

Any Excuse



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By Acer Adamson

"I could just as easily go to the salon across the street," Skyler said, the slightest hint of a smile on his face.

"Don't be silly." Max painted another stripe of red lacquer onto Skyler's left thumbnail, careful to avoid jarring the nasty bruise on that slender, delicate hand. "I really don't mind helping out." *Any excuse to be this close to you is a good enough one for me.*

Skyler clucked his tongue, shook his head and sighed. "So terribly clumsy of me, to trip up the stairs like that."

"At least your hand is only badly bruised." Max smiled at Skyler. "It could have been a lot worse." *Scared the shit out of me anyway.*

When Max was between brushstrokes, Skyler slid his chair a little closer to Max's and their knees bumped under the table. Max's face felt instantly warm. Skyler smiled at him.

Jesus, you're beautiful. Max ran his eyes over Skyler surreptitiously, the same way he did with a suspect in custody before an interrogation. Quickly and nonchalantly, a speedy assessment of little details and subtle nuances only detective-types seemed to notice.

Skyler's shiny, jet-black hair was tucked tidily behind his ears, the center part neat as always. His makeup was subtle, perfectly applied: green eyes warmly highlighted, a rosy glow to his cheeks, the barest hint of something wine-colored on his lips. There was no foundation, but then Skyler didn't need it. Max still couldn't get over that amazingly smooth and flawless complexion. He'd thought for sure that Skyler was a chick when they first met, simply based on that. Skyler was one of the lucky ones who

didn't have to shave, and unlike most men Skyler didn't have pores you could drive a truck through. With that skin, that face, the graceful manner and feminine clothes, Max had been utterly convinced.

It had taken Skyler putting Max's hand between his legs that first night when they were dancing to convince Max otherwise. *That* had been a real kick in the pants. Sometimes Max still found it hard to believe.

And how Max had ended up like this—more or less domesticated, sitting at a kitchen table in the rear of a dress shop polishing his boyfriend's nails—well, sometimes he found that sort of thing hard to believe, too.

Boyfriend. It hadn't really been in his plans to fall in love with another guy, but here he was anyway. Max blew out a small, quick breath and dipped the brush in the little bottle.

"You're awfully good at this, Maxwell." Skyler gazed down at the table, watching Max work. "If I didn't know better, I would think you've had some experience."

"What do you mean, know better?" Max swiped another stroke of Revlon Firecracker Red onto one of Skyler's nails. "Had a girlfriend with really long nails once. She used to like me to polish them."

Wait for it...

Wait for it...

"Oh, she did, did she?"

"Uh huh." Max grinned, getting a little charge out of Skyler showing a jealous streak. He didn't have to look up from his work to know Skyler's left eyebrow was arched.

Skyler's right elbow went on the kitchen table. He propped his chin on the back of his hand, taking obvious care not to smudge his wet nails. Smiling just a bit too cheerfully, Skyler asked, "This was back when you still thought you were heterosexual?"

Max chuckled and finished Skyler's ring finger, pausing a second before moving on to his pinky.

"No," said Max. "That was back when I *knew* I was heterosexual."

"Oh, of course." Skyler smiled sweetly.

Max was pretty sure Skyler didn't buy that for a second. He was also fairly certain Skyler wasn't done grilling him about the chick yet. Max quietly cleared his throat and kept on working, fighting to suppress a grin.

"So, Maxwell," Skyler said right on cue. "What was she like? This well-manicured girlfriend of yours?"

Max finished polishing Skyler's pinky and screwed the cap on the bottle. He carefully picked up Skyler's hand to spray each nail with some of that canned, quick-dry stuff Max had initially thought was hairspray. Then, for good measure he started blowing gently on each nail. "She's a knockout, a real looker. Tall, blonde, leggy, nicest set of tits you'd ever want to see." Max flicked his gaze up to Skyler's face momentarily before taking Skyler's other hand and resuming his blow-drying. The grin finally tugged at the corners of Max's mouth, but he managed to resist and stopped it from spreading. "Nice gal; it just wasn't the right time." *Or the right person.* Max pursed his lips and blew on another nail. "Still see her every now and again. She lives not too far from the station."

