

A shirtless man is shown from the chest down to the waist. He is holding a white rose against his left chest. His right arm is bent, with his hand near his waist. He is wearing dark jeans. The background is dark. The title 'Twisted Rose' is written in a red and white gothic font across the middle of the image.

Twisted Rose

Amber Kell

A Boudoir Books Release

Twisted Rose

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Chapter One

Ian was sound asleep when his cell phone rang, immediately snapping him awake. As a vice detective he could hear his phone's ringtone even in his dreams.

Reaching blindly he batted his hand around the top of the nightstand. His fingers brushed the plastic case moments before he heard it hit the floor.

Ian leaned over the side of the bed stretching his body towards the small black case reaching...reaching.

"Ahhh!" With a loud thump he hit the hardwood floor.

"Maybe I should've invested in some carpet." He muttered to his cat who looked at him curiously from under the bed. Henry purred and brushed his long fur up against Ian's face. Ian snorted the fluffy strands of fur from his nose, grabbing his cell phone as it started to ring again.

"Hello."

"Ian." A familiar voice on the phone sobbed. "Gary left me."

"Good."

Ian disconnected and laid his cheek against the cool wood looking idly under his bed. Damn there was a dust bunny revolution going on.

He made a mental note to hire a housekeeper to come in regularly. It was a luxury but he didn't have a lot of time or energy to spend his salary so he might as well make sure the dust bunnies didn't eat his cat.

The phone rang again.

A glance at the readout told him it was his friend Keith again. What the hell did Keith want? Ian wasn't known for his empathy and he'd always hated Gary anyway. To his logical mind it was a great solution to a bad relationship. Ian sighed and flipped open his phone. As he lay there he could feel particles on the floor pressing into his skin. He definitely needed a housekeeper.

"Yes."

"You hung up on me!" Keith said. There was a slur to his voice that told Ian his friend had definitely been drinking.

The detective in him went on alert.

"Where are you?"

"At the club."

Even with Ian's well-renowned detective skills that wasn't enough information.

"Which club?"

"The Twisted Rose."

Ian bit back a curse. The Twisted Rose was the biggest BDSM club in the northwest. Keith didn't make the best decisions sober, god knew what he would do drunk in a bondage club while sinking in self-pity.

"Be careful not to get over your head with some big leather daddy." Ian cautioned. He hated to ask, "Do you need me to come get you?"

Keith sobbed into the phone. "Please."

Ian sighed. This was why he kept to himself and didn't make very many friends. Friends are too much fucking work. "I'll be there in a few. How do I get in?"

Keith had told him in the past that the club was private and didn't let anyone in without a membership or exclusive invitation. As far as he knew Keith had been a member since it opened three years ago.

"I'll leave your name at the door as my guest."

"Great."

Ian hung up not bothering to say goodbye.

Sleeping in the nude made it easier to get dressed quickly. Thinking he would be returning in an hour or two Ian didn't bother with underwear as he slipped on his favorite worn denim jeans with a hole below his ass and a few rips on his inner thighs. Shivering in the morning air, Ian completed the outfit with a tight red tee that outlined his muscular chest. As a cop, Ian kept himself in peak condition. The sight of the older cops with their desk job stomachs hanging out was a flashing caution sign to him that he needed to stay in shape. Luckily once he worked to reach his top physical condition it was relatively easy to maintain.

Glancing at the mirror he ran his fingers through his thick auburn hair, grown straight and long from his last undercover job. He pulled it back with a rubber band exposing the thick rings piercing through both of his ears.

He sighed at his reflection. Dark circles underscored his bloodshot blue eyes and his two-day old scruff was a testimony to his exhaustion. Luckily he could get away with that kind of shit in Vice.

Fuck he needed more sleep.

Groaning in disgust, Ian grabbed his keys and headed out the door.

* * *

The club was right where he remembered it. Ian had busted drug dealers in this part of town more than once. For a club with such an upscale reputation it was located in a questionable neighborhood. But you probably couldn't plant a BDSM club in the ritzier part of town without local residents raising a stink.

It took Ian a moment to find a place to park on the street. He eyed the people milling about as he parked hoping his truck would still be there when he returned. His truck was old but dependable and it would suck if he had to replace it. Ian walked into the entrance with a careful eye out for trouble.

The tasteful painted sign over the metal door had spiked Ian's curiosity more than once just by the pure artistry of it. The words *Twisted Rose* were intertwined with a pair of handcuffs, a rope and a bullwhip. It was so cleverly done that only a discerning observer could make out the individual components. From a distance they looked like decorative swirls.

Ian checked the knob, locked. Tired and grouchy he banged on the door with his fist.

The large man who answered the door had so many muscles they probably had their own zip code. He was too muscular for Ian's taste, but he admired the smooth naked chest shining in the moonlight. The bouncer glared at Ian. The glare only lasted a moment before turning warmer as his appreciative gaze looked Ian up and down.

"Can I help you, handsome?"

Ian was startled for a moment. The muscle bound ape's voice was a nice deep baritone that probably made more than one twink cream his pants.

"I'm here to get my friend. I'm Ian Stiller."

"Please come in." The bouncer said moving back with the elegance of a trained butler. Nodding to the man, Ian walked through the door. Passing through the entryway he was taken aback at the beautiful surroundings. Decorated in art deco style the entryway had an elegant grace to it, enhanced by rich polished wooden floors, colored-glass light fixtures and an old-fashioned hatcheck station at the far side of the room.

"You'll need to check in at the counter." The muscular doorman said, smiling wide. Ian's instincts went on high alert as he walked to the check station. He knew he wasn't going to like this by the sparkle in the bouncer's eyes.

A boy and a girl stood behind the long wooden counter wearing very little clothing. The young man was wearing blue body paint instead of a shirt and the tightest pair of white leather shorts Ian had ever seen. Ian would have to give the kid a ticket for indecent exposure if he spotted him outside the club. The girl wore a skimpy pink outfit made out of some sort of shapeless mesh material that stopped an uncomfortable margin below her crotch. He sent a swift, silent prayer that she didn't bend over while he was there.

Some things should remain a mystery.

The pair watched him with heavily made up eyes and disturbingly identical expressions of lust.

"May we help you?" The girl asked licking her lips.

"I'm here to see a friend. The bouncer sent me back here."

"That's because you can't enter the club with a shirt." The young man smirked.

"What?" Surely he'd misunderstood.

"Your shirt." The young man repeated. "Club policy. Men can't wear shirts."

For a long moment Ian thought about walking out and leaving Keith to his own fate. But he couldn't do that. He couldn't leave a friend in trouble, but Keith was *so* going to pay for this.

"Fine."

Ripping off his shirt he handed it over to the boy who made no motion to take it.

"I thought you wanted my shirt?"

"Oh, right." The kid blinked a few times before reaching out a shaky hand to grab Ian's shirt. Ian frowned. He hoped the boy wasn't on drugs. A quick glance showed the kid had clear eyes even if they were a little fixated on Ian's naked chest.

"Are you a dom or sub?" The girl spoke into the sudden silence.

"What?"

"Do you top or a bottom. Do you prefer girls or guys?" The male clarified.

"I like men and I like to do both."

What the fuck business was it of theirs?

"Wear a green band." The girl pulled out a green cloth band with a snap closure from a basket behind her. "That will tell people your preferences. Green means you'll do either and that you prefer men."

Ian let the boy put it on his arm. It didn't matter. He wouldn't be here long enough for it to be a problem.

"Am I done now?"

They nodded in freaky unison.

"Great."

Turning he saw the door muscle waiting behind him.

“Slow door day?”

“You might say that.” The man said. “Besides it was worth the walk to see you without your shirt.”

Ian snorted as he followed the man through a pair of stained glass doors. He had no idea why he was getting so much attention. Surely they saw much finer specimens every day. It was a sex club after all. Maybe there weren’t very many customers tonight.

Entering the main room he felt like he’d walked into another era. This part of the club was decorated like an old-fashioned theatre. Red velvet curtains framed long glass windows. It wasn’t until Ian looked through the glass and saw men and women involved in carnal acts did he realize it wasn’t an old-fashioned parlor but a room dedicated to the erotic arts. One window showed a woman strapped to a cross-like contraption and a man in a black mask whipping her to a frenzy of pleasure (if her expression was anything to go by). Another window showed two naked men kissing on a velvet couch. One of the men was bound in rope from wrist to elbow relying entirely on his lover to hold him up. Ian would’ve stayed to watch them further but Keith was waiting.

So he wouldn’t get sidetracked, he forced himself to walk past the rest of the windows without looking. Doors lined the far wall leading to private rooms. He hoped the bouncer wasn’t leading him to one of those. Keith wasn’t an unattractive man but their relationship wasn’t the type that he’d feel comfortable viewing Keith in a compromising situation.

He followed the bouncer into a larger room that made up the main room of the club. It was classier than he expected from a BDSM club. The room was filled with thick padded booths and real linen on the tables. He had a brief thought that his grandmother would’ve approved of the table settings. He quickly shelved that line of thinking before the thought of his grandmother in a sex club almost prevented him from wanting sex ever again.

It didn’t take him long to spot Keith. The blond-haired man was sprawled in a booth in the corner but his light hair shone like a beacon even under the dimmed lights. A tall man with long black hair sat across from him and appeared to be listening to Keith’s drunken ramblings enhanced by furious hand waving. Ian gave the man a cursory glance before looking carefully at his friend.

Keith looked like hell.

A sickly pallor replaced his normal healthy glow and his usual clear green eyes were bloodshot and swollen.

For the first time Ian felt a little sympathy for his friend. Keith’s boyfriend might have been a jerk but it was obvious he was taking the asshole’s abandonment hard.

His friend’s eyes widened at seeing Ian. “Wow you look hot.”

Ian laughed. “They wouldn’t let me enter with my shirt.”

“Oops forgot about that rule.” Keith said looking Ian up and down. “Maybe I should make it a rule for my apartment too.” A bitter smile crossed his face. “It’s not like Gary will be there to object.”

“Are you ready to go?”

Keith flashed him a sulky look and took another sip of his drink. “Let me at least finish my beer.” He scooted over making room for Ian. “Have a seat.”

Ian slid into the booth next to Keith. “Tell me what happened.” He dug up a little concern from the depths of his soul.

It was an effort.

Once seated, exhaustion settled into his tired bones reminding him of his lack of sleep and his eyelids scraping across his tired eyes felt like sandpaper.

"I was beginning to think Keith called the wrong person."

Ian turned to glare at the dark-haired man in the corner and ended up having to swallow the surge of lust that tried to strangle him. Black leather bands wrapped around each of the man's muscular arms and cinched together with leather ties.

Sexy.

Ian had always thought leather armbands were too leather daddy for his tastes but he had a feeling this man could change his mind on a lot of things. Looking at the straps Ian wondered if he could take them off with only his mouth.

The man looked to be a few inches above Ian's six-foot height and had a nice expanse of muscle. A tattoo of a whip intertwined with a trailing vine of thorns and roses formed a ring above the gorgeous man's heart. Ian's tired mind played out a vivid image of tracing the stranger's tattoo with his tongue.

Yum.

He forced his attention back to his friend. "I was sleeping when you called." Ian said. "Sorry if I was rude."

"No, I'm sorry." Keith said resting his head on Ian's shoulder. Ian lifted his arm and gave his friend a one-armed hug.

"It's okay. I know how you felt about Gary but you really are better off without him."

"What was wrong with Gary?" The dark-haired man asked.

"I didn't like the way he treated Keith."

"He's a bastard." Keith said bursting into tears.

Damn.

Ian gathered Keith in his arms. "Shhh." He soothed Keith, stroking his friend's silky head. He felt awkward as he patted him on the back, but then he'd never been good with the touchy, feely stuff. "It's okay sweetheart. We'll find you a new lover. Someone who knows how to treat you right."

Keith looked up and sniffed. "You're right, Gary was an ass and I'll find someone better." He swallowed his tears before blinking at his companion across the table. "I'm sorry I forgot introductions. Daniel, this is my best friend Ian, Ian this is Daniel Rose."

"Let me guess you own this place." Ian said.

"That is my pleasure." Daniel said with a sexy smile. From the hot expression in the brunet's eyes he liked what he saw in Ian.

Figures, the first person he found attractive in months owned a sex club.

Daniel looked at the Ian's arm around Keith and wanted to rip Keith's head off his shoulders. He'd known Keith for two years and usually he liked the man but if he touched the gorgeous redhead one more time he was going to ban him from the club for eternity.

After he kicked his ass.

Ian's flawless skin drew Daniel like moths to a flame; making him itch to grab a whip and mark the gorgeous man as his. There was just a hint of gold in Ian's creamy Irish complexion telling him that somewhere in his pure Irish ancestry one of his pretty, redheaded forbearers had a taste for a darker flavor.

"Yes, Twisted Rose is mine. I'd be happy to show you the ropes any time."

Keith laughed. "Don't let the sexy look fool you. Ian is as straight-laced as they come." The tipsy man leaned over to whisper loudly. "He's a cop." Keith nodded as if he'd imparted a chunk of sage wisdom.

"Come on Keith. Let's get you home." Ian slung Keith's arm over his shoulder and helped his friend to his feet.

Shit. Daniel was losing his chance. Not one to let an opportunity slide by, he pulled out his business card and tucked it into Ian's front pocket. He slid his long fingers as deep as possible, stroking Ian's erection in the process. The feel of Ian's long, hard cock sent waves of need through Daniel. He hoped the erection was for him.

Never had he felt so attracted to anyone. This man would be a challenge. Just the challenge he needed in his jaded life. Standing beside six feet of perfection, Daniel was certain Ian would look even better on his knees.

"You give me a call if you need anything beautiful." He said, placing a kiss on Ian's cheek. "Anything at all." He forced himself to walk away without looking back. He'd never thrown himself at a man before and it was unsettling how far he was willing to go for this gorgeous redhead.

Chapter Two

Ian stopped and collected their shirts on the way out, ignoring the disappointed sighs by the workers when he covered his chest.

Keith giggled as they walked to Ian's truck. "Daniel wanted you bad. I don't think I've ever seen him drool over a guy before. He's so hot. All the subs beg for his attention. And I do mean beg."

"Have you ever played with him?" The thought of Keith doing the kinds of scenes he'd mentioned in the past with Daniel made Ian's stomach churn.

Keith shook his head. "I'm not his type. Unlike you, who is apparently exactly what he's looking for."

Ian's head jerked around at Keith's bitter tone.

"Let it go Keith. He's not *my* type" Ian climbed into his truck annoyed enough to let his drunken friend climb in on his own.

"Right, because sexy men in leather aren't any gay man's type." Keith continued after settling on the passenger seat and giving Ian a triumphant smile.

Ian laughed. "Okay, he's my type but I'm not into that shit."

Keith was quiet. "You shouldn't knock it if you haven't tried it." He said quietly..

Ian reached over and squeezed his friend's hand.. "I'm not criticizing but that kind of thing isn't for me. But we *can* agree that Daniel Rose is hot." He flashed his friend a smile as he started the car.

Keith laughed.

A few minutes later they pulled into the driveway of Keith's townhouse. Ian frowned as he saw lights pouring out of the windows. "Gary doesn't still have a key does he?"

"Yeah. He just left yesterday. I didn't get a chance to ask for it back."

"I'm going in with you." Ian said, turning off the ignition. He had planned on it anyway because Keith was definitely not sober. Wrapping an arm around Keith's waist he helped his inebriated friend up the short flight of steps. Trying the door, he found it locked.

