



One thousand ccs of smooth, raw power. Oh baby. Lt. Cameron Bradshaw accelerated up onto the highway on his brand-spanking-new electric blue Suzuki SV1000S. Three months ago, an assassin had arranged a very intentional “accident,” smashing a pickup truck into him while he was on his previous motorcycle. He had come horrendously close to dying, and only survived due to the amazing skills of an orthopedic surgeon who also happened to be a psychic healer: Dr. Mason Flynn.

Six foot two and eyes of blue, wasn't that how the phrase went? Cam thought Mason was the most delicious thing he'd ever known. And his best kept secret. F/A-18 Navy fighter pilots did *not* have male lovers. To the public world, Mason was his best friend, nothing more.

After the murder of his roommate, a casualty of the same covert op that had nearly killed him, Cam had moved back onto the base. Bachelor Officer's Quarters sucked. Okay, that wasn't exactly true. It was a bland, boring, one bedroom apartment that was far too close to too many other people. For a psychic, that was a problem. So he escaped to Mason's house near the Virginia Beach oceanfront as often as feasible. And that's where he was headed now. He was eager to show his lover his awesome new toy.

Cam took the Birdneck Road exit and turned toward the north end of the beach, threading his way over to Atlantic and up to 63rd Street. He pulled into Mason's driveway and killed the engine. He yanked off his helmet and ran his hand through his hair. The driveway was empty except for his cycle; Mason must be running late. Not that that was uncommon with the doctor. Cam sat for a moment astride his bike, opening his senses, mentally searching for his lover. Finding people and things was his gift, with a little empathy thrown in. His tie to Mason had grown deep over the past weeks. These days he could probably find that man anywhere on earth, and he was nearly home.

Swinging his leg off the bike, he set the helmet on the seat as Mason pulled his car into the driveway beside the motorcycle. The doctor got out of the car slowly.

"So, like my new bike?" Cam asked with a grin. He traced a finger down over the bright metallic blue paint. The flash of anger hit him so hard he took a step back.

"Are you out of your fucking mind?" shouted Mason. "I would have thought almost dying on the last one would be enough for you!"

"That accident wasn't my God damn fault! You know that!"

"And what happens when someone nails you on this one?"

"That's pretty damn unlikely," Cam yelled back. He was rapidly heading toward pissed.

"Get the hell out of my driveway and don't come back 'til you find some sanity!" Mason strode to the front door, unlocked it and slammed it hard enough to echo.

"Bastard," Cam muttered and grabbed his helmet, yanking it on. He started up the engine and gunned it out onto the road. He was a full grown adult capable of flying an F/A-18. The motorcycle was a hell of a lot less dangerous than a navy jet. Mason Flynn could keep his frigging opinion to himself and Cam decided he wouldn't be darkening the doctor's doorstep anytime soon.

The sound of the motorcycle engine retreated as Mason leaned back against the inside of his front door. How could that man be so fucking stupid? The “accident” had been so very close to being fatal, and Mason’s skills had probably been the deciding factor between life and death. He hadn’t known Cam then. Hadn’t cared about him, except in the way that a doctor cares for a critically injured patient. Now... The chances of him being present if Cam had another such crash were almost nonexistent. He wasn’t sure if he could face having to bury the pilot. God in heaven, he had even killed to protect Cam from that homicidal traitor who had been part of the whole stolen missile fiasco.

Mason couldn’t decide if he wanted to punch something or just scream. Ultimately he did neither. He went out into the garage and flipped on the light. Pieces of a partially assembled mahogany chest lay on the saw horse and workbench. He picked up a block plane and began evening out the slight ridge on the piece of wood that was to be the lid. It probably would go a lot faster with a table saw and a random orbital sander, but he hated power tools. Steve Villetti, one of the other surgeons in the practice, teased the crap out of him, telling him he used more power tools on people than he did on his pet furniture projects. It was true. He loved the near silence of the hand tools and feel of perfect control that they imparted. Tiny curls of wood fluttered to the floor. It was soothing, relaxing, and best of all, for just a little while he didn’t think about the lover he had probably just driven out of his life.

“Hey, you wanna grab a beer and some food at the Gator Grill?” yelled Curtis from across the parking lot.

Cam looked up from where he was about to stick the key in the ignition of his bike. Curtis was one of the other guys in Hell Dogs Squadron and they had just finished an exhaustive analysis of a simulated dogfight.

“Sonja might swing by,” taunted the other pilot. Cam had dated the deliciously built blonde a couple of times. From a purely physical point of view a woman held as great an appeal as a hot guy. He and Sonja had even made it to bed once. No commitments, no expectations. Yeah, that sounded like what he needed.

It had been six days since the argument in Mason’s driveway. Argument or fight? The word fight evoked images of fists and punches when applied to two guys. Six days that normally would have been broken by a couple of phone calls between them. At the very least, a handful of text messages, if their schedules were too tight to allow anything else. There had been nothing.

He wasn’t going to get rid of his motorcycle just because Mason thought it was too damn dangerous. How dare he think he could run Cam’s life? Memories of the words -- don’t come back ‘til you find some sanity -- burned in his head and his hand clenched around the keys. Christ, what an arrogant prick that man was!

And his chest ached like someone had torn a huge chunk out of his heart.

“Yeah, sounds like a plan. I need to swing by an ATM and get some cash. I’ll meet you there,” said Cam.

Make sure the blood flow is reaching all the way to the toes, Mason told himself, as he directed a trickle of his healing talent all the way to the bottom of the patient’s leg. His little eight year old female patient’s lower left leg had been virtually crushed in a car accident. All his colleagues thought he should amputate just below the knee. Not without a fight, he decided.

He had already spent ninety minutes just cleaning and debriding the multiple open fractures. This was going to take at least another two hours. If it didn’t work, he’d probably be bringing her back to the OR in another twenty four hours to perform the amputation he was trying so hard to avoid. But he had an edge, an edge that almost no one knew of, one that he had recently been refining with the help of Division P’s top healer, Peter Vithoulikas.

He gritted his teeth a little behind his surgical mask. He *would* make this work, damn it.

