A full-page photograph of a young, muscular man with light skin and short brown hair. He is shirtless, showing his well-defined abdominal muscles, and has a white towel draped over his left shoulder. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a tropical scene with palm trees, a body of water, and a stone wall under a blue sky.

Loose Id

AMANDA YOUNG

RECKLESS BEHAVIOR

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Amanda Young

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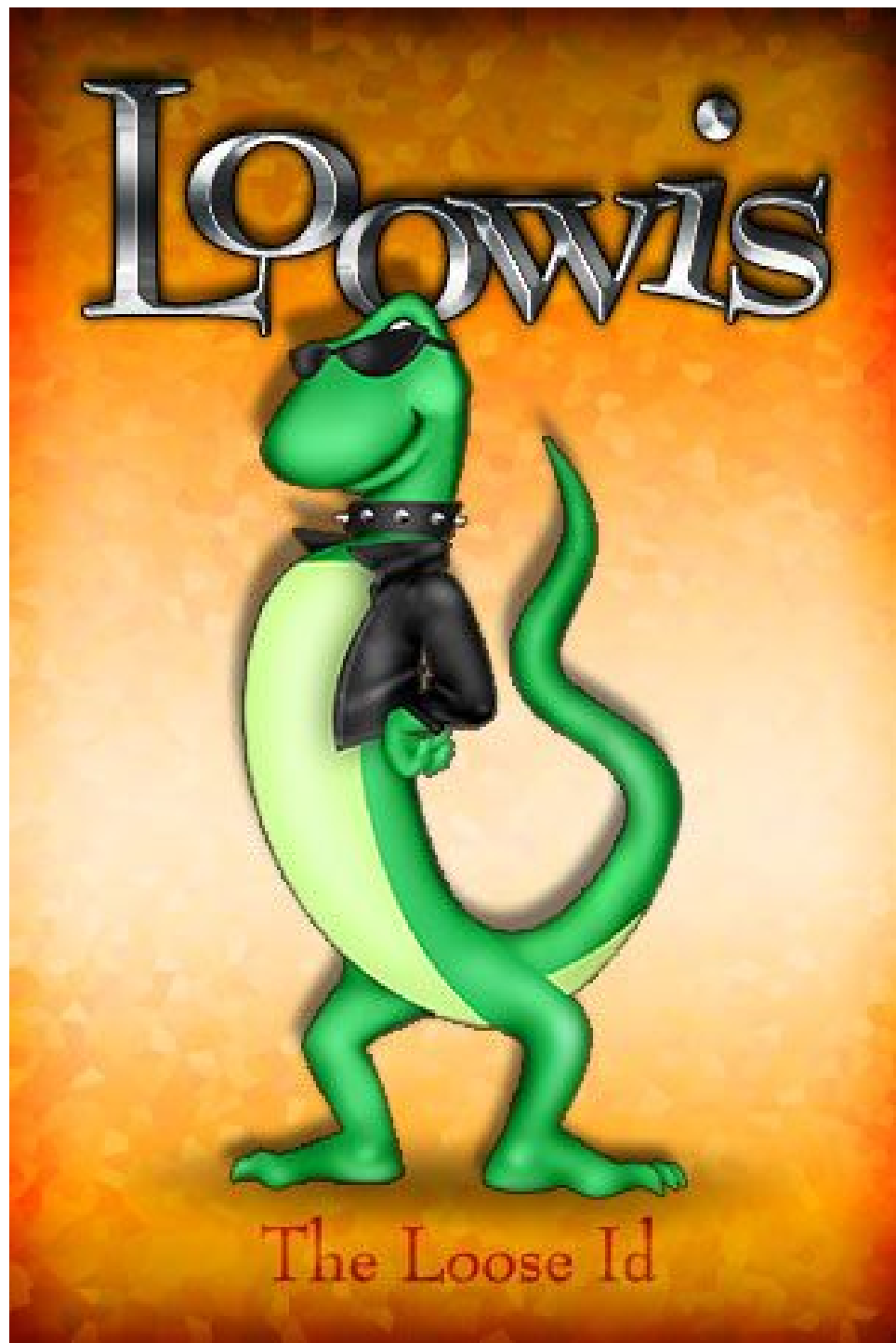
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Chapter One

Dante reclined under an umbrella. The shade was a nice respite from the broiling heat rising up off the crystalline depths of the pool directly ahead of him. Cody, his lover for the last six months, lounged to his right. Dante's anxious gaze roamed the ample crowd of wet, nearly naked men parading in and out of the water. His idea of a weekend jaunt to Palm Springs had been a good one, although it was not turning out exactly as he planned. He had wanted to spend the weekend wrapped up in his young lover; Cody, however, had other ideas—like a weekend of debauchery with anyone who caught his fancy.

Even if things were not going strictly to plan, there was no reason to complain. Dante had Cody and the knowledge that no matter who joined them in bed, Cody curled up with him at the end of the night. He was in his first real relationship with someone he truly cared about. As an added bonus, he could still fuck anyone he wanted. His lover not only approved of him being with other men but instigated most of their encounters.

Life was good.

He should have been thrilled.

Instead, he felt restless and out of sorts. Rather than basking in the beautiful day and the exciting night to come, he wanted to throw Cody over his shoulder and run. A knot of dread built in the pit of his stomach. A glimmer of what the problem could be lingered in the back of his mind. He wasn't quite ready to lay all his cards on the table and face the possibility that Cody might not feel the same way he did. The time would come when he had no choice but to air his concerns. Thankfully, that was not now.

Stretching to his left, Dante snatched a tall bottle of water off the table and took a long swallow. The icy liquid sloshed over his tongue and quenched his thirst, but it did nothing to satiate his hunger. He glanced at Cody, taking in the tiny shorts and smooth, bare torso, and held out the bottle. "Want a drink?"

"No, thanks. I'm not thirsty." Cody pointed toward a lithe brunet in a bright blue Speedo. "I'd much rather have a taste of him."

Dante followed his lover's gaze to the man in question. "He's not bad, but what about the blond over there?" He nodded toward a delicate young man with sandy-colored hair and visible tan lines.

"No." Cody shook his head, his pale hair bouncing like a tarnished halo. "I'd rather have the brunet. The blond's too feminine."

"All right." Dante took another sip of his water and then twisted the cap back on. He leaned across the scant space between them and ran the chilled bottle down Cody's smooth chest. "You know I can't say no to you."

Cody shivered and pushed Dante's hand away. "Christ, that's cold."

Dante lowered his sunglasses and leered at Cody, letting his gaze linger on a single bead of sweat cascading down the tan, silken skin between Cody's firm pecs. "I know just how to warm us back up."

"I'm sure you do." Cody smirked. "I'm hot just thinking about what we're going to do tonight."

Dante sighed and sat back. "Are you still sure you want to go through with it?"

"Oh yes." Cody nodded, as if he wanted to make doubly sure Dante knew what he wanted. "I haven't thought of anything else since we talked about it the other night."

"It's going to hurt."

"I don't care if there's a little pain. It will feel good too."

"I'll have to take your word on that. I've never met a man who got off on bottoming the way you do. Regardless, it's bound to hurt like hell if you take two cocks up your ass at the same time."

Cody shrugged. "I can take it."

"I guess we'll see about that soon enough." *Much to my annoyance.*

It wasn't that the thought of squeezing into his lover's tight little ass with another man didn't turn him on, or that he wanted to refuse Cody something he obviously wanted to experience. More that he was tired of the charade. Kink was fine in the right time and place, but there was something to be said for plain old vanilla sex. Was it wrong to want to clip Cody's wings and keep his young lover all to himself? He didn't want Cody to feel smothered, but when would the parade of men stop? Quite frankly, he wasn't sure how much longer he would be able to keep up. Although he was not old—not by a long shot—he wasn't as young as he used to be either. That point was driven home each time he and Cody engaged in raucous sex. Orgasms seemed to energize Cody, while Dante inevitably wanted to roll over and go to sleep.

He feared he was to blame for Cody's sexual excesses. He had taken it upon himself to broaden Cody's horizons. Now he was stuck with the results from his lack of foresight. There was nothing he could do about it without coming off like a hypocrite.

"Mm hmm," Cody hummed. "I cannot wait to get started."

"Why don't you go get your man and see if he's interested? We might as well get things started. It's going to be a long night."

Cody whooped. He leaned over, smacked a quick kiss to Dante's lips, then rose to his feet. "This is going to be so much fun."

Dante wasn't so sure fun was the right word. Fucking hot was a better description. Just because he was feeling his age didn't mean he wasn't looking forward to seeing Cody lost in pleasure. There was nothing more beautiful or alluring than watching Cody come and knowing he'd had a hand in making it happen.

He slid his sunglasses back up the bridge of his nose and watched his lover run off toward the other man in question. The heat building in his body had nothing to do with the sun and everything to do with the blond sprite diving headfirst into the deep end.

Cody swam with ease and then rose to his feet as he neared the shallow end. Water slid down his skin like butter, making it glisten in harsh, late-afternoon sunlight. He ascended out of the water an inch at a time, like some mythic sea creature hell-bent on seduction, and revealed every inch of his perfect, lissome frame. The snug material of his swimsuit hugged his trim hips and dipped into the tempting crease between his pert cheeks.

Dante licked his lips, knowing it wouldn't be long until he was face deep in that perfect, tight little ass. His pulse accelerated, thinking of all the ways he could use Cody's body. The remembered sound of Cody's hushed little pants and whimpers echoed in his ears as if they had just escaped Cody's sweet lips. Dante sighed and readjusted his thickening prick, not giving a damn who saw him fondling his crotch.

Cody was going to be the death of him. Although no one had ever called Cody shy, the young man had really blossomed in the last six months. He seemed more confident and sure of himself. Since Dante had taken his virginity, Cody had embraced his sexuality with panache. Dante had initiated their first threesome thinking it was something Cody would enjoy trying out—*once*. Admittedly, his motive could have been to show off a little as well. It was a thrill being the first to introduce someone so untried to the great world of debauchery. He had gotten off on guiding Cody through the paces, of being so hedonistic with a man completely unfettered about his sexuality. Unfortunately, he had never expected it to become a regular thing.

Cody couldn't seem to get enough.

Dante, on the other hand, was growing tired of sharing.

His only consolation was the rule they had agreed upon before their first ménage: If either of them wanted someone else, they both had to agree and do him together. Otherwise there was no sex outside of their relationship, period.

It had seemed reasonable at the time. Because he was Cody's first lover, Dante realized Cody would want to sow some wild oats. It wasn't as if he hadn't gone through the same thing once upon a time. Knowing Cody returned to him, regardless of whom they fucked, made him feel like a god. He wanted to let Cody spread his wings. What he didn't like was watching the kid spread his cheeks for anyone and everyone.

He had thought he was mature enough to handle sharing. Logically, he knew the other men were just physical cravings, playthings who were fucked and forgotten. Emotionally, it was wearing on him. Their revolving bedroom door grew exhausting. At the same time Cody was busy discovering himself, Dante had learned he wasn't getting any younger.

It was a hell of an eye-opener.

While he had gotten off on sleeping with other men and experimenting to a point, he found himself longing for the nights when it was only him and Cody. For the time they spent alone together, making love and – God forbid – cuddling.

Maybe his midlife crisis was hitting early. At thirty-two years old, he was a little young for one, but stranger things had happened. Nonetheless, something had changed. It wasn't like him to be so mawkish.

Dante scowled at his thoughts as Cody headed his way with the brunet in tow. He rose to his feet and tried to look friendly.

* * * * *

Back in their hotel room, Cody stared into the mirror and tried not to let his nerves scare him out of what awaited him in the other room. He had left Dante and Pete – or was it Peter? – in the bedroom while he took a quick shower. He wanted to be squeaky-

clean, inside and out. He and Dante had done a lot of kinky shit over the past six months, but nothing like what was about to happen.

Cody loved to fuck. There was no doubt about that. The thing he was getting tired of was sharing Dante. Although he loved having the attention of two men centered on him and relished the feel of empowerment it gave him to be so desired, he longed for the nights when Dante made slow, passionate love to him. They didn't call it that—Dante had never once said the *L* word to him in any connotation—but that's exactly what it felt like to him. In his mind, he had shouted *I love you* every time Dante sank into his body, claiming his ass as surely as he'd claimed his heart, even if he didn't dare eke the words aloud. Saying he loved Dante may not have been an option just yet, but that did not mean he couldn't show Dante how he felt every time they were together.

