

*Single
Shots*



Tails and Teapots
by Misa Izanaki

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Frankie woke up to the sound of an angry chicken clucking on his bedside table. *Stupid ring tone ...* He really needed to figure out how to change that. Of course, that was after he found out who was calling him. It was way too early for Frankie to be up, let alone taking phone calls. Okay, it was almost ten but that was still pretty damned early for him.

"Hello?" Frankie flipped his phone open before it could go through another round of angry clucking. It was Alan, his boyfriend and, as far as Frankie was concerned, the sexiest thing on two legs. They had been dating for almost two years and despite his quirks, Frankie loved Alan to death. He was even ready to take the plunge and ask Alan to move in with him. Hell, Frankie would have asked him then and there if his brain was awake enough for more than caveman sentences. "Hey, babe."

"Oh, you are home." Okay, maybe it wasn't a good time after all. Alan did not sound happy to hear Frankie's voice.

"Why? What's up?"

"Nothing."

"Okay..." The tension on the phone woke Frankie like a cold shower. *What the hell did I do now?* Frankie got the distinct feeling that something was wrong. Alan was speaking in short, icy sentences and he only did that when he was pissed about something.

Alan was silent. Frankie half thought that they got disconnected until he heard a long, irritated sigh from Alan's end. Damn, whatever he did must have been bad. Frankie just wished he knew what it was.

"Um, do you want to get dinner later? I'm off at eight or so."

There was another impatient sigh from Alan. He was probably rolling his eyes, too. Alan had a tendency to do that when Frankie was being particularly thick about something. "Check your email."

With that, Frankie's phone beeped and went silent. Frankie glared at his phone and snapped it shut. "What the hell was that all about?"

Frankie grabbed a pair of clean boxers off the floor and tugged them on as his computer booted up. He scooted his mouse through some of the clutter on his desk and clicked on his email. There was one message offering to make his cock bigger. Frankie deleted that one. The next two were from his mom; Frankie would answer those later. Finally, he got to the one from Alan.

There was no subject, which worried Frankie even more. Alan was very particular about things like that. So, either Alan had been distracted when he sent that email or upset, and neither of those meant good news for Frankie.

Frankie took a deep breath and clicked on the email. It wasn't a long one. There was something about Frankie spending too much time at work and Alan needing his space. Then Alan called him an "insensitive fuck who wouldn't know romance if it kicked him in the ass." Frankie read through the email two more times, making sure that he didn't miss anything. He sat back in his chair with a sigh. Who the hell breaks up with someone over email? And why didn't Alan tell him on the phone? Why the hell did Alan call him anyway?

Frankie shook his head. It was all part of what made his gorgeous and very passive-aggressive boyfriend, okay, ex-boyfriend, tick.

"What a shitty way to start the day." Frankie blew a bit of hair out of his eyes. He tried not to let the whole thing bother him but it didn't really work. It hurt that Alan didn't bother telling him to his face or even mentioning that there was a problem before their relationship got that bad.

Frankie glanced at the clock on his dresser. It was 10:15 and he had to be at work in forty-five minutes. Frankie sighed again. He didn't feel like going to work after all that. That said a lot about how Frankie was feeling. He usually loved going to work. Frankie tended bar at The Body Shop which was the sweetest gig in Seattle. Hot dancers, easy hours and an apartment to boot, it was a great place to work. Too bad he wasn't in the mood for any of it.

Calling in sick wasn't really an option unless he wanted to piss off his boss, which he didn't. Oh well, at least work might take his mind off of Alan. He went to his closet to pick out something to wear. Frankie settled on a pair of worn jeans and a black T-shirt. Both were tight and clung snugly to the hard muscles of his chest and to his long, lean legs. He even stopped off in the bathroom to make sure his hair was well spiked and stylishly ruffled. Just because he was depressed didn't mean that Frankie didn't have to look good for work.

The entire time he was getting ready, Frankie kept going over the last few weeks and the last few months in his head. He tried to figure out what he did wrong but he couldn't do it. Hell, he didn't even know there was a problem until he got

that stupid email. Oh, maybe that's what Alan meant by "insensitive fuck." Then again, if that was the case, why didn't Alan say anything before?

That just frustrated Frankie even more. So, despite his better judgment, he called Alan. Not that it helped any. Alan wasn't picking up his phone. He was probably screening his calls. Besides, if Alan really wanted to talk, there wouldn't have been a break-up email.

Frankie took one last look in the mirror before heading down to work. At least he looked good. Granted, it wasn't hard. Frankie liked to keep fit and the silver hair and jade green eyes helped, too. Ev

He still felt like crap, but hopefully that would go away once he got to work. Frankie took the stairs down, determined to burn off some of the anger and frustration he was feeling. The last thing he wanted was to snap at a customer or one of the drink boys and get yelled at by his boss, Kale.

Three flights of stairs later, Frankie was in the club and not feeling any better. The drink boys were wandering between the small tables, taking orders and clearly dressed for the holidays in their Santa hats, cuffs and collars hung with Christmas bells and velvety red hot pants. Even the bouncers were wearing Santa hats, well, Itsuki was anyway. Though the kitsune had to cut holes in his to make room for his fox ears.

Damn it ... Frankie sighed again. He had totally forgotten that it was Christmas Eve. Frankie had been looking forward to spending the holiday with Alan but that plan had been shot

to hell. Frankie sighed. His day was getting better and better. He took his spot behind the bar and started filling drink orders. It was still early in the day, which meant it was slow, and that gave Frankie way too much time to think about everything. Maybe he should have risked Kale's wrath and called in sick. Watching all the pretty boys was depressing him even more.

"Okay, spill it, Frankie. What's wrong?"

Frankie sighed again. It would be Dante on shift with him. That boy was curious as a cat and would keep poking until Frankie told him everything. Frankie wanted to brush Dante off and tell him that it was nothing, but he seriously doubted that the boy would take that as an answer. He tried it anyway and hoped that Dante would take the hint.

"Nothing ... I'm fine."

"Frankie!" Dante stood with both hands on his hips. It was almost parental, which was kind of funny, since Dante was both younger and shorter than Frankie was. The small devil horns Dante had didn't help things either. "I know something's bothering you. You've been moping since you got here. Now, are you going to tell me what's wrong or do I have to start prodding?"

"All right, all right! You know how I was going to ask Alan to move in with me?"

"Yeah, Kale said it was okay, so what's the problem?"

"Well, I don't have to worry about asking him anymore. Alan broke up with me a little while ago ... with an email."

"What?"

"He emailed me like an hour ago, called me an insensitive fuck and broke up with me."

"Wow, that's really lame." Dante patted Frankie on the shoulder. Dante was trying to comfort him but it wasn't working. "Would it make you feel better if I said that you're better off without him?"

"Not really." Frankie sighed and raked a bit of hair out of his eyes.