Skyler put his good hand on the table and freshly polished, sparkly red nails began drumming on the Formica. Those green, pussycat eyes were wide and the smile

looked decidedly forced.

Click-click-click-click. "You're still *seeing* her?"

Max glanced up again. Jesus, Skyler really looked pissed, but in a controlled sort of way that was actually kind of scary. "Well, I see her around occasionally," Max said, "but I'm not *seeing her*, seeing her. Not right now, anyway." Max put a hand lightly on Skyler's back, and he felt Skyler stiffen.

Those slender, red-nailed fingers resumed their irritated drumming on the table. "You say that like there's a possibility of your former intimacy with her resuming." Skyler's smile wavered, bottom lip quivering so briefly that only highly trained eyes like Max's would've notice.

Uh oh.

"Hey," Max said, tilting Skyler's chin up with a finger. Those wide green eyes peered up from under thick black lashes and the look in them made Max shiver. Jesus. "Not gonna happen, Sky."

That bottom lip quivered again. "But—"

"No buts." Max cupped Skyler's chin, thumb stroking slowly across that trembling bottom lip, and for the hundredth time Max was amazed that no color came off on his own skin. He still hadn't figured that one out, but then Skyler Trent was more complicated and layered in mystery than any woman Max had ever known. "I'm with *you*, and I'm not going anywhere."

Skyler breathed out a shaky sigh. He turned to face Max, hands coming to rest gingerly on Max's thighs. Skyler's eyes met Max's and it made Max cringe to see the hurt.

Shit.

"I'm sorry, Maxwell," Skyler said after taking a deep breath, "but when things like this come up, I can't help but get confused. I can't understand how you could be attracted to someone like *her*, and then someone like me. People simply don't go to sleep one night straight and wake up gay the next morning. It frightens me to think this is merely a phase. That I'm just a novelty."

Aw, fuck, so that's what's eating him. Max shrugged. "I guess I've always been gay; I was just too confused and too scared to let myself even think about it. I grew up in a conservative household in a family full of cops. You just didn't come out and say, 'Hey, by the way, I'm queer.' And I guess it didn't seem important enough for me to deal with until I met you. So, no. You're not a novelty, Sky, you're just the first man I met who *made* it seem important. It's not that I'm suddenly gay for you, it just never really mattered before."

The quivering lip stilled and Skyler smiled, his expression now warm and genuine. Just another of Skyler's many mysteries—the speed with which his fleeting annoyance always dissipated even when Max knew it was rightly deserved.

Skyler stood and stepped away from the table, offering his uninjured hand to Max. "I think I'd like you in the bedroom right now," said Skyler in that purring tone that always went straight to Max's dick.

When they got to the bedroom, Max toed off his sneakers and socks, leaving them in a trail behind him as he walked Skyler toward the bed. His fingers went to work on the sash of Skyler's robe. It wasn't tied tightly like it normally would be, no doubt because of Skyler's injury. The knot pulled out easily, peacock blue satin parting slightly

then falling closed again. He only got a brief glimpse of Skyler's skin, but damn.

Skyler sat down slowly on the edge of the bed and looked up at Max, the robe parting again. Even though all Max could see was a narrow strip of Skyler's chest, it was enough to send all the blood remaining in his brain rushing toward its inevitable southern destination. Max swallowed, and suddenly the crotch area of his jeans seemed ridiculously tight. Skyler touched him there and Max gasped.

"Wh-what about your hand?"

Skyler gave Max's bulge a little squeeze and smiled pleasantly up at him. "I don't need both hands to do this." A fingertip dragged down the rapidly hardening length of Max's erection under the denim. Max shivered and it made his dick twitch. Skyler made a pleased little noise and gave a squeeze.

"Oh, God," Max moaned, afraid—and not for the first time since he'd been with Skyler—that he might blow his load right there in his pants. Jesus, Skyler knew just what Max's hot buttons were, and when and how to press them. "You'll mess up your n-nail polish."