As much as he cared for the older man, he feared those three little words would send Dante running. That wasn't something he was willing to risk. Up to this point, the faintest hint of discord between them made something inside Cody clench down and squeeze so hard he didn't know if he would ever be able to draw another deep breath.

Foolishly, he had believed he could handle the other men and the lack of mushy sentiments if it kept him in Dante's good graces. He had jumped headfirst into the decadent lifestyle, just as he thought Dante had wanted. At first, the game had been new and exhilarating. Between the two of them, they'd been able to score with just about any man they'd set their sights on. However, at some point over the last couple of months, the sense of excitement had worn off.

Even so, Cody couldn't pass up the opportunity to experiment this one last time.

He had already decided there would be no more threesomes. All he had to do was explain his ulterior motives to Dante, which was easier said than done when he considered how terrified he was of how Dante would react to the slightest show of territoriality. Regardless, it was beyond time Cody spoke his mind. He just hoped being honest and forthright didn't blow up in his face.

Cody turned the knob and pulled open the bathroom door. The opulent hotel suite was ignored in favor of the two studs atop the massive California king bed in the middle of the room. His vision tunneled until the only thing he saw was the two men on the bed. Dante hovered over Pete, his strong hands sliding up and down Pete's impressive muscular abdomen. It was the tight abs and hairy chest that had caught Cody's attention out by the pool. Although he adored Dante's broad, smooth torso, there was absolutely nothing wrong with a little fur. Cody looked forward to running his fingers through it, as Dante was doing now. Apparently he wasn't the only one who could appreciate a hairy man when given the chance.

Clenching his butt in anticipation only served to remind Cody of the thick black plug lodged between his cheeks. After cleaning himself out, he'd lubed and stretched himself, wanting to be ready for whatever the men threw his way. He was still loose from sex earlier that morning, but he figured a little extra help wouldn't hurt. *God knows I'm probably going to need it.*

Cody watched for a second longer, then cleared his throat, since the men seemed too occupied to notice he was in the room.

Dante turned and looked at Cody, his dark eyes intense. "It's about time you came out of there. I was staring to think you fell in."

"Nope. The toilet monster didn't get me. I'm all yours for the night."

Pete leaned up on his elbows and glanced around Dante. "Hey."

"Hey, yourself," Cody said, approaching the bed. "I see you two have been busy."

"Not really." Dante sat back on his calves, his intense perusal like a caress as it roamed over Cody's body. "We were just trying to pass the time until you joined us."

"Well, here I am." Cody's gaze crawled down Dante's chest and slanting oblique muscles. Moving lower, he lingered over the hard-on jutting away from Dante's groin. A quick glance to the side proved the boner Pete sported was nothing to sneeze at either, although his wasn't quite as big as Dante's. Cody's ass hurt just thinking about accommodating both men. Or was that from the plug? It was kind of hard to tell.

Cody knelt on the side of the bed and leaned in closer to his lover. Dante latched onto his biceps and tugged him closer. As soon as Cody reached Dante's side, the older man leaned in and covered Cody's lips with his own, taking his mouth in a long, passionate kiss that left him panting when Dante pulled away.

"Man, that's hot," Pete exclaimed. "My turn. One of you come down here and kiss me."

Cody winced. Pete was sexy, but he seemed a little light in the brains department. Then again, maybe Cody was just being too touchy. He couldn't hear "that's hot" without thinking of a certain brain-dead heiress.

Cody kissed Pete, tentatively at first, then with more enthusiasm as he realized the man knew what he was doing. Pete's lips were soft, in sharp contrast to the short stubble surrounding them. Bracing one hand on the pillow by Pete's head, Cody used the other to tilt Pete's face, making it more comfortable to kiss him.

He didn't realize Dante had moved until he felt his lover's strong hands on his ass. Cool air rushed over his bottom as Dante yanked away the white bath towel tied around his hips.

Cody heard Dante's appreciative sigh as the plug was revealed, and couldn't resist giving his ass a little wiggle. Teasing his lover was almost as fun as the sex that inevitably followed.

He chuckled into Pete's mouth and then moaned when Dante pressed down on the plug, putting pressure on the best place possible. He pulled away from Pete's lips long enough to say, "Christ, Dante..."

"Like that, do you?" Dante questioned.

Cody hummed but didn't stop kissing Pete, since Dante knew already the answer to his question anyway. There wasn't anything he didn't like as long as it involved Dante's hands on him.

The plug shifted in his ass, sending sparks of pleasure up and down his channel. Cody wriggled, pressing back against Dante's hand for more. Dante did not disappoint.

He pulled on the plug until the wide base stretched the tense muscles guarding Cody's tight passage.

Cody whimpered. His hole burned, greedy for more than the constant pressure could provide. Dante held the plug still, keeping Cody in an invariable limbo of anticipation.

The toy twisted and was shoved back inside him. "Want more?"

Cody tore his mouth away from Pete and sucked in air. "Yes. I want it all." Dante could take that to mean whatever he wanted.

Before Cody could resume kissing Pete, the man beneath him wrapped his lips around Cody's right nipple. His tongue flicked back and forth, the sharp edge of his teeth holding Cody's nipple hostage while he taunted Cody's flesh into a tight ball of fiery need. Pete licked and nipped one nipple and then the other, moving back and forth until both tender bits of flesh pebbled and ached from the attention being lavished upon them.

So focused on his nipples, Cody forgot about Dante kneeling behind him. The plug was ripped from his body with no fanfare, leaving him tender and empty. His butt cheeks were spread; cool air circled around his slick, exposed entrance.

Cody jerked, crying out as soft, wet heat took the place of the plug. Dante's long tongue danced inside him, thrusting in and out like a tiny cock. Pete wrapped his arms around Cody's waist and held him still while he continued to torture Cody's poor abused nipples.

He was torn. He didn't know whether to push back against Dante's face or move forward toward Pete. He needn't have bothered; both men seemed hell-bent on driving him out of his mind.

Dante ate his ass like he hadn't been fed in a week, his slick tongue digging in and inflaming Cody's desire for more. Every single lap around his anus ignited his nerve endings and made him jerk and whine, desperate for something more substantial in his

ass. No one had touched his cock, but that didn't lessen the throb shooting up and down his shaft.

Cody held every muscle in his body rigid, afraid he was going to come. "Oh, please. Dante...Pete...don't stop."

Air replaced the heat of Dante's mouth. His voice drifted to Cody through the thick fog of need. "Not so fast, pretty. If you want to take both of us, you need to be panting for it."

Cody sat up and twisted around to glare at Dante. "Why can't I come now *and* later? I'll get it back up again. You know I will."

"No."

"Asshole."

Dante quirked a brow. "If we're going to do this, we're going to do it my way or not at all. Which is it going to be?"

"Fine. Have it your way." Cody feigned annoyance and fought the urge to throw himself into Dante's arms. He was a bossy bastard, but Cody loved him. "Can we get on with it? 'Cause I'm going to come all over myself if you make me wait much longer."

Pete chuckled, dragging Cody's attention back to the man beneath him. "What do you think?" Cody asked the brunet. "Do you want to fuck me or lie around and wait for Mr. Bossy back there?"

Pete laughed. "I vote for now. I wanted to bury my dick in your ass the moment I saw you."

Cody turned and gave Dante a shit-eating grin. "See?"

Dante smacked Cody on the ass. "Fine. I'll get the condoms." He walked into the bathroom and came out with a strip of rubbers. He tore one off, then threw it at Pete. "No glove, no love."

Cody snickered and moved out of the way. He sat back on his calves and watched as Dante and Pete rolled latex over their shafts. "How are we going to do this?"

Dante crawled up onto the bed and rolled to his back. "Straddle me, pretty."

"Yes, sir," Cody said, doing as his lover asked. He nipped Dante's chiseled chin. "What now?"

"Pete?"

"Right here," Pete said, pushing up against Cody's buttocks from the rear.

Dante tossed the lube to Pete. "Cody's already nice and stretched out, but you might want to double-check and lube him up a little more. Make sure you use plenty of slick stuff."

Two fingers were unceremoniously shoved up his ass. Cody jerked and moaned. "Fuck. Could you be a little more gentle back there?"

"Sorry," Pete said. "I'm just a little anxious. I don't think my dick's ever been this damn hard." He rotated his fingers in Cody's ass and scissored them apart. "He's pretty loose back here. I think he's ready."

Cody wiggled his hips, anxious for what was coming. "God, yes. I'm past ready."

Dante rolled his eyes and glanced over Cody's shoulder toward Pete. "Just take a deep breath and calm down. We have to take this slow or we could hurt him." To Cody, he lowered his voice and said, "This is it. It isn't too late to back out, if you are having second thoughts."

"No." Cody shook his head. "I want this." If people could take an entire fist and arm up their ass, then he could take two cocks. He wasn't afraid of a little discomfort. God knew it had taken him a while to get comfortable accepting Dante's horse cock without some pain, but he'd learned to love it.

"All right. Here we go." Dante caressed Cody's side. "Just say the word if you need to stop."

"I won't."

"If you're sure —"

"I am," Cody snapped. "Now shut up and fuck me."

"Your wish is our command, pretty." Dante's hand slid between them and aligned his cock with Cody's quivering entrance. The blunt, latex-covered tip brushed Cody's hole and then slowly breached the outer ring.

Dante stilled and grabbed hold of Cody's hips. "You want it, take it."

Impatient, Cody thrust backward and impaled himself on Dante's thick shaft. He sucked in air and lowered his head to Dante's chest. Christ, Dante was a big fucker.

When he spoke, Dante's voice sounded strained. "You okay, pretty?"

"Yeah." He counted ten heartbeats, letting himself adjust. "I want the rest."

"You have my entire cock."

Cody snorted and lifted his head. "You know what I mean."

Dante looked at Cody for a long, pregnant moment and then turned his attention to Pete, who was still kneeling behind Cody. "Remember to go slow. If you intentionally hurt him, you answer to me. Understand?"

"Yeah, sure," Pete said. "I'll take it easy."

There was some fumbling from behind, and then the fat tip of Pete's slick cock brushed through Cody's crease. Cody shut his eyes and breathed, trying to hold still. Pressure built against his entrance, straining him almost beyond endurance.

The bed shifted, the springs groaning. Pete grunted, while Cody forced himself to hold still and wait for Pete to move forward.

Pete's cock nudged Dante's, then forced its way partially inside.

Cody gasped. His cock flagged under the added strain.

Dante groaned. "Oh, damn."

Moisture filled Cody's eyes. It stung. Oh, God...did it burn. His erection waned in light of the sharp pain shooting through his channel. It was too much. He couldn't stretch that wide. He didn't know why he had ever thought it was even possible. The pain was... Cody's eyes shot open, his vision eclipsed by the overwhelming starburst of sensation inside him. "Oh...oh, right there. Do that again."

Pete chuckled and shifted forward a little farther. The pressure did weird things inside Cody. Instead of the feel of having his prostate rubbed, there was an almost alarming amount of constant tension on his sweet spot. The sensations didn't ebb like he was used to. His body couldn't adjust enough to relax around the heavy bulk inside him. There was no in and out stirring, no moment of acclimation that allowed him to catch his breath. Instead, he was stuffed full and given no quarter between one intense bout of painful pleasure and the next. Rapture rocked his body and engulfed his mind in one long, never-ending wave. It was like coming over and over again without ever spurting the first drop.

He couldn't stand it.

He couldn't get enough.

Through gritted teeth, Cody moaned at the feel of Pete moving deeper. Sweat beaded on his skin and tickled as it slid down his sides. The urge to scratch rose and was ignored. He was afraid to move.

Cody panted for air. His hands fisted in the sheets to either side of Dante's torso. "So full. Please, Dante...do something."

"Are you all right?" Dante brushed a damp lock of hair away from Cody's forehead and then cupped his cheek, tilting Cody's face up. "Do you need to stop?"

"No! I...I'm okay." Cody groaned in frustration. "Just move. Please."

He girded himself, not knowing what to expect. The first thrust was minuscule but felt huge. He winced and sucked one slow, deep breath of air after another, trying to make himself relax. Clenching his ass wasn't going to help matters.

