. Hell, Jack did it, too. They were partners, not dead. But Jack would be damned before he would let some hot little twink steal his “Eddy.” That much he was sure of. And, although he didn’t say as much, Edgar had the same doubts as Jack. Gay neighbors could be a good thing, but best to keep them at arm’s length, at least until they get to know them.

Jack felt himself wince. He wasn’t sure how he felt about more queer neighbors. So far, Eldon Court had been a quiet, pleasant distraction, a nice refuge from the meat market that San Francisco had become. He wasn’t too keen on the idea of younger queers moving in and turning the street into a mini Peyton Place with their petty dramas, self-created intrigues, and all night parties. Nevertheless, he was glad that the new neighbors would most likely be open-minded and liberal, at the very least.

That night, over a candlelit dinner in the dining room, he told Jack about his brief encounter with the new neighbor.

“Was he cute?” asked Jack, between bites of grilled salmon.

“I guess,” lied Edgar, taking a sip of wine and staring right into Jack’s eyes. “He looked young.”

Young compared to us? thought Jack. *Or worse, young compared to me?*

Edgar knew what Jack was really asking, and that was “*Did you find yourself wanting to fuck him and do I have to have cameras installed in the house?*” He also knew that the less he said, the better. Jack would meet them soon enough, and then the smallest look or gesture or misstep of any sort on Edgar’s part would be duly noted by his partner and held in reserve for the next time Jack needed any sort of ammunition in an argument. But Edgar understood Jack’s apprehension at having a couple of hot, young gay guys living next door. He felt it, too. They were unknowns, so who knew what they were capable of? And Edgar’s jealousy was just as potent as his partner’s; it was something he had to keep in check for years while living in San Francisco. But Wonderland was different. In the city, he might worry about Jack taking a trip to Land’s End alone or wandering into the cruisy bathrooms at the Embarcadero but, in their home, he never expected any sort of treachery. Here, their home on Eldon Court was all that they had and, if that wasn’t sacred, Edgar didn’t know what was.

The whole thing was too much to think about. Not just the new neighbors, but the whole jealousy thing. Edgar recalled a conversation that he had with a friend, shortly after he and Jack had attempted a three-way with a tourist visiting San Francisco. The sex had been hot, almost fulfilling even. But the next day, he and Jack had decided that they would never take part in a three-way again. They had both been too eaten up with jealousy to really enjoy themselves. They had tried it and it hadn’t really worked; experiment done. His friend, an old college friend and unrepentant club boy, had laughed at what he called Jack and Edgar’s “uptightness.”

“Come on,” he had suggested, “it’s just sex.”

Of course, for his friend Scott, who visited sex clubs on an almost nightly basis and would probably have burst into flames if a guy had asked him to be monogamous, sex was just sex.

But, for a committed couple like Jack and Edgar, their physical couplings weren't just about sex and that was the problem. For them, they were too emotionally involved to completely divorce themselves from sex. For them the very act of sex, no matter how base or kinky, was a supreme act of love. Why else even be in a monogamous relationship without some sort of commitment? Sure, plenty of their friends had open relationships or shared their partners with willing thirds, but not Jack and Edgar. It just wasn't the dynamic of their relationship. With Jack and Edgar there would always be jealousy. Trust, too, but always jealousy. After all, without jealousy wasn't there the underlying message of not really caring?

Edgar was about to suggest to Jack that, really, there was no need for them to befriend the new neighbors if they didn't want to, when Jack did what Jack did best. He grabbed the bulls by the horns.

"We'll have them over for dinner when they get settled in," he announced.

Edgar didn't reply, just nodded his head. They had been together long enough that Edgar knew not to belabor the point. If he acted excited by the idea it would look suspicious, and if he protested the idea, that, too, would seem fishy.

* * * *

Edgar laughed softly at his partner as Jack spied through the window at the most recent moving truck, parked next door. Freddy, their little dachshund who was a new addition to the family, moved expectantly at his feet. Confused by what was going on, Freddy walked back to the bed, where Edgar sat reading.

“Calm down, Gladys Kravitz,” Edgar teased, barely taking his eyes off of the book in front of him, “I’m sure we’ll officially meet the new neighbors soon enough.”

“I’m just curious,” replied Jack, eyeing his partner with a mock coolness. “I mean, what if they’re serial killers or something?”

“Or worse,” deadpanned Edgar, his eyes still glued to his book, “Republicans!”

“Can we just forget about them—for now? You said you met the partner—Marc was his name? He seemed nice, right? So let’s not give them any kind of label just yet. Imagine what they could come up with for us.”

Edgar peered over the top of his book at Jack and smiled. “I don’t dare even think it.”

Jack laughed. He was busy sorting dirty laundry from the hamper in preparation for the trek to the washing machine in the basement, occasionally peeking out at the moving truck. He was clad in a t-shirt and Edgar’s favorite boxer shorts. Even at forty-three years old, Jack was still as hot as the day they had met sixteen years earlier. And, although gray hairs had begun to invade Jack’s otherwise curly, blond hair and subtle lines had started to appear on his handsome face, he still exuded a youthful energy that made his age difficult to guess. With his large, sparkling green eyes and mere five foot, eight inch frame, Jack was still sometimes mistaken for a person half his age, a fact that he was quite proud of. And, although he was finding it increasingly difficult to keep his weight in check, Jack exercised religiously in an attempt to hold middle age at bay. Edgar, who at five feet, nine inches tall was naturally thin and lean, said nothing to Jack to betray any notice of his weight gain. They had been together for too long for him to make that sort of mistake. Besides, it wasn’t as if Jack was letting himself go with no thought to his appearance. He biked, did morning sit-ups, and yoga. As long as he was trying, well, that’s all that Edgar could ask of him.

Edgar, on the other hand, did little to nothing in the way of exercise, a fact that drove Jack nearly to hysterics, not just because he managed to keep thin despite this, but because Edgar refused to quit smoking. In an attempt to keep his partner healthy, Jack did his best to force Edgar to take bike rides with him and, in Jack's role as Walters, made sure that their diets were healthy. One day, he told himself, he would get Edgar to quit smoking.

And Edgar was suffering from the same effects of aging. Every morning, as he shaved, he wondered who the old man in the mirror was. He still felt young, younger than his forty-three years, but the gray hairs and the pillow lines that remained on his face longer than they once had were a distressing development for the otherwise energetic man.

More distressing, however, was the fact that his sex drive wasn't what it once was, and this had become a bit of an issue in the relationship. Jack, who was still as horny as ever, was increasingly put off by his spurned advances and was starting to have serious doubts about Edgar's fidelity. If he wasn't putting out for him, Jack reasoned, then Edgar must have been putting out for someone else. As a result he began to suspect nearly everyone on Eldon Court and the slightest indication of familiarity between Edgar and any one of their neighbors was suspect. Then, too, Jack noted, the culprit could have easily been one of Edgar's young students at the community college where he taught. The idea of fucking the professor for a good grade was hardly a new one. Edgar, of course, vehemently denied any wrong-doing, either at school or on Eldon Court. *Besides*, he told himself, *they still had great sex, just not as frequently as in the past and clearly not enough to suit Jack*. For Edgar, the subject of his diminishing sex drive was a painful realization that he was, indeed, getting older. That morning, however, he was feeling relaxed and frisky and the new arrivals having sex had gotten him worked up. Besides, Jack was so damned hot in those boxer shorts!

“Come here,” said Edgar, putting down his book and patting the bed on which he was lying.

Jack stopped gathering the laundry from the floor and smiled at Edgar.

“What?” he asked, crawling onto the bed next to his partner.

“Take off your clothes,” replied Edgar, his voice almost a whisper.

Without further prompting, Jack dutifully stripped off the t-shirt and boxers that he had been wearing. Edgar duly noted that Jack’s cock had begun to harden, and he let his robe fall open to reveal his own rapidly stiffening cock.

“What now?” asked Jack, a knowing smile on his face.

“Suck it,” instructed Edgar. “Get it good and wet so that I can stick it in your ass.”

Jack took Edgar’s dick into his mouth and began to suck hungrily, stopping occasionally to pay extra attention to the head. The sensation of Jack working on the head of his cock was almost too much for Edgar to bear, and he thrust his hips upward, forcing his stiff shaft deeper into Jack’s throat, gagging him. As Jack sucked his cock, Edgar stroked his partner’s hair.

“Play with your ass,” instructed Edgar, who looked at the mirror on the wall at the foot of the bed. “Let me see it.”

Jack, who dared not touch his own cock too soon, fingered his asshole while he sucked Edgar’s dick, the whole performance being enjoyed by Edgar courtesy of the mirror.

“You want this up your ass, baby?” asked Edgar.

Jack, who was still sucking Edgar’s cock, managed to nod his consent.

“Get the lube.”

Jack arose from the bed, his veiny cock pointing to the ceiling, and walked to the armoire where they kept their lube and sex toys in a drawer. He returned to the bed and coated Edgar's cock and his asshole with the slick lubricant.

"You want to ride it?" asked Edgar, teasingly.

Jack nodded his head, his lips red and swollen.

He straddled Edgar and slowly inched down on the massive cock, pulling back twice in order to comfortably accommodate his partner's fat dick. Finally, he inched down onto it like a pro, letting the entire shaft fill him up, as he groaned with pleasure. Edgar tugged at Jack's nipples, which were erect, and thrust his pelvis upward, filling Jack even more with his swollen dick. Jack inhaled sharply, letting Edgar know that he had touched the spot, that Jack was getting a fuck that he would feel for two days. Pre-come dripped from Jack's stiff cock as he pumped his ass on Edgar's dick. Edgar suddenly arose, lifting Jack up and flipping him onto his back. He pushed Jack's legs back so that his knees were almost resting on the bed and pounded his hole with a vengeance, thrusting the stiff shaft deeper still into Jack's willing ass.

"Oh, fuck," he groaned, his thrusts faster, "I'm gonna come."

Jack quickly stoked his own erect cock, catching up to Edgar, and the two blew their loads simultaneously. Breathless and his heart racing, Edgar collapsed onto the bed next to Jack. When they had both caught their breath, Jack kissed Edgar softly on the lips.

"I love you," he whispered.

Edgar may have been the occasional pain in the ass, but he sure knew how to fuck. Take that, new neighbors. The "old guys" on the block still had what it took to rock the block.

* * * *

Edgar Newcastle and Jack Fish had met in San Francisco the year that Bill Clinton was elected president. Both men had migrated to the west coast from small Midwestern towns in the late 1980s -- Jack from Indiana and Edgar from Kansas -- and both were from large families. Edgar, four years out of college, was working as a writer for the *San Francisco Chronicle* and Jack was working in product development for a small import company downtown. They had met over drinks at a local club, a set-up courtesy of a mutual friend, and their attraction for one another had been immediate. After dating for a year, and fucking almost nightly, they finally found an apartment together, one perched high atop Nob Hill across the street from the famed Fairmont Hotel. Both already in their mid-twenties, they had initially encountered the typical obstacles of two polar opposites coming together under one roof. Although there were the classic arguments regarding house cleaning and bill payments, their passion for one another somehow helped them navigate the precarious waters of early cohabitation.

They had already been through the initiation of being single and gay in San Francisco, so neither could have realistically claimed virginity when they met. So they each brought to the relationship a sexual intensity that made for mind-blowing sex. They fucked everywhere they dared; on the beach, in Golden Gate Park, in parked cars, in stairwells, even once in a movie theater. And, through this intense sexual interaction--or maybe because of it--they became something more than lovers; they became best friends. To their circle of friends, both gay and straight, they were known as Jack and Edgar. Not just Jack or just Edgar, but Jack and Edgar, as if they were an inseparable unit or Siamese twins. And, in many ways, they were; neither man could ever fathom being without the other. Far from being the product of co-dependency, there was something about their union that both men had craved all along, even when they were younger and busy fucking or getting fucked by everything that moved in the Castro.

For Edgar, this need for intimacy stemmed from his strict upbringing and the lack of a father, who had deserted his family when Edgar was only a boy of six. Edgar knew this of himself but thought it was all textbook bullshit that he chose not to dwell on, having, in his opinion, moved past it all a long time ago. Instead he did his best to be a good partner to Jack. Besides, to him, underlying issues with intimacy or not, he truly did love Jack, and wasn't that all that was really important?

Jack, on the other hand, simply loved Edgar for who he was. Sure, Edgar's moodiness sometimes pushed Jack to his limits, but there was intensity in Edgar that seemed to draw Jack to him. Edgar's raw sexuality, coupled with an almost childish naiveté for the world made for a sexually potent aphrodisiac for Jack, who disliked anything or anyone he found boring or commonplace. In fact, Jack viewed Edgar as a challenge -- almost. Not a challenge as far as maintaining their relationship but, rather, a challenge to bring out all of the good that Jack knew existed in his beautifully flawed partner. Jack never professed to be perfect, either, far from it. Born the youngest of six children, Jack was thoughtful, caring, and intelligent. But he could also be petty and, having been brought up as the baby of the family, was used to getting things his way. As a result, it was unlikely for Jack to admit when he was wrong, a condition that made communication between him and Edgar sometimes difficult. Fortunately, their arguments were rare but, when they happened, an angry silence fell over the apartment that usually lasted a day. Despite these differences, they remained loving and faithful, each doing his part to take care of the other and, as the years passed -- five, ten, fifteen -- each man grew. And because of the personal growth that often only comes with age, their relationship had grown stronger, as well.

* * * *

They lived in their Nob Hill apartment for six years before deciding, half-heartedly, to leave San Francisco for Wonderland, just a short drive south. The real estate market in the city was out of control and even their combined salaries weren't enough to purchase the type of home they really wanted. After viewing an exorbitantly over-priced shoebox of a house out near City College (which, in their opinion, wasn't even in San Francisco,) they decided to look elsewhere. It was on a weekend drive that they had accidentally found Wonderland, an out of the way stop on the way to the beaches near Mendocino, and an easy mistake to make, given the winding roads often devoid of street signs. They had turned onto Eldon Court, a dead-end street lined with Victorians, completely by mistake. By the time they saw the sign reading "Street Not Through," they had no choice but to drive to the end of the small block and turn around where the road ended against a rocky cliff.

That's when they saw the house, a two and a half story Victorian with a witch's peak and white picket fence. An unlikely sign on the lawn announced that it was for sale and, after exchanging the briefest of glances--one that spoke volumes--they stopped the car to poke around. Although the house was painted a garish mixture of pinks and purples, an unfortunate circumstance of the "Painted Ladies" as the Victorians were referred to, the men were instantly charmed by the immaculate details of the house. A sign on the front door indicated that they were standing on the porch of Number Four Eldon Court. While Edgar peeked into windows set back off the wide front porch, discovering hardwood floors and at least two fireplaces, Jack went around back to find a medium-sized yard which contained, among other things, four rose bushes. Beyond that was a sweeping vista, which afforded a breathtaking view of the Pacific. There was a detached garage, as well, a luxury nearly unheard of in the city, where they were forced to park in a courtyard in front of their own building. A closer inspection of the other houses on the

small, tree-lined street revealed that they were all much the same, although there were no outward signs of their inhabitants.

After a brief conversation, they had decided to call the agent, whose number was listed on the sign. Amazingly, for a Sunday, she had answered and agreed to meet them at the house and was there in fifteen minutes. As she emerged from her brown Mercedes, Jack and Edgar were immediately at ease with her bohemian appearance. She appeared to be in her thirties and wore a white, gauzy top and a loose, flowing skirt, adorned with a floral pattern. The whole outfit seemed to be held together in the middle by a ridiculously wide belt and on her feet she wore Birkenstocks. Her blonde hair was a curly mess, which she attempted to keep in check with the use of what appeared to be a man's necktie, and she looked more like someone that you would encounter on any street in Berkeley, not sleepy little Wonderland. She smiled warmly and introduced herself as Lauren Healy. That she didn't blink an eye at the fact that two men were interested in the house which was clearly a non-issue for her, instantly endeared her to them.

As she showed them through the house, Lauren inquired nonchalantly regarding their jobs while expertly pointing out the home's amenities. The house was far too big. Who, Edgar wondered, really needed a living room and a sitting room on top of a formal dining room? And, on the second floor, were four bedrooms really necessary? The third floor consisted of one, large unfinished attic, but large enough to store the car if need be. Of course, the house needed some updating but was otherwise in excellent condition.

Edgar could see that Jack was in love with the house the minute he saw the large, airy kitchen that led out onto a sunroom. He stepped out into the backyard while Jack and Lauren chatted about built-in cupboards. The yard, verdant with trees and flowers and filled with fluttering butterflies, felt comfortable. He gazed out at the view of the Pacific, the sea air fresh

and pungent. He turned and looked up at the house. Yes, she was a beauty, he thought, but do we really want to live in the suburbs, in Wonderland?

Edgar walked back into the kitchen just in time to hear Jack extolling the virtues of gas stove.

“What are the neighbors like?” blurted Edgar, interrupting the conversation.

“Next door,” replied Lauren, pointing to her right, “at Number Three Eldon Court, are the Cummings, a very nice couple in their sixties. And, up the street at the first house,” she continued, pointing in the other direction, “are the Greens. I think they must be in their seventies.”

“What about the others on the block?” pressed Edgar, who remembered at least five houses on the street.

“Well, let’s see,” replied Lauren, tapping her forehead. “The Tylers live on this side of you at Number Five. I think they have three kids.”

“Trick-or-treaters,” offered Jack, enthusiastically. Lauren smiled and nodded encouragingly.

“Vandals,” retorted Edgar, who instantly hated himself for sounding so stodgy.

“The last house, Number Two Eldon Court” continued Lauren, ignoring Edgar’s comment, “is empty. Nobody knows if the owners, who live in Europe, intend to sell it or not. It’s been empty for about a year or so.”

Satisfied with Lauren’s answers, Edgar walked back into the living room and looked out onto the quiet street as Jack continued exploring the kitchen with the agent, their footsteps echoing through the empty house. The scene outside the window was so fucking bucolic, so Mayberry, R.F.D., that Edgar wasn’t sure if he could stomach living in such a tame place. Then

again, there was something so peaceful about the street and it made Edgar feel oddly domestic, as if the house had been waiting for them. For the briefest of seconds, Edgar imagined a Christmas tree in the living room and a fire roaring in the fireplace. Jack and Lauren's footsteps on the stairs snapped him from his reverie and Edgar reached in his pocket for the keys to the car.

* * * *

In the end, they had taken Lauren's card and a spec sheet and thanked her for her time. She promised to be in touch, and the house was the only thing that Jack could talk about during their drive back to the apartment on Nob Hill. Edgar smiled and nodded, interjecting when he could. Fireplaces and a yard would be nice, he agreed. Still, there was a nagging doubt in the back of his mind about leaving San Francisco. What were the locals like? If Lauren had been any indication, they would be fine, but to Edgar, the absence of any visible human beings on Eldon Court that morning could only have meant one thing: they were all probably at church. The last thing that Edgar wanted to deal with was moving to a town where his neighbors all hated him and where, at any moment, a rock could be thrown through the window or a cross might be burned on the front lawn. Hell, they could have stayed in the Midwest for that shit.

And the town itself, while charming, took the name Wonderland to the extreme of corniness. The town center, known to the locals as "Down Wonder", had businesses that played off the "Alice in Wonderland" connection; there was a bar called "Mad Hatter's Bar and Grill" another called "The Rabbit Hole" and a jewelry store called "The Looking Glass." To Edgar it was awful but Jack, true to form, found it quaint and charming. Besides, they would still be in California, he had argued, and close enough to San Francisco that they could visit regularly. Edgar had only grunted a reply, knowing that Jack was right, as usual.

That night, their lovemaking took on a sudden urgency, as if their time in the apartment was suddenly limited, and so Edgar fucked Jack in the kitchen, their boxer briefs pulled down around their ankles and Jack bent over the kitchen island. Later, as they lay in bed, with Edgar's defenses gone, they decided to put in a bid on the house. Though he was still harboring his doubts about leaving the city and their friends, Edgar agreed and promised to call the bank first thing in the morning. To his consternation and Jack's delight, their offer was accepted and a closing date set.

* * * *

Within a month, having gone through the process of the house inspection and final walk-through, they found themselves saying good-bye to their old apartment in the city. In a symbolic act typical of their relationship, Edgar surprised Jack with a candlelight dinner on the roof of their Nob Hill apartment building. As they dined on take out, delivered by their favorite French restaurant on Bush Street, Edgar offered a toast, lifting his wine glass.

"Here's to change," he said.

"Change," echoed Jack, lightly touching his glass to Edgar's.

Jack regarded his partner's face for a moment, sensing the lingering doubt that Edgar was doing his best to hide.

"It's going to be great," Jack finally managed. "We're going to live in that great big beautiful house."

Edgar smiled at his partner's enthusiasm.

"As long as I have you, I'm fine," he said, embarrassed that his insecurities were always so goddamned obvious.

Jack put his wine glass down on the small card table that they were using and rose from his chair. He knelt in front of Edgar and took his hands, gazing lovingly into his eyes.

“You’ll always have me, baby,” he promised. “No matter where we end up, we’ll always be together.”

Edgar leaned forward and kissed Jack on the mouth, softly at first, and then harder. Jack yearned to feel Edgar inside of him, and pulled his partner down to the gravel roof. Though it was rough on his elbows, Jack didn’t care. There was only one thing he wanted and he wasn’t afraid to ask.

“Fuck me, Eddy,” he whispered, an urgency in his voice. Jack didn’t care, either, that there was a chill in the air or that they might be seen by guests in the highest parts of the Fairmont Hotel across the street, he only wanted Edgar.

Edgar quietly laughed and glanced up at the Fairmont Hotel, looming above them.

“Fuck them,” Jack whispered, and began tugging at Edgar’s belt as he kissed his neck.

Edgar, in turn, began to tug at the buttons on Jack’s shirt, eventually working his hands inside and caressing Jack’s hairy chest. Edgar reached inside Jack’s now-open jeans, freeing his erection. He ignored this however, knowing that what Jack wanted was to be fucked, and took him by the hand and helped him to his feet.

He led Jack around the small building that housed the stairs to the roof. There they were at least partially obscured in shadow, and he pushed Jack’s face against the cool metal wall and pulled down his jeans, exposing his bare ass. Edgar lowered himself to his knees and began to lick Jack’s asshole, darting his tongue in and out of the tight hole. Jack moaned softly, his boner pressed against the cold metal of the shelter.

“Fuck me, baby,” he whispered. “Fuck me with your tongue.”

Edgar, who had the fly on his slacks unzipped, was slowly stroking his own erection as he continued to rim Jack, shoving his tongue deeper into the tight asshole. Edgar quickly stood and spit onto his boner, which was still poking out of his open fly, and tapped it against Jack's ass.

"Give it to me," begged Jack.

Edgar could taste Jack on his tongue, was heady from the scent of Jack on his face. He spit again on his erect dick and pushed the head against Jack's moist hole, still wet from the rim job. He felt Jack tense up as the head of his dick penetrated the soft flesh.

"Relax, baby," he whispered, his breath hot in Jack's ear. "You can take it."

Jack, his heart pounding, eased back onto the stiff, hot shaft.

"Fuck," moaned Edgar, the tight asshole gripping his hard dick. "That feels so fucking good."

Jack arched his back, pushing his body farther onto his partner's tool until he could go no further.