"Well, it's true. Alan was a bitchy little brat and you deserved better." Dante nodded. "I mean he was really hot, but he treated you like crap."

"Thanks, I think." Frankie grabbed a couple of limes and started hacking them into small wedges. Killing fruit always made him feel better.

"It's true." Dante cocked his head and eyed Frankie worriedly. "And it's really shitty of him to break up with you on Christmas Eve too."

"It's not that big of a deal." Frankie wiped his hands and pulled two beer bottles out of the fridge under the bar. He popped the caps and handed the beers to one of the waiting drink boys.

"Yeah, it is ... email is a really lame way to break up with someone, especially this time of year." Dante's tail twitched back and fourth, doing that angry cat thing it did when Dante was annoyed at something. "Did you talk to him at least?"

"He called me earlier to tell me to check my email." Frankie shrugged. "And now he's not answering his phone."

"What?" Dante's tail bristled angrily. "That's even worse than just emailing you. He could have said something when he talked to you, at least."

"Yeah, we—" Frankie stopped mid-sentence as Kale, the owner/manager of the club, stepped up to the bar with a box almost completely covered in brightly colored postage stamps in his hands.

"Am I interrupting something?" Kale asked. One slim, auburn eyebrow arched in curiosity.

"No..." Frankie busied himself with more of the limes stored behind the bar. He didn't need to let his boss in on his personal life, really he didn't.

"That blond twink he was dating dumped him and he did it by email, too. The brat couldn't even come down here and face him."

Frankie resisted the urge to chuck one of the limes he was cutting at Dante's head. It was tempting, but Dante and Kale were an item and smacking Dante would just get him fired. Kale probably didn't take kindly to anyone pelting Dante with fruit, even if he deserved it.

"Sorry to hear it. You okay?"

"Yeah."

"Well, if you need a little time off or something, let me know." Kale nodded at him. "Dante or Ed can cover for you." Kale set his box on the bar and pushed it toward Frankie. "A little good news though, this came for you today. It's from Japan."

"Thanks." Frankie eyed the return address with curiosity. It was from his mom. Ever since his dad died, Frankie's mom

had gotten the urge to travel the world. She was currently wandering around Japan and having the time of her life. At least, that's what her post cards and emails said anyway. "I think it's a Christmas present from my mom."

"Ooh, open it!" Dante started to bounce.

Frankie pulled a box-cutter from one of the drawers under the bar and sliced through the layers of tape and stamps. A neatly folded letter sat on a mound of packing popcorn. Frankie opened the letter first and read it. Yup, it was from his mom.

The letter read like the postcards he was used to getting from her. She was in Nara and having a great time. She was also sorry that she couldn't spend Christmas with him but she hoped that the present would make up for it. It was something she found in a tiny shop there and she knew that Frankie would love it. Well, she hoped he would, anyway. It was kind of funny that Frankie's mom actually wrote the last bit on her letter. Then again, she did ramble, even when she was writing. Frankie tucked the letter into his pocket. He would read the rest of it later. He then carefully dug through the packing popcorn. Frankie was curious to see what she sent him, and so was Dante, apparently.

"Come on, Frankie, the suspense is killing me. What did you get?" Dante grumbled as Frankie pulled something vaguely oval and wrapped in layers of bubble wrap out of the popcorn.

"Dante!" Kale glared and Dante immediately stopped complaining.

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Frankie wished he knew how Kale did it. Oh wait, maybe he didn't. He didn't want to know what Dante and Kale did behind closed doors or how Kale got the boy to behave, for that matter. He just didn't need to think of his boss and his friend like that, no matter how sexy it was. It would just make things, well, awkward.

Carefully, Frankie slit the tape and peeled away the bubble wrap, revealing an old iron tea kettle. It was a pretty big kettle that probably held around four quarts of water. Well, if he actually dared to put water in the thing. Beneath the oxidation, Frankie could make out lines etched into the metal. The kettle was supposed to look like a tanuki. The spout was one of its paws and the handle was its tail. The only strange part was the wide strip of paper scrawled with what looked like an old form of Japanese that held the top of the kettle in place.

"Wow, that's ugly."

"Dante!"

"What? It's true."

"I don't know, I kind of like it." Frankie lifted the kettle up and rubbed off a bit of dust with his finger. "This is actually a pretty normal gift from my mom. She usually sends me weirder things when she travels."

"I'd hate to see what else she sen—Ow!" Dante cringed as Kale stepped around the bar and swatted him on the ass.

"Just for that, you're covering for Frankie for the rest of the night."

"Kale..."

"That's final." Kale glared at Dante. Good lord, Kale was good at that.

"Fine!" Dante made sad puppy eyes at Kale and stuck his bottom lip out in a pout. "Jerk..." Dante muttered the last bit, but Frankie heard it and Kale probably did, too.

Kale glared at Dante again. "Keep that up and you won't be sitting down for a few days."

Frankie didn't need to hear that, or see the hungry look Dante gave Kale after that threat, either.

Kale turned to Frankie who was watching the whole exchange in amazement. "Go on, you officially have the rest of the night off."

"Thanks, Kale." Frankie set his tea kettle back in its box and headed home. "Thanks, Dante."

"You owe me!" Dante called after him.

Frankie headed back to his apartment, taking the elevator this time. He felt a little better after talking to Dante, and the present from his mom helped, too. Dante was right though, the teapot was kind of ugly, but it was still cool. Besides, it would look a whole lot better once he got it cleaned up. It was also a nice change from the random snacks she sent him last year when she was in China. There was something just not right about Gummi candy that tasted like corn.

Once inside, Frankie settled on his couch and took a closer look at the tea kettle. It was old, from the looks of things, and covered in a layer of greenish oxidation. That would be easy enough to clean off, though. Frankie set the thing on his coffee table and grabbed a damp rag from the kitchen. At

least cleaning up the tea kettle would keep his mind off of Alan for a little longer.

"I guess this'll have to come off too." Frankie tugged at the ancient looking slip of paper that clung to the top of the kettle. At first, Frankie thought it was a piece of wide paper tape place there to keep the lid with the kettle but it was more than that. There was writing on it, fluid, scrawling script that looked far more complicated than normal Japanese. It looked like one of those paper spirit wards he kept seeing in anime. What the hell were they called? *Futon ... furo ... Ofuda ... that was it.*

That's what the paper looked like. Then again, Frankie's knowledge of Japanese was pretty limited. Hell, it could have been an elaborate price tag for all he knew. Besides, why would anyone stick a spirit ward on an old tea kettle? Frankie picked at one tattered corner of the paper and lifted it carefully. The paper crackled as he pulled at it and crumbled to dust beneath his fingers. Well, that was a little weird. Even if the paper was old it shouldn't have turned to dust like that, should it?