Pete cursed and pressed closer by slow, infinitesimal amounts. The fingers on Cody's hips tightened to the point of pain. "Man, you're tight."

Cody grunted in reply, his gaze locked on Dante for reassurance. Animalistic noises were the best he could do. They'd just have to forgive him for not being eloquent at the moment. It was kind of hard to form cohesive thoughts when he had two dicks battling for supremacy in his ass.

Dante stared right into Cody's eyes, the muscles in his neck standing out. "You feel so good, pretty. So hot and tight around my cock."

Cody squeezed his eyes shut at the sound of Dante saying his nickname. Most people would think it was silly—a man with such a nickname—but he loved it. Every time Dante uttered "pretty" in that deep voice, something inside Cody clenched tight and refused to be ignored. Being called pretty made him feel beautiful. Oddly enough, it also made him feel safe and loved.

Too lost in sensation to open his eyes, Cody leaned forward by tiny degrees and blindly searched for Dante's mouth. Warm hands cupped his face and directed his lips until humid air brushed his lips. He pushed closer, slanting his face to the right, desperate for Dante's kiss. He needed something to ground him or else he feared he was going to spin apart into a thousand pieces.

"God, Cody," Dante gasped, caressing Cody's side. "You're killing me."

Cody whimpered and buried his face against the curve of Dante's throat. Three little words shouted through his mind, begging to be spoken. He swallowed them before they could be said, knowing it wasn't the time or place.

They set up a rhythm of short, shallow thrusts, alternating who did what within the tight space they had to work with. To Cody, it felt as if one huge cock were in constant motion, twisting and plunging in and out of him with an insatiable need he wasn't sure he could match. The pleasure was excruciating, the pain a constant reminder of how open and vulnerable he was to the men slaking their hungers within his body.

Cody's world was reduced to the cocks shuttling in and out of his ass and the hunger reflected in Dante's dark, liquid eyes. He couldn't think, couldn't move. All he could do was hold still and pray he wasn't going to break apart when his climax hit. It was already brewing in the pit of his gut. His cock leaked against Dante's firm stomach, his ass stretched wide around the long, thick cocks splitting him open. A deep, internal coil tightened, ready to burst free at any moment.

The aroma of sweat and sex permeated the room, invading his nostrils. Slick flesh slapped in time with their movements. The bedsprings creaked, echoing in Cody's ears alongside his speeding pulse.

Dante's warm mouth ran down his throat and over his shoulder, kissing every inch of flesh within his reach. Firm hands wandered up and down Cody's back, caressing taut muscles into submission.

Pete's fingers bit into Cody's hips, holding him in place. "Fuck, close."

Dante grunted. "Yeah. Soon."

Cody cried out, hoping they wouldn't leave him behind.

Dante slid his hand between them, his long fingers wrapping around Cody's shaft.

A high-pitched squeal echoed in Cody's ears.

Pleasure rushed over him, so strong it bordered on pain. He cried out, deaf and dumb to everything but the bright spark of overwhelming ecstasy roiling through him. His muscles clenched down, his entire body locking in place as all his desire, all his need, gushed out onto the cobbled surface of Dante's abs beneath him.

It wasn't until Dante kissed him that he realized he was the one making the noise.

Cody's muscles quivered, his vision wavering. The steady thrusts into his body continued, in and out, one man after the other as they searched for their own relief.

Finally, when Cody was sure he couldn't take another second, Pete shouted and thrust deep. Almost simultaneously, Dante's arms tightened around Cody and squeezed the remaining breath from his body. Unable to draw a deep enough breath to sustain him, black dots immediately swam in front of his vision.

The last thing he felt was Dante's strong arms enfolding him. Then blackness reigned supreme.

Chapter Two

Cody spent the following week hitting the books and looking forward to the weekend. Although it seemed as if he spent more time at Dante's apartment than his own dorm room, the hours he kept for school did not mesh with Dante's work schedule. Most days, they were little more than ships passing in the night.

He dropped his bag by the door, strode into the living room, and plopped down on the cushy sectional sofa. He kicked his shoes off, then propped his feet up on the table, knowing Dante hated when he left heel impressions on the shiny glass surface. He picked up the remote and began flipping through the stations.

He still felt a little strange about coming to Dante's and spending his evenings there alone, even if Dante insisted it was no big deal. In truth, he suspected Dante liked coming home to him and a warm bed—even if he was comatose by the time Dante dragged himself home from the club.

Sometimes it seemed as if he lived in stasis from Monday through Friday, his body and soul on hold until he was free to spend time with his lover. It would be sickening if he weren't so head over heels for the man.

And speaking of head over heels...

He still couldn't believe what he and Dante had done the previous weekend. His ass had been sore for days afterward, which he blamed for the random thoughts and images that had haunted him all week. So much so that he had spent more than one lecture daydreaming and had been forced to rush to the restroom to take care of his hard-on between classes. Thank God no one had caught him whacking off in the bathroom stalls. *That* would have been mortifying.

Though his gaze was on the wide-screen television, his mind was not. He'd originally planned to change his clothes and join Dante at the club after he had finished at the library. Now that he was done for the day, he didn't really feel like it. He wanted to see Dante, but the loud music and insistent men at The Casbah were a huge pain in the ass if he wasn't in the mood to socialize. Plus, not going out meant there was no chance of a threesome. Dante wouldn't bring anyone home without Cody's prior knowledge.

Though Dante had first introduced threesomes into their relationship, the older man rarely instigated them himself. It was usually Cody who brought up the idea, mostly because he loved how turned on Dante got when they were doing something outside the norm. The man was a wonder to watch when he was horny. Cody also wasn't ashamed to admit that he enjoyed pushing Dante's buttons. Being the catalyst for his lover's pleasure got him off in a big way.

Just thinking about New Year's Eve gave Cody wood. He readjusted his dick to make more room in his jeans. His hand lingered over his hard-on, rubbing a little as he closed his eyes and reclined his head against the back of the sofa, remembering...

* * * * *

Dante had been forced to work on New Year's Eve, since it was the busiest night of the year at The Casbah. Wanting to celebrate with his lover, Cody had tagged along and spent the night dancing by himself and watching his lover from afar. Although Dante was swamped with work, he'd still searched

Cody out right before midnight and kissed him senseless as the crowd counted down the final seconds of the year.

Afterward, when Dante was finished, he had ushered Cody up the stairs to the second level and one of the many private rooms the club kept available for VIP guests. Cody trailed behind his lover, their fingers entwined. His damp palms slid against Dante's with every step. At that point of the night, he was ready to go along with anything. He'd been hard and aching for his lover all evening.

Dante stopped outside the room and pulled Cody forward, kissing him with a fervor that stole Cody's breath and forced him to hold on to his lover's wide shoulders to maintain his balance. His head swam with pleasure as Dante ground against him and cupped his buttocks.

When Cody was reduced to nothing but mouth, dick, and ass, Dante broke the kiss. He stared down at Cody with eyes nearly black with desire. "I have a surprise for you."

"Oh, yeah?" Cody panted, trying to calm his racing libido. He glanced at the closed door and wondered what awaited him on the other side. "You have something special hiding for me in there?"

"Maybe," Dante hedged. "You know Clyde, right? He's the go-go dancer who hits on you all the time."

"I know who he is. Why?"

"Well, tonight was his last night at the club. He's moving home to start college for the late semester."

Cody frowned, confused.

"Do you recall when we watched that Jet Set DVD and you said you wanted to try a three-way as long as it was with someone you knew, but not someone who you'd have to see all the time afterward?"

"Yeah..." Cody blinked. "Ohmigod! He's in there? You want to..."

"Mm hmm. I know you think he's cute. I thought we could share him, if you want. Clyde's game for anything."

Cody bit into his lower lip until it stung. He wasn't sure if sleeping with someone else was such a good idea. Wouldn't one of them end up feeling like the third wheel? Worse, what if that someone was him? Although his nerves were jangling, his dick had never been harder. Maybe indulging just once wouldn't hurt anything. Dante did say Clyde would be leaving soon. At least he wouldn't have to worry about fending off Clyde's advances in the future, or losing Dante to the other man.

He gave a tentative nod. "Okay. Let's do it."

"Are you sure? We don't have to. I just thought it was something you wanted."

"I do." Cody grinned, a Technicolor kaleidoscope of pornographic ideas running through his mind. "This is going to be so wild."

"Damn right, it will." Dante cupped Cody's face in his big, strong hands and kissed him soundly. "You're going to come so hard, pretty."

Cody ran his mouth down Dante's throat and nipped his collarbone. "I can't wait for you to prove it."

"It would be my pleasure." Dante shoved the door open, revealing the dim room beyond. A large, canopied bed with an ornate wrought iron headboard dominated the space and was framed by plain, black-lacquered nightstands. The only light in the room spilled from two wall sconces above the head of the bed. None of the finer details held Cody's attention. Instead, the naked man lying on the black satin sheets held Cody captive.

Clyde loosely stroked his glistening member, every inch of his sleek body shamelessly on display. "Well, hello, boys. It's about time you got here."

Dante laughed and shook his head. "I see you started without us."

Clyde grinned and spread his legs wider, showing off all his assets. "Can you blame me? I've been looking forward to this forever."

Cody fidgeted, unsure of what he was supposed to do. Was there small talk for this kind of situation or could they just strip down and get to it? His zipper was seriously biting into his shaft. Were there rules he needed to know before anything happened? He wasn't sure, and he didn't want to ask any stupid questions. Looking green in front of Clyde would be bad. Appearing dumb and immature to Dante would be worse. Rolling with the flow had never been more critical. He would just follow Dante's lead and hope for the best.

Out of the corner of his eye, Cody noticed Dante pulling his shirt off over his head. If Dante was undressing, Cody wasn't going to argue. He went along with his lover, stripping out of his clothes. In a matter of moments, they were both naked and

standing at the foot of the bed. Cody shivered from a mixture of want and dread. What if Clyde was better than him in bed? The other man undoubtedly had more experience. The only person Cody had ever been with was standing beside him.

Clyde snapped his fingers. "Hello. I know I'm hot, but sheesh...what are you guys waiting for? Get over here."

Cody glanced at Dante, who nodded toward the bed. "Go on. You heard the man."

"All right." Cody climbed onto the bed and hesitantly lay down beside Clyde. He propped his elbow on the pillow and rested his head on his hand. Uncertain of what he should do first, he stared down at Clyde and took in the scenery.

The other man really was attractive, with sunny locks that almost verged on white they were so pale. His build was lean and defined, every muscle corded to perfection and gym honed. Firm pecs were topped by hard light brown nipples. Wispy white-blond hairs ringed the tight little peaks and begged for a tongue or fingers. The muscles in his abdomen were distinct and rippled with his every breath.

Cody wanted to run his tongue down the furrow bisecting Clyde's abs and see if he tasted as good as he looked. Instead, he went directly for Clyde's cock. Long and thin, Clyde's prick was as pretty as the rest of him. The head was slick with Clyde's need and tapered to precision, the rim clinging to the heavily veined shaft.

"That's it, man. Touch me."

Cody stroked from base to tip, keeping his hand loose since that was the way he'd seen the other man doing it. "Like this?"

"Yeah. That's good." Clyde shifted his hips, pushing up toward Cody's hand. "Could you play with my balls too?"

"Sure." Cody reluctantly let go of Clyde's cock and cupped the other man's balls, rolling them in his palm. He varied the pressure a little here and there, trying to discover exactly what Clyde liked most. A gentle squeeze made Clyde buck, whereas stretching his ball sac produced the most delicious moans.

Dante moved in close behind Cody, warmth radiating from his larger frame. The thick length of his cock pressed up tight against Cody's ass, naturally settling into the groove between his cheeks.

One of Dante's thick, muscled forearms reached across Cody. Cody's attention diverted from Clyde's groin. He watched as Dante pinched and plucked Clyde's firm little nipples, one after another. The tender buds flushed and hardened, turning an appealing shade of burnt umber. Too tempted to resist, Cody wrapped his lips around Clyde's right nipple while Dante tortured the left. He lapped the small protrusion, then flicked the tip of his tongue back and forth over the stiff pebble.

Clyde jerked and groaned, dislodging Cody's grip on his balls. Instead of returning to the same place, Cody fisted Clyde's cock and pumped. He moved the soft skin back and forth over the steely shaft, while he licked and sucked Clyde's nipple.