"Fuck me hard, Eddy," he whispered.

Edgar willingly obliged, grabbing onto the back of Jack's shirt for leverage. He fucked Jack hard and the sound of their flesh slapping together echoed on the rooftop.

"Fuck," Jack groaned, "I'm coming."

"Not yet," protested Edgar, but the spasms of Jack's asshole tightening around his cock sucked his own cock off, and he shot a load in Jack's ass.

Spent and panting under the full moon, on the roof of their apartment building, it was a fitting goodbye to their time on Nob Hill.

* * * *

They managed to completely furnish the new house, filling it with the belongings they had collected over the years and with frequent trips to antique shops up and down the coast. In no time they transformed the old house into their own home and took advantage of their newly gained space by fucking in every room possible. Within a few days of moving in, they even managed to meet their new neighbors who, as Lauren had pointed out, were nice, older couples. Mr. Green, a man of sixty-five and a World War II veteran, had brought over a pie, which had been baked by his wife, Sarah. He stood six feet tall and had a full head of thick, white hair. He welcomed the new neighbors warmly, offering his assistance for any work they might need done around the house. If he was uncomfortable with two gay men living next door, his face didn't betray it. The other neighbors, the Cummings, he explained, were considering selling their house so that they could move to a retirement community, something they would do once they felt that their house was too much upkeep for them. The family with the kids, the Tylers, he said, mostly kept to themselves, though rumor had it that the father worked for one of the airlines. As for Number Two Eldon Court, the empty house with the owners in Europe, Mr. Cummings only shook his head. If there was a story there he wasn't telling it, but his face darkened at its mention.

"A real shame," was all that he offered, before excusing himself and returning to his own house.

* * * *

Within a year of moving to Eldon Court, Edgar resigned from his post at the *Chronicle*, taking advantage of planned staff cutbacks and a generous severance package. He had tired of the commute, anyway, no matter how short, and took a job as a literary professor at the local community college just outside Wonderland. It was the ideal job for him, as he only worked

three days a week -- Monday, Wednesday and Friday -- and he hoped to use his newfound free time to work on an idea he had for a book. The premise of the book was based on dirty politics at City Hall using information culled from his experiences while working at the *Chronicle*. The history of California politics while, at times ground-breaking and progressive, was littered with dirty money, dirty elections, dirty land deals, and even murder. Edgar loved doing research, had contacts all over the state, and knew that his proposed book could blow the lid off centuries of dishonest politics. He threw himself into the new project with gusto, spending any available free time in front of his computer, on the phone with contacts, or in San Francisco interviewing erstwhile insiders. Jack, happy to see his partner so excited about a project, gave Edgar a wide berth while he was working and threw himself into redecorating the house.

Jack, too, had resigned his position at the import company in downtown San Francisco, and took money from his saving's account to open a yoga studio in a vacant storefront Down Wonder. Though his gamble had been a financially risky one, Jack's willingness to meet new people had quickly earned the studio clients, mostly bored housewives and students from the community college where Edgar taught. In a shameless display of pandering to the town's fascination with everything Wonderland, Jack named the studio "King of Hearts Yoga Studio."

"Get it?" Jack had asked, grinning. "Yoga's good for the heart."

"I get it," replied Edgar, shaking his head. "It's corny as hell, but I get it."

* * * *

Fortunately, there were no bricks thrown through their windows and no flaming crosses placed on their lawn. The little hamlet of Wonderland, whose main industry was fishing and whose claim to fame was that Alfred Hitchcock had filmed brief outdoor scenes for a movie there in 1963, had seemed to quietly, grudgingly perhaps, accept the new transplants. Though the

topic of Jack and Edgar's sexuality was never raised in their presence, the general consensus was that all would be fine as long as everybody minded their own business, and this arrangement was fine with the new inhabitants of Eldon Court. They lived there quietly for several years and the block remained relatively the same. They seldom saw their neighbors, and the empty house at Number Two Eldon Court remained empty, though someone occasionally came to mow the lawn and once, paint the exterior. Years passed, with Edgar quietly passing his time teaching literature at the local college and Jack teaching yoga at his studio downtown.

To Jack's consternation, his and Edgar's visits to San Francisco slowly became fewer and fewer, with Edgar protesting the "long drive" and "the traffic. He was slowly becoming more and more of a homebody. Each night he would go straight home from work, only occasionally venturing out for a beer or dinner in the town center, but never willing to stay out long. It was an existence Jack hadn't foreseen, and he blamed their lack of a social life on Edgar's long-unfinished manuscript.

Fate took an odd turn, however, when, after two years of hard work, Edgar suddenly put his manuscript away unfinished. At a loss as to why his partner would suddenly shelve such an intriguing project that had seemed to be going so well, Jack pressed Edgar for a reason. Edgar had simply stated that he was missing too much information and it was clear to Jack that he would have preferred to let the matter drop altogether. To Jack, however, this was a non-reason, especially for someone like Edgar, who had always been so fond of research.

He searched his brain for a reason, and secretly suspected that it had something to do with a phone call Edgar had received one night that had reduced him to yelling at the person on the other end of the line. As he was in the office with the door closed, Jack had been unable to hear what was actually said. Had Edgar been scared away from something? Unwilling to press

the matter further and anger Edgar, Jack finally stopped pushing. The unfinished manuscript remained in the locked file cabinet in the office upstairs for eight years when, suddenly, Edgar pulled it out and dusted it off. Choosing to take the cautious route, Jack said little, but was secretly happy to see Edgar back at work. Although Jack was happy that Edgar was working on it again, and had shown support for the renewed effort on his partner's part, he didn't ask why, after eight years of letting it languish in the file cabinet, Edgar had decided to revisit it. Some things, he knew, were better left alone. Maybe the new neighbors, who had just moved in to Number Five Eldon Court, had somehow given Edgar the drive he needed to work on something outside of teaching. Jack didn't understand how this could be, but accepted it as a possibility.

* * * *

A week after the arrival of Rich and Marc, Edgar was enjoying one of his days off. As Jack prepared to leave the house for his yoga studio, Edgar settled in front of his computer, his recently resurrected manuscript in front of him. Jack leaned over to kiss Edgar goodbye as he pulled on a light jacket.

"Get a lot of work done today," he offered, kissing Edgar on the lips.

Edgar grunted and looked at the mess on the screen in front of him. His book, unlike fine wine, seemed to have worsened with age. He stared at the manuscript, entangled in a quagmire of pointless sentences and lost thoughts. He knew that he was still missing important information key to the development of the book. He appreciated Jack's encouragement, however, and this alone forced him to sit at the computer and work. Jack, who had taken upon himself the thankless task of editing Edgar's work, felt that the story was rife with potential, and did everything he could to assist his partner in his work. It was for this reason, even when filled with

self-doubt that Edgar had resurrected his unfinished manuscript. That, and there was a story that needed to be told, no matter how unpleasant.

With Jack gone for the day, Edgar poured over his notes, usually hastily scribbled on small pieces of paper that became lost in the pockets of his sports coat. Amazingly, though, there was order to this seemingly disorganized mess and Edgar managed to bang off four pages in a relatively short amount of time. As usual, he worked for about an hour before getting up to go outside for a smoke break. It was a bad habit, he knew, but the break helped him clear his head and regroup his thoughts. He gazed up the quiet street as he exhaled a blue cloud of smoke. A slight breeze off the ocean stirred the tops of the pine and eucalyptus trees that dotted the landscape. Edgar was extinguishing the cigarette in a small bucket filled with sand, kept on the porch just for that purpose, when the phone rang. He walked into the house and freed the phone from its charger.

“Hello.”

Edgar’s gruff, no nonsense approach to answering phone calls drove Jack nearly crazy but, to Edgar, a phone call was important, with no place for niceties or false pretense. State your business and get on with it, was Edgar’s mantra. He had driven more than one telemarketer to tears, and he had no intention of changing.

“Hi, Edgar,” came the reply. “It’s me.”

The voice of the man on the other end of the line was familiar, and it brought a smile to Edgar’s face.

“I’ve been wondering when you’d call,” said Edgar. “I’ve been waiting.”

“You have my number,” the voice said, “unless you lost it.”

“No,” laughed Edgar, fishing in his pocket and extracting a piece of paper that held the number in question. “I still have it. But you know I can’t call you from here.”

“Can you come to the city?” the man asked.

“Yes,” replied Edgar. “I really need to see you. Jack’s at work all day.”

“Good,” replied the man. “Meet me at the usual place in half an hour?”

“Fine,” agreed Edgar.

The next day Jack had found one of Edgar’s little pieces of paper left uncharacteristically lying on the table. On it, written in Edgar’s firm hand, was a man’s name and a San Francisco telephone number. Although he didn’t recognize the name, Jack realized that it could have been anything. Someone from the college or maybe something connected to Edgar’s book. His omnipresent jealousy, of course, compelled him to ask, which he did over dinner with an air of thinly-veiled nonchalance. Edgar had known that Jack had found the number, had known that it was only a matter of time before the question would be asked. He tried, unsuccessfully, to mask his irritation when Jack brought it up, assuring him that it was only a contact at San Francisco City Hall that was helping him with a new angle on his book. Jack nodded but, to Edgar’s disbelief, pressed the matter.

“Who is he?” he asked, busying himself with the pork chop on his plate.

Edgar dropped his fork onto his plate with a clatter.

“Could you just trust me for one minute?” he asked, rising from his seat.

“Where are you going?” asked Jack, alarm on his face.

“Outside for a cigarette,” snapped Edgar, “if you don’t mind.”

Jack rose from his own seat, tears forming in his big eyes.

“I’m sorry, Eddy,” he said, catching Edgar’s arm as he attempted to pass. “I just get so jealous.”

Edgar, who had stopped in his tracks when Jack caught his arm, turned and kissed Jack lightly on the forehead. “It’s nothing to worry about, really,” and he then walked out onto the porch.

* * * *

The next day, Jack and Edgar took a walk to the cliffs overlooking the Pacific and made their way down a sheer rocky slope, carefully inching along makeshift walkways to the beach below. It was a well-worn path that they had used many times but it was dangerous. Edgar imagined that, without knowledge of the twists and turns in the gnarled, wind-blown rocks, a newcomer could easily lose their footing and be dashed to death on the jagged stones below. But he and Jack were fit and sure-footed and, even with a hefty sea breeze whipping their hair and clothing, agilely made their way to the beach below. The wind drove the sea against the rocks and the mist thrown off made the air heavy with salt and the pungent odors of rotting sea creatures, large and small. Seagulls hovered in the air above them, held aloft by the currents, and their screams occasionally drowned out the roar of the ocean.

The sun was high in the sky when Edgar took Jack by the hand. They began walking north, toward their favorite spot, a collection of gigantic boulders that rested in a circle, forming a private hiding place from any prying eyes that might have been on the beach. To Edgar, the gigantic stones, which were tossed into their position as if they were marbles, were a potent reminder of the power of the sea. It was both frightening and exhilarating to imagine. They scaled the familiar stones and dropped into the middle of their hiding place, a flat, sandy nucleus where they spread out their towels. Jack plopped down on his towel and began pulling lunch,

grapes, cheese, crackers, and bottled water from his backpack. Still standing, Edgar began to strip, pulling off his t-shirt and then his khaki shorts.

“Aren’t you going to get comfortable?” he asked, still standing.

Jack squinted up at Edgar, the sun in his eyes.

“It’s still partially shaded here,” he said, grinning. “Sit down and eat some lunch.”

“I’ve got your lunch,” teased Edgar, wagging his meaty cock in front of Jack.

“Mmm,” agreed Jack, putting aside his bottle of water. “What you’ve got looks better than the lunch I brought.”

Without further prompting from Edgar, Jack began to disrobe, quickly discarding his clothing on the ground beside him. Blood coursing to his cock, he knelt in front of Edgar, and took Edgar’s swollen cock in his mouth.

Edgar had always enjoyed fucking on the beach, both here at the foot of Eldon Court and the numerous times they had visited Baker Beach beneath the Golden Gate Bridge. For him, there was something so liberating about fucking in the open air, under a bright sun and with the ocean just feet away. And, of course, there was the major turn-on that they could be caught, that they were doing something that was technically illegal.

Edgar tugged at his nipples as Jack expertly sucked his dick, taking great care to work on the head and then surprising Edgar by completely swallowing the massive boner.

“Fuck that feels good,” said Edgar. “You like sucking dick, don’t you, baby?”

Although Jack could only reply in the affirmative with a muffled grunt, he knew that the question had merely been rhetorical. Not wanting to blow his load too quickly, Edgar suddenly pulled his cock away from Jack and pushed him down onto the outstretched towels. They kissed with the same passion that they had felt the night they met, sixteen years earlier, their tongues

darting in and out of each other's mouths. His right hand blindly fumbling to find the backpack, Edgar finally managed to locate the bottle of lube he had brought. Though such an act might have been viewed as premeditated, the fact that they were going to the beach that day practically dictated that Jack and Edgar would fuck. It was what they did.

Edgar looked into Jack's eyes and smiled.

"You want my dick, baby?" he whispered.

Jack nodded. *Of course, I want your dick,* he thought. *You know I want it.*

Edgar kissed Jack's neck and his erect nipples and began working his partner's asshole with his fingers. Jack groaned and lifted his muscular legs, allowing his partner better access. Edgar, beyond excited at this point, was a little too liberal with the lube but managed to work two fingers into Jack's ass. Pre-come had begun to pool on Jack's stomach just under the head of his stiff cock, and Edgar coated his own dick with the slick lubricant.

"You ready, baby?" asked Edgar, his cock throbbing in his hand.

But, before Jack could reply, Edgar's cock was already pushing its way inside of him and the sensation nearly drowned out the sound of the ocean.

"Fuck, yeah," he gasped, as Edgar's rod penetrated deep inside his ass. "Use my ass."

Edgar lifted himself up onto his forearms and pounded Jack's ass with the agility of a gymnast on a pommel horse. He could feel the overhead sun warming his back and ass, a feeling nearly as intoxicating as the act of fucking. He expertly rolled Jack onto his side, lifting his partner's left leg and slowly guiding his cock in and out of Jack's open asshole. The friction created by the head of his cock rubbing just inside Jack's asshole caused Edgar's nuts to draw up.

"Fuck, baby," he whispered, "I'm gonna come."

As he unloaded his nuts in Jack's ass, Jack let his own load shoot across the towel. Edgar collapsed panting at Jack's side, and the two men kissed for a very long time. When they were done, the sound of the ocean returned and Jack sat up to resume his lunch preparation.

"That was nice," he said, passing Edgar the cutting board that held cheese and crackers. Edgar smiled sheepishly and took the offering without comment. After their light lunch, Jack lay back onto his towel and closed his eyes. Edgar remained sitting, with his legs tucked up under his chin. He turned and looked at his beautiful partner, who he knew was probably drifting off to sleep. The combination of food, sex, and sun had always been a sleep-inducing combination for Jack. Edgar smiled. They were truly fortunate. In their sixteen years together they had shared so much, from the deaths of Edgar's mother and Jack's father to buying their first home together. Edgar tenderly touched Jack's curly hair, which was shiny in the bright sun. What would he ever do without his Jack? Edgar stood from his spot and peered out at the ocean. A sailboat rode the waves a few miles out, but the beach itself was devoid of any other human beings.

Just then, he noticed a shadow cast onto the sand just to his right, a shadow that appeared to be the head and shoulders of a man somewhere on the cliffs above them. He was turning to peer up the cliff when a boulder, at least two feet in diameter, came crashing down followed by a cascade of smaller stones. Edgar darted toward Jack, throwing himself across him in attempt to protect him. Fortunately, the boulder landed with a thud in the sand just outside the rock enclosure and the only debris that landed inside was smaller pebbles. Startled, Jack asked what had happened.

"I think somebody was on the cliff," Edgar explained, visibly rattled.

"Watching us?" demanded Jack.

"I think so," stammered Edgar, who had begun to quickly pull on his clothes.

Jack followed suit, hastily throwing their belongings back into the backpack.

“Did they throw rocks at us?” asked Jack, glancing warily up the face of the cliff.

“Not rocks,” said Edgar, climbing from their hiding place. “That rock.”

He pointed to the boulder resting in the sand.

“Did you see him?” asked Jack.

“Just a shadow...in the sand,” replied Edgar, absently. His head was racing. Had the boulder been shoved in an effort to hurt them? An accident? And, worse, would the culprit be waiting for them at the top of the cliff? The two men scaled the hill, using the familiar path, each lost in their own thoughts.

Could it have been one of their new neighbors, or was it merely kids from Wonderland having a little fun at their expense? As open-minded as the citizens of Wonderland seemed to be, Edgar was sure that there were people there who would never approve of them. But hate them enough to kill them? Edgar shuddered at the thought. The one thing he knew for sure was that their favorite spot on the beach was now off-limits, its location no longer their little secret. Another troubling thought occurred to Edgar; what if what had just happened was connected to his unfinished book and his newfound questions?

As they neared the top of the cliff, Edgar was relieved to see that nobody awaited them, but he stopped where he imagined their would-be assailant must have been standing. A large hole in the ground marked the spot where the boulder had been dislodged, meaning that it hadn't been moved without effort. Still, someone who may have been watching the action on the beach below might not have realized how much pressure they were putting on the boulder, and the weathered earth on the side of the cliff could have easily already been eroded by the wind. He looked around on the ground in search of any other evidence of the mysterious visitor but found

nothing. Satisfied that they were no longer in any immediate danger, Jack and Edgar continued up the path and onto Eldon Court.

* * * *

Two days later, Edgar settled back down in front of the computer to work on his manuscript. Jack had gone to work at the yoga studio that morning and Edgar sat working and drinking cup after cup of coffee. He was just refilling his coffee cup when the phone rang.

“Hello?” he said, picking the phone up from its charger.

“Edgar?” asked the familiar voice on the other end of the line. “I have to see you, today.”

The urgency in the voice mildly irritated Edgar, but he did his best to keep his voice calm.

“I can’t today,” he replied. “Jack will be home in a couple of hours. He found your number.”

“Big deal,” was the reply. “It’s really important that I see you. Vital.”

“It’s important to me,” countered Edgar, irritated, “that Jack doesn’t get mixed up in this. I want to keep him out of it.”

“He’s already involved,” said the caller, “because you’re involved. You know that.”

Had that statement been meant as a threat? Edgar dared not ask, and so finally he agreed, his defenses worn down. The less Jack knew, the better.

“Fine, I’ll be there as soon as I can,” he finally managed before hanging up.

What next?

PART THREE

Aaron & Paolo

by Adam Carpenter

“So, what do you think, should we host?”

“Host what?”

“A party? To welcome the new neighbors.”

A sigh could be heard in the darkness of the room. “Don’t Edgar and Jack usually do that? I mean, they did it for us. As the elder statesmen of Eldon Court, it’s their role.”

“Yeah, but it’s been over two weeks since Rich and Marc moved in and so far Edgar and Jack haven’t stepped up. I think it might be time for us to take over anyway. Those old bitches have been around here for so long, I think they take our little street for granted. Me, I’m thrilled to live here and I want to make sure those new guys feel welcome. So, what do you think?”

“As long as I don’t have to plan anything, I guess its fine by me.”

“Way to commit.”

So went a typical discussion in the household at Number Three Eldon Court, where Aaron Walters and Paulo Bautista circled around what wasn’t being said. *Don’t bother me with dumb things, I’m busy.* That’s what Aaron was really saying. Paolo knew to swallow these comments. Aaron might not like what he was proposing but he knew he wouldn’t stop him from the planning and execution.

Nightfall had come to Wonderland, and on the upper floor of their home -- the smallest of the five Victorian's which lined the street -- the only sound that could be heard above Paolo's quiet tones were the waves crashing against the shore. Bedtime had called to them, as Aaron had an early morning meeting and could ill-afford to be late for it or too tired to focus on its agenda. This was why he was giving Paolo the "whatever" treatment.

The lights were off with just a shade of moonlight streaking through the window and Paolo's eyes had adjusted to the darkness and could focus on the man he loved. His eyes were half-open, the lids sliding quickly toward sleep. He gazed at the man's strong features, cheeks and jawbone, and at the full lips he'd only just moments ago kissed goodnight. He felt a familiar stirring, in his heart and his groin; he always did at this time of night, when Aaron was at his most peaceful, free from the day's stress. Paolo knew how lucky he was to have met such a man, both sexy and smart. How he wanted to just reach out and...well, do more than just touch him.

Conflict tore at him. With Aaron's important meeting tomorrow, sleep came first and foremost. But it was only eleven o'clock and Paolo was more a night owl. One thing they did insist upon in their relationship was that when one was ready for bed, so was the other. They needed the closeness of their bodies in order to fall asleep. Paolo let his own chocolate brown eyes drift down over Aaron's hot body, noticing how the gentle light seemed to illuminate his contours perfectly. The surprisingly tiny, tender nipples, the stubble from where he'd shaved his chest hair. Impulse took over and Paolo leaned over, his tongue encircling first one nipple, then the other. A slight groan came from Aaron; he didn't push his lover away.

Paolo knew he'd been given the go-ahead. He knew what he was to do, what Aaron was up for.

Sliding the covers all the way down, Paolo exposed Aaron's long cock, watching as it sprang into action. Running his tongue against his lips, he prepared himself for his specialty. Aaron loved his blow jobs; the first time they'd had sex, when Paolo had finally brought him to climax, Aaron had said, "You do that whenever you want, which means whenever I want." They were often in agreement about when whenever was, and now was one of those moments.

Paolo took the sensitive head into his warm mouth and heard Aaron's instant groan of desire. With one sweep of his arm, Aaron ran his hands through his thick dark hair; a sure sign he was turned-on. He loved touching himself as much as he loved being touched. Paolo knew what stroked his lover's imagination, and that was to take the entire cock deep down his throat. Positioning himself above his man, he slid down past the head, taking in inch after inch of the shaft, finally coming to a stop at the base, where a trimmed patch of pubic hair tickled his nostrils. With gentle, easy motions, Paolo's mouth and tongue worked wonders on the engorged penis. Pre-come leaked out, and Paolo quickly slurped at the delicious taste. He wanted more and he continued to suck.

Heavy pants began to erupt from Aaron, his strong chest expanding as he sought air. Just then Paolo took a finger and slid it underneath, winding its way to the ass. It snuck between the cracks, again feeling prickly stubble. Aaron was a naturally hairy guy who had recently decided he didn't wish to be, and the spa at the hotel where he worked gave him complimentary waxing services. For now, though, Paolo forged ahead as his finger slid inside the welcoming ass. He pushed more, as though his finger was his cock and he was fucking him.

With Aaron's breath growing short, Paolo knew he was close. He inserted a second finger, then a third, and continued to pound at the lovely ass all while his mouth never gave up its capture. Aaron began to squirm on the bed, happily horny. Paolo knew he was getting ready

to blow. He kept up the finger fucking, increasing the speed with which he sucked that impressive cock.

“Oh...oh...yes...that...”

“Mmm,” Paolo said with a mouthful of cock.

“Now, oh yeah, baby...now...”

Paolo felt the head thicken, felt the veins in the shaft grow, felt intensity about to give way to power. He thrust once more with his fingers, swirled his tongue again around the tip, and just then Aaron’s cock erupted with a thick, generous helping of gooey come. Paolo sucked it, swallowed it, and savored the taste upon his tongue and on his lips.