Having Sonja squirm her butt down on his groin was a definite turn on, decided Cam. He and Curtis had been hanging out in the sports bar for a good three hours over dinner, a beer and several games of pool. Sonja had indeed shown up with Curtis’s girlfriend Liz, and Cam had done nothing to dissuade her blatant flirting. He was currently leaning on the wall waiting for Curtis to take a shot at the corner pocket. Sonja was slouched against him, the curve of her behind planted very deliberately against his crotch. It was a sort of deliciously uncomfortable pressure.

“We should get out of here when you’re done with the game,” she suggested. He grinned at her.

“Your place?” he asked.

“If you like.”

“I’ll follow you on my bike.”

“You could give me a ride.”

“I’ve only got one helmet.”

“Oh. Then you need to get another helmet.”

“Yeah, okay,” he laughed. “But I think it’s bit too late to buy one tonight.”

“Bummer,” she smiled.

It took another twenty minutes to finish the game, then they walked out into the parking lot. The late September air was still comfortably warm. Cam stood beside her car and pressed her gently back against the closed door. Judging by the smirk on her lips, he was sure she could feel the hard length of his arousal as his hips pushed against her. He kissed her slowly, savoring the taste of her mouth. It had been a while since *he*'d been inches taller than the person he was kissing. Mason was not quite two inches taller and if they both had shoes on, he usually ended up tilting his head back just a little. Oh God. Mason. Cam froze for a moment and then turned his head away.

"Hey, did I do something wrong? I thought you were into this," said Sonja.

He was. No he wasn't. He was letting his dick make decisions he was going to regret. He pushed back away from her. "Listen, I'm sorry. I'm seeing someone... and we had a fight. I... I just can't. Not 'til I know where I stand with him," Cam said. She gave him a funny look.

"Did you just say **him**?" she demanded.

"Uh, yeah," he replied uncertainly.

She slapped him. Hard, across the mouth. Hard enough that he could taste blood.

"Get away from me, you pervert!" she shouted, and yanked her car door open. He stepped back as she started the car and stomped on the gas, peeling out of the parking lot.

He stood in the center of the aisle between cars, watching her go. He carefully felt his lip with his fingers. Ow. They came away smeared with blood. Damn. Even when he was absolutely furious, Mason hadn't hit him. Cam slowly walked toward his motorcycle. Picking up his helmet, he swung a leg over and sat down.

He wasn't planning on apologizing. And he damn sure wasn't going to get rid of his brand new bike. But he needed to talk to Mason. Despite the fact his body seemed to think it was a good idea, kissing Sonja had felt so very wrong. Betrayal wrong. Cheating wrong. Oh Jesus, when had this "thing" between him and Mason become... whatever the hell it was? When people asked who Mason was, he said, "my best friend." And he wasn't lying. Best friend with benefits? Lovers? Partners?

He sat on his bike for a long time, trying to compartmentalize what he felt. Depressed. Frustrated. Angry. Empty. Alone. Cam slowly put on his helmet and started the motorcycle. He had to go see Mason. It was midnight on a Wednesday. That should mean Mason would be home, probably in bed, but as he left the parking lot, he realized he was heading toward Norfolk. Opening his senses, he focused on the tugging sensation that guided him when he hunting for something or someone. Mason was at Norfolk General Hospital. Midnight in the middle of week, must mean he was on call and gotten yanked out of bed for an emergency. Maybe they could grab a cup of coffee when the doctor was finished, and talk.

Mason sat down heavily on the bench in the locker room. Close to four hours of surgery on the little girl's leg, accompanied by a vast output of energy in terms of his healing talent, had left him sweaty and exhausted. He grabbed a bottle of Gatorade from the locker and chugged it. That much healing took a marathon level of calorie consumption and was capable of leaving him with a dangerously low blood glucose level. He had wolfed down a power bar while his patient was being prepped, but that was long gone. Mason held his hand out in front of him. A fine tremor shook his fingers. Hopefully the carbs from the Gatorade would kick in soon. He ran a hand back through his hair. It was sweat damp. Shower time.

It was incredibly tempting to just sit down on the floor of the shower and fall into a coma. He goaded himself to finish and returned to his locker to dress. He was sitting on the bench fumbling with the buttons of his shirt. Christ, his coordination was shot.

"You look like shit," said a voice beside him, and his head whipped around to see -- Cameron Bradshaw. The pilot was leaning on a locker, facing him, arms crossed.

"Damn! Give a guy a little warning. You about gave me a coronary," said Mason.

"Sorry. I figured you heard the door open."

"I... wasn't paying that much attention."

"You done with whatever case dragged you over here?"

"Yeah. For the night anyway."

"Give me your car keys," said Cam.

"Why?"

"Because I'm driving you home. A guy too tired to notice he's fucked up the buttons on his shirt is too tired to drive home without wrapping his car around a light pole," replied Cam.

Mason looked down at the front of his shirt and realized he had mismatched the buttons and the opening was hanging at an angle. He made a low growl of frustration and undid them. Then he dug his keys out and handed them to Cam.

"You're about to screw it up again. Let me do it," said Cam, as he reached for Mason's shirt. Mason stood with his hands hanging at his sides while Cam buttoned up his shirt for him. It was a meaningless practical gesture... except it wasn't.

How come you could make a satellite bounced phone call from the Mediterranean to the U.S., but the intercom at the drive through always sounded like the guy was on Mars? Cam pulled up to the second window and grabbed the Wendy's bag that was handed to him. He passed it across to Mason.

"Eat," he said, pulling out onto the street. When he had walked Mason out to his car at the hospital, he had noticed that the doctor was shaking. They'd been through this enough times before that Cam knew food was a priority. Fast food wasn't an ideal solution, but fast was the operative word.

Mason ate while Cam drove, and it took roughly twenty-five minutes to get back to Mason's house. Cam unlocked the front door. Mason followed him in and flopped onto the sofa, rubbing his hands down over his face. Cam sat down in a chair, facing him.

"So what happened to your lip?" Mason asked.

"I got slapped."

"I'm guessing by a woman?"

"Yeah. Basically for deciding not to sleep with her."

"Any particular reason?"

"I told her I was seeing someone. And..." Cam blew out a breath. This was hard. What exactly was he supposed to say? "I said we'd had a fight and wasn't really all that sure where I stood with... him."

"And she hit you."

"Yeah."

