



Loose Id

RECKLESS PASSION

AMANDA YOUNG

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About this Title

Genre: LGBT Erotic Contemporary

Previous Title: *Reckless Behavior*

Beau Bradbury has it all. He's good looking, owns a lucrative business, and has an endless supply of hunks vying for his attention. His skinny, uptight personal assistant shouldn't rate a blip on his radar. Nevertheless, there's just something about Adam that Beau can't resist.

One night of drunken passion leads to nearly a year of secret trysts during office hours. Adam keeps his private life confidential, while Beau pretends to want nothing more than a good time. It's a good arrangement, until a simple phone call ruins the status quo and makes Beau green with envy.

Frustrated that Adam might be seeing someone else, Beau tries to put his attraction to the younger man behind him. However, all that changes with the introduction of Adam's son. Instantly smitten with the sweet little boy, Beau is all the more driven to claim Adam for his own. All he has to do is convince his wary lover to open his heart and trust that there's more to Beau than his playboy persona suggests.

Publisher's Note: *This book contains explicit sexual content, graphic language, and situations that some readers may find objectionable: Anal play/intercourse, male/male sexual practices.*

Dedication

My sincere thanks to everyone who helped make this story shine. Without the support of my editor, proofreaders, and beta readers, Beau and Adam's story may never have seen the light of day.

Prologue

October 2008

Beau Bradbury stared at his laptop, the last quarter's earnings for Club Casbah slowly burning into his retinas. Glaring at them didn't change the fact that memberships were on a downward swing. With the economy doing a nosedive, people just weren't willing to splurge on expensive gentlemen's clubs in order to get their rocks off. Something would have to be done if he wanted to stay in the black, but he wasn't sure what. He certainly couldn't raise the already exorbitant fees he was charging current members. That would only result in losing loyal customers who couldn't afford the rate increase.

He refilled a highball glass with bourbon and swallowed the bitter brew, enjoying the heat that spread down his throat and crashed into his stomach. If there was ever a good time to get drunk, this certainly looked like the occasion.

Leaning back in his chair, Beau tried to think of some way to drum up business without losing his edge.

Casbah was known as an exclusive club, meaning he couldn't promote a two-for-one deal without fucking up the club's reputation. People didn't pay good money for a club any Tom, Dick, or Harry could be admitted into at a moment's notice.

After draining the glass, he topped it off yet again. A pleasant buzz built as he drank his fill. Thoughts of work circled around and around in an endless loop. With no easy solution in sight, his business woes slowly dissolved and were replaced by Beau's favorite mental candy these days.

Adam Winger.

Having hired the young man as his personal assistant the month before, Beau was still on his best behavior around the guy. At twenty-one, Adam was a prime specimen of male virility.

Twelve years older than Adam, Beau normally felt like a perverted chicken hawk for lusting after the younger man. At the moment, he just felt horny and in need of some TLC.

However, he had no intention of acting on his desire to fuck Adam's pert little ass into next week. That didn't mean he couldn't think about it all he wanted, though. No one ever needed to know who he was fantasizing about on the rare occasions when he rubbed one out.

It wasn't that he lacked for company so much as he was sick of the club scene. Taking care of his own needs was simpler than bringing someone home for the night, then having to kick them out the following morning. His taste in men invariably meant he chose the clingiest guy available, someone he'd have to pry out of his life with a crowbar, regardless of how quickly the other man had agreed to casual sex the night before.

Being a wealthy business owner had drawbacks as well as perks.

Those who weren't swayed by his bank account would usually drop and spread 'em for his blond good looks or the body he religiously exercised. Single and in his thirties, Beau had no intention of letting an ounce of fat touch his short and stocky frame. If he weren't careful, it would be too damn easy to go from solid to flabby.

Perish the thought. A fat ass wouldn't catch the attention of anyone, regardless of how much I'm worth.

Beau closed his eyes. His mind flashed from one improper image to another. Adam taking advantage of Beau's home gym, his pale skin glistening as he made use of the treadmill. Sweaty black curls clung to the sides of his heart-shaped face. Beau was half convinced the man's tiny running shorts and nearly transparent tank tops were designed as punishment for horny, leering men of his ilk. Learning Adam dressed to the left, and had surprisingly large balls for a man his size, had been worth the torment.

Another image came of Adam decked out to the nines in a formfitting rented tux, his cheeks tinged with pink from all the compliments he'd received during the last party at the club. The coquettish looks and bashful blushing had only made Beau want to bend Adam over the nearest booth and fuck him all the more.

Beau palmed his cock through the slick fabric of his slacks. Christ, he ached. It'd been too long since he'd gotten laid. That was going to have to change. Soon.

A quiet knock sounded on the door, followed by Adam's deep voice. "Boss?"

"It's open." Beau yanked his hand away from his dick and brushed his bangs out of his eyes. He hoped his face wasn't as red as it felt.

Adam opened the door and then strode into the room carrying his laptop. His curls stuck up in spiky little ringlets, as if he'd been running his fingers through them. Dressed casually, Adam wore a pair of snug chinos and a faded black T-shirt. "Hey, I was just going through your calendar for this month, and it looks like you're double booked for the thirtieth."

Speak of the devil, and he appears. Beau blinked away his inner thoughts and stared at the man he'd been obsessing over for the last thirty-plus days. Already half-hard, his cock gave a tiny, happy jerk inside his pants. *Why does Adam have to be so fucking adorable?*

Beau coughed, trying to concentrate on what Adam was saying. Not an easy feat when his mind was busy translating everything into a subtle come-on. "Why don't you switch the Adalgo appointment to the morning of the first and cancel my racquetball game with Mitch."

There. I can do professional, even while half-baked.

A hint of wet pink tongue flashed over Adam's lower lip as he stared down at his laptop. "That'll work."

Beau swallowed a groan.

Adam looked up, his deep brown eyes concerned. "Are you okay?"

Fuck. He hadn't meant to make a noise. "Fine."

"All right." Adam closed his laptop. "Is there anything else you need from me tonight? It's closing in on seven o'clock, and I'd like to call it a night."

"No. I—" Beau's gaze lowered to Adam's mouth while the younger man licked his lips and made the plump, rosy flesh glisten. Beau's control snapped like a dry leaf. *Fuck it.* "There is something I need from you."

"Oh?"

Beau got up, his legs a little unsteady beneath him, and advanced toward Adam. "I need you to stop batting your lashes and undressing me with your eyes. If I see you lick your lips in my direction one more time, you'd better make damn sure you're willing to back up the move with some action."

Adam took a step backward. "I...I don't know what you mean, sir."

“Don't you?” Beau snatched the laptop out of Adam's hands and set it on his desk. “I've seen the way you look at me when you don't think I'm paying attention. You want me. I know you do. Even if you're too chickenshit to admit it.”

Adam's eyes widened, his chest rising and falling faster. “If that were true, and I'm not saying it is, I still wouldn't act on it.”

“Why?” Logically, Beau knew all the reasons. They no longer mattered. Lust overruled common sense and fueled his need to claim Adam in the most basic, intimate way possible.

“I work for you. Isn't that explanation enough?”

“No.” Beau caught Adam's chin and tilted it up. Without giving Adam a chance to pull away, Beau swooped in and caught the younger man's mouth with his own. Adam's lips were firm yet soft, the lower one providing just enough cushion for the brute force behind Beau's kiss.

Adam gasped and parted his lips, providing just enough space for Beau to take advantage. He slid his tongue into Adam's mouth and explored, caressing and teasing as he got his first taste. Adam's mouth was flavored with the French vanilla coffee he favored. A hint of a darker, infinitely richer tang lingered beneath, prompting Beau to keep kissing, to keep savoring, until he could figure out precisely what that unidentifiable zest was.

Meanwhile he palmed Adam's cheek, the skin hot and prickly under his hand, and buried his fingers in the soft black curls he'd been dying to touch since the first time he'd laid eyes on the younger man.

Adam's reluctance slowly vanished. His mouth became more pliant, his tongue more daring. His hands fisted in Beau's shirt and tugged him closer, returning Beau's aggression tenfold.

Beau lost himself in the taste of Adam's lips and the feel of the younger man pressing against him. Although Adam was an inch or so taller than Beau, his slighter build felt good in Beau's arms. Right.

Beau's pulse thundered in his ears, blood racing from one head to the other. He would've liked to go on kissing Adam forever, but his body had other, more pressing desires. All he needed was to hear Adam say he wanted this just as much Beau did, and then he'd give in to his desire to get the younger man naked. He yearned to press against Adam, skin to skin, and explore every inch of the sweet body he'd been fantasizing about for so long.

Panting, Beau tore his mouth away from the soft cushion of Adam's lips. "Say it."

Adam lifted his eyes and stared at Beau. "Huh?"

"Tell me you want me. I need to hear you say it before this goes any further."

"I—" Adam swallowed. "God, I want you. You have no idea how much."

Beau didn't bother contradicting Adam, even though he had a pretty damn good idea of how much his desire was returned. In fact, he could feel the long, hard proof rubbing against his hip. His own body insisted he forge ahead, strip Adam bare, and feast on the pale, creamy excesses he divulged.

Following one last taste of Adam's lips, Beau dropped his arms to his sides and took a step back. He wanted Adam naked. *Now*. "Someone's wearing too many clothes."

Adam stared at Beau with eyes gone dark with desire. "We both are. Want to do something about it?"

"Hell, yes." Beau tugged Adam's shirt out of his pants, while Adam went to work on Beau's slacks. The slick fabric slid down his legs and pooled around his ankles as he yanked the T-shirt over Adam's head, revealing a smooth chest so unlike his own hirsute physique. Unable to resist, Beau ran his palms down Adam's chest, absorbing body heat and rubbing the silky skin. Just for the hell of it, he took one of Adam's tiny light brown nipples between thumb and forefinger and tweaked it.

Adam shivered and arched his back, pushing into Beau's touch. "Turnabout is fair play."

With a grin, Beau lavished the same treatment on Adam's other nipple. "I look forward to it."

Adam's nimble fingers unbuttoned Beau's short-sleeved dress shirt and parted the fabric. Once Beau's chest was bare, Adam bent, caught the stiff peak of one nipple between his lips, and sucked hard, flicking his tongue back and forth over the taut bud.

Beau carded his fingers through Adam's hair and fisted the dark curls, forcing Adam's mouth away from his chest. "Enough. Finish undressing and bend over the desk."

Adam *tsked*. "So bossy."

Beau toed off his loafers. "Are you complaining?"

“No.” Adam dropped his hands to his belt, slid it open, and quickly shucked his pants to down around his calves. He turned, showing off the perfect, heart-shaped mounds of his ass, and bent over the desk. Glancing back over his shoulder, he winked at Beau. “This what you wanted?”

“Oh yeah.” Before all his blood drained south, Beau bent and pulled a condom out of his wallet. Rubber in hand, he stepped out of his slacks and approached Adam, drawn to the other man's bottom like a moth to a flame. Each cheek was flawlessly round and plump, with just a hint of definition in the sides. Without being spread, the shallow cleft showed off the minutest hint of pink.