“Oh, wow, Paolo...you...that was...I need to...you”

“It’s okay. Go to sleep, rest easily now. Don’t fret about the meeting. You’re in good hands.”

“And good mouth.”

Paolo slid his naturally brown-skinned body against the tanned skin of his sexy lover. He kissed him once on the lips and noticed the kiss went unreturned. Sleep had already claimed Aaron.

Getting up from their king-size bed, Paolo padded into the bathroom and sat down on the commode. His cock was suddenly rock hard. From a metal tin beneath the porcelain sink he removed a magazine and began to flip pages. He found the spread he wanted. Two hairy men with monster, veiny cocks, sucking and fucking each other and getting off in various positions. One man wore a thick goatee and damn if it didn’t look sexy; the other man had the muscled body of an Adonis. Paolo imagined himself a third member, engaging in the acts depicted in the photographs, and with his mind taking off, he began to jerk at his own cock.

Five minutes later, his come spurted all over his hand. A drop of it dripped onto the magazine and for a second, Paolo indeed felt he was part of that fantasy. Then he cleaned up, put the magazine away, and rejoined his lover in their bed of reality.

* * * *

Sunshine beamed down on the late morning. Paolo felt his body stir beneath the blanket, realized he was coated in sweat. The cool night temperatures had given way to a fresh wave of warmth, creating one of those special mornings that made living in coastal Wonderland such a joy. Paolo jumped out of bed and quickly threw himself into the shower. The clock said it was nearly eleven; Aaron had been gone for nearly four hours, which made Paolo feel incredibly lazy.

Refreshed after the shower, he dried off and brushed his teeth. Then, staring at himself in the mirror he realized he needed a shave. Laziness had definitely set in, now that school was over and he was free of teaching for the next couple of months. So he grabbed the shaving foam and soon had run the razor beneath his chin. A glob of foam fell to the floor, causing Paolo to look down. His eyes zeroed in on the magazine rack and his thoughts turned to last night, to the pictures of the men and his private jerk-off session. An idea popped into his mind and for a second he waited to consider it; the jutting of his growing cock sealed the deal though. He felt sexy already. He finished shaving, but he'd intentionally left his chin and upper lip stubbled. In a couple more days, he'd have a nice goatee going. He decided he liked it, something new for summer.

Tossing on shorts, t-shirt and flip-flops, Paolo went downstairs to the kitchen, where he found coffee in the pot and a note taped to the counter. As he heated the coffee, he read the note: "Thanks for last night. You want a party, let's have a party. Love, Aaron." A smile spread

across Paolo's face. He knew just what he'd be doing today, and it would all begin with his new neighbors.

He finished the coffee, then headed out the front door of Number Three Eldon Court. The lawn needed mowing, that's what he noticed first. Probably the pool needed a cleaning, and a few other items would have to be taken care of if they were going to host the summer's first event. But all that could wait, for now he walked down the length of Eldon Court, feeling the sun burning against his skin. He already had good color thanks to his Hispanic heritage, but that didn't mean he couldn't smooth out the lines later today.

As he approached Number Five, he noticed one of the new neighbors sitting on the porch with his feet up and a sketch pad in his hands.

"Hiya, neighbor," Paolo said from the street, waving as he did so.

"Hi."

"Mind if I stop over for a sec?"

"I'd love the company."

Paolo approached the porch, leaped up the steps two at a time. He shook hands with the cute guy, noticing he wore very nearly the identical outfit. During summer in Wonderland, pretty much everyone looked the same. "I'm Paolo. Paolo Bautista. I live at Number Three."

"Marc Anderson. Nice to meet you."

"Sorry it's taken so long to come over, but it's the end of the school year and there were a lot of details to take care of. But it's summer now and..."

"No problem. My partner, Rich, and I—we're from New York, we're used to not knowing our neighbors." Then he laughed, an inviting sound that gave Paolo a grin.

“Well, this is Wonderland, and more importantly, this is Eldon Court. We like to know who lives next door. In fact, that’s kind of why I’m here. You and...Rich, did you say?”

“Yeah. He’s at work right now, otherwise I’d go grab his ass from inside.”

“That happens a lot on Eldon Court, ass-grabbing,” Paolo said, emitting a quick laugh, realizing perhaps sexual innuendo wasn’t the wisest course of action. He didn’t want to give his new neighbor the wrong impression that he was some kind of perv. But then again, he did say “partner,” so it can’t come as much surprise that Eldon Court was one big homo haven.

“Anyway, Aaron and I—Aaron is my other, not necessarily better half—he and I were thinking of hosting a party, maybe even this weekend. So we can all get to know one another. Jack and Edgar from Number Four will be there, I’m sure, and as for Sawyer and Dane down at Number One, I’ll have to see. They’ve been away for a few weeks, not sure when they’re due home. In any case, what do you think -- will you and Rich be around?”

“I’ll have to check with Rich, but I think we’re free. When are you thinking? Evening?”

The beautiful sunshine and gentle breeze gave Paolo an idea. “Actually, how about afternoon? We have a great Olympic-size pool and we can swim, work on our tan lines, and pour some bubbly or daiquiris or whatever. If the party goes into the night, so be it. Not like any of us have to drive.”

“Sounds great. Let me check with Rich and I’ll let you know. Should I call you later?”

“Nah, just stop by anytime. The summer is all mine now, so I’ll be around. How about you, do you work?”

Marc pointed to the sketch pad. “I’m a painter. The top floor of our beautiful new home is slowly becoming my studio. Right now I’m just working on some ideas, before I waste paint and canvas. I’ve shown a few of my pieces in New York but I’ve never had enough for a show.

Perhaps when I've got a few more paintings, I'll start looking around at some galleries up in San Francisco."

"Why up there? You should try the gallery Down Wonder."

"Oh, there's an art gallery in town?"

"Sure. The Healy Gallery. Maybe one day next week you and I can head into town to have lunch, and we can stop by the gallery."

"I'd love to, thanks for coming by, Paolo. We wives, we've got to stick together, huh?"

Paolo grinned widely; he was glad of Marc's suggestive comment. "Here on Eldon Court, you mustn't assume, Marc, that just because our men go off to work at their important jobs that we just bottom with the best of them. My Aaron, he just loves it up the ass. Oh, sorry, was that too much information? Really, don't be shocked. There are very few secrets in Wonderland."

* * * *

"Oh my God, yes, Aaron, fuck me harder. Be mean to me, hit me, slap my bad ass, that's what I want, that's what a bad boy like me deserves. Ow...ohhhh."

God, this guy was a piece of work. Mother issues? Daddy issues? Wet his bed until he was eighteen? What? Whatever had happened in his long-ago youth, he was one messed up guy. With the harness hanging from the ceiling, his feet in the stirrups, and his bony ass on display, he was captive to the sexual position before him—as well as to the sexual deviance deep within his mind.

Aaron Walters shoved his long cock deep inside that waiting ass, hard and eager, just the way the man wanted...demanded. He thrust and thrust harder, his heaving groans like bad written dialogue. He was playing a part, doing just as the director -- and co-star -- wanted. Film

analogies, he decided, weren't helping matters. Because if this was actually being filmed, well, it wasn't anything Aaron would want shown to the public. For him, this was a job and he didn't want anyone finding out about it. Most of all, Paolo.

"Mr. Walters."

Aaron realized his mind had been drifting, and as a result his body had stopped what it had been doing.

"I'm not paying you to think, Mr. Walters. I'm paying you to fuck."

"Sorry, Mr. Converse."

"And what did I tell you? I hate all that disgusting chest stubble. We make an appointment, you make good and sure you're good and ready and that means smooth. If I need to increase your spa treatments, I will. Edna downstairs loves to smother bodies with her magic wax. Look at me!"

Indeed, Mr. Converse hadn't a hair on his body; nor his head, either. And Edna down in the hotel's spa, my God, she must be of German descent the way she liked to inflict pain.

"Sorry, Mr. Converse. Won't happen again."

"Enough talk. I've got an important meeting in a half hour, and I don't feel sufficiently naughty yet. Where's that whip, I've been bad...talking to you that way when all you do is please me. Yes, that's it...whip my back, slash at my ugly body..."

It went on like that for the next twenty minutes, with the paying party making his filthy demands and Aaron fulfilling them like a robot, a drone, albeit one with a hard body and a long, pleasing cock that thankfully had a mind all its own. It could fuck for as long as Mr. Converse wanted, leaving Aaron's brain free of any culpability. Finally, after nearly an hour of not touching his tiny penis, Mr. Converse ran a hand over the head and come shot forth onto his

belly. Aaron followed suit, having held it back as long as he could. He felt orgasm approaching, and as was Mr. Converse's want, Aaron slid out, quickly removed the condom, and spurt all over the man, two loads of jism mixing. It was as personal as things got between them.

Ten minutes later, with ten crisp hundred dollar bills in his pocket, Aaron watched as the older man dressed in his expensive suit while cradling his cell phone. "Yeah, yeah, I know, what the hell reason you think I'm paying you? I want results. If it takes occupying that last house, then so be it. If it gets the desired result, then it's all worth it."

Mr. Converse then waddled out of the hotel room. Aaron turned the lock on the room, pondering the old man's conversation and then dismissed it as business talk that was none of his concern, and began the process of cleaning up after the morning's perversion. , He put the harness, whips, and chains away in a wall safe until next time.

Dressed in his white shorts and tight knit shirt, Aaron returned to the hotel lobby, where he took up behind his desk. He wiped the brass plate, his fingers savoring the words. "Aaron Walters. Assistant Manager of Customer Relations." He always laughed at the irony of that title, since his job description was more one of employee—er, employer—relations.

How had this all happened?

He'd always worked in the service industry—at restaurants, spas, and at a number of hotels. Originally from Los Angeles, he'd gone north ten years ago at the age of twenty-five, just after the shocking death of his parents. The inheritance they'd left allowed him a bit of freedom, which gave him some choices about what next to do with his life. He'd met Paolo in Seattle. He was working at a winery during his summer hiatus from teaching. Aaron was on a wine tour with his brother, Dane, and a few of their friends, and had taken a liking to the dark-skinned pretty boy. With a white smile that gleamed brighter than the sun, Aaron had been

hooked. A dinner invitation and night of thrilling sex, had only sealed the deal, and not just for Aaron. Paolo had also been seeking something more permanent. They'd combined forces, figured out their next step, and one day had stumbled upon Wonderland on a drive down the coast. They'd started out on a wine tour; but they'd ended up going house-hunting. Eldon Court had called to them. They moved -- lock, stock, and lube.

The Bayside Hotel was the lone seafront resort in Wonderland, and realizing he needed to do something with his life, if not for income than for his mental health, he'd applied for a job. He got a simple check-in position, but in two years time had made the transition from desk duty to a more proactive, guest-friendly job. He loved it, and the customers loved him. His favorite spot was, of course, the pool, and the guests certainly appreciated his presence. Men and women alike were drawn to the handsome man with the affable smile and great body. He resisted all offers; he was loyal to Paolo.

And then things changed, practically overnight. The Bayside Hotel changed hands, as the original owner left and sold it in the wake of a controversial divorce. The desirable property had been bought out by a stranger to Wonderland, a man who even today still refused to make the town his home. He lived some seventy miles away with his wife and children and fortune. He stayed three nights a week before commuting by helicopter back to his Carmel home. Oh, and when in town, he liked to get fucked, and Aaron was his latest victim...choice.

Their arrangement had begun four months ago. Who doesn't need additional money, especially with Paolo's teaching job not paying as much as it had up in the Pacific Northwest. Buying the Victorian on Eldon Court had cost a pretty penny, draining a huge portion of their life savings. Aaron didn't want to see it dwindle any further; the last thing he wanted to do was lose their dream home. So he'd given in to Mr. Converse's requests. He had to fuck the old pervert

until he felt as bad about himself as Aaron did. The difference was that Mr. Converse liked to feel bad, felt it emboldened him in business.

“Hey, Aaron—you with us?”

Aaron looked up, realizing he’d been day-dreaming. Standing before him was a weasel named Bart Hendricks. He was Mr. Converse’s snitch.

“Oh, hey, Bart. Sorry, mind’s trying to solve a problem.”

“Well, you’ve got plenty of time for thinking in an hour. Mr. Converse, he’s made an appointment for you at two o’clock.” Bart, fucking weasel, then smiled like one. “With Edna.” As he walked away, Aaron could hear his chuckling.

For the first time since coming to work for the Bayside Hotel, Aaron Walters decided he hated his job. But what to do about it? How desperate was he to get out? He wondered what he was capable of. And if Paolo would ever be able to forgive him?

* * * *

Saturday rolled around quickly and all the plans were in place for the party. They would be six, since the youngsters Sawyer and Dane were still away. Edgar and Jack were both excited about the party, and grateful that they didn’t have to plan it. Rich and Marc were eager for it as well, since this would give them a chance to truly feel settled on Eldon Court. The only other guest expected was LeeAnn, since this world of Eldon Court was all her creation.

“Great, just the bump I need in my social life,” she’d said over the phone when Paolo invited her. “To hang around with a bunch of gay guys.”

“In swim suits,” he’d reminded her.

“Sounds like an orgy waiting to happen.”

Paolo thought about those words now, just an hour before the party was scheduled to begin. They'd been blessed with a gorgeous day, temperatures hovering in the low eighties, bright sunshine and nary a cloud in the sky. The wine would be flowing and they would all be parading around in shorts and swim trunks or maybe just Speedos, so there was no telling what could happen. Not that Paolo really expected any dirty stuff. Edgar and Jack weren't exactly their type, and if nothing had happened yet in the three years they'd known them, it wasn't going to start today. Rich and Marc were another story—they were definitely an attractive couple, but who knew whether they had an open or closed relationship. Paolo and Aaron were solid, had never wandered astray. Still, a little touch and tickle never harmed anyone, and that new neighbor Marc certainly was touchable and...tickle-able.

His thoughts were interrupted by the sound of footsteps coming down the stairs. There was a shirtless Aaron in his board shorts. His chest was perfectly smooth and tanned. Paolo himself had already donned his bathing suit, nothing too revealing but complimentary nonetheless. Together, he thought they looked great, the picture of health and happiness, ready to impress the neighbors. Aaron embraced him and kissed him deep on the lips.

"Everything looks great outside—the tables and chairs and food, the drinks bar. You did an amazing job," he said, again kissing him. "Sorry I was such lousy company this week. Work just isn't the same anymore since the buyout."

"The party was a great distraction for me. What else did I have to do, watch my hair grow?"

"Speaking of, this goatee of yours? Hot."

Paolo ran a hand over the dark fuzz on his chin. He had to admit, he kind of liked it too, and in the course of the passing week it had come in nice and full. He kissed his partner, his

tongue probing inside his mouth causing the heat between them to go from a simmer to an instant boil. They kissed as they moved into the den, and seconds later they had shed their clothes. Both of their cocks bounced with excitement as they pressed against the other's leg.

Paolo turned his lover around and told him to give him his ass. He bent down and began to run his tongue along the smooth crack. The bristles of his goatee caused Aaron to let out a thunderous moan.

“Oh, I love how that feels...yes, lick me and eat me. Give me that sexy goatee...”

Lapping at his lover's ass, Paolo felt his cock twitch. His tongue probed deep, licking the puckered hole, sliding inside. He could see Aaron's hand in motion, jerking at his cock, pulling it and encouraging it to spit its juice. Paolo dug in deeper, brushing his goatee deep inside the waiting crack. Aaron moaned again, louder and louder still.

“Oh, fuck...yes...take my ass.”

Just then Paolo took hold of his cock and urged it deep inside Aaron's ass. He began to fuck him from behind, thrusting fast and hard and deep. His breathing was short; he could feel orgasm fast approaching. Paolo continued to push deep inside his lover's tight ass. He heard Aaron's groan, felt his ass constrict as his lover shot his load into his hand. Paolo knew he was close, too, so close and...

...that's when the doorbell rang.

“It's us!” came a sing-song voice from the porch.

“Oh, shit...oh shit...oooh,” Paolo exclaimed, a mix of surprise and passion overwhelming him as he came, shooting far and deep into his lover. He panted, trying to catch his breath. He quickly pulled out. “God, why are Edgar and Jack always early...hang on guys, we're coming!”

* * * *

Thirty minutes later, the party was in full swing.

On the heels of Edgar and Jack's premature arrival had come Rich and Marc, and the six men all shook hands, embraced, smiled and said how glad they were to finally meet and have a chance to get to know everyone, and then all the guests were escorted outside by their hosts. Paolo beamed as they all remarked on what a nice spread had been laid out, and he quickly showed them around the patio, the pool, and the magnificent view of the Pacific, all while Aaron tended bar. The blast of the blender let them know that the first round of strawberry daiquiris was ready. With drinks poured, the six men raised their glasses.

"To summer," Paolo said.

"To new friends," Marc said.

"To new opportunities," Rich added.

"And welcome changes," said Aaron.

The four of them looked sideways at their two other guests, waiting for their toasting input. Finally, both Edgar and Jack spoke at the same time, and not surprising for a couple who had been together as long as they had, said, "To Eldon Court."

Plastic tumblers clinked and they all drank. They all agreed that Aaron had mixed up a mean daiquiri and to "keep them coming." The party was just getting started.

"Guys, really, feel at home here," Aaron said. "Go for a swim, bathe in the sunshine, eat and drink whatever you like. There's no pressure here—and don't worry about overstaying your welcome. Eldon Court parties have been known to go long into the night."

With the ice broken, the group began to realize they didn't all need to sit in one circle and have one conversation. It was time to mingle and get to know one another. Paolo realized,

though, he'd had to take the first initiative when it came to their inhibitions. At the moment, none but he were in their swim trunks, all of the guests having arrived in shorts and shirts. Even he and Aaron had thrown shirts on to welcome their guests, but with the combined effects of the alcohol and warm air, Paolo felt sweat begin to bead on his forehead. So he decided he would be first in the pool.

He shed his shirt, proudly showing off his fit body.

"Oh, the party really has started," Rich said. "Skin has made its first appearance."

"No one's stopping you, Rich," Paolo said.

"Fine, race you to the diving board."

As Paolo made fast work of the challenge, he watched as Rich trailed after him, tossing his shirt aside and running up right behind him. *Nice*, he thought. Rich was happy-go-lucky, ready for the moment, and clad only in his shorts, damn sexy. With a chest covered with thick black hair and a trim furry tummy, Paolo experienced a moment of envy for Marc. Getting to sleep next to this guy, to have sex with him, Paolo's mind could only imagine. He stole a look back at his own lover, at Aaron and his plucked body, it made him wistful for a time gone by. But Aaron didn't notice -- he was too busy chatting up Edgar. Marc and Jack had made their way to a pair of lounge chairs, drinks in hand.

Just then Paolo heard a splash.

"Hey..."

"You snooze, you lose," Rich said from the pool. He dove in when Paolo hadn't been watching.

Paolo dove into the deep end, his body swishing through the surface of the water, only to come up just inches away from Rich. He felt a stirring in his loins despite the fact that he and

Aaron had just had sex an hour ago. But this guy was really sexy and Paolo would have loved to reach out and grab the guy's cock. He resisted though, swimming away in an effort to get his erection to subside. It didn't help matters that Rich swam over to him, and the two of them ended up hanging out on the edge of the pool.

"Paolo, where are you from originally?"

"All over. Venezuela, mostly. But Mexico and some time in Barcelona. I have family there."

"Sounds nice. I'm strictly an east coast guy, so this life of all-around sunshine is new to me."

"Well, you're pretty tan then, considering."

"I've been working on it a bit since we arrived, hanging out in our backyard."

"Sorry I missed the show," Paolo said.

"Yeah, some show, a corporate drone like me sunning himself."

"Right, Marc mentioned you used to work on Wall Street?"

"Now I'm just a simple bank manager. Offering mortgages and loans to needy folk, back to basics. I've always been a money guy, not a creative bone in this body of mine."

"Creative or not, it's a nice body."

"Yours too," Rich stated.

Their conversation was interrupted by Edgar, who decided to join them by dipping his legs in the pool. He wore a flowery button-down t-shirt and shorts, and though summery-looking, there was something buttoned-up about him.

"You got lucky with the weather, Paolo, I heard we've got a rain storm headed our way tomorrow night."

“Oh, I love when it rains hard,” Rich said. “Staying inside, arms wrapped around each other for security. Leads to some memorable nights.”

Edgar nodded, and Paolo grinned. But he was really distracted suddenly by such a thought, of thunder clapping down over Eldon Court with Rich and Marc huddling tight under the covers as their fears gave way to passion. Paolo imagined Rich hovering over his lover, getting ready to insert what he guessed was a nice thick cock. Seconds later it wasn't Marc playing bottom but Paolo himself. Such thoughts! Didn't he and Aaron have a healthy enough sex life? *Yeah, that's why you jerk off to dirty magazines after he goes to bed.*

“Edgar, what line of work are you in?” Rich asked.

“I teach literature at the local college,” he said.

“Oh, so you have the summer off, too, just like our host, Paolo.”

“Actually, no. I do a couple summer courses, keeps me busy—and keeps up the income. I'm also working on a book.”

“Really? What's it about?”

Edgar seemed to hesitate. “Corruption. Politics, mostly. Still figuring out the real angle. Maybe it'll be a bestseller. Secondary income would be great, these houses on Eldon Court, they don't come cheap.”

“That's for sure.”

Aaron had joined them, swimming up behind them. Paolo watched as his lover stood up in the shallow end, the water cascading off his hard body. The effect was nice, but still he found his gaze returning to Rich.

“No offense, Aaron, but I wondered how you guys could afford this beautiful Victorian when one of you is a teacher and the other works at a hotel. What’ve you got, rich folks?” Rich asked. “Sorry, that all came out wrong...but you know what I mean...”

Aaron waved him off. “No offense taken. Fact is, my folks died in a car accident many years ago and left a pretty nice fortune to my two brothers and me. I don’t have to work, at least for not for awhile, but having a steady check helps us with the little things—pool parties and such. Besides, I like to work, and the Bayside Hotel has its share of benefits and luxuries.”

“The Bayside is where Marc and I stayed before we moved into Eldon Court. I think I might have seen you around...what is it you do?”

“Whatever the customer wants,” Aaron said.

“Sounds intriguing,” Edgar said. “Service industry, indeed.”

Paolo actually saw Aaron blush beneath his tan. *What was that about?*

“Actually, the Bayside has a lot of services to offer, not just for its customer but for all the residents of Wonderland. Rich, you should try the spa—they’ve got a great masseuse, and if you ever think of trimming down that chest of yours, Edna has a nice gentle touch with her wax. Look at me, pain-free.”

With that, he displayed his powerful chest, smooth like a baby’s bottom. He ran his hands over the taut skin, suggestion in his eyes.

“Uh, I heard that,” a voice proclaimed from the lounge chairs. Marc leaned over, a second drink in his hand. “You’re not turning my hot guy into some hairless twink, not on my watch!”

“I agree, Marc, Rich is a sexy guy with that hairy chest.”

Paolo looked again at Rich, where he noticed Rich looking directly at him.

All the guys laughed, and Aaron had no choice but to shrug. Paolo, though, in the midst of his amusement had to wonder if there was something deeper behind Aaron's suggestion. As though he were looking for a fellow comrade among the group.