"Got your keys?"

"Yeah." Keith stood shakily on his own as he pulled a set of keys out of his pocket. After his third attempt to get the key into the lock, Ian unlocked it himself wishing he had his gun with him. There was nothing he'd like more than to shoot the bastard that broke his friend's heart.

"Hey baby." Gary said strolling into the room. The brown-haired man was tall and lean and had a ready smile that Ian never trusted. There was something about Gary that always tripped his cop instincts.

"What are you doing here?" Keith asked standing straighter. "I live here." Gary said. Ian could tell that Gary was trying to exude confidence but the nervous twitch by his right eye gave him away.

"Not any more. Or did you forget you dumped me for that guy from the store you were fucking."

"That's over baby. It was all a mistake. I don't love him like I love you." Gary reached to take Keith in his arms.

Ian watched in shock as his gentle friend, who never raised his voice in all the years they'd known each other, punched his lover in the face.

"Fuck!" Gary screamed clutching his nose. Blood poured through his fingers in brilliant streams of crimson as Ian watched in shock.

"I could've forgiven you for falling for another man." Keith said in a calm, cold voice. "But to say you broke my heart over some fuck that didn't mean anything to you just shows how little you care. Now get your crap out of my house and leave."

"Tonight?" The disbelief in Gary's eyes was almost comical. "It's two in the morning."

"Then you'd best be going since you have to work in a few hours."

A strange expression crossed Gary's face.

"You don't have a job any more do you?" Ian asked.

Gary turned on him, his face contorted with rage.

"Fuck you Ian! It didn't take you long to make a move on my man. I was barely gone a day."

"You lost your job." Keith laughed bitterly. "No wonder your new lover didn't measure up. He probably can't afford you."

Keith was a partner in a law firm and made a six-figure salary that allowed him to live in an exclusive community while Gary barely made anything as a delivery guy for a furniture store. It didn't take a genius to figure out why the man was backtracking when he realized his usually calm lover wasn't taking his crap any more.

"It's not about the money, baby." Gary said stepping forward.

Ian stepped in front of his friend, blocking Keith with his larger frame. "You have thirty minutes to pack a bag and get the fuck out."

"Where am I going to go?"

Keith stepped around Ian to face his lover.

"Maybe you should go mooch off that kid you like to mess around with so much. Now pack your bag and go or I'll have my friendly officer arrest you for trespassing."

"I live here!" Gary screamed.

"Not any more." Keith said. He slid his sleek touch screen phone out of his pocket and dialed. Someone on the other side gave a groggy reply. "Steven, could you do an emergency replacement for me? I need my locks changed within the hour."

Ian couldn't hear what the response was but Keith wore a satisfied expression when he disconnected the phone.

"You bitch!"

The look Keith gave his ex-lover must be the same one he pinned criminals with in the courtroom. Ian was glad it wasn't turned on him. He could almost fill the arctic chill from where he was standing. "I was your bitch until you blew it. Now get the fuck out."

Realizing he was outnumbered, Gary gave Ian a seething glare before turning on his heel and stomping towards the master bedroom.

"Let's go supervise. You don't want him stealing your crap." Ian said.

The pair followed Gary into the room just in time to see him pocketing a pair of Keith's diamond cufflinks.

"Unless you want to be arrested for theft I'd advise you to leave anything behind that doesn't belong to you." Ian growled. He always knew that Gary was an ass but he never thought the bastard would steal from Keith.

Other than a tightening of his lips Gary didn't respond. He quietly placed the jewelry back in the tray and pulled another pair out of his pocket and set those down too.

Fucker.

The men watched as Gary placed a bunch of clothes in a small suitcase. Ian knew from past experience that if he hadn't been there to support Keith, Gary would've had the lawyer back in his bed as soon as Ian walked in the door. It was purely Keith's pride that made him grow a backbone when he had a witness.

"This isn't over." Gary said, with a hand on the front door knob. "I'll be back when you've had time to calm down."

Ian saw Keith blink back tears. "We started over too many times. I'm done with you Gary. I deserve better."

"And he's better?" Gary said, pointing a finger at Ian. "I guess now you'll have what you really want."

"*He's* my friend." Keith said with quiet pride. "So yeah, he's better."

Ian gave Gary a smirk. Maybe if the man thought they were lovers he'd think twice about messing with Keith.

"I'll come back later for the rest of my stuff." Gary snarled.

"Call first." Keith said. "Your key won't work any more."

Gary slammed the door loudly behind him.

Keith collapsed on the couch, covered his face with his hands and sobbed. His slim body shook so much Ian was worried he'd make himself sick.

Ian sat beside him and rubbed his friend's back helplessly. "It's okay. You know you did the right thing." He sat there rubbing Keith's back for a moment before asking, "What is it that you really want?"

Ian was almost afraid to hear the answer. The two of them had never had a romantic relationship and he didn't want to ruin their friendship by starting one now.

Wiping his face with the heels of his hands, Keith gave Ian a watery look. "Gary is under the impression that I want Daniel Rose."

"Do you?" Ian figured Daniel Rose would be any gay man's dream especially one who was already into that sort of scene.

Keith shrugged. "Once when I was drunk I told him I thought Daniel was hot. He never got over that. I should've broken up with him a long time ago. It's not even the first time he cheated."

Ian didn't know what to say. Any guy who cheated on him was history. End of story. He didn't understand men who took their lovers back after an affair. He'd seen enough to believe the adage of 'once a cheater, always a cheater'.

"Fine." Keith threw up his hands. "I think Rose is hot and I'd drop to my knees if he crooked his little finger. But he didn't and I would never cheat on my lover. Unfortunately I can't say the same about Gary."

"You're not going to take him back again, are you? You *do* deserve better."

Keith smiled as he wiped away his tears. "Yeah I do. Thanks by the way. It helped to have you here."

"Anytime."

He almost meant that.

Ian left Keith's house when Steven showed up. From the heated looks the locksmith gave Keith, he had a feeling the lawyer wouldn't be single for too long.

Why couldn't he find someone?

Thoughts of Daniel Rose made him shift uncomfortably behind the wheel. The Dom was definitely sexy but the odds of being able to have a lasting relationship with a man who ran a BDSM club were beyond slim. Not to mention Rose probably just wanted to play with the policeman and wasn't looking for anything more serious.

Ian was done with one-night stands. He was getting close to thirty; it was time to settle down.

He just needed to find the right guy.

Chapter Three

Three weeks later

Ian picked up the phone to stop its annoying trill. A glance at the caller id showed the captain's office extension number.

"Hey Cap."

"Still I need you in my office now."

"Sure thing."

He hung up the phone and looked across his desk into the brown eyes of his partner Tom Everson.

"The Captain wants me in his office."

Tom stood up, a frown crossing his handsome face. "Do you think it has to do with that last drug bust? I'll come and back you up."

Ian thought it over. "He didn't ask for you?"

Tom puffed out his chest. "I'm coming anyway. He can always throw me out if he doesn't want me there."

Ian nodded. It wasn't like the Captain was shy about saying what he wanted and nothing he said would change Tom's mind. His partner was loyal like that.

When they walked into the Captain's office together Captain Adams looked up from his desk and gave Tom a frown. Adams was a large dark-skinned man with salt and pepper hair who was known for two things: He didn't take crap from anyone and he was the most honest man on the force.

"Not you Everson?" Captain Adams said frowning at Tom as he watched the man come into the room.

Ian frowned. "Tom is my partner. If you have anything you want to talk to me about..."

"Not this time. I'm reassigning him to work with Jack Carson while Jane is out on maternity leave. We need you for a special assignment."

"I'll see you later Tom." Ian said, exchanging a private look that promised a confab later. Tom nodded his understanding as he left the office.

Standing at attention Ian waited for Captain Adams to speak. "These two gentlemen are Detective Ben Harris and Detective Lou Gomez. They need you for an undercover assignment."

Detective Harris was a cool looking blond with a pockmarked face and a thin moustache while Detective Gomez was his physical opposite; a slim Hispanic with shiny black hair that made Ian want to run his fingers through the silky strands. Somehow he doubted the other man would appreciate his touch. He screamed *macho straight guy*. Ian vaguely recognized the blond as a homicide detective from another precinct but he couldn't remember which one off the top of his head.

Ian shrugged. It wasn't unusual for him to be assigned undercover ops but it was odd that they didn't want Tom around to be his handler.

"Drugs or prostitution?"

Ben Harris looked distinctly uncomfortable. His blue eyes avoided Ian's. "Have you heard of the sex club murders?" Gomez asked.

Ian felt all of the blood rush out of his face as images of Daniel injured flashed through his head. "No. I've been wrapping up a drug bust with my partner. What's been going on?"

"There have been three bodies delivered to a sex club owner on the south side, one each week. The killer whips the victims and then carves the man's name on them while they're still alive. After that he slices them open, ties a bow around the victim's neck and leaves them outside the club. We think he's going after the club owner next." Gomez said.

Harris broke in. "So far there have been no witnesses. Our profiler thinks it's a man who yearns for sexual perversions but hates himself for his needs. He sees this club owner as a symbol of everything he loves and hates. We think he'll eventually tire of this game and kill the owner."

Detective Gomez held out a picture. "This is an example of the killer's work. We're assuming the killer is a man because it would take a lot of strength to haul the bodies."

Ian took the photo. A slim man bound in cuffs with a ball gag in his mouth lay on the ground. Whip marks crisscrossed the body in clean perfect lines; the erotic picture ruined by the blood splattered across the torso.

Not Daniel.

He let the air rush out of him and swallowed a few times before he spoke to moisten his mouth. "So why do you want me?"

Detective Gomez gave a smirk. "We've heard you're familiar with a club called the Twisted Rose."

Ian felt the chill chase its way down his spine. He dreaded what they were going to say next. Please don't let it be Daniel. Please don't let it be Daniel. He whispered inside. To the officers he kept his tone neutral as he responded. "I've been there once to rescue a friend." He handed back the picture to Detective Gomez who put it back in his folder before exchanging a look with his partner.

Ben sat up straight in his chair. "Are you saying you've only been in that club once?"

"Yes. A couple of weeks ago."

"Shit." Lou stood up, fury etched across his face. "This doesn't make any sense. Daniel Rose said he'd only agree to have police protection if the officer was you. How do you explain that?"

Ian's memory of Rose flickered before him like a sexy video. Even under the eyes of three of his co-workers it was still a challenge not to let lust take over his body. Ian cleared his throat.

"I met him the night I went to get my friend Keith who'd drunk a little too much. I haven't spoken to him since."

"Are you even gay?" Ben asked jumping to his feet. "Because if we got that part wrong there's no hope of us pulling this off."

Captain Adams stepped to Ian's side in a show of solidarity. "Don't even think about harassing my officer."

Ian did his best to hide his surprise at his Captain's support. Adams knew he was gay but Ian never knew Captain Adam's feelings about it. It wasn't something you asked your supervisor.

"Yes, I'm gay." Ian said. He didn't hold with the 'don't ask, don't tell' bullshit. Ben let out a breath. "At least we got something right. It's difficult enough to get someone into the BDSM community, if you weren't even gay it would be impossible for you to go convincingly undercover as Daniel Rose's new sub. People are dying and we're desperate to

get someone on the inside. The catch is Mr. Rose is only willing to let a one person in and he was specific that he'd only take you."

The detective looked him up and down, shifting nervously under Ian's gaze.

"We can't make you do this Ian." The Captain said patting Ian on the back. "It's entirely up to you. We can find some other way if you aren't comfortable with the idea."

The Captain didn't have to tell him that lives were at stake. Everyone in the room knew it. But this was the best opportunity they had to get someone on the inside.

"Shit. What am I looking for?" Ian said softly.

Over the next hour he was shown pictures of the victims, given the profile of the murderer and told what to look for.

"It's someone who likes to whip men and gets his kicks out of killing them after they reach their high. You'll need to look closely at each Dom. We've already investigated Daniel Rose. He was out of town on vacation during the last two murders and his location was confirmed. The weapon hasn't been found at any of the crime scenes so we think the killer is taking it with him to use on the next victim. He has an attachment to this knife so if we find the knife we find the killer. None of the victims had defensive wounds so they probably know this man and more than likely allowed him to tie them up thinking it was part of the scene." Ben said.

Lou continued. "It's common knowledge that Daniel Rose has been looking for a new sub for a while so your sudden appearance shouldn't send up any red flags. No one should be interested enough in you to ask what you do for a living, but if they ask, be honest. The fact that you're a cop might be just the thing to appeal to the killer. He likes an audience. If someone is trying to lure you from Mr. Rose's side, pretend to consider it. Don't leave with anyone but Mr. Rose and report to us if anyone appears to be too interested. For the duration you'll take residence in Rose's house to add to the illusion that you are in a serious relationship. All the killer's victims were either seriously involved or married. Once we get a better idea on how the killer chooses his victims we'll know how to better position you as the bait.

Ian nodded his understanding. He just hoped Daniel wasn't allergic to cats.

"You aren't required to have sex with him." Ben said as if trying to reassure Ian they weren't asking him to perform illicit acts.

The man didn't know that that was the only part of the job that Ian was really looking forward to.

Chapter Four

"I'm driving." Tom declared.

As soon as Ian returned from the Captain's office Tom announced it was time for lunch.

"Why? Doesn't Karen let you drive the car anymore?" He shook his head in mock sorrow. "It's sad when you can't even wear the pants in your own family." Tom's wife was a tax accountant who kept her husband on a tight leash but loved him dearly. The combination of the easy-going detective and his high-strung wife never failed to amuse Ian. His favorite game was to tease Tom about his wife even if he did adore her like a sister.

Tom laughed as he opened the driver's side door. "And how does that work with two guys? Who wears the pants then?"

Ian slid into the car and flashed his partner a wicked smile. "If either of us are wearing pants then we're doing something wrong."

Tom groaned as he pulled out of the parking lot. "That's so wrong. No wonder you can't get a date."

"Who says I can't get a date?" Ian asked with a frown. "I'm just picky." Images of a hot man in leather with a sexy tattoo ran through his head.

"Maybe you're *too* picky."

Ian shrugged. "Maybe." Or maybe he had tastes he'd never examined until now.

They kept up the light banter all the way to the restaurant though Ian knew once they got there he'd have to explain everything. He couldn't go undercover and not tell his partner what was going on. He only trusted the other detectives so far. If he ran into real problems he counted on Tom to bail his ass out of trouble. Over the years he'd come to depend on the other man's advice and if he ever needed any, this was the time.

They ended up at a local diner called *Lila's* known for big servings and better pie.

Through a meal of burgers and fries he explained to Tom what was going on and what he was being asked to do.

"Wow, going from no dating to some guy's sub is a big jump even for you." Tom said in a hushed tone looking around to make sure none of the other diners could hear them.

Ian shrugged. "It's for a good cause."

"Do you even like this guy?"

"I don't know. We exchanged maybe five words. He's hot as hell though and it's not exactly a burden to pretend to be his sub for a while."

Tom shrugged. "I don't get the whole whips and chains thing, but if you run into trouble you know you can count on me. And you'd better wrap it up quickly partner. You know I can't stand Jack. He's a homophobic asshole. If he says one more word about you he'll still be in the hospital when *his* partner gets back from maternity leave."

Ian laughed. Tom didn't have any tolerance for homophobes. His younger brother was gay and he felt very protective of the kid who was now twenty and off at college. God save any gay bashers who touched Tom's baby brother.