"You can polish them again later," Skyler said, and using the fingers of his uninjured hand, undid the top button of Max's jeans.

Max felt his belly tighten up in knots, his balls trying to climb inside his body.

Skyler took his hand away, and with a shrug of his shoulders lost the robe. It slid off and puddled around that fine, fine ass, exposing him fully. Like Max, Skyler was already hard, that gorgeous, slender cock jutting up.

Max tried to think of unpleasant things to keep from embarrassing himself. He looked down and saw a dark blue wet spot fanning out on the front of his jeans. Served

him right for going commando.

"My goodness," Skyler said, licking his lips. "I suppose I had better not waste any time." He took the zipper tab between the thumb and forefinger of his uninjured hand, and lowered it slowly.

Max moaned, and he grabbed onto the bed's corner post with one hand in case his knees decided to give out. He blinked his eyes, swallowed hard, and looked down at Skyler again. "Not gonna take much," was all Max could croak out past the knot in his throat and the big, clumsy dry thing his tongue had become.

"Mmm, look at that," Skyler crooned, licking those damn pretty lips again as he lifted Max's dick from the confines of the jeans. Those amazing green eyes flicked up, and then that soft, wet tongue came out and licked the head of Max's dick.

"Oh God, Sky," Max groaned, grateful he was gripping the bedpost because his knees truly felt like they'd turned to warm jelly. He dropped his other hand to Skyler's head, fingers twisting in that soft, black bob. Skyler made a quiet little gasp, and then Max felt his cock slide into the wettest, softest, warmest mouth ever known to mortal man. He felt Skyler's fingers circle the base of his cock, giving a slow, firm squeeze. Max moaned loudly, muscles twitching wildly in his ever-weakening thighs.

It was over quickly from there, Skyler sucking him, licking him, squeezing him until he couldn't hold back another second. Skyler's pretty, wine-colored lips closed tightly around the head of Max's cock, sending him up onto his toes as Skyler drank down every last forceful spurt unloaded. Max collapsed onto the bed awkwardly, his jeans still trapped around the tight muscles of his thighs.

Skyler lay back with him and rolled onto his side, watching Max, sliding his own

rock-hard cock lazily through his fist.

Between ragged breaths, Max said, "Want me to...you need a little help there?" Max slid a hand along Skyler's smooth, flat belly, pausing to let his fingers toy with neatly trimmed, soft black curls.

Skyler sighed and shook his head. "No," he said, and shuddered a little, his good hand quickening on his cock. "Just tell me what you want to do with me once my hand feels better."

"Oh," Max said with a grin and a chuckle, moving one hand to rest and knead on Skyler's hip, the other dropping down to absently play with his own softening erection. "Now, that's the easiest question you've asked me so far today."

"Well?" Skyler scooted a little closer, close enough that when his fist made an upstroke, the firm head of his cock bumped Max's stomach.

Max didn't hesitate. "I want you naked, laid out for me on the bed, just like this, stroking yourself when I come into the room, getting yourself hard and ready for me." He saw Skyler's long eyelashes flutter, heard Skyler's breath hitch, felt the warm head of Skyler's dick thump against his belly with increasing speed and force.

Skyler's lips parted on a sharp little gasp, his next words quiet, breathy. "You like to watch me touch myself?"

"Oh, yeah," Max said, his hand on Skyler's hip caressing appreciatively. "So, I'll stand there in front of the bed, just between your feet, watching you while I get undressed. I'll climb on top of you, cover your sweet little body with mine, kiss you so hard you won't be able to breathe, and—"

"Maxwell," Skyler whimpered, and the underlying tremor in that silky-soft voice

sent a pleasant twinge through Max's balls. Max palmed himself, contemplating the unfairness of males losing the power of rapid erection recovery at such a uselessly early age. The brief, reminiscing reverie broke when Skyler locked that merciless, green-eyed gaze on Max and said he was about to come.

* * * *

"You need any help in there?" Max tilted his head to the left, chin up, and dragged the five-bladed razor up his neck. He shifted his gaze in the bathroom mirror to catch Skyler's silhouette on the fogged-up shower door.

"No, I'm managing," called Skyler over the noise of the water. "You had better hurry though, or you'll be late. And don't forget, I'll have to meet you at the banquet; I have a fitting with a client in an hour, but it shouldn't take very long. I tried to put her off, but she's only in town for the evening. It will only take me a few minutes, so I should be there in plenty of time for the awards ceremony." The water went silent. Skyler slid open the shower door and stepped out, grabbing a towel from the rack.

Max stopped shaving mid-stroke, eyes admiring Skyler's reflection. He smiled. "How about we skip this shindig altogether and just stay home? I mean here?"

"No, you meant home," Skyler said matter-of-factly, dabbing himself dry with the towel. "I don't understand why you insist on keeping that drab little apartment of yours since you're always here anyway. Can you even remember the last time you slept there?"

"Sure, I remember." Max made a scoffing sound and resumed shaving. "It was last...no...okay, I remember, it was...wait, I think it was..." He shook a blob of shaving cream off the razor into the sink. "No."

"Maxwell, why don't you just move in with me? I already told you it doesn't have to mean any sort of commitment or anything, if that's what you're worried about." Skyler finished drying off, carefully refolding the towel before hanging it on the rack. He stood next to Max at the mirror, in front of the other sink.

Max slid a sideways glance at Skyler and smiled. "I wish I could figure out how you do that."

"Do what?" Skyler gave Max a puzzled look, and grabbed his toothbrush from a cat-shaped cozy on the counter.

"Look so damn good all the time." Max handed Skyler the toothpaste, some purple gel kind of stuff with little sparkly things in it that Max would never think to buy on his own. He was a classic Colgate man himself, maybe Crest, or even that tri-colored Aim junk if he were feeling particularly adventuresome.

Skyler squeezed a ribbon of sparkly paste onto his toothbrush. "I'll never tell. I wouldn't want to spoil the mystery of my allure for you. It keeps you on your toes." Skyler grinned impishly at Max and commenced brushing his teeth.

"Smartass."

"Mhm." Skyler finished brushing his teeth and started fussing with his hair.

Max checked his own hair in the mirror. Damn, he felt like he needed a trim, but Skyler had convinced him to let it grow out a little. Max was a plainclothes detective working mostly undercover, so he didn't have to adhere to any sort of strict code of personal grooming. That was Skyler's rationale, anyway. Theoretically, Max could let his hair grow down to his ass if he wanted to, but that was unlikely to happen. After years of having a regulation buzz-cut, his hair was now barely touching his collar and already

bugging the crap out of him.

But Skyler said he loved it. He said it felt nice to play with the tendrils on Max's neck when they danced, said it was fun to twist those soft brown locks through his fingers while Max was sucking his cock.

Boy, was *that* an image.

Max looked down at his crotch. *Fine time for you to finally wake up again, buddy*, he thought as his dick came back to life. He shook his head, laughing at himself, and met his own brown eyes in the mirror. Max had to admit he looked pretty damn good these days, in the best shape of his life at thirty-three. He also had to admit his longer hair looked nice, and if Skyler liked it...well, that was reason enough for Max.

"Yes, I'm a smartass," Skyler said, freshening his lipstick, "and, no, I'm not letting you off the hook. Move in with me. It's silly to continue paying rent on a place you never use." Skyler exchanged the lipstick for a compact of peachy blush and started dusting it onto his cheeks. "Unless you need it for noonday trysts with your nail polish girlfriend who lives near the station."

"Oh, Jesus," Max groaned, shoulders sagging, chin dropping to his chest. "That's playing dirty, Skyler. What if I like having someplace private to go after a really lousy day, and I don't want to drag my crap home to you? You've seen what I can be like after a rough one."

Skyler set the compact down and turned to Max. "Yes, I have. I've also seen how dramatically your mood improves the instant you walk through my door." With an impatient sigh, Skyler slipped his arms around Max's waist and pulled him close. He looked up and snared Max's gaze. "I know you're not having an affair with an old

girlfriend. I know you need privacy sometimes, and I can deal with that. More than half the basement in this big old house is unused. We'll build you a den, a gym, a billiard room or whatever...I just want you here with me. I don't care if you're cranky."

Max smiled and raised an eyebrow. "The 'no commitment' stuff was bullshit, right?"

Grinning, Skyler said, "Sounded good, though, didn't it?" Skyler tiptoed and gave Max a quick kiss on the mouth. "I have to get ready for my client, and you need to get ready to go accept your award. I'll be there well before the ceremony, and I might even make it for dinner if I'm lucky and don't have too much problem hailing a cab." Skyler turned to leave, but Max caught him by the arm.

"What are you wearing?"

Skyler looked contemplatively toward the ceiling. "Basic black, I think," he said with a mysterious smile. "Something tailored yet sexy. Sophisticated but not *too* understated. Classic and classy."

Max's cheerful disposition suddenly fell away. "Skyler, I'm really kind of nerv—"

"I know, Maxwell. I know what a huge step this is for you. Believe me; I'm scared, too. But *you* can't keep hiding, and *I* can't change what I am. We'll be fine." He chuckled lightly and gave Max another quick kiss. "No punching anyone this time. We don't want a repeat of that fiasco at the station from a while back."

Max vehemently shook his head. "No way," he said, looking over his shoulder at the spot where the beer bottle had gashed him in the subsequent bar brawl. "I learned my lesson. I swear—no more caveman behavior. If someone says something offensive, I'll simply walk away. I promise."

"I'm going to hold you to that," Skyler said as he left the room.

Smiling and shaking his head, Max went back to the mirror, knowing full well Skyler remained unconvinced.

* * * *

The last time Max had been to the Downtown Hyatt Regency it had been for a similar function. Only, that time he hadn't been the one receiving an award and he'd gotten very, very drunk. He didn't remember much of the affair, and the parts his fellow cops had relayed to him later, he'd just as soon forget. Max had promised to behave himself this time since he was the honoree, but under the circumstances it wasn't proving easy.

Max took another sip of his Jack and Coke and checked his watch again. Forty minutes and two drinks in, he was a little more relaxed but still quite nervous. He sat at a large round table at the front of the room, alongside the city's top brass. The chief of police, the head of the fire department, the mayor, and a bunch of politicians he recognized from here and there but couldn't recall their names, were all acting like Max was suddenly their best friend.

He smiled politely as yet another of the nameless many passed by to slap him on the back and say, "Congratulations, Fielding." Max took another long drink, another glance at his watch, nearly choking on the former when a deep, gruff voice spoke to him from behind.

"Whatsamatter, Fielding? Cinderella late for the ball?"

Oh, no. Oh, *fuck* no. Max closed his eyes, took a deep breath in and thought of pleasant things, enhancing his calm or however the hell it was Skyler put it whenever

Max seemed about to explode. He blew the breath out, downed the rest of his drink, got up slowly from his seat and turned around to see which asshole was starting shit with him already.

Could've knocked him over with a feather, and Max had never in his life felt his legs go quite that rubbery. He blinked at the man in the impeccably tailored three-piece suit. Skyler had said he was going to wear black, but Max had assumed spike heels, silk stockings, and a cocktail dress would be involved. Max blinked again, hardly able to believe his eyes.

Skyler looked stunning, but he didn't look much like Skyler. No makeup, none at all, and his hair was slicked back with no part and secured in a neat ponytail at the nape of his neck. That slim body in that expensive designer suit made Skyler look like he'd stepped off a modeling runway in Paris or the cover of a fashion magazine. Max thought Skyler looked surprisingly...well, masculine, a word Max would've never before thought to utter in the same sentence with Skyler's name.

"Are you going to offer me a seat," Skyler asked quietly, voice back to normal again, "or are you simply going to stand there and gawk at me all night?"

"Oh." Max stared dumbly for another few seconds. "Oh! Shit! Sure..." Max scrambled out of his seat to pull out the adjacent chair for Skyler and held it as he would for a lady.

Skyler smiled at him and sat, letting Max scoot him and the chair up to the table. "Thank you, Maxwell."

Max felt like his tongue was ten sizes too big for his mouth, so he just nodded as he returned to his own seat.

One of the men across from Max at the table cleared his throat. "You gonna introduce your guest, Maxie?"

Oh God, this night is never going to end. Max stood. "Everyone, if I could have your attention." Conversation stopped, not just at his table but also at the ones immediately surrounding. Max swallowed hard, certain that whatever came out of his mouth next was sure to be a monumental mistake, regardless of what it was. He took a deep breath, wished his knees would stop knocking, and gestured toward Skyler. "I'd like to introduce you all to Skyler Trent." Max paused and swallowed again. "My boyfriend."

* * * *

Bent over the men's room sink, Max cupped his hands and splashed cold water on his face, catching Skyler's image in the mirror when he straightened up.

"Are you all right?"

Max nodded, looking around for something to dry off with. Like most these days, this restroom only had one of those automatic blow-dryer contraptions, and damn if he was going to make an ass of himself by sticking his face under that.

Skyler reached under his suit jacket and extracted a handkerchief from the inside breast pocket. He handed it to Max.

Max took it and dabbed his face. "Yeah," he said with a nod and sharp sigh. "Yeah. Better to get it over with, right? I mean, this isn't the military we're talking about here. It's not like they can fire me." He chuckled cynically and stuffed the damp hanky into his coat pocket. "They can make my life a fucking miserable *hell* from now on, but they can't fire me."

"Why'd you do it, Maxwell?"

"Why'd you show up here looking like *that*?" Max leaned back against the sink, arms crossing over his chest in a tight hug.

Skyler scanned the room.

Max followed his gaze. They were alone. Max looked at Skyler and cocked an eyebrow. "Well?"

"Because I love you. I thought it would make things easier for you."

"Same here."

Skyler smiled. "Did it?"

"Did it what?"

Skyler rolled his eyes. "Make things easier?"

"Oh, hell no," Max said, snorting a laugh. "I think they'd gotten sort of used to me being with a guy who looks more like a woman than most women do these days. Honestly, I think some of them had kind of forgotten, and maybe some of them didn't even realize it in the first place. It's not like I advertised, you know? Now, with you showing up looking like that and me making my little announcement—well, now there's no doubt. Detective Maxwell Fielding is a bona fide, dyed-in-the-wool homo and now everybody knows it."

Skyler laughed. "Yes, but you're *my* homo." He made a show of peering around the room again as if to make certain they were alone as he closed the small distance between them. Apparently satisfied, Skyler kissed Max, teasing just a little with his tongue. "In honor of this momentous occasion, we should do something stereotypically homosexual and screw in one of these bathroom stalls."

Feigning shock, Max grabbed the lapels of Skyler's expensive black jacket. "Oh, so now that you're wearing pants you think you're the one in charge?"

"I have been all along," Skyler said as Max tugged him closer. "I've just been very careful not to let you notice."

"Is that so?" Max leaned in to kiss Skyler's lips, really paying attention to how they tasted without lipstick. Still just as supple, moist, and sweet, and somehow that translated to Max's cock going hard inside his slacks. He licked his own lips and looked into Skyler's eyes. "Maybe I should take you up on your suggestion. Maybe we *should* get it on in here."

Skyler grinned. "And maybe you should get a grip on reality, Detective. You have an award to collect, and I don't think you want to take the stage in front of the 'Who's Who' of our fair city with an obvious boner in your pants."

Max let go of Skyler's jacket and burst out laughing. "Boner? I've never heard such gutter-talk come out of your mouth before, Skyler Allen Trent. I'm shocked."

"It's the pants," Skyler said. "They make me feel so butch. I have this sudden urge to spit, scratch my balls, and rattle off random baseball statistics." "I love you." Max gave Skyler a quick kiss on the cheek and took his hand.

"I know," Skyler said as he was pulled along.

* * * *

You could have heard a pin drop in the cavernous ballroom once the applause died down after the police chief introduced Max. The chief told the story of how Max saved a young kidnap victim through tireless hours and dogged detective work, and then Chief handed Max the award plaque signed by the mayor himself.

Max stood center stage behind the wooden lectern and adjusted the microphone, waiting for the news crews to get the damn cameras out of his face. He felt like his cheeks must've been six shades of red, and he had a big lump in his throat. Finding Skyler, Max focused on him and took a deep breath.

"I'm not very good at making speeches," Max said, backing away from the mic when his voice sounded far too loud and feedback squealed through the speakers. He chuckled sheepishly and felt more warmth rise to his cheeks. "Sorry. Didn't mean to blast your eardrums out. Anyway, I just want to thank everyone for bestowing this honor on me, but I don't deserve sole credit. A lot of police hours went into this case, and I'll be the first to admit that a fair amount of luck was involved. But thank you; this means a lot to me." Feeling braver, Max looked away from Skyler and scanned the rest of the crowd. All eyes were on him, a sea of faces. He thought of simply saying thanks again and leaving it at that, but he felt like he needed to clear the air publicly, once and for all.

"I guess the news has traveled around the room by now, for people who didn't already know or hadn't figured it out on their own. I'm a cop—a damn good one—and I'm gay. If that's a problem for anybody, well, that's your problem, not mine. I'm the same old Max I've always been; I'm just a hell of a lot happier now that I've come to terms with myself. I'm not going to apologize for who or what I am, and I'm tired of being secretive about the person who means the most to me." Max found Skyler again and smiled at him. "Ladies and gentleman, I'd like to introduce all of you to Mr. Skyler Trent: my lover, my partner, my life. This man makes me happy, and that's made me a better person *and* a better cop."

Skyler blew Max a quick kiss, and as sweat beaded on Max's upper lip,

something rather unexpected happened. In the center of the room, one man rose to his feet and began applauding. To Max's absolute amazement, it was Bill Reynolds—the puny, obnoxious desk sergeant whom Max had decked those months ago for having made a disparaging remark about Skyler.

When Max smiled and nodded acknowledgment to the man, the entire room broke out in applause.

* * * *

Max latched the deadbolt and locked them in for the night, chuckling as he followed Skyler to the bedroom. He would've thought that expensive designer suit was made of flames or poison ivy for the speed at which Skyler was shedding it piece by piece. By the time they reached the bedroom, Skyler was down to a pair of black silk boxers, everything else tossed onto Skyler's overstuffed reading chair in a heap.

Leaning against the doorway, Max watched as Skyler went to the dresser and yanked open the drawer Max knew stored Skyler's more frilly unmentionables. "Feel better?"

"Almost," Skyler said, rooting through the drawer until he apparently found something suitable. He turned around and held up for Max's approval a pair of ladies pale pink, boy-cut panties with darker pink lace around the edges. "Good?"

Max chuckled and entered the room, shedding his own monkey suit. "You'd look good in a gunny sack. Whatever's comfortable for you is fine with me."

Skyler smiled, skinning the boxers off and replacing them with the lacy pink lingerie. "I was afraid you might prefer the men's clothing on me."

"Well, I can't lie—I thought you looked incredible tonight." Max moved up to

Skyler, hands dropping to Skyler's hips, fingers stroking bare skin and soft lace. "You looked so handsome, so sexy and masculine, but..." Max leaned in and nibbled on Skyler's neck. "But that wasn't my Skyler." Max slid his hands around to cup Skyler's firm ass, palming the silky material of those sexy little panties. "I love you for doing that for me, but don't feel like you ever have to do it again. Not unless it's because *you* want to. I'm done with hiding, Sky, and that includes the way you dress. It turns me on when you get all dolled up for me. *Fuck* them if they can't handle it."

Skyler skimmed the back of one hand down Max's chest until he arrived at Max's package. Max flexed his stiffening cock in Skyler's hand and Skyler giggled.

"Is that your pistol or are you just happy to see me, Detective?" Skyler smiled coquettishly, and Max thought briefly that he couldn't wait to see color on those perfect lips again, to put shiny polish back on those nails.

Max grabbed Skyler's slender wrists, mindful of the injured hand, and walked him slowly backward toward the bed. "You are under arrest. You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be—"

Skyler laughed and fell back onto the mattress, pulling Max down with him. "It's so good to have you home."

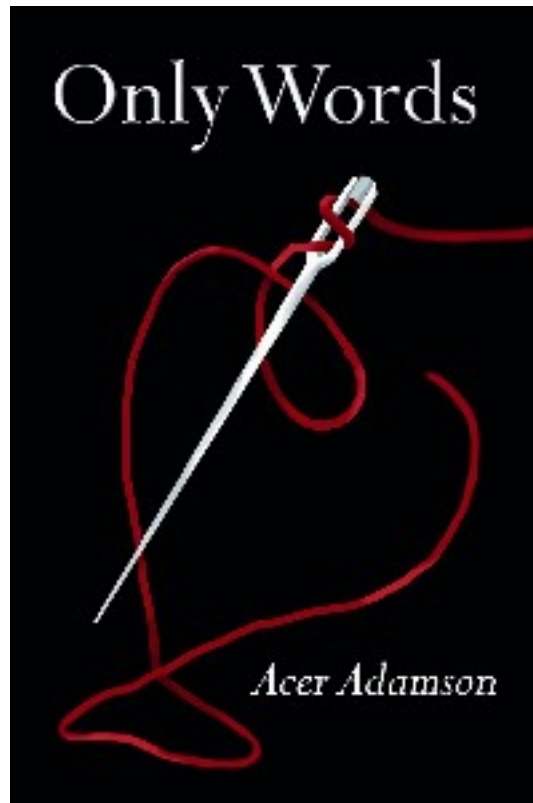
Max couldn't argue with that.

The End

ABOUT ACER ADAMSON

Acer Adamson lives in a small New England town with his partner and their growing menagerie of cats and freshwater fish. Along with his partner, Acer enjoys writing, watching movies, and is shamefully fond of competitive reality shows such as America's Top Model, Project Runway, and Top Chef. Acer writes less fluffy gay urban fantasy, horror, and sci-fi novels under another awesome pseudonym. For more fascinating information like this, please visit Acer at his [LiveJournal](#).

If you enjoyed ANY EXCUSE, you might also enjoy:



ONLY WORDS

by Acer Adamson

Maxwell Fielding is a police detective. Gruff, stubborn, and a little blind to subtlety, Max is the perfect poster boy for stereotypical masculinity. Used to dealing with the dregs of society, he never backs down from a fight, but his attitude is a reckless one.

Max's lover, Skyler Trent, is a dress designer who happens to be a cross-dresser and the polar opposite of Max. When a rough day on the job sets the stage for disaster, Max's quick temper and a need to play knight in shining armor makes a bad situation even worse. After a very observant Skyler patches Max up, both are forced to face some less visible wounds that are just as in need of healing. Max needs to find the courage to admit a few things to Skyler-and to himself-or he might lose everything.

Warnings: This title contains graphic language, m/m sex and contains a cross-dressing character.

Excerpt From ONLY WORDS:

I'm a fucking dead man.

Max closed his eyes and shook his head, and when he looked toward the lobby again he didn't see Skyler there. He was just about to thank his lucky stars for hangover-induced hallucinations when the desk sergeant came bursting through the door.

"Fielding! You got a visitor." The short, wiry man grinned like the fucking Cheshire cat.

Max winced. He'd had never liked the puny little bastard-the guy was a worse gossip than a goddamn woman-and Max didn't trust the prick any further than he could be thrown. "Yeah, Sarge?"

"Yeah."

"Well?" Max rolled his eyes. "Who is it?"

"The skinny little faggot from that highfalutin dress shop around the corner."

Max blanched. His eyes darted across the room just in time to see Skyler standing in the doorway, those high cheekbones flushing bright scarlet.

The puny little desk sergeant wouldn't find out what had hit him until the precinct captain told him later in the emergency room.

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