The party then shifted gears as Aaron began grilling swordfish and salmon, both of which had been marinating for hours. The pungent smells wafted in the air, enticing them with a promise of a luscious, wondrous meal. With conversations in full swing, Paolo took a rare opportunity to wander down by the cliff's edge, where he could look out over the blue water. As much as he loved the pool in the backyard, nothing beat swimming in the warm Pacific, its churning water and foamy broth.

"We're quite lucky, aren't we?" he heard.

Marc Anderson had approached from behind, placing a hand on Paolo's shoulder for effect, for comfort.

"Eldon Court is a pretty amazing place to live. I'd hate to think if we had to give it all up."

"Why would we have to do that?" Marc asked.

Paolo shrugged. "Oh, I don't know. Just imagining the worst, I guess."

"Well, I just moved here and I'm getting comfortable. I'm not going anywhere."

Paolo smiled at his new friend. "I'm glad you and Rich moved here. It's nice to have someone new to talk to."

"Everything okay—I mean, between you and Aaron?"

"Perfect. We love our house and our jobs, we love each other. The passion between us is still strong, too. In fact...can I let you in on a little secret?"

"Oh, yay, gossip at last!"

“Bitch!”

“You want me to not be interested?”

A grin hit Paolo’s face. “I was fucking Aaron something good in the den when Edgar and Jack rang the doorbell. I actually think the sound of the bell made me come.” Paolo gazed at his friend, wondering if he’d shocked him. “So, what about you and Rich? The sex good? I can tell, even in those baggy shorts of his that he’s packing something big.”

“Big cock, hairy body, nice bank account,” Marc said. “All my dreams coming true.”

“You guys, uh...ever experiment. You know...with others?”

“No, never. You guys?”

“No,” Paolo said. “But there’s always a first time.”

A wrinkle crossed Marc’s nose, and Paolo wondered if he had gone too far. “Did I just offend you? I wasn’t really suggesting you and me and Aaron and Rich have sex, it’s just a silly idea, probably the drink talking.”

“No, no, that’s not it. I was just wondering...”

“What?” Paolo asked, sensing hesitation. Or perhaps reluctance.

“Have there ever been cases of...well, peeping toms on Eldon Court? Curiosity from neighboring streets about what goes on inside our homes? I mean...God this sounds so paranoid, but I could have sworn the other week someone was watching me and Rich while we were...you know.”

“Fucking,” Paolo said. “You don’t have to be shy around me. Christ, Marc, we’re all gay, we know that a central part of our relationships is sex. You put two horny men in a room together, they’re gonna get it on. And when you add in the ingredients of a beautiful new home, a new life, that passion is going to rise. So it’s hardly a shock that you and Rich have been

having lots of sex lately. As for someone watching? That seems a bit...extreme for Eldon Court. Personally, I can't see Edgar and Jack getting off on watching other people. Aaron and I, sure we like to watch the occasional porn DVD, but neither of us would have the guts to spy on a neighbor."

"What about the other house? Number One Eldon Court?"

"Oh, that's Sawyer and Dane. They haven't been home for about six weeks. So it couldn't have been them. Did you know that Dane is Aaron's younger brother?"

"No, I didn't," Marc said. "Really, two gay brothers in one household?"

"Yeah, pisses the straight brother off royally," Paolo said. "Dane actually came to stay with us for awhile, that's where he met Sawyer. Guy had a different boyfriend at the time, but it didn't work out. Took Dane all of five minutes to get in Sawyer's pants. Kids, you know."

From over by the grill, Aaron called out to them. "Hey guys, dinner's almost ready. How about you join the rest of the party?"

"Be right there," Paolo called out. But before the two of them rejoined the others, he said to Marc, "Keep in mind what I said, you know, the four of us? I think we could have an amazingly hot time. But sshh, don't tell Edgar and Jack I said anything. And don't mention it to Aaron either, he has no idea what I'm thinking."

"Your secret is safe with me," Marc said. "Okay, I need a refill."

"I'm right behind you."

But Paolo wasn't. Staying cliffside, he watched as the waves crashed against the shore, the water turning white and foamy in its wake. This was what sex was like, power and energy, nature's passion, the confluence of sexual drive and release. He thought about sex with Aaron, how different it was these days, how...he had to admit it, how unsatisfying it was. Sure they

fucked and sure they came, but Paolo knew what was in his mind when that moment occurred, the dirty pictures found beneath the bathroom sink. And tonight, when they had sex, he had no doubt he'd be fantasizing about Rich, his beast of a cock pounding his ass good.

Paolo had been thinking about sex for a long time now, even since he'd watched them from the window of their Victorian mansion, Marc's sweet ass descending upon that huge, thickened, luscious cock. Paolo sighed; maybe it wasn't Aaron who was distracted. Maybe it was himself.

* * * *

"We have company!"

"Finally, some women!"

"Haha, boys. Don't flatter us—we know it's just an act."

LeeAnn Lehman had arrived with a bottle of wine in each hand and a friend at her side.

Aaron flipped a salmon fillet on the grill as he accepted a peck on the cheek from not just LeeAnn but from Lauren Healy, another Wonderland resident and a woman with a personal connection to Eldon Court. Both women had worked at varying times for Wonderland Realty, and actually it was Lauren who helped transition the sale of their house; Lauren had been in the process of setting up her own business when she brought LeeAnn into the realty. LeeAnn had eventually made the sale to Aaron and Paolo, as well as Sawyer and Dane, and now to Rich and Marc. The only couple Lauren had truly helped was Edgar and Jack, and from the looks of it, tight hugs and kisses all around, they were eternally grateful.

"Hey guys," Jack said, "You should all know Lauren Healy—she's the one who put the first homos on Eldon Court—me and that old man over there, my Eddy. What she started, sweet LeeAnn finished."

“She’s not finished yet,” Edgar said suddenly, as though prompted. “There’s still Number Two Eldon Court to sell. So, LeeAnn, any hot gay couples with money coming to Wonderland? I mean, besides our newest cuties, Rich and Marc?”

“Hey guys, you know that house isn’t for sale. The owners aren’t ready to part with it,” LeeAnn said with a dismissive toss of her hand. “Hey, speaking of neighbors, where the hell are Sawyer and Dane? Aren’t they back yet from their excursion? Sawyer sent me a text saying they’d be back this weekend.”

Aaron pointed over to their neighbor’s still darkened house. “Been that way since April, when they left for Europe. Haven’t heard a peep from them. Guess my little brother is having the time of his life.”

“Little brother?” Lauren asked. “Dane is your brother? Why didn’t I know that?”

“When he came out too, it really shook things up in my family. I think that’s what made my parent’s drive their Mercedes into that,” Aaron said. “At least good ol’ boy brother Derek is keeping the family name alive, he and his wife have five kids, including four boys.”

LeeAnn stepped up then, said, “Hey, speaking of shaking things up, did you all read about the earthquake?”

“What earthquake?”

“It was on the news the other day. Seems a small tremor passed through lower San Francisco a week ago, barely registered on the Richter scale for anyone to care. Still, they say even Wonderland could have been affected. I certainly didn’t feel anything. Anybody else?”

“I think my Eddy was having his way with me,” Jack said, “so, no, I didn’t feel anything.”

“Bitch,” Edgar said, but still he laughed along with everyone else. Aaron, though, could see through the current mask of amusement. There was something on Edgar’s mind, and the earthquake comment had brought it to the surface. He let it go, figuring he’d ask him later.

The party continued as more drinks were poured and more food was consumed. Minutes turned into hours and nightfall began to settle down around them. Jack and Edgar were engaged in conversation with the two women, and Rich and Marc were sharing a private moment, which gave Aaron and Paolo a chance to breathe.

“The party’s a big hit,” Aaron said. “I’m glad you suggested we have it. Later, when everyone has left, you’re all mine. Right?”

Paolo gave him a quick kiss. “I want nothing more. Ooh, I see empty glasses, let me see to our guests.”

As Paolo went running off to service his guests, Aaron reflected on the afternoon. He liked their new neighbors. Marc was friendly and out-going and if Rich could only learn to relax a little bit he’d be fun, too. But Aaron himself wasn’t exactly himself either, so he could hardly blame the newcomer for feeling tense. All week long he’d thought about what to do about Mr. Converse and the situation at the Bayside Hotel, and of course lingering in the back of his mind was that comment his boss made about “filling the other house.” It made him think of LeeAnn and Lauren and that empty house sitting at the edge of the street, Number Two Eldon Court. Mr. Converse surely couldn’t have been talking about that house. What did a remote street on the outskirts of Wonderland have to do with Mr. Converse and his ownership of the Bayside?

Burning fish wafted up to his nostrils, and suddenly he said, “Oh shit,” which got the attention of everyone. That in turn got the entire gang focused on dinner, and before long all the food was plated, place settings were made, drinks were refreshed, and any concerns beyond the

party were forgotten. Talk turned to pleasurable things: life, work, sex, vacations, summer plans spent by the pool and down at the beach, and who was hosting the next event. Rich and Marc volunteered.

“It’s not like I’ve got much going on,” Marc said. “Just a few paintings to complete, I can plan a party.”

“Painting?” Lauren asked, her interest piqued.

“Sure. I dabble a bit,” Marc said.

“Said the modest artist,” Rich interjected. “What my bottom half here is trying to say is, he’s an amazing painter, visionary really, and he is presently completing a few pieces that would give him enough for a show. I’ve been promising we’ll venture up to San Francisco one weekend, start to scout out galleries.”

Both women then glanced at each other.

“You know, Marc,” began Lauren. “When I left Wonderland Realty, it’s because I decided to pursue my true passion—art. Don’t get me wrong, I’m no artist, even my stick figures don’t qualify for bulimia. But I’ve opened up a gallery Down Wonder, and I’m always on the lookout for promising new talent. Perhaps I should look at your stuff, Marc, maybe Wonderland is the place for your next show.”

“My God, Lauren, that would be amazing.”

“Great. I’ll call you in the next week and we’ll set up an appointment. Fabulous!” she said.

“Uh, Lauren honey,” Paolo said. “That’s our line.”

* * * *

The party came to an end around nine o'clock, with Edgar and Jack protesting they had an early morning drive to visit relatives in Portland, "a birthday, someone's...who, your aunt's, seventy-fifth? God, if I get that old, just shoot me."

Lauren and LeeAnn departed also, actually hopping into LeeAnn's Porsche and speeding down the street. Edgar and Jack lingered a bit longer, exchanging hugs with their neighbors new and old. Marc and Edgar promised to share coffee one morning next week while the two "men" were off earning money at their respective jobs. They would just sit around and bitch and gossip and plot. Paolo wasn't happy that people were leaving so early, so he coaxed the new neighbors into staying a bit longer, and they agreed to do so.

"Paolo, let me just run home for a second," Rich said. "Turn a couple lights on. I hate when a house looks so empty at night. Be right back."

"I'll walk with you," Jack said. "I know Edgar wants to talk to Aaron for a sec, so I'll give them a private moment."

"Fine. Marc, let's you and I find some wine down by the patio," Paolo said, patting his new friend on the shoulder.

That left Aaron standing on the porch with Edgar.

"Something on your mind you don't want the others to know about? What's going on?"

"LeeAnn mentioned an earthquake the other day, right?"

"Yeah. What of it?"

"Did you feel anything?"

"I'm not sure I know what you're getting at."

"Okay, the other day—I think the same day LeeAnn is talking about—Jack and I went for a walk along the beach. One thing led to another...actually, it was a great moment, we just gave

into it, and the next thing we know we're royally screwing our brains out. Afterwards, though, something weird happened..."

"Edgar, just spit it out."

"We were nearly crushed by a boulder. It came crashing down from above."

"My God, I didn't know. You must have been freaked....but, wait, what's that's got to do with..."

"If an earthquake really hit, perhaps the vibration loosened the rock, so it naturally fell tumbling toward us."

"Yeah. Perhaps. Or else..."

"Or else someone pushed it."

"Deliberately?"

"Right at us."

"To kill you?"

"Or to scare us."

"Why would someone want to scare you and Jack?"

"I've been doing research again. On my political corruption book."

"And you think you got too close to some secret? Listen, Edgar, strange things happen all the time, it's very possible the boulder came loose, either on its own or from a tremor in the earth. I highly doubt anyone was deliberately trying to cause trouble, or worse. This is Eldon Court. This is Wonderland. That kind of stuff doesn't happen here—book or no book."

Edgar smiled, put his hand on Aaron's shoulder. "That's why I reached out to you. You see things rationally. Of course nothing was meant by it. Just one of those things in life, a scare to make you appreciate what you have. What you can lose."

“Edgar. Want my advice?”

“Always.”

“Forget about it. Go home and just have some wild sex with Jack tonight.”

“After this party, I think we’ll all be having wild sex.”

Edgar departed, leaving Aaron alone on the porch. He gazed out at the darkened street that was Eldon Court, his home of more than three years. It had all been so blissful, so perfect...until recently. Just like the earth, there was a slight tremor in Wonderland, and Aaron had to wonder when the big one would hit.

* * * *

“I knew you would come, that you wouldn’t disappoint me.”

“I’m here. I’m just not sure why.”

“You know perfectly well why you’re here. Why else did you rush home?”

The two men decided they’d dispensed with the niceties, with the required dance of reluctance. Now they came together in an eruption of passion, their kisses overpowering and hungry, as though neither had experienced such lust before. That their lives had been devoid of any kind of passion for too long and now they were letting go if not their hearts but their minds and bodies. They tore each other’s clothing off, and thankful for the cover of nightfall, they began to kiss and to caress, to fumble in the sand and to feed off the heat emanating from their selves.

“I’ve wanted you all day.”

“I know. You kept making me hard, with your sly comments and your suggestive eyes,” he said. “Is that what you really want? You want my big cock deep inside you?”

“As deep as it can go,” he said.

Paolo couldn't believe this was truly happening. He raked his fingers through Rich's fur, realizing he'd missed the rough feel of his own lover's chest. He'd known from the moment he saw Rich fucking that night that he'd wanted to feel him, to touch him, to lick and to suck him. To feel him inside him. All day long he kept sneaking glances at Rich, when he'd emerge from the pool with water dripping from his body, the baggy shorts leaving little the imagination; when he'd toss on his t-shirt and his mind had to picture the chest he so wanted to touch; when he'd nibble on Marc's ear, whispering something secret into it. The hidden looks they both shared.

When the party had dwindled down to the four of them, the wine continued to flow. Aaron at last announced that there was some clean-up to handle, volunteering to do all the dishes. Marc had yawned, stated he and Rich should probably head on home. Aaron convinced them both to stay, but Marc said only if they could help with the clean-up. Both of them delved into those duties, leaving Rich and Paolo alone. Paolo mentioned he loved moonlit walks along the sand, usually by himself. Have a good one, Rich had said, and so Paolo had navigated the path down to the shore, taking up on a nearby rock. That's where he waited, to see if what he thought might happen did happen.

And now it was happening.

As Paolo and Rich kissed, the mutual scratch of heavy beard and goatee sounded like sandpaper, drowning out the crashing waves in their ears. Paolo reached down, felt for Rich's big hard cock, his mind swirling as it filled up his fist. *My God, it's huge*, he thought, and then this perpetual top whispered into this man's ear, "Take me now, and take me as hard as you can."

"Are you sure? I mean...back at the house?"

"It's okay...don't worry about them, they may even be doing the same thing. Right now this moment is ours, and I need you to plow my ass like it's never been plowed. Fucking beast,

I've wanted your cock all day, since the moment you peeled your shirt off and showed off that hairy chest I've been in pre-come mode. I'm practically ready to explode already, but I need your cock inside me first, now, right this second."

Paolo's prayers went answered. Thrust down onto the sand, his ass pointing up at the sky, he heard the tear of the condom wrapper, the cool feel of lube against his crack. He looked back at the massive cock about to split him in two, wondered could he possibly take it? Aaron's cock was great, it had a nice length to it but it lacked girth. This thing before him...er, behind him, actually, it had length and thickness, and for a moment Paolo's ass puckered with anxiety. Then he had no more time to contemplate what was to come, for that cock slid inside him, puncturing him with its might, its power. He felt Rich slide that giant cock as far as it could go; he could feel the tickle of the man's pubes as they scraped against his smooth ass. God, it had been so long since he'd been fucked.

"Oh that's it, take my ass. Take it right now and don't ever stop."

From his motions and his grunts, from his thrusts and his mounts, it seemed clear that Rich had no intention of ever stopping. Paolo took every inch and every amazing, penetrating push, trying his best to keep from coming too quickly. With Rich fucking him from behind, Paolo placed his hands against the large boulder which was so out of place on the sandy beach, using the crevices to hold on for dear life. Pound, pound, thrust, thrust, the thick cock slid inside and out, inside and out, like a well-oiled machine doing what it had been built to do. Thankfully the waves were loud, drowning out Paolo's urgent pleas to stop, to give him more, to stop, to give him more and more.

"Oh God, oh yes, oh fuck me so hard...yes...owww..."

Rich withdrew his cock, grabbed hold of Paolo and threw him to the sand. Lifting his legs, he hovered over him, his thick member still ready, willing, and definitely able. He shoved hard, the entire length of his cock disappearing into Paolo's ass with such speed neither had time to react. Like they hadn't missed a beat, the groans and the fucking, the moans and the bucking, they just continued on, and on, and on, neither ready to give in to the power bubbling up inside them. Paolo wrapped his legs around Rich's hairy ass, ran his hands over the carpet that covered the man's chest, and reveled in its sexy touch. Rich meanwhile had taken hold of Paolo's erection, rubbing it between his fingers, urging it on toward an amazing climax.

"Yes, don't stop...fuck my ass as hard as you can. Yes..."

One more violent thrust and suddenly Rich's cock blew its load, hot come drenching the inside of the condom. Paolo felt every jerk, every squirt, and it ran through his body like a river, and at last his own dam broke. Thick ropes of white hot come burst from his hardened cock, spilling all over Rich's chest, dripping down the hairy trail that laced his belly.

"Wow, oh wow oh wow," Paolo said. "I haven't come like that in...forever."

"You were good, that's for sure. Made me come buckets."

But with the passion drained from them, suddenly silence overcame them and they looked at each other.

"So..." Paolo said. "Now what."

"I don't know," Rich added. "I can't believe we just did that."

"But you know you wanted to, right? I mean, no regrets?"

"I'm the one who ran home for the condom and lube. I would call that premeditated," Rich said. "So, no, no regrets."

"Can I ask you something, Rich?"

“Maybe.”

“Cautious answer.”

“Hey, I gave you my cock, not my heart. But go ahead, ask away.”

“Wonderland. Why did you move here? What is it you’re expecting? A cure for what ails between you and Marc? Or something else? Something deeper? I know you said you grew up here. What is it you’re trying to reclaim? Lost youth? Vengeance for something gone wrong in your past? Or maybe you’re running from something? Did something occur back east?”

Darkness covered Rich’s scruffy face. “Truthfully, Paolo, I’m not sure I can answer any of those questions...”

And Rich wouldn’t have the chance to answer it, even if he could. A large crashing sound brought both men back to reality. They gazed back up toward Number Three Eldon Court and saw a glow erupting over the horizon.

“What the fuck...?” Paolo asked.

Neither stopped to answer the question. They both went running back up the path, tossing on their clothes as quickly as they could. When at last they arrived back on Eldon Court, they could see that the porch of Paolo and Aaron’s home was awash with flame. They also saw Marc and Aaron out on the front lawn, lost in an embrace of solidarity.

“What the hell happened?” Paolo asked.

Aaron didn’t react to seeing Paolo and Rich together, he just said, body quivering in fear, “Someone threw something at our house. We heard a sound like a motorcycle or something, and next thing we hear is that big crash. This thing...a bottle, comes crashing through the window. The porch, the curtains...our home, it was suddenly on fire.”

“We called the fire department...but can they get here on time?” Marc asked.

“I hope so,” Aaron said.

As the fire raged, the four new friends huddled closer. Theirs was a newfound bond, shared by a mutual love for Eldon Court, for their way of life, and for each other. Paolo hugged Aaron tight, but his eyes never wavered far from Rich. He also noticed that Marc hadn’t missed a thing. He knew. His eyes said it all.

In this place called Wonderland, something was clearly afoot.

And they were all playing a part in it, whether they knew it or not.

What next?

PART FOUR

Sawyer & Dane

by Jeff Wilcox

The night sky deepened from a handsome midnight blue to a murky blackness as the taxi left the lights of San Francisco and continued south. Two passengers sat in silence, dog-tired but only because their bodies couldn't decide whether it really was time to go to bed.

"It'll be nice to sleep in our own bed tonight," one whispered.

Eyes closed but smiling at that thought, the second muttered, "I can't remember where we live anymore."

Yes, you do. Wonderland.

Ah, yes. Wonderland. Eldon Court. It was like a dream. Especially for two twenty-somethings who were just finding their footing in life and with each other. He and Sawyer Block had been living there together for almost a year now. Minus six seemingly endless weeks of business travel from which they were just returning.

Headlights of a passing car momentarily illuminated Dane's naturally masculine features in the window. He opened his eyes and looked blankly at his reflection without recognition.

"Who am I?" he silently asked himself.

It occurred to him that the same question had been posed to a young girl by a snobbish caterpillar in *Alice in Wonderland*. Not that children's fairy tales were his cup of tea, but living in the unlikely-named place called Wonderland, one couldn't help but be accosted by snippets from Lewis Carroll's famous book. And like it or not, some pieces just stuck. In this case, he

remembered Alice's answer: "I'm not sure. I knew who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have changed several times since then." Yeah, that's how Dane felt. Since the day they left town a lot had changed. He felt different. And he was certain that his relationship with Sawyer would never be the same.

A gentle pressure at his crotch broke these thoughts. He looked over to find his partner had casually reached over from the other side of the backseat and was now resting his right hand over the front of his pants. Without turning his head, Dane surreptitiously looked over at the taxi driver who appeared to be focused on the road ahead. Good. Because the hand had now begun wandering, gently outlining the form of his hardening cock through the gabardine fabric. After a brief but blissful massage, Sawyer found the zipper and quietly drew it down. Dane breathed in silently.

* * * *

They met in San Francisco. At a straight bar of all places. Dane had accompanied some office mates who naively never made the connection between his sexual orientation and the fact that they had never seen him with anyone of the opposite sex. Sawyer, on the other hand, had a date, a girl who looked a lot like the singer Dido. The couple was introduced as friends of one of the guys. Dane's undivided attention was on Sawyer from the moment they sat down at their cramped table. This guy was gorgeous, truly. Flawless in every way. The complexion of his skin looked almost airbrushed. He was tan but not overly so. A strong jaw line gave him the look of a comic book hero, completed by a confident smile. At the time, Sawyer sported longish hair with blond bangs that pointed attention to his expressive blue eyes. They beamed in the subdued lighting, just as phosphorus glows in the dark. Helpless in their gaze, Dane was not in the least surprised when Dido informed the table that her date was a fashion model.

Sawyer grinned mischievously at her, licked his lips... and then started sucking face with Dido.

Dane blanched, his smile evaporated. Straight guys. Why did he always fall for them? He sat there, feeling awkward, and looked around — at the crowded bar, at the pathetically claustrophobic dance floor, at straight folks stomping without rhythm to songs that were at least ten years old — to anything other than this Sawyer guy and Dido, who were all over each other, oblivious to the stares from around their table. The others drooled over the girl, thinking dirty thoughts and hoping they would score with a chick tonight as well. Dane had a tent in his pants, but only for the model. (He never did care much for Dido. He was more of a Kylie kind of guy.)