Ian dropped the subject when the waiter brought him a huge slice of cherry pie with whipping cream. He always had a good time teasing Tom about the dietary restrictions Karen had him on.

"Come on buddy, try a bite." He said holding up a forkful of pie and waving it at Tom temptingly. "You know you want some."

After giving him a scowl, Tom dove forward and bit the pastry off his fork in one quick bite.

Ian cracked up. He knew his partner couldn't resist sweets.

He was taking another bite when a shadow fell over the table. Looking up Ian almost choked on a cherry.

Daniel Rose stood beside their table and looked down at him with a thunderous expression. "Who the fuck is he?" He asked pointing a finger at Tom.

Ian stared at him a moment not certain what the hell he could say.

Daniel had never been so angry in his entire life. Every night he dreamed of this man. Dreamed of Ian wrapped in leathers on his knees, mouth on his cock. Dreamed of his stunning blue eyes looking at him with trust and submission. Dreamed of running his hands through the man's rich auburn hair to determine if it was as soft as it looked. Walking into the diner to see Ian smiling fondly at another man was an unpleasant shock. Not to mention the other man was gorgeous and looked like he stepped out of the pages of a magazine.

He was going to kill the well-groomed bastard.

When Ian's guileless eyes looked up at him he felt a surge of lust so strong he wanted to haul the other man out from behind the table and drag him back home.

"I think you have the wrong idea, mister." Ian's GQ companion said.

Daniel resisted the urge to punch Mr. Perfect in the face. How could his fantasy man want a man who was obviously ironed within an inch of his life?

"And what idea is that?"

"That my partner has to answer to you."

"He's your partner!" Daniel yelled. A sharp pain carved a hole through Daniel's heart. He was angry enough when he thought they were casual lovers but the idea of Ian having a permanent partner just about killed him.

He could barely hear Ian over the roaring headache forming in his head.

"Keith told you I was a cop. Tom's my partner. Tom Everson this is Daniel Rose." Ian said.

Relief rushed through Daniel like a gale force wind taking away his breath.

"Don't scare me like that." Daniel grabbed Ian by his shirt and pulled him across the booth. Ignoring any onlookers he planted a kiss on Ian's mouth. He was pleased at the fogged look the detective gave him when he finally lifted his lips.

"I see my concerns were pointless." Tom said cryptically as Daniel released Ian. "By the way, are you allergic to cats?"

"No, why?"

"Because I'm not leaving Henry behind in my apartment." Ian said piercing Daniel with his brilliant blue eyes. "As my new live-in lover you should know I'm keeping my cat."

"Fine. Call me and we'll find a time you can come and bring your stuff." Then, before he could embarrass himself any further, Daniel left the restaurant. He'd grab something to eat later. Right now he had to go home and jerk off. Ian really got to him.

Back at the restaurant Ian turned to see his partner giving him a searching look. "I don't think you'll have any problem pretending to be his lover." Tom said.

“Well the passion part will be easy.” Ian said. It was difficult to speak when his mouth tingled and his dick was rock hard. Ian focused on thinking non-sexy things. The waitress walked by with falling knee-highs and a hairy mole.

Problem solved.

“It looked to me like the man thought you belonged to him. Shit, I’m not even into men and I thought he was hot.”

Ian couldn’t stop the smile spreading across his lips. “He is, isn’t he?”

“So tell.”

“I guess he likes me.” Ian ducked his head to hide the sappy smile he knew was spreading across his lips. “That was our first kiss.”

“That was your first kiss! I wish Karen kissed me with half the passion that guy gave you. I thought he was going to fuck you on the table.”

Ian glared at his partner, blushing. “I guess that’s what happens when you don’t marry a cold fish.”

“Karen’s not cold.” Tom protested. “She’s well-bred.”

“You just keep telling yourself that.” Ian teased, throwing his money on the table. “While I get laid.”

He was proud of his parting shot as he left the restaurant with his partner on his heels.

After hours of paperwork and some assignment shifting, Ian’s schedule was cleared enough to concentrate on his new case. Looking at the clock he decided it was finally late enough to call Daniel. He punched the number on the card but was unprepared when a familiar deep voice answered. He’d expected to leave a message.

“Rose, speaking.” A rough baritone said sending sparks of desire down Ian’s spine.

“Hi, it’s Ian.”

“Hi babe, where are you?”

Babe?

“Still at work. I was wondering if it was okay if I brought Henry over tonight.”

“Sure. Stop by my condo first, I’ll tell the doorman you’re coming. It’ll be best if we get the rules out in the open before we go public.” He rattled off an address in a wealthy part of town repeating it twice to make sure Ian had it.

“I’ll meet you there in about an hour.” Ian said, before hanging up the phone. Shit it looked like Henry and him were moving uptown.

* * *

Ian stared at the fancy condo. He guessed the saying ‘sex sells’ was true. The expensive building was one of the newer ones billed as luxury accommodations with a water view. With his cop’s salary Ian would never be able to afford one of these in his lifetime.

Gripping his cat carrier in one hand and a rolling suitcase in the other, Ian paid the cabbie and headed towards the building. Before he could reach the door a man rushed forward and opened it for him.

“Let me get that for you sir.” The man said. He was a middle-aged man with a slim build and wide shoulders. Ian’s examined him with cop eyes and decided the other man probably also did double duty as a bouncer for the undesirables. The man’s uniform was red and gold with the name of the condo on his jacket. *The Golden Rose*.

Oh shit. He had a bad feeling that the whole fucking building belonged to Daniel. He was seriously outclassed.

"Are you Mr. Ian Stiller?"

"Yes."

"Excellent. Mr. Rose is waiting for you. Can I take your luggage?"

"No I'm fine."

The man looked like he was going to protest but instead he gave another professional smile and headed towards the elevator banks. "Follow me."

There were two more guards at an inside desk that watched him with curious glances as he followed the doorman to the elevator. The security looked tight making Daniel wonder if that was why the killer targeted Daniel at his club or if he just didn't know where Daniel lived.

"I'm Riley." The guard declared. "You'll have to excuse the looks from the guards. Mr. Rose rarely has any guests come to his condo."

"Really?"

Ian would have thought a player like Daniel would want to bring his lovers to his posh condo to show off.

Riley shook his head. "He almost always entertains at the club. And he certainly has never moved anyone in before."

"Huh." Personally he thought Riley was a little too chatty with strangers about Daniel's love life but he wasn't going to say anything. He appreciated the information.

Riley entered a key into a slot on the control panel and turned it before pressing the TF button. Ian assumed it was for the top floor since the P button probably led to parking.

Riley pulled another metal key from his pocket along with a card key. "These are for you courtesy of Mr. Rose."

Ian thanked him hoping his blush was hidden in the darkened elevator.

Henry gave a plaintive meow.

The guard laughed as the elevator came to a halt. "Mr. Rose must really have it bad for you."

"Why."

"He hates cats."

With the doorman's laughter still ringing in his ears, Ian got off the elevator and the doors closed behind him.

Daniel heard the elevator bell and took a deep breath. He felt a little guilty for blackmailing the police department when they were just trying to catch a killer but to get his hands on Ian he'd do far worse.

Besides, what better way to trap a killer than to dangle the perfect bait of a new sub trying out his wings? Daniel rubbed his hands together. This was the most exciting thing he'd done in a long time. A frown crossed his face. He'd just have to make sure Ian didn't want to leave after their time together ended. Not to mention make sure his gorgeous redhead didn't come too close to a psychotic killer.

Daniel had enough money to buy and sell most people but he had a feeling his cop wasn't on any purchase list.

"Good evening."

Daniel's head jerked around. Ian stood in his doorway with a pet carrier and a rolling bag of luggage. They'd have to do something about getting the rest of his belongings brought over. He didn't want to spook the man, but the more of Ian's belongings in his apartment the harder it would be for the man to leave him afterwards. Pre-warned he'd gone shopping earlier and asked the pet store employees what was needed for a new pet. Daniel hadn't known what to get since he didn't like the stupid creatures. However, if Ian had a soft spot for his cat he'd have to adapt. How much longer could the stupid thing live anyway?

"I have stuff for your cat through there."

"Thanks that was sweet of you."

Daniel almost choked on his coffee. He'd been called many things, most of them unrepeatable, but never sweet. "Would you like a cup of coffee? Dinner? I've got some snacks. Nothing heavy since it's so late."

"Yeah I'd like that." Ian set down the carrier and opened its mesh door. A beautiful silvery tomcat slunk out of the carrier and gave Daniel a reproachful look with its large golden eyes, before regally walking in the direction of its food bowl.

"I hope I got the right kind of cat food." Daniel said. He didn't want to think about how the large tomcat would retaliate if he didn't like his food.

Ian shrugged. "I've got some in my bag if he won't eat it." The cop walked towards him in a slow hip-rolling prowling that made Daniel shiver with desire. From Ian's slow, sexy smile he was certain he failed to hide his reaction to the cop. His sub had a lot of predator in him. It would be up to Daniel to be able to teach him control.

He couldn't wait.

"We..."

That is as far as Daniel got before his mouth was taken in a luscious kiss that sent tingles of sensation to his toes. He let Ian have his moment before slowly pulling away.

"I can't believe you told homicide you wanted me to be your sub." Ian said.

Daniel shrugged. "I had to do something. You weren't calling and I didn't have your number. I could've gotten it from Keith but that seemed too stalky."

Ian started laughing. "As opposed to requesting me directly from the police department." Unexpectedly he wrapped his arms around Daniel and gave him a hug.

Daniel basked in the warmth of the other man's embrace. He couldn't remember the last time he was spontaneously hugged. Subs he'd played with in the past didn't hug as a rule and for some reason Daniel was reluctant to break Ian of this habit. If the man wanted to hug him surely it was the basis of a fonder feeling.

Fuck, he was grasping at straws. Ian was probably just a touchy person.

Ian stepped back and gave Daniel a look that probably froze more than one drug dealer to the marrow.

"Did you know any of the victims?"

Daniel shook his head. "Not well. I'd seen them all around the various clubs. The last guy I heard about, Steve, came to The Twisted Rose fairly often but we never played together." And didn't it feel good to be able to say that. He didn't relish being interrogated by his future lover on his varied and colorful past. But he did know that for as long as Ian was his there wouldn't be another playmate.

"Was there someone he played with?"

“Not really, he was just trying out the scene. He played with the house doms but not anyone seriously. He liked the occasional whipping but he wasn’t suited for full time submission. Publicly he was in the closet. I heard rumors that somewhere he had a wife and kids tucked away.”

“Bastard.” Ian said a scowl crossing his handsome features.

Daniel shrugged. “Sometimes men come to the club because they don’t feel they can share their darker desires with their spouse. I’m not condoning it but not everyone can be free about being a submissive. Some people come just to be trained and don’t even have sex with the Doms.”

“I don’t understand the submission thing.” Ian said confusion clouding his eyes.

Daniel smiled. “Don’t worry. I can teach you what you need to know. But for now come sit down and I’ll get you something to eat.”

Ian gave him a charming smile and went to sit on one of the barstools on the other side of the kitchen island. He could feel Ian watching him out of the corner of his eye as he pulled containers out of the fridge.

It was a study in self-control that kept him from yanking the sexy redhead across the island and ripping off his clothes.

He wanted the man so badly it was like a knot in his stomach.

“Fuck I want you.” Ian’s whispered. His words so perfectly echoing Daniel’s thoughts that for a moment he thought he’d said them out loud.

“Mmmm. Me too.” Daniel replied. Need ate at him like acid. Without regard for the food, he thrust all the platters back inside the refrigerator. “We’ll eat later.”

Daniel walked around the counter and yanked Ian off the stool pressing the slim muscled body between him and the counter.

Full body contact with the sexy cop was almost enough to make him shoot.

“Mmmm.” Ian tilted his hips increasing their body-to-body contact as their erections rubbed against each other through multiple layers of clothing.

Frantic with need to see, touch and taste, Daniel ripped open Ian’s shirt ignoring the soft pings of his buttons falling onto the wooden floor.

“I liked that shirt.” Ian protested mildly before latching his mouth on Daniel’s neck.

“I’ll buy you another.” Hell he’d buy the man an entire wardrobe as long as half of it included adorning Ian’s sexy ass in leather.

Ian laughed softly. “My sugar daddy.”

Fuck if he didn’t get harder. The thought of being the sole supporter of the hot redhead lying in his arms, made him harder than a rock. It was insane the craving he felt for this man. A man that not only didn’t need Daniel to support him, but would probably break every bone in his body for even suggesting it.

Looking down at the gorgeous exposed chest, Daniel pulled away and used his strength to lift Ian up on the counter so he could attack those tempting nipples. All those hours spent working out were worth the expression of surprise on Ian’s face.

“Fuck.” Ian said, groaning. “You’re strong.”

“Does that turn you on?” Daniel asked, his voice was rough with need.

“Hell yes.”

“Excellent.”

Daniel bit Ian’s nipple making the other man shout. He felt his cop’s body convulse as he smiled against Ian’s warm skin. He made a mental note to try nipple clamps later.

"I bet I can get you to come just from playing with your titties alone." Daniel purred.
"Fuck."

Daniel hooked Ian's legs over his arms, using his leverage to spread Ian onto the counter like a pagan sacrifice.

He lapped at Ian's nipple alternating between biting and licking before switching to the other. Through it all he kept a good hold on Ian not wanting to drop and injure the other man. The third time Ian bucked and he almost lost his grip, Daniel set him on his feet.

Ian blinked at him with lust-filled eyes. "What's wrong?"

"I need you in my bedroom now."

A wide smile crossed the sexy cop's lips derailing Daniel's thoughts.

"Lead the way."

"Hmmm." Daniel said. Unable to resist that smile, he leaned forward and took Ian's mouth. The biting taste of peppermint making him jerk his back in surprise.

"Peppermint?"

Ian flashed him a sexy smile. "I chewed some gum while you were getting stuff out of the fridge."

How had he missed that? He thought he'd watched the other man closely. "Sneaky man."

"Remember that." Ian said with a wicked grin.

"I will. What happened to the gum?"

Ian gave a laugh. "I swallowed it when you bit my nipple."

Daniel grabbed Ian's arm and pulled him through the living room and down the hall laughing all the way.

A darker part of Daniel wondered how far he could push this natural submissive he found in his hands. The gods were smiling on him the day Ian walked into his club. Now that he had the gorgeous cop he was never going to let him go.

Ian didn't say a word as they entered Daniel's bedroom. The quiet created a cocoon of stillness where hushed whispers and gentle touches were encouraged.

For the first time Daniel didn't feel the need to dominate his lover. He knew that he would only have one time with this gentle warrior and he didn't want to scare Ian off with too many demands the first time they came together.

If he scared Ian off now he might not have another opportunity. And he wanted a lifetime of opportunities.

He turned to face Ian who was watching him with a cautious expression.

"Shhh. None of that. I'll take very good care of you."

From the unsettled expression on Ian's face he knew the other man would feel more comfortable if they were both naked.

"Remove your clothing and I'll remove mine." He said in his sternest Dom voice. As much as he wanted to be gentle with Ian it had been so long since he was anything but dominant in a sexual relationship he barely remembered how not to be. Instinct had him falling back onto his old habits.

He was pleased at how quickly Ian stripped bare exposing a pair of long, long legs with a light dusting of red hair and a thick cock that wept with its need for attention.

Ian's body was finely muscled like a Greek statue except his lover was in living color. Warm, sexy, fuckable, living color.

Eyeing Ian's gorgeous body, Daniel quickly stripped. He pointed towards his feet indicating he wanted Ian to kneel. Despite wanting to take things slow, if he didn't feel Ian's lips wrapped around his cock soon he was going to die.

"Suck me."

Surely if he came once he'd have enough willpower to last a bit longer once he was inside Ian's tight, sexy ass.

Daniel's body tingled with desire when Ian dropped to his knees. The man would make an amazing sub. Ian's first instinct was to obey.

"You're so sexy." Ian said in a voice so quiet it was barely audible

"Suck me." Daniel growled plunging his fingers into Ian's thick hair.

Teasing, Ian sucked just the tip, running his tongue along the ridge of the cut member.

Daniel looked down into Ian's laughing eyes and almost spurted. None of his imaginings came close to the image before him. An image he knew would follow him into his dreams for many years to come.

"Don't make me punish you." He said. If he didn't get some relief soon he was going to be a very cranky Dom.

Daniel moaned when, without warning, Ian deep-throated him with a skill that made Daniel suspicious of his lover's experience.

Obviously he wasn't the ingénue, Daniel had expected. He was torn between complete ecstasy and a burning jealous rage over the many men his Irish lover must've practiced on to reach that level of skill.

"Enough." He took a tighter grip on Ian's hair and pulled him off, lifting him to his feet heedless to the soft sound of pain. "I *will* be in control."

He unconsciously massaged Ian's scalp, as he looked him in the eyes. "Eventually I will tie you up and whip you until you scream with pleasure but you're not ready for that. So tonight I'm just going to fuck you senseless. Lie on the bed face down."

Ian's sexy ass flexed as he crawled onto the bed, a come hither glance over his shoulder told Daniel that the man knew he looked good and wasn't shy about using his appeal against Daniel.

A whimper escaped the Dom, a fact he would ever after deny.

Trying to keep his pace casual, Daniel strolled to the side table and pulled out the drawer. Ignoring the dildos and butt plugs he grabbed a condom and half-used tube of lube.

"Fuck you're fine." He whispered. It didn't hurt to tell your lover he looked good. After all sex was always better if both sides knew of their attraction.

"You're not so bad yourself." Ian replied.

"Smart ass." He idly slapped Ian on the butt. A low groan followed the action as Ian shifted closer to him.

Interesting.

He would have to pursue that later. Right now he was frantic to get inside Ian. Daniel carefully prepared his lover making sure to give Ian nothing but pleasure. They could work on the pain aspect later. Once he was certain Ian was open enough, Daniel slicked on a condom and pressed inside. A soft sigh came from Ian as he slid home.

"So good." Ian said in a choked voice.

"I'll make it even better, baby." Daniel promised. He pulled in and out with the same slow even movements. He felt the need to savor each contact as he admired the muscles flexing beneath him.

There was another reason he wanted Ian face down when they made love.

He didn't think he'd be able to last looking into those brilliant blue eyes. Ian's hand snuck around and Daniel grabbed his wrist before he was able to touch himself.

"Mine." He growled. Fuck he was feeling possessive. "Come on baby, give it up." He whispered in Ian's ear.

With a cry, Ian shouted out his release. Tightening his muscles, he pulled Daniel along with him to a mutual release.

Daniel lay draped across Ian until his lover's arms gave and they collapsed in a heap on the bed. Never had a lover made him lose control so completely. Grabbing a tissue off his bedside table, Daniel removed the condom and dropped it in his bedside trashcan.

"Wow." Ian said, panting beside him. Daniel felt a rush of pride at having pleased his lover. Exhausted, he wrapped himself around Ian only to find cum decorating his lover's chest. He lifted a hand to his mouth only to have his lover stop him.

"You don't know if I'm infected with anything." Ian's blue eyes were serious as death.

"I don't remember you objecting when you were sucking my cock, besides you're a cop. Don't you get regular screenings?"

Ian nodded. "You still need to be careful and you're right I should've used a condom on you."

"I'll take this as a justifiable risk because I'll die if I don't get to taste you." Daniel licked his fingers making yummy noises as he polished them clean with his tongue.

"Idiot." Ian said fondly.

"Come on. Let's go take a shower." He could feel sweat coating his body and knew the cum on Ian would itch when it dried. "Besides we need to change the sheets."

Ian let Daniel drag him into the shower. After all it was hard to think when your brain was all melty and your mind was still reeling from the fabulous sex. The last time he felt this good was...never.

Shit, he was falling hard for a man who owned a sex club. Tom was going to laugh himself sick and Keith was going to never let him live it down after all the crap he'd given him over his membership to The Twisted Rose.

He let the hot shower and Daniel's gentle touches ease him.

"You're thinking too hard." Daniel said in his deep, soothing voice.

Was this how he talked his subs down from an endorphin high? He quickly squelched the jealous image in his head. He had no right to be jealous. They were just scratching an itch. "Hungry?" Daniel's deep voice broke into his thoughts.

His stomach growled as if on cue. "Apparently, I am." Ian said with a laugh. He pushed deeper thoughts aside. Now that sex was done and basic desires sated he was famished.

Daniel laughed exposing his perfect white teeth. "Let's get you something to eat."

The pair dressed quickly and headed to the kitchen where Daniel brought out tray after tray of appetizers. Cheeses, dried meats, bacon wrapped shrimp and dozens of miniature tarts.

"There was a party at the club and we had some leftovers. I hate to cook."

Ian frowned. "You should have more nutritious meals. Cooking isn't hard you just have to commit to it."

Daniel gave him a hot look as he pulled small plates from the cupboard.

"Baby you can cook for me anytime."

"I'm not a baby." Ian snapped. There was nothing he hated more than inane pet names.

"You'll be my baby." Daniel said with a glare. "And you'll like it."

"Fuck you."

"I think you've got that wrong." Daniel walked over to Ian, yanking him close by the fabric of his shirt. "I will fuck you." He gave Ian a hard kiss. "Over and over until you forget the feel of any other man. And anyone looking at you will know that you belong to me."

Ian grew hard as Daniel's long muscular body pinned him to the counter. He'd never gone for the pushy top type before and he didn't know why he was letting Daniel get to him, but there was something about the man that made Ian want to let everything go and put Daniel in charge.

Not that he'd tell Daniel that. Ian knew that giving Daniel an inch would be the same as waving a white flag.

After a few hot kisses Daniel released him so they could gather food and eat. They dined companionably, chatting about inanities until Ian was blinking to focus. "Are we going to the club tonight?"

Daniel shook his head placing a soft kiss on Ian's lips. "You're too tired and it will add to the mystery if I keep you to myself tonight. I'm sure my doorman already started the rumors of a live-in lover."

"Yeah, I was going to ask you about that. The man doesn't have any discretion, why do you keep him around?"

Daniel smiled. "Because he only spreads the rumors I tell him are okay. It wasn't an accident that he shared things with you on the way up the elevator."

"Wow, you are sneaky." You had to admire a man who even planned his gossip out in advance.

Soft kisses were pressed to each of Ian's cheeks. "Not sneaky, I just saved you from having to ask awkward questions." A fast hard kiss spun Ian's brain. "Now let's get a good night sleep and I'll educate you in the morning. I'm going to have to put some marks on you tomorrow because no one is going to believe I had you in my clutches for more than a few minutes without whipping you. Go brush your teeth and I'll get the bed ready."

Daniel quickly put clean sheets on the bed stuffing the others in the wash and starting the machine. The sheets could get clean while they slept. He exchanged places with his lover and brushed his own teeth.

When Daniel returned to the bedroom he found one of his fantasies lying on the bed in living color and sound asleep. Without his powerful blue eyes trained on Daniel his lover looked like an angel, maybe one with singed wings from avoiding hellfire, but an angel none-the-less.

Smiling at his fancy, Daniel slid beneath the covers. He knew some men demanded their subs sleep in their own room or at the foot of their bed. But even though he'd never had a permanent sub of his own he was going to enjoy every moment of having this man in his bed. Sliding closer to his lover he was stopped by a fluffy body wiggling beneath the blankets. A meow sounded and a furry face peeked out from under the comforter.

Daniel laughed at the expression on the cat's face. "Sorry big guy but you have to share him now." He carefully picked up Henry, surprised at how soft his fur was. Gently he placed the creature at the bottom of the bed and scooted closer to his sleeping companion.

Daniel gave a surprised yelp as Ian grabbed him by the waist and wrapped his arms and legs around him like a snuggly octopus.

“Go to sleep.” Ian whispered in his ear. The redhead nuzzled his face into Daniel’s neck sending shivers of delight down the Dom’s spine.

“Night babe.” He said, kissing Ian on the top of his head. Now all he had to do was convince the other man that he was in it for the long haul. He was torn between hoping the serial killer was caught right away and selfishly hoping the man held off killing anyone for a while because he didn’t want to lose his chance to convince the redheaded cop they had a future together.

Chapter Five

Ian woke more rested than he could remember being in a long while. Long nights and stakeouts tended to burn away his sleeping hours. If nothing else, this case could be the key to catching up on his sleep. He blinked when he encountered amber eyes staring straight into his. Henry purred at him from his spot on Ian's chest.

"Fuck Henry you don't have to get so close."

"Yes he did, I took up the rest of the bed." Large hands lifted up the cat and tossed him gently off the bed before pulling Ian into a heated embrace.

There was a soft meow of annoyance as Henry landed lightly on the floor.

Carefully he disengaged from Daniel's tender embrace.

"I have to use the bathroom." He muttered sliding out of bed and walking casually to the bathroom instead of running like he wanted. Ian was careful not to let his eyes stray to the hard bodied temptation he knew was waiting for him between the sheets. He couldn't let himself get used to waking in the arms of a lover. This was just temporary. Absently, Ian rubbed the spot over his chest.

"You okay babe?" Daniel's deep voice followed him.

"Yeah. I'll be back in a minute." The rumble of his stomach gave him an idea. He brushed his teeth and relieved his bladder before going back into the bedroom and retrieving his jeans off the floor.

"Not coming back to bed?"

"Nah, I'm starving. I'll make us some breakfast."

Silence.

Ian dared to look at the bed. He swallowed.

"Come back and serve it to me in bed." Daniel purred.

Ian snapped out of his fixation and looked at the Dom's face. Daniel had a questioning smile. He was probably wondering what the fuck was wrong with him.

"Sure, I can do that."

Ian left the room as fast as he could.

Henry followed moving between his feet as he walked and causing him to stumble.

"Shit, Henry." Ian picked him up and set him by the set of silver food bowls Daniel provided. "I should've thought of bringing your stuff. Don't get used to the high life. You'll be back battling dust bunnies in no time."

Henry purred in agreement as Ian carefully filled the bowls with food and water before turning to the human aspect of eating.

Opening the refrigerator, Ian was exposed to a sea of foam containers and take out platters.

"Does no one take care of you?" Ian wondered. He wasn't exactly a five star chef but his mother made sure he knew how to cook a meal. Buried in the back was a carton of eggs, a package of feta cheese and a brown paper bag with some mushrooms that didn't look too bad. A loaf of bread was in the cupboard and looked good enough to toast. Whistling, Ian made two omelets, toasted the slightly stale bread, and brewed some coffee in Daniel's fancy coffee maker. He finished the meal by pouring some orange juice into a pair of stubby glasses that were probably crystal. Grabbing a platter from the night before, Ian scrubbed it up and used it to carry the food.

He entered the room and smiled when he saw Daniel sitting up and waiting for him. "You need to buy some groceries, honey."

Daniel was pretty sure he kept the drool off of his chin, but damn. Ian was standing in his doorway shirtless with a tray of food. He never believed in the adage about the way to a man's heart was through his stomach but he was willing to reverse that belief if the food was delivered with a sexy half naked sub.

"W-We can go shopping later." He blurted out. He felt like an idiot but he wanted Ian to know how much he appreciated his efforts.

Ian gave him a brilliant smile. It was ridiculous what he was willing to do for that smile.

"I can't be a proper sub if I can't make food for my Master." Ian said batting his eyelashes.

"Funny." Daniel laughed. He couldn't resist a gorgeous man in a playful mood. He was even more pleased when Ian slipped into bed next to him.

Ian lost his smile and gave Daniel a serious look. "So how would a proper sub feed his master?"

"Luckily that is entirely between master and sub. The others have only seen me with the occasional house sub. I don't take men home and I do limited public scenes." Daniel stroked Ian's hair before confessing. "For an owner of a sex club I probably have less sex than the average man. It all gets boring after a while."

He smiled as Ian choked on his orange juice. Daniel patted him on the back.

"I hope I didn't bore you last night."

"No babe. You are anything but boring." Daniel opened his mouth and let Ian feed him a forkful of omelet. Flavor exploded across his tongue. He gave a humming noise and opened his mouth for another bite.

Ian laughed and fed him again. "Here you go."

"Delicious." Daniel said. "I don't know how you made this out of my kitchen but we are definitely going grocery shopping after this."

The pair finished off their food in relative silence with Daniel making appreciative noises. Damn, he really had to find a way to keep this man. He was gorgeous, kind, fabulous in bed and cooked like a dream. Just the man his mother would've picked out for him.

Thinking of his mother made him remember that tomorrow was her birthday.

"Remind me to pick out a card when we go shopping." He said.

Ian tilted his head as he regarded Daniel. "What for?"

"My mother's birthday is tomorrow."

"You should send her flowers."

Daniel laughed. "She's surprised when I remember her birthday. She would die of shock if I sent her flowers."

Ian shrugged. "It's up to you."

Finished with breakfast, Daniel set the platter aside. "Come." With a smile he led his lover to the second bedroom that Ian didn't get a chance to see before. This room had a high-end large screen computer and a hand-carved hardwood desk with leather seating.

"Nice setup." Ian said admiringly. "What are we doing?"

“Drag that chair over here.” Daniel ordered pointing at a small guest chair. He’d have to invest in better guest chairs if he could convince Ian to stay.

“O-o-okay.” Ian said sliding his chair over. He gave Daniel’s body a quick once over that had the Dom hiding a smile. His lover would have to get over his hang-ups with nudity if he was going to make a convincing sub. “What are we doing?”

“Sending my mother flowers.”

“I thought the shock wouldn’t be good for her.” Ian teased. He leaned forward and placed a kiss on Daniel’s shoulder.

“She’ll survive.” Daniel said resisting the urge to grab his Ian and fuck him over the glossy desk.

With a few motions of his fingers he pulled up an online florist and after a spirited debate with his lover they decided on a beautiful arrangement with a combination of roses and seasonal flowers. Against Ian’s protests, Daniel added his name to the card.

“But she doesn’t even know me.” Ian argued.

“Too late, it’s already sent.” Daniel gave Ian a hard kiss. “Besides nothing says commitment like flowers to my mother. I’ll drop that information at the club and it will cement us as a couple in everyone’s eyes.”

Ian dropped the argument.

Daniel turned to see those brilliant blue eyes focused on his quickly rising erection. After all how could he stay down in the presence of such male hotness?

Acres of bare skin beckoned his fingers and Daniel’s hands actually twitched with the need to touch the gorgeous man before him. Without warning he leaned forward and bit down on Ian’s right nipple.

“Ow!” Ian yelled.

Pleased with himself, Daniel kissed his way up Ian’s chest biting his way up to his ear where he pulled on one of the many rings pierced through the cop’s ear. “It’s time to start your training, my very tender sub. You’ll need to know the basics before going to the club tonight. It’s all right if people think you’re new to the scene. But if you don’t even know the basics they’ll become suspicious. By the way, how high is your pain threshold?”

Ian looked at him for a moment before answering. “If I can withstand a bullet wound I think I can take whatever you can dish out.”

“When were you shot?”

“A few years ago. An old lady with a concealed weapon got the drop on me. She killed her husband the same way.” Ian pointed to a mark two inches above his heart, way too close for Daniel’s comfort. “You’d never figure an eighty-two year old woman as the leader of a cocaine ring. Guess that’s why she was so successful.”

“Shit.” Daniel said softly placing a gentle kiss on the scar. “I promise nothing I do will hurt as much as a bullet wound. Some men are heavy into pain. I prefer to use a lighter hand. A kiss of the whip takes much more skill than a bludgeon. Let’s go back to the bedroom I want you to have your first session lying down.”

Ian nodded but didn’t speak as Daniel took his hand and led him back to the bedroom.

“Take off your pants.” Daniel ordered slipping into a dominant mindset. He would take it easy on Ian for their first scene but he wanted there to be no mistake of who was in charge.

With a nervous sideways glance Ian slipped off his pants and stood naked before Daniel.

“When you are waiting for direction stand at attention, back straight and hands clasped behind your back.”

Ian adjusted his position. Daniel could see a fine trembling along his lover's body. Nerves were settling in.

“Very good.” Daniel praised Ian stroking his hands gently across Ian's shoulders, arms, one thigh and then the other. He wanted Ian to become so familiar with his touch that even blindfolded he would know who touched him. Not that Daniel would let anyone else touch his sub but he wanted Ian to know him bone-deep.

“Close your eyes.”

He waited until Ian obeyed before walking over to his cabinet. Opening the wooden cabinet revealed his extensive whip and sex toy collection. All of it was pristine and had never been used. Over the years he'd added to the collection waiting for the perfect man to try them all out on. Deep in his soul Daniel knew that Ian was the right man but he didn't want to scare Ian away by showing how many toys he had. Scanning the collection he grabbed a leather flogger from its spot on the door. The multiple knotted strands would deliver an erotic sting when used correctly. With a light hand it would be enough to mark Ian, but not permanently. Just enough to satisfy anyone looking at the redhead that he was Daniel's lover. Ian would lose all credibility if he came into the club unmarked. No one would believe that Daniel would bring his new lover without claiming him in some way. If he cared enough to move Ian into his apartment then the others will expect to see evidence of their time together. Being a sex club owner came with certain expectations.

He closed the cabinet and returned to his lover.

“You may open your eyes.” Daniel said, pleased that Ian kept them closed the entire time.

Ian's eyes looked at the whip, trepidation shining his eyes. “That looks painful.”

“Touch it.”

His cautious lover reached out a hand and carefully touched the strands. “It's soft.” He said in a surprised voice.

“I'm going to use this to mark your back and upper buttocks because that is all anyone will see.”

“Why are they going to see my ass?” Ian asked. Daniel didn't know if it was the fact he was going to be whipped or that total strangers were going to see his butt that caused the expression of distress. His beautiful cop was oddly shy.

“Because the pants I got you ride nice and low. Now, go to the bed, lean over and grab the footboard.” Daniel chose this bed because it was made of solid wood and could take a great deal of abuse. Initially he thought to whip Ian lying down but partially standing would give him a better angle.

After giving Daniel a long look with his piercing blue eyes, Ian turned to obey.

The sight of Ian's fabulous ass tilted towards him had Daniel biting his lip to hold back a moan.

Damn, his baby was fine.

He slid the leather strands from shoulder to ass letting Ian get used to the feel of the leather against his skin.

Ian made a soft sound of surprise.

“That's it baby give in to the sensation. Soon I'll be striping your ass and you won't be able to sit down without knowing you're mine. What's your safe word?”

“Safe word?” Ian turned his head to look at Daniel. “I don’t have a safe word. Don’t you know when to stop? I thought you were experienced at this type of thing.”

Daniel leaned forward and gave Ian a hard kiss. “Don’t be a smart ass. I need a safe word because you are the only one who can judge whether or not you’ve had too much pain. Everyone is different. We’ve never done a scene together so I won’t be able to gauge your pain threshold. I can’t always tell how much pain you’re in. If you don’t have a way to communicate then I might unintentionally do you harm.” He tilted Ian’s chin until their eyes met. “I would rather cut off my arm than cause you the wrong kind of pain.”

Disbelief flashed through Ian’s eyes but Daniel chose to ignore it. Time would prove to his stubborn cop that he meant what he said. He didn’t want Ian suffering. A little play that reminded him of their encounter later was a far cry from causing real harm. Ian didn’t know it yet but they were in it for the long haul and Daniel wanted Ian to trust him with both his body and his heart. That would never happen if he scared off his big, bad cop in the beginning of their relationship.

Ian licked his lips as he watched Daniel nervously. “What makes a good safe word?”

“A word you’ll remember to use even under pressure.”

“Rose.”

Daniel smiled. “You want to use my last name?” Then he shook his head. “Bad choice. What if you are just calling out my name and I think it means to stop.”

Ian smiled. “I wouldn’t call you by your last name while you’re fucking me. Trust me on this.”

Daniel thought about it for a moment. “All right. But if you decide to change your safe word let me know. I won’t be offended.”

He would be but he wouldn’t tell Ian that. He wanted Ian to feel comfortable telling him anything. Slowly he would gain Ian’s trust and with time prove he was able to keep his lover’s heart and body safe.

“Face straight ahead. I don’t want to accidentally strike your eyes. In the future remember, when we’re in a scene keep your gaze on the ground unless I tell you to look at me. It is a sign of respect to not look your Dom in the eyes.”

“Sorry sir,” Ian said turning to face the bed. His tone was such the perfect level of subservience that Daniel wasn’t sure if he was faking it or if he was sincere. Daniel’s ability to get in character was probably what made him such a good undercover cop.

After stroking one hand down Ian’s back to soothe him, Daniel stepped back and with a flick of the whip struck Ian’s perfect skin with the flogger on one butt cheek. The whip made a nice red mark, high enough for easy visibility. He made a matching one on the other cheek.

Ian let out a soft hiss.

Daniel resisted the urge to ask if he was okay. He gave Ian a few more slaps on each cheek gradually increasing his strength. He added a few marks Ian’s back careful to not strike his lover’s spine. The point was to titillate not injure. Daniel paused and slid the flogger across Ian’s right shoulder letting him get a whiff of the freshly oiled whip.

Ian gave a whimper.

“That’s it baby. Feel the kiss of my whip. Inhale the smell of leather.” The scent of leather was a big turn on for some guys and it looked like Ian was one of those men who found it arousing.

Daniel rubbed his finger across Ian's back sliding through the sweat trickling down his skin. "Just a few more and then we'll be done."

He stepped back and gave a series of light even whips up and down Ian's back keeping a steady rhythm that gradually slowed until there was a delicate tracing of marks on Ian's back and the upper part of his ass.

Ian gave a low moan and Daniel threw down his whip. Damn he was hard.

He stepped up behind Ian careful not to touch his sore back. "You were stunning, my sweet. He wrapped his right hand around Ian's erection and settled his left hand on Ian's hip. "You are safe." He whispered in Ian's ear. "I have you. You can come now."

You are mine. He whispered inside.

With a soft cry Ian sprayed the comforter with his cum.

He'd have to strip the bed before they went to bed but for the first time Daniel didn't care. Turning Ian, he wasn't surprised to see tears in those beautiful blue eyes but he was surprised at how it affected him. Many subs came through his life and cried but this was the first time he wanted to tuck the man in his bed and keep him there for eternity.

"Let me get some spray for your back."

Ian slid into Daniel's arms resting his head on Daniel's shoulder. "Just hold me for a moment."

"I can do that." He whispered rubbing his face against Ian's shiny red hair. The younger man was only a few inches shorter than him which made the position comfortable without either of them having to strain.

His hand brushed Ian's back and he heard the other man suck in his breath. "Come on baby let me get the spray. I'll be right back."

Daniel placed a soft kiss on Ian's head and went to his bathroom to get his spray of antiseptic.

Ian was completely undone. He had never experienced such a strong release in his life and he wondered what he would do when the case was over and Daniel kicked him to the curb. The sexy Dom spoke of a future of them together but Ian was a realist and the odds of a cop and a sex club owner having a solid future were slim to none.

That didn't stop his heart from racing when Daniel walked back into the room.

His back and ass were on fire but he was more satisfied than he'd ever been in his life. Everything in him was loose and relaxed and he all but melted when Daniel sprayed a cooling gel on his back with gentle care. Daniel's erection slid against his hip.

"Want me to suck you off?" His mouth started to water at the thought of having Daniel's cock filling his mouth.

"No." Daniel said to Ian's great disappointment. "You're too sore to get on your knees right now." Daniel stroked the back of his hand across Ian's cheek, a sweet gesture that was becoming all too familiar. "I want to stay on the edge knowing you put me there."

Ian didn't have a response to that. "I always thought Doms only focused on their own pleasure."

"Not good Doms." Daniel replied with a smile, stroking Ian's face in an affectionate move that was becoming a habit.

Ian's senses sparked at the contact. He bit back a moan. Instinct told him that giving this man any response at all would be ruthlessly used against him.

Ian sighed at the contact. No matter the temperature, Ian was almost always cold. There was nothing he liked more than a hot-blooded lover.

"You are so warm." He said snuggling closer as he absorbed the body heat from the other man. "So warm." Unconsciously he started nuzzling the Daniel's neck, as he pressed closer.

"I have some pants I want you to wear and a collar." Daniel said in a firm tone as if he was already anticipating Ian's objections.

"A collar?"

What was he a lost puppy?

"It will signify to everyone that you're mine and that I won't take well to anyone touching you."

Ian was about to tell him what he thought about that idea when Daniel kissed him and completely derailed his ability to form words. He felt Daniel's body shift but he didn't think anything of it until he felt the chill of cold metal against his skin and the soft click as something encircled his neck.

His questing fingers found a series of tiny objects embedded in a metal necklace. "What is this?"

"Your collar." Daniel led him to a mirror. An elegant solid silver band wrapped around his neck with small silver roses embedded every few inches. It should've looked lame and girly but instead it looked manly and hot.

"It looks really good against your skin." Daniel purred in his ear. The sexy man stood directly behind Ian. His hands on Ian's shoulders, his face beside Ian's in the mirror. They looked good together. Similar in build but extremely different in looks. Daniel's dark hair was like an ebony shadow against Ian's rich red. Never a man for jewelry it was strange to see something that prominent against his skin. Even more disconcerting was the sexy way Daniel's long fingers stroked across it.

Focus Ian.

"Is this really necessary?" He blurted out. He knew it was, he did, but there was something about the formality of it that freaked Ian out. It was like getting engaged or something.

"Yes. If you want them to believe you are part of the scene, than yes. Most of them know me well enough to know that I wouldn't move someone in unless we were serious. The collar proclaims us very serious." Daniel slid a kiss across Ian's cheek. "And tells the other Doms to keep their hands off what is mine."

Ian sighed. "I guess you're right. Let's go shopping and get you some food. After the store we can come back here and dress in whatever sub-wear you've got for me."

Daniel gave Ian a smile that didn't reassure him at all. It was like a wolf catching sight of the lamb it wanted for dinner.

"Let's throw the comforter into a bag and have it sent to the drycleaners. I don't want it ruined."

Ian blushed as he remembered why the comforter was dirty in the first place. "Sorry."

Daniel gave him a hard, fast kiss that tingled his toes. "Why? I'm sure as hell not. If that is the reason it gets dirty, I'll be happy to have it dry cleaned daily."

Ian laughed. "Or we could remove it before we have sex."

Daniel shrugged. "Some things are more important than a comforter."

Ian had no response to that so he slid on a clean pair of pants, hissing when the denim brushed against his whip marks. Sucking in his breath he pulled on a clean t-shirt, trying to block out the sting, and turned to see the stud of his dreams leaning against the doorway completely naked.

“Aren’t you getting dressed?”

“Yes. But I didn’t want to miss the show.”

Daniel ducked the pillow Ian tossed at his head. “Get dressed. I won’t be able to cook for you if we don’t have any food. And I don’t count what you have in all those foam containers as food.

“Yes, sir.”

Ian bit the inside of his cheek to resist the comment rising to his lips. If he was going to play the proper sub he couldn’t be caught mouthing off to his Dom.

Chapter Six

For Daniel getting groceries was like pulling teeth, he hated the crowds, the stupid carts that never rolled properly and the noisy blaring non-stop announcements about crap he didn't care about on sale. It was one of the many reasons he just ate leftovers from the club.

But going to the grocery store with Ian was a culinary experience. For a man who claimed to only know how to cook a few dishes Ian knew how to examine his food. Daniel leaned against the cart watching his lover examine a melon, eye a bunch of bananas and pick up fresh herbs for mystery dishes he was going to make in the future.

The process amused him until a muscle bound blond in a wife-beater made a move on his man. He saw the man coming and was tempted to intervene but he was curious if Ian felt as bonded with him as he did with his gorgeous cop.

He watched as the blond make a few motions with his hands and gave Ian a smarmy smile. Ian shrugged and waved a hand over to Daniel indicating they were together. When the interloper turned towards him, Daniel gave him a stare that had made more than one Dom freeze in his leather boots. It was equally effective with the muscle bound blond who, with a quick nod to Daniel went on his way... fast.

Guess he was smarter than he looked.

Ian grabbed his cantaloupe and walked back to Daniel.

"Can you believe that guy? Who really picks up men at the grocery store? It's like a bad cliché?"

Daniel laughed. He couldn't help himself. The other guy had been gorgeous and Ian's complete lack of interest was more than a little flattering.

"I guess some guys don't have any class." Daniel said.

"Luckily my guy has it in spades." Ian said giving him a long look up and down his body. "Though I don't think many men go grocery shopping in Prada boots."

Before Daniel could make a comment Ian kissed him right there in the produce aisle.

The kiss was nice but it was the shock of having Ian embrace him in such a public place that stopped him from taking over.

"Ian? Daniel?"

Ian's lips lifted from his and Daniel was pleased to see his lover's eyes were clouded with lust as he turned to greet Keith who was staring at them as if they'd each grown a second head.

"Hey Keith." Ian said. The huskiness of his voice settled deep in Daniel's balls and he wanted nothing more than to drag the man off to his bedroom and keep him there forever.

"When did this happen!" Keith demanded his cheeks flushed red.

Daniel had never seen Keith so angry.

Ian turned to face Keith so Daniel couldn't read his expression. "We got together recently."

"Recently! Then why do you have a collar and why are you kissing Daniel in the middle of the grocery store? You never do public displays of affection!" Keith's ranting started to gather a crowd.

Daniel slipped his arm around Ian. "Do you have a problem with us being together?"

Keith swallowed. "No. No of course not." His eyes darted around the store as if noticing for the first time that people were staring. "I was just surprised that's all. You two look good together."

Daniel would have believed him more if he didn't see the anger still lurking in the other man's eyes. Keith looked furious. Something in the smaller man's expression had Daniel placing himself between Keith and his lover. "Let's get together and have dinner soon." Daniel said easing Ian away from Keith. "We have to get going now and finish our shopping but I'll call you." Daniel headed for the opposite side of the store pushing the cart and pulling Ian behind him.

"That was so weird." Ian said once they gathered the rest of their groceries.

"Now you know why I don't go grocery shopping. If someone isn't trying to steal my man someone else is, well I don't know what he was doing." Daniel said. "What is your relationship with Keith?"

"Until today I'd say he was one of my closest friends. I'm not sure what was going on in there. I know he's been stressed since he caught Gary cheating on him. It's only been a little while but I don't think he's found someone else yet. You probably see him more than I do."

Daniel frowned. "He was acting more like a scorned lover than a friend. I've always wondered about him."

"About what?"

"If he's a switch." Daniel said paying for the groceries.

"What's a switch?" Ian asked in a loud whisper.

"Someone who likes to bottom and top."

Ian shrugged. "I like to do both does that make me a switch?"

The grocery teller looked Ian up and down. "You can do me any time you want gorgeous."

Daniel snarled at him and grabbed their groceries. "I'm going to fucking lock you in a tower and only let you out for assignments where you go undercover as a drunk, homeless guy who doesn't bathe for a week."

Ian threw back his head and laughed. All eyes, both male and female turned to watch him.

Shaking his head Daniel put the bags in one hand and snagged his lover's arm with the other, dragging him to the car.

"It's a miracle no one has captured you yet." Daniel said. The two men settled in Daniel's Aston Martin with Ian putting the groceries by his feet.

"We should've brought my truck. You're going to kill me if anything spills."

Daniel shrugged. "It's only a car."

Ian licked his lips. "Daniel I hate to sound like a cop or anything but I have to know how can you afford all this; the car, the penthouse building, the Prada shoes. I know sex sells but it doesn't sell that much."

Daniel laughed as he revved up his car. "My parents both came from extremely wealthy families. When my dad died I inherited a very nice chunk of money. I could comfortably live on my inheritance for the rest of my life. I bought the Twisted Rose to occupy my time so I wouldn't turn into a drugged out bond baby like some of my yacht club friends. Is that enough information my curious cop?"

Ian nodded his cheeks flushed red. "Yeah. I just felt the need to ask."

"Completely understandable." Daniel edged around a corner ignoring the way Ian white-knuckled the edge of the seat.

"So this switch thing." Ian gasped.

Daniel glanced over to see his lover looking pale. "You're not a switch. You're my stunning submissive."

"I top." Ian protested.

"I'm not saying you can't. You probably even do a good job of it. I'm saying that you don't yearn for it. It doesn't make you fly like being mine. Does it?"

Ian was silent for a moment making Daniel worry that maybe he'd read his lover wrong.

"No. You make me fly like no one ever has before. Last night and this morning were incredible."

Daniel relaxed muscles he didn't even realize were tensed. They pulled into the condos underground parking garage and Daniel swiped his security card. "I'll get you one of these too. It's supposed to keep thieves out but it's mostly for show. If a thief really wanted in they can always find a way. Fortunately we haven't had any problems since I bought the building two years ago."

Ian glanced at all the shiny sports cars and luxury vehicles. "I don't think my truck would fit in here. Sheila is a little shy."

Daniel laughed. "Is Sheila the name of your truck?"

Nodding, Ian gave Daniel a shy smile. "I've had Sheila for eight years. She's not as pretty as she once was but she's never let me down."

"She'll fit right in," Daniel said "just like everything else of yours."

Ian smiled, a warm glow forming in his chest. Daniel was everything he'd always wanted in a lover. "Let's go put the groceries away. We need to get dressed if we're going out tonight. You have a killer to catch."

Chapter Seven

It took a few minutes for Ian to slide into the tight leather pants Daniel had laid out for him. Only with excessive force and some baby powder did the suckers fit. It didn't matter what he wore as a shirt since he wouldn't be keeping it on. Daniel entered the room wearing the same outfit he wore to go grocery shopping. Who wore two thousand dollar pants to wander through produce? Looking his lover up and down, Ian had to admit the man looked fine.

"Are you ready? You'd best get dressed so you can show me off. The sooner I'm displayed as bait the sooner this psycho can be caught. I don't want him to get his hands on anyone else. Especially you."

A strange look passed through Daniel's eyes. "I don't suppose you've ever thought about being an accountant?"

Ian laughed. "Can't say that I have."

"Consider it." Daniel said, stroking Ian's head.

Ian knew they had to address this problem now. "If you can't cope with my being a cop let me know. It's better to find out we're not compatible before we get too involved. I know this is just a case but I'm already more attached to you than I should be. If we're going to date after this you have to be able to handle my job."

Daniel looked into those earnest blue eyes and lied through his teeth.

"I can handle it." There was no way he was ready to admit that he was already too involved.

The collar looked fabulous on his lover. Daniel placed a soft kiss on Ian's forehead. "Everyone is going to know you're my submissive. I've also alerted the staff so I doubt there will be anyone who is unaware that I've acquired a new lover. You will need to walk a few steps behind me and not talk to anyone unless I give you permission to answer. Keep your eyes on me or on the ground. Don't meet my eyes in the company of others because it will appear as a battle for dominance. When we get to the table you are to kneel on the pillow by my chair."

"You're fucking with me right?" Ian asked his eyes wide.

"No. If you're really my sub you would live to serve me. Any less and people will wonder who you really are. I'll explain to people that you're new so they'll overlook minor mistakes. I'm a prominent figure in the world of BDSM and everyone will be looking at the person I finally chose as my partner."

Ian's blue eyes widened, "Haven't they ever seen you with someone before?"

Daniel struggled with his answer. He didn't want to sound like he went around screwing everything that moved but that was sort of his history. "They've only seen me with temporary lovers. Men I've chosen to play with for a few hours or even for an evening but never with a more permanent lover. I've never had anyone live with me before."

He shifted uncomfortably beneath Ian's astonished look.

"You've never had a serious relationship?"

Daniel shrugged. How did he explain to this kind, loyal man that he liked to play the field but that for the first time he wanted to keep someone for his own? "For the past few years I've been busy building my business and although I've had fun with many subs I've never wanted to keep one for myself."

“Help me solve this case and then we’ll see where it goes.” Ian said gently. “We need to stop the killer who is hunting you first.”

“Fair enough.” Daniel said. He wanted to say something more. Make himself look like a better bet than he was but he was more a man of action than one of words. He would prove to Ian that they belonged together even if he had to bind the gorgeous stud to his bed.

He really liked that idea.

Different scenarios flashed through his head as he pulled out a pair of black leather pants from his closet.

“Let me get dressed and we’ll be off.”

* * *

Ian walked into the room feeling conspicuous with his naked chest and red armband. The terrible twosome at the check-in counter handed over the red band when Daniel requested it but the wide-eyed looks he received spoke volumes. When he gave up his shirt his marks became visible. Ian couldn’t stop the blush on his cheeks. They were probably as red as his hair.

He’d been on undercover jobs as drug lords that were less embarrassing.

Whispers followed them as they walked through the club. The bouncer gave him a smile as he passed but didn’t speak.

Daniel walked him through the club stopping at a large round table where four other male-male couples were sitting. Ian was careful to keep his eyes on Daniel’s heels and his posture straight and tall the way Daniel told him to.

Each man had another man either sitting on his lap or at his feet in various situations of bondage. One kid even had a ball gag in his mouth.

Ian shuddered with disgust and turned to look back at Daniel who was taking his seat.

Daniel snapped his fingers and pointed down.

A square plush pillow sat beside his chair.

He had to be kidding.

Typical. Give the man an inch and he took twenty miles.

Dropping to his knees, a feat in his tight leather pants, Ian sat on his heels and peered up at Daniel through his lashes wondering what to do next. A hand came down and stroked his head. Daniel’s long fingers massaged his scalp in a slow hypnotic manner that made him tip his head to the side to get more of the soothing sensation.

He couldn’t remember the last time someone gave him a scalp massage.

“Daniel, who’s your pet.” A cold voice asked from across the table. Daniel identified it as the icy blond with a red harness wrapped around the kid in his lap. A kid that barely looked legal. The only reason Ian knew the kid must be legal was that Daniel let the kid in. Whatever his lifestyle or preferences, Ian got the impression that the club owner kept his club as close to error free, legally, as possible.

Ian closed his eyes so he didn’t have to look at the other man. He had a feeling jumping across the table and choking the life out of one of his patrons wouldn’t make Daniel willing to help him catch a killer.

Daniel’s hand continued its blissful stroking. “This isn’t a pet. This is my new sub, Ian. Ian say hello to Master George.”

Holding back a snort of disdain, Ian muttered a quiet hello.

"Doesn't say much." Master George observed.

"I don't keep him for his talking ability." Daniel said causing a round of laughter from the other men at the table. The gentle hand in his hair gripped him tighter in warning. Ian decided to play a little on his own. He leaned forward and laid his head in Daniel's lap making sure the back of his head rubbed against the Dom's erection.

"He certainly is affectionate." The same voice said. Ian didn't look up. He'd read somewhere that it wasn't a good idea to challenge a master. Of course if the guy committed a crime he'd be happy to slam him to the floor. He let a small smile cross his face as he continued to rub against Daniel. This close he could smell Daniel's desire.

From the iron rod bumping the back of his head he could tell Daniel was just as aroused as he was. He might not be into all the bondage and crap but the temptation to unzip Daniel's pants and suck him off in a room full of other people was sounding better and better. After all he had to stay in character.

"Behave, baby." Daniel warned. "I don't want to have to punish you."

Shit

Ian slid his head off the other man's thigh and settled back on his heels. He didn't know exactly what kind of punishment the man was thinking of but he didn't want anything to do with being tied up and whipped in front of a roomful of strangers. Alone in Daniel's bedroom was one thing but he didn't think even semi-public shows were his thing. He kept his head bent so he could hide his expression knowing his resentment probably showed on his face.

He wondered how much longer he had to put up with this crap before he could talk to Daniel privately.

Daniel watched as Ian pulled away. He could almost feel the distance widening between them.

Damn. He wanted Ian to stop rubbing because he didn't want to come in front of the others. It wouldn't be an unusual occurrence, it was a sex club after all, but he wanted more with Ian. Steadily increasing their intimacy was something he wanted to do in the privacy of his bedroom. The chance to show Ian off to the others was just a bonus.

He licked his lips as he looked at the bowed head. All that beautiful skin exposed was almost enough to make him come in his pants. Only the fact that Ian was there for reasons other than being fucked by Daniel kept him from hauling the cop up by the hair and pounding him against the table.

That and his reputation.

Daniel was known for his massive self-control. After years of building his reputation he'd hate to lose it over a BDSM ingénue no matter how beautiful the man was. It was a shame he was tumbling head over heels for the cynical man who probably wouldn't even let him near him if he didn't need his help.

Who knew the family curse would finally make its mark. The men in the Rose family always fell in love at first sight. There were stories as far back as his great-great-grandfather that could be traced of the number of Rose men who fell for the love of their lives with just one look. Unfortunately, it wasn't a guarantee of a happy ending. More than one Rose ancestor pined for the rest of their life for the one who got away but was never forgotten.

Daniel was one hundred percent positive that Ian Stiller would be his downfall.

"So Daniel, when did you meet your pretty new sub?"

He felt Ian freeze under his hand.

"A couple of weeks ago he came in to pick up his friend. One look and I knew he had to be mine." He didn't know how much Ian was comfortable sharing but he wasn't going to lie to his friends. He'd known most of them since he first came to the scene when he was a fresh-faced kid in his early twenties and if he didn't always like their choices he always appreciated their input.

The looks they were all giving Ian let him know they appreciated his taste even if he wanted to tell them to keep their eyes to themselves.

"Do you loan him out?" George asked.

Daniel felt he showed a brilliant restraint when he didn't pull the other man off his chair and beat him against the brick wall at his back.

"No." He kept his voice level but from George's expression he knew wasn't completely successful at hiding his rage at the thought of Ian under another Dom's hands.

"Just asking." George held up his hands in a placating gesture.

"Sorry." He said though he wasn't sorry at all. "I'm a little protective of my boy." He stroked Ian's head glad the other man didn't growl at being called a boy. Ian may be a toughened cop but he was pretty certain there was at least ten years between them.

Age wasn't something Daniel fixated on but he hoped that Ian didn't use that among other things to keep a relationship between them impossible.

The conversation between the Dom's went its usual path; discussing boys and techniques and who hooked up with whom. Daniel kept his ear out for any information, as he knew Ian did from the tenseness of his body.

Despite knowing these people for years he looked at them with new eyes. George was a cold bastard but he took good care of his subs, Ned was a little older and although he could still use a whip he didn't have the strength to overpower someone and stab them as Ian described. Ben and Vincent were lovers who never played alone.

The five of them had known each other for years and Daniel could trust them with his secrets but the question was whether he could trust them with Ian's. That he wasn't quite sure about. But he was almost certain none of them were killing off subs and leaving them on the street outside his club for Daniel to find.

"Your food sir." A plate of steak fajitas was set before him. He liked to have finger foods when he was feeding a sub. It was sexier to feed someone from your hand than to struggle to handle a fork.

"Come up here baby."

Ian tilted his head and gave him a puzzled look.

"On my lap."

It was a good thing he forbade Ian to talk because the look in those piercing blue eyes said he wouldn't be saying nice things. Still, staying within his role, Ian stood up and slid onto Daniel's lap. It took him a moment to get comfortable but he finally found a position for his head on Daniel's shoulder and settled.

"Make me a fajita." Daniel ordered even though he hated to break up the intimacy of having Ian snuggle with him. He had a feeling that his acerbic lover didn't snuggle often but he had to stay in his Dom mindset or his friends would start to wonder why he was treating this one so different.

He watched with a smile as Ian carefully assembled a fajita. Ian spent several minutes getting the perfect combination of peppers and beef before wrapping the entire thing up in a tortilla and holding it out to Daniel.

"Feed me." Daniel ordered. He gave a slight smile so Ian knew he was doing it for the group.

Ian held the food up to Daniel's lips slowly brushing it against his lips in a slow sensual slide. Daniel bit into the fajita moaning when the heat of the peppers and well-seasoned beef slid across his taste buds. He finished the fajita in quick greedy bites and when he's swallowed the last he grabbed Ian by the back of his head and kissed him.

He slid his tongue inside Ian's mouth sharing the spiciness of the food and the heat generated by the peppers.

"I never thought I'd see it." Ned said. The lights reflected the silver weaving through his thick black hair.

"What?"

"Daniel in love." Ned gave him a teasing smile. "I've watched you play for years and you never settle down. Then you come in with a pretty redhead that has you wrapped around his finger."

Ned's gaze was friendly but speculative.

Daniel shrugged. "That's how it works in my family. You meet the one and then you're done for."

Ned was right. He was in love and falling deeper by the second.

"Have you heard anything more about the killings?" Ben asked, his leather gleaming in the club lights. He leaned over eagerly to share his news. "The news media has been pretty quiet lately."

"So far there hasn't been any leads, at least not that they told me about." Daniel said stroking a hand down Ian's back.

All four men shook their heads. "I'm not surprised." Vincent said. "But then half of them couldn't find their ass if there was a flashing sign pointing at their pucker. You should've gotten a bodyguard. As pretty as your new man is, it puts you both in danger."

Ian stiffened beneath Daniel's hands.

"Shh, baby." He whispered using long strokes to bring Ian down from the rage he could feel building. Vincent had his own reasons for hating cops having dark skin and growing up in a poor gang-infested neighborhood left a bad taste in his mouth even ten years later. He knew Vince still went back to visit his mother who refused to leave their family home.

"What's wrong with him?" Vincent asked nodding to Ian.

"There are a lot of cops in his family." Daniel felt bad for lying but he would feel worse if it got out that Ian was a cop and the killer came after him for fun.

"Sorry man." Vince said. "I'm sure your family are good cops. I just didn't see many of them when I was growing up. My street got the corrupt kind that sucked money from my family's store for protection." He said the last word with air quotes.

Ian nodded his understanding, keeping his gaze low.

"Can he talk?" Vince asked Daniel, his dark eyes teasing.

"Yes he can talk. I just told him to keep quiet tonight. I'm testing his control. The fact he didn't tear you a new one proves he's doing very well. Daniel stroked Ian's bare back, pressing slightly on his marks to ground his lover and remind him why they were there.

Daniel ate another fajita and then fed one to his lover; licking away a spot of sour cream from his lush mouth. He would have that mouth around his cock by the end of the evening.

"I think that wraps up our evening gentlemen." Daniel said not looking away from Ian's bowed head.

"Early night." George teased.

"Only here, George. Only here."

Ian slid off of Daniel's lap and the pair of them left the club. Daniel kept his hand on Ian's back the entire way through the crowd making sure the others knew the fine man beside him was claimed. There were enough eyes staring at his gorgeous lover that he gave one or two a less than friendly look.

They made it to Daniel's car and back to the apartment without Daniel pouncing on Ian, which he thought showed fabulous control.

* * *

Ian walked into Daniel's condo and his nipples hardened with the chill. Might as well since everything else on his body was hard. The man got to him faster than anyone he'd ever met. But duty called first.

"I've got to make a few phone calls." He went to the bedroom and snatched up his cell before walking out onto Daniel's balcony. Daniel's condo had the most amazing view. He put on his wireless headset hoping to diffuse the sound of the wind while he talked.

He called Detective Gomez first.

"Good evening Ian. Any news."

"No. The Doms at the club didn't seem to know any more than we do."

"Shit. There's been a slight break in the case. It looks like all the subs were taken to the same tattoo parlor to get pierced. It's a place called Dragon's Breath, it's on the corner of Main and Custer."

There was a long pause on the line.

"Shit."

Gomez laughed. "I can see you know where this is going. At least you already have some piercings it would look odder if some clean cut guy walked in there and wanted a piercing. Take Mr. Rose with you and we'll see if we can flush this guy out. He either works there or watches the place in some capacity. There's a connection there I feel it."

Ian sighed. "Fine. The things I do in the line of duty."

Gomez was still laughing when Ian cut him off.

He called Tom next. He promised his partner that he would check in every evening so Tom knew that Ian was safe.

"So are you all bound up? Is Rose holding the phone for you so you can speak?"

"Asshole."

"Any news?" Tom's voice lost its teasing note as he got down to business.

"They think there's a connection with a local tattoo shop called Dragon's Breath. I'm supposed to go there tomorrow and get a piercing."

"What are you getting pierced?" He could hear the laughter in his partner's voice.

That was a good question. There were a lot of places that could be pierced and some of them made his balls want to crawl up inside his body and hide. One thought sent waves of desire through him. "My nipple."

“Man. That’s going to hurt.”

“Yeah but I don’t think the subs killed were having their ears pierced and I’m not letting some stranger near my man junk so that’s as adventurous as I’m willing to go.”

Not to mention the thought of Daniel pulling on a nipple ring was almost enough to make him cream his pants.

“Sounds like a plan.” Tom’s voice lost its teasing. “Be careful partner, I don’t want to hear about your death on the evening news.”

“I will.” Ian promised. They said their goodbyes and Ian hung up. He stood for a moment on the balcony enjoying the city lights. He heard the sliding door open behind him but he didn’t turn around.

“Everything all right?” Daniel asked. A warm hand slid across one shoulder reminding Ian that he was standing half naked in the cool evening breeze.

“Yeah. I need to go to a place called Dragon’s Breath. It’s a piercing and tattoo parlor that all of the subs visited shortly before they were killed.”

“Mmm. That’s a good place. Livvie there did my whip tattoo. I’ve referred a lot of people there. Want me to call and get you an appointment?”

“Yeah. That would be great.”

“They do a lot of work for the BDSM community so I’m not sure that’s exactly a clue.” Daniel said. “But the real question is what are you going to get pierced or tattooed?” Was it his imagination or had Daniel’s voice dropped an octave?

“I’m thinking I’ll have my nipple pierced.”

“Good choice.” Daniel purred. Ian wasn’t prepared for the Dom to reach out and pinch his nipple. His entire body jolted from the sensation. “A very good choice. Maybe we should pierce them both then we can run a chain across them and I can play with them at my leisure.”

“No. Just one. I think two would be too much distraction.”

“Sometimes distraction is good.” Daniel said nibbling on Ian’s neck.

“And sometimes it can get me shot.” Ian replied.

“Ahh. One it is then.” Daniel wrapped his arms around Ian sharing his body heat. “You’re chilled, we should go back inside.”

“Yeah.” The day was catching up with him. He’d had more sex in the past few days than he’d had in a while. “Let’s go to bed.”

“Even better.” Daniel laughed.

“To sleep.” Ian gave a mock frown.

“Right, to sleep.”

His butt got a slap but that was the last move Daniel made. They stripped off their clothes and got into bed. The last thing Ian remembered was being wrapped into a pair of strong arms as he drifted off to sleep.

Chapter Eight

Daniel woke in the morning to an armful of Ian and a heart that was overflowing. It had been awhile since he'd woken with another man and never had he appreciated it this much. The scent of his lover filled his senses. He pulled Ian closer, nuzzling the younger man's hair with his face. Making certain that Ian was still asleep.

Stroking the auburn head he whispered, "I love you."

He wasn't ready yet to tell Ian while he was awake. Placing one more kiss on the silky head he slid quietly out of bed.

Ian's phone rang in the other room. Knowing his cop was on duty he glanced at the screen.

What kind of asshole was calling his man this early in the morning? Daniel grabbed the phone and flipped it open. "Ian's phone, Daniel speaking."

"Mr. Rose this is Detective Gomez is Ian around?"

Daniel swallowed trying to moisten his dry throat. Ian was going to kill him. "Just a minute." He muttered.

Holding the phone against his chest he walked back to the bedroom.

Ian was still snuggled up in the blankets his red hair rumpled.

"Babe wake up." Daniel hissed.

Ian's blue eyes blinked at him. He caught sight of Daniel and his eyes zoomed in on Daniel's nakedness.

"You have a phone call." Daniel said in a louder voice.

"Phone call?" Ian blinked at the phone Daniel held out. His eyes snapped into focus and he snatched the phone from Daniel's grip.

Oooh, his darling was pissed.

"Hello."

Daniel could only hear half the conversation but the part he was hearing sounded bad. The words death and stabbing sent chills down Daniel's spine and not just because he was naked.

Ian snapped his phone closed.

"Don't ever answer my phone." Ian said, his eyes harder than diamonds.

Normally Daniel would've tossed out a sub for talking to him in that tone but this wasn't some sub he picked up for the night, this was his lover and hopefully permanent mate. And he knew he was in the wrong.

"I'm sorry, Ian."

Ian stared at Daniel for a moment. He wasn't sure what to do with that. He'd been prepared for the Dom to tell him that he would do what he wanted. The sincere apology wasn't what he was expecting at all.

"I should never have answered your phone. I just didn't know who would call you this early in the morning." Daniel looked away refusing to meet Ian's gaze.

"You were jealous!" Ian exclaimed. "You thought some guy was calling me early in the morning."

Daniel cleared his throat and looked anywhere but at Ian. "Maybe a little. I just found you and I'm feeling very protective. I don't want anyone else poaching on what is mine."

Ian smiled. "Just remember in the future don't answer my phone. It's my work number while I'm here."

Daniel nodded. "Understood."

"Good." Ian didn't want to argue with his handsome lover but Daniel had to know that there were some things that Ian wouldn't allow. This was probably just one of many things they'd argue about but the fact that Daniel realized he did something wrong was a good step.

"Do you need to go?"

Ian shook his head "But I do have to get out my laptop. They are emailing me pictures to review. There are reporters everywhere so they don't want me on the scene."

Daniel nodded. "You get to work and I'll fix you something to eat."

Ian stopped pulling up his pants to give his lover a look. "You're going to make breakfast?"

"Coffee and peanut butter toast. I'll take you out later for lunch."

"Deal." It was sweet that Daniel wanted to make him anything. It was obvious the man was in full protective mode and Ian had never seen anything as adorable as his overbearing lover hovering.

Ian went to the closet where he'd tucked his computer and set it out on the kitchen table so he could see Daniel work while he checked his email. It only took a few minutes of booting before he was deleting junk mail promising him fifty-two million dollars from the estate of a deposed dictator, the increased orgasm pills and of course penis enlargement.

"Do you think I need to be enlarged?" He asked Daniel, admiring his lover's ass. Unlike him, Daniel didn't choose to put on clothing.

Daniel looked at Ian over his shoulder. "What are you talking about?"

"I just wondered if I was deficient in the size department. After all I get a dozen emails a week about enlarging my penis. I thought maybe you were just being polite in your admiration." Ian bit the inside of his lip to hold back the laughter.

Daniel gave Ian a leer. "There's nothing deficient about you and as a vast sampler of men's penises I can tell you that yours is by far the nicest one I've ever seen."

"Glad to know it meets your high standards." Ian said. Finally he waded through the rest of his mail separating work things to follow up later with personal emails to trash. He opened an email from his sister and let out a loud shout.

Daniel rushed over. "What is it?"

"My sister, Helen, is expecting. I'm going to be an uncle."

He couldn't stop the wide smiling spreading across his face. He adored his sister and was looking forward to being an uncle for the first time.

"You have a sister?" Daniel asked.

"Yeah, I have a brother too. Both older. I'm the youngest. Helen has been trying to get pregnant for a while. I'll give her a call later. I hope this wraps up soon so I can go see her."

"Where does she live?" Daniel asked putting a plate of toast in front Ian.

"Down the street from my place but I haven't seen her for a while, we've had conflicting schedules."

He looked up to see an expression of longing pass Daniel's face.

"Don't you have any family besides your mother?"

Daniel shook his head. "I'm the only child of only children. My dad died when I was young. My mother is all I have these days."

Ian gave Daniel a hug. "I'll share mine."

Daniel barely remembered to hug Ian back. The thought of Ian sharing his family both pleased and frightened the piss out of him. As much as he wanted to be part of Ian's life he hadn't thought of the complications of having other family members involved. The ping of email arriving saved him from a full out panic attack.

Ian gave him a smacking kiss before going to his email. "Christ on a crutch." He whispered drawing Daniel's attention to the laptop screen.

It wasn't the man's nakedness or the whip marks that made Daniel's heart skip about a hundred beats, it was the man's eerie similarity to the man standing beside him. If Ian had black hair the man could've been his twin.

"He's seen you." Daniel said.

Ian gave him a brilliant smile that for once didn't affect him. The ice covering his soul blocked out all sensation. All Daniel could think of was that the dead man on the screen probably once had the same pretty smile that lit up the room. He vaguely heard Ian pick up his phone.

"Yeah, he does look like me. I think we've got the killer on line. I'll go to the piercing parlor this evening and see if it attracts any attention. Did this guy go to the same parlor? He did? Excellent."

After saying goodbyes, Ian snapped the phone closed and turned to Daniel. He must've looked as sick as he felt.

"Are you okay?"

He turned his head to look into Ian's eyes. "You are not to let this psycho kill you."

Ian gave him another smile. This time it froze some of the ice covering his soul. "I'll do my very best not to get killed. I'm going to be an uncle after all."

"And me." Daniel wrapped himself around Ian holding the center of his world close to his body as if he could protect him from harm by willing it. "You have to avoid getting killed for me."

"Yes, sir." Ian whispered in his ear.

Daniel slid his fingers into Ian's hair gripping it tightly in a fist and forcing those brilliant blues to look into his eyes. "One day you will mean it when you call me sir."

Ian leaned forward regardless of Daniel's grip and placed a soft kiss against Daniel's lips, the gentle touch tingled him down to his toes. "Who says I don't mean it now?"

Sighing into the kiss, Daniel used his grip to pull Ian closer returning the embrace with a harder kiss of his own seeking to imprint his touch onto this gorgeous man. What wouldn't he do to keep this man safe in his arms? As the kiss prolonged and their erections rubbed together he decided the answer was nothing. There was nothing he wouldn't do to keep Ian Stiller in his life.

"We have some time before we go." Ian said placing a row of kisses along Daniel's neck and sending chills down his spine. His neck was one of his sensitive spots. He let out a soft sigh as Ian continued to kiss and nibble.

He didn't have time for domination games. He just needed.

Luckily he was still naked and it took little effort to have his lover as naked as himself.

Ian sighed into his mouth when his jeans dropped to the floor. Daniel made a mental note to hide all Ian's baggy jeans and replace them with tight ones that showed off his fine ass.

As easy as it was to remove the baggier version he wanted to be able to see Ian's body when they were out. When they were home he was going to work on keeping the man naked. He spun Ian around and pressed him against the counter. "Damn you're a fine looking man." Daniel said as he kissed his way down Ian's back.

"You're not so shabby yourself." Ian responded.

Daniel smacked him on the ass. "Behave." He knew what he was. Men didn't fall into his bed for his looks; they fell into his bed for the power he could exert over them and how he made them feel. His body was in fine shape and he was a far cry from ugly but he wasn't in Ian's league. There was no denying it, Ian was the picture of masculine beauty and the fact that he had no idea about it just made him that more appealing.

Admiring the strong muscular back, Daniel kissed his way down Ian's firm ass and took a bite of one firm cheek.

"Ow." Ian said but his tone was more amused than angry. "You should've eaten some toast."

"Why eat toast when I can eat you."

He spread Ian's ass to peek at the rosy hole and got a glimpse of heavy balls hanging low. "Lean over lover and grab the bar." He was thrilled when Ian didn't ask questions but did as he asked.

Daniel's mouth watered and he dove for the hole.

Ian let out a cry as Daniel's tongue did wicked things. He'd heard about rimming but he'd never experienced it before. He hoped Daniel enjoyed what he was doing because it felt incredible. He knew he was making incoherent sounds but he couldn't stop the noises coming out of his throat. He gave a whimper when Daniel's tongue stopped moving and he heard the sound of a condom wrapper opening.

Daniel slid in and stilled. Ian whimpered as his lover's arms wrapped around him. "Move."

"I was just waiting for you." The deep voice murmured in his ear.

With Daniel's big hands on his hips and his huge cock hitting him at just the right angle, it didn't take long before Ian's body erupted and he felt Daniel's release inside him. Ian collapsed against the counter taking Daniel with him.

He enjoyed the weight until he couldn't take the granite counter digging into his naked skin any more. "Let me up."

Daniel gave a rich chuckle. Ian let out a cry when Daniel slid out of his body and off of his back.

"Let's go take a shower and get you pierced. You can't imagine how much I love the idea of tugging on your pierced nipple."

Ian shivered at the thought. He liked the idea too. Maybe too much.

After a quick phone call to the tattoo parlor the men dressed and left the condo.

"Good afternoon Mr. Rose, Mr. Stiller." Riley, the doorman, rushed forward to get the door.

"Afternoon, Riley." Daniel greeted.

He gave them both a cheery smile but Ian felt the doorman's eyes on him long after they went through the door.

"The Dragon's Breath is only a few blocks away, let's walk." Ian said.

A limo town car pulled up beside them and a sleek blond woman with sharp features and sharper green eyes stepped out to open the back door.

Daniel gave him a wicked smile. "I don't walk places baby and when you're with me neither do you." His smile turned more professional as the woman approached. "Leena, I want to introduce you to Ian Stiller. You are to make sure a car is always available for him at any time understand."

"Yes, Mr. Rose. How long will he be staying?"

"He'll be staying with me until he dies of old age." Daniel said.

Ian turned to see Daniel giving him one of his Dom looks. Convinced he was putting on an act for the young woman Ian turned to her with a smile. "I've moved in with Daniel."

"Congratulations." She pulled a card from her front pocket and handed it to Ian. "Here is my number, you should program it into your phone so that I can always be reached. If I can't drive you I'll be sure there is someone who can."

Ian took her card reluctantly. "I prefer to drive myself so I doubt I'll be bothering you much."

"Feel free to bother me whenever you want." She said with a smile, her eyes looked Ian up and down like he was a particularly delicious dessert.

Daniel put a possessive arm around Ian. "Like he said it won't be that often."

Ducking into the vehicle, Ian hid his smile. Although he didn't usually like jealous lovers it was flattering that Daniel felt the need to protect what was his.

Chapter Nine

Ian returned to the apartment frustrated and sore. His nipple burned and he was no closer to solving the case than before. None of the people at the tattoo parlor looked like they were capable of moving a full-grown man. Two women and a skinny man were the only employees and if any of them were able to stab a man and move the body he'd eat his gun.

"It wasn't a total waste of time." Daniel said soothingly. The larger man stroked Ian's shoulders in a calming gesture completely wasted on his frustration. "We got you pierced."

"Yes but there is no definite connection between the parlor and the killings. Why didn't you tell me no one there could move a body?"

"I warned you there probably wasn't a connection. I didn't tell you not to bother because I didn't know if they'd hired anyone new." Daniel said with a soft kiss on his lips.

Ian shrugged him off. Inside he knew he shouldn't take out his anger on his lover but frustration with the situation was building. "Men are dying and I can't do anything about it. I'm starting to wonder if the killer will even come after me."

Daniel grabbed Ian by the back of the neck. "I don't want to hear you say that again. Am I scared of some psychotic coming after me? Yes. But if it means you'll be safe then I'll take the chance. I never want to know a killer is hunting you down to get to me."

"Perhaps you forgot the entire reason I'm here." Ian glared at the older man. He'd take a bullet before he let a killer get close to his lover. "I'm here to protect you not be coddled in your fancy condo and keep you company. My assignment is to keep you safe not be treated like a child."

"I have never treated you like a child." Daniel said anger flashing in his eyes. "But I'm also not going to do anything to endanger you."

"That's what I'm here for." Ian looked at his handsome lover, uncomprehending. How could Daniel not understand? "I risk my life all the time in the line of duty. It's what I do. True, I don't usually work as a bodyguard but that doesn't mean I can't do my job. I'm good at what I do. Why can't you trust me to do my job?"

"Trust you?" Daniel grabbed Ian's shirt and pulled him close. "It's not a matter of trusting you. It's a matter of loving you." Daniel's kiss was hot and passionate and full of anger. The Dom released him. "I'm going to the club. Don't worry. I'll make sure someone stays with me the entire time."

Daniel gave him a long look before turning around and walking back out the door.

Ian knew he should stop him but he just didn't have it in him. He was fucking tired. Tired of the roller coaster of emotions that Daniel caused in him. Tired of worrying that someone would hurt his lover. He picked up the phone and called Keith.

"Hey Ian." Keith's voice was strange and sounded like he was crying.

"You okay?"

"Yeah...No."

"What's wrong?" Maybe if he concentrated on someone else's issues he wouldn't fixate on his own.

"It's Gary."

"Is that bastard there again?"

There was a heavy sigh on the phone. "I don't really want to talk about it over the phone. Can I come over?"

Ian figured it would be a while before Daniel came back home. "Sure." He rattled off Daniel's address.

"I'll see you soon." Keith said his voice already sounding more cheerful.

"Yeah, see you."

After alerting security to expect Keith, Ian paced aimlessly around the apartment before realizing he hadn't checked in with Tom recently.

"Hey partner. How is it going?" Tom answered.

Everyone had caller id these days.

"Daniel went to the club, alone."

"I've got your back buddy. There's an undercover sitting outside the club waiting for another delivery."

"Good."

"So dish, how are you doing?"

"We had a fight and we're still not getting any closer to the killer. Keith is going to come over and hang while I mope."

"Is he still fixated on Gary?"

"No, I think he's just lonely."

A banging on the door caught his attention. Still holding the phone against his ear he opened the front door.

"I gotta go Tom, Keith is here."

"Time to listen to him whine?" Tom had never liked Keith. For some reason the two never clicked and Ian never knew why. Some people just instinctively didn't like each other.

Ian laughed, "I think it will be mutual." He said thinking of his own troubles.

He stopped laughing when Keith pulled a gun from his pocket. His usually well-groomed friend was unshaven and rumpled and his blond hair stood on end like he'd run his hands through it. Keith held a finger to his lips warning him not to say anything.

"Hang up the phone." Keith hissed.

Ian swallowed the lump of fear threatening to choke him. "I've gotta. I'll might be late for that barbecue after all."

He closed the phone and hoped to God that Tom remembered their old code.

"Give me the phone."

Ian handed over his cell pleased that his hand didn't shake.

"Good boy. I knew you'd make an amazing submissive." Keith gave him a dazzling smile that chilled Ian to the bone. He had severe doubts he was going to leave this encounter alive. A pang of remorse went through him when he realized the last words he'd had with Daniel were angry ones. He'd never have the chance to tell the Dom that he loved him.

"I tried to warn you away." Keith said waving the gun towards Ian. "But no, you decide to try him anyway. He isn't supposed to have you Ian. I am!" Keith screamed. "That's why I was practicing so hard. To make you mine. Gary was too much of a wimp. He wanted me to hide what I was in public because he couldn't take the fact that a smaller man could be a top, it hurt his masculinity. But I knew you wouldn't be like that. You wouldn't care about how tall a man was as long as he made you fly. I've been practicing a while now trying to get it right."

Keith stepped further into the room and gave Ian a dreamy look that made his skin crawl. This wasn't his friend. This was some psychopath who looked like his friend. Never

in all the years they'd known each other had he ever seen that mad light in Keith's eyes. He'd read that situation all wrong.

Ian was jolted back to the present when Keith stroked his head tenderly. "I'm an excellent Dom now, my sweet. I'll take great care of you. Do you like this condo?"

"Um, yeah?" Ian was thrown by the casual tone in Keith's voice. He wished he hadn't put his gun in the closet. What kind of idiot cop didn't keep his gun on him during the course of duty? He'd gotten lax while staying with Daniel.

"I'll buy you this condo. It will come available as soon as Rose is gone. Hell! I'll buy you the whole building if you want."

"Thanks Keith." Ian said in the most soothing tone he could manage. "But where is Daniel going?"

"He'll have to die of course. Come here Ian." Keith pointed to his feet. "Don't try to run. I've been practicing at the practice range and I'm quite the sharpshooter now. I wanted you to be proud of your Dom."

"Why did you kill all those men?" Ian asked cautiously coming forward.

Keith shrugged. "I was done with them. I made them all fly and I didn't want them telling others I was a Dom."

"You were with Gary for years."

Keith stepped closer. "I knew Gary would never tell, he didn't want others to know he wasn't the Dom in our relationship. Now strip. I want to see everything before we begin our lesson."

* * *

Daniel sat in his favorite corner booth sipping a glass of water. He desperately wanted something stronger but he knew a clear head would be needed when he went back to his lover. He'd come to the club to calm down. Watching the scenes distracted him for a while but he still missed Ian. He'd never had a full time lover and to fight with the love of his life was like a punch in the gut.

Daniel's phone rang. He frowned as the number of his condo security came up.

"Hello."

"Mr. Rose. It's Riley I hate to interrupt you but I thought you should know that some cops showed up and are breaking into your condo right now. They said Mr. Stiller is in danger. I didn't know I wasn't supposed to let Mr. "

"I'm coming right now."

Daniel raced through the club not bothering to get his shirt on the way out. The thought that his last words to Ian were a fight ran through his film like a repeating reel. Leena was waiting by the car when he ran outside. "Get to the condo as fast as you can. Ian's in danger."

He didn't wait for her to open the door but ripped it open and jumped inside. The car tires squealed as the town car took off.

They arrived at the condo within minutes. Daniel barely waited for the car to stop before he jumped out of the vehicle and ran for the front door.

"They went up about five minutes ago sir. I didn't want to stop them if Mr. Stiller was in danger. He said the man was his friend." Riley wrung his hands.

"Don't worry Riley your job is safe. Stay here." Daniel said. He brushed past the doorman and straight to the elevator. It took two tries to get his shaking hands to put in the key and turn it to access his floor. What followed was the longest elevator ride of his life.

When the elevator stopped Daniel saw two men who he vaguely recognized as the detectives on the case and Daniel's partner Tom.

His frantic gaze caught sight of Keith lying in a puddle of blood in his entryway.

"Ian!" Daniel shouted. The trio turned towards him.

"You can't come in here Mr. Rose." Detective Gomez said.

"Fuck that. Where's Ian?"

"He's gone." Detective Gomez said, his eyes serious as death.

Spots formed before Daniel's eyes.

"Fuck, he's going to faint." He heard Tom say. "Couldn't you be a little more sensitive?"

"What, I didn't know they were really involved."

Daniel felt a hand grab each of his arms and drag him to the couch.

"Put your head between your knees and take slow even breaths."

His beautiful Ian was gone. That was the only thought circling Daniel's head as he took slow breaths.

"He's at the hospital. Keith shot him in the chest."

"He's alive!" Daniel was almost afraid to hope.

Another man sat beside him. "You may not remember me but I'm Detective Harris the idiot over there is my partner. We think we got to Detective Stiller right after the shooting so he has an excellent chance of making it. He didn't have the opportunity to lose too much blood. They took him to St. Anthony Hospital on Madison, so if you go there I'm sure you can at least find out how he is doing."

"I'm not officially his partner." Daniel said. "They won't tell me crap." Then he remembered. "I'll call his sister on the way. They'll be able to tell her everything."

Daniel scanned the apartment and saw Ian's phone on the counter. He snatched it up and turned to see the three men staring at him. "What?"

"You really love him don't you?" Tom said, his eyes dark with sympathy.

"You know how they always talk about finding that special someone?" Daniel asked.

"Yeah."

"He's my someone."

Daniel walked out of the condo without another look at the detectives or the dead body in his foyer. It didn't matter. Nothing mattered if Ian didn't make it.

Leena was waiting for him when he came out.

"How is he?"

"At St. Anthony's. Drive me there while I call his sister."

Daniel slid into the car and scanned Ian's list of contacts. He was a little amused to see the number of male phone numbers, which unless they were related by blood were accidentally going to be erased. Finally he ran across Helen's name. With only a moment of remorse for upsetting a pregnant woman, Ian pressed the call button.

"Hey Ian, I was just thinking about you." A feminine voice answered.

"This isn't Ian, it's Daniel Rose."

"Oh my God something happened to Ian."

"He's been shot. I'm on my way to St. Anthony's but without a family member..."

“They won’t tell you shit. I’m on my way.” She hung up leaving Daniel clutching the phone as a lifeline. The divider in the town car slid down.

Leena looked at him through the divider. “I’m sure he’ll be fine.”

“Of course he will.” Daniel said. Ian had to get better. The world was a dark, unfriendly place without his lover in it.

Chapter Ten

The incessant beeping was getting on Ian's nerves. Why didn't anyone turn it off? Someone kept muttering in his ear and it took a few minutes before the sound created words to his foggy mind.

"Come on baby. You've got to wake up. I want to see your beautiful blue eyes again. You're not going to let that asshole Keith win, are you?"

Daniel's voice sounded odd. The rough sexy tone was more desperate and pleading than hot and melty.

"Daniel, why don't you go home? You've been here for three days. If he wakes up I'll call."

Why was Helen there? And why was the bed so hard?

"No! I'm not leaving until he wakes up." Daniel's voice took on a familiar hard edge.

Ian tried to speak and tell Daniel to be nicer to his sister but his throat was too dry and he couldn't push any sound through it. He licked his lips.

"Did you see that?" Daniel asked excitement rising in his voice.

"Give him an ice chip." Helen said.

Cold ice touched his lips. It took all of his effort to open his lips to accept the ice. The frozen pieces felt amazing in his desert dry mouth.

"Be nice." He whispered.

Daniel laughed. The laughter sounded tinged with hysteria. "I swear baby, if you open those eyes I'll be the nicest brother-in-law ever. Just wake up."

Brother-in-law?

Shock had Ian opening his eyes.

His usually smooth lover looked rumpled and his eyes had bags big enough to put a steamer trunk in.

Jesus he hurt.

"Are you okay?" He managed to say through his parched throat. Surely something horrible must have happened to his lover to make him look that crappy.

"Am I okay?" Daniel rubbed his eyes with the palms of his hands. "He's shot and unconscious in the hospital for three days and his first question is whether I'm okay."

Helen leaned over and placed a soft kiss on Ian's forehead. "Daniel's had it rough. You were shot and we weren't sure you were going to make it. I don't think he's slept since."

"Keith?"

"The fucker's dead." Daniel said in a low mean voice. "Good thing too because if he wasn't I would've killed him."

"Am I all right?" Surely this amount of pain wasn't normal?

"You're fine. Or you will be." Helen said brushing back his hair from his face. "The cops got there in plenty of time and Keith missed all the important body parts."

"Hurts like hell."

"I know baby." Daniel stroked Ian's head. "I'm sorry we fought and I'm sorry you got hurt. But I love you and I want us to work things out. You concentrate on getting better and I'll concentrate on not being such a controlling asshole."

Ian couldn't stop the smile that spread across his face even if it did crack his parched lips. "I love you too."

Daniel lifted Ian's hand and kissed the back of it. "I know you love being a cop but don't ever do that to me again."

"I'll try not to."

"Good. When you're up and able we're going to get married in whatever state is currently allowing gays to marry and I'm going to give you half of everything I own."

Ian shook his head.

"Yes I am because then if you try to divorce me I can make it an ugly drawn out affair until I convince you not to leave. Besides it's not good for the baby to have divorced uncles I hear it causes undue trauma."

Helen giggled behind him.

"Well I guess we'll have to stay together for the children." Ian said with a smile.

"I guess we will." Daniel turned to look at Ian's sister. "Did you bring the box?"

"Yes. I was hoping you'd need it."

Helen handed a small black box to Daniel. "I'm not going to ask you to marry me because that gives you the opportunity to say no." He opened the ring box and revealed a gorgeous man's ring made of wide band that looked like twisted rope along the edges. Inside the lines was the imprint of a vine of roses. Between each rose was a small square diamond.

"When did you have this made?"

Daniel gave him a sweet smile totally at odds from the usual expression he got from the extremely testosterone laden man. "I put in the order the day after you came and got Keith."

"We weren't even seeing each other." Ian said.

"I knew we would be." Daniel said sliding the ring on Ian's finger and gave a pleased smile when it fit perfectly. "I always get what I want and I never wanted anything like I want you. There was no doubt in my mind we would be together." Daniel said rubbing his thumb over the ring now on Ian's hand. "It was just a matter of how long it would take. My mother sends her regards. She says she wants to plan our wedding. I told her she could do anything she wanted as long as you were mine. She liked her flowers, she said you were a good influence."

"You're a pushy bastard." Ian said.

"Yeah, but I'm your pushy bastard." Daniel said placing a soft kiss on Ian's lips. "And always will be."

The End

For more information on other Amber Kell Books check out her blog at
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