Beau ran his hands over the outside of Adam's buttocks while the younger man quivered beneath his attention. “I'd say this is just about perfect.”

“Glad you approve.” Adam wiggled his ass. “Just tell me you have rubbers, and I'll be a happy boy.”

“I have it covered.” To prove it, Beau ripped open the condom and tossed the foil onto the desk in front of Adam. He rolled the slippery rubber down his shaft, giving himself a minute to enjoy his hand on his dick. Suited up and ready to play, Beau pressed up against Adam's ass and rubbed the lubed tip between the cheeks he wanted to split wide. His alcohol-fogged mind whispered that something was missing.

Lube. Fucking hell.

Beau pressed his lips against the curve of Adam's throat. The younger man's pulse leaped beneath Beau's kiss. He was pretty sure he was going to cry if he didn't get to bury his dick inside Adam. “How would you feel about being fucked dry?”

“What?” Adam glanced back over his shoulder. “No.”

“The condom's lubed.”

“That isn't enough.” Adam groaned and rested his head on the desk. “Christ, what now?”

Another way to open Adam and indulge his own hunger dawned on Beau. “Give me just a second, and we'll be good to go.”

“What? But I thought you—”

“Never mind what I said.” Beau dropped to his knees and ran his hands over Adam's ass and thighs. He kissed one firm cheek and then other, inhaling a musky, earthy scent that went straight to his groin and made him throb in the best possible way. His dick knew exactly what it wanted, and wasn't shy about making it known. The slight glimmer of pink between Adam's taut buttocks called to him, hinting at the pleasure to come.

A moan spilled from Adam, coloring the air with the sound of impatient pleasure. “Are you...?”

Adam's voice trailed off on a high whine as Beau separated the younger man's cheeks and licked a wide path from tailbone to balls and back again. He buried his face in Adam's ass, lapping every inch of skin he could reach. Adam squirmed, moving back and forth as if he couldn't decide whether he liked the feel of Beau's tongue. Beau chose to believe he loved it. God knew Beau loved to rim a nice ass; Adam's was a work of art.

Placing his thumbs at the outer edges of Adam's hole, Beau spread his lover's cheeks wider. The tight ring parted, showing a peek of the darker rose color within. Beau's mouth filled with saliva, a substance he planned to put to good use.

Leaning forward, he blew air over Adam's crease and stared as the tight little hole tried to clench, to no avail.

Adam shuddered, his hips swaying as much as Beau's tight grip allowed. “God, Beau... Quit teasing me.”

“Is this what you want?” Beau flicked his tongue over and around Adam's quivering hole, keeping the pressure light enough to tease and little more.

“Harder.” Adam squirmed, pushing back against Beau's mouth. “*Please.*”

Adam's pleading finally got through to Beau. He dragged his tongue across Adam's hole, lapping back and forth. Each pass over the fluttering muscles yanked a groan out of Adam. The steely buttocks under Beau's hands tensed and relaxed, while he continued on. He kept licking across the small opening, prodding it with his tongue on every pass.

Adam pleaded for more, his guttural moans egging Beau on.

He pressed closer, smashing his nose into Adam's skin and limiting his airways. However, the restriction didn't stop him in the least. He breathed through his mouth and licked harder. He sealed his mouth over the tiny opening and sucked, caressing the taut ring with soft flicks of his

tongue. The moment Adam loosened up, Beau stiffened his tongue and thrust it within, wiggling it back and forth just inside Adam's entrance.

Adam wailed and pushed back so hard, it knocked Beau on his ass. Laughing, he climbed to his feet and bent over Adam, pressing his thick cock between Adam's cheeks. "I take it you liked that?"

"Yes! That was... No one's ever..." Adam took a deep breath and exhaled. "It felt so good."

"It's supposed to." Beau kissed the curve of Adam's shoulder and ground against him. "I can think of something that will feel even better."

"Oh yeah." Adam rocked his hips, rubbing his ass against Beau's cock. "I think you've made me wait long enough."

"I agree." He couldn't wait to get inside Adam. "I'm gonna screw you so hard."

Adam groaned and rolled his hips. "Enough talk. Fuck me."

Beau spit in his hand and rubbed it over his shaft, remoistening the lubrication on the condom. His hand felt so damn good, he closed his eyes and prayed for staying power. He hadn't been this ready to pop in longer than he cared to remember. *There's just something about Adam...*

Grasping his shaft around the base, Beau lined his dick up with heaven and pressed forward. After a moment's resistance, Adam's body gave way and let him in, swallowing his crown and half his shaft in one hungry gulp. Tight heat surrounded him, clamping down hard enough to make him grit his teeth. The last thing he wanted to do was shoot off before he even managed to get all the way inside.

Adam stiffened and yelped, the muscles in his back rippling.

"Adam... Fuck, you're tight. Are you okay?" There was tight, and then there was *tight*. There was no way Adam was enjoying anything at the moment. The younger man's body felt rigid beneath Beau's. Maybe skipping the lube hadn't been such a good idea. Some men had a harder time accommodating a thick prick than others.

"Just give me a minute. Christ, you're big."

Normally Beau lived to hear those words. At the moment, a big dick didn't seem like a good thing. He petted Adam's side awkwardly, wondering what he should do. "Maybe we should stop." His dick might turn blue and fall off, but he wasn't going to hurt Adam in pursuit of an orgasm. If he had to, he could always jack off later. It wouldn't be good—not even fucking close—but he would make do.

"No. I'm fine. Just—*oh damn*—just give me a second."

Beau ran his hands up and down Adam's torso and hips. "You have to relax, babe, or this isn't going to work." Sure, Beau could get off this way—he was already closer than he wanted to admit—but he yearned for Adam to come too. He'd never been a big supporter of the "suffer through it and be a man" mentality. After all, what was the point of sex if it didn't feel good?

"I'm trying." Ever so slowly, Adam's body began to relax. The almost painfully tight constriction around Beau's cock started to loosen.

In an effort to move things along, Beau reached around and found Adam's cock. Even at half-mast, Adam was a handful. Stroking from base to tip, Beau tried to restore Adam's flagging desire.

Within seconds, Adam's dick firmed in Beau's hand. The young man's respiration picked up; quick moans interspersed with ragged puffs of air. "Do it," Adam pleaded. "Fuck me."

Taking Adam's word that he was all right, Beau slowly withdrew until only his crown remained lodged inside. His hips instantly reversed direction and pushed forward, reburying his length, all the way to his balls this time.

Adam's back muscles undulated. He spread his legs farther apart and white-knuckled the desk. "Oh God."

Taking that as a good sign, Beau continued to screw himself in and out of the hottest, tightest ass he'd ever had the pleasure of fucking. A grunt flew from Adam's mouth each time Beau bottomed out, joining the breathless moans Beau couldn't hold in. He wasn't normally a moaner, but the way Adam squeezed him didn't lend to silence. Adam's channel rippled and contracted, stroking Beau's prick as he moved in and out.

His hips took on a life of their own, picking up speed as they slapped against Adam's taut buttocks, over and over again. Changing his angle of entry, Beau bent his knees and pumped

harder, faster, plowing Adam's ass with all the force he could muster. If he was going to come, he was damn sure going to take Adam over the edge with him.

“Ah...” Adam cried out and thrust his back toward Beau. “Beau...”

Beau thrust harder, careful not to change his approach. “Right there?”

“Uh-huh. Oh, *please*...”

With every thrust, Beau concentrated on pegging Adam's sweet spot. The desire to make the normally reserved and quiet young man howl with pleasure swelled, taking center stage in Beau's mind. Right behind it was his own need to come.

Unsure of how much longer he would last, Beau fisted Adam's dick and stroked harder, wanting to feel his lover come around him before he let go. Already his balls ached with the need to unload, his dick nearly sore from shuttling in and out of Adam's ultratight ass. “Adam...I'm close. Come for me, baby.”

“Al—*oh*—almost there.” Adam rocked back and forth, shoving his ass back toward Beau's dick one second and then fucking Beau's fist the next.

Beau tightened his grip on Adam's rod and focused on the upper inches, pumping his hand over Adam's slick crown. Closing his eyes, he centered his thoughts on dragging air in and out of his lungs and not coming. The tingle behind his balls warned that the end was near. Adam's ass tightened around him, although whether it was from Adam's orgasm or his own dick swelling, he couldn't tell. He was too busy gritting his teeth and trying not to yell his fool head off as lightning charged up his spine.

He shot his load, over and over again, until he was afraid he'd pop the condom. Pleasure swelled and ebbed within him. Beau rolled with it, jerking a little as he kept pushing into Adam. Somewhere in the back of his mind he found the good sense to continue pumping Adam's cock until hot cum spilled over his knuckles. The loud shout Adam gave assured Beau the younger man had gotten off, good and hard. At least he'd set out to do what he'd intended, even if he had blown first.

Oh, man. I should have made Adam blow me before I fucked him. I would have lasted longer, and it would have been so pretty. Next time, maybe...

Beau kissed the smooth plane of skin between Adam's shoulder blades. “That was fucking great.”

“Mm hmm,” Adam murmured, without moving. “I never knew it could be like that.”

“What do you...?” Beau snapped his mouth shut. *Sweet Jesus*. He carefully withdrew and tore off the used rubber, then pitched it into the trash can by the desk. “Adam, you aren't saying this was your first time, are you?”

Adam stiffened. He lifted himself off the desk and stood upright, meeting Beau's gaze. “Well, I wasn't a virgin, if that's what you're asking.”

“That's good.” He could have really hurt Adam. He hadn't exactly been gentle. Losing your anal V card was hard enough without being bent over a desk and fucked without lube.

Adam's nostrils flared. “Not that it's any of your business, but I've had sex plenty of times. I've just never been on the receiving end before.”

Fuck. “I'm sorry, Adam. If you had told me, I would have”—*stayed far, far away from your ass*—“been gentler.” Christ, he'd always kept his distance from green men. Unlike so many of his friends, he'd never had the slightest inclination to pop anyone's cherry.

Adam snorted, in the process of pulling up his pants. “I'm fine. A little sore, maybe, but far from broken.”

“That's...good.” The fact that he was repeating himself made him feel like a tool, but he didn't know what to say. *Sorry I fucked you* just didn't have a nice ring to it. It would also be a huge lie. Although he didn't like that Adam had so little experience, he couldn't deny that he'd come harder than hell. His knees were still trembling from the force of his release.

Rather than say anything else to make himself look like more of a moron, Beau joined Adam in getting dressed. Unfortunately that only bought him a few minutes. Not nearly long enough for his brain to reboot and kick out all the happy, “I just got laid” vibes still soaring through his body. He needed to figure out a polite way to disentangle himself from this situation without losing his personal assistant in the process. The thing about breaking in newbies that bothered him the most was the way they tended to equate sex with automatically being boyfriends. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Sex was sex. Simple as that.

Although Beau loved the idea of finding one man, falling in love, and creating a life with him, that person wasn't going to be Adam. Adam was too young, too inexperienced, and

undoubtedly still had wild oats to sow. Pinning any hopes on someone so green would only end in heartbreak.