"Come here," Mason beckoned him with a finger. Cam slowly got up and walked over to sit on the sofa beside the doctor. Mason reached out and brushed his thumb across the swollen and bloodied lip. Cam grabbed Mason's wrist as soon as he felt the warm thrum of energy.

"Don't," he said.

Mason raised an eyebrow. "Why not? I can fix it."

"You're so wiped out, you can hardly keep your eyes open. You don't need to burn yourself out any further over something so minor."

"Maybe I want to." Mason's voice was barely audible and his expression so raw it tightened Cam's throat. Cam hugged Mason's hand to his chest.

“I... missed you,” he whispered.

“If you kill yourself on that God damn motorcycle, I’m gonna miss you a whole lot more.”

“I’m not selling it, but I should’ve told you I was buying it. You... I should’ve guessed you would be stressed out by the idea.”

“Cam, you nearly died in my arms... and I didn’t even know you then.”

“I’ll be careful, I promise. Oh God, I sound like I’m sixteen.”

“I’m not your parent.”

Cam stared into those beautiful blue eyes and his heart clenched. “What are we?” he whispered.

“Lovers... I hope.”

“We’re two guys.”

“So? I lost my heart to you months ago. I want you in my life, permanently if I can get it. But much as I want to, I can’t make your choices for you. It hurts. The fear that I could lose you. To a plane crash, to a motorcycle accident... to someone else.” Cam watched the tears slip down his lover’s cheeks. “God, I’m such a wreck. I can’t even hold it together,” Mason muttered. He angrily scrubbed the sleeve of his shirt across his face.

Cam cupped his lover’s face in his hands. “Not someone else. Very definitely not someone else. I couldn’t go through with it, even though I was stupid enough to think about it. It felt all wrong. She wasn’t you.” He carefully pulled Mason’s body against his own and wrapped both arms around him. This was the man he had nearly gotten killed by an assassin. This was man who had pulled the trigger and saved him from his own death. This was the man who tolerated being Cam’s dirty little secret in a country that didn’t allow the military to have same-sex partners. His cheek rested on Mason’s forehead. Suck it up. Say the words. Tell him.

“I love you,” Cam whispered. He tilted his head and placed a careful lopsided kiss on his lover’s forehead. His mouth still hurt.

“I love you, too,” said Mason.

Cam sat still for a long time just holding Mason. It was right. He hadn’t realized just how achingly hollow he had felt for days.

Mason tipped his head back a little and nuzzled against the underside of Cam’s jaw. “Let me fix your mouth, please,” he said.

Cam nodded.

Mason's fingertips brushed over the bruised and swollen skin of his lip and Cam could feel the soothing buzz of warmth. He licked across the inside edge, still tasting a hint of blood. The swelling was receding and Mason's head was growing heavier on his shoulder. He kissed the healer's fingertips and then pulled the hand back down to his chest.

"Quit already. You're done. You're too tired for this," Cam said. "You need some sleep. Do you have to work tomorrow?"

"Noon."

"Good. It's already pushing toward three am." Cam hauled Mason to his feet and pushed him in the direction of the bedroom.

Waking in the darkness to a warm tangle of limbs, Mason inhaled the scent of his lover. It was a mix of soap and sweat and male skin. Cam. To have Cam back after nearly a week's worth of agony over whether he had made an unforgivable error, was incomparable. During sleep, they had unconsciously migrated tightly together. Cam's head was tucked against Mason's chest as if to listen to his heart, one arm flung over his body, one knee jammed between Mason's legs.

Mason squinted at the display of the digital clock across the room. It read 6:20. He twisted his head and placed a kiss on Cam's temple. His lover made a sleepy sound and stretched slightly. Cam nibbled softly at the base of Mason's throat, then up the side toward the pulse point beneath his ear. Mason's breath hitched and his fingers tightened on Cam's hip as he felt arousal pooling in his groin. Too tired, his brain suggested half-heartedly; his cock had other ideas, especially when Cam's mouth began sucking at the skin beneath the corner of his jaw.

Mason slid his hand down inside Cam's briefs, curling it around the curve of his lover's behind. His fingers explored along the warm cleft between butt cheeks. Cam made a huskier sound and ground his own arousal against Mason's. He could feel the soft pressure of Cam's mind on his psychic shielding and he dropped it so he could more fully sense the delicious intimacy of his lover's presence. If someone had asked him to describe how his lover's mind felt brushing along his own, Mason would have been hard pressed to find words that were adequate. Maybe somewhere between the feel of warm skin on lips and running your fingers through electricity. That probably didn't make sense. He sometimes wondered how he felt to Cam.

"You're thinking too hard," mumbled Cam as he bit gently at the skin he was sucking on. *Wanna leave a mark.* Mason was slightly surprised, he seldom got coherent specific thoughts from Cam. The teeth were more insistent, bringing a whisper of almost pain. Cam immediately relented a little, soothing the spot with a stroke of his tongue. Mason whimpered. The small sensation was going straight to his crotch, along with most of the blood in his body apparently. His brain was a fog of pure lust.

His mouth sought skin, and came down against the firm muscles of Cam's shoulder. Tracing across the trapezius, he licked and sucked on the skin there, twisting to bring his face down

toward a tantalizingly tight nipple. He could feel Cam's hand fisted in the hair at the back of his head, dragging him back upward for a deep passionate kiss.

"Need to make love to you," Cam whispered. "Need to hold you. Be in you and feel you in my head." Mason gulped. It was raw and needy and the intensity of the emotion nearly sent him over the edge.

"Yes," was the only word that came out.

For a moment, neither of them moved, then Mason managed to grope on the night stand for the tube of lube and the condoms. Cam nudged him to roll over and spooned up against his back. There was a moment of squirming as they both struggled out of their briefs. The feeling of Cam's chest pressed to his back was a divine warmth.

Slick fingers breeched him gently and Cam rained kisses down the back of his neck and across his shoulders. He rocked back a little, trying to increase the penetration. The fingers were gone and replaced moments later by the delicious pressure of his lover's cock. Cam's knee pushed up behind his top leg, edging it further forward into a hurdle position. Oh God, so good. He pulled Cam's hand to his mouth, sucking on his fingers, tracing his tongue along the blunt tips. Cam moaned against the back of his neck.

"Fuck... don't... too much," Cam gasped, trying to pull his hand from Mason's grasp.

Mason guided it toward his groin, where his erection bobbed against the tangled sheets of the bed. Cam's fingers wrapped around his aching cock and stroked him firmly. He could feel his pulse pounding in his ears and in his crotch. Cam thrust harder into him, rolling him forward a fraction, changing the angle, slamming into his prostate. Time slowed down for a moment as he felt Cam's body teeter on that knife edge. He yanked Cam's mind as far into his own as he could, and it tipped the scale for both of them. Cam's body slammed into him with almost a scream, cock pulsing, back arching. Mason sprayed hot pulses across his belly, Cam's hand and the sheets, as the orgasm ripped through his nervous system. They were both left gasping for oxygen, muscles limp and shaky.

Love you, Mason whispered inside his lover's head.

"Love you too," murmured Cam. Mason could feel the intensity of the connection fading much the same way Cam was sliding from his body, but a little lingered. Mason pushed the sticky sheets off to one side and turned in the circle of Cam's arms. He kissed Cam softly and they drifted back to sleep.

Cam leaned against the desk where Mason kept his laptop. The doctor was checking email while drinking coffee. Mason glanced up at him. There were times when Cam felt like he could just drown himself in those blue eyes, and now was one of them. Where did they go from here? He

supposed he could say they'd patched things back together well enough. But where did that leave them?

"Talk to me, Cam. I can feel you stewing, even if I can't figure out why," said Mason.

"You, um, you said you wanted me in your life permanently. What does that mean?"

"Ideally, monogamy."

"I can live with that." A brief image of pushing away from Sonja flitted through his memory. "What else?"

"I'd like for you and me to both get tested, so we can forget about the condoms."

Cam's throat tightened up a little. Don't be an ass, he told himself, if you had a female lover you'd have to worry about birth control. "Okay."

Mason hooked a finger in Cam's belt loop and pulled him forward to stand between his legs. He loosely wrapped his arms around Cam's hips and looked up at him. "I like having you around. Maybe I could convince you to leave some extra clothes here?"

Cam's fingers brushed down the side of his lover's face. "If I start leaving stuff at your place, does that make me your boyfriend?" asked Cam.

Mason grinned at him. "If you like. However that kind of makes us sound like we're in high school. I'd rather say you're my partner. Can you deal with that? I mean, I understand that we still have to put on the public face of just being friends. But it would be nice to be able tell a few select people, openly."

"Can I think about that last part? The telling people part. I know that a couple of the Division P people know, but I'm... kind of skittish about the regular people."

"For the moment I'd settle for us being open when we're at P. Peter and Stephen obviously know, but we're still doing the 'don't touch' thing most of the time when we're there. I'd like to be able to hold your hand or kiss you in plain view." Mason sounded wistful, and the longing cut Cam like a knife. How could he have not realized how hard the secrecy was on Mason. The doctor was by no means a flamer, but he wasn't in the closet either.

"I'll try to be more... relaxed when I can," he said. He bent forward and kissed Mason, who tasted of coffee and sugar. Mason's arms tightened around his hips a little. Damn. How could something that felt so right be viewed as wrong?

"I've got to get moving. I've got office hours and then I need to go check on the little girl from last night's case," said Mason as Cam lifted his head.

The rest of the day took a little finagling. Mason had to drop Cam back at the hospital to get his motorcycle and then dash back to the orthopedic office for a long afternoon filled with a stream of patients. Then back to hospital again to check on the little girl with the crush injury. Everything was healing within acceptable limits on her leg except her little toe and a small portion of the foot. Dead tissue was beyond his capabilities. He was going to have to take her back to the OR to remove that part. He sighed in frustration. After notifying the parents and making the necessary scheduling arrangements for the surgery, he headed for the cafeteria. Over a mediocre meal, he called Cam.

“Hey, I’m going to be at the hospital for a while, probably at least a couple hours,” Mason said.

“Problem?” asked Cam.

“Nothing really unexpected. I’m going to have to amputate the girl’s toe and remove some other tissue. Could be a lot worse. Everything else is doing okay.”

“You want me to meet you there?”

“No, I don’t know exactly how long this will take. I can either call you when I’m done or you can hang out at my place and wait for me.”

“How ‘bout I go pick up the clothes you suggested and take them over?” This brought a little bit of a smile to Mason’s face. Cam was actually following up on the morning’s discussion.

“That’s sounds like plan. I should be home before midnight. I hope.” Mason hung up and sat staring thoughtfully into his coffee cup.

He knew that Cam frequently felt conflicted about their relationship. If the pilot had a different type of job, things would be easier, not simple, just easier. Mason was trying not to push too hard. In truth, he’d love for Cam to just flat out move in with him and have this whole thing turn into forever. The first item might eventually be possible. Lots of Navy guys had roommates, i.e. Keith Haverty, Cam’s previous roommate, now dead. The other part? Even hetero couples frequently didn’t last forever; he wasn’t sure what his chances were. Knowing that Cam was willing to bend a little was a step in the right direction. Mason knew he needed to bend a little more, too.

The previous week had been horrible. He kept reaching for the phone, intending to apologize, and then stopping. What could he say that would make amends? It certainly wouldn’t have been his first relationship to hit an abrupt screeching halt. But it had hurt, like an open wound. And it wasn’t the type of pain he could just shut off. He hadn’t figured that Cam would be the one to make the first move. You didn’t get much more alpha than a Navy pilot. He decided the developing psychic bond between them had to be a contributing factor. God, last night had been intense.

When Mason dropped heavily onto the sofa in his den, Cam fleetingly wondered how the man had made it home without running off the road. Four wheels had some benefits over two. Cam grabbed a soda from the refrigerator and went back to give it to his lover.

“You’ve been really burning it at both ends the past couple of days,” he said, handing the soda to Mason.

“It happens. I didn’t used to use my healing stuff as much as I do these days. Having Division P cover my back, so to speak, makes a difference.”

“Are you going out there tomorrow?” Most Tuesdays and every other Friday, Mason spent training with Peter Vithoulkas, the primary healer for Division P.

“Yeah, I will, but I’m thinking of telling him I’ll be late. I want to pick his brains a little for tips on the crush injury I’ve been treating.” Mason took a long drink from the soda and leaned on Cam’s shoulder.

Cam was tense. He needed to tell his lover something and he desperately hoped it wouldn’t start another fight.