Moist warmth kissed the back of Cody's neck. Dante's lips skimmed Cody's nape and then moved into the tender depression beneath his ear. "Want me to fuck you?"

Cody tore his mouth away from Clyde's pebbled nipple. "God, yes. Please." He rested his head on Clyde's shoulder and

watched as his hand slid up and down Clyde's ruddy erection. Turning his attention to Clyde, Cody asked the other man what he liked.

Clyde skimmed his fingertips down Cody's chest. "I like it all, but I'm not into penetration."

"All right," Cody said. "Can I blow you while Dante fucks me?"

Clyde smiled, his green eyes twinkling. "Like I'm going to say no? I'd love to have those pretty lips around my meat." Clyde rolled over and reached to the nightstand on his side of the bed. He opened the nightstand and pulled out a handful of condoms. After dropping all but three on the surface, he reached back in and grabbed a bunch of little pillow packs of lube. With the objects he wanted in hand, Clyde rolled onto his back, and he held out his bounty to Cody and Dante. "Let's wrap 'em up, boys. I only play safe."

"Even for blowjobs?" Cody wondered about that, since he and Dante had never bothered with condoms for anything other than anal sex.

"Yep, even for giving head. A boy can never be too safe these days."

Cody plucked two rubbers and two single shots of lube from Clyde's palm and handed half to Dante. Unable to resist, he fingered the damp head of Dante's cock.

Dante swatted Cody's hand. "You better quit teasing if you want me to fuck you. I'd hate to waste it by coming all over your palm."

"You'd get it back up."

One of Dante's eyebrows lifted. "Are you sure?"

Cody was certain, but who was he to complain if his lover wanted to save all his pent-up desire for his ass. "Fine. Be stingy with your cock. See if I care."

Dante slapped Cody on the ass and then rubbed the sting away. "Don't pout, pretty. It'll be all yours in just a minute."

Clyde looked up from where his hands were busily rolling a condom over his dick. "Is someone more impatient than me?"

"No," Cody answered, his face and neck heating.

"Yes," Dante said at the same time.

Clyde laughed and let go of his covered shaft. "Don't keep me waiting, boys. Get those dicks covered so we can get this party started."

Already having sheathed himself, Dante took Cody's place by Clyde. He stretched out on his side, heavy muscles flexing with every shift of his big body.

Cody licked his lips and busied himself with the task of slicking his own ass. He twisted off the tab on the lube and squeezed the contents onto the fingers of his opposite hand. He leaned forward, resting one hand on the bed. With the other, he reached back and spread lube around his hole. Impatient, he skipped one finger and went straight for two, his body opening with a slight burn that only made him crave something bigger. Slowly pumping his fingers in and out, he looked up to see Dante pressing Clyde down against the mattress. His lover's mouth slanted over Clyde's in a deep, passionate kiss. With every movement, Cody got a glimpse of glossy pink tongues dueling.

Cody watched the two men make out, waiting for jealousy to seep in and ruin his mood. Surprisingly, there was none. The scene in front of him was nothing if not arousing. His skin grew hot and tight as he watched, while his dick felt like an iron bar where it hung beneath him, weighing him down. The fingers in his ass were a reminder of how good it would feel once Dante's thick cock sank inside him. Anything else was a bonus. He wasn't sure how he would manage to suck Clyde off while Dante was pumping away at him, but he looked forward to the challenge.

Clyde's dick was average length and girth. Cody didn't foresee any problems sucking him off, although he wasn't looking forward to a mouthful of latex. Concentration, on the other hand, might be a problem.

The sight of Dante's hand cupping Clyde's balls snapped Cody into action. The last thing he wanted was to be left behind while they got off without him. He pulled his fingers from his bottom and quickly rolled a condom over his shaft, wincing as the tight latex made his painfully hard erection throb in response to his haste.

Cody straightened, his knees beneath him on the bed, and cleared his throat. "All right, guys. Where do you want me?"

Dante patted the bed between him and Clyde. "On your back, pretty."

"Wouldn't it be easier the other way?"

"Not for what I have in mind. Trust me?"

"Always," Cody said, meaning it. He rolled onto his back and gazed up at the men crouching at his sides. "What now?"

Dante's full lips curved into a wicked smile. "Clyde is going to straddle your chest and fuck your mouth, while I take your ass."

"All right." The words alone made Cody shiver in anticipation. He hated to think what the real thing was going to do to him.

"Sounds good to me." Clyde climbed on top of Cody and leaned forward, his hands braced on the headboard. His hard, latex-wrapped cock jutted out in front of his body and bobbed up and down in Cody's face.

Cody had just the thing to do the trick. He grasped the other man's hips and pulled him forward until the tip of Clyde's prick hovered over his mouth. Once he had Clyde right where he wanted him, Cody grasped the other man's shaft around the base and slid his palm over the swollen head. He closed his eyes and flicked his tongue over the tip. A hint of strawberry assaulted his taste buds, although the strong taste of latex prevailed. Beneath the bitter tang of the rubber, Clyde's flesh was hot and firm.

With Clyde sitting on top of him, Cody's positioning wasn't good enough to take more than a couple of inches of the other man's length. In a bid to get more, Cody lifted his chin up and pulled down on Clyde's hips, giving silent permission for Clyde to move.

One of Clyde's hands released the headboard. He threaded his fingers through Cody's hair, holding on. His hips rolled forward, shuttling his meat a little deeper. "Oh, yeah. That's it, Cody. Take me all the way in."

Strong hands parted Cody's thighs, distracting him from the blunt object pressing on his tonsils. Hair-roughened flesh brushed against the soft skin of his inner thighs and rubbed his bottom. Something bulbous and sticky knocked on his entrance. Without thought, Cody clenched.

Dante stroked Cody's inner thigh, the edge of his fingertips whispering past Cody's sac. "Here we go, pretty. Just relax and let me do all the work. I'm gonna make you feel so good..."

Cody tried to concentrate on loosening his muscles, while Clyde continued to slowly plunge in and out of his mouth. Pressure built and then released, his body flowering open. Dante's crown forced its way inside him, stinging just a little. What felt like a couple of inches followed, the burn easing in wake of the tremendous friction against his inner walls.

Cody groaned around the dick on his mouth and bucked his hips, wordlessly begging for more. Nothing felt better than his lover moving inside of him, claiming him in the most primal way possible.

Dante sank deeper, filling Cody up. Cody tilted his head back and allowed Clyde free rein on his mouth. The other man would have to take what he needed, because there was no way Cody could give Clyde's dick the attention it deserved when Dante was grinding against his ass, stretching him open so good it hurt. The blowjob was going to go down in the history books as the world's sloppiest head.

But Clyde must have thought he was doing something right judging by the broken whimpers spilling from the man's mouth.

Cody held perfectly still, only allowing his lips and tongue to move over Clyde's dick as it slid in and out of his mouth. Dante's powerful thrusts, joined with the sensation of his lover's hands caressing his hips and thighs, were driving him out of his mind. The rasping friction had his ass ablaze, the minor pain coaxing his pleasure higher.

Just when Cody thought he was getting a grip on what was happening, Clyde surprised him by leveraging himself up and around, spinning until they were each facing the other's groin. Clyde attacked Cody's cock with gusto, swallowing every inch.

The extra stimulation of a hot, wet mouth surrounding his prick was more than he could take. He didn't want to come so soon, but there was no way in hell he could hold it in for another second.

White noise filled his mind. Every muscle in his body clenched, then vibrated. He shook from the force of his climax, crying out around Clyde's cock. The muffled sound of his pleasure came out distorted and in the shape of Dante's name.

Clyde shoved deep, the tip of his cock butting the back of Cody's throat. He gagged as the condom bulged with the evidence of Clyde's release.

Before the last of his strength deserted him, Cody shoved at Clyde's hips. Clyde grunted by way of reply and then reached down to hold the base of the condom in place as he withdrew from Cody's mouth. He rolled over onto his back and slung an arm over his eyes. "Fuck, I think that killed me."

Cody didn't have time to comment. Dante fell forward, braced his forearms on the bed to either side of Cody's head, and

slammed his mouth onto Cody's. The pace of his thrusts picked up speed, his thick cock shuttling in and out of Cody's ass with renewed vigor.

Cody dived into the kiss, giving it his all. He wrapped his arms and legs around Dante, his fingers slip-sliding on Dante's sweaty shoulders. Eager to feel his lover come, Cody drove his ass back against Dante, meeting every hard lunge.

Dante's hips rolled in a fast, jerky rhythm that forewarned of his impending orgasm. He thrust deep, once and then again. Dante froze, groaning. Cody held on to his lover through the worst of the shakes, praying he'd never have to let go.

* * * * *

Snapped back to the present by the persistence of his body, Cody shuddered through his orgasm, his dick in hand. Cum fountained over his fist, the first few blasts splattering his T-shirt. Subsequent bursts oozed over his fingers and dripped down onto his groin in fragrant, pearlescent ribbons.

With a quiet groan, Cody wiped his hand off on the hem of his shirt. The orgasm was nice, but it would have been better if Dante were there to share it with him. Hopefully he could stay awake until his lover got home later that night, and they could engage in a little something-something before he fell asleep.

Cody rose to his feet and padded into the bathroom, in desperate need of a shower. He turned on the taps and stuck his hand up the flow of water, waiting for it to heat up.

Now that he had made up his mind about ending the threesomes, a part of him was going to miss the sensation of having two men's attention focused solely on him. Thankfully, what he would receive in the trade-off had the potential to be so much better. Without the fear of other men lurking around every corner, Cody intended to

invest more energy on his and Dante's relationship. He yearned to spend more one-on-one time with his lover, in bed as well as out. In the process, he hoped to glean some sort of insight into the way Dante felt about him. He knew the older man liked him well enough and that Dante enjoyed fucking him. However, Cody wanted more than a close friendship and mind-numbing sex. He was in love with Dante. Was it so wrong to want the same in return?

All he had to do was convince his wanton lover that monogamy was better. He couldn't help but think it would probably be easier to stop the flow of water from running through his open fingers.

* * * * *

Dante was tired and cranky by the time he ambled home from work. The pungent scent of alcohol wafted from his person, making him sneer at the smell. Someone had sloshed beer all over the floor, and he'd stepped in a puddle of it while wearing his favorite leather boots. Needless to say, he was not a happy camper. The text message he had received saying Cody was tired and staying in for the night hadn't helped his mood. He'd been looking forward to seeing Cody and stealing a dance or two between catastrophes.

Thankfully, the night was over, and he had a sexy lover waiting for him in bed. He was too tired to fuck, but Cody was probably asleep. It didn't matter. He had always liked morning sex better anyway.

Tonight, Dante just wanted to shower and sleep. Holding Cody was a bonus.

He crept through the apartment and entered his bedroom, relieved to see a familiar Cody-shaped lump under the covers on his bed. He undressed, laid his clothes over the chair by the door, and then quietly entered the adjoining bathroom. After closing the door behind him, he turned on the light and stepped into the enclosed shower stall to wash off the night's work.

Oddly enough, knowing someone was waiting for him at home had never developed into the noose he had imagined. He'd always thought he was better off being single, a man with no ties to hold him down. Never had he expected to look forward to crawling into bed beside his lover...and going to sleep.

Cody was the first of his lovers he had given a key to his home, the first lover he'd spent more than one night in a row with. It would have been unsettling if it didn't feel so damn right. Cody was young, but his simplistic outlook on the world soothed Dante's jaded soul. A lot of people looked at Cody and saw naïveté; Dante knew better: Cody simply enjoyed life to the fullest. He wasn't cynical or hard like so many of the gay men who were Dante's age. He was like a breath of fresh air in a city full of smog.

Following a quick scrub and rinse and an even-faster pat dry with a fluffy bath towel, Dante padded back into the bedroom. Yawning, he pulled back the covers and slipped into bed. The mattress shifted as he sidled against Cody's back and softly rested his arm over his lover's waist. Cody mewled, pushed his naked backside up against Dante, and buried his face deeper into the pillow.

Dante smiled into the darkness and closed his eyes.

Chapter Three

"More," Cody demanded, glancing over his shoulder at Dante. Crouched on all fours atop the bed, the only thing Cody could make out was the top of Dante's bald head bobbing up and down above the rise of his own ass. Beyond the slick feel of Dante's tongue slithering over his hole, the sight reinforced just how much he loved the feel of Dante eating his ass. Having such a dominant man kneel and tongue his asshole was a hell of a turn-on.