Fully dressed, Adam stood staring at Beau, as if waiting for him to say or do something. Beau felt out of his element. He cleared his throat and said the first thing that popped into his mind. “So, um... You'll switch those appointments around for me, then?”

Adam winced. The move was subtle but there. “Yes, sir. I'll get it taken care of.”

Beau was screwed and he knew it, but he couldn't think of a decent way to be nice without giving the younger man false hope for something that wasn't going to happen. He scratched his head and looked at Adam without making direct eye contact. “That'd be great. Thanks. I, um, I just want you to know that what happened here won't affect your job in any way. Neither of us went into this with any kind of expectations”—*or so he assumed*—“so we should probably just chalk it up to one crazy night and put it behind us.”

Adam gave a terse nod. “Sure. It was a mistake. It won't happen again, sir.”

It was Beau's turn to wince, although he hoped he did a better job of hiding it than Adam. “I assume I'll see you in the morning, then?”

Adam scooped his laptop off the desk and held it against his chest. “Yes, sir. Bright and early. If that'll be all...?”

Beau nodded. “Yeah, sure. Drive home safely.”

“Of course.” Adam turned and walked away.

Beau stood in the center of the room and watched Adam leave, an odd sense of regret climbing up the back of his throat. Chalking the feeling up to not being able to repeat one of the best sexual experiences of his life, Beau walked back to his desk and poured himself another drink.

Chapter One

August 2009

Adam was at his wit's end. Standing at the back of the formal living room, he watched Beau schmooze his way from one wealthy benefactor to another and marveled at the graceful way the other man carried himself. Regal and yet comfortable, Beau moved from one person to the next and mingled with his guests. A smug smile graced his handsome face, while prisms of light caught the individual strands of his short golden hair and made it glisten with highlights that could only be achieved by too much time spent in the sun. Even Beau's classic charcoal suit, the crisp white shirt beneath left open at the collar, lent the impression of casual elegance. Adam was fairly sure he wouldn't have been able to achieve the same look with a team of stylists and fashion designers. He was too tall, too skinny, and too prone to stumbling over his feet rather than gliding on them.

Knowing Beau was only trying to drum up business didn't help staunch the acidic splash of jealousy each time Adam saw his lover air-kiss cheeks or laugh at some fat cat's lame jokes. If anything, the artificial friendliness made him want to puke.

Contrary to what he'd said the first night he and Beau had slept together, Adam fell prey to the older man's raw magnetism again and again, casting aside any pretense of playing hard to get. The long hours they worked, paired with social drinking and an undeniable chemistry, made resisting the attraction almost impossible. Giving in had been all too easy. Being with his boss felt so damn good, until the moment Beau inevitably pulled away, forcing Adam to go home and crawl into bed alone, ashamed of his lack of control.

Seeing Beau kiss ass for the sake of a buck brought home how very little Adam truly knew about the other man.

Beau waffled from coolly professional to wildly seductive, leaving Adam confused as to which facet of Beau's personality would greet him at any given time. The only thing Adam felt sure of was the knowledge that their association wasn't going anywhere. The sex was crazy hot, but sparkling chemistry did not lead to storybook endings.

More than anything else, Adam yearned for a partner, someone with whom to share all the ups and downs life had to offer. Beau was good for a killer orgasm, but not much else. He would never be the kind of man Adam needed in his life, even if his contrary libido said otherwise.

Tearing his attention away from the man haunting his thoughts, Adam gazed around the open space before him. Two of the four walls housed large bay windows that overlooked the picturesque grounds, but the view held no appeal when compared to the cold beauty inside. Because of the vintage furnishings and delicate glass tables, the formal living room was one of the least used in the sprawling mansion. Decorated in sterile shades of white, from the plush beige carpet to the blindingly white high-backed sofas and matching wing chairs, the entire area was a parent's worst nightmare. One small child could decimate the posh surroundings in a matter of seconds.

Adam himself was a little concerned about making a mess. Every trip inside the room was preceded by a check of his shoes and clothes to make sure he wasn't carrying filth into the pristine space. Thankfully, he could count on one hand the number of times he'd been required to go inside for one thing or another. Unless Beau was hosting a dinner party or some other gathering, the heavy double doors leading into the room remained sealed shut. Truth be told, it didn't seem like Beau used more than a handful of the rooms at his disposal. The rest of the house would have collected dust, if not for the housekeeper who came in twice a week.

Upon being hired, Adam remembered being in awe of the house—and more than a little intimidated by the man who owned it. He'd never been inside such a grand home, much less lived in one. After being raised in a tiny two-bedroom apartment, the same home where he currently lived, Adam was unsettled, to say the least. His entire pad would have fit into the palatial foyer of Beau's home, with spare room left over.

Nevertheless, over time he'd come to think of the mansion as a home like any other. That is, until Beau threw these gatherings and reminded Adam of how very little he had in common with the upper crust of society. As Beau's personal assistant, Adam did everything from wrangle

laundry to help organize functions. Privy to the expense put into each endeavor, Adam could appreciate the effort Beau took to impress while still resenting the fact that the cost of the hors d'oeuvres these people sneered at would have covered his grocery bill for a month. The bitter pill of jealousy was difficult to swallow but damn hard to ignore. Envy wasn't an emotion he enjoyed, least of all when he had to return home to his son and wonder how he was going to provide the child with a better future.

However, now was not the time to dwell on life's little mysteries. He had a job to do; one Beau paid him well to perform. While the others were mingling and having a good ole time, Adam was supposed to be observing from the shadows and making sure everything ran smoothly.

So far so good...

Adam slipped out of the room to check on the caterers. Unlike most homes he'd visited, Beau's large kitchen was hidden at the rear of the house, with its own private servants' entrance and tiny parking area. Although Beau had never asked it of him, Adam normally left his car in the small gravel lot. Since his vehicle was prone to leaking oil, he preferred not to chance leaving even a single garish stain on the circular driveway out front.

Passing a waiter dressed in a smart white blazer and shirt, black bow tie and slacks, Adam sneaked a peek inside the kitchen. Men and women hustled back and forth, refilling trays of appetizers and slim champagne flutes. After watching for a moment and seeing everything was under control, he turned to leave.

Strong hands clamped down on his shoulders and pushed him face-first into the wall. Adam struggled to turn around, to no avail. A hard body pressed against him from behind, cutting off any avenue for escape.

Before he could panic, firm lips pressed against the side of his neck, right beneath his ear. "Relax. It's just me."

Adam's tension fled. He craned his neck, staring back at Beau. "Shouldn't you be with your guests?"

Beau nuzzled Adam's throat, kissing him. "I think I can spare a minute or two for the best-looking man here."

A silent thrill raced down Adam's spine. Curbing the urge to smile, he said, "Then what are you doing here with me?"

"Funny." Beau's hand ran down Adam's side and then slipped beneath his jacket. "I love seeing you in this suit. It makes me want to strip you down and muss you up."

Adam was thankful Beau approved, because the navy suit was the only one he owned. "I'm glad you like it."

"Mm...I do." Beau nibbled the column of Adam's throat. His hand settled over Adam's crotch and squeezed. "I like this more."

The rough grasp of Beau's fingers pulled a quiet groan from Adam. He wanted to say no and pull away, put an end to all this foolishness. Instead, he moved into Beau's embrace and wrapped his arms around the older man's neck. Every time they stood like this, Adam felt like he should be looking up into Beau's eyes instead of slightly down. Beau's personality was so much larger than life, it made it seem like the man was taller than he was.

Adam parted his lips, moistening them in anticipation. He didn't have to wait long. Beau caught Adam's mouth beneath his own and ravaged it, kissing Adam with a passion that stole his breath and left him with the inability to think of anything but the man pressing against him. Right or wrong, he wanted Beau. The strong chemistry arcing between them wouldn't be denied. Fighting it was an effort in futility.

Adam met Beau's tongue halfway, swirling his own over and around Beau's in a primitive dance meant to beguile Beau into giving Adam what he wanted. He couldn't have said precisely what he craved, but Beau's touch was the only thing that relieved the churning ache in the pit of Adam's stomach.

Or maybe I just have an ulcer.

Either way, he couldn't get enough of Beau. The woodsy scent of his favorite cologne teased Adam's senses. His mouth watered for more of Beau's kisses. His skin fevered for more of the older man's caresses. He longed to hear Beau pant and moan, calling his name at the height of bliss. The sight of Beau naked and trembling seemed scorched into his memory, but that didn't prevent him from wanting to see the real thing over and over, if only to verify Beau looked as good as he remembered.

All of it worked together to drive Adam to his knees, figuratively and literally. He tore his mouth from Beau's and slid down the wall, ready and willing to service Beau in a way that had nothing to do with his job and everything to do with mutual pleasure.

Grasping Beau's thick, muscular thighs, Adam rubbed his cheek over the bulge behind Beau's fly. Up so close, the heady scent of Beau's desire went straight to Adam's dick and made it throb. The potent aroma brought back images and feelings, reminding him of how satisfying the heavy weight of Beau's shaft felt gliding over his tongue, spilling briny tears across his taste buds.

A chord of longing shot through Adam, heating him from the inside out. He needed skin. Wanted it with a fervor he couldn't explain. His hands fumbled with the clasp on Beau's slacks, clumsy in their haste to reach the prize beneath. At any second, someone could round the corner and catch them going at it. Adam didn't give a shit. They would have to be quick, but that was okay; after almost a year of fast and dirty trysts, he was getting used to it.

One of Beau's hands left the wall and threaded through Adam's hair, letting him know his lover wanted this just as badly as he did. "God, Adam. Hurry."

Beau's pants opened under Adam's persistence. The zipper slid down with a quiet hum, revealing hair-roughened skin and a long, thick erection topped by a swollen, plum-colored crown. A stark tan line rode low on Beau's hips, highlighting the older man's groin better than wrapping paper. Adam licked his lips and leaned forward, beyond ready to take Beau into his mouth.

A sharp, discordant buzz lanced through Adam's side. So intent on the goal at hand, it took a moment for him to realize the vibrating was coming from his cell phone. With Beau's fat knob resting on his lips, Adam was damn tempted to ignore his phone. He wanted nothing more than to close the remaining space and swallow Beau whole.

Thoughts of who might be calling cooled his ardor faster than a bucket of ice. With an apologetic look at Beau, Adam snatched his phone out of his pocket. "Hello."

"Hello," a nasal female repeated. "I'm trying to reach a, um, Mr. Adam Winger."

"Speaking. May I ask who's calling?"

"This is Margery Doolittle. I'm a registrar here at Memorial Hospital. I'm sorry to report I have your son in the emergency room. If you could just—"

“My God. Is Johnny all right?” Adam rose to his feet, his pulse ringing in his ears.

“Your son is fine, sir. I’m afraid I can’t tell you what’s brought him to the emergency room due to patient confidentiality, but I would appreciate it if you could get here as soon as possible.”

“Then he’s really okay?”

“He’s fine, sir. He was brought in with an adult we’re treating, although I really can’t say anything more without violating privacy laws.”