“I, um, I bought a second motorcycle helmet. I’m kind of hoping I can convince you to come riding with me. If you don’t like it, that’s okay. But I remember one time you said you’d never even been on one. And I know it scares you, but you might like it,” he blurted out in one long breath.

Mason laid his head back against the sofa looking at him. Oh please don’t let him freak about this, Cam prayed internally.

“Okay.”

“Okay?” Cam was stunned.

“You’re right. It scares me, but I shouldn’t pass judgment on something I’ve never tried. If we go riding, can we stick to somewhere with a kind of low speed limit?”

“Absolutely. We could ride up to Rudee Inlet on Pacific Avenue or something. Given the usual traffic, we’d probably never get above thirty-five.” Cam smiled at Mason, infinitely relieved. He put an arm around Mason and pulled him into a kiss.

“You thought I was going to rip your head off again, didn’t you?” Mason asked, curling against Cam’s chest in fatigue.

“I wasn’t sure. I was hoping maybe not.”

“I’m tryin’ to be more... flexible,” mumbled Mason. Cam could tell the healer was fighting the intense desire to just fall asleep in his arms.

“I know. Me, too. Come on. Much as I like your sofa, your bed’s more comfortable and I have to fly in the morning.”

“You could have begged off completely,” said Peter, handing Mason a cup of coffee. “Believe me, I understand the too tired to move concept.” The older healer sat down across the table. The infirmary was a quiet place that morning, no patients in residence.

“I suppose, but I’d really like to pick your brains about the little girl I’ve been working on,” replied Mason. He’d dragged himself out of bed and off to the Division P complex in Suffolk. He was wearing jeans and a T-shirt, not needing the respectable shirt and tie motif he usually wore for office hours.

“Okay. You seem to be in a much better mood today than Tuesday,” Peter commented.

Mason couldn’t help the slight smile that curved his lips. “Yeah, I probably am.”

“I take it you worked things out with Cam?”

“Yes.” Mason decided it was nice to be able to give a straight answer to at least one colleague, even if he was reticent on details. Peter had been one of the very first people to be aware of the relationship between him and Cam. In a place where better than eighty percent of the personnel had at least some degree of telepathic or empathic talent, true secrets were impossible.

“Good. You two belong together,” said Peter. Mason’s eyebrows raised a little. He still hadn’t quite adjusted to the absolute bluntness sometimes expressed by the other healer. “So tell me about your patient,” Peter continued.

They spend two hours thrashing through all the case details and all the things Mason had done, both as a surgeon and as a healer. It was a sweet thing. After decades of fumbling his way through what worked and what didn’t, to have someone to openly compare strategies with was invaluable.

“I have an idea I need you to think about,” said Peter.

“I’m not ready to ditch my day job,” replied Mason.

“I know, I know. But hear me out. Benford and I have been discussing an idea with the head honcho. Over the past year, we’ve had a half dozen serious medical incidents with our personnel. Since we farm them out to about fifty different agencies, in spots all over the world, care specific to psi can be dicey. We never know if one of our own is going to have a really bad time with standard medical care. We’ve been thinking about putting together a mobile trauma team of

sorts. One healer, two corpsmen or nurses and somebody on security detail. Before you even ask, the last incident we had was in Afghanistan. Somebody to watch our backs is a necessity, especially if we're distracted with patient issues."

"I take it that I'm supposed to fit into this scenario?"

"I hope so. The majority of what's occurred has been on domestic soil or friendly nations. And the stuff I've done has been a kind of emergency damage control and get our people back here sort of thing. Medivac type stuff."

"Flying."

"Yeah, sometimes," admitted Peter.

Mason grimaced. "I'm not a real big fan of anything that leaves the ground."

"I know, but there's only one of me. The other two healers we have are fair, but they don't have the same level of Talent as you. How's that for an ego stroke?"

"I'm gonna have to think about this," Mason said slowly.

"I figured. Here's an additional thought though. We normally use Cam for his 'finder' Talents but on a more practical level, a psi *pilot* could be a really useful thing for a medivac team."

"Here," Cam said, handing the helmet to Mason. He watched the other man take a deep breath before pulling it on. "Thread the strap back through the D-rings. It should be snug but not tight enough to hurt. I forgot to buy a speed clip for it."

"A speed what?"

"Speed clip. It's kind of like a seat belt buckle, well sort of anyway. It's faster and a lot less hassle. Get on behind me and put your arms around me." Cam slung one leg over the motorcycle and sat there pulling on his gloves. He felt Mason gingerly ease onto the seat behind him. "Another thing, going around a turn, lean with me. It's counter-intuitive. You lean into it, not away. Got it?"

"Um, guess so," replied Mason. The bike was sitting face out in Mason's driveway. Cam fired up the engine and adjusted the choke just a little. "Ready?" he asked.

"No, but go anyway."

Cam laughed and squeezed Mason's hand where it wrapped around his chest. He eased out of the drive and down to the end of the street. He could feel Mason's heart hammering against his back, where their bodies were snug together. Pausing for a moment at the intersection, he pulled out

onto the main street. Mason's arms tightened around him. They rode along Atlantic Avenue for a couple of miles before coming to the area where the main density of beachfront hotels were. Stoplights and a certain amount of traffic slowed them. Cam pulled into the parking lot at the south end of the beach and shut down the motorcycle.

"Want to get off and stretch your legs for a few minutes?" he asked. Mason slid off from behind him and took his own helmet off. "So? What'd ya think?"

"I looked over your shoulder at the speedometer. I can't believe we were only going like thirty miles an hour. I kept expecting the jump to hyperspace," replied Mason.

"You didn't answer the question."

"I liked it. Sort of. It's also fairly scary."

"Kind of like flying?"

"No. Not like flying. If the engine stopped working, I'm hoping we could safely coast to a stop on the side of road, rather than fall out of the sky like a brick!" Mason bared his teeth in a mock snarl.

Cam snickered. "Guess I'm never going to get you voluntarily on a plane again. Although, you have to admit, we did come up with a way to pass the time."

"I like that part just fine. I also didn't mind the part I was unconscious for. Now if you can find a way to combine the two..." Mason suggested.

"I'll see if I can come up with an idea. You know, you could learn how to ride by yourself."

"Uh-huh. I can just see myself getting hosed off the highway in about six pieces."

"Come on. It's like when you first learn to drive a car. We can go to some nice quiet school parking lot and you can just cruise around at like five miles an hour. Minimal risk."

"You're kidding."

"No. Isn't there an elementary school about two blocks from your house?"

"Yeah."

"It's Friday. Nobody's going to be there. It'll be perfect."

"I must be out of my freakin' mind."

"Yeah?"

“Yeah, okay,” agreed Mason.

Cam threw an arm around Mason’s shoulders and rubbed his knuckles across the top of Mason’s head. “It’ll be cool.”

In the deserted parking lot of the elementary school, Mason sat astride Cam’s motorcycle. The sun was beginning to set, but it was still fairly light. Hands sweating inside his gloves, Mason began to relax his left hand and the bike began to move. Yipe! And as he let the clutch out the rest of the way, the engine promptly stalled out. Fuck. Okay, squeeze the clutch and the brake and push the starter button. The engine grumbled and restarted. Try again. Let go of the brake and try to let out the clutch. The bike lurched forward and died and he suddenly had to brace both feet on the pavement to prevent it from tipping over. Oh God, why in the hell had he let Cam con him into this? Cam walked over and laid a hand on his shoulder.

“Relax Mas’. I don’t care if you stall it out twenty times in a row. You have to get use to the deal of releasing the clutch and giving it just a little gas.”

“I feel like it’s going to take off at like ninety and throw me over the handle bars!”

“It’s in first gear, dude. You can’t go ninety in first gear.” Cam smiled at him.

Mason gnashed his teeth. “Says the guy who thinks Mach one is a nice safe cruising speed at work!”

“It’s not like this thing has afterburners. 1000 ccs. Smaller than the engine of your car.”

“My damn car has *four* wheels. And seat belts!”

“Uh-huh. Lots less fun, too.” Cam tipped the face shield up on Mason’s helmet and leaned down and kissed him on the nose. “Try again,” he said. Mason made a growling noise and started the engine again. Cam stepped back a few feet.

He opened his left hand at slowly as he could manage. He was rolling. Aaah! His feet were just barely off the ground.

“Put your feet on the pegs!” Cam yelled from halfway across the parking lot. He fumbled to comply and it took two tries to figure where his right foot was supposed to be. He was heading toward the far end of the lot. Brake, brake, brake, his brain shouted. His right hand clenched around the brake lever and he stopped somewhat abruptly as the engine coughed and died. Shit. He was supposed to do the clutch thing, too, to get it out of gear. God, he was hopeless. Cam jogged in his direction.

“Hey, that was a little better. Believe it or not, speeding up just a little will make it feel less wobbly. Bend your knees a little more, too. Your legs are a little bit longer than mine. It’s gonna put your knees a little closer to the gas tank,” Cam commented.

“I’m just pathetic,” grumbled Mason. He hadn’t felt this uncoordinated since high school.

“It’s just like driving a stick. Only it’s with your hands not your feet,” Cam said.

“I can’t drive a stick.”

“What?”

“Slowly now, for the hearing impaired -- I -- can’t -- drive -- a -- stick. Hence the reason I have a Mustang with an automatic transmission.”

“You’re kidding.”

“No. I had a boyfriend who tried to teach me. But after a couple episodes of grinding the crap out of his transmission, he quit.”

“Damn Mas’! You’re a surgeon. It’s not like you have eye/hand coordination problems. You just need some practice,” said Cam. Mason flexed his fingers. They ached from the death grip he’d had on the handle bars. “It’s getting dark. Let’s head back. You can try again when it’s daylight.”

Mason put down the kick stand and got off so Cam could drive. God, the man made it look simple.

Cam and Mason rode the brief way back to Mason’s house and went inside, peeling off helmets and gloves along the way. In the kitchen, Mason set his helmet on the table and yanked open the refrigerator.

“Want a beer? Cause God knows I need one,” Mason said. He was bent over beside the open door. The denim of his jeans pulled tight across his butt, and Cam had to swallow hard before he could answer.

“Yeah. Give me one,” Cam said.

Mason straightened up and handed him one. He had apparently run his hand through his sweat damp hair after taking off the helmet and his hair was sticking out in all directions. It reminded Cam of how Mason looked wet and just out of the shower. And suddenly his jeans felt way too tight.

He pushed Mason back against the counter, and set the bottle down. His hands clasped his lover’s head, holding Mason immobile as he kissed his lover with enthusiasm. Cam pushed his

tongue against Mason's teeth and plunged his tongue inside as the doctor's mouth opened to him. His head was tilted back just a little as he nipped at his lover's soft lips. Like it hadn't been when he kissed Sonja. This was the one he loved. This was the one that felt right. Just the right combination of hard muscle and intense care.

Cam leaned his head back and looked at Mason's face. Eyes so blue focused all on him, pupils blown wide in desire. He rubbed his hand down across the fly of Mason's jeans. He was every bit as hard as Cam. Cam yanked open the button and slid the zipper of Mason's jeans down. He jammed his hand down inside his lover's briefs and palmed the hard cock trapped inside. It was already slick at the tip. He shoved jeans and underwear down over his partner's hips. Mason's breathing sped up a little as Cam's fingers wrapped around his erection. A slight flush was spreading across his face. Cam thought it was one of the most erotic things he had ever seen.

He stroked Mason and his lover bucked into the rhythm. Teeth clenched, then parted as he panted for breath. Cam nipped at his exposed throat as Mason's head hung back. He was making little gasping moans, and then his body froze for an instant before he exploded, spurting warmth all over Cam's hand and shirt. Cam watched his face. It was amazing. That contortion that almost looked like pain, followed by the eyes rolling back and the completely blissed out relaxation of muscles. He pushed his thigh between Mason's, who looked for a moment like he might slither bonelessly to the floor. Cam kissed him.

"Unh... God... Does this mean giving me riding lessons counts as foreplay?" Mason said between gasps.

"Mmm, maybe, I'd rather have you ride me at the moment," replied Cam.

Mason gave him a wicked grin, pushing Cam's T-shirt up and off. He walked Cam backward until his legs hit one of the kitchen chairs. He sat down somewhat abruptly.

"Stay put," said Mason and vanished toward the bedroom. He was gone just long enough that Cam was beginning to wonder where the hell he'd gone. He finally returned, buck naked, with lube and a condom in his hand.

"You could've have just told me to follow you, instead of leaving me out here in agony," Cam teased, having some idea where this was heading.

Mason merely smiled and hauled him to his feet, yanking his pants and briefs down around his knees and pushed him back into the chair. Mason popped open the condom packet and put it on Cam. He squirmed slightly as those long slender fingers tightened around his cock for a moment. Mason slicked him with the lube and then straddled him. He lowered his body onto Cam's, slowly impaling himself until he sat on Cam's legs.

Cam breathed hard. Fuck. He almost came right then, but Mason didn't move, except for nipping down the side of his neck. His urgency calmed a little. Mason began to move, in an excruciatingly slow rhythm. Cam's arms wrapped around him, pulling him down with more

force. Mason's cock bobbed between their bodies as the friction reawakened that part of his body. The chair creaked ominously with their combined weight.

Cam buried his face against Mason's chest. The dark curls of chest hair rubbed his nose and mouth. Mason smelled of sweat and come and that scent that was all male. Cam could feel the thrum of his energy and the lust distracted caress of Mason's mind at the edges of his own. All of this was melting his brain into incoherence.

Mine, was the whisper he heard in his head as the rest of conscious thought was ripped away. He came hard enough to black out his vision and leave his body clinging to his lover's, hips jerking in a few brief reflexive thrusts.

Mason's mouth brushed along his hairline and down the side of his face, kissing, nibbling. It was another several minutes before either one spoke.

"Should I be amazed we didn't break the chair?" Cam said with a smile.

Mason slid off his legs and chuckled a little. "Guess maybe I should have aimed you at the bed or maybe the floor. I wasn't exactly thinking structural integrity at the time.

"I don't think I've ever had sex on a kitchen floor."

"We'll put that on our to-do list then," said Mason, giving him a leer.

Cam rolled his eyes and stood up. He pulled up his pants enough that he could walk without falling over. "I'm thinking a shower ought to go on our do it next list. Guess it's a good thing I brought a couple of changes of clothes over, cause this shirt's not fit to wear," said Cam. He scooped his sticky T-shirt up off the floor.

"Throw it in the hamper in the bedroom. I'll toss it in with my next load."

"Oh, are you volunteering to do my laundry now?"

"Only cause the mess is fifty percent my fault." Mason grinned.

"Only fifty percent?"

"You're the one who started this."

"Yeah, guess I am. No, wait, you're the one who bent over in front of the fridge."

"So now it's my fault you decided to jerk me off against the kitchen counter?"

"Uh-huh. Cause you're so hot I couldn't help myself." Cam backed Mason against the wall of the hallway that led away from the kitchen, planting a soft kiss on his mouth. "About that shower..." he whispered.

Mason lay sprawled across his bed watching his lover dress in his uniform. It was Saturday. He didn't have to work today, but Cam did.

"What did you want me to do with the extra clothes I brought over?" asked Cam. He gestured at the backpack sitting near the wall.

"Let me grab some stuff out of my bottom dresser drawer. You can put it in there." Mason got up and pulled a batch of sweaters out and went to stick them on a shelf in the closet.

"Next thing you know I'll be leaving my razor in your bathroom and my undies stuffed in between the sofa cushions," said Cam.

Mason's stomach clenched. That was what he wanted. He wanted Cam to live with him, but knew that his lover hadn't quite reached that step yet. "Okay. Just so long as your lipstick and mascara don't end up in the bathroom, too," said Mason.

Cam laughed and put his clothes in the drawer. "I was thinking, I could leave my bike here today and borrow your car. You could go putt along the street and down to the school parking lot and just mess around. Try to get used to the clutch and all. Maybe you'd be less stressed about not knowing what you're doing if nobody's watching," Cam suggested.

"I guess maybe I could," replied Mason. The thought put a mix of butterflies and a vague tingle of excitement in his gut.

"Go for it." Cam picked up Mason's wad of keys from the dresser. "Gotta go. I'll see you later." He smiled and walked out of the room.

Mason could almost see Cam erecting those mental walls. What did he call it one time? Compartmentalization. The job and personal life didn't intersect, except in the most casual way. He was in uniform, and the uniform meant Mason was off limits. No touching, no kiss goodbye, even though they were alone.

The late afternoon sun had warmed the seat of the motorcycle, Mason noticed as he turned the key in the ignition. He pushed the starter switch and sat listening to the engine warm up for a couple of minutes. Here goes, he thought, letting out the clutch. The bike eased forward and he guided it out of the driveway. Cool, he was moving. With a combination of thrill and fear, he rode down the quiet residential street at about ten miles an hour. It wasn't very far to the school, and he could practice for a little while.

He paused at the stop sign without too much of a lurch. Pretend to be the cautious five year old, look both ways, make sure you're in first and go. The engine grumbled like it was going to stall and he cranked the throttle a little.

Too fast! Too fast! He groped at the controls, but not quickly enough. The front wheel hit the curb and he was thrown sideways as the tire slammed into the concrete and dumped him to the right. His right hand and elbow hit the sidewalk. Stunned by the event, he slowly realized he wasn't really even off the motorcycle exactly. His right knee was on the ground, foot sort of under the body of the motorcycle. It wasn't lying flat because it was against the curb. He floundered to his feet, suddenly mad as hell that he had done something so stupid. Fucking hell, he'd wrecked Cam's bike.

He stood there looking at it for a long moment, slowly aware that something was dripping down the back of his forearm. He twisted his arm to look. Just great. He'd skinned the crap out of his elbow and about halfway down his forearm and the blood was dripping. Nothing life threatening, just road rash. He would mend. He wasn't so sure about the motorcycle. There was a piece lying on the sidewalk. What the hell was that that? Oh, the right front turn signal. Effing magnificent. Wires stuck out of the place where it was suppose to be attached.

Cam was going to blow a gasket. Brand new bike and his boyfriend wrecked it! Mason wrestled the bike back upright and examined it. It was scuffed a bit along the front cowling and also little in front of the right foot peg. The front fender looked a little worse for wear, too. Nothing else seemed to be dangling or obviously broken. No leaking gas, no other shredded parts except for the turn signal. He picked up the piece and stuck it in his pocket.

He was roughly a block and half from home. Dammit, he would get back on and go home and then have his nervous breakdown. He flung his leg over and nervously pushed the button to start it. The engine fluttered and sputtered and refused to catch. He double checked the clutch and brake and made sure it was in neutral. He tried again. The engine turned over and refused to catch. Damn. Shit. Fuck. He couldn't leave it at the edge of the school parking lot. The wheels still worked. No apparent flats. He'd have to push it. It wasn't that far.

Twenty minutes, six hundred pounds of motorcycle and two tenths of a sweat soaked mile later, he pushed it into the driveway, put the kick stand down and staggered into the house. He needed to rinse out the scrapes and gouges in his arm before he could even think about having a go at healing them. He was still pretty lame at fixing himself. That was something that Peter was trying to help him work on.

Cam had an uneasy feeling driving back to Mason's house. He couldn't put a finger on it, but something was wrong. Not God-awful things blowing up people dying wrong. Just wrong.

He pulled into the driveway. The motorcycle was parked there. Mason must be home. It was only after he had climbed out of the car that he realized the turn signal light had been snapped

off, and there were wires dangling. There were also scuffs along the body, and something dark smeared across the throttle. He touched it. Blood. He bolted into the house.

“Mason! Mason! Where the hell are you?!” he screamed.

“Master bathroom,” said a slightly muffled voice. He ran toward the back of the house. Mason had one hip leaning on the sink as he examined the damage to the back of his forearm in the mirror. Cam hastily wrapped an arm around his partner's waist.

“Jesus Christ! Are you okay?” he demanded.

Mason let out a shaky sigh. “Yeah, it’s just skin. I screwed up your bike.”

“I don’t give a shit about the bike! I can get it fixed. What the hell happened?”

“I stopped at the intersection that leads into the school parking lot. When I started up again... Obviously I was going too fast and wiped out,” Mason said with a sigh.

Cam rested his forehead against the back of Mason’s shoulder, both arms wrapped around his lover’s body, just holding him. Cam shouldn’t have pushed him to learn to ride. Cam shouldn’t have proposed swapping vehicles. Mason wasn’t ready. It had seemed so simple. Just let him cruise around the parking lot and residential street and get a feel for how the bike felt in a nice low speed, low traffic situation.

“Hey, look at me,” Mason prompted. He turned within the circle of Cam’s arms and tipped Cam’s face up with a finger. “I’m okay. It’s just road rash. I was beginning to feel a bit too comfortable. I understand just a little why you like the stupid thing.” Mason gave him a lop-sided smile.

Cam hugged him tightly. “I saw blood on the bike and about freaked,” he whispered.

“I don’t suppose it occurred to you that if I was hurt very badly, the motorcycle wouldn’t have been parked in the driveway, banged up though it is.”

“No, that part definitely didn’t cross my mind. Not too rational for a pilot,” he admitted. Mason kissed him softly. “Can you fix it?”

“My arm or the motorcycle?”

“Your arm, doofus. I’ll get the dealer to fix the bike.”

“It won’t start,” said Mason. Cam just looked at him. Say what? “The bike -- it won’t start. I screwed up more than the paint job and the turn signal.”

“Oh, don’t worry about it. I’ll take a look at it later. Back to your arm. Can you heal it?”

“Probably. At least enough to get me to work tomorrow and not draw too much attention. I had to come home and clean the dirt out of it first though.”

“Is there anything I can do?”

“Once I’m done with the clean up, I could do with leaning up against you while I do the healing thing.”

Cam nodded and sat down on the toilet lid to watch Mason finish rinsing the dirt and gravel bits out of the injuries. God, it could have been so much worse. He’d had worse. Even if you didn’t count the near death experience after getting hit by the pickup truck, he’d wiped out himself. Road rash more than once, some evil bruises, and a sprained wrist fell in the category of motorcycle inflicted damage he’d suffered.

“Okay, done as it’s going to get,” said Mason.

They went into the bedroom. Cam leaned back on the headboard of the bed and Mason slouched between his legs, leaning back on his chest. Cam slid his arms around his lover and rested his chin on Mason’s shoulder.

“This might take a while. Let me know if you want to get up,” said Mason. He closed his eyes and let his injured arm lie with his hand on his collar bone. Cam noticed a change in the soft energy vibration he nearly always felt when he held his lover. It was sort of like a change in tone. This was different from all the times Mason had healed him. Must have been something Mason was learning from Peter. He closed his own eyes just holding Mason and feeling his lover breathe. Half an hour ticked by. Mason shifted and drew a deep breath.

“You done?” asked Cam.

“For now,” replied Mason. He twisted his arm around trying to get a good look at his elbow. “What do you think? Feels sort of better. Less sting and all.” He held it up for inspection by Cam.

“Yeah, definitely looks better. Can we *not* do this again any time soon?” Cam said. The skin was less red and torn, and more pink and scabby, looking several days old at least. He still felt worried about what had happened. “Do you always feel this way about me riding?” he asked softly.

“Sometimes. I’m getting used to the idea, sort of. I guess it classifies somewhere in the same vein as worrying about you crashing the jet.”

“I’m sorry. I didn’t really get it. I just didn’t get why you were so amazingly furious when I bought the new one. Now...” Cam blew out a long breath and ran his hands down over his face.

“How ‘bout we forego vehicles entirely for the rest of the evening and go walk on the beach?” Mason suggested.

“Sounds like a plan. Gimme a few minutes to put on some civvies.”

In the late September dusk, the beach was moderately deserted. The height of the tourist season was winding down to a close. Mason padded along the wet sand at the edge of the surf, cuffs of his jeans rolled up. His sandals were tucked under his arm. Cam walked beside him.

“So, wanna tell me why you aren’t just absolutely about to blow a gasket wigged out by what happened?” asked Cam.

“Cause it was my fault. I should have been more careful, and I wasn’t. It was a stupid maneuver and I lost control, so I’m mad at myself.” They walked in silence for another couple of minutes. “It doesn’t mean I’m not going to be shaking in my shoes, when I finally get up the nerve to try again.”

“Everybody drops their bike sometime. Despite what happened, I’m still proud that you had the nerve to try.” Cam took Mason’s hand, threading his fingers in between his lover’s, and they kept walking.

Seeking Balance: Blue Bike Blues

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