The weirdness didn't end there, not by a long shot. Once the paper was off, the tea kettle trembled and with what sounded like a sneeze, it hopped out of Frankie's hands and fell on to the floor.

"What the hell?" Frankie blinked at his empty hands in disbelief. The tea kettle did not just sneeze and jump out of his hands. Did it? No, of course not, tea kettles did not move or sneeze for that matter. It had to be his brain playing tricks on him.

Maybe it was the stress. It was either that, or he was going crazy. Frankie sighed and hoped it was the stress. Ending up in a mental ward would have been a shitty way to end the week.

"Ouch..." There was a puff of green-gray smoke and once that cleared, there was some sort of animal standing there on its hind legs, rubbing its head with one furry, chocolate brown paw.

It looked like a cross between a raccoon and a dog, with dark brown fur and a bushy striped tail and was about eye level with the arm of the couch. At least it was cute, whatever it was. Frankie shook his head. The thing talked too. Yeah, he was going crazy all right.

Two big brown eyes glanced up at Frankie and, before he could do anything the dog-raccoon thing jumped up like it was trying to tackle him to the couch, not that it worked. It didn't have enough weight or mass to push Frankie over, so it ended up sort of wrapped around Frankie's chest with its furry, little arms clinging to his neck.

"Thank you, thank you, thank you!" The dog-raccoon thing licked at Frankie's face excitedly. "I thought I'd never be free of that stupid ward."

Frankie pushed the thing off him. He was in no mood for a tongue bath, especially from some weird talking animal or figment of his imagination, whichever this happened to be. "Get off me!"

"Sorry..." The thing picked itself off the floor and hopped up onto the coffee table. It glanced at him timidly, which made Frankie feel like he just kicked a puppy. "I was just

excited that's all. You don't know what it's like, being stuck as a tea kettle for almost two hundred years."

"It's oka—Wait, what?"

"I'm a tanuki ... a raccoon-dog, I guess you'd call me. We're shapeshifters and tricksters ... but only sometimes."

"Ah, like kitsune." Frankie nodded. Okay, maybe he wasn't crazy after all. He knew about shifters. Hell, most of the crew at The Body Shop knew about them, well, kitsune at least. It was pretty common knowledge that Itsuki, one of the bouncers, was one and Itsuki was a well-spring of information, especially about werefoxes.

The tanuki looked vaguely insulted. "I'm more than some silly fox. We tanuki can change into almost anything. Kitsune, on the other hand, only have their fox and human forms."

"Oh..."

"How do you know about kitsune, anyway?" The tanuki cocked its—his—head to one side. It was easy to tell by its voice that the tanuki was male. The furry set of balls that hung between the tanuki's legs made it pretty obvious too. "I didn't think they ventured this far west."

"I work with one, actually." Frankie raked his hand through his hair and sighed. "He's from Japan originally, though."

"Interesting..." The tanuki stretched and shook out its bushy tail. "Oh, it feels good to be myself again."

"How did you get stuck as a tea kettle for so long?"

"I ran into a demon hunter who couldn't take a joke, that's how."

"What?"

"We tanuki enjoy playing jokes on people, especially ones who take themselves too seriously. We can't help it. It's part of our nature, really." The tanuki hopped up and sat down cross-legged on Frankie's coffee table. "Anyway, there was this demon hunter ... First, I pretended to be an oni and I swear he chased me across half of Japan. Then when he was about to catch me, I changed into the tea kettle. I figured I'd lose him that way and he'd leave me be."

"But he figured you out, didn't he?"

"Yeah ... and boy was he mad. He slapped that damned ofuda on my head and I was stuck that way until just now. Who knows how many people man-handled me before you came along."

"Really?" It was an interesting story, but Frankie wasn't sure if he should believe the tanuki or not. He was cute, but cute didn't always mean trustworthy. Alan was proof of that. Okay, that wasn't really fair. Alan probably had his reasons for breaking up with Frankie like that, but it still sucked and Frankie was still stinging from the whole ordeal.

"Yes, and I owe you a lot." The tanuki's face got serious. "What can I do to repay you? I need to do something. Debts are a very serious thing to a tanuki, you know."

"You should really thank my mom. She's the one who bought you and sent you here."

"She may have bought me, but you're the one who pulled that ward off and freed me. So, what can I do for you?"

"Look, I'm glad I could help, but I don't really need anything from a tanuki."

The tanuki's ears drooped unhappily. "Please ... there must be something."

"Can you make my ex-boyfriend come back to me, or at least talk to me?" Frankie kicked himself mentally. He wanted to discourage the tanuki, not sound desperate.

The tanuki shook his furry head. "I don't have any magic that can do that." He did a little handstand on his front paws and twirled once. "I can dance, though." The tanuki then hopped back on to his back paws and looked hopefully at Frankie. "And I'm an excellent hunter, especially when it comes to bugs."

"Um, thanks ... but I think I'm good. I get my fill of dancers at work and I don't really have a bug problem."

"Oh..."

There was that kicked puppy look again. Frankie sighed. He was in no mood for any of this. "Look, I don't know what else to tell you ... but if it helps, you can stay here for a few days, or at least until you figure out what you want to do."

The tanuki shook his head. "No, if there's nothing I can do then I should go. I owe you too much as it is."

"Wait, it's dangerous out there." Now Frankie felt like a real jerk. It wasn't the tanuki's fault that he was in a bad mood. "I'd hate for you to get hurt out there because of me."

There was a brief flick of those velvety-looking ears as the tanuki hopped off the table and headed for the door. That probably meant that the tanuki heard him but was trying to ignore him. Frankie's old cat used to do that to him whenever it was pissed at him.

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The tanuki reached up, opened the door and before Frankie could say anything else, it was gone.

Frankie sprawled back onto the couch and rubbed his temples with his fingers. Wow, he was doing really well today. First, Alan dumped him, and then his Christmas present walked out on him. Frankie was tempted to just go to bed right then and there just so his day couldn't get any worse.

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It was dark when Frankie finally hauled himself off the couch. He was tired of moping around his apartment and decided to go down to the club and have a little fun. It wasn't often that Frankie got a night off and he meant to take advantage of it. He glanced at the clock. It was nearly eight, which meant that he could grab a quick shower and still get down to the club and catch Aoi's cowboy routine. Aoi may have been taken but watching him dance always brightened Frankie's day. And this was one day that could definitely use it.

Frankie headed into the bathroom and set the water temperature to just short of scalding. He tugged off his jeans, shirt and boxers and stepped into the shower. Oh, that hit the spot. Frankie stuck his head under steamy spray, letting the water soak into the sleek muscles of his back.

The shower felt good but wasn't really helping his mood. That left him with "Plan B." Frankie braced one hand against the smooth tile and trailed the other down his chest and over the sleek muscles of his belly. He wrapped his fingers around his cock, sliding up and down hard, wet flesh. Jacking off was

always a good way to get rid of tension and boy, did Frankie need it. There was a ball of tension sitting in Frankie's gut and another knotted between his shoulders. That needed to be dealt with before Frankie went anywhere or he wasn't having any fun.