“All right. I’ll be right there.” Adam mentally calculated the drive time. It took twenty minutes on a good day. “Give me fifteen minutes.”

Adam said good-bye and clicked the phone shut, his mind already spinning with all the possible implications of why Johnny might be at the hospital. *Christ*. Had something happened to Mrs. Brando? What the hell was going on?

A throat cleared, jerking Adam back to attention. He turned to find Beau looking at him curiously. The older man had pulled himself back together and looked as suave as he had before he’d waylaid Adam. Nevertheless, Adam felt the need to apologize. “I’m really sorry about leaving you hanging, but I need to go.”

Beau nodded toward the phone, his brow furrowed in confusion. “Want to tell me what that was all about?”

Adam felt a twinge of guilt. He wasn’t sure why he’d never mentioned his son to Beau, but now certainly wasn’t the right time to explain. “Later. I really have to get to the hospital.”

“All right.” Beau sighed. “Just, um, drive carefully, then.”

“Thanks,” Adam called over his shoulder, already moving toward the kitchen. He needed to get to Johnny as soon as humanly possible. He could ponder why he’d never mentioned his son to Beau later, after he brought his kiddo home, safe and sound.

The entire drive to the hospital was spent thanking everything holy that Johnny was okay. All the same, a tiny part of Adam refused to believe his son was fine until he’d discerned it for himself. If there was a single scratch on Johnny, Adam would never forgive himself. He was the one who had hired Katherine Brando, a retired schoolteacher who lived in the same apartment building, to watch after Johnny while he was at work, rather than accepting a lower-paying job with better hours.

What the hell was I thinking?

Katherine was a nice woman, but she was also seventy, if she was a day. He should have known better than to place Johnny in her care. So what if he'd been stuck between a rock and a hard place. He should have looked for a job with a normal schedule, instead of accepting a position under Beau—who needed him to work all manner of hours. Then he would have been home with Johnny where he belonged, rather than playing tonsil hockey with Beau.

Adam swerved into the emergency-room parking lot, taking the sharp curve so fast, his passenger-side tires tried to lift off the asphalt. Rather than searching for a space, he pulled up right in front of the entrance and brought the car to a screeching stop. Out of the vehicle and inside the hospital in record time, Adam sped toward the reception desk, wishing he'd thought to ask where his son was being held when he'd had the registrar on the phone earlier.

He stopped at the desk and leaned over the counter. A woman with a red bouffant hairdo stared back at him, dark circles of kohl ringing both her wide brown eyes. “Hi. I'm looking for my son, Jonathan Winger. I received a call from someone saying he's here.”

The woman nodded and turned to the computer, rapidly typing. In the space of a deep breath, she returned her attention to Adam. “I'm sorry, sir. He's not in the system.”

“He's not a patient. Actually, I'm not sure why he's here at all. He may have been brought in with someone else. His sitter's name is Katherine Brando.”

“Are you a relation to Ms. Brando?”

“No. She just babysits my son.” Adam tapped his fingers on the counter.

“Then I can't tell you whether or not she's here.”

“Well, what can you—” Adam stopped mid-rant and tried to restore some calm before he bit the problematic woman's head off. Yelling wouldn't do him any good. “A woman from here called me. She said her name was Mary Doolittle or something like that.”

“Margery Doolittle?”

“Right. *Margery*. Do you think you can call her for me? She said my son was with her.”

“Sure. Just a minute.” The woman picked up the phone, tucked the receiver between her ear and shoulder, and dialed. A second later, she said, “Marg? This is Shirley in admitting. I have a Mr.—”

“Winger,” Adam interjected.

“I have a Mr. Winger here, who claims you have his son with you?” She paused, listening. “Uh-huh. Mm hmm. All right. Thanks.”

Adam leaned across the counter, watching the woman hang up the phone. “Well?”

“If you would like to have a seat, sir, Ms. Doolittle will be right out.”

As if he could sit down and relax... “Thanks.”

Ignoring the cramped little blue chairs in the waiting area, Adam paced back and forth in front of the door. He kept glancing at his watch, counting seconds as they soared by. Ten minutes had never seemed so freaking long.

What is the damn holdup?

Before he could break down and storm the desk to inquire, the double doors at the back of the room *whooshed* open. A tall blonde dressed in a conservative black pantsuit walked into the room with Johnny by her side. Johnny spotted Adam, squealed, and tugged his tiny hand free of the woman's grip. He launched himself across the room, shouting, “Daddy!”

“Hey, sport.” Adam dropped to his knees and caught Johnny, hugging him tight. For the first time in the last thirty minutes, Adam felt like he could breathe.

Johnny pulled back and stared up at Adam with eyes too large for his tiny face. “Daddy. I was so scared, but then I got to meet a 'MT and ride in a 'bulance. They flashed the lights, and it was *loud*.”

Adam smiled at his son, mentally deciphering what the fast hodgepodge of words meant. “Wow. I've always wanted to ride in an ambulance. I bet that was almost as much fun as the time you got to see the fire trucks.”

Johnny's eyes widened. “Oh. I wanna see the trucks again. Can we? Please?”

A throat cleared, drawing Adam's attention to the woman watching them.

“Maybe sometime soon, sport.” Adam rose to his feet, picked up Johnny, and offered the woman a wan smile. “Thank you for seeing after Johnny.”

“He was a good boy. Weren't you, Johnny?”

Johnny nodded and snuggled into Adam's side, a testament to how tired he was. A recent independent streak wouldn't allow Johnny to let Adam hold him or carry him about unless he was exhausted or sick.

"I'm glad he wasn't any trouble." Adam smoothed down his son's wild black curls. "I understand the concept of confidentiality, but isn't there some way you can tell me what happened?"

"Not much, I'm afraid. He came in with a patient via ambulance."

"Right. I gathered that much from what Johnny said. I assume he was brought in with Mrs. Brando. Will she be all right?"

The registrar nodded but said, "I'm sorry. I really can't tell you anything else. I would advise coming by the hospital tomorrow during visiting hours. You may learn more then."

"All right." Adam bounced Johnny, making him giggle. "If there's nothing else, I'd like to take Johnny home now."

Chapter Two

Following the departure of his guests, Beau spent a long and lonely night staring at the television. When one boring show after another failed to lull him to sleep, he gave in to his need for relief and jerked off while thinking of Adam's aborted attempt at a blowjob. Afterward, the lethargy Beau expected never arrived. He was still at a loss for what to do with himself. Thoughts of Adam, and the way the younger man had hustled out of the house as if his ass were on fire, kept Beau awake long after his body wanted to fade into oblivion. He blamed the knot in his gut on aggravation at being led on, then left hanging. It had nothing to do with jealousy.

He finally dozed off somewhere around dawn, only to awaken a couple of hours later, just as tired and listless as he'd been before falling asleep. Beau knew it was going to be a shitty day. Although he wished he could burrow deeper under the covers and hide for the rest of the day, he had places to go and people to see. Plus, Adam was scheduled to come in to work around nine. Beau didn't want to look like the Crypt Keeper when the younger man arrived.

He summoned up what he remembered of the puzzling phone call he'd overheard, and replayed the one-sided conversation in his mind.

"Is Johnny all right?" Pause. *"He's really okay?"* Pause. *"I'll be right there."*

The bits and pieces told Beau very little about the new man in Adam's life, except that he was fine and apparently impatient enough that he would have someone call Adam at work and demand he drop everything to run to his side. Frankly, Beau didn't know who the hell "Johnny" could be, other than competition. Judging by the concern lacing Adam's voice during the short exchange, it also appeared as if Adam cared a great deal for the guy.

Curiosity made Beau wonder what this Johnny person gave Adam that he himself couldn't deliver. Because he'd been the first person inside Adam, Beau knew it wasn't a matter of sex. Adam wasn't a slut.

Without anything else to go on, Beau pushed aside the subject in favor of getting up. There was no sense in lamenting about it. He and Adam had never discussed what they did outside of their little work arrangement. Adam was welcome to see whomever the hell he wanted to.

Beau threw off the bedcovers and rose to his feet, shivering a little at the temperature change. Although the thermostat was set to seventy degrees year-round, goose bumps paraded up and down his arms and legs. Naked, Beau padded into the adjoining bathroom and relieved himself. As he washed his hands afterward, he stared into the mirror and wondered who the hell he was trying to kid. He despised the idea of Adam sleeping with anyone else. Worse, the very thought of it made him feel foolish. He hadn't fucked anyone other than Adam since the previous October. Although being faithful hadn't been his intention, he'd found he wasn't interested in being intimate with anyone else. Adam obviously didn't share his opinion on the matter.

Bending closer to his mirror image, Beau examined the subtle laugh lines bracketing both his eyes. Tiny wrinkles marred the smooth surface of his forehead as well. Only recently, one of his older friends had suggested Botox. He'd laughed it off at the time, abhorred by the idea of having poison shot into his head, but he was starting to rethink the matter.

Aging was a bitch.

Although no one would ever describe him as a spring chicken, he certainly wasn't old either. At thirty-three, he still felt young. He worked his ass off keeping his body tight and fit, but there wasn't a damn thing he could do to prevent wrinkles. This he knew from firsthand experience. He'd bought creams and elixirs of all kinds, but they couldn't stop the passage of time from etching its way across his face.

He would bet Adam's *friend* didn't have fucking wrinkles.

Following a quick shave and shower, Beau stood in his closet and ruminated over what to wear. He didn't feel like wearing slacks, but jeans were inappropriate since he'd have to go into the club at some point in the afternoon and check on things. Settling for khakis and a collared pullover the color of fresh melons, Beau dressed and walked downstairs in search of coffee. A little caffeine pick-me-up was required before he did anything else.

Thanks to the wonders of an automatic timer, a pot of his favorite French roast was brewing. The mouthwatering aroma filled the air, making his stomach growl for sustenance as well as the liquid ambrosia awaiting him. He filled his favorite mug, the one Cody had bought a

decade earlier that said *World's Greatest Uncle*, and added a dash of skim milk. Sipping his coffee, Beau grabbed a banana out of the fruit basket on the countertop and carried both drink and snack down the hall to his office.

By eight fifteen, he was sitting behind his desk, ready to begin the day. The first point of business was to check his messages and e-mail. Subsequently, he planned to map out his afternoon and decide what Adam needed to take care of once he arrived.

After typing in his access codes, Beau set his voice mail to speakerphone and then turned to his e-mail. Two applications for club membership, several tour requests, and a dozen spam e-mails were the only things in his in-box. Forwarding the applications and requests to Dante, his club manager, only took a few moments.

Beau stopped what he was doing to listen to a message from Cody. It seemed his nephew planned to come to the club later and needed to talk, although he didn't specify what he wanted to speak about. That was interesting. Cody could always be counted on to liven up the day, although there was no telling what the little brat was after. However, following his last spat and subsequent make-up with his boyfriend a few months earlier, Cody hadn't been coming around as much as he once had. Beau looked forward to seeing him and hopefully spending a little time together. He missed the kid. The house seemed cold and lonely without him.

Beau was about to turn back to his e-mail when the next voice mail stopped him in his tracks. Willing his temper into submission, he listened as Adam's voice rose and fell.