Of course, it didn't hurt that Dante was sex personified. The man was six feet of raw, mind-numbing masculinity — *and all mine for the taking*.

A particularly vicious stab of Dante's tongue made Cody jerk and quiver. His balls pulled taut, his body overheating from the inside out. "Fuck, Dante, I want you."

"Mm hmm," Dante muttered, his mouth vibrating where it was pressed tight against the outer ring of Cody's hole. The tip of his tongue wiggled, then thrust inside Cody.

"One of these days," Cody panted. "You're going to drive me insane with all the taunting."

Dante hummed, adding to the sensations shooting through Cody's ass.

Teetering on the brink of ecstasy, Cody rested his forehead against the pillow beneath him. Would he ever get enough of this man? It didn't seem possible.

He still had to pinch himself occasionally just to make sure he hadn't dreamed having Dante in his life. The fantasies he'd had for so very long paled in comparison to the real thing.

Dante was everything he'd ever wanted, only more. While most people saw the older man's blunt attitude as standoffish, Cody had glimpsed beneath the armor to the strong, pigheaded man who was afraid of forming attachments with anyone, lest he be rejected. The fact that Cody was the first person with whom Dante had ever had a real relationship meant more than words could convey.

Cody dragged in a deep breath, the air ripe with the scent of sweat and musk. The light tickling sensation around his flesh was driving him out of his mind. "Please..." He didn't know what he was asking for, but at this point, he was ready to take what he could get. A hand, a mouth, Dante's cock splitting him open...*anything* as long as he got to come soon.

Dante licked faster, interspersing short jabs with long, slow laps over and around Cody's entrance. With his face pressed right up against Cody's ass, the tiny sound vibrated against Cody's sensitive skin.

Cody squeezed his eyes shut. His breathing quickened as he fought back the desire to come. Although it had only been a few minutes, it seemed as if Dante had been licking him for hours. He wasn't sure how much more he could take before he either started begging or came all over the clean sheets beneath him. Already his hips were rocking back and forth with a mind of their own, searching for nonexistent friction to rut against.

Cool air replaced the cushion of Dante's scorching lips. He wanted to scream in frustration. "Fuck... Don't stop now."

Instead of licking him or doing anything that furthered Cody's goal, Dante rose to his knees behind Cody. He rubbed the fat, leaking head of his cock over and around Cody's slick, relaxed entrance. "Want it?"

Cody cursed under his breath. He hated when Dante made him beg for it, even if it did make his heart race and his palms sweat. There was something so shameful about having to plead for his lover to fuck him. Conversely, he thought that was exactly why it turned them both on.

"What was that?" Dante asked, sliding a spit-slick finger into Cody's ass. He slowly thrust the digit in and out, just enough to make Cody squirm in need of more. "I didn't hear you."

"You know I want it." Cody glanced back at Dante, pleading with his eyes.

"I'm not a mind reader. You have to tell me what exactly you want."

Cody groaned and shoved his ass back against Dante's touch. "You are such a prick."

Dante's thin lips spread into an unrepentant grin as he slid a second finger in beside the first. "You love it."

No, but I do love you. Cody swallowed the words he yearned to say. "Do it," he said. "Take me, Dante." *Please. Make love to me.*

Dante's fingers left his body. The telltale snap of a condom reached Cody's ears seconds before the blunt end of Dante's cock nudged his entrance. Upon breaching the outer ring of muscle, Dante's thick shaft pressed home in one slow, continuous thrust. Breath escaped from Cody's lips in a rush of sound, coloring the air with the resonance of his desire. "Oh, yes..."

Dante's balls slapped against Cody's. "God, Cody. I never get tired of this. You feel so good."

Cody moaned his pleasure, loving how Dante filled all the empty places inside him. "Dante...fuck me."

"Not yet." Dante's hands snaked beneath Cody's arms and around his sides. He grasped Cody's pecs and tugged him backward, pulling Cody up onto his knees. Dante ground his hips against Cody's ass, the slightly wider base of his cock spreading Cody open a fraction more.

With his back snuggled up to Dante's chest, Cody dropped his head against Dante's shoulder and looked up at his lover. Dante's dark eyes were narrowed in concentration. His tanned cheeks were flushed, his nostrils flaring with every thrust. The thin line of his mouth enticed Cody. Before he could voice his desire, Dante lowered his head and took Cody's mouth in a hot, searing kiss. He closed his eyes and sank into the feel of Dante all around him. Callused fingers tugged his nipples. A firm hand pumped his cock, loose on the way down and then hard on the return trip toward the head. The crown was squeezed, pearly drops of liquid milked from its slit. Dante covered Cody's lips with his own, thrusting his tongue into Cody's mouth as he rocked his hips backward, withdrawing his cock one slow inch at a time. Only once the flared ring of Dante's crown stretched Cody's anus, his fat head threatening to pop free, did Dante drive back inside.

On and on it went. Pressed front to back, Dante took his time retreating and then returned with a fast, hard stroke that pinged Cody's sweet spot and made his knees quiver. With his head twisted at an awkward sideward angle to prolong their kiss, he filled Dante's mouth with the echo of his desire. Their tongues danced back and forth as surely as their lower halves.

Cody whimpered like a puppy. The sounds spilling from his lips would have been embarrassing if he'd been able to think of anything but the way Dante felt plunging into him. There was no way he could censor even the smallest of reactions while his inhibitions were blown to hell.

Making love to Dante was like nothing he had ever anticipated. Although he had expected their shared chemistry to dim over time, it only grew stronger, eclipsing anything he'd ever imagined.

Cody smoldered, a slow burn building inside him as Dante's cock slowly slid in and out. An agonizing friction grew stronger with every fluid thrust.

"Dante...oh, please...so close."

"Do it," Dante ordered. He curled his fingers around Cody's cock and pumped. "Come for me."

The feel of Dante's fingers stroking him gave Cody the final nudge he needed to plummet over the edge. Ecstasy flooded his body and poured from his cock, streaming over Dante's fist. Cody moaned and shuddered, trembling through the worst of the contractions as endorphins flooded his body.

Once the final drops of seed had seeped from his cock, Dante released Cody's softening rod and folded his arms across Cody's chest. He held Cody tight against him, his hips snapping back and forth. Over and over, he vigorously shafted Cody, pulling all the way out and then ramming deep in search of satisfaction. No more than a handful of thrusts passed before Dante plunged home and stiffened, shaking through his own climax.

Dante nuzzled the curve of Cody's throat, kissing his feverishly damp skin. "Damn, that was fantastic."

Cody tilted his head to the side and glanced up at his lover. "It always is."

"You're good for my ego." Dante gave Cody a quick kiss and pulled away, easing his dick from Cody before the condom could slip off. "I'll be right back."

Without Dante's support, Cody crumpled forward onto the mattress and buried his face in the soft cushion of the pillow. Exhaustion flowed through his body like a Valium, tempting him to say the hell with personal hygiene in favor of sleeping. He could always clean up later, when his bones didn't feel like melted butter.

Dante returned from the bathroom before Cody was ready to move. Heedless of the wet spot beneath him, Cody lay still and let Dante swab the lube off his rear with a damp, warm washcloth. He murmured a drowsy "thanks," on the verge of sleep.

The mattress sank as Dante collapsed onto the bed beside him. A warm arm was slung across his midsection.

"Hey...Cody...don't fall asleep yet."

"I don't wanna do it again. I'm tired."

Dante chuckled. "Don't worry. I think my balls are empty."

Cody dredged up the last of his energy and rolled onto his side, facing his lover. "What is it then?"

"I'm not going to be able to make it to your uncle's house for dinner tomorrow."

He frowned. "Why?"

"I need to go into work for a while. There are some things I need to get done."

"Mm hmm..." Cody tangled his legs with Dante's, snuggling closer. "You can't keep avoiding him forever, you know?"

"I'm not."

"What would you call it?"

"Common sense. Can you blame me for not wanting to be around Beau more than I have to? He's been pissed off at me since I popped your cherry."

"He'll get over it."

"When?"

"When you ask for my hand in marriage and it's legal to follow through with the wedding."

Cody stared up at Dante, unsettled by his lover's silence. He knew better than to bring up commitment, much less something like marriage. "Hey, I was kidding. I don't want to marry you anyway."

The lines around Dante's mouth deepened. "I know that."

"Then why the long frown?" Cody stretched up until he could reach Dante's nose. He kissed the narrow tip, trying to lighten the mood, although a maelstrom of turbulence brewed inside him. The smile gracing his face belied his inner turmoil. If

Dante believed Cody didn't want marriage—whether they called it by that moniker or any other name—then he was dead wrong. However, Dante's misunderstanding was Cody's fault. He was the one who was too chickenshit to say what he really desired.

"I'm not frowning. I'm thinking."

"Uh-huh. About what? It can't be very pleasant with your face all scrunched up like that."

"Nothing you need to worry about."

"If you don't want to tell me what's on your mind, then just say so and I'll drop it."

"I don't want to talk about it."

"Fine." Cody burrowed his face against Dante's throat. "I'd rather go to sleep anyway."

Dante's lips pressed against Cody's forehead. "Don't pout."

"I'm not." Cody slid his leg between Dante's thighs, getting comfortable. "Now shut up and go to sleep."

Lying very still, Cody tried to take his own advice. He listened to Dante's even breathing and wondered what his lover had been pondering. He wished he could make Dante see that it was all right to share things with him. Not being trusted with his lover's innermost thoughts hurt in ways Cody couldn't explain.

Not that he had room to complain. Didn't he hoard his own secrets, too wary to share his hopes and dreams with the man he loved? He had made so many mistakes already that he wasn't sure he would ever be able to rectify them.

Who'd have thought dating would be so complicated? He'd gone into this relationship looking for a good time with someone he genuinely liked. Love only muddled the situation.

His emotions contradicted his actions, confusing the hell out of him. Pride and the fear of rejection kept him quiet when all he wanted to do was tell Dante how he felt.

Every bend in the road left him conflicted and in fear of being torn in two. He wanted to be the fearless, exciting kind of man Dante salivated over, while still being true to himself. Yet it was impossible to straddle both personas and not be torn down the middle; the divergences were simply too wide. He couldn't be a good-time boy and still strive to be part of a passionate, loving relationship. Easy and faithful didn't mesh.

Cody lay awake, thinking, long after Dante began to softly snore beside him.

Chapter Four

Bright and early Sunday morning, Dante made sure he was up and out of the apartment before Cody so much as twitched on his side of the bed. A long drive stretched out ahead of him, although it wasn't the reason he'd sneaked out before Cody awoke. It was damn hard to leave his lover when he wanted nothing more than to snuggle in and go back to sleep, but he didn't have a lot of choice in the matter.

The sound of his tires on the interstate droned on as Dante sped by one exit sign after another. Following more than a decade away from his family, he was finally returning to the little town where he was raised. He planned to do his best to avoid his mama and papa while he was there. They wouldn't be interested in a reunion either. They'd made their position regarding his "lifestyle" clear long ago.

He wasn't quite sure why he had lied to Cody about what he needed to do in place of going to dinner at Beau's house. Nonetheless, he had a feeling his young lover hadn't bought the work excuse anyhow. Eventually, Dante would have to explain where he'd been and why, but for the moment, he was going to keep the issue quiet. There were too many uncertainties, and it wasn't his story to share.

Although there were bound to be some hurdles to overcome, Dante couldn't turn away someone he loved. He'd promised to always be there for Milo, and he had failed.

This was his chance to make it up to him. Now that it was in his hands to make amends, Dante would go to the ends of the earth to make sure Milo was happy. All he could do was hope Cody didn't mind sharing his attention with someone else.

* * * * *

Cody spent the day lounging around Dante's apartment, watching television, and being a slug. The only thing that would have made it better was having Dante help pass the time, but he knew his lover well enough not to expect him to hang out at home. After all, he couldn't fake being busy at work if he spent the day goofing off with Cody.

Something would eventually have to be done about the tension between Dante and Beau. Cody, however, was at a loss for what it would be, short of locking the two men in a padded room and letting them go at it until one of them beat some sense into the other. Both of them hemmed and hawed and puffed up like blowfish when it came to their pride, but someone was going to have to make the first move eventually. Otherwise, Cody was going to kick some asses. Dante and Beau had known each other for too long to let one little difference of opinion ruin their friendship.