Frankie closed his eyes and moved his hand a little faster. It would have been a lot nicer if Alan was there with him, that lithe, little body sliding against his own, all slick and soapy. Frankie shook that last thought from his head. His pretty blond ex was not coming back, no matter how much Frankie wanted him to.

Damn, that totally killed Frankie's mood. He gave his cock one last half-hearted pull before giving up. Every time he closed his eyes, Frankie saw his ex and Alan was the last person he wanted to jack off to, especially today.

Frankie sighed and stepped out of the shower. He definitely needed to go down to the club and get distracted. Whether it was just watching a dance or two, or even picking up a hot one night stand, Frankie didn't really care as long as it took his mind off of Alan. Frankie toweled off and grabbed a pair of jeans out of his drawer and his leather vest out of his closet. Both were a little worn but clean and that was what mattered. He fiddled with his hair for a bit and headed down to the club.

Frankie got downstairs just in time to see Aoi dance. Maybe it was the chaps or the way Aoi rubbed himself against the pole, but Frankie was definitely feeling better. Of course, it also helped that Dante wasn't around to pester him.

He shifted and leaned his back against the bar. It had been a while since he could just sit and watch the people milling around. Alan always insisted on going out somewhere instead of hanging out at the club. Then again, Frankie was pretty sure Alan wouldn't be caught dead in The Body Shop. Alan didn't even like coming over to his apartment. Frankie sighed. He really needed to stop thinking about his ex.

Frankie gave the room another once over. "Oh, hello..." His eyes were drawn to one of the small tables halfway between the bar and the stage. Sitting there was the hottest young man he had ever seen. Long, dark brown hair tipped with auburn and gold straggled into a fine-boned and boyish face and over slim shoulders. He was new, too. Frankie definitely would've remembered if he'd seen that boy before.

"What are you doing here? I thought Kale gave you the night off?"

Damn. Frankie turned and tried not to look too annoyed. "Hey, Dante." He was surprised to see Dante in a pair of dark gray slacks and a light blue dress shirt. It was a lot different than the tight T-shirts and short shorts or even the leathers Dante usually wore.

"Hey, yourself." Dante hopped onto a bar stool and eyed Frankie with curiosity. "So, are you done moping yet?"

"I guess..."

"That's good. It's nice to see you down here instead of holed up in your apartment. Going out and being social is the first step. So, did you finally realize that you're better off without what's-his-face?"

"Don't start with me, Dante." Frankie took a deep breath and counted to ten, twice. He was in no mood to deal with Dante, especially after the whole thing with the tanuki earlier. "I came down here for a little distraction, not to talk to you about Alan or my current lack of a social life."

"Fine..."

"Why are you still here, anyway? And what's up with the clothes? You look like you're going on a job interview or something."

"Kale's taking me on a date." Dante bounced a little on his bar stool. "I don't know where we're going yet, but he said I had to dress up."

"A date?" Frankie hopped up on one of the stools and grabbed a beer from behind the bar. "You know you're supposed to do that before you start sleeping with someone, right?"

"Don't be a jackass." Dante whapped Frankie on the shoulder as his tail swished back and forth. "Kale's feeling romantic and I'm not about to argue with the boss man."

"It's kind of funny that you still call him that even though you two are sleeping together."

"What else am I supposed to call him? He doesn't like it when I call him 'Sir' in public."

Frankie almost choked on his beer, but it was better than spraying it across the room. An image of Kale decked out in typical leather daddy gear popped into Frankie's brain. Wow, he really didn't need that in his head. "Damn it, Dante..."

"What?"

"I don't need anymore weird thoughts in my head, that's what."

"What's weird about Kale being all hot and masterful? It's pretty sexy, if you ask me."

"I didn't ask you." Frankie rubbed the bridge of his nose with his fingers. "I never ask about your and Kale's sex life. I know better."

"What about my sex life?" Kale stepped up to the bar and gave Dante a look. "Okay, Dante, what have you been telling him?"

Damn ... Frankie almost didn't recognize his boss. Kale was dressed in a stylish, almost Victorian-looking black suit with a white collarless shirt and his long auburn hair pulled into a tail at the nape of his neck. He looked like some hot business man, the kind you only see in those Japanese "boy's love" comics. Either that or a sort of modern day vampire.

"I didn't tell him anything, well, not anything that wasn't already common knowledge..." Dante hopped off his stool and snuggled against Kale's side.

"What?"

"Nothing..." Dante grinned innocently. "Shall we go?"

"Sure thing." Kale nodded then glanced at Frankie. "See ya later, Frankie. I hope you find yourself a nice little distraction tonight."

"Thanks ... You two have fun!" Frankie waved as his friends headed out the door. How the hell did Kale know why he was hanging around? Frankie shook his head. Kale always did have a knack for knowing what was going on in the club and with everyone who worked there.

Frankie drained his beer. Damn, watching Dante and Kale together just made him more depressed. He and Alan were happy like that once, or at least, Frankie thought they were. Coming down to the club was turning into a bad idea. It was a slow night and most of the guys were in the club too often to make a one night stand anything but awkward. Not that they'd be interested in him anyway.

That thought depressed him even more. Frankie sighed and slumped against the bar. Here he was, single for—what? six hours—and he already didn't know what to do with himself. He was horny, too, which didn't help things. *Damn, maybe I should have jacked off in the shower.*

Someone sat on the barstool next to him. Frankie felt a slim hand touch his shoulder.

"Are you okay?"

"Yeah..." Frankie glanced up and almost fell off his stool in surprise. It was the guy Frankie had seen earlier, and damn if he wasn't even better looking up close.

"Is everything all right?" Warm, worried chocolate brown eyes met Frankie's. "You look depressed."

"I was ... until I saw you, at least." Frankie cringed. That had to be the worst pick up line ever. Oh well, so much for first impressions.

The young man just smiled at him and held his hand out. "I'm Aki."

"Frankie..." Frankie gave Aki a quick once over while they shook hands. Aki had a good-looking body, too. He was built perfectly as far as Frankie was concerned anyway, all sleek muscles and slim lines. "Nice to meet you."

"So, do you come here often?"

"You could say that." Frankie turned so he could get a better look at Aki. There was something familiar about those big brown eyes, but Frankie couldn't place it. "Usually I'm behind the bar, though."

"Ah, so what brings you to work on your day off?"

"I had a hell of a day and needed a little distraction."

"Ooh, anything I can help with?"

"Maybe..."

Aki leaned closer and whispered into Frankie's ear. "If distracting you involves us getting sweaty and naked, I'm all for it."

"Really?" Before today, Frankie wouldn't have asked. He would have just dragged Aki upstairs without a second thought, but the whole thing with Alan made him wonder if he could read people as well as he thought he could. Who knew one email could mess with his head so much? "I wasn't sure if you'd be interested."

"Why wouldn't I be?" Aki's slim fingers trailed up Frankie's thigh and gave him a gentle squeeze. "It's not every day I meet a man as handsome as you are."

"Thanks..."

"You're welcome." Aki gave him another breathtaking smile. "So, do you have somewhere to go or should we find a quiet corner here?"

"I—my place is upstairs."

"Ooh, that makes things convenient."

"Yeah, it's one of the perks I get from working here." Frankie grabbed a couple of condoms and a pack of lube from the fish bowl on the bar and took Aki's hand. "Come on."

"Is that the only perk?" Aki bounced behind Frankie as they headed to the elevator. Damn, he was cute. "I mean, working with such gorgeous guys must be a perk in itself."

"Yeah, it is pretty sweet, even if the hottest ones are taken." Frankie tapped the call button. The elevator was actually prompt for once and Frankie and Aki stepped inside once the doors opened.

"Like the cowboy with the long hair who was dancing earlier?"

"Yeah, that's Aoi; he has two boyfriends."

"What about you?" Aki slipped his arms around Frankie's mid-section and snuggled closer as the elevator doors closed behind them.

Frankie shook his head and pushed the button for the third floor. "Nope, I'm single ... boyfriend broke up with me this morning."

"Oh, that's what you meant by 'a hell of a day.'"

"Yeah, it's okay, though. I'm better off without him ... at least, that's what my friends keep telling me."

Aki rubbed Frankie's shoulder gently. "Still, that's why you needed the distraction, right?"

"Yeah, sorry."

"Why are you sorry?" Aki cocked his head to one side and looked at Frankie with curiosity. "It's pretty fortunate, if you ask me." The elevator doors slid open again and Aki tugged

Frankie out into the hall. "After all, I wouldn't have met you tonight if you and your boyfriend were still together."

Aki did have a point. Granted, after tonight, Frankie was probably going to be alone again but he didn't mind so much. One night with the beautiful boy next to him seemed worth all the crap he went through earlier. Frankie just hoped Aki didn't mind a messy apartment.

"I should warn you, my place is kind of messy." Frankie ran his hand over the palm scanner and pulled Aki inside. "I wasn't expecting company."

Aki closed the door behind him and smiled mischievously. "I don't mind, as long as your bed is free."

Frankie scooped Aki into his arms and carried him to the bedroom. "It is. I even put fresh sheets down, well, yesterday."

"Perfect." Aki nuzzled Frankie's cheek. Slim fingers tangled in the silvery spikes of Frankie's hair and pulled him into a kiss.

Frankie flicked his tongue against Aki's, savoring the sweetness of his mouth. Aki tasted vaguely of apples and something else Frankie couldn't place. It was a sweet and slightly spicy flavor that Frankie could not get enough of.

They tumbled onto the bed together, tugging at each other's clothes. Aki's nimble hands undid the button fly of Frankie's jeans and pulled them down Frankie's legs. Frankie kicked off his jeans and set to work, getting Aki out of his clothes. He slid his hands under Aki's shirt and slipped it over Aki's head. Aki's skin was soft and almost velvety beneath his fingers. Frankie just hoped that Aki liked to be petted.

"You have good hands." Aki wiggled out of his jeans and briefs. He glanced up and licked his lips. "Mmm, and an amazing body too."

"You're prettier." Frankie pulled Aki closer and nuzzled his neck.

"I don't know about that." Aki cupped Frankie's face in his hands and kissed him again. "Then again, you're handsome, not pretty. You're too manly to be pretty."

"Is that a bad thing?"

"Not to me. I think you're perfect." Aki tugged at Frankie's boxers. He grinned hungrily as he freed Frankie's long, thick cock. "Oh, better than perfect."

Frankie sat up, bracing himself on his elbows as Aki trailed soft, nibbling kisses down his chest and the flat planes of his stomach. Aki shifted a little and flicked his tongue over the flared tip of Frankie's cock. Aki lapped at him again. Frankie had to resist the urge to tangle his fingers in Aki's hair and push his head lower. He wanted to feel more of Aki's mouth but he didn't want to push Aki too hard either.

That warm, wet tongue teased him again. Frankie groaned and lifted his hips. Aki must have gotten the hint. Aki wrapped his lips around Frankie's prick and took it deep.

Oh, Aki was good at that. He didn't rush things, for one, and he had the perfect mix of suction and gentle friction going too. It was enough to make Frankie's toes curl.

Frankie stroked Aki's soft hair. "You know, I'm going to come if you keep doing that."

"It's okay. I'll just make you hard again if you do." Aki gave Frankie an innocent smile. "It'll be fun."

"Aki..."

"Please..." Aki glanced up at him, those wide dark eyes eager and pleading.

"Okay, okay ... just stop making puppy eyes at me." Frankie reached over and grabbed his jeans off the floor. "But if you're going to suck me off, we need to be safe about it."

"Safe?"

"Yup," Frankie pulled one of the condoms he had stashed in his pocket earlier and tore it open with his teeth. "It's one of the boss man's rules. No bare-backing unless you're in a serious relationship." Frankie hissed as the cool latex sheathed his cock. "Trust me, it's better this way."

"If you say so..."

"I do." Frankie winked. "After all, you don't know where I've been."

Aki ran his fingers over Frankie's prick, the look on his face was more curious than anything else. "Can you feel anything through that?"

"Mmm, I felt that."

"That works for me, then ... even if I wanted to taste you a little more."

Frankie had an answer for that, but before he could say anything, Aki's mouth was on him again. That distracted Frankie from everything else. Aki bobbed in Frankie's lap. Each time Aki brought his head up, that warm, wet tongue of his dragged along the underside of Frankie's shaft, teasing the hard flesh.

From the feel of things, Aki was determined to make him come or Aki really liked giving blow jobs. Frankie trailed his

hand down Aki's back and over soft curve of his ass. It just wouldn't be right if Frankie had all the fun.

A soft moan vibrated against Frankie's cock, sending a jolt straight to his brain. Aki moaned again and arched eagerly against his hand. Oh, that was encouraging. Frankie licked his fingers, getting them good and wet. He slid the slick digits between Aki's cheeks and circled the sensitive flesh between them. Frankie eased one of his fingers into Aki's ass, slowly coaxing Aki open. Once the grip on his finger eased a little, Frankie curled it, rubbing against Aki's gland.

"Ooh! No fair!" Aki gasped and bucked against Frankie's lap. "I'm supposed to make you come."

"Do you want me to stop?" Frankie nudged Aki's sweet spot again. "I will if you want me to."

"N-no ... it feels good." Aki swirled his tongue around the crown of Frankie's prick and glanced up hopefully. "More please?"

"Whatever you want, baby." Frankie pulled his hand back and coated his fingers with more spit. He slid two of them back into Aki's amazingly tight ass.

"Oh, yeah..." Aki shifted onto his knees and rocked back, taking Frankie's fingers deeper. He was panting and his eyes were clamped shut, which meant Aki was either lost in the moment or at least concentrating on what Frankie was doing. Aki wrapped a hand around his own hard cock and started to stroke himself.

Damn, Aki was sexy. Frankie figured that he might have lost out on a blow job, but he didn't mind too much. Aki was giving him one hell of a show.

"Mmm, I almost forgot." Aki shifted again and buried his face back in Frankie's crotch.

Frankie popped before he meant to. He couldn't help it, not with those sweep lips sucking on him and that velvety tongue swabbing against his cock. Frankie bucked off the bed, driving deep into Aki's throat.

As soon as Frankie caught his breath, he turned his attention back to the tight, twitching muscles still gripping his fingers. Frankie slid his fingers in and out of Aki's ass, keeping pace with the slim hand pulling on Aki's cock.

Aki had to be close. Aki's entire body had tensed up and his breath was coming in short ragged pants accented by soft moans.

"Come on, baby, I want to see you come," Frankie murmured against Aki's shoulder. "The sooner you do, the sooner I can fuck you."

"Ooh, Frankie!"

It must have been intense. Aki's entire body convulsed as he came. Frankie felt it, too. Aki's ass rippled and clenched around his fingers, squeezing them tightly. Frankie couldn't wait to feel that around his cock.

Aki rolled onto his back, breathing heavily. He smiled up at Frankie. "I'm so lucky I found you."

"I don't know about that." Frankie sat back, watching Aki lounge. It was still hard to believe that fate dropped such an amazing young man in his lap, tonight of all nights.

"Look at me." Aki ran a finger through the sticky mess splattered on his stomach and held it out for Frankie to see. "I'm covered in come and hopefully about to be fucked cross-

eyed by a sweet and gorgeous man. That's pretty damned lucky if you ask me."

"I still say I'm the lucky one." Frankie slid off the bed and tugged off his rubber. He tossed it into the trash can near the bed. "Let's get cleaned up, and I'll see about fucking you cross-eyed."

"Sounds like a plan to me!" Aki bounced behind Frankie as they headed to the bathroom. "I can't wait to ride that gorgeous prick of yours."

Frankie turned and gave Aki a grin. He couldn't help it. "You don't beat around the bush, do you?"

"Should I? I can be coy if you want me to."

"No, I like you just the way you are." Frankie turned and pulled Aki against his chest. He nuzzled that soft mess of hair. "I—sorry..."

"For what?" Aki touched Frankie's cheek and eyed him worriedly.

"For getting too involved, I guess. I—never mind ... I'm just being stupid, that's all." Frankie patted Aki's shoulder and tapped the digital panel by the tub. "Don't worry about it, I'm fine."

"Are you sure?"

"Totally." Frankie forced a smile. "How do you like your showers?"

Aki shrugged. "I usually take baths ... but I like those hot and steamy, like my men."

"Got it." Frankie set the water temp and pulled Aki into the shower. It was a tight fit but that made it all the more fun. "I'm surprised I haven't seen you in the club before."

"I'm new here, just got to town today, in fact. I'm definitely going to be there more often, though."

"You're always welcome, but don't be surprised if Kale asks if you need a job. You're definitely hot enough to work at The Body Shop."

"I don't know ... I'd be too distracted by a certain silver-haired bartender to get anything done." Aki rubbed that wet and sexy body against Frankie. Aki was hard again already.

"Wow, you bounce back fast." Frankie trailed his fingers over Aki's hard cock. Damn, he wished that he could recover so quickly. He still needed a little more time.

"I can't help it." Aki turned into the pelting water and wiggled his pert little ass teasingly. "You make me so horny."

"I know the feeling." That did it for him. Frankie pushed his hips forward, rubbing his stiff length against Aki's wet skin. "How about we head back to the bedroom so can I ride that sweet ass of yours?"

Aki leaned back against Frankie's chest and glanced over his shoulder at him. "Couldn't we do it in here? The water feels so good..."

Frankie's brain turned to mush beneath that hot, hungry look Aki gave him. He couldn't say no to Aki, even if he wanted to. The only tricky part would be condoms and lube.

Aki ducked out of the shower briefly only to return with a small plastic packet in his hand. "I grabbed one of these, just in case. We need to be safe right?"

"Good thinking, baby." Frankie took the condom from Aki's fingers and nuzzled Aki's cheek. "I could kiss you."

"As long you do it while you fuck me." Aki gave him another hungry look. "I don't think I can wait any longer."

"You are definitely a boy after my own heart." Frankie rolled the rubber over his prick and grabbed the bottle of hair conditioner from the tiny shelf on the shower wall. Alan must have left it behind. Frankie never bothered the fancy stuff. It was all natural, according to the bottle, and there was no harsh, soapy stuff, which meant it wouldn't mess with Aki's insides.

"Frankie..."

"Sorry, I—" Frankie turned back to see Aki sliding two fingers in and out of that perfect, little ass of his. He almost dropped his make-shift lube. Frankie licked his lips. Damn, that boy knew how to make him needy. "Wow!"

Aki glanced over his shoulder at Frankie. Those amazing chocolate-colored eyes were half-lidded and soft, breathy moans slipped from Aki's lips. He pulled his fingers out and pressed his hands against the slick tile. "Mmm, fuck me, please..."

Aki didn't have to ask him twice. Frankie squirted some of the conditioner into his palm and rubbed it into his sheathed cock. Slowly, Frankie guided himself into tight, gripping heat. Aki moaned, his entire body rippling around Frankie's length.

"You feel so good," Frankie murmured. He pushed in the rest of the way and leaned in to kiss Aki's neck and shoulders. "I can feel you squeezing me."

"Can't help it, you're so big." Aki rocked back a little. "Mmm, ride me, please, Frankie? Fuck my ass."

Frankie rumbled something in agreement. It wasn't really English. His brain was too occupied for that. Frankie wrapped both hands around Aki's slender waist and fucked him with long, deep strokes.

"Oh, fuck! Frankie!" Aki leaned against the tile wall and pushed his ass out, taking Frankie a little deeper. "T-touch me some more, please!"

Frankie brushed one hand over Aki's dusky nipples. He loved the feel of Aki's body against him. Aki's skin was so warm and was just begging to be touched.

"Lower..."

Frankie slid his hand lower petting Aki's flat stomach. He knew where Aki wanted his hand, but he was also so much fun to tease.

"Frankie!"

"Impatient boy..." Frankie wrapped his hand around Aki's cock and stroked him.

Aki moaned again, his hands clenching against the shower wall. He kept moving, rocking back to grind his ass against Frankie's groin and forward to fuck Frankie's hand. Aki tossed his head back and squirted Frankie's fingers with come.

"Oooh!"

Frankie slammed his hips forward as Aki clenched around him, milking his cock. He buried his face in Aki's neck as he came. "Fuck!"

They stood together for a few minutes, catching their breaths. Frankie held Aki against his chest feeling better than he had in a long time. It sucked that he and Aki would go their separate ways so soon. Frankie ran his fingers through

Aki's wet hair and sighed. He definitely wouldn't mind if Aki wanted to stay the night or longer. Frankie just didn't know how to ask.

"Frankie..." Aki wiggled in his arms. "The water's starting to get cold."

"Oh, damn, sorry."

They cleaned up and stumbled out of the shower before the water got too chilly. Frankie grabbed a towel and wrapped Aki up in it before grabbing his own.

"Thank you."

"No problem. I just hope you didn't get too cold in there." Frankie tucked his towel around his hips.

"I'm fine." Aki rubbed the towel over his hair and smiled innocently. "Besides, I'm sure you could warm me up again."

"Aki ... I don't know if I can get it up again, even as sexy as you are." Frankie raked his fingers through his hair and glanced at the tile floor. He didn't want Aki to go, but he didn't have another round of sex in him either, not for a while at least.

"I was thinking I could curl up with you and catch a nap." Aki stood on his tip-toes and kissed Frankie on the cheek.

"You kind of wore me out."

"You want to stay?"

"I'd like to. Do you mind?"

Frankie scooped Aki up and carried him back to the bedroom. He tried not to look too excited. It was hard though. "Why would I mind? I'd love the company, actually."

"Yay!" Aki grinned and hugged Frankie tightly. "Thank you!"

Frankie set Aki down and dropped his towel before climbing into bed. He held the blankets up so Aki could crawl in beside him.

Aki snuggled against Frankie's chest and let out a deep, contented sigh. "Mmm, toasty warm."

Frankie dropped a kiss on Aki's forehead. "I do make a pretty good heater, or so I've been told."

"That you do." Aki shifted and rested his head on Frankie's shoulder. "I have a feeling you'd spoil me if we were lovers."

"You could always stay and find out..." Frankie mumbled that into his pillow. He meant it, but he also hoped that Aki didn't really hear him. It would've been fine if Aki felt the same way he did. But, if he didn't, the rest of their time together would just be awkward and that was the last thing Frankie wanted.

"What?"

"Nothing ... Night, Aki."

"G'night."

* * * *

Frankie sprawled on his back and blinked sleepily. It usually took him a little while to wake up, but not this morning. There was someone in bed with him, curled up against his chest, actually, and it wasn't Alan. It was Aki, the pretty, sweet boy who came home with him last night. Aki had been amazing in bed as well as the shower and was currently purring like a contented cat. Aki shifted and murmured something in his sleep. His tail brushed lazily against Frankie's thigh, tickling him. *Wait a minute...*

That couldn't be right. Frankie was seeing things—okay, and feeling things too. He must have popped a brain cell or something. Aki didn't have a tail, did he? Frankie glanced down at Aki's back side. There it was. A tail. A thick, furry striped one like a raccoon's sprouted from Aki's backside, just above that sweet ass of his.

Aki yawned and glanced at up him. A pair of fuzzy and rounded ears peeked through Aki's hair and twitched. "What's wrong?"

Frankie fell out of bed and stumbled backwards. What the hell did he end up in bed with? "Y-you have furry bits, and I know they weren't there earlier."

Aki glanced up and tugged at one of his ears. "I do, don't I?"

"What the hell is going on?" Frankie stood with his hands clenched at his sides. Now that the shock was gone, he was kind of pissed. Somebody owed him a fucking explanation.

Okay, maybe he was overreacting. Aki was still gorgeous, even with the ears and tail. Hell, they made him even cuter. Frankie shook that last thought from his head. It didn't matter. Aki was hiding things from him and he hated that.

Frankie took a deep breath and counted to ten. Yeah, he was overreacting. He wanted a distraction, a one night stand. It shouldn't matter that Aki didn't tell him everything. Hell, he didn't really give Aki a chance did he?

"You don't recognize me, do you?" Aki's ears drooped unhappily. "I guess you wouldn't..." Aki looked down at his hands. "Not like this."

Frankie looked at Aki again. There was something familiar about Aki's eyes and that tail of his. Then it dawned on him. "You're that tanuki, aren't you?"

Aki nodded. "I wanted to repay you for freeing me. Remember?"

"What?"

"I wanted to repay you and I thought that distracting you from your ex-boyfriend would be a good way." Aki clutched his tail to his chest, his ears drooping a little. "From what your friends said, you needed it."

"When did you talk to my friends?" If this was somehow Dante's fault, Frankie was going to kill him.

"I didn't, I over heard you talking to them. I was a tea kettle at the time but I still heard most of what happened." Aki touched Frankie's arm timidly. "Are you angry with me?"

"I don't know. I—" Frankie didn't know what he was feeling anymore. Even if he didn't expect a life story out of a one night stand, something like "I'm a tanuki" should have come up at some point. What bothered Frankie even more, though, was the idea that Aki only slept with him because Aki—tanuki—whatever, thought that there was a debt to pay.

"Please don't be mad..." Aki took a step back and started to shift. His hair went from brown to blond and his skin and eyes lightened. Frankie blinked in disbelief as his ex, Alan, stood in front of him instead of Aki. "Would this have been better?"

"That's not funny."

"I thought you wanted him back." Aki trailed his slim hands over Frankie's chest. "I can't make him love you again, but you can always pretend."

"Aki..."

"It's better than nothing, right?"

"No, it's not! It's weird. I—you can't go around pretending to be my ex!"

Aki stood on his tip-toes and leaned in to kiss Frankie.

"Why? I'm sure you'd be happier with me."

"It'll be a big lie, that's why!" Frankie pushed Aki off him. Even if Alan left him in a really shitty way, it still felt wrong to have Aki pretending to be him.

Aki stumbled back and fell, landing on his ass. There was a puff of smoke and Aki sat there in tanuki form. He cringed and rubbed his backside with his paw. "Oww!"

"Aki, I—"

Before Frankie could finish, Aki turned and ducked under the bed. "I'm sorry! I'm sorry!"

Frankie knelt down and peeked under the bed. Of course, it was dark, and Frankie couldn't see a damned thing. He grabbed a flashlight off the dresser and shone it under the bed. Aki was pressed in the farthest corner among the shadows and dust bunnies. The tanuki had his tear streaked face buried in those dark paws. He looked so sad and scared. *Great, just great ...* Frankie was scaring cute little animals and making them cry, too. No wonder he was single.

"Aki ... come out, please." He tried to find a comfortable position but it wasn't happening so he ended up on his side,

his arm stretched out awkwardly in front of him. Frankie held a hand out to his furry friend.

"No! Y-you're mad at me and I don't know why." Aki pressed himself further in the corner. "I thought you had fun last night."

"I did and I'm not mad ... not really." Frankie sighed. He did have fun but that was when he thought that Aki was just a pretty boy looking for a little fun instead of the tanuki he accidentally got for Christmas. Damn it, he was not into animals, even if they could talk and shapeshift. "I just don't like being lied to, that's all."

"I didn't lie!" Aki peeked out from under the bed. "My name is Aki and what you saw last night is my natural form. Well, one of them ... just minus the ears and tail."

"How many forms do you have, anyway?" Frankie sat down and leaned against the bed.

Aki crawled back out and sat beside him. He was still cute and very furry but at least Aki had stopped crying. "I can change into anything, but this one and the human form I used last night are my natural forms."

"Just with the ears and the tail, right?"

"Yes ... I wasn't sure if you would like them, so I hid those."

Frankie rubbed those fuzzy dark ears. "They're very cute."

"But this form bothers you, doesn't it?" Aki stood on his hind legs and gave Frankie a pleading look. "I don't understand you. Most people like cute, furry things."

"I do too ... but I don't sleep with them."

"I don't either!" Aki shifted to his more human form with another puff of greenish smoke. The furry ears peaking through his hair flicked back in irritation. "This is my preferred form for mating, even with another tanuki. Besides, it's not like I'd shift in the middle of sex or anything."

"Aki..."

"You liked me last night. Did that change simply because of what I am?"

"I still like you. It's just—this is just a lot to take in, I guess." Frankie raked a handful of silver hair out of his eyes. "Can I ask you something, though?"

"Go ahead."

"Why did you come home with me last night? Was it because you thought you owed me something or was there another reason?"

"I did want to repay you, but that wasn't the only reason I slept with you..." Aki laid a slim hand on Frankie's shoulder. "You're handsome and sweet, too."

"Right..."

"I think you're a good person and so does your mother."

"When did you talk to her?" Frankie raised an eyebrow in curiosity.

"I didn't really ... but she talked to me a lot before she shipped me off to you." Aki sat beside Frankie and pulled his knees up to his chest. "She worries about you a lot ... and she didn't like your ex much."

That sounded like his mom, all right. Frankie sighed and glanced over at Aki. Poor guy looked so unhappy and it was all Frankie's fault. Maybe Aki and his mom put too much faith

in him. "I think it's kind of funny that my mom was talking to a tea kettle."

"I think she knew something was different with me. I mean, she might not have known what I was exactly but she knew something was up."

"I hope so. I don't want her getting locked up because people think she's crazy."

"Frankie!"

"I'm kidding. My mom's a smart lady and probably figured there was something odd about you. Could be why she sent you to me." Frankie had to smile at the thought of his mom talking telling a tea kettle about him. "It must have been hard on you being stuck like that for so long."

"Luckily, I was asleep for most of it..." Aki shrugged. "I didn't really wake up until your mother found me in that dusty old shop."

"Still, it must have been pretty lonely."

"It was. Tanuki, for the most part, are social creatures." Aki's ears drooped unhappily. "It was hard not to be able to talk to anyone, to touch anyone for so long."

Frankie slipped an arm around Aki's slim shoulders and pulled him closer. "I'm sorry you had to go through that."

Aki leaned into him. "It's okay ... if I didn't get stuck as a tea kettle, I might have never met you."

"Are you sure that's a good thing?" Frankie stroked those ears again. "I mean, I did chase you under the bed and make you cry. Sorry about that..."

"I'll forgive you, this time." Aki tapped Frankie on the nose. "But you need to promise me something."

"What's that?"

"Promise me that you won't ever mail me anywhere. That was something I never want to go through again."

"I think I can do that." Frankie smoothed Aki's sleep rumbled hair. He wanted to pet lower but he wasn't sure if it was a good idea or not.

There was no denying the fact that Aki was hot and he seemed like a good guy, but Frankie wasn't sure he was ready to get attached again. Part of him wanted Aki to stay. Aki was gorgeous, amazing in bed and seemed like good company, as far as he could tell, anyway. Then again, he really didn't know much about Aki, aside from the fact that he was a tanuki and that he just spent the last two hundred years stuck as a tea kettle.

Was that enough? Frankie's smaller, more insistent brain seemed to think so but that brain couldn't be bothered with things like personality. Aki did like the club, which was a definite plus. It would be nice to have someone around who wouldn't be embarrassed or jealous because Frankie worked at a strip club. Hell, Aki would probably get along great with everyone there.

Frankie sighed. He was over thinking things. He wasn't sure if Aki was even going to stay past breakfast.

"Did you mean what you said last night about me staying? I'd still like to hang around if it's okay with you."

"It's more than okay." Frankie pulled Aki into his lap. Yeah, he wanted Aki around even if it didn't turn into anything serious. "I'd love to wake up next to you every morning."

"What about my furry bits? Do you want me to hide them again?"

"No, I like them."

"Really?"

Frankie ran his fingers through the soft fur of Aki's tail.

"What can I say? They're growing on me."

Aki closed his eyes and bit back a moan. "Y-you might want to stop doing that..." Aki straddled Frankie's lap and gave him a hungry look, "Unless you want to fuck me again."

"Oh, what got you all hot and bothered all of a sudden?" Frankie slid his hand higher, petting the velvety skin at the base of Aki's tail. "Not that I'm complaining or anything."

"My tail is very sensitive. I—especially where you're petting..." Aki leaned in and lapped at Frankie's cheek. "W-we have time for a quick fuck, don't we?"

"We have lots of time, most of the day, in fact."

"You're not working today?"

"Nope, Kale always gives us Christmas day off." Frankie rubbed his free hand over the curve of Aki's ass. "We need to be at the Christmas party, but that's not until later."

"Mmm, Christmas party?" Aki pushed his hips forward, sliding his cock against Frankie's steely abs.

"Yeah, and we have to be there. Okay, I have to be there ... but I'd like it if you came with me and met everyone."

"Sounds like fun. Not as much fun as you bending me over in the shower again, bu—"

Frankie kissed Aki hard, cutting off the last bit of what he was saying. It didn't matter, though. He knew exactly where his lover's train of thought was going. Frankie tightened his

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grip on Aki's ass and stood, lifting Aki with him. If Aki wanted to fuck in the shower again, Frankie was more than willing to indulge him. Well, if they made it that far. The hallway was looking mighty inviting.

"I'm going to need more condoms with you around."
Frankie mumbled between hungry kisses. "Lots more..."

"For lots and lots of sex?"

"Yup." Frankie made a mental note to run to the store later. Besides the condoms, he needed to pick up a card too. He had to send his mom something. After all, she did give him the best Christmas present ever.