"Beau...it's Adam. Something has come up, and I'm not going to be able to make it in today. Um, sorry."

Beau leaned back against the high, cushioned back of his leather chair. His fingers dug into the padded arms, his knuckles turning white as his grip tightened. He knew exactly what had "come up" for Adam. Apparently the younger man wanted to spend the day hiding the sausage with his little buddy instead of working. That was all right. Two could play that game. Beau would just find a little companionship of his own for the night.

Unfortunately, unlike his assistant, Beau had work to do before he could play.

With a long-suffering sigh, Beau dialed Cody's cell phone number and made plans to meet his nephew at the club while he was doing his weekly walk-through. He figured he might as well kill two birds with one stone. Afterward, all bets were off. He'd been fooled into thinking he and

Adam had some kind of unspoken understanding. Since he was apparently mistaken, he might as well go out and do what single gay men did best. Just because Adam wasn't available didn't mean he had to spend the night alone.

* * * *

Later that afternoon, Beau was sitting in his office at the club, going over his schedule and making room for a few guided tours with hopeful members in coming weeks. Although Dante normally took care of the tours, there were a few big rollers coming in who Beau wanted to deal with personally. With the addition of a monthly cover-charge night for nonmembers and Dante's idea to expand their stage acts to include the occasional role-playing and fetish scenarios, memberships were on the rise. So much so that Beau was beginning to believe it might be possible to expand soon. He'd had his eye on an investment property in Charlotte that would be the perfect location for a second Club Casbah. Opening another club was risky with the current economic climate, but it was certainly something to think about. If nothing else, he could buy the real estate and sit on it until things improved. The price the owners were requesting couldn't have been better.

Cody breezed in through the open doorway and plopped into one of the two chairs across from his desk. "Hey, Unc."

"Hey yourself, kiddo." Beau set aside his PDA and really looked at his nephew. Other than his taste in ratty jeans and T-shirts with offensive slogans, he appeared fine. The summer sun had kissed his hair, making the short blond locks shimmer with highlights, and his complexion gleamed with the health and vitality of youth. "Long time no see."

"Sorry about that. I've just been soaking up the sun and trying to concentrate on my classes."

"You didn't have to enroll in the summer session, you know. You could have taken some time off and lounged around like every other lazy college student."

"Nah. The sooner I complete my course load, the faster I'll be finished. Besides, I didn't really want to give up my dorm room. As much as I love hanging out at Dante's crib, I don't want to assume he wants me there full-time, you know? We love each other, but I don't think either of us is ready to move in together yet. Plus the whole Milo thing is happening. It's crazy."

"I can understand that, but you're welcome to come home anytime you want."

"Thanks, but I'm good."

"Okay." While he'd love to have Cody around more, he knew what it was like to be twenty and on the cusp of independence. Of course Cody wouldn't want to give up his freedom and move back home, even if only for a couple of months. "So what is it you wanted to talk to me about? You sounded pretty ominous over the phone."

"Nothing huge. Sorry if I freaked you out or something. I just wanted to know if you'd think about giving Dante's younger brother, Milo, a job."

Beau frowned. "How old is Milo?"

"He's eighteen."

"Hmm... Well, Dante is a perfectly capable of hiring whoever he wants. I wouldn't have made him my general manager if I didn't trust his opinion."

Cody sat forward, resting his elbows on his legs. "You don't understand. Milo is working this crappy little job that pays nothing. He can't find anything better because nobody is hiring right now. Even if they were, they wouldn't want to hire someone without any more than a high school diploma. Dante offered to pay for Milo's education, but Milo's too proud to accept the money. He said he was perfectly happy with community college, but I don't see how he'll even be able to swing that on what he's making. He's going to end up living with Dante forever, and we're never going to get any time alone and—"

Beau held up his hand. "Hey, calm down. Maybe even take a breath or two, before you pass out."

"Sorry." Cody bit into his lip and gazed across the desk imploringly.

"First of all, I don't want to hear about your sex life." Especially now that his own was tanked, thanks to the mysterious Johnny. "Second, Milo's a smart boy. I'm sure he'll figure out what he wants to do and jump on it, with or without your help. Besides, I'm not going to go behind Dante's back and hire his little brother to work here."

"I don't mean to sound so selfish, but I miss having time alone with Dante. Plus, I really think it'll help to get Milo a better job. You wouldn't believe how hard he has to work for below minimum wage. It's disgusting."

"I'm sure it is." Not for the first time, Beau was reminded of how much he'd spoiled his nephew. He didn't regret any of the choices he'd made while raising the kid. He'd done what he

thought was best at the time, and he stood by that, even if Cody was a little naive about some things. Tom and Madelyn would have wanted the best for their child. Beau made damn sure he gave Cody everything his brother and sister-in-law would have provided, had they lived to raise Cody themselves.

“Are you sure I can't talk you into changing your mind?”

Beau crossed his arms over his chest. “Do you really want me to? What does Dante think about his brother working here?”

“He said he didn't want Milo working in a meat market, but wouldn't it better for Milo to work here rather than going somewhere else? At least we could keep an eye on him here and make sure he was taken care of. I don't imagine other clubs have half the safeguards that Casbah has in place for their employees.”

“You're not seeing my point. Dante will be pissed because you went behind his back to get Milo a job Dante doesn't want him to have.”

“I suppose so. At least I can tell Milo I tried, though.” Cody slumped back in his chair. “Now that's out of the way, what's going on with you right now? When I came in, you kind of looked like someone had kicked your puppy.”

“I don't have a puppy.”

“You know what I mean. So what's up?”

“Nothing much really. I was just thinking about the economy and whether or not now would be a good time to expand the business.”

“I can see how that would be a concern, but isn't expanding a reason to celebrate? The club must be doing well if you're even considering opening another one.”

“We're doing extremely well, thanks to Dante's entertainment ideas, among other things.”

Cody smiled brilliantly. “That's my man.”

“Don't start with the mushiness. I don't think my sugar levels can handle it right now.”

“Spoilsport. You wouldn't be so grumpy if you found someone to make you happy.”

“I'm perfectly capable of making myself happy, thank you very much.”

“Don't be so touchy. I'm just saying I wish you would find someone and settle down. I worry about you being alone all the time.”

Beau snorted. "What's the matter? Afraid I'm going to fall and break a hip?"

"Hardly. I just think you'd be more content with someone in your life."

"I'm okay with things the way they are."

"Fine. Have it your way. Be a jaded old queen, and see if I care."

"I am *not* a queen, old or otherwise!" Beau snapped his mouth shut, appalled that he'd raised his voice. The teasing banter wouldn't have normally bothered him, but today it grated on his nerves worse than fingernails scraping a chalkboard.

Cody's forehead wrinkled as he stared at Beau. "Are you really okay? You're not acting like yourself."

"I'm fine. I just have a little headache..." *And a big craving for something I'm never going to have for longer than it takes to come.* He didn't know why he was allowing the thought of Adam being with someone else to get to him so much, but he needed to do something about it. Now. Before he did or said something he would regret later.

"All right." Cody rose to his feet. "Well, I guess I'll see you later. I need to pop in and say good-bye to Dante before I leave, but I have a bunch of things I need to get done this evening."

Beau nodded, biting into his inner cheek while Cody walked out. He hadn't meant to practically scream at Cody. Rather than going out, maybe he would better off going home and drowning his sorrows in a drink or two. It didn't look as if he was going to be good company for anyone.

Chapter Three

Adam felt bad for calling in two days in a row, but he really didn't know what else to do. If he didn't come up with something—*and fast*—he was going to be up shit creek without a paddle. He couldn't afford to quit his job without having another lined up right away. However, he couldn't very well go into work and leave Johnny at home either, which presented a problem, because there were no sitters that he knew of who were willing to watch a four-year-old until all hours of the evening. Torn between work and his child, Adam was at a loss for what he should do.

Thankfully, he'd found out Katherine was going to be fine. She's taken a nasty spill and broken her hip, but she was alive and expected to make a full recovery. When he'd taken Johnny by the hospital to visit her the day before, Katherine had apologized over and over again about the accident and any trauma it might have caused Johnny.

She was a good woman. Adam would miss her when she moved to Cincinnati to live with her daughter. Although it was selfish, he couldn't help but think of it as losing another piece of his mother, no matter how small. His mom and Katherine had been good friends.

It was three years after his mother passed away, and Adam still had to remind himself that she was gone every single time something important happened. His first thought was generally to share the news with her, as it had always been. Not having her around was a daily torment that only grew worse as Johnny got older. Adam finally understood the kinds of sacrifices his mom had made in order to raise him by herself, only she wasn't here to hear him tell her how grateful he was for all her love and support. God knew he hadn't been the best kid. Johnny's very existence was proof of that.

Speaking of the little scamp, Johnny bounced into the living room. His eyes widened as they landed on Adam. "Daddy! You're home." A large smile cracked Johnny's sleep-creased face

as he darted across the room and crawled up into Adam's lap. "Are you gonna stay home with me again today?"

"There's nowhere else I'd rather be." Adam snuggled his son close. Still dressed in his favorite Batman pajamas, Johnny looked adorable. Wild tufts of ebony hair stuck up all over his head like tiny horns. With the addition of eyes red-rimmed from scrubbing away sleep, Johnny favored a little devil. Thank goodness he didn't have the temperament of one.

Johnny squirmed, looking up at Adam with eyes the same shape and color of his own. "Can we have berry oatmeal? I'm hungry."

"Sure, sport." With Johnny in his arms, Adam stood and strode into the adjoining eat-in kitchen. "Would you like strawberry or blueberry this morning?"

"Blue."

"And what color is blue?" Adam tickled his son's midsection. "Can you point it out for me?"

"Daddy, stop." Cackling, Johnny wiggled in Adam's arms. "You're gonna make me pee."

Laughing, Adam set his son down and grabbed the box of instant oatmeal off the microwave. He opened it and held the package down for Johnny to see. "Show me which color is blue."

Johnny pointed to the navy and tan packets. "Those."

"Very good." Adam plucked the chosen envelope out of the box and set the container aside. While he mixed the contents with milk, he said, "How about a banana with breakfast this morning?"

Johnny shook his head. "No."

Adam popped the oatmeal in the microwave and turned it on. "Why not?"

"Nannas are gross."

"Bananas are good for you. They'll make you grow up big and strong."

"They're slimy."

"Hmm...all right. How about some apple slices, then?"

"Kay." Johnny climbed into one of the two chairs grouped with the tiny dining table and grabbed a shiny red apple out of the wicker bowl sitting in the center. "Can I cut it?"

The microwave dinged, announcing Johnny's breakfast was finished. Adam got it out, set the bowl of warm oatmeal down in front of his son, then held out his hand for the fruit. "Not this morning, kiddo."

Johnny's bottom lip pouched out. "No fair."

Grinning, Adam pulled the small wooden cutting board out of the dish drainer and set it down on the counter next to the sink. He sliced into the apple, cutting it into small pieces. "How about I let you help me make lunch, instead?"

In the process of slurping oatmeal off his spoon, Johnny nodded. Adam laid apple portions on a napkin near Johnny's bowl and grabbed a banana out of the fruit bowl for himself. He knew he needed to eat something, even though he wasn't all that hungry. He had too many problems to worry about without adding in the needs of his body.

Picking up the newspaper, Adam once again scanned the contents. There were two ads from women looking for babysitting positions. One clearly stated she wasn't interested in watching children after six o'clock, and the other was located more than an hour away. The extra time and gas money would gouge into his budget, but she sounded like his only option. He could only pray she had references that checked out. He wasn't about to leave Johnny with a virtual stranger without some kind of assurance that the woman could be trusted. Frankly, he didn't want to leave Johnny with anyone he didn't know personally, but he had little choice. It wasn't as if he could choose to stay home and take care of his son himself.

This would be a fabulous time to win the lottery. Of course, that would mean he actually needed to play the state lotto first. Who had money to burn on something so frivolous as hope?

The echo of someone knocking on the front door pulled Adam's attention away from the paper and his inner turmoil. *Who the heck could that be?*

Sparing a glance at Johnny, who was concentrating on sliding a slice of apple through his oatmeal like a little fruity boat, Adam headed toward the door. A quick look through the peephole confirmed the identity of the man on the other side and set his heart galloping. Following two days of separation, Beau looked as fresh and new as a copper penny.

Adam thought about darting into his bedroom to get dressed, but there wasn't time. Instead, he settled for pulling his ratty terrycloth robe more snugly around him and tightening the belt. He hadn't so much as run a brush through his hair that morning. He'd been much more interested in

getting up and calling in before Beau staggered into his office. *There's nothing I can do about it now.*

Taking a deep breath, Adam slid the chain off the door, opened it, and faced his boss. “Hey, Beau.”

“Adam.” Beau shifted from one foot to the other, looking uncertain and yet adorable. “Can I come in?”

“Uh, sure.” Adam stepped back, allowing Beau inside. As his boss and lover walked by, Adam threw a glance toward his son through the open entryway into the kitchen. Johnny was still eating and didn't even appear to have too much oatmeal on his face for a change. Only time would tell how Beau reacted to learning about Johnny. The older man seemed to like kids—after all, he'd raised his own nephew—but that didn't mean he'd want to be with someone who came with a ready-made family and enough baggage to sink a battleship.

Not that we're a couple, Adam reminded himself for the umpteenth time. *Hell, for all I know he's here to fire my ass for calling in sick when it's obvious I'm not.*

Adam closed the door and turned to see Beau checking out his digs. Adam looked around the tiny apartment and tried to see it through the eyes of a man who had more money than Adam could hope to earn in two lifetimes. The living room and kitchen were really one large open room, the only difference being that one had beige linoleum while the other sported cheap tan carpet. The overstuffed sofa and chair were a plain blue color but comfortable. Heavy wooden end tables were more serviceable than stylish. Toys spilled from the crate beside the sofa, evidence that Adam hadn't taken the time to clean up the night before. The entertainment center was stuffed with children's DVDs and a hodgepodge of framed photos. Most of them were of Johnny, although there was a couple of Adam's mom as well. He would have had more, but she hadn't liked having her picture taken. She'd always claimed it made her look old and fat, regardless of how many times everyone told her differently.

Adam crossed his arms over his chest, self-conscious of the way he looked. “So, to what do I owe the honor of this little visit?” In almost a year of working—and playing—together, Beau had never come to his home. Granted, Adam had never invited him, but still. To the best of Adam's knowledge, the man hadn't even known where he lived beyond the address listed on his résumé.

Beau half turned, facing Adam. "I just wanted to drop by and check on you..."

Adam knew the exact second Beau spotted Johnny sitting at the table. The other man's eyes widened, and his brow crinkled. It would have been funny if Adam weren't so nervous. He didn't let just anyone meet his son. He'd always held to the belief that no one he dated would get a proper introduction until they were beyond casual and well on their way to seriously committed. There would be no revolving door filled with boyfriends who popped in and out of his son's life—not that he ever dated someone long enough to overly spaz about it. He'd been seeing Beau longer than anyone, and they were more associates with benefits than anything else.

Beau's attention flipped from Adam to Johnny and then back again. "Is that...?"

"My son, Johnny."

"Johnny? I thought..." Beau's voice trailed off as he scratched his head, looking confused.

"Thought what?"

"When you were on the phone the other night and mentioned Johnny, I thought he was your boyfriend." A heartbeat passed before a beatific smile cracked Beau's face. "Guess I don't have to worry about that now."

"No." Adam laughed. "I'm not seeing anyone else."

"That's great." Beau stepped closer, within touching distance. He lifted his hand and then let it fall back to his side, as if he wasn't sure whether his touch was welcome. "I don't want to admit I was jealous, but I damn sure didn't like the thought of you being with anyone else."

"Watch the language, please." Adam nodded toward Johnny.

"Sorry."

"It's all right. Accidents happen. I just don't want him to start parroting curse words, you know."

"That's understandable."

"I—Can I meet him?"

"Sure." There was no use trying to avoid it now. Adam strode toward his son, with Beau following close behind him. He stopped by the table and smiled down at Johnny, pleased to see the oatmeal was limited to being smeared across his mouth and not his entire lower face.

“Johnny, there's someone here I want you to meet. This nice man is my boss, Mr. Bradbury. Can you say hello?”

Johnny looked up at Beau and then ducked his head. A bashful grin graced his pixieish face. “Hi.”

Adam shrugged. “Sorry. He's a little shy around strangers.”

“That's all right. Believe it or not, Cody was shy once upon a time too.”

Johnny looked up at Beau. His little forehead wrinkled in curiosity. “You got a little boy? Is he here? Can he play with me?”

Beau squatted down beside Johnny's chair. “I used to have a little boy named Cody. But he grew up.”

“Oh.” Johnny's face fell.

“It's been a long time since I've been around a little boy, but if I had to guess, I'd say you're five. Is that right?”

Amused at the way Beau chose to fish for information, Adam patted Johnny's shoulder. “Can you tell Mr. Bradbury how old you are?”

Johnny held up four grimy fingers. “I'm this many.”

“Wow. Then you're not a little boy at all, are you?”

Johnny shook his head and beamed at Beau. “I'm a big boy. I know the whole alphabet song.”

Beau smiled up at Adam and then returned his attention to Johnny. “You do?”

“Mm hmm.” Johnny nodded sagely. “I can count to fifty too.”

“You're awfully smart. And cute too. I might just have to take you home with me.”

“You better not.” Johnny sneaked a glance at Adam.

“You're right. I'm sure your dad would miss you.”

“Yup.” Johnny's chin bounced up and down. “Wanna see my toys?”

“Maybe next time, kiddo. Right now, I need to talk to your dad.”

“Kay.” Johnny jumped down from the table and tugged on the sleeve of Adam's robe. “I wanna watch Wiggles.”

“Sure. Do you need me to find it for you?”

“No!” Johnny stomped. “I do it.”

“All right, sport. Go ahead, then.”

Beau took a seat at the table, while Adam busied himself with cleaning up. He didn't know why he was stalling for time, but that didn't change the fact that he was. Beau's inquisitive gaze burned into Adam's back as Adam rinsed Johnny's bowl and spoon and placed them both in the dishwasher. Once he heard the television come on and the theme song from Johnny's favorite show blare through the speakers, he moved to sit across from Beau.

Beau leaned forward. “So, want to tell me about Johnny?”

Adam sighed. “What would you like to know?”

Beau shrugged. “Whatever you feel comfortable sharing, I guess.”

“Well, it's not a very interesting story. Boy is confused about his sexuality. Boy tries to convince himself he's straight by dating a girl.” Adam lowered his voice. “I was shocked when Rachel came to me and said she was pregnant. I begged her to have an abortion. She wouldn't listen. I'm not proud of myself, but we were both kids; we weren't in any position to have one.”

Beau leaned forward and covered Adam's clasped hands with his own. “I can't judge you for wanting to take the easiest way out of the situation.”

“Yeah, well...I judge me. It hasn't been easy, but I wouldn't trade Johnny for the world, you know? He's mine, and I love him.”

“He seems like a great kid, Adam. It's obvious you adore him and vice versa.”

“Thanks. I know I'm a little partial, but he's so smart. And sweet. He's the most lovable little boy ever.” A dopey smile stretched across Adam's face. He realized he probably looked like a sappy moron, but he couldn't help it.

“He gets that from you.”

Heat crawled up Adam's neck and slashed across his cheekbones. “Yeah, well...”

“You're so cute.” Beau squeezed Adam's hands. “Not that it's any of my business, but where's Johnny's mom now?”

“College, I guess. She wanted to give Johnny up for adoption because of this scholarship she had. Instead, my mom stepped in and agreed to help me raise him, on the condition that I

finish high school and not expect her to take the brunt of the work. She didn't expect to get sick at all, much less so soon." Adam stared down at his and Beau's hands, inspecting the differences between his long, thin fingers and Beau's thick, hair-roughened digits. "Mom passed away when Johnny was barely a year old."

"I'm sorry." Beau used his thumb to caress the back of Adam's hand. "That must have been rough."

Adam nodded without looking up. "It was hard, but I had to pick up the pieces and keep going. I had Johnny to think about."

"For what it's worth, I think you did a brave thing keeping Johnny. A lot of teenagers in your shoes would have given up. I'm sure your mom would be proud that you've done so well for the two of you."

"Thanks." Adam pinched his nose, trying to stanch the rising burn of impending tears. If his mom were able to see him now, he sincerely hoped she liked what she saw. The fact that he'd never come out to her was a thorn in his side. He regretted not sharing that part of himself with her before she passed away. At the time, he'd been too scared of what she would think to mention it. Looking back, he felt confident she wouldn't have made a big deal out of it. That simply wasn't her style.

Not that it matters now...

In need of a subject change, Adam latched onto his job. "I'm sorry I haven't been in to work, but the woman who watches Johnny for me had an accident the other night. I'm still trying to find another sitter."

"That's what the phone call was about the other night?"

"Yeah."

"I was wondering about that. How long do you think you'll need to find someone else?"

"I don't know. The search isn't looking very good, I'm afraid. As much as I hate to, I may have to give you my notice."

"What?" Beau's hands tightened around Adam's. "Why?"

Feeling more settled, Adam finally looked up. "It's not that I want to quit, but I may not have much choice. It appears as if no one wants to watch kids after a certain hour."

“I—” Beau glanced away. When his gaze returned, his expression was resolute. “I don't want to lose you.”

“Just because I need to find another job doesn't mean we can't keep seeing each other outside of work.” Fear that he'd misunderstood and Beau wasn't talking about their relationship rose up inside Adam like a mushroom cloud. At the last second, he added, “That is, if you want to.”

“Of course I want to keep seeing you. That goes without saying. But we work well together too, and I'd hate to lose that. Couldn't you just bring Johnny to work with you? I'm sure we can come up with some way to entertain him while you're busy.”

“I don't know, Beau. You have to think about some of the stuff you've had me doing. A child doesn't have any business at some of the functions you've dragged me to.”

“That's true. But what if I could find someone to watch him on the rare occasions we both needed to be somewhere?”

“Like who? No offense, but I wouldn't want to just leave Johnny with anyone.”

“Cody likes kids.”

“Your nephew Cody?” That didn't seem very likely to Adam. Cody seemed a little too flighty to be any good with children, especially younger ones who needed more supervision. Then again, who was he to judge? It wasn't as if he knew Cody all that well.

“Yep. I'm sure Cody would be happy to keep an eye on Johnny now and then.”

“Don't you think you should talk to him about it before you offer his services?” The last Adam thing needed to do was count on someone who wasn't going to be available.

“Cody won't mind. However, if it'll make you feel better, I can call him and double-check.”

Now he just felt silly. “No. I trust you. If you say Cody won't mind, then I'm sure you're right. I just don't want to leave you in a bind on the off chance something goes wrong.”

“Great.” Beau tilted his head to the side. “Now that we've got that settled, do you think you'll be able to come in tomorrow? I can manage on my own for a bit, but I miss having you around.”

“Are you sure you don't mind if I bring Johnny in with me?” Adam could only imagine the havoc Johnny would cause to Beau's house if given the chance.

“Not at all. I think it'll actually be kind of nice to have a kid around again. Things have been almost too quiet since Cody moved out.”

A huge weight lifted off Adam's shoulders. “Well, if you're really sure, I suppose we'll see you bright and early in the morning.”

“I look forward to it.” Beau let go of Adam's hands and scooted back his chair. “As much as I hate to interrupt your morning and run, I need to get going. There are a million and one things I need to get done today.”

Guilt blossomed inside Adam. “I'm really sorry about that.”

“It's all right, Adam. Shi—stuff happens.” Beau rose to his feet. “I'm just glad we got to talk before you felt like you had no choice other than finding a new job.”

“Me too.” Relieved they'd cleared the air and actually made it possible for him to continue a job he loved, Adam stood and followed Beau to the door. A few short steps brought them to the exit, but Adam wasn't quite ready to let Beau leave yet.

After assuring himself that Johnny was fine where he sat playing with his toy trucks in front of the television, Adam opened the door and stepped out into the hallway with Beau. For peace of mind, he left the door cracked so he could keep an ear out for Johnny.

“You know,” Beau said, staring at Adam, “I feel like I should make a confession about something before I leave.”

“Oh yeah?” Although curious about what Beau was saying, Adam glanced back over his shoulder to make sure Johnny wasn't paying them any mind. His lips tingled with the need to kiss Beau before he left, but he didn't want to do it in front of his son. “What's that?”

“I had ulterior motives for stopping by. I know I said I just wanted to check on you. While that's partly true, a larger part of me wanted to get a peek at your fictitious lover. I'm embarrassed to admit it, but I wanted to see what he had that I didn't.” Beau moved closer, backing Adam up against the wall beside the door. “I know we never really talked about seeing other people, but I haven't been with anyone other than you since the first night we were together.”

Adam licked his lips. “I haven't been with anyone else either.”

“That's good.” Beau's gaze lowered to Adam's lips. “Really good.”

“Uh-huh.” Adam tilted his chin, wordlessly begging for Beau to kiss him. Anticipation pooled low in his gut.

Instead of giving Adam what he wanted, Beau bypassed his mouth and kissed his cheek right beside his left ear. Humid breath wafted over Adam's ear as Beau spoke. “You're all I want.”

Adam's pulse hiccupped. The spicy scent of Beau's cologne wafted around him, muddying his concentration. Even so, he knew what he wanted. “You're all that I need.”

Then Beau's lips converged on Adam's, and he didn't need to think of anything other than how good Beau tasted. The rest could wait.

Chapter Four

Adam trailed up one hall and down the next, his gaze steady and focused on the goal at hand. Johnny had to be around here somewhere. He yanked open one door after another, peering into guest bedrooms and closets alike.

This can't be happening... Johnny couldn't have vanished into thin air.

Only halfway through his first day of bringing his son to work with him, and he'd already lost Johnny. He'd looked away for mere seconds, only long enough to hang up the telephone, but his oversight had opened a window of opportunity for Johnny to disappear from the spot where he'd been sitting by the desk and coloring so peacefully.

Frantic searching was getting him nowhere. There were a million spaces for someone small to hide within Beau's home. He never should have taken his attention away from Johnny. Panic welled inside him. Sweat beaded on his upper lips and dampened the armpits of his casual black polo shirt. The peaceful tranquility of his surroundings seemed somehow ominous as his footsteps echoed on the hardwood floor in the upper hallway.

Where the hell are you, Johnny?

Adam swung around the bend in the hall and smacked into Beau, who was traveling in the other direction. Beau grinned. "Hey, you. I was just looking for Johnny. Have you seen him?"

"I was just getting ready to ask you the same thing." Adam blew out a frustrated breath of air. "Wait. Why are you looking for my son?"

"That is what a person is supposed to do while playing hide-and-seek, isn't it?"

"Right." *As if I'm psychic and knew Beau was talking about some game...* "How long have you been playing with Johnny?"

"We just started, why?"

Adam shut his eyes and counted to ten before opening them again. God save him from people who meant well. “Would you please tell me the next time you take off with my son? I thought I was going to have a coronary when I turned around and couldn't find him.”

“Damn. I'm sorry, Adam.” Beau gripped Adam's shoulders and began to knead them. “I didn't think. I was coming down to see how things were going, and Johnny was standing at the door, looking bored. I thought you would appreciate it if I took him off your hands and entertained him for a little while.”

“It's all right.” Adam groaned at the feel of Beau's hands on his body. He didn't even want to think about how long it had been since Beau had touched his more sensitive parts. “I guess I overreacted. I'm just not used to losing track of him. I'm always hyperaware when we're out in public together, and it's not like there's much chance of misplacing him in my apartment.”

Adam's eyes grew heavy as he let Beau massage the tension out of his neck and shoulders. His hands were strong and warm, even through the cloth separating their skin. With so little space between them, the rich aroma of cologne and man teased Adam's sense of smell. His nose twitched with the need to bury itself against Beau's chest and inhale more of the arousing scent straight from the manufacturer. He had firsthand knowledge of how wonderful every inch of Beau smelled.

That feels so good.

As long as Beau kept touching him, Adam could let all his problems melt away. Not exactly the most honest thought, for a self-admitted worrywart, but it eased his mind, at any rate. He stood in awe of Beau's ever-changing ability to be exactly what Adam needed at any given moment, from eager seducer to a shoulder to lean on.

If only I were worthy of all the attention...

Deep in the darkest regions of his mind, Adam feared it was only a matter of time before Beau got sick of him and moved on to someone else. How could he not? Adam was...Adam. There was nothing special about him, other than Johnny. He knew he wasn't ugly, but he certainly wasn't handsome either. Not like Beau. He wasn't stupid, but he would never be considered a rocket scientist. “Quiet and mousy” best described him, and those weren't features that would allure someone of Beau's caliber for longer than it took the newness of their quasi

relationship to wear off. He'd come to grips with that and was willing to take whatever scraps of affection Beau was willing to give him in the meantime.

Now if only I could stop my foolish heart from longing for more...

"Come here," Beau demanded.

"Excuse me?" Adam widened his eyes. "Are you asking me or telling me?" He stared at the other man, daring him to say the wrong thing. Adam may have been called a lot of things, but a pushover wasn't one of them. No one was going to order him around and get away with it.

"It was a request." Beau moved closer and slid his hands down Adam's arms. "You have to lighten up a little bit, baby."

"Shit. I'm sorry. I don't mean to be so neurotic and cranky. I'm just frustrated. It's been a craptastic week."

"I can get rid of all that stress, if you'll let me." Beau wrapped an arm around Adam's waist and pulled him close enough to feel the solid ridge of an erection pressing into his stomach.

"Don't I wish..." Adam licked his lips in preparation for what he hoped was coming, while Beau's eager gaze dropped to follow the path of his tongue. He'd barely had time to finish when Beau caught his chin and tilted it upward, then crushed their lips together.

The sharp edge of Beau's teeth raked the tender flesh of his bottom lip, but Adam didn't care. Beau quickly soothed the tiny hurt with a flick of his tongue, passing over the moist inner flesh before delving deeper. Adam parted his lips, and Beau took advantage, slipping his tongue inside. Every slick, sensuous glide amplified Adam's desire for the man pressing against him.

He moaned into Beau's mouth and was rewarded with the feel of Beau's big, strong hands slipping down his back. Beau's fingers kneaded Adam's buttocks, making Adam's stomach quiver and his balls tight. It had been much too long since he'd had Beau's fingers on his bare skin or inside his body, working him toward one summit after another.

Adam moaned his compliance and tilted his head for a better fit. He licked along the seam of Beau's lips, begging for him to deepen the kiss. Beau gave him what he wanted, thrusting his tongue in and out alongside Adam's, mimicking deep, penetrating sex. Adam's groin throbbed, his ass clenching from the very thought of Beau spinning him around and taking him right where they stood in the hallway. He knew it couldn't happen, shouldn't, but also knew too much more would snap his control like a dry twig.

With reluctance, Adam pulled away from the sweet haven of Beau's kiss.

Beau stared down at him with eyes the color of the ocean. "You have no idea how much I want you right now."

Adam snorted and rubbed his groin against Beau's hip, letting the other man feel the proof of his desire. "I think I have a clue."

Beau groaned and backed up a step, putting a little much-needed space between them. "As much as I would love to continue what we've started, now isn't really the time."

"I really wish it were." Adam's balls were going to ache something awful if he didn't relieve them soon. The thought of taking care of the problem alone just didn't hold the same allure as seeking satisfaction in Beau's embrace.

Beau ran a hand through his golden hair. Unlike the way Adam's hair stuck up in all different directions when he did the same gesture, Beau's hair neatly fell back into place. "Since we obviously can't do what we're both thinking about, why don't you take a little break from work and play hide-and-seek with Johnny and me? It'll be fun."

"I'd love to, but there's so much to do since I was out for two days. I should probably just get back—"

"Do I need to remind you who the boss is here? Take a break. Anything that's waited two days can probably wait another."

"I suppose you're right."

"I do love to hear the last two words that came out of your mouth."

Adam rolled his eyes. "You're a giant goofball. A giant goofball who is *not* always right, contrary to what you might think."

Beau leaned in close and whispered in Adam's ear. "You know, things would go so much smoother between us if you'd just get it over with and admit that I'm never wrong."

A shiver raced down Adam's spine. "Whatever. Let's go find Johnny. He has to be around here somewhere."

"I'm sure he's hiding in one of the bedrooms. I only counted to fifteen before peeking, so he couldn't have gotten very far."

"That's cheating," Adam teased.

Beau cupped Adam's chin and kissed him softly. "So it is, but even I know better than to leave a little one unattended for long."

Adam tried to adjust himself as inconspicuously as possible as he followed Beau down the hall in search of his son. Allowing himself to get all worked up probably wasn't the wisest course of action, since he had no sitter. No matter how much he wanted to, Adam couldn't drag Beau off into the nearest bedroom and have his wicked way with him. Or vice versa. At this point, Adam wasn't picky. He'd settle for a deep lip-lock and fumbling fingers, as long as they weren't his own.

Unfortunately, he didn't see that in his future anytime soon. No sitter meant no alone time with Beau. He was going to have to think of some way to fix that.

Soon.

Chapter Five

Desperation was high on Beau's list of emotions by the time Friday evening rolled around.

Other than a few pilfered moments, he hadn't managed to spend any alone time with Adam. Johnny was always there, a ready excuse for why Adam couldn't be the slightest bit intimate with Beau. It wasn't as if he wanted to screw Adam in front of his son—after all, he wasn't a pervert—but was it asking too much for a kiss now and then, or even a friendly hug? The only attention that swung Beau's way was when Johnny was safely out of sight, which was rare, since Adam stayed glued to Johnny like he was afraid someone was going to run off with the kid. A stolen kiss here and there only made things worse, because it left Beau yearning for more of the same.

Adam acted like any physical contact between them would traumatize Johnny for life. The result was a frustrating situation Beau couldn't see his way out of without offending his lover. He knew better than to push his opinions on child rearing down Adam's throat. On the other hand, if he didn't say something, he was only postponing a subject that would eventually need to be discussed if they were going to make a go of this relationship. He wasn't going to spend the rest of his life hiding his sexuality in his own home.

That, however, was a matter better left to another day, when he wasn't aching to get Adam alone and naked.

A glimpse at his watch revealed the time was verging on six p.m. He pushed down on the gas pedal and shifted into fifth gear, rocketing his car toward home. After spending the afternoon at Casbah dealing with a VIP client's persnickety demands for a private party he was hosting the following weekend, Beau was more than ready to be home. However, if he wanted to catch Adam before he left, he needed to get moving.

Unbeknownst to Adam, Beau had the upcoming weekend all planned out in his mind. The three of them could spend the daytime hours together, doing something fun with Johnny. Then at

night, after Johnny was tucked into bed and sawing logs, adult playtime could begin. Sometime during the last week, while he and Adam were playing cat and mouse, Beau had realized that although he and Adam had been sleeping together for around ten months, he'd never actually had the younger man in his room, in his bed. It was an oversight he planned to rectify as soon as possible. The image of his young lover spread out across the bed, Beau's for the taking, had kept him going through the seemingly interminable days of being around Adam without being able to hold him.

All he had to do was get Adam to agree.

Beau swung into the circular driveway in front of his home and parked. Anticipation flowered anew as he exited his car and headed inside. Beau entered the house, closing the door behind him, and felt a shiver skate down his spine. Compared to outside, the interior was downright chilly. The temperature had to have dropped at least twenty degrees. The dampness gathering at the base of his spine and seeping through the back of his pale yellow polo shirt seemed to evaporate as if it had never existed.

Straight ahead, the sound of childish laughter and the echo of the television resonated from the den. Pocketing his keys, Beau strode down the hall toward the noise. He found his lover sitting on the sofa and Johnny lying stretched out on the carpet in front of the flat-screen TV. A laptop perched precariously on Adam's slender thighs. His head was bent low, dark curls hanging over his forehead, while his fingers flew over the keyboard.

Beau's lips tilted into an amused smile. He could get used to coming home to the scene before him. Quiet as a mouse, he crossed the room and leaned over the back of the couch. His lips connected with Adam's cheek before the man even realized anyone else was in the room.

Adam jerked. His hands shot out to steady the laptop even as he craned his neck and looked up at Beau. His expression smoothed, transforming from wary to cheerful in the blink of an eye. "Hey, you."

"Hey yourself," Beau said. "Whatcha doing?"

"I was just going over your schedule for the rest of the month. The next few days are pretty much clear. So if you don't mind, I was thinking about taking the weekend off."

Beau swallowed the curse trying to crawl up the back of his throat. "I kind of wanted to talk to you about this weekend."

“All right.” Adam's brow furrowed. “Just give me a second to finish up here.”

“Okay.” Beau straightened and glanced at Johnny, who was still lying on the floor in front of the television. Some kind of weird sealike cartoon characters paraded back and forth over the screen, singing about hamburgers. Johnny's head bobbed back and forth in time with the music, his dark locks bouncing, while his tiny little feet swayed to the rhythm of the silly song.

Beau smiled, amused by the kiddo. He wasn't sure why Adam had been so worried about bringing Johnny to work. He was an angel compared to Cody at that age. It was a pleasure to have him around the house, filling it with noise and energy.

The prospect of spending Saturday and Sunday alone loomed ahead of Beau, dismal and daunting; not only because he was dying to get Adam into his bed, but because of the overwhelming silence that expanded the moment Adam and Johnny left each evening. In a few short days, he'd grown accustomed to having them around. Two days suddenly seemed like an unbearable chasm of solitude. Knowing he could go out alone and do whatever he wanted was cold comfort.

Adam closed the laptop, set it on the couch beside him, and then rose to his feet. He stretched his arms over his head, his lips spreading in a wide yawn. The movement dragged the hem of his shirt up the flat plane of his stomach, revealing pale skin beneath the dark blue fabric of the button-up shirt. A glimpse of the sparse hair beneath Adam's belly button was all Beau was afforded before Adam lowered his arms.

Adam grinned at Beau. “Sorry. Today has just been one of those days that seems to drag on and on forever. Oh, hey... That reminds me. I picked up your dry cleaning earlier. I put the bag in your room.”

“Thanks,” Beau said, swallowing the abundant moisture in his mouth. “You want to, uh, step out into the hallway?”

“Sure.” Adam bent at the waist and ruffled Johnny's hair. “You sit tight, all right? I'll be right back.”

“Okay,” Johnny responded without looking away from the screen. “Daddy? I'm thirsty.”

“How about I bring you back another juice box?”

“Kay.”

Beau was glad he'd possessed the foresight to pick up some kid-friendly groceries earlier in the week, after he'd learned Adam was going to be bringing Johnny to work. He went ahead and left the den, turned right, and headed into the kitchen, confident Adam was behind him.

He waited until they were in the kitchen, far enough away from prying eyes, before grabbing Adam's shoulders and pushing him into wall beside the refrigerator. Adam opened his mouth, probably to protest, but Beau covered his lover's soft lips with his own, crushing any chance Adam may have had to complain. The kid was safe and sound in the other room; there was no reason they couldn't indulge in a little kiss or two. *Or three*. Beau longed for some kind of contact with Adam, no matter how slight, and he wasn't willing to wait another damn second to get it.

Holding Adam captive between his body and the wall, Beau slid his left thigh between Adam's legs and pressed flush against him. Adam groaned and tilted his chin upward, his lips falling slack under Beau's intimate persuasion.

Adam's lips parted, and Beau took advantage, sliding his right hand into Adam's silky curls, keeping his lover's head at just the right angle to plunder the depths of his mouth. Adam tasted dark and rich, all man, with a little something fruity thrown into the mix—probably from those juice boxes, if Beau had to guess. The combination made Beau crave something salty to go with the sweet. If he had his way, he knew just where to get it.

With his left hand, Beau reached around Adam's back and cupped a butt cheek, the flesh hot and firm beneath his palm. He gave it a squeeze, wishing the soft fabric between his hand and Adam's skin would vanish, and was rewarded with a tiny whimper. Swallowing the sound of Adam's desire, Beau kneaded Adam's ass and put all his effort into wooing his young lover with one kiss after another. He wanted Adam as receptive as possible before he asked him to stay the weekend.

As they kissed, Adam's hips began to rock back and forth, his groin grinding against Beau's thigh. The slick glide of Adam's plump lips and the frantic swaying of Adam's pelvis coalesced to leave Beau light-headed. Suddenly the crotch of his slacks seemed to have shrunk a size or two. Cramped and swollen to twice its usual size, his shaft had long since grown out of his silk bikini briefs and was leaking a sticky pool against the inside of his fly. If he intended to retain even a modicum of decorum, he needed to pull away and put some space between them—

and he would, eventually. Their brief make-out sessions notwithstanding, it had been way too long since he'd had his greedy hands on Adam to stop just yet.

Adam's hand slid down Beau's chest, traveled beyond his trembling abs, and cupped Beau's bulge in a firm grip. His mouth escaped Beau's and peppered kisses up and down Beau's jawline. "Want this. Want you so bad."

God, yes. Beau had never heard more welcome words. He buried his face in the curve of Adam's neck, licking the slightly salty skin above Adam's shirt collar. That earned him a long, low moan. Nipping the tender flesh produced squeezing pressure around his cock and an inflated swing of Adam's hips.

Things were getting hot and heavy fast, too serious with the kiddo waiting on his dad in the other room. More than anything, he wanted to flip Adam around, pull down his pants, and plug his tight little ass. However, that was going to have to wait until they had more than half a dozen minutes to spare.

Beau lifted his head and stared down at Adam through eyelids that felt much too heavy. His pulse thundered in his ears, echoing the ruthless ache in his groin. "Stay. Spend the weekend with me."

Adam's stiffened. "I can't."

"Why not?"

"Johnny needs me."

"I need you." Beau had never in his life felt jealous of a child, but he'd be damned if he wasn't experiencing the emotion right then.

"I know, but..." Adam sighed and ducked beneath Beau's arm, putting a couple of feet between them. "It's not the same."

Beau dropped his arms to his sides, a chill climbing up his spine despite the way his temper ran hot. Without turning away from the wall, he said, "I should hope not."

"Don't be an asshole, Beau."

Beau straightened, trying to get ahold of himself. Every muscle in his body was taut with need, his mind a chaotic jumble of yearning and rejection. He turned, resting his back against the wall, and faced Adam. Adam's appearance, his dark hair mussed and his lips still swollen from

bittersweet kisses, didn't go a long way toward stifling Beau's irritation. "I'm not the one who's being unreasonable here. Maybe I wouldn't be so upset about being left hanging—*again*—if you hadn't started humping me like a bitch in heat and pawing at my cock like you couldn't wait to bend over and take it."

Adam sucked in a sharp breath, his nostrils flaring. "Excuse me?"

Beau folded his arms across his chest. "You heard me."

"For your information," Adam hissed, his voice deathly quiet. "You were the one who dragged me into the kitchen and kissed me, not the other way around. And I was not *humping* you."

"Call it what you like. The fact is, I'm sick of you leading me on and then hitting the brakes before anything can happen. You've been doing it all damn week."

"Well, forgive me for not dropping to my knees the minute you decide you want to get off. I've had a few more important things to worry about than your dick lately. Is sex all you can think about?"

"It's hard not to when you're shaking your ass at me all the time."

"Fuck you, Beau. I don't need this crap."

"Of course you don't," Beau retorted. "You don't ever *need* anything, do you?" And damn if that didn't sting. It wasn't as if Beau wanted a clingy lover, far from it, but it would have been nice to know Adam felt a little of the same desperation to be with him.

"Whatever, Beau. If all you want is a piece of ass, then I'm sure you can find someone else to accommodate you." Adