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# *In-Dare-Pendence Day*

A Dareville story by

LEIGH ELLWOOD

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## *Author's Note*

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*In-Dare-Pendence Day* is a special 4<sup>th</sup> of July story, set after the events in *Dare to Dream*. Enjoy!

Stay daring,

Leigh

Jared Wilton clutched the picnic basket and swung it gently from left to right, brushing the front of his jeans. Behind him in the distance, the activity of the town's Independence Day celebration roared to a lively drum beat and the echoed feedback of the night's entertainment. He wondered how much of the concert they had missed, and why his boyfriend had taken them to Dareville's only grocery store, rather than the site of the actual event.

He'd said nothing when Red parked the car in an employee's spot—his father owned the place, which had been closed today, so Red probably could get away with it. After what seemed like an hour as Red tested yet another key in the sliding door's lock, he spoke up.

"Did you forget something?" he asked. A cursory peek under the checkered cloth covering the basket revealed plenty of provisions for a pleasant Fourth of July evening: fried chicken and biscuits, cold beer, nacho chips, and citronella candles. Instinctively Jared patted his back pocket for the other item he'd secretly packed, hoping they might make good use of it and create their own fireworks later.

Red Marbury looked up from the tangle of keys in his hands and winked. "Only knowing which key opens this damn place. I think it's the blue one," he said, singling out a blue key with a triangular head. A sharp tug, then a twist to the left and Red gave a short cry of victory.

"We're going to miss the end of the concert," Jared needed, "and the beginning of the fireworks."

"No, we won't. We're going to have the best seats in the house." Red forced one of the automated doors open and motioned for Jared to remain still. "Let me disable the

alarm real quick.” With that he grabbed the rolled up flannel throw he’d set on the ground and disappeared.

“Fine.” Jared sighed. At this rate, they’d be lucky to get a good parking spot, much less prime blanket space on the grass. As though acting in defiance, he edged closer to the door and savored the blast of air conditioning as he watched a line of traffic crawl down the main street toward the park. Along the sidewalk, families and couples toted folded lawn chairs and pulled wheeled coolers toward Dareville Memorial Park. Occasionally a child would break rank to chase a firefly before being called back in time to cross the street. He sighed, thinking maybe they were better off parking here and walking. But how long would that take?

His first real holiday in Dareville...how he’d looked forward to celebrating it, and enjoying an old fashioned, small town festival. Having lived in a post 9/11 New York City, it seemed nearly every day was the Fourth of July, with streets lined with patriotic souvenir shops. Jared had loved the fast pace and endless activity, but the time spent here convinced him he could become a country mouse, provided a certain someone remained willing to share his cheese.

*Cheese.* Red had bemoaned earlier finding none in the fridge. Jared heard a faint “Thank you, good night!” from the direction of the park and cursed to himself. “Red, I think the concert’s over!” he called into the store. “We have plenty of food, come on!”

“No, you come here.” Red beckoned him into the store and Jared loped inside with a heavy grunt. Aside from a few small security lights positioned in the building’s corners, Jake’s Organic was dim. Jared relied on the lamppost light shining through the front picture windows to follow his boyfriend’s shadowed figure as they headed toward the office. No sense asking what was needed

there—if Red didn’t act cooperative now, he wouldn’t answer the question anyway.

Another door in Jake’s office led to a dark staircase. Red took the steps two at a time without flipping the switch, encouraging Jared to hurry. “You’re going to love this, I promise,” he said.

“I better,” Jared grumbled, squinting at the flash of moonlight exposed at the end of the line.

Red had opened a hatch leading to the roof. He stepped out first, then took the basket from Jared before fishing his boyfriend from the darkened depths. “Get a load of this view.” He gestured broadly toward the east, and once Jared found his bearings he looked up to see the bright lights surrounding the main recreation area of Dareville Memorial Park. From this vantage, they could clearly view the stage where the concert had taken place, as well as legions of picnickers enjoying themselves and the canned music piped in through large speakers.

“They always shoot the rockets from behind the stage area,” Red told him. “And they’re always late, so we have plenty of time to get settled.”

“Wow!” Jared relaxed and smiled at his boyfriend, and tried to brush away the brief pang of guilt that seized him. “This is really nice of you to do this. I feel so bad for thinking we were going to miss the big finale—”

Red neared and planted a quick kiss on Jared’s parted lips. “Trust me, babe. The fireworks are only the beginning.”

“I like the sound of that.” Jared shifted in place, sensing his cock stir in his jeans. He helped Red set up the blanket and candles, then cracked open both beer bottles as Red distributed food on paper plates.

“Every year, after spending the Fourth on the beach, we all used to come up to the roof to watch the fireworks. It’s the best place to view them,” Red explained between



bites of chicken. “Sometimes Dad would set up a small fire for toasting marshmallows, and we’d make s’mores.”

Jared noted the faraway look in Red’s eyes, made all the more mysterious in the yellow glow of the candles. He could almost picture two rowdy boys—young Redding and his brother J.J.—cavorting around the roof and pretending to teeter over the edge, worrying their parents.

“Last time we came up here, Charlene was pregnant with our first daughter.” Red’s voice took on a wistful tone. “She didn’t want to do it the next year, thought the baby might crawl right over and fall. We just got out of the habit after that.”

Jared looked down at his plate and set aside the remaining scraps and bones. Of course, staying in Dareville meant living with the ghosts of his lover’s past. Though Red and Charlene had split long before he came into the picture, a part of him wondered if Red regretted the decision to divorce her. Granted, Red had come to terms with his sexuality, but sometimes Jared wondered if Red might change his mind and wish to reconcile.

“I’m sorry,” Red blurted out suddenly, and drew Jared closer. The blanket wrinkled underneath him, but Jared didn’t care. The intoxicating scent of Red’s aftershave taunted him, and the closer he sat the more it masked the pungent odor of citronella.

He settled his head on Red’s shoulder, wanting to speak but uncertain of words to use. He opted instead to nuzzle Red’s neck and was happy to receive a light kiss in his hair in return.

“I didn’t mean to spoil the fun,” Red said.

“You didn’t, it’s fine.” Red had history here, he needed to accept it. “I like hearing about when you were younger.” How much of the lives of former loves had he learned? Little, if anything. Knowing Red’s past gave Jared confidence in their future.

“Well, maybe you’ll like this, too.”

Red reached into his back jeans pocket and pulled out a folded envelope, handing it to him. Jared smoothed out the papers within, but the lettering proved too small to read with the lack of good lighting.

"I don't want to put this near the candles, what is it?" he asked. Red aimed a small flashlight from the keychain over the document, and Jared clearly saw that he held Red's divorce decree.

"It's official, Jared. I'm a free man. Charlene is going to marry George this Christmas, and I...well, I suppose I won't be *free* depending on what you have planned."

Jared's hands trembled and he quickly handed back the papers. He didn't need to let go and send them flying through town, though it wouldn't invalidate the news he'd longed to hear. Red was wholly free to be with him now. They could make a life together and enjoy many more holidays together. Growing up as an only child of only children, there had been few opportunities for gatherings. That Red's father and brother accepted his choices, and Jared, caused his heart to swell with hope for the large family he always wanted.

"What about the girls?" Jared asked.

"Joint custody. You'll be seeing a lot of them, I hope."

"Me, too." He couldn't resist any longer. He leaned forward and kissed Red full on the lips. They remained seated side by side, mouths parted and tongues mating, through at least two songs blaring from the park. He touched Red's shoulder and trailed his fingers down his arm. When his lover reciprocated Jared shivered despite the dry, Virginia heat.

They broke away and Red whispered, "Love you so much. I don't know how I'd have gotten through these last few months without you." He looked down. "I just wish I could have done a better job of—"

"Don't." Jared cut him off with a finger to his lips. "I love you. You brought me here, that's something. Why

don't we enjoy the view, and next year we'll continue our own traditions?"

"I'd like to start another one with you, if you're willing."

There was no mistaking the mischief in Red's smile. Before Jared could reply, Red had him on his back and staring at twinkling, pinprick stars in a cloudless sky. Hands breached the hem of his t-shirt and smoothed over his chest before sliding back down to undo his jeans. Jared reached forward to assist with Red's undressing and was quietly rebuked.

"No, you first." Red took control.

His shoes, jeans, and underwear quickly shed, Jared propped up on his elbows to watch Red kneel before him and stroke his cock to stone. He sucked in air when Red took in first the aching tip, then more of him. Pursing his lips tighter, Red moved in a slow, smooth rhythm that set Jared's heart pounding in double time. His balls tightened under the feather light brush of Red's other hand as it burrowed deep to find Jared's anus. Once at the target, Red probed gently, preparing him.

"God, that's good." His breathing labored and he whined for more attentions, then realized something. "Red, in my back pocket..." He pointed at his discarded jeans.

Red shook his head and smiled. "Way ahead of you, babe," he said, and produced a packet, which he tore open with his teeth. "Knees up," he then ordered as he shucked his lower clothes.

Jared obeyed and tilted his head to one side to admire Red's profile. In the park's backlight he looked impressive with his thick cock jutting out and upward. He could have that every day, free and clear, if he wanted.

*I will*, he knew. Any doubts Jared had about their relationship vanished with Red's news. They belonged to each other now.

With the condom fastened, Red knelt before Jared and guided his cock toward the entrance. He teased the hole a bit, obviously enjoying Jared's frustration. "Okay, babe. I know what you want. I need it, too." And he thrust into Jared, moaning with the contact.

"Yesss..." Jared hissed, and rolled his hips up higher to better set the angle for his lover. He extended his legs to hook his heels over Red's shoulders, and watched the play of emotion on the other man's face as he pressed deep into him. Slow slow fast, slow slow fast, the rhythm built until Red moved at a more urgent pace. Jared didn't mind, he preferred it rough, and he tugged at his own cock to time his climax with his lover's.

"It's coming, babe. Ohh." Red huffed and gasped; his head thrashed back and his eyes pinched shut, but he didn't stop pumping into Jared. Behind him came the first red glow shooting up into the night, and Jared realized the show had started.

A giant starburst with about a hundred red spikes exploded in the distance, and cheers erupted from the park. From Jared's point of view it appeared to halo his lover and symbolize the moment. He was about to explode himself.

He stroked his cock hard, feeling the orgasm pulse through him. "Now, Red," he cried, and groaned his own release just as another rocket lit up the night.

"Yes!" Red stilled, his cock buried to the hilt, then shuddered his own climax. His cock expanded and jerked inside Jared, and he clenched his nether muscles to prolong the feeling. In seconds, however, Red was spent and he collapsed against him, his cock sliding free.

They cuddled and kissed in the afterglow, under the brightly-color display in the sky. Rockets released starbursts and heart shapes of dark reds, blues, and purples. They lay together on the flannel blanket, watching each one, neither bothered by the booming sounds of the celebration.

Jared leaned into his lover and whispered, “Happy Independence Day.” Yet Red seemed too entranced by the light show to have heard. No matter, Jared decided. There was plenty of time to talk later.

For now, he lay back to enjoy the holiday.

*Let freedom ring.*

How did Red and Jared come to their happily ever after?

Get the full story in *Daring Red*.

Coming 2010 from Phaze Books!

## *About the Author*

**Leigh Ellwood** writes spicy romances and sassy mysteries. She is the creator of the award-winning Dareville series for Phaze Books, as well as numerous shorts for Phaze and other small publishers. Readers are invited to visit [LeighEllwood.com](http://LeighEllwood.com) for more information on Leigh's books, and to follow Leigh's writing adventures via her blog at [leighwantsfood.blogspot.com](http://leighwantsfood.blogspot.com) or through her Twitter at [Twitter.com/LeighEllwood](https://twitter.com/LeighEllwood).