He arrived at his uncle's house promptly at five for dinner, which was going surprisingly well so far. He'd only been there a little under an hour, but Beau hadn't brought up anything unpleasant, and the spaghetti and meatballs they were served was one of Cody's favorite meals. All in all, Cody was glad he'd come. Though they were few and far between, there were times when he missed seeing his uncle every day. Mostly, he was too busy to be homesick.

He and Beau sat at the dining room table, stuffing their faces in silence. Cody was fairly sure they'd already covered the bases—each of them inquiring about school or work—and was all-too-happy to stay quiet. Dante's name hadn't been brought up yet, and Cody rather hoped it wouldn't become an issue. If they could just get through dinner without bringing up Dante, then Cody hoped to slip out without having the same old argument with his uncle. As much as he loved Beau, the man was beginning to sound like a broken record when it came to his views on Cody's relationship.

Cody swallowed another tangy bite of pasta and eyed the basket of bread sitting just out of reach. "Would you pass the bread, please?"

"Sure," Beau mumbled around a mouthful of food.

Cody waited until Beau held out the basket filled with aromatic garlic bread and then snatched the biggest chunk out of the pile. He dipped the flaky crust into his pasta, sopping up the marinara sauce and then bit into it, letting the tomato and garlic bounce off his taste buds. A hearty, closemouthed moan spilled out of him as he swallowed. "God, I love this stuff."

Beau shook his head and selected another slice for himself before he sat the bowl back down on the table. "It's not that hard to make, you know."

"How would you know?" Cody asked, twirling his fork in the spaghetti noodles. "It isn't like you've cooked a day in your life." After all, that's why Beau paid someone to cook for him.

"I can cook. I'll have you know that your grandma was a stickler for teaching me and your father how to cook. Well, a little. She always said no child of hers was going to be sent out into the world without being able to take care of themselves." Beau's eyes took on a faraway look, as if he was remembering something special. "She would have loved you. I always thought it was such a shame she passed away right before you were born. Your mom cried so hard at the funeral that your father was terrified she would go into labor."

Cody's fork rattled against the ceramic plate. "What was she like?"

"Who? Your grandma?"

"No, Mom. I can remember her a little, but it's just silly stuff, like how she would always sing to me when she tucked me in bed, or the way she would chase me around the yard and tickle me when she caught me." He couldn't remember enough about either of his parents, although he could remember a little more about his mom than his father. Sometimes he felt guilty that he didn't try harder to keep them alive in his memory. However, it was hard to talk about them when he knew so little. Cody had

asked questions about them when he was younger, but the subject always seemed to upset Beau, and he'd eventually let the matter drop.

"Madelyn was a beautiful woman, inside and out. Probably the only person I ever knew who was always kind without needing a reason. She was smart and funny and loved you more than anything else in the world. She would be so proud of the man you've become."

Cody looked down at the table, blinking away the tears in his eyes. "Do you really think so? I sometimes wonder if I would have turned out differently if they'd lived."

"I know so. Both your parents loved you like nothing else. They would have been proud to call you their son."

"Thanks." Cody picked up his napkin and wiped his mouth. He cleared his throat, hoping to dislodge the frog stuck in his esophagus.

"You're welcome." Beau pushed his plate aside. "I may not always say it, but I do love you, Cody. You're the closest I'll ever have to a child of my own, and I'm damn glad I got to raise you, even if the circumstances weren't something I would have wished for."

"I know. I love you too." Cody stared at Beau, wondering if his uncle had imbibed a little too much with dinner. It wasn't like him to be so...mushy.

Beau nodded and took a sip of his wine. He set the glass down, his expression hardening. "It's because I love you that I worry so much."

Cody groaned.

"Now, now. At least hear me out."

"I don't need to listen to whatever you have to say. I've heard it all before. Many times." Too many.

"No, you haven't. Not this. I've been giving it a lot of thought, and I want you to know that, while I'm not thrilled with you seeing Dante, I am glad things seem to be

working out for the two of you. Although I had my doubts, I have to admit I might have been wrong about your little relationship."

Cody cringed. Little relationship? "That's, um, very big of you. Thank you."

"I'm not finished." Beau drained the contents of his glass and set it aside. "You have to understand, I thought Dante would be a bad influence on you. Dante had always been" – Beau waved his hand – "a free spirit, I suppose. I thought he would take all the values I tried to instill in you and warp them to suit his own purposes. Thankfully, that hasn't happened."

"Right." Cody's face heated at the barefaced lie. It wasn't as if he were going to sit there and purge all his demons onto the carpet at Beau's feet. In six months, he'd gone from a virgin to a slut who spread like peanut butter. He didn't want his uncle to know how carried away he had gotten in search of pleasure.

Beau's expression softened. "I reserve the right to worry, and expect the best for you, but I also want you to know how very proud I am of the man you've become. Instead of giving in to the decadent lifestyle Dante leads, you've stuck to the principles I taught you. I think you may have even had a good influence on him."

Cody wasn't so sure about that, so he forced a smile instead of speaking. He didn't want to lie to Beau any more than he had to. Guilt blossomed anew in response to his uncle's faith in him. Upstanding morals didn't stand a chance in the face of the extreme, unending rapture he found in Dante's arms. Obviously, word had not gotten back to his uncle about the men Cody and Dante had been sharing. But then, he and Dante had always been careful not to involve anyone they knew as more than a passing acquaintance. He'd never been more grateful for that simple prudence.

"Well, I don't know about you, but I've eaten about all I can hold." Beau pushed away from the table and rose to his feet. "Want to catch a movie with your old uncle before you head home? I have the new Indiana Jones movie."

"Sure. Harrison Ford is pretty hot, for an old guy."

"You are such a little smart-ass."

"I have no idea where I could have learned the sarcasm."

"I blame the public school system."

"Right," Cody drawled, rolling his eyes. "That must be the cause." He stood and followed his uncle down the hall to the family room.

They'd just sat on the sofa, the opening credits for the movie crossing the television screen, when Beau turned sideways and faced Cody. "So, where is your other half tonight? I thought Dante was supposed to come to dinner with you."

Here we go... He knew this discussion would come up sooner or later. "What am I, chopped liver?"

"Don't be silly. You know I love seeing you. You don't visit nearly often enough. I'm just curious about Dante. I don't see much of him anymore."

"He said something about needing to work tonight."

"But the club's closed on Sundays."

Cody sighed. "I know that."

Beau frowned. "He hasn't made it to any of the poker games in the last few months either."

Cody gave his uncle his best innocent smile. "I've been keeping him busy on the weekends."

"Too much information, kid. As far as I'm concerned, you're as pure as snow. I don't want to know any differently."

"Well..." He almost reminded Beau about the night he'd walked in on Cody and Dante in bed together, but thought better of it at the last second and zipped his lips shut. There wasn't any sense in antagonizing the beast. "Um, never mind. I lost my train of thought."

"You ought to have that checked out, Cody. You shouldn't be so forgetful at your age."

"Sorry, I've just had a lot on my mind lately."

“Oh? Like what?”

“Nothing much, just school and stuff.” *How I’ll explain to Dante that I don’t want him to sleep with anyone other than me.*

“You know you can talk to me about anything you need to, right?”

“I do. Thanks.” He knew he could go to Beau with a lot of things, but his sex life wasn’t one of them.

Seemingly satisfied, Beau turned his attention to the movie. Cody faced the screen, his thoughts in turmoil.

The threesomes were fun, but now he just wanted his lover to himself. He didn’t think that was too much to ask for. Whether Dante shared his opinion was another story. Speculation as to how he could make his feelings known without sounding like an immature child who didn’t want to share his toys brought no new ideas. The only thing he could think of was to be honest.

By the time the movie finished, Beau was quietly snoring on his end of the sofa. Cody couldn’t have said what the movie was about. He *had* made a decision regarding his relationship. Although Dante wasn’t expecting him to return that night, Cody was too anxious to wait until Monday afternoon. He was going to pay Dante a visit and lay everything out on the line. Now that he’d made up his mind, he didn’t want to wait another minute to tell Dante he loved him. Afterward, they could discuss monogamy.

Good or bad, he would have Dante’s response before the end of the night.

Chapter Five

Doubts assailed Cody as he trudged up the stairs to Dante's apartment. It wasn't late, only about nine o'clock, but Dante wasn't expecting him. He usually went back his dorm room on Sunday nights, so he could study for any upcoming tests and at least make an appearance of living there. Otherwise, people would steal his shit. He doubted Dante would care about his impromptu visit, regardless of whether or not he'd called first. He never had before. Dante would welcome him with open arms and a hard cock.

Cody rationalized that the nervousness thrumming through his body was more in relation to the reason behind his visit, rather than the stopover itself. His mind was conjuring any old excuse it could come up with to give him a reason to chicken out.

His thoughts circled, going from one bad outcome to the next. Was he cutting his own nose off to spite his face? After all, he'd enjoyed the other men every bit as much as Dante. Maybe more, since he was usually the one who reaped the benefits of having both men's attention on him.

No. Cody knocked on the door and waited. I'm not making a mistake. I love Dante. It's only natural that I'd want to keep him all for myself.

He raised his hand to knock again, and the door swung open before his fist met the wood. Blood drained from his face, leaving his skin cold and hot all at once, as he stared at the muscle-bound stranger who'd answered the door.

Cody quickly cataloged the other man's features without much thought. Dark hair and eyes the color of midnight. Young—somewhere around Cody's own age—and more muscular, with a deep bronze tan that Cody's fair skin would never accomplish. One of Dante's thick black bath towels hung low around the other man's narrow hips. Another was slung over the guy's shoulder, as if he'd just been running it over his wet head before he had opened the door.

Cody's hands fisted at his sides. "Who in the hell are you, and where's Dante?"

"Not that it's any of your business, you rude little shit, but I'm Milo. Dante's in the shower. Is there something I can do for you?"

"Yeah. You can tell Dante... Tell him..." Fuck. What do you say when you catch a half-naked man in your lover's apartment? There weren't any words. "Never mind. I guess there's nothing left to say."

"Whatever, man. I'll tell D you stopped by."

D? Since when did Dante go by "D"? Cody stormed down the stairs, the stranger's gaze boring a hole into his back. *I'd like to know how he's going to tell Dante I stopped by when I didn't even give him my fucking name. Maybe he'll just describe me and then Dante can play a guessing game to figure out which flavor of the week stopped by.*

Cody unlocked his car and slid behind the wheel, his teeth clenched to stop the expletives dying to break free. If he allowed himself to start ranting, there was no telling when he would be able to stop. He had never felt so fucking betrayed in his entire life.

He had to resist the urge to storm back into the building and give both men a piece of his mind. At the moment, he'd like nothing more than to work out his hurt and frustration by using his fists to pummel the truth out of Dante's lying, conniving mouth.

Instead, he pulled out onto the highway and drove, not sure of where he was going...except away. He couldn't believe Dante would bring some other man back to

his apartment the minute he thought Cody was gone. Was that guy the thing Dante needed to spend all day doing? Yeah, he'd needed to work all right. Work on some other slut's ass. What happened to their rule about not fucking anyone else unless they were together?

Flushed down the toilet...just like our relationship.

Cody was willing to put up with a lot, but he wasn't willing to compromise on trust. He'd put so much faith into Dante, faith that he wasn't a walking dick like everyone claimed. Even his own uncle—*especially Beau*—had tried to warn him not to expect much from Dante. Instead of believing the word of a man who'd loved him and raised him the best way he knew how, Cody had stood up for his lover, determined to prove everyone wrong. He wanted to show every last one of the naysayers that he could tame the untouchable Dante Santiago. He'd tried so hard to thaw Dante's heart and make it beat for him alone.

What the hell was I thinking? Apparently, I can't inspire fidelity, much less love.

His cell phone began to ring; the raunchy chorus of Nickelback's song "Animals" filled the car. Cody snatched the cell phone off the seat beside him and turned it off. He knew exactly who was calling, and he didn't want to hear his paltry excuses. What could Dante say? *Sorry, Cody, but I couldn't help myself. I was so horny I couldn't possibly wait for the length of time it would take you travel across town to fuck me.*

Bullshit.

Cody knew he would have to talk to the other man eventually. Inevitably, he would calm down and want to know what Dante had to say for himself, but that time was not now. He couldn't hear Dante out when it felt like his heart was going to burst through his ribs and splatter the windshield.

I just can't.

He would confront Dante on his own terms, when he was ready. Not the other way around. First, he needed to gain a little perspective. Running his car into a tree

because he couldn't see through the blur of moisture clinging to his eyelashes was not a good idea.

He wiped his eyes with the back of his right hand, the left secure on the steering wheel. The illumination from oncoming vehicles flashed in and out of the window, temporarily blinding him every time they blasted him with a shot of bright, concentrated light. He blinked, trying to get his eyes to focus, and sucked in a deep breath of air. He'd just drive around until he could figure out what he needed to do.

If he shed a tear or two, no one else would ever have to know about it.

* * * * *

After a lot of aimless driving and a pathetic pity party for one, Cody was surprised to find himself nearing the gated community where his uncle lived. He didn't know if it was intentional or not, but he was comforted by the thought of going home. There was nowhere he'd rather be right then.

He wasn't in the mood for an "I told you so" from Beau, but he yearned to be somewhere he was welcome and wanted. College dorms were only good for sleeping or partying. Not much else. He certainly didn't feel like dealing with his roommate's nosy questions and poor attempts to finagle Cody into giving him a no-strings-attached blowjob. The prospect of fending off unwanted advances wasn't pleasant when he was already aggravated beyond the point of having a single ounce of tolerance left.

Cody parked outside of his uncle's house and turned off the ignition. Not a single light shone inside the house, although he doubted his uncle was asleep yet. Beau was normally an even-bigger night owl than he was.

While sitting in the dark, he decided to be brave and listen to the messages on his cell phone. He didn't particularly want to hear what Dante had to say, but curiosity was a powerful thing. After turning on his phone and dialing the access codes, Cody put the phone to his ear and settled back against the driver's seat. Twelve voice messages awaited him. Cody listened with a heavy heart and then erased the messages.

Who was Dante kidding with his bullshit excuse? As if Cody were gullible enough to think this Milo guy was really Dante's brother. After six months together, he had never heard one word about a sibling, male or female. It was a little too convenient that a brother would suddenly pop out of the woodwork now.

The vast sense of loss building inside him was staggering. More than a lover, Dante had quickly become Cody's closest confidant. He had been fooled into believing he was special, that he actually meant something to Dante beyond a piece of ass. Now that certainty had been pulled out from underneath him as surely as his love and trust had been thrown back in his face by a half-naked lothario.

From the very beginning, Cody had feared he wouldn't be enough to satisfy Dante, but he had never expected their relationship to end like this. At the worst, he'd thought Dante would break up with him and move on to someone new.

After six months of friendship and love, Cody could no longer be certain he knew Dante at all. The upstanding, sometimes brutally honest man he cared about wouldn't have gone behind Cody's back and screwed around. Torn between what he wanted to believe and what he'd seen with his own two eyes, Cody's mind and heart were at an impasse.

He wasn't sure whether he should punch something or just scream until his vocal cords gave out. Everyone had told him Dante wasn't a one-man kind of guy, and he'd blown them off. He'd been warned over and over again, yet he had chosen to ignore everyone in favor of following his heart. *Stupid fucking organ.*

Worse, he'd naively believed he had steeled himself against being hurt if Dante ditched him. Falling in love had put blinders over his eyes. He'd become convinced he would be the one to change Dante for the better. Now he realized what an idiot he'd been to think Dante Santiago would ever settle down. Thank God he'd never told Dante he was in love with him.

What a laughingstock that would've made me.

Disgusted with his train of thought, Cody pitched his phone onto the passenger seat and then got out of the vehicle. There was no point in taking it inside with him. He hustled up the sidewalk, anxious to break into his uncle's liquor cabinet and drown his sorrows. Although he wasn't much of a drinker—and was technically still underage in Virginia—a hard shot of the good stuff sounded like just the ticket to forget his woes. He wasn't ignorant enough to think alcohol would make his problems disappear, but it would help him get through the night without blubbing like a baby.

As he reached the door, Cody considered whether to knock. The decision was taken out of his hands. The door swung open, Beau standing on the other side with a concerned look on his face. "Cody? What's wrong?"

"I..." Cody really didn't want to get into it while standing on the stoop. "Could we talk?"

"Sure." Beau stepped back, making room for Cody to pass. "You know I'm always here if you need me."

"Thanks."

Beau herded Cody into the family room and then waited until he sat before joining him on the sofa. "So, what's going on?"

Cody fidgeted with the hem of his T-shirt. "I, um..." *Damn, this isn't easy to say.* "I caught Dante with another man earlier tonight."

"Christ. I knew something like this would happen. I—"

"Please," Cody interrupted. "Just stop. I'm really not in the mood for an 'I told you so' right now."

Beau's expression softened. "I wasn't going to say that."

"Mm hmm," Cody murmured doubtfully.

"Well, it's his loss." Beau patted Cody's knee. "Want me to cut his balls off and feed them to the dog?"

Cody snorted and then chuckled, surprising himself. He hadn't thought he would be laughing again so soon. "You don't have a dog."

"We could always go buy one in the morning. A huge, hairy beast that'll happily chomp down on whatever we order him to devour."

Cody shook his head. "That's all right."

Beau shrugged. "Well, it was just a suggestion. Is there anything else I can do make you feel better?"

"You could fix me a drink."

"I don't think so. You're only nineteen, Cody. What kind of father figure would I be if I let you have alcohol?"

"An understanding one. It isn't as if I've never had a beer before, you know."

"Maybe so, but not in my house."

That wasn't entirely true, but there was no sense in pointing it out. What Beau didn't know wouldn't hurt him. "Fine. You can't blame me for trying, though. It's been a hell of a night."

"Sounds like it. I'm just sorry you had to go through something like this. I wish... Well, I guess it doesn't matter what I wish now. I just want you to know that this doesn't have any bearing on you as a person. You're a good kid, and anyone would be lucky to have you. Some men just aren't prepared to make a commitment."

"I still can't believe he really did it. I know what you and everyone else think of Dante, but he really seemed like he was into me. Like he thought I was more than a piece of ass. My mind keeps trying to wrap around all the things we did, every minute we spent together, and it just doesn't add up. I really thought he cared about me."

"I'm sure he did, in his own way."

"I want to believe that, but I just don't know anymore." Cody shook his head. "Did I tell you what he said? He blasted my voice mail with a bunch of messages saying the guy who answered his door half-naked was his brother. Can you believe that shit?"

"Wait." Beau's forehead crinkled. "I'm a little lost here. I thought you said you caught him with someone else?"

"I did. After I left here, I went by Dante's apartment. Some guy answered the door in a towel and said Dante was still in the shower. How much more obvious could it have been, other than seeing them flat-out fucking?"

"What happened then?"

"I left. What was I supposed to do, stick around and inhale their sex fumes?"

"You mean you took off and didn't give Dante a chance to explain?"

"Yeah. So?"

"Don't you think you should have at least confronted him about the other guy? It's possible he really *was* Dante's brother."

"Dante doesn't have any siblings."

"Yes, he does. He has two older sisters and a baby brother."

Dante really had a brother? Fuck. Cody groaned. "Dante's never mentioned his family. I figured he was an only child and that his parents had passed away or something."

"They disowned him when he came out."

Cody buried his head in his hands, laughter bubbling up in his chest like battery acid. "Man, when I fuck things up, I really do it right, don't I? I can't believe he never told me about his family."

"Did you ever ask?"

"No. It had never occurred to me." Cody looked up, dreading the disappointment he expected to see in his uncle's eyes. He knew better than to jump to conclusions about people—had been raised not to pass judgment on people and to give everyone the benefit of the doubt—but the first hint of infidelity had caused him to believe the worst about his lover. Worse, it took a lecture from Beau to make him see what a shitty

boyfriend he'd been. How could he have never asked Dante about his family? What kind of person did that? "I just assumed he didn't have any family."

Beau shook his head. "Didn't I ever tell you what happens when you assume?"

"Yes, dear uncle. Assuming makes an ass out of you and me."

"I always said you were a smart boy." Beau stood and held a hand out to Cody, helping him up. "Why don't you crash here tonight? You can find Dante and talk to him after your classes tomorrow."

"Yeah, that'll work. Thanks." He was going to need all the beauty rest he could get before he went and groveled at Dante's feet.

Chapter Six

Dante didn't sleep worth a shit. After tossing and turning all Sunday night, he gave up around four a.m. and went for a long jog in an attempt to shrug off the nervous energy making his muscles twitch. It didn't work.

When he got home, he started a big breakfast for him and Milo, figuring the kid would be starving when he woke up. Sure enough, Milo stumbled into the kitchen as Dante was pulling the last strip of bacon off the stove.

He collapsed into a chair at the table, his mouth stretched in a wide yawn. "Whatcha cookin'? I'm hungry enough to eat the ass end out of a hobbyhorse."

"Nice expression."

Milo gave an unrepentant grin. "I like it."

Dante set a plate heaped with bacon on the table next to the pancakes. "Help yourself, brat. There's plenty."

He freshened up his fourth cup of coffee and then sat across from Milo, amused to see half the food had already been appropriated. He helped himself to a little of what was left and pushed it around on his plate while watching Milo shovel one silver dollar pancake after another into his mouth.

Milo licked the syrup from his fork and then used the tines to scratch his head. "You know, I got up to piss around four and noticed you weren't here. Did you go make up with your boy?"

Dante frowned. "No."

"Where were you then?"

"I went for a run."

"Oh, God," Milo groaned. "You aren't one of those health freaks, are you?"

"Would I have cooked this crap if I were?"

"Nice point. It's good, man, thanks." Milo took another bite and then washed it down with a slug of milk. After setting his glass down, he nodded at Dante's plate. "Aren't you hungry?"

"Not really."

"Then why'd you cook?"

"No real reason. I just thought I'd fix you something, since this is your first morning here and all. Don't get used to it, though. I'm not much on being domestic all the time."

Milo shrugged. "No biggie. I can take care of myself."

"I'm sure you can." Dante took a sip of his coffee and thought of how he could bring up what had happened the day before without sounding like he was harping on the subject. "So, Milo... Remind me exactly what was said yesterday?"

Milo put down his fork and looked at Dante. "I said I was sorry, man. How was I supposed to know the little twerp is your boyfriend?"

Dante let the name-calling slide. "I'm not mad. I just want to make sure there isn't anything you forgot."

"I've already told you everything."

"Humor an old man. Tell me again."

Milo rolled his eyes, his impatience making him look more like their papa. "He asked who I was, and I told him my name. Then he wanted to know where you were. I said you were in the shower. When I inquired about whether he wanted to pass on a message to you, he paused and said something about there not being anything left to say. After that, he just stormed off."

"Shit. That doesn't sound good. I wish he would answer his damn phone."

"He'll get over it. If not, screw him. I don't know why you like him anyway. He wasn't very nice."

The pressure in Dante's head squeezed tighter. "Can you blame him? He probably thought I was fucking you, for Christ's sake."

Milo's nose wrinkled. "Gross. Why didn't you warn him about me coming to stay for a while?"

"I don't know." *Maybe because I don't like airing all the family drama...* It wasn't easy explaining family discord to someone who hadn't experienced anything similar. In a lot of ways, Cody was naive about the world. He'd never had to worry about coming out to his family or being disowned for being himself.

"Serves you right then. You should have told him I was coming."

"I was going to, after I was sure you couldn't work things out with Mama and Papa."

Milo sighed. "You should know better. It isn't as if you ever worked anything out with them."

"Maybe not, but I'd hoped they come to their senses this time around. You were the only son they had left who hadn't been disowned for being gay."

"No such luck, bro." Milo stood. "Now if you'll excuse me, I need to get out of here and see about finding a job. I appreciate you taking me in, but I need to support myself. I don't plan on staying here and mooching off you forever."

Dante rested a hand on Milo's shoulder as his younger brother walked by, stopping him. "You know you're welcome to stay here as long as you need to."

"I know. Thanks, man."

Dante nodded and let go. "Anytime, kiddo."

He glanced out the window, his mind already focusing on how to get Cody to hear him out. Nothing good would come of his young lover running around with the belief Dante was screwing around behind his back. Something would have to be done about that. Soon.

* * * * *

Cody bounced from one foot to the other, waiting for Dante to answer the door. He'd done nothing but fret during his classes all day, worrying how Dante would react to his apology. He probably should have just skipped school for the day, but he was having a hard enough time keeping up in his classes as it was. One subpar grade and Beau would shit a brick, so it was probably best not to push his luck. Even if his thoughts had been elsewhere, his body was still firmly planted in school. He may have learned something by accident, but he sure as hell hadn't been paying attention.

From the moment he woke up, his mind had been on Dante. Although Cody could kick himself in the ass for jumping to conclusions and then doubting Dante's word, he still felt like he wasn't the only one to blame for the situation. If Dante had opened up to him a little more, Cody would have been a little more prepared to believe him when he'd claimed the naked guy was his brother.

The doorknob began to turn. Cody's heart raced. A toxic case of the nerves raced up and down his spine. Before the door was fully open, he blurted, "I'm sorry. I didn't know about your brother."

To Cody's chagrin, it was Milo who appeared over the threshold. The younger man cocked his head to the side and seemed to study Cody as if he'd found something

interesting on the bottom of his shoe. "You should know about my brother. You're screwing him."

Cody scowled at the other man. "Shit. It's you."

"I'm pleased to see you too, princess."

Cody fidgeted, feeling stupid. "Is Dante around?"

"I'm right here." Dante appeared behind Milo and set a hand on his brother's shoulder. "And Milo was just leaving, weren't you, kid?"

Cody looked from Dante to Milo and back again. With the two men standing so close, it was obvious they shared DNA. They both had the same coloring and similar bone structure. Milo was a couple of inches shorter and a lot skinnier.

"Yeah, yeah. I'm out of here." Milo brushed past Cody on his way out. "See you around, princess."

Cody glared at Milo's back until the younger man disappeared down the stairs. Afterward, he turned his attention back to Dante. He stared at his lover, unsure of what to do or say next. Surely the other man had heard his embarrassing apology. The way he figured it, the next move was Dante's.

Dante stepped back. "Come on in."

"Thanks," Cody said, walking past his lover. He stopped just inside and glanced around the apartment he knew so well. It was strange being there and not knowing what to expect. Dante's home had come to feel like his own in the last six months. Now he wasn't sure if he should make himself at home or be on his best behavior.

Without a word, Dante shut the door and strode into the living room, where he sat on the corner of the sofa. Cody followed behind him and chose to sit on the opposite end, though he longed to throw himself into Dante's arms and forget the last twenty-four hours. "So," Cody said, uncomfortable.

Dante's brow furrowed. "Why are you all the way over there?"

"I guess I wasn't sure of my welcome after the way I acted last night."

"I heard what you said at the door earlier." Dante scooted closer, narrowing the space between them. "For what it's worth, I'm sorry too."

"Why didn't you stay and talk to me?"

"I wasn't thinking. I just saw a half-naked man and reacted."

"I can understand that, I suppose. But why didn't you return my calls after I left a message explaining who Milo is?"

"I thought you were lying."

Dante scowled. "We're going to have to work on your trust issues. I can't be with you if you aren't willing to have a little faith in me."

"It's not that, Dante. I want to trust you. I really do. Before last night, I thought I did. But when Milo opened the door, it was like being confronted by all the rumors and warnings I've been given about you. There he was, dripping water all over one of your towels, while you were still in the bathroom. I put two and two together and assumed he'd been in the shower with you. My brain just shorted out."

"I can see where you'd jump to conclusions, but why did you run? I don't understand why you took off and then refused to talk to me all night."

"It was stupid of me, but my gut instinct was to leave. I didn't want to hang around and hear you tell me it was over between us. Worse, I didn't want to come in and listen to you make excuses when things seemed so cut-and-dried at the time. If I could do things over, I would."

"Would you really, or are you just saying that because it's what you think I want to hear?"

"I mean it. I wish I would have just stormed into the bathroom and demanded to know what the hell was going on. We could have avoided all the drama."

Dante nodded. "That would have been nice."

"On the other hand, you should have told me about Milo. You want me to have faith in you, but you aren't exactly the easiest person to get to know, Dante. You build

walls to keep people out. I felt like a complete shit when Beau told me there was a possibility the half-naked man in your apartment might actually be your brother. For Christ's sake, we've been dating for six months, and I didn't even know you had siblings. Part of that's my fault for not asking the right questions. The rest is on you. For all I knew, thanks to your glorious communication skills, you could have been hatched from an egg. I'm not a mind reader."

"You're right." Dante rubbed the back of his neck. "I should have told you, but it's not a pleasant subject."

"I don't care. I want to know everything about you, the good and the bad. I don't expect you to be perfect—I'm definitely not—but I need you to take down some of the walls and let me in. I" —*love you so much*—"need you to be open and honest with me if there's going to be any hope of us being together."

Dante exhaled. "All right. I'll give you the abbreviated version. When I was in college I got the bright idea to come out to my parents. I'd gotten it into my head that the whole thing would be like some after-school special. There would be crying and hugging, and they'd eventually come to grips with the situation and realize I was the same person they raised. It didn't quite work out that way."

Cody leaned forward. "What happened?"

"My parents did what they thought was right, I guess. Mama sat on the sofa and cried quietly. Papa yelled and cursed the day I was born. Then, being good God-fearing Roman Catholics, they offered to send me to a camp where I could be cured of my deviant urges. When I refused, they threw me out and told me not to come back until I'd seen the light. Both of my older sisters, Helena and Mary, were too worried about Papa's disapproval to go against his wishes. Since there's an eleven-year age difference between us, Milo was too young to really understand what was going on. It has only been in the last couple of years that he's gone behind Papa's back to contact me here and there, mostly through e-mail."

Cody shuddered. Having been raised by a gay man himself, he couldn't begin to imagine what Dante had gone through. "I'm sorry. That must have been horrible for you."

"I lived." Dante shrugged. "Frankly, I'm more worried about Milo than I was myself at that age. As the baby of the family, he was sheltered and coddled more than any of the rest of us."

"I'm sure he'll be fine. He has you to help guide him." *So stoic, my strong lover.* Cody reached out to Dante, rubbing the tips of his fingers up and down Dante's brawny, corded forearm. "And you are obviously alive, since I'm really not into necrophilia."

Dante shook his head and smiled. "Smart-ass."

"That's right. I have a brilliant ass."

"Yes, you do. I love your ass."

"It loves you right back." The silly banter helped Cody relax, but it did nothing to make him forget the conversation to come. If he and Dante were being honest with each other and clearing the air, then there was no time like the present to bring everything out in the open. Things weren't going to be copacetic until he spoke his mind—if ever, depending on how his lover reacted to the suggestion of monogamy. As much as Cody loved Dante, he wasn't willing to settle for anything less than everything.

He took a deep breath and let it out slowly, building his courage. "Um, there's something else I need to tell you."

"Oh, yeah?" Dante twined his fingers through Cody's and rested them on the sofa between them. "What's that, pretty?"

Cody gazed down at their joined hands and hoped it wouldn't be the last time he felt the heat of Dante's touch. He looked up, taking in the concerned expression on his beloved's face. "While I've enjoyed the threesomes, I don't want to do them anymore. I'm in love with you, Dante. If we're going to be together, I don't want to share you with anyone else. More than anything else, I'd like for us to be a monogamous couple."

A glimmer of surprise crossed Dante's features and disappeared in the blink of an eye. The masked expression Dante wore at work took over, dimming Cody's hope of a positive outcome.

He glanced away, hurt and disappointment coalescing inside him. He pinched his nose, willing away the sharp sting of imminent tears. He felt like such a fool. He should have known he was asking too much of Dante. In hindsight, he probably shouldn't have blurted out the *L* word in the same breath as his request for monogamy.

When the silence grew unbearable, he separated his fingers from Dante's and started to rise to his feet. "I should probably go."

"Wait." Dante clasped Cody's hand between both of his own and tugged him back down onto the sofa. "Don't leave me."

"Why?" There was no point in staying if they each wanted different things.

"I don't want to lose you." Dante squeezed Cody's fingers. "I love you too."

"Really?" Cody goggled at Dante, floundering for something more intelligent to say. While he'd longed to hear Dante return the sentiment, he hadn't expected it. Instead, he had prepared for a much worse reaction.

"Yes, really. I wouldn't say the words if I didn't mean it."

"I know that." A smile tugged at Cody's cheeks. "I just can't believe it. You really love me?"

"I do." Dante's gaze softened. "I've been in love with you for a long time. I'm sorry I didn't say it sooner."

"Me too. I was afraid saying the words would scare you off."

"Now you know better." Dante pulled Cody into his arms and covered Cody's mouth with his own.

Cody went willingly. He pushed right up against Dante and tilted his head up for Dante's kiss. Strong hands rubbed down his back and cupped his ass. Cody moaned

into Dante's mouth and threw his leg over one of Dante's thighs, desperate to get closer. Using the grip he had on Cody's ass, Dante lifted him up and over, aiding Cody as he scrambled to straddle Dante's lap without breaking their kiss.

Locked in Dante's warm embrace, Cody released all his fears and threw himself into the kiss, putting all his love and yearning behind the actions of his lips and tongue. The slow exploration of mouths never sped; it kept going on and on until Cody's head spun dizzily. He needed to pull away, to breathe, but he refused to lose the connection between them so soon. Dante swirled his tongue over and around Cody's, exploring the recesses of his mouth as if he weren't ever planning to quit. There was a hungry desperation expressed that shocked Cody, a possessive bent to Dante's grip that he had never noticed before.

The disappointment he'd been preparing himself for all day came crashing down, replaced by a promising sense of expectation for the future.

Dante loves me.

Cody relished that validation of his feelings almost as much as the words themselves. He panted through each sinuous glide of lips and tongue, with his pulse thundering in his ears. He fisted his hands in the soft cotton of his lover's shirt, holding on to the wide breadth of Dante's shoulders.

Dante was the first to let go, his chest rapidly rising and falling. "Christ, Cody, you drive me crazy."

"Only in a good way, I hope."

"The best, pretty. I don't think I'll ever get enough of you."

"Speaking of enough, you never said anything about my wanting to skip the threesomes from now on..."

Dante sighed and kissed the side of Cody's face. The warmth of his breath wafted over Cody's cheek and ear. "You're more than enough for me, love. The other men were fun, but I don't need them. To be honest, I was getting tired of sharing anyway."

"Good," Cody said. He lifted his head and smiled at Dante. "Since we're in agreement, I guess I'll have to keep you."

"See that you do. I'd hate to think what my life would be like without having you around to keep things exciting."

Cody kissed the tip of Dante's nose. "You would be downright pitiful."

"You're probably right. Thank God, we never have to find out. Just think of what it would do to my reputation as a stud..." Dante mock shuddered.

"The last thing you need to worry about is your reputation."

"What should I be worried about, pretty?"

Cody nipped Dante's chin. "Me."

"Why should I worry about you? I have you right where I want you."

"And where's that?"

Dante squeezed Cody's bottom. "Right in the palm of my hands."

A knock echoed through the room, and then the front door crept open. Cody turned just in time to see Milo stick his head inside and look at them. "Are you finished with the lovefest yet? As much as I'd like to wait in the alcove all day, I need to get my keys. Someone rushed me out of the apartment and made me forget them."

Dante laughed and hugged Cody close. "Come on in, Milo. The lovefest is just beginning, but we aren't doing anything you can't see."

"Do I need to find somewhere else to crash tonight?"

"No," Dante said to his brother, without looking away from Cody. "But you might want to invest in some earplugs while you're out. You're probably going to need them."

"Great," Milo deadpanned. "That's just great."

Laughing, Cody leaned forward and pressed his lips to Dante's in a soft, slow kiss. Against Dante's mouth, he said, "I love you."

Dante pulled back scant inches and gazed into Cody's eyes. "I love you too. Don't ever doubt it."

 THE END 

Amanda Young

Amanda Young is a multi-published, erotic romance author. Since she tends to write whatever strikes her whimsy, all of her novels fall into various subgenres. You never know what merry adventure her evil muse will devise next.

Basically, she writes stories about people who love indiscriminately and wholeheartedly. Her characters are never perfect; they're flawed and oftentimes troubled. Which makes it that much more satisfying when they receive the happy ending we all deserve. No matter what genre her books fall into, she can guarantee they'll end with a happily ever after. In her opinion, it's just not a romance without one.