Later Dane stopped in the men's room to drain the four beers he had consumed. Mercifully, the music was muted in here. If this were a gay club, the DJ would have been killed hours ago. As he tugged at his fly, the door to the restroom squeaked open and Sawyer stepped in drunkenly. He staggered to the urinal next to Dane's and moved to free his dick to pee. Per standard men's room etiquette, both men kept their eyes up and forward. After an uncomfortable moment of shyness, urine started hitting the porcelain in a protracted demonstration of relief that only a beer piss can produce. Finally the sound of water hitting water finally abated. But neither man moved away. Dane found couldn't take it any longer. Using his peripheral vision, he chanced a glimpse of Sawyer's cock. Sure enough, it was as perfect as the rest of him, a beautiful specimen of manhood. Dane blinked. Was it his hopeful imagination or was the shaft lengthening and thickening before his very eyes? The answer solidified with a tantalizing upward curve. Dane cautiously looked up to meet Sawyer's gaze. His own dick turned to concrete in a second.

The model lifted his chin as if to say, "Now what?" His expression betrayed nervousness.

Dane stood there, mesmerized. He only hesitated a moment before pushing Sawyer into the single stall in the corner, pinning the sexy stud against the tiled wall with one hand and slamming the door shut with the other.

Sawyer held him at bay for a moment. “Wait. I’ve got to tell you something...”

“I know, you’re straight. You’ve never done this before. This is your first time...”

Sawyer smiled and shook his head. “No, it’s just that I... I’ve got a –

“A girlfriend.”

“No, a boyfriend.”

* * * *

Dane’s cock was freed into the open air of the taxi. He kept a watchful eye on the driver. Fortunately, the darkness of the cab gave them cover, though occasional breaks of passing light threatened to expose them. Then who knew how the cabbie would react? That thought, coupled by Sawyer’s manipulations, had Dane dripping pre-come. Sawyer’s thumb found the sticky secretion and used it as lube to rub the tip of his lover’s cock in small clockwise circles.

Dane bit his lip. The sensations were more than his sex-starved system could take. He hadn’t ejaculated in the past 30 hours, a personal record of abstinence. Now he was reaching a precipice, his nerves wired, and his hypersensitive body ready to submit to a gut-ripping climax, when Sawyer let go and allowed his dick to bob and dance by itself in ecstasy.

* * * *

Sawyer squatted on the dirty men’s room floor, hands firmly planted on Dane’s ass cheeks while he ravenously bobbed up and down on the guy’s fuckpole. Dane could only cradle his beautiful head in his hands and ride the waves of the rapture enveloping him. He wasn’t a small boy down there and few in his experience had ever been able to take the whole thing.

Sawyer had a technique.

“Oh God, yes!”

His distended dick filled Sawyer’s mouth, stretching it open wide. He was only halfway in when the tip hit the back of Sawyer’s mouth at the throat. This was usually as far as he got with other guys, Dane’s cue to start face fucking for better results. Sawyer had another idea. He simply adjusted the angle of his head and pushed further. The cock hit the slimy, heated back wall of his throat, and then slid forcefully past tonsils, down at an angle, deep into his throat.

This guy had no fucking gag reflex!

“Oh son of a—FUCK, yeah! Take it, man, take it!”

So Sawyer did. With pleasure.

* * * *

Sawyer changed tactics, reaching up and into Dane’s shirt.

Oh no. Not the nipples.

A passing streetlight revealed Sawyer’s devilish grin. Oh yes. He knew his lover’s most sensitive area. But he hesitated, content to toy with him first. He raked his manicured fingernails over Dane’s chest. A thin covering of hair ran from chiseled pecs down to his nether regions. Sawyer wished he could trace that trail with his tongue but this would do for now. Until they got home.

Dane breathed in short, quiet gasps as fingers found his left nipple and squeezed. Then twisted. His athletic body tightened again in anticipation of what was to come. Literally, if this kept up. Then a second hand grasped his dick and began pumping its nine-inch length. Sawyer knew what he was doing, pulling back and forth with just the right pressure, a slight twist of the wrist at the engorged head. Dane’s right leg involuntary kicked out, hitting the front seat. The

driver looked up at the rear-view mirror and all activity in the backseat stopped for a few seconds. When the driver returned his attention to the road, Sawyer punished his lover with a full manual assault. “Oh... God,” Dane hissed.

* * * *

“Dude, let’s flip for it.”

The model looked at Dane. “Flip for a condom. No way.”

They only had one rubber between them. And much as Dane wanted this guy’s butt, Sawyer clearly had similar ass-pirations. That, and ownership of the condom.

“Pays to be prepared, huh?”

“Always.”

Dane turned his back to the model, facing the door to the stall. A versatile lover, he was no stranger to bottoming... for the right guy. And this guy was right in every possible way. He bent over and arched his back, jutting his ass in Sawyer’s direction. There was a pause as Sawyer realized that prepared as he was with a condom, he hadn’t any lube. Dane stroked his dick and produced a liberal amount of pre-come, which he applied to his hole and, reaching back further, Sawyer’s beautiful dick.

“Do it, man.”

The top man tested the waters with his thumb, which sank softly into a blissfully tight hole. He nodded and stepped up to bat, rubbing the tip of his dick on the slippery pre-come along Dane’s crack.

“Fuck me. F-FUUUUUUUUUCK!”

In one single breathtaking stroke, Sawyer’s dick slipped inside the comforting confines of Dane’s rectum. He pulled out, almost completely before feeding it back in. Dane tightened his

muscles to grab that wonderful cock and never let it go. And so began a tug of war that had Dane bracing himself by pushing out against the metal walls on both sides. The stall shook violently while metal groaned in unison with its occupants. Sawyer found his rhythm, a stride reported with each punishing slap of his thighs against that meaty ass and echoed across the tiled room. And then—

Squeeeeeek.

There was a rush of sound from the bar outside as the door opened. The 80's band Frankie Goes to Hollywood bellowed for everybody to “relax,” compliments of the demented DJ. Most of the sound was sucked back out of the restroom when the door swung shut. The fucking couple froze. With a chill, Dane found himself almost face-to-face with one of his co-workers through the space between the stall door and the wall. He panicked, his every muscle seized in fear. Though he wasn't aware of it, his sphincter was now squeezing the living hell out of Sawyer's member. The model opened his mouth in a silent cry. The interloper, drunk and oblivious to the men and their conjugal plight, meandered to the urinals and began to do his thing, singing to himself the song playing just outside.

“Relax... duh, da, da. Relax, duh, da da.”

Sawyer tried desperately to pull out, and failing that, push in. His movements were small and staccato. The force on his cock was amazing.

Dane watched his coworker wash his hands and then play with his hair, adjusting it. He was certain the guy was going to catch sight of him through the opening in the stall and if he did he'd see the guy attached to him at the ass. Dane wasn't out at work. It was a fairly conservative environment. Clearly, Sawyer wasn't out either; he was traveling with a beard even though he had a boyfriend. Sweat tickled Dane's neck as it ran down from his temples. Finally,

the bastard left, never catching on to what he had interrupted. The door opened with Frankie issuing one last melodic demand: “Come!”

And that’s exactly what Sawyer did. Dane rested his forehead against the stall door as the sheathed dick deep inside of him pulsed over and over again.

* * * *

Sawyer increased tempo, bringing his fist up and down in a quick, concentrated flurry. Dane, lost in the lust of an impending climax, became a bundle of twitching limbs. Though nobody could see, the tendons on his neck were locked and distended. Thankfully, his ragged breathing was disguised by the taxi’s motor as it labored uphill, away from Down Wonder.

It wasn’t far to Eldon Court. So Sawyer hit home by tweaking Dane’s sweet spot — his right nipple. The right shirt fabric against that sensitive erogenous point could give Dane wood like nobody’s business. When Sawyer sucked on it, the man would melt into sobbing fits of beautifully painful bliss. Rubbing the hard little nub between his thumb and finger as he did now brought his lover to a shattering orgasm. Dane lost all composure as he let loose ropes of sticky come and growled a string of obscenities.

“What the—” The taxi driver swerved a bit as he tried to turn his head and see what was wrong with his passengers. The back of the darkened cab was a tangle of confusion, though he could discern that one of the men’s faces was contorted in a mask of pain.

“Charley horse.”

“What?”

“He’s got a Charley horse. A cramp.”

“Shit! Uh... shit!”

In seconds, they seemed to have the situation under control. The kid with the Charley

horse relaxed, the knot obviously worked out.

His friend laughed, “We’ve been cooped up in planes and taxis for 15 hours. Something had to give.”

“Yeah, I gave all right,” Dane thought, shaking his head in good nature. The back of the front seat was coated in splodge. And suddenly, the cab smelled of sex, the unmistakable scent of man-come that any guy, gay or straight, knew well. This may have been why the driver continued looking back at them suspiciously through the rear view. He said nothing, though.

Dane opened his window a bit. Fresh sea air, blowing in from the coast, told him they were home.

* * * *

The taxi pulled away, leaving the boys to gather their things and make their way to the front door of Number One Eldon Court, their Victorian home.

“Let’s unpack tomorrow. I’m thinking the cab ride was a prelude to something even better.”

Dane dropped his bags on the wraparound porch, just short of the welcome mat at the front door to search his pockets for his keys. “It better be. Six weeks posing as your friend, your assistant, your... your gofer or whatever. You owe me. Big time.”

Until the trip, Sawyer had purposely kept him at length from his work as a model. If there were any secrets in their relationship, Dane felt certain it centered around what his lover did for a living. There was something that wasn’t being shared. A secret. Then Sawyer announced he was going away for Fashion Week. This pinnacle event was the sun around which all bodies in fashion revolved. It was not to be missed. It could be a career maker or breaker.

“I want to go too. It’s a part of you I don’t even know.”

Dane also didn't know that Fashion Week is not one week, but six weeks of non-stop events, displays, parties, photo ops, and meetings. An extravaganza that circles the globe — first, the couture event in New York, then London, then Milan and finally, the *pièce de résistance*, the international prêt-à-porter or ready-to-wear collections in Paris, a never-ending parade of high-powered runway shows held at the Carrousel du Louvre, below the famous Louvre Museum.

With reluctance, Sawyer capitulated to his partner's continual requests to accompany him. But under certain conditions, he advised. Foremost, no one could know about the true nature of their relationship. Sawyer insisted that maintaining a mystique about his sexuality -- putting on a straight face if you will -- was actually helping his career. Fashion was bloated with fags. Designers, assistants, buyers, hair stylists, make-up artists, photographers, you name it. And the models were the worst. Many of them expected to be treated like royalty. Much to their chagrin, it was the straight ones who got all the attention. But even the most majestic of queens wasn't above kneeling to the sword of a hunky straight model. Designers of men's fashions, regardless of how effeminate they really might be, felt camaraderie with straight models who understood their "masculine sensibilities." Gay agents coveted their straight models, secretly lusting after them and plotting their next stealthy move on the casting couch of runway life. After all, more often than not, they had a choice in which they sent to which clients, and for the best gigs occasionally asked for more than the standard fifteen percent. In the industry, it was called pay to play. Successful models knew that sometimes, in order to not be screwed over, you had to take it up the ass.

Almost immediately upon landing in New York, Dane was lost in this turbulent sea of activity, often without Sawyer who, as a straight man, couldn't constantly be seen with male

escorts without arousing suspicion. His lover had dinner obligations and special events virtually every night. By the time they reached Paris, Dane sadly mused that he had come to the city of lights, the city of lovers, with only his hand to keep him company. Worse, amidst the flash and glitter, he had seen the underbelly of the beast called fashion and it was far from pretty. Many of these beautiful people were animals, biting, scratching, clawing, and, yes, fucking their way to keeping their head above water, even if it meant drowning everyone else.

It took several days for Dane to process the reality that there was no way Sawyer could be true to him. Dane met dozens of self-absorbed people -- especially on the New York and London legs of their trip where he could more easily converse -- and learned from inane conversation and idle gossip that you had to give yourself over to fashion, body and soul. Many were happy to name names. And places. And sexual positions. Interestingly, nobody had dirt on Sawyer.

But that hardly gave Dane relief.

One night, at a little Milanese café, he sat by himself drinking carafe after carafe of red wine and letting his imagination run free. Dark thoughts he had been denying since they left Wonderland haunted him vindictively. Who else had Sawyer been with? How many? Were they better looking than he was? Did he like them better? Would he leave Dane for one of these guys to get ahead...or just get some head? Was Sawyer the top...or the bottom? (Strangely, that last question seemed incredibly important.) When the café closed for the evening, Dane was not only lost in thought, but equally lost in the cobblestone maze of this ancient European city. All the streets looked the same. In a darkened shop window, he caught sight of his reflection and fumed at how pathetic he appeared. Eventually, Dane returned to his lodgings by hailing a cab and muttering the name of his hotel. Exhausted and drunk, he stripped off his clothes and fell

onto the bed.

Then something happened.

With a perpetual case of Sawyer on the brain, Dane found himself fantasizing about his lover, trying to maneuver the twisted and salacious fashion world. At each turn, people in power were making him submit. Dane imagined Sawyer negotiating with Max Melbourne, his agent and a phenomenally well-dressed man who exuded confidence in everything he did. He pictured Sawyer begging for better, more visible contracts. And mighty Max dropping perfectly tailored trou, saying, “If you rub it the right way, I will grant you three contracts.” Dane opened his eyes with the realization that he was so hard, it hurt. Reaching down, he jerked off to the mental picture of Sawyer sitting on Melbourne’s cock, which penetrated him from down under. In Dane’s head, the three of them came at once.

After that night, things were different. Dane was different. And unbeknownst to Sawyer, their relationship was different. There was a lot to talk about, but that would have to wait for them to actually have ten minutes of uninterrupted time together without an entourage from the Melbourne agency.

Here they were back home now, at the door to their less than humble abode, and that conversation had still yet to happen. Maybe tonight. Sawyer activated his ubiquitous cell phone, while Dane fumbled with the keys to the house.

“Well, the house looks okay. The timers on the lights are working...”

Behind him, Dane heard an electronic female voice confirm, “You have eleven new messages.” The first message began playing. “Honey, it’s me... I decided to swing by your house to welcome you back home and hear all about your travels...” Before Dane could fit the key into the lock mechanism, the front door swung open. Both men exchanged confused,

worried looks at the sight before them. That's when Sawyer, an incredulous tone to his voice, said, "Mom!?!"

* * * *

Mom wasn't alone. Blonde-haired, pretty Kate Munson moved around Sawyer's mother in a blur and stopped short of him with a nervous smile. "Honey! You're back."

"Obviously."

"I called you, like—"

"Ten times? Yeah, I had my phone off for the flight and forgot to turn it back on."

Sawyer leaned in to pretend to kiss her. Instead he hissed in her ear, "What's *she* doing here?"

Kate whispered, "She called me and said she was coming over to surprise you." A pause before she smiled and called out, "Surprise!"

Diana Block crossed the threshold and gave her son a hug. "I haven't seen you in ages. You never stop by to see me anymore. So I figured Katie and I should welcome you back home in style. I brought some pastries from Tartine's. Your favorite." Tartine's Bakery, located in San Francisco's Mission District, was a weak spot for Sawyer who otherwise slaved to keep his physique in top notch condition.

Kate turned to Dane and rolled her eyes at Mrs. Block as a private joke between them. "Hey, Dane. Looking good."

Sawyer caught Kate's eye over his mother's shoulder. He mouthed "are you out of your fucking mind?" Kate pantomimed that she would explain everything inside.

"Dan." Diana gave the boy a motherly once over. "You're getting so beefy. Look at those big arms!"

The boy quietly muttered, "It's Dane. Dane Walters—like the comedian, only...way

different.”

“I didn’t know you went with Sawyer on his trip. How was it? Did you meet any hot girls?”

Without waiting for an answer, Mrs. Block ushered Kate and her son into the house. She chided Sawyer, “I’m going to assume that you behaved like a perfect gentleman while Kate was home waiting for you.”

“I can honestly say I didn’t touch another woman.”

About to close the door, Mrs. Block remembered Dane and offered, “Dan, you’re welcome to join us for a little coffee.”

“Oh. Thanks.” Dane picked up his bags and trudged behind the trio, swearing under his breath. “It’s Dane...”

Sawyer paced around nervously, inspecting the house. They had been away so long, it seemed strange to be back. Like they were visitors instead of the owners of this grand Victorian. He nodded for his lover to keep his mother busy. “Mom, sit and relax. Dane will fill you in on the trip.”

“Who’s Dane?”

Mrs. Block had a habit of hearing only what she wanted to hear.

Sawyer turned to Kate, wide-eyed. “Honey...”

“Yes, lamb chop.”

“Can I see you in the kitchen for a second?”

Kate smiled but her narrowed eyes got the message across that Sawyer shouldn’t push it. “I’m all yours.”

“That’s right, Katie. You tell him.” Mrs. Block cackled.

* * * *

“Are you nuts? I mean, what—what are we--?”

“Calm down. Seriously, Sawyer. Take a breath or I am out of here and YOU can explain how it really is to your mother.”

That took the air out of Sawyer’s sails. If his sexuality was a secret at work, it was a hundred times more covert in his family life. After his parents’ divorce five years ago, both his mom and his dad tried desperately to cling onto the one good thing their union had produced — their only son. Michael Block wanted to make sure that his lineage lived on. He admitted it was probably a “guy thing” but it was what he wanted and he was used to getting his way. He encouraged his son to settle down with a good woman and have lots of babies. He hoped to make up for absentee fathering by being a better grandfather. A successful real estate investor, Michael had given Number One Eldon Court to Sawyer as a gift. What better way to help his son put down roots? What he didn’t know was how Eldon Court had changed over the years since he first bought the property. Diana Block, on the other hand, turned her back on her ex-husband and their marriage after catching him cheating on her, something she was fairly certain had been going on a long time. She claimed one of her husband’s properties just outside the virtually fogless area of SOMA, so named because it was south of Market Street. She dared her ex to challenge her on the property. He didn’t. The house brought her within walking distance to the one she now dedicated her life to: the Lord Almighty. She worked at St. Patrick’s in the church store and helped maintain the office in the rectory.

Despite their differences, Sawyer knew that Michael and Diana Block shared one other passion: a complete disapproval of homosexuality. To his mother, it was a sin. To his father, it was the lowest form of man...well, a man could become. His mother condemned homos as

abominations. His father just called them fags. Clearly, Sawyer had to make sure his parents never found out about him and Dane. And so far, so good.

“What about the bedroom? And the... the—”

Kate patted Sawyer’s chest. “Relax. I’m not stupid. I got here first and de-gayed the place. Your magazines are hidden in bedroom closet... appropriately enough. The Palmer photo is in the basement under a sheet.” Earlier in the year, Sawyer and Dane had commissioned photographer Jeff Palmer to shoot an erotic photo of them, sexy but tasteful, which hung over their bed.

“Thank God.”

“Thank who?”

“Thank YOU, Kate. Shit, this is a mess. I owe you one.”

“Big time. I had to cancel a date with a really nice guy—straight, too.” Kate smiled, looked in the direction of the swinging kitchen door. “She’ll be gone tomorrow morning. The Lord calls, you know. But what are we going to do tonight?”

“You mean about Dane?”

His lover entered the kitchen, right on cue. “What *about* Dane?”

Sawyer rushed to his partner and hugged him tightly. “Babe, I’m so sorry about this.” Kate excused herself to keep Diana busy while the boys worked things out. Sawyer couldn’t make eye contact with his lover. He stood there, head bowed.

“What? You mean I can’t stay in my own home tonight?”

Sawyer shrugged and held out his hands helplessly. “We can’t afford to have my parents find out about me. About us. I’ve told you how they feel about gays. What if they take away the house? Where will we live?”

Dane pulled away from Sawyer's imploring arms. "What if I walk out of here and never come back?" He clicked his tongue with anger. "Saws, you know they're going to find out sometime. You think you can keep this charade up until they die?" There was an uncomfortable pause between them. "You...are, aren't you? Son of a bitch! You know they're going to pressure you and Kate to get married and when that doesn't happen, they'll be falling over one another to fix you up with someone else. Where do I fit in?"

Sawyer tapped his chest over his heart. "You fit right here, Babe. You know that." He moved to Dane's side and embraced him. Their foreheads touched, eyes only centimeters apart as they looked longingly at each other. Though neither said another word, their tear-filled eyes — one pair an ardent blue, the other a soulful brown — spoke volumes. "I love you" simply wouldn't have been enough. Slowly, hands that held each other tight began to caress. Tongues that had momentarily been still, darted out to connect.

"I need you. I need you inside of me." Sawyer had never wanted his lover more.

Dane looked to the single door that separated them from the church lady and their friend and beard Kate.

Sawyer gently held Dane's head and turned it so they were again making eye contact. "Now. Please."

They kissed with abandon. Dane's hands rubbed Sawyer's tight body, as if exploring a new territory rather than the man he had shared a bed with for the past twelve months. He gently turned his lover to face the sink. Sawyer bent over as Dane buried his face in the seat of his lover's pants. He gasped in pleasure. Without missing a beat, both men fumbled at Sawyer's belt. It opened. Dane made a blind attempt on the button at Sawyer's waist and then forcefully pulled the fabric open instead. The button popped off the slacks and bounced along the tiled

kitchen floor. Suddenly, the pants were down and Dane attacked the musky crack before him, licking and chewing. As he devoured the hairless ass, Dane's free hands undid his own pants and searched his front pants pocket for a condom. After their fateful first meeting in a dingy men's room, Dane made sure he was never without protection. In moments Sawyer's pink hole was puckering with anticipation. Dane teased it with his tongue. He tickled the balls that hung just below. Fuck Tartine's pastries. This was a real man's dessert. He stood up and slid the condom down on his rigid dick, in one practiced movement.

"I love you, Dane."

Dane responded by pushing the tip of his dick into Sawyer's perfect body. He playfully wiggled his hips to stretch his lover's ass a bit and then pushed forward in one, long, slow movement. Inch by inch, Sawyer was filled until that wonderful ninth inch pressed against his prostate causing the most sublime sensations to explode throughout his body. He quietly whimpered into his sleeve, willing his lover to dominate him.

Slowly, purposefully, Dane began to pump his lover. He breathed out forcefully like a woman in labor. Whooo, whooo, whooo! But the pain his labors brought about were just this side of heaven. And through it all, Dane couldn't take his eyes off the magnificent sight of his dick disappearing between the perfect globes of Sawyer's buttocks. "Oh...baby!"

Diana Block's voice rang out from the next room. "Do you boys need any help?"

Sawyer cried out an answer, "No. We've got it."

"Oh you're going to get it, all right." Dane started fucking with abandon. Sawyer reached out involuntarily, and accidentally turned on the faucet in the sink. His sleeves were immediately soaked. Then, without even touching himself, Sawyer shook and began to ejaculate in jets that landed on the cabinetry and the floor below. "Here we come, Mrs. Block."

* * * *

They sat around the living room, what Diana called the parlor for a house like this, and ate their pastries, drank coffee, and shared stories about Fashion Week. Diana listened with interest. “Well, it sounds like it was a success for you. I don’t know. Fashion and men...it seems an odd combination. Thank God you have Katie. Otherwise, people might think you’re...”

The room fell quiet and nobody offered to come to the older woman’s rescue. She blushed and changed the subject.

“Now, this designer you mentioned...”

“Tyler Wood.”

“Is he supposed to be good?”

Kate interrupted, “Wait, *the* Tyler Wood? You met him? Mr. You’re-Always-In-Fashion-When-You’re-Sporting-Wood?”

Sawyer nodded proudly. “Mom, he’s the hottest up-and-coming designer in the world. Everybody wants a piece of him.” Dane shot him a look. “Well... um, we might be working together soon. It could open doors.”

“Speaking of which, I need to be heading out the door.”

Sawyer winced at Dane’s words. He followed him as he retrieved his bags piled at the front door. “Why not stay a little longer? You haven’t even finished your dessert.”

“Yeah,” Dane snorted quietly so that no one else could overhear. “A tart filled with crème. Sound like anyone we know?” Sawyer’s face registered that comment like a slap in the face. “Well, folks, I’m off. Mrs. Block, nice to see you again. And you two,” he motioned to Kate and Sawyer, “you lovebirds behave now.” He was out the door and down the porch steps

without another word.

Kate put a comforting hand on her “boyfriend’s” shoulder as they solemnly watched Dane walk down the street, away from his own home.

* * * *

The latest issue of *TORSO* rested on the edge of the sink next to the john where Paolo sat. One hand deftly flipped back and forth through the pages of a steamy pictorial while the other pumped his cock with intent. Clearly one hand knew what the other was doing and their concerted efforts were locked in an effort to time his climax with the right visual image. Almost there. Almost. The two men on the page brought him to the brink...and then left him there. Suddenly, the magazine wasn’t doing it for him. Before his erection flagged, though, a new image came to mind. Rich, from down the street. Hot, hairy Rich. The mere thought of the man made Paolo’s uncut cock expand fully. His ballsack clenched close to his body, ready to shoot a load across the floor. Paolo closed his eyes and gave in to the fantasy. Rich was banging him so forcefully, he could actually hear it.

Or could he?

He stopped beating his dick and the sound continued, soft but insistent. Try as he might to reconnect with his fantasy, his ear was cocked at the source of the knocking. Somebody was at the front door.

“*Madre de la gran puta!*” Paolo rarely swore in his native language. But the loss of this promising climax really pissed him off. Probably because of the thought of Rich. He wasn’t sure what that whole episode was going to mean or where it would lead...if anywhere. It wasn’t like they were going to leave their lovers, right?

The knocking sounded again.

Paolo pulled up his pajama bottom over his smooth cocoa skin, straightened the ribbed fabric of his imported undershirt (Aaron teasingly called it a wife beater), and checked himself in the mirror at the sink. Satisfied, he slipped the magazine back into its hiding place underneath the towels and headed downstairs.

* * * *

Finally, the porch lights came on. Dane sighed with relief. Paolo opened the door cautiously. Upon seeing his neighbor on the stoop, he opened up fully. "Dane..."

"Hi, Paolo. Sorry to bother you."

"No bother. What's wrong? When did you guys get back?"

Dane sighed again and shrugged. "We got back about an hour ago." He shuffled his feet absently. Paolo could tell he had something on his mind but wasn't sure how to go about voicing it. "Um... can I speak to my brother?"

"He went to bed early. Is this an emergency? I can wake him up—"

"No, no, no. Don't do that." Dane looked around the neighborhood helplessly.

"You okay?"

"Um...no. Not really." The man looked up with tears in his eyes. "I have to ask a big favor. Can I crash on your sofa tonight? I have no place to go."

"What?" Paolo stuck his head out and looked over at Number One Eldon Court. The downstairs was ablaze with lights. "Well, of course, you can stay here. Come on in."

"You sure I'm not interrupting anything?"

The Latin man gave Dane a puzzled look and then followed his gaze downward. Paolo was still half erect and a wet spot decorated the crotch of his pajamas. With some degree of embarrassment, he gave Dane a demure shrug of his shoulders. He reached down to hide his

condition. “Strangely, no. You didn’t interrupt a thing.” He took one of Dane’s bags and put his arm around his guest’s shoulders. “Tell you what. Let’s get you settled in the guest room and we can share what’s bothering us over a drink.”

“What’ve you got?”

“Everything, but I recommend Tequila in this instance.”

“You got a deal.”

* * * *

“Let me get this straight,” slurred Paolo. “Sawyer is at your home with his mother and his girlfriend?”

“No. Yes. Well, not exactly.” He was living this nightmare and it barely made sense to him. No wonder Paolo was lost. The alcohol wasn’t helping matters any. “Sawyer’s pretending to be straight. He’s gay.”

“Good. I was worried there.”

“And soon, I will be too.”

“Worried?”

“No, pretending to be straight.” Dane sat up and lowered his voice as though telling a secret. “I haven’t had a chance to tell Sawyer, but I think I have a new job.”

“You quit that terrible marketing thing to go with Sawyer on this trip, right?”

He nodded. “I couldn’t stand it anymore. The people there were so homophobic. I had to hide everything. I couldn’t even tell anyone about my weekend without having to switch all the pronouns.”

“Huh?”

“Calling Sawyer a ‘she’ instead of a ‘he’ so no one would figure out I was gay.”

Paolo took a good swig of tequila. “So...no, I’m still lost. You left a job because you had to be in the closet and now you want to pretend you’re straight.”

“I got the idea from Sawyer, actually. He pretends to be straight to get ahead in modeling. Well, I met a guy when we were in New York who is starting a new venture. I’m thinking of becoming his new partner.”

“Business partner.”

“Oh, yeah.” Dane giggled. The alcohol was getting the better of him. “I don’t want to leave Sawyer. He’s...he’s everything to me.”

“Even though he shut you out tonight.”

Dane nodded, suddenly sad again. “Yeah. It’s not perfect. We have some things to work out.” Tears welled in his eyes. “Oh Paolo, I’m just afraid I’m going to lose him.”

“I know how you feel. I think there’s something between Aaron and me...some kind of secret or something, I don’t know. And it’s like a wedge between us.”

“Hey,” Dane put a comforting hand on Paolo’s arm. “My brother loves the shit out of you. Trust me. But if there’s a secret between you, you’ve got to come clean. Otherwise, it will mess things up.”

Oh, the Latino thought, I may not know what’s wrong with Aaron, but if I tell my secret, things will be far worse.

Dane continued, sounding as though he were convincing himself of something. “This trip with Sawyer, it revealed a lot to me. Stuff we need to deal with. I realize this modeling job could rip him away from me. And then there’s this new thing I want to do. What if he doesn’t understand? What if he doesn’t approve?”

“What job?” Paolo demanded.

“Well, it’s a kind of... you know. It’s... Paolo, promise me you won’t tell a soul. Not even my brother.” Dane gave it up. “It’s porn.”

* * * *

It was much later. Sea wind whipped in the open window making the curtains dance. The air smelled of an impending storm. But it was a something else that pulled Dane from sleep, a familiar buzzing noise amid unfamiliar surroundings. His cell phone. He fumbled around in the darkness, trying to pinpoint its location. He was still zeroing in on the sound when the phone went silent. It took a minute to find where he left his clothes, draped over a wooden fan chair. He pulled his cell from his pants and confirmed that it had been Sawyer. With a tap of a speed-dial button, he returned the call.

“I was thinking you didn’t want to talk to me.” Sawyer sounded conscience-smitten.

“I love you, you jerk.”

“Seriously?”

“Seriously.”

Sawyer’s voice cracked. “I’m lonely.”

“What about Kate?”

“Not funny.”

“So come over. You know where I am.” He looked out the open window. “Meet me in the back yard.”

* * * *

As Sawyer jogged toward Number Three Eldon Court, home of Dane’s older brother Aaron, he took in the five Victorian homes that made up the neighborhood. This was where his heart lay, if he was honest with himself. No, that wasn’t entirely true. His heart was with Dane.

Their life was here.

But adventures awaited him — them — out there. Beyond the boundaries of Wonderland. Surely, there was a way to make that work for both of them. Allowing him to come to Fashion Week was a mistake. It was too much too soon. For all intents and purposes, fashion was an Ouroboros. A serpent with glittery scales of silver and gold that formed a circle as it fed upon itself. In traditional Greek culture, the Ouroboros represented cyclicity. As fashion, it reflected the industry's dog-eat-dog mentality. But it also depicted fashion's ability to constantly recreate itself. Styles came into vogue, fell from grace, and later reappeared to be hailed as the hot new thing. Sawyer wanted to tame the beast. It was an exciting challenge. But it would be a hollow victory without Dane. He had to let his lover know that. Right now.

With grim determination, he stepped around the side of the house toward the back yard.

"Dane," he called out. "Dane."

"Shhhh. I'm here." He stepped outside the house, gently closing the door behind him. He motioned quietly above them. "Got to be quiet. The windows are open."

Sawyer nodded. He took in his lover and was overcome with lust. Dane stood there dressed only in briefs. The white cotton was luminescent in the summer night air.

"A little overdressed, aren't we?"

His better half smiled coyly. "You're right," he said slipping his thumbs into the waistband and pulling the underwear down. He sauntered over to Sawyer. "There's a strict dress code, sir. No shirt, no shoes...or no service. Here, let me help you." He slid the man's shirt off his shoulders. Then helped remove his pants and underwear. They paused for a moment looking at one another. Sawyer could see the effect of the cool wind on Dane's skin. His nipples had hardened to tiny granite nubs. He reached out and brushed his hand across the man's full chest.

“So...about that service...”

“Follow me.”

“But we really need to talk—”

Dane put a forefinger against his lips and guided him to the steps leading into the swimming pool. They entered the water, gliding gracefully after one another. Without a splash, they frolicked. Touching. Hugging. Rubbing. Treading water, Sawyer whispered, “I’m in over my head.”

“You’ve got that right.”

They stroked their way back to where their toes could reach the bottom. There, Dane pinned Sawyer against the side of the pool. They kissed, sucking each other’s tongues into their mouths and playfully nibbling on each other’s lips. Then Dane took a deep breath and disappeared beneath the surface. Sawyer looked up at the darkened house; it appeared to be watching their antics. His attention was captured as Dane began sucking his dick underwater. He held himself in place by reaching behind and holding onto the cement lip of the pool.

“Oh, yeah.”

Dane surfaced, took another breath and dove again. With a lusty smile, Sawyer decided that the service here was phenomenal. He hoped Dane was enjoying his tip. If his actions underwater were any indication, it wasn’t enough and he was going deeper for more. Sawyer’s moans were lifted into the wind that had now whipped the water into a frenzy of little waves.

When Dane again appeared, Sawyer reached out to him. “Stop. If you keep this up, I’m going to come and I want to be inside you.”

“Uh-uh, Saws. I want to fuck you. I want to fuck you hard.”

They stared at each other, bobbing in the water.

“Flip for it?”

“You’re on.”

Abandoning any attempt at stealth, the boys went at it, chasing each other, splashing, dunking, laughing, and throwing themselves into the water. In the end, Dane won out. Sawyer panted in exhaustion and submitted. He floated over to his lover, wrapped his arms around Dane’s neck and his long legs around his lover’s hips.

“You sure?” For the first time, neither man had a condom.

“I’m yours, Dane. And I always will be. Nobody has ever had me like this.”

His lover nodded, understanding. He entered Sawyer little by little. The chlorine water offered little in the way of lubrication and Dane didn’t want to hurt the man in his arms. Not for the world. It was a rough entry, but Sawyer was a trooper. Once in, it was like walking on water. Using their natural buoyancy, they bobbed up and down in the pool, lost in a grand fuck. Sawyer held tightly to Dane’s taut body and bit into the soft flesh at his neck.

“Yes. Fuck me. Don’t stop. Never stop fucking me. It feels so good.”

“Oh Saws.”

The friction of skin on skin, with only water to ease Dane’s dick along, was quickly more than either man could handle. “I’m going to come.”

“Do it, babe. Come inside me. Fill me.”

“Ohhhhh.”

Their rhythm intensified. Dane grabbed Sawyer’s at the waist and literally slammed his lover down on his cock.

“Jesus!”

Dane’s covered his lover’s mouth in a full kiss as he came powerfully. Sawyer moaned

as he felt heat, hot jets of jism shooting deep inside of him. In contrast, the water suddenly felt cold. They remained locked in a cluster of straining limbs for a full minute. By then, Dane's dick softened and they naturally uncoupled. Strings of sticky come leaked from Sawyer's ass and floated in the water. By morning, the filter would have eliminated any evidence of their lovemaking.

"That was amazing!"

Dane, still breathing hard, agreed. "I didn't think I'd stop coming." He looked longingly into his lover's eyes. And that's when the sky opened releasing torrents of rain.

Forgetting their clothing, they ran for the house, only to find the door locked. "Oh man," laughed Dane. He didn't know it would lock behind him.

"I don't suppose you have a key?"

"Nope."

"Then come home."

And they were off, running naked, hand-in-hand. As they approach their house, it was evident that somebody was up because the downstairs lights were on. Sawyer stopped Dane. "It's got to be Mom. We can't go home."

They stood there, in the no-man's land of darkened Number Two Eldon Court, unsure of where to go or what to do. Then a barrage of lightning and thunder ripped the night sky. The rain worsened and the wind whipped with force. Suddenly aware of their exposure, the men sought shelter against the house.

"Wow. Look at it."

"Hey," Dane tapped Sawyer's shoulder, indicating the window behind them, "Look at this." The house had been empty for quite some time. That much everybody on Eldon Court

knew. But the inside looked... surprisingly clean. Or so it seemed with the glimpse the ambient light afforded them. Pieces of furniture stood like ghosts covered in white sheets. The men moved along the house, peering in, until they came to the back door. Sawyer smiled at Dane and tried the knob.

“You know this place is locked up tight, Saws.”

The door fell open. Along with Dane’s jaw.

“You were saying? Let’s explore.”

“I don’t know...”

Sawyer pulled him in. “It’s not like we have much choice. Let’s at least ride out the storm here.” Dane didn’t look convinced. “Come on, it’ll be an adventure.”

* * * *

The house, though large, was unremarkable. Sure, the wood flooring was in pristine shape underneath a layer of dust. The woodwork on the sidewalls only needed some oil. And the covered furniture was of a style that didn’t match Sawyer and Dane’s tastes. Rich, but stuffy. Of course, there was no electricity and the water had been shut off.

The boys made a romantic nest for themselves on the second floor in an empty bedroom. Dane spread a bunch of the furniture sheets on the floor before a half moon window, which was clearly the most distinctive feature they had seen in the house. Rain washed the window and reflected liquid tattoos on their naked skin.

“So have you...you know, done it with anyone else?”

“No!”

“Because I’ve heard plenty from some of the models I spoke to on the trip.”

Sawyer leaned forward. “Dane, listen to me. I have never cheated on you. Never.” He

looked out the window for a long moment. “But things are progressing to the next level. I’ve called my own shots so far, but sooner or later, I’m probably going to have to play by the rules.”

Dane looked back at him. “Pay to play...”

Sawyer laid his head on Dane’s shoulder. “If you want me to quit, I will.”

“Hell no! This is your dream. If I asked you to give that up, I wouldn’t be a very good partner, would I? We just have to be straight with each other.”

“And there’s that. The straight thing.”

“I meant honest.”

“I know what you meant but my whole modeling persona is a straight superman who is really a mild-mannered gay boy, completely devoted to his lover. It’s a secret we’d have to keep together.” They agreed that it would be a lot easier if they could keep Sawyer’s mother at bay. Specifically, south bay — far from their home in Wonderland.

“Want to know a secret?”

Sawyer looked at Dane with curiosity.

“The idea of you with another guy kind of turns me on.” Sawyer’s eye widened. “I mean, don’t make a habit of it. I can be a jealous bitch. But if you have to take one for the team...let me watch!”

“I don’t know you!”

They laughed.

“Got another secret, as long as we’re sharing.” Sawyer motioned for him to continue. “I met a guy when we were in New York, you know, when I didn’t see you for three days?”

Sawyer stopped smiling. “I understand.”

“It’s not what you think. We didn’t have sex. We were talking business. I think I know

what I'd like to try my hand at."

Sawyer was relieved. He squeezed Dane's hand. "That's great, babe. I'm sure you'll be great at anything you set your mind to."

"Yeah? Well, I borrowed a page from your book, superman."

"I don't follow you."

Dane took a deep breath and explained. He couldn't keep following Sawyer around from city to city like a lost puppy. He needed to find something productive to do. Something lucrative. Dane had watched how fashionistas fed off Sawyer's supposed heterosexuality. It was an aphrodisiac for many of the gays around him. So Dane figured, let's make that pay off. He intended to start a new online venture leveraging his business partner's knowledge of photography and film and his own background in marketing. A new website that would feature straight men that had sex with other men. They would call it Straight to Bed.

"You're kidding."

Dane shook his head.

"Would you be doing the modeling?"

"No. Maybe at first until we can line up guys to use as models." He hesitated. "So what do you think?"

"You're going to have sex with other guys?"

"Sawyer, you're the only guy for me. But yes, it would involve sex. If you don't want me to do it, I won't."

Sawyer heard his own words come back at him. Dane said that he could deal with Sawyer's modeling career. But could he accept his partner's job in online porn? Could their relationship survive this? He sat there watching the rain abate, leaning into the warmth of Dane's

naked body. What had happened to them? In less than a year, their ordinary lives had become surreal. But he wanted an adventure, right? Sawyer mulled on this until the answer came to him.

It was all a matter of perspective. The love they felt for each other, that was all that mattered. Their jobs were fantasies. Pretending to be straight. Playing a part even to the point of having sex with a stranger if necessary. None of that was genuine. There was no emotion behind the charade.

“Yeah, okay.” Sawyer nodded to Dane. “Let’s make this work.”

They were about to embrace when they heard the back door open downstairs. Heavy footsteps echoed on the floor. Sawyer guessed that the person was wearing handmade Italian shoes with true wood outsoles. Expensive. The stranger began to speak, obviously connected to somebody by cell phone. “I’m here. This shouldn’t take long.” More pacing. “I understand. I’ll—wait a minute.” The house fell silent. “Let me get back to you. I think somebody is here.”

“Shit!” whispered Sawyer. They looked around frantically for a hiding place as footfalls sounded on the stairs. Whoever it was, he was coming up. They took refuge in the bedroom closet, pressing themselves as far back into the darkness as they could. It was a narrow space, forcing the men to crouch in tandem, Sawyer directly behind Dane.

The stranger walked along the corridor and then paused, perhaps unsure how to proceed. Sawyer figured he must have seen the water on the floor from when he and Dane entered the house. But the guy couldn’t know they were still in there. Just great, they were going to be caught in somebody else’s house. Naked.

The door to the closet was slightly ajar. They couldn’t fully close it without making noise that might give them away. Dane peered through the opening and listened intently as the stranger wandered from room to room. Behind him, the thrilling possibility of being discovered

aroused Sawyer. His exposed cock stiffened. Dane's butt was before him, a tempting target. "I shouldn't do this. This is crazy." He thought as he shuffled forward until his dick was rubbing along the hairs of Dane's crack. The prone man looked back in disbelief. But he didn't resist as Sawyer spit on his hand and rubbed it on his hole. Dane arched his back to accommodate the curve of his lover's dick. Then Sawyer was inside of him. He felt a tremendous sense of completeness as he was impaled. He involuntarily started to moan and was stifled as Sawyer's hand covered his mouth. The hand remained clamped as Sawyer quietly but methodically began pumping his cock deep inside Dane.

The stranger entered the bedroom, saw the tangle of sheets on the floor and set down a metal case to use his cell phone. This time, he was close enough that Dane could hear the electronic beeps.

"Me again. Somebody has definitely been here. The sheets have been taken off of the furniture..." Pause. "I thought you said this place was abandoned."

Dane tried to concentrate on what the man was saying but Sawyer's plowing was powerful competition to any other thoughts. Except maybe a sense of déjà vu. One fateful night, over a year ago, he had been face-to-face with an oblivious co-worker through a crack in a men's room partition as Sawyer pounded his ass. Now, here, he watched through an open door as the stranger, dressed in a black overcoat, gave the room a cursory glance. There was nothing to be done. Either they'd be caught or, like that night in the men's room, they'd escape detection. He succumbed to Sawyer's dick, gloriously rubbing the inside of his ass raw. Sawyer had turned into a machine, a human piston running at full throttle, moving closer to release. With his mouth still covered, Dane was forced to breathe deeply through his nose.

That's when he smelled the gasoline.

Panic surged through him as Sawyer made one final thrust, filling his battered asshole with the soothing ointment of come before he fell forward over Dane's back. No longer possessed by carnal hunger, Sawyer heard the stranger retrieve the metal can and leave the bedroom.

Dane pulled himself off and twisted around to whisper into his lover's ear. "This guy is trouble. We've got to get out of the closet."

Dane emerged from the closet with caution. He motioned Sawyer to follow. They stopped, hidden on either side of the open bedroom door and waited until the footsteps had retreated to another part of the second floor.

"Go." Sawyer hesitated, not wanting to leave his partner's side. "Go!" Dane urged, his voice low. The model nodded once, kissed him quickly, and fled into the hallway and down the stairs. The stranger heard Sawyer's bare feet on the hard wood and ran to pursue. As he passed the bedroom, Dane rushed out and clipped the stranger with his shoulder. The man in black lost his balance and hit the wall at the top of the staircase. His attempt to regain his footing missed both the floor and the top step, finding only air. He dropped the gasoline can and grabbed for the railing, but missed. Both he and the can tumbled over the edge, falling down the stairs in a cacophony of clangs and bangs.

There was a moment of silence. Then Dane heard the stranger trying to rise. He ran for the stairs at the other end of the hallway, leading up to the third floor, and took them two at a time. It ended in a single room with a single window. Desperate, Dane twisted open the lock and tugged at the windowsill. It was old and stubborn but he was able to force the pane up enough to slip through. The stranger burst into the bedroom just then, limping and cursing. He peered out the window with a stern face, but Dane was already out of reach as he inched his way

along the shingled roof. It was slick from the rain.

Dane peeked over the edge. He couldn't see Sawyer but he knew he was there, somewhere, just out of sight. Looking back, Dane noted that the stranger had also disappeared. Before he could decide what to do next, his feet slipped out from under him. Then he was sliding forward, picking up speed. At the last second, he was able to grab the rain gutter and found himself hanging over the edge of the roof. He struggled to pull himself back up, his biceps bulging with concentrated effort. But his hands couldn't maintain their grip. Dane fell into the fresh night air.

What next?

PART FIVE

The New Neighbors

by Adam Carpenter

In Wonderland, people treasure many things: their privacy certainly counts, their right to live their lives as they see fit, their friends and their neighbors, and the places and events that help make the village what it is. Given its picturesque oceanic views, its gorgeous sunshine and blue skies, its desirable proximity to California's lush coast, it's no wonder there's a belief that magic exists within its borders. That was a Wonderland tradition and had been for years, decades -- a place that lived within its own world, its own rules.

Which of course meant that all of that was destined to change.

Change did not occur when Edgar and Jack moved into Number Four Eldon Court, nor did it happen when Aaron and Paolo settled at Number Three, or when young Sawyer was lucky enough to land Number One Eldon Court. No, change really didn't arrive until the day Rich North and Marc Anderson discovered the wonders of Number Five Eldon Court. For three years the quiet street had been left alone, and now these newcomers had gone and mixed it up. But that was nothing compared with what was still to happen.

Number Two Eldon Court still remained empty. Or at least, that's how it was supposed to be.

* * * *

Marc Anderson couldn't sleep, not with all that thunder. Rich, damn him, could probably sleep through a nuclear explosion—survive it, too. Once the storm had rumbled over Wonderland, Marc grabbed hold of a late-night nightcap from the kitchen, brought it out to his favorite spot at the house at Number Five—the front porch.

He watched as rain cascaded down in near sheets, curled up in protective-mode whenever a streak of lightning cracked the black sky. The feel of the brandy soothed his throat, warmed his insides, and comforted him. Lost in thought, about their new lives here and the strange things that been happening on Eldon Court, Marc supposed he was letting his imagination get the best of him. The only thing he was certain of was the fact that Rich had fucked Paolo. *God*, he sighed, *new scenery, same old problem...*

A commotion broke his from his thoughts.

Down the street, something was happening at one of his neighbors' houses. He got up from the wicker chair to gaze down the street but was unable to see anything. Just then lightning streaked across the sky again, highlighting the action taking place at...Number Two.

"Number Two?" he asked aloud. "But that's supposed to be empty."

Suddenly he heard the slam of a door, the spit of tires against gravel, and at the last minute, headlights of a car as it sped down the street. Marc also thought he detected a scream. Despite the fact he was glad only in shorts, he went running down the steps and down the street. He felt ridiculous, exposed. Someone, though, needed his help and that took precedence.

As Marc approached the edge of the lawn at Number Two, he saw two figures near the bushes surrounding the periphery of the house. He thought he also detected the smell of gasoline. He thought of the Molotov cocktail thrown at Aaron and Paolo's house, wondered if maybe he was catching the culprits in the act of another incident of arson.

“Hey,” he called out. “Who’s there...what are you doing on our street?”

A rustling sound could be heard, and the two figures emerged from their hiding spot. By now Marc’s eyes had adjusted to the darkness, and his night vision was taking over. He saw that both men were young-looking, probably twentysomething, just a few years younger than him. He couldn’t help but notice they were naked, one of them doing his best to hide his...privates. The other was just letting it all hang out.

“Sorry, did we disturb you?” said the not-shy one.

Marc said, “Who are you?”

“Sawyer Block. The one covered with leaves is Dane Walters.”

“Aaron’s brother?” Marc asked.

“Oh, you know Aaron?” said Dane. “Who are you?”

“Marc. Marc Anderson. I’m the new neighbor at Number Five,” he said. “You guys want to tell me what’s going on?”

“Uh, we were...you know, having sex. My mother is staying at our house, so we needed a place to...”

Marc put his hand up in protest. “Say no more. But who was driving that car? And is that gasoline I smell?”

“Look, Marc...can we talk about this another time?”

“We were having a threesome,” Sawyer suddenly said, cutting off his lover. “Look, we were lighting some kerosene lamps, there’s no electricity in that house. The last thing we need to do is call any more attention to us tonight. My mother, she can’t know.”

Marc nodded. “Guess I’ll have to get used to the antics that go on here on Eldon Court.”

“Thanks, man. We appreciate it,” Sawyer said. “Hey, you’ve got a nice body, Marc, you ever...”

“No.”

And so Marc Anderson finally met the last two his neighbors, and he would remember it always. Not just because they’d invited him to join them for a wild night of threesome sex, but because he knew just about every word out of their mouths had been a lie.

* * * *

It was four days later when the limousine came to Eldon Court.

“What the hell is that?”

“It looks like a limo.”

“Well, duh, hello, I know what a limo is. I mean, what’s it doing on Eldon Court?”

“Maybe it’s a romantic gesture for one of us? Maybe our lover wants to sweep us off our feet, fuck us nice and good in the backseat.”

“God, if only.”

There were four of them situated on the steps and porch of Number Five Eldon Court, with Marc acting as the host of their morning coffee klatch. Joining him were Paolo, Edgar, and from down the street, young Dane. It was Edgar who had made the sex in the limo comment, but Paolo who replied “if only.” Everyone looked at him, the same thought occurring to them: Trouble in paradise? Edgar, it would appear, wasn’t getting any lately.

The conversation would have continued in that vein had the limousine not pulled into the driveway of Number Two Eldon Court. Something was afoot.

“New neighbors?” asked Paolo.

“Should we go down and ask what’s going on?” Dane wanted to know.

“I don’t like the looks of this,” Edgar added.

“Guys, guys, let’s not get all melodramatic here. Just sit and enjoy our coffee, and watch what happens from here.” As always with this group, Marc realized he had to be the voice of reason. Still, he had to wonder, given what had happened the other night if Dane actually knew what was going on.

It was a late June morning and the neighbors had begun to form a new bond. The first klatch had happened randomly, with Marc hanging out on the porch with his coffee that Monday morning. Edgar wandered over, proclaiming “writer’s block.” Coffee was poured, and next thing Marc knew, the process was repeated the next day and the next. Dane had jogged by one morning and stayed for a cup, too. The last holdout to join their tiny gang was Paolo. Marc had eyed him suspiciously that Friday morning, kept a cool distance and hoped that his neighbor wouldn’t return the next Monday. But he did, and subsequent mornings. The four of them had officially become the Coffee Club.

A man clad in black emerged from the driver’s seat and walked around the length of the limo to the backseat, where he proceeded to open the door for his passenger. Another man unfolded himself from the rear of the stretch limo. He was tall, more than six two, and even from this distance they could tell he was a man with power, that’s what Dane said.

“Uh, he’s also way hot,” Paolo added.

Marc shot him an unexpected cold look. *Would he fuck anything?* Granted, what he’d said about the new arrival wasn’t untrue. With thick, perfectly coiffed brown hair, the face of a movie star, and an air of grace swirling about him, this stranger in the strange car smoothed down his crinkled but very expensive suit and gazed about his surroundings. He was looking at the street and the houses, looking pleased. The four men at Number Five suddenly felt the man’s

penetrating gaze find them. He held the look, but didn't make any effort to wander over, to say anything, hell—the guy didn't even wave. A broad grin hit his face, and then suddenly he turned away from them and bounded up the steps of Number Two.

“Wow,” Edgar said. “Now that's what I call a fine specimen.

“Maybe he's here to buy the new place. Just think, Paolo, more hot meat on the street,” Marc said. “Of course, we can only look. I'm sure a hot piece like that is off-limits.”

A noticeable tension hit the group. Edgar and Dane sensed that last remark had a specific target and it seemed to have hit its mark. They excused themselves, passing quick pecks on the cheek to their host and neighbors. As they drifted away, Marc found himself alone with Paolo for the first time since...he couldn't even put it in words. And he wasn't even sure he wanted to confront Paolo. Before he could decide, Paolo took matters into his own hands.

“I'm sorry,” Paolo said. “I don't know....”

Marc cut him off, and the next words out of his mouth surprised him. “It's not your fault, Paolo. Let's just say it's not the first time Rich had strayed. I was hoping Wonderland would be a new chance for us—a new one for Rich. He's made mistakes in his life, for sure, and I've always been there to see him through them. I stand by my man, even when he admits that he can't always reciprocate.”

“Now I really feel bad,” Paolo said.

“Look, Rich is an attractive, sexy guy. He likes to flirt, and he craves the attention. When we arrived for your pool party, I told myself to take whatever happened in stride. Of course I was hopeful that Rich's eye wouldn't wander, but of course it did. He's actually got pretty low self-esteem, and so having sex with others kind of emboldens him. You've had him,

you know how good he is. His biggest ego stroke is that cock of his. I guess he feels the more he shares it and shows it off, the better he'll feel about himself. So no, I don't blame you."

Paolo had turned away, embarrassed to be given such absolution. "You mean he used me?"

"Men like Rich, they use everyone," Marc said, stifling a laugh. "But I still love him, and I still believe this new start will have the desired effect. Make no mistake -- he loves me and his affinity for seeking sex elsewhere hasn't ever taken away from our own sex lives. Rich just likes to have sex."

"You know, I realize I let Rich fuck me, but in terms of friendship, it was you I wanted," Paolo said. "Any chance we can start over?"

Despite what had happened, Marc knew he too needed a friend, and living on an isolated street such as Eldon Court, in a new town, the beggar couldn't be choosy. Marc extended his hand, and Paolo took it, following it with a quick embrace.

"So, friend, what's on the docket for the day?"

"I thought I'd finally go Down Wonder, maybe stop by Lauren Healy's gallery."

Paolo smiled. "Want company? Maybe we can have lunch before at the Bayside's poolside restaurant, knock back a martini or two. I think I can get us a table. After all, I am sleeping with the Assistant Manager of Customer Relations."

"As long as he's the only person you're sleeping with," Marc said, surprisingly himself at his ability to joke about the matter.

"Ouch," Paolo said with a smile. "What a bitch."

* * * *

Wonderland's hottest scene was lunch by the pool at the Bayside Hotel, and during this last week of June, business was booming. Good thing for Rich North he hadn't needed a reservation, since his scheduled appointment was with the owner of the hotel itself, a Mr. Danvers Converse. An odd name, certainly, but wealthy people had their eccentricities and names were just the tip of the iceberg.

He strode through the lobby in his business suit, looking very out of place. Passing by the elevator that led to the penthouse suite, he smiled at the remembrance of passionate nights he and Marc had spent upstairs in that room. The thought further spilled over into feelings of guilt. He'd cheated on Marc again, this time with a neighbor. What had possessed him to fuck Paolo down on the beach the night of the pool party he couldn't say. But then again, he never understood what drove him to be with men other than the one he loved. Calling it a sickness was a cheap excuse. He liked sex, and he'd never turned it down. Perhaps it went back to high school and his first sexual experience, inside the coat room during the prom with someone other than his date. An image of the boyish Parker St. John flashed in his mind. Had his cheating ways been established that night, along with his desire for men?

"Rich, is that you?"

Rich turned to see Aaron Walters approaching him, clad in white shorts and a white knit shirt. With his even tan and easy smile, it was little wonder he'd been cast in the role of customer service. What person wouldn't want to be seen in the company of such a great-looking guy?

"Hi, Aaron. How's it going?"

"Same old. You?"

"Business lunch. With Mr. Converse."

Aaron's face wrinkled at the news and Rich wondered what that was all about. He didn't appear interested in explaining his reaction, just took hold of Rich's arm. "I'll show you to his table. It's under a large umbrella, so the sun won't be beaming down too badly on you. Must be important, no one in Wonderland wears a suit during the summer months."

"I am the new bank manager, and this is a business meeting. I didn't want to take the chance."

"Oh, I don't think that will be a problem," Aaron said mysteriously.

The two men wandered out onto the expansive deck of the Bayside, where a giant pool was surrounded by tables and chairs. About a dozen of them were already occupied by beautiful people in swim suits and summer wear, sunglasses and stylish hats that protected their skin from the sun's deadly rays. Rich felt more out of place than he'd expected.

"Let me get you a glass of wine," Aaron said as he showed Rich to his chair.

"Oh, no...I couldn't possibly have a drink right now."

"Mr. Converse will insist. Fear not, I know the man quite well. I know what he likes."

Aaron's enigmatic words had to keep Rich company as he awaited both his drink and his lunch companion. For now, he took a look around, jealous at the other diners for the ease with which they seemed to be living their lives. Like they hadn't a care in the world. *Some of us*, Rich thought, *still have to earn a living*. He took a napkin from his place setting and dabbed at the sweat which formed on his brow. Despite the ocean breeze, Rich was sweating inside his suit. He felt the first dab of perspiration slide down his back.

Finally he saw two men in business suits coming toward him. An older man with a gleaming chrome dome of a head led, a smaller but much more handsome man trailing after him. The second man was holding a glass of wine.

“Mr. North,” said the older man, his words statement rather than question. As though he already knew who Rich was. “Danvers Converse. This is Mr. Allen. Russell Allen, my associate.”

“Pleasure, Mr. North,” Russell said. He set the glass down. “Aaron mentioned this was for you?”

“Oh, uh, yes...he thought in this heat I might need some refreshment. Didn’t realize it was...”

“Nonsense, Mr. North,” Converse said, settling into his chair. “If you can’t enjoy a glass of wine with lunch, what good is life? This is Wonderland, and we want everyone who lives here, who stays here, to feel as welcome as any place on the planet. This is a unique kind of town, lots of history but with so much future potential. But all that can wait. What do you say I order us a fine bottle from the hotel’s cellar and we can get our business under way.”

Danvers Converse snapped his fingers, and a waiter appeared immediately. He couldn’t have been more than eighteen, this kid, with a fresh face and eager nature. He seemed to know just what his boss required and promised to be back within minutes. Left to their devices, the three men were distracted by the arrival of two guests on the patio. Rich couldn’t believe what he was seeing. Was that really Marc and Paolo? What were they doing here? Didn’t Marc remember that he was lunching here today, why would he come and why of all people would he bring Paolo? An image of Paolo pushed up against the boulder, Rich plowing his tight ass, flashed in his mind. He felt himself harden, then grow red with embarrassment. He hadn’t realized his lover and his fling had become such pals.

“Friends of yours, Mr. North?”

“Oh, uh. Our neighbor, Paolo. And the other guy, he’s...” Rich hesitated, not sure how much Danvers Converse knew about him. Turned out, a lot.

“He’s your partner, is he not? Marc Anderson?”

“Yes, Mr. Converse. You’ve obviously done your homework on me.”

“You don’t get where I am in business without knowing your opponent.”

Rich didn’t like the sound of that, an underlying threat. He squirmed noticeably in his seat as a cocksure grin widened on Converse’s face, as though to say, “I have you where I want you.”

The wine arrived as Paolo and Marc were seated on the opposite side of the pool. He noticed they both took off their shirts, ready to sun bathe as they wine and dined. He wasn’t sure how he felt about their burgeoning friendship. Marc had said nothing about Rich and Paolo, wasn’t entirely sure he had guessed what had happened. But Marc had put up with so much, what was one more infraction? He returned his attention to the table as the wine was poured and glasses were raised in toast.

“To the future,” Converse said.

The three men clinked glasses, a chiming sound followed by a ringing. Rich discovered the ringing was coming from Converse’s cell phone. He picked up without apology, spoke tersely, nodding his head. When he hung up, he leaned over and whispered something into Russell’s ear. Without a word of good-bye, Russell Allen left their table.

“An urgent matter requires his attention,” Converse said. “So, Mr. North—may I call you Rich?—it’s just you and I for lunch. What would you like? I recommend the lobster salad. It’s quite fresh and divine. Yes, wonderful, I’ll have the same.”

The hovering waiter took the order and disappeared. Rich found himself alone with Danvers Converse, and he had a feeling this was how it was meant to be. As though what had transpired so far was all choreographed, from Aaron's greeting him right down to the phone call.

"So, Mr. Converse, you requested this meeting. I assume you have some business that would be of interest to the Wonderland Savings Bank?"

"As a matter of fact, yes. Since you came on board as the bank manager, I thought it best we meet as soon as possible. Wonderland has been...wonderful to me since I've taken ownership of the Bayside and I would like to give back to the community. A few select investors and I have decided to develop some properties in town, and of course we require financing. That's where your bank comes in. We hope to come to a mutually beneficial arrangement."

"Sounds ideal," Rich said. "Which properties are you interested in?"

Converse took a sip from his wine, an obvious ploy for time, for effect. Finally he said, "Eldon Court."

"Excuse me?" Rich asked.

"You heard me well enough, Mr. North."

"You realize, of course, that Eldon Court is my home."

"You've been there a mere month, it can hardly mean all that much to you. But that's not why I've called you to this meeting. I do wish to secure financing from your bank for the development of the property—the houses and the land, the beachfront below—and I fully expect you to cooperate."

"And destroy the new life I've built for myself. Why would I ever agree to that?"

“Come now, Mr. North,” Converse said, a growing leer to his face. “It’s hardly the first time you’ve destroyed your life. You wouldn’t be in this situation otherwise.”

That’s when Rich realized he was dealing with a businessman of ruthless proportion. Assuming this was an innocent meeting, Rich hadn’t prepared much beyond the surface. Converse was the owner of the Bayside and was exploring further businesses in Wonderland. Conversely, Mr. Converse had done his homework very well, A-plus, really. Because he knew as much about Rich as there was to know.

“I think this meeting is over, Mr. Converse,” Rich said, standing up from his seat.

“On the contrary,” he said, and the next gesture took Rich by utter surprise. The older man slid a card key across the table. “We will continue our discussion in more private quarters. I would hate to be overheard. This deal is top secret and if word were to spread beyond this table, there would be hell to pay. As an official of the Wonderland Savings Bank, you are subject to confidentiality. Mention one word to another person, and you’ll never work again--on either coast. You’re been fortunate, Mr. North, given a second chance in this forgotten little town. Don’t make the same mistake you made in New York. Don’t fuck the wrong person.”

His words were ominous, laced with a threat that Rich could ill-afford to bluff. He accepted the card key, and without another word he left the pool area. Somehow, inside the air-conditioned lobby he felt hotter still, nearly faint from the heat which threatened to undo him.

* * * *

Mid-afternoon on a summer Tuesday and for Sawyer Block, nothing could be more boring than being home in Wonderland. Not after the fancy parties, the booze and the drugs, the clothes and the adoration, and the flights to foreign locales and private residences. But his body did need to dry out some, and so maybe it wasn’t so bad that he was spending the day flipping

through magazines, ripping out any photo of himself he came across. An hour into his endeavor, he had gathered quite a collection of advertisements. Man, the royalties would be flooding in, he'd be able to afford homes in places beyond Wonderland, in Paris and in Milan, in Tokyo if he so chose. Get out from under his father's financial thumb.

Damn, but it was good to be gorgeous.

The front door banged open, and in ran an excited Dane, his body clad only in shorts. A nice coating of sweat glistened against his tanned skin.

"Oh my God, you missed it. A limo pulled up at Number Two, this really hot guy got out and entered the house—he didn't seem to be the same guy who almost caught us the other night. We all saw it, Marc and Paolo and Edgar, we were having our morning coffee."

"That was hours ago. What's got you so riled up now?"

"Because just now the limo returned and this time a different guy got out."

"What the hell, Dane, have you been spying on the house?"

"Call me curious. I was just coming up the drive to tell you about the first limo, and that's when the second one arrived. You've got to admit, something weird is going on. Empty all these years, now it's the focus of attention by men who arrive by limousine?"

"So what do you think is going on?" Sawyer asked, definitely intrigued.

"Only one way to find out."

"I think I'm going to regret this."

Like kids on Halloween, they sped out of the house ready to play trick or treat—whichever the situation called for. Sneaking around the back of their house, they circled around to the rear porch of Number Two Eldon Court, hoping that the old stairs weren't as creaky as time might have allowed. Better that, though, than falling into the bushes from the second floor.

They eased up the stairs, trying the door to the kitchen and discovering it was locked. Their luck had changed. Peering inside the small glass squares, they searched for any sign of activity and found none. If both of their new neighbors were still inside the house, they were either in the front or upstairs. Dane took out of his wallet and reached for a credit card. Sliding the card against the doorframe, they heard a quick click and then the back door popped open. Well, they'd already broken in, they may as well enter.

"I can't believe you just did that," Sawyer added. "I'm so turned on right now."

"Uh, Sawyer honey, you don't have an off switch."

Silently now, they edged their way through the kitchen, listening for any creak in the floor or voices. Cobwebs adorned ceiling corners, with thick layers of dust covering every surface. In the living room, furniture was still covered with once-white sheets; time had taken its toll on everything. One thing they did notice was that all of the windows of the house were opened, the pent-up musty smell giving way to the fresh air off the ocean. It would take more than an afternoon to rid the old house of its stale odor. One new thing caught their attention that the darkness of the other night hadn't revealed. Splotches of rust brown splattered the far wall.

"What the hell is that?" Dane asked.

"My guess? Blood. Dried blood."

Both men shivered, wondering what it meant.

Just then a sound from upstairs caught their attention. Sawyer and Dane exchanged looks, their silence clearly understood. They'd come this far, what was an old staircase but a minor inconvenience. Stealthily, they made their way up the stairs, an occasional creak in the wood echoing in the near-silence of the house. Still, they went undetected.

The door to the bedroom in the front of the house was half-closed, and urgent sounds could be heard coming from inside.

“Holy shit,” Dane whispered. “More homos on Eldon Court. Five for five.”

Sawyer rolled his eyes; liked he cared about statistics. He wanted to see some action. Easing their way forward, they saw skin. Both men were naked, locked in the missionary position. The guy on top was working his impressive cock with fierce determination. The guy on the bottom took each slick thrust with ease. His screams filled the room and it could have been interpreted he was in pain—both Sawyer and Dane knew the sound though and it was pure, unadulterated ecstasy.

They were both good-looking guys, with the top garnering more acclaim than the bottom. Even in the throes of passion, his face contorted and his muscles working overtime, you could tell he was what many might call “pretty.” *Pretty fucking amazing*, Sawyer thought. Guy was a bit too hairy for his tastes, though the bottom was having a field day with all that fur, leaving deep scratches on the guy’s back. The top roared with pleasure, and it was clear they were getting close to climax.

Did they stay for the finale? Or had they seen enough?

They wouldn’t be themselves if they left now.

Suddenly they heard the top demand that he “grab my furry back, yeah, pull it, yeah, you love all that hair, take it man, I’m going to come so hard, so fast...yeah, that’s it....”

The bottom wrapped his legs around his ass, pulling the guy in deeper for the final plunge.

“Ahhhh,” screamed one as they let out a grunt of utter desire. The hairy guy on top bellowed with pent-up rage as he came. “Yes, oh yes oh fuck, oh yeah...oh my God.” The top

rolled over, obviously out of breath. But their coupling wasn't yet over. Bottom guy climbed on top, sliding himself down over that big cock and began to moved up, then, up then down, working his ass continuously while he stroked his own member. He stroked hard, fast, and less than a minute later he was shooting thick ropes of come all over the guy's chest.

"Oh, shit, I'm so glad you called. That was fucking fantastic," the bottom said, not yet ready to relinquish the guy's cock from his ass. He wiggled, playfully running his fingers through his own come, matting down the thick brown hair of the guy's belly.

"Give me a few minutes, we can go again."

"You know I'd love it. But I have to get back. This isn't part of the plan, remember?"

"Call it a fringe benefit."

At last they parted, and the man who'd royally fucked his friend got up and headed toward the bathroom. They heard the shower being turned on, the door closing. Then they saw the bottom guy get up, grab for his cell phone. He punched in a bunch of numbers, waited until the other end picked up.

"Hi, it's Russell. I need to see you again. It's important." A pause, obviously the other guy was talking. "Okay, same place. Fifteen minutes. Don't be late."

The guy named Russell began to dress, putting on a business suit, complete with tie. Who wears ties in Wonderland? What the hell was going on? An afternoon rendezvous at a house that hadn't seen any kind of action in years and was now the hotbed of an afternoon's sexual liaison? It made no sense; nor did it seem these guys were partners in any way; even as hard as Sawyer and Dane screwed each other, there was always kissing, there was intimacy. What they'd just witnessed, it could have just been a business meeting for all the emotion it carried.

Russell had finished dressing and made his way toward the door. Sawyer and Dane scrambled, hiding themselves in a familiar nearby closet. When Russell passed them by, they listened for sounds of the other guy, whose name they hadn't yet learned. He was still in the shower. So the two of them eased their way back downstairs and out the back way.

Once safely inside their home at Number One Eldon Court, Sawyer and Dane exchanged curious looks.

"What the hell was that all about?"

"Beats me," Dane said. "But whatever it was, they're not new neighbors. Something else is going on there. And once we find out what it is, I don't think any of us is going to like it."

Sawyer checked his watch. "The others don't get home till later. We've got a couple of hours. Are you as turned on as I am?"

"I repeat..."

"I know, I know, I'm always horny. Shut up, Dane. Just take me upstairs and fuck me. You know what to do. And how many times."

* * * *

"Guys, hi—oh, I'm so glad you stopped by. Marc, I've been meaning to call but it's been so busy with the summer tourist gearing up..."

"No need to explain. If I felt I was ready to show my stuff to a gallery, I suppose I would have been more aggressive about following up."

"Oh good, a modest artist. I can't stand those who think their pieces rival Picasso. Fuck-heads, all of them."

Lauren Healy was a vision of beauty this afternoon. Her gallery was equally bright, with large plate glass windows taking in the afternoon sun. At the moment, the place was devoid of any traffic, so the newly arrived Marc, with Paolo in tow, had their host all to themselves.

“Have a seat, can I get you some coffee? Glass of wine?”

“We just shared a bottle over at the Bayside....” Paolo explained.

“Which just means you’ve got a nice buzz going.”

The Lauren Healy Gallery was located, of course, Down Wonder, directly across the street from a flower shop and pet store. On the far corner was the Mad Hatter Bar & Grill, which Rich had been promising to take Marc to some night soon. Just to get out from the routine of quiet, solitude, sex that was Eldon Court at night.

Lauren returned with a bottle of Pinot Grigio and poured three generous glasses. They clinked to future successes, and then settled in for a friendly talk about art, commerce, and the marriage between the two.

“Of course I need to sell, that’s how I stay in business,” Lauren explained. “So I’m happy to look over your stuff, Marc--no guarantees, though. If I like what I see, I don’t know of any reason I wouldn’t host a show for you. All you boys up on Eldon Court will come to the opening, and I know you’ve all got money to spare for a painting or two. We’ve got a few collectors in town, but most of our trade comes from the tourists. Wonderland isn’t exactly known for its art scene or for anything much beyond its isolationism, but when people do find us off the highway they generally come back. The Bayside is a great place to stay, and we’ve got plenty of charming stores to offer visitors.”

“You sound like you should run the tourism board,” Marc said.

“I sort of do. All decisions about the direction of Wonderland are handled by the village council, of which I’m a member. We handle all sorts of governmental issues, from housing to permits, tourist campaigns, zoning.”

“Zoning?” Marc asked.

“Basically, we turn down all offers for any kind of chain store. The rest of the country can be as homogenized as they like. In Wonderland, we really like people to feel like they’ve fallen down the rabbit hole. If we don’t like an idea, we shoot it down. Of course those are delicate issues, since Wonderland isn’t necessarily self-sufficient, so we do depend a bit on outsiders. But there’s a difference to letting in developers who wish to enhance Wonderland’s image rather than, say, a McDonald’s or a Starbucks.”

“Sounds like you’re busy,” Paolo said. “Any time for a love life?”

Lauren rolled her eyes. “In a town full of gays, you expect a girl like me to get regular action?”

They all had a good laugh over that, clinked glasses again with a toast of Lauren “getting some.”

“And no, Paolo, before you say anything, LeeAnn and I are not a lesbian couple.” She tossed Marc a look. “Guy’s got so many fantasies inside his brain, it’s a wonder he can concentrate on sex with his own partner. But I love him anyway, don’t I, gorgeous?”

“*Ay dios mio*,” Paolo exclaimed.

Their meeting was over. Lauren admitted she was expecting a call from back east. So Marc and Paolo made their exit into the bright sunshine. The glare hit their eyes, causing them both to squint. In doing so, though, they saw something that perhaps they weren’t supposed to

see -- two men embracing, exchanging quick pecks on the cheek before darting inside the dark environs of the Mad Hatter.

“Was that who I think it was, or have I had too much wine?”

“Looked like Edgar,” Paolo said.

“Yeah, but who was that other guy?” Marc asked. “He kind of looked familiar.”

“Why would Edgar be meeting up with some guy at a bar in the afternoon, and besides, who wears a suit during a Wonderland summer?”

As the two men headed back toward the Bayside to collect the car, Marc pondered that last question. Who, indeed, wore a suit? A businessman, like Rich, whom he’d seen having lunch with two equally suited men at the hotel restaurant. That’s when it hit him. The guy he’d just seen with Edgar, just two hours ago had been seated beside Rich at lunch.

What the hell was going on in Wonderland?

* * * *

Rich gently knocked on the door, uncertain what he was to find behind it. He remembered he’d been given the access key and was supposed to let himself in. Mr. Converse clearly had an agenda, why else would he call for a meeting on his own turf and immediately antagonize the situation? But to end lunch so abruptly, only to suggest a more private encounter in an upstairs room of the hotel. Rich knew enough about the way the world worked to know what might be expected of him.

Sliding the key into its slot, he waited for the green light. Seconds later the lock clicked. Rich turned the knob and entered a darkened room. The shades were drawn, the lamps were off. He waited a moment to allow his eyes to adjust to the faded light, and when he could see better he noticed a figure lying on the bed. A man. Wait, correct that, a naked man.

Rich made his way over to the bed, surprise registering on his face when he saw who was waiting for him.

“Aaron?”

“Rich,” his neighbor said in a voice slightly detached. Or was that resigned?

“What the hell’s going on?”

A disembodied voice came through hidden speakers. “You will undress, Mr. North.”

Rich looked up, not even sure what he was searching for. Clearly Mr. Converse was in another room and had rigged the room for audio. Probably video as well. So, this was his game. Blackmail at its basest level. No doubt he was supposed to fuck Aaron with the video to be used as a tool. Given this set-up, yes, Mr. Converse had done his research extremely well. Just then it occurred to him that perhaps he owed his position at the bank to the Bayside’s owner? If he was that wealthy and powerful, he could have pulled strings to manipulate Rich. It could have been worse, he could have been forced to have sex with Mr. Converse. At least Aaron was attractive, with a super trim and sexy body.

“I believe the command was for you to undress,” the voice said again.

“Rich. Just do it. If you’re up here, it’s because he’s already got something to hold over you.”

“Which means I’ve got nothing to lose.”

Aaron shook his head. “It’s not just about you anymore. Or you and Marc. It’s about all of us who live on Eldon Court.”

“So, what, you and I are supposed to have sex—with this pervert watching? And by doing that we’re going to save our homes? I don’t think so. We give him what he wants, what do we get in return? Somehow I doubt he’s going to drop what he has planned for Eldon Court.”

As Rich was speaking, Aaron rose off the bed and kissed him suddenly, furiously, a passion born from desperation. Rich responded in kind, more so out of desire than a will to do as he'd been instructed. His felt his cock hardening inside his pants. My God, was this what Converse had been counting on, Rich's never-ending quest to fuck everyone in sight? No, he was a changed man and wouldn't do this again, not to himself and not to Marc. He resisted Aaron's tongue as it attempted to slip inside his mouth. He couldn't do this, please...he couldn't submit...

Aaron's hand cupped his cock, fingers toying with the zipper. He snaked his hand inside Rich's pants and fondled the hardening cock. A moan escaped Aaron's mouth. Rich knew he had lost. Sexual energy overtook all other senses, and before he knew it, he had pinned Aaron to the bed. As they kissed, Rich ground his body against Aaron's naked self, felt Aaron's long cock growing. Aaron grabbed at Rich's clothing, pushing off the suit jacket, unbuttoning the shirt, and kicking off the pants. Before long, Rich was completely naked, writhing on top of Aaron.

"Very nice, gentleman," came a panting voice from above. "Don't stop on my account."

Rich stared down at Aaron, both men catching each other's eyes. One set said "are you sure," while another said, "give it to me." On the nearby table were condoms and a bottle of lube. Rich reached over, opened the condom pack and expertly unfolded one over his thick piece. Aaron readied his ass with the lube. They knew what they had to do. For Rich, this was sex pure and simple, and he loved it, the sensation of his cock pulsating inside a man's ass, the ripple of orgasm as it spread through his body.

"Just fuck me," Aaron suddenly said.

"You sure?"

"Better you than him, believe me."

“You’ve...”

“Too many times. Please, Rich, it’s been too long since it’s been good, with anyone, this guy...he’s messed me up. Awaken me. Make me feel it.”

The thick head of Rich’s cock pushed at Aaron’s ass, found resistance. He took a finger, then a second, working the hole until it was more open. At last he tried again, and this time he slipped inside with a noticeable slurp. Aaron erupted with a panting scream. Rich had fucked Paolo, had learned he preferred to top but also knew the guy had nowhere the cock Rich had. Aaron was clearly unused to such a thick tool.

For the next ten minutes he fucked Aaron, changing positions with alacrity. On top of him, coming at him from behind, Aaron riding him. As hard as they screwed, pushed, thrust, neither of them was ready to come. Or maybe because of what they were doing, and who they were doing it for, their bodies were protesting. There would be no release. No satisfaction for the pervert watching behind the double mirror.

“Damn it, come boys. Come. Cock that size, you should be shooting gallons deep inside him.”

They fucked more, more still. Their cries of passion threatened to explode out into the hallway. Rich pounded, Aaron received. Still, nothing. As the furious sounds of their coupling continued, a sudden burst of air hit the room. The door from the neighboring room opened, and out came Mr. Converse naked. His arms flailing, his face florid with exertion, he climbed onto the bed as Rich continued to fuck Aaron. With his tiny erection in his hands, he grunted once and then shot a load of come all over Aaron’s face

The sulfurous odor of fresh come dominated the bed, and suddenly Rich could wait no longer. His huge cock shot forth, big drops of come hitting the wall of the condom, filling the

tip. Aaron released his own load, spurts of white hot come hitting his belly. Mr. Converse leaned over and began to lap it all up with his tongue. Rich took that moment to pull out, to toss the condom aside. He began to put his clothes on.

Converse looked at him. “Remember, do as you’re told, and no one has to know what happened in here.”

“Yes, you’d hate for word to get out, wouldn’t you, you fucking pervert.”

“What did you just call me?”

Rich’s voice was tinged with power; he knew the tables had turned. “Considering you’re buck naked and you just shot a load over two guys who were having sex in your hotel, I’d say pervert is a pretty mild sentiment. I think you’ve overplayed your hand and messed with the wrong guy. I don’t know what kind of blackmail you were planning—what, showing the video you just filmed to my lover? To Aaron’s? Once we tell them what you’re up to, they’ll understand why we did what we did. But you? Would your investors approve of your sick proclivities? Would banks make loans to you? And what of your wife, your children? I would hate to think of the divorce settlement you’d have to deal with—might even put a financial crimp in your plans for Wonderland...for Eldon Court. Speaking of, do not underestimate us. We might all be gay, that doesn’t mean we’re weak. Solidarity suits us, and we’ve got a lot more behind us than a bitch slap. Which no doubt you’d enjoy.”

“I’ll destroy you, Richard North.”

Rich laughed. “If Wall Street couldn’t do it, I doubt small peanuts—and I do mean small—like you can. I swam with the sharks in New York and did a fair amount of biting. Go back to where you came from, Danvers. Wonderland doesn’t need your type. Aaron, I suggest

you put your clothes on and just go back to work. And if you think of firing him, Danvers, you'll regret it."

Aaron got up from the bed, quickly dressed in his hotel whites, then bid a hasty retreat out the door. Rich made for the door, waited for the inevitable threat to come from Converse.

"You may have won this round, you cocksucker," Mr. Converse said. "But Eldon Court will be mine. We've already invaded your little street, Mr. North. There's a spy amidst you. And I don't mean that sniveling weasel that just scampered out of here. Far worse things than a Molotov cocktail can occur." He leered, the look grossly unattractive. "Get ready for an explosion to rock Eldon Court. No one's life will ever be the same again."

* * * *

"He's here, finally," Marc said, peering through the lace curtains of the living room at Number Five Eldon Court.

Assembled in the living room were the now usual suspects. Edgar and Jack sat together on the sofa, and Sawyer and Dane were huddling together on the love seat. Paolo and Aaron were coming in from the kitchen, where they had refreshed their drinks. All of the neighbors of Eldon Court were together. It had been a busy, eventful day, and all they were waiting for was the return of Rich.

"What the hell is going on?" Rich said as he entered his home. Fear washed over him as he saw each and every one of his neighbors, including both Aaron and Paolo. My God, he thought, perhaps Marc knows everything that's happened and he's staging an intervention. For the crime of sleeping with both of your neighbors, who also happened to be a couple, you are being punished with...

...a glass of wine.

“Thought you might need this,” Marc said, planting a kiss on Rich’s lips.

“I don’t understand...”

“It’s simple,” Edgar said. “While you boys were all working together, Eldon Court got a bit of a surprise. New neighbors.”

Rich’s face contorted with confusion. “Wait, we’re all here, all the houses...” And then it hit him on so many levels. Not just the fact that people might be living inside Number Two, but also Mr. Converse’s words about a spy already being in their midst. Was that what he meant? Had he placed someone inside the vacant Victorian, somehow managed to pry its ownership from the previous owners?

“All these years Eddy and I have lived here, Number Two has been quiet,” Jack said. “Until today. A limo pulled up this morning and some guy went inside the house.”

“And later that limo came back,” Sawyer said. “And another guy entered the house.”

Dane smirked. “That’s not all he entered.”

That comment took a bit of explanation, but minutes later everyone knew about Sawyer and Dane’s escapades inside Number Two. Complete with a mention of the rust brown stains on the wall.

“So, another gay couple hits Eldon Court,” Rich said, trying to downplay everything. “Can we really pass judgment?”

“Don’t you find it kind of curious?” Paolo asked. “That place is empty for years, and suddenly it’s not. With all that’s been going on around here? The boulder that nearly hit Edgar and Jack down on the beach, the bottle that was thrown at our house, setting it afire? Luckily no one has been injured—yet. Aaron, you agree, something’s not right?”

Rich caught Aaron's eyes with a note of caution. "I don't know what to think anymore. Eldon Court used to be such a quiet street. Nothing ever happened here. Just friendly neighbors getting along, having parties, and sharing gossip over coffee. Now, though, it's like Wonderland has suffered a sea change, and Eldon Court is bearing the brunt."

"So what do we do?" Jack asked.

"Why should we do anything?" Aaron said. "Why not just go about our business. None of us have done anything wrong. We just live our lives like anyone else. Paolo, maybe it's time we just go home, all this speculation is giving me a headache."

A sudden hammering sound threatened to give them all headaches.

"What the fuck is that?" Sawyer asked.

Dane ran to the window and gazed down the street. "Hey, guys, those guys are back, the new neighbors are out on their front lawn. They're posting a sign out front. The top is hammering it into the ground."

Sawyer laughed. "I bet he is. Got the tool for it, that's for sure."

Paolo laughed, which made Rich grimace. It was Marc who brought the gathering back on topic. "Look, we're all curious about them, right? Why can't we just introduce ourselves? The guys are right outside, let's go over to them and say hi."

"All of us? At once?" Jack asked. "Kind of intimidating. In the yoga world, that would be seen as an act of aggression. Rather than soothing the soul, it might make these guys nervous."

"Look, guys...guys, listen up," Rich said. "I think Jack's got a point. If we all go and greet them it will look weird. Why don't you all stay here while Marc and I go for a walk and talk to them. Since we're the newest ones on the block, we'll have something in common, okay?"

We'll be back shortly, help yourself to the wine or vodka or whatever you want from the bar.

We'll report back."

They all agreed to the plan, and so Rich, still clad in his business suit, and Marc, wearing his summer shorts and tee, headed out into the warm Wonderland night. The sun hadn't fully gone down, and the sky was glowing orange over the horizon. It was a beautiful sight over the Pacific, and not for the first time did Rich and Marc feel grateful for the life they had found here on Eldon Court. It was like living inside a postcard.

As they walked down the street, Marc grabbed his lover's hand.

"Everything okay?"

"No problem, everyone's a bit on edge right now. Myself included."

"Want to talk about it?"

"Bank stuff," he said. "I'll tell you later. It's quite a story."

For now, that story would have to wait, as they neared the front lawn of Number Two. The two men were still positioning the sign, hammering a few more times into the ground to ensure the sign could stand on its own. With shadows falling across the frame of the large house, both Rich and Marc had trouble discerning the men's features, as well as what was written on the metal sign.

"Hi neighbors," Marc called out, his affable voice carrying over the currents of the air.

The two men looked up. "Hello," they said, with a quick wave.

"We're your neighbors from Number Five—all the way down. We noticed your arrival earlier today, kind of hard to miss. Not many limos find their way to Eldon Court," Marc said.

"I'm Marc. Marc Anderson."

The first man emerged from the shadows, his hand extended. “Pleased to meet you, Marc. I’m...”

“Russell Allen,” Rich said, unmistakably remembering the man who had joined him and Mr. Converse for lunch. Or at least, for a drink before being called away. “What a strange coincidence.”

“Please, call me Russell. And this is my partner. Parker, come over here and meet our neighbors.”

Parker? Rich’s ears perked up. Couldn’t be, could not possibly be. The last few weeks had been filled with too many situations, too many cases of small world meeting smaller world. And now, a name from the past had blossomed right before him. The man stepped forward, and Rich’s first thought was: *Wow, this guy is probably the most handsome man I’ve ever seen.* His second thought was: *Wow, this is the first guy I ever fucked.*

“Parker St. John,” said the man, shaking hands with Marc. “And Rich North, what a nice surprise to see you. Funny world, isn’t it? Look at us, both living back in Wonderland.”

Marc shot his lover a glance. He said nothing, but his feelings were obvious, “What the fuck?”

That’s when they finally read what was posted on the sign.

“Welcome to the future home of the Wonderland Palaces.”

* * * *

Candles flickered in the otherwise darkened room. Loud grunts of sweaty sex filled the silence. Combined with the lighting, the shadows gave off the effect of more than two people in the bed. Though it was only Marc and Rich alone, the case could be made that their minds were

allowing others inside their bedroom. It was later that same night, and Marc's tight ass already hurt from the fierce fucking he was receiving from Rich.

"Oh, Jesus...yes, faster...oh, Rich, the way you fill me up. Fuck me harder than you ever have."

Marc was facing the wall, his hands gripping the headboard with a white heat, while his ass took every thick inch of Rich's great cock. His lover panted and grunted wildly, like an animal in heat, as though he didn't care who heard them. The windows were open and the wind was fierce. No doubt the violent sounds of their coupling could be heard down the block. If the day's events were any indication though, Marc and Rich wouldn't be alone in fucking their brains out. They needed to vent, to release, to be together.

Rich thrust faster, a demon possessed by a force beyond his control. His cock was so hard, as thick as he could imagine, and he just kept shoving it up his lover's ass. Sweat poured from his face, running down his hairy chest in rivulets, pooling by Marc's ass and acting as further lubricant. Was this an expression of love between two men, or was their anger fueling their coupling? At Rich's betrayal with Paolo, or Marc's knowing but not saying anything? Or was something deeper eating at them that had nothing to do with Paolo and everything to do with the sudden, curious arrival of Parker St. John to the house at Number Two Eldon Court.

No matter their motive, their love-making was intense, born out of a sense of potential loss. Losing each other, losing their new home, and losing the new life they had forged in an effort to heal the wounds of the past. Now old lovers and new developers were threatening to take away not only their livelihood but those of their neighbors and friends. And in one case, it appeared that one man held the title of former lover and new enemy, and that was in the form of the ridiculously handsome Parker St. John.

Seeing him after all these years, a natural impulse had hit Rich. His cock had reacted, like it was seeing an old friend for the first time in years and knew just what was in store for it. But his cock would not be fucking Parker, not this time. Still, as Rich fucked Marc, nearly pounding his ass into the mattress of the bed, he couldn't help but wonder how much Parker had grown and what he might look like naked. He remembered a decent-sized cock and the promise of an early beard on the man's young face. Was he hairy now, like Rich? What would that feel like now, two beasts going at it long into the night?

The idea of the two of them as young lovers sprang his cock into faster motions. With Marc on the receiving end of this monumental plowing, Rich's pants echoed in the room. He fucked him like never before and at last his cock grew even bigger as it prepared for orgasm. Quickly he pulled out and ripped off the condom. Come spurted out seconds later, covering Marc's back. Marc had been working his own cock, and as the droplets of come hit him, so too did his own climax. He screamed with satisfaction at the release, cupping his hand to catch every last drop.

Both Rich and Marc fell against the soft blankets, each trying desperately to catch their breaths. The sex had been amazing -- cataclysmic really -- and they knew they would sleep well tonight after such powerful, toe-tingling orgasms. They might even fuck one more time before sleep settled over them. For now, words had formed on Marc's lips, and Rich kissed them, urging them to be spoken.

"So, Rich, what do we do about Converse and his team of developers?" Marc asked. It had been a long night, and Rich had held nothing back. All was revealed, about the Bayside Hotel, about Mr. Converse, and the plan for Eldon Court. "And what do we do about this Parker guy?"

“Forget about Parker, will you? He’s easily a pawn in this; they’re just using him to get to us. As for the others, we certainly can’t just lay back and let them fuck us over,” Rich said.

“It’s going to take a lot of effort to stop the plan to turn Eldon Court into The Wonderland Palaces, and we’ll need the help of all our neighbors. Maybe Sawyer and Dane have some powerful friends in the fashion world that can help us. Aaron and Paolo may be able to dig up some dirt on Converse, given Aaron’s association with the man. Maybe there’s a family angle to exploit. But it’s Edgar and Jack who I think will be the most helpful.”

“How so?”

“They’ve been here the longest, they knew the previous neighbors.”

“Rich, I don’t understand. What does the past have to do with saving Eldon Court’s future?”

“It’s all about the vacant house, I’m sure of it. Those brown stains on the wall that Sawyer saw? Got to be dried blood. But whose was it, and is that related to why it’s been empty for so many years? It might explain why the family who owned it never returned to it. If we can find out the truth, perhaps it will scare away Converse’s investors. No one wants to stay on a block tainted with scandal.”

“You think some kind of scandal occurred?”

“Worse. I think someone died in the house at Number Two.”

“Because of the blood?”

Rich nodded. “What’s the worst case scenario, Marc?”

A chill ripped through the room, like a cool fall breeze coming from deep out on the ocean, months ahead of schedule. With candles flickering wildly, the room took on the presence

of something greater than the two of them. Like a soul had reached from beyond, letting them know they were on the right track.

“Murder?” Marc asked.

“Has to be. Someone was murdered inside Number Two Eldon Court,” Rich said, “and we’re going to find out who was killed, and who the killer was. A secret’s been covered up, something that all of Wonderland has chosen to forget. But to save Eldon Court—and all of Wonderland—from being destroyed, we have to dig up the past.”

The battle for Wonderland had just begun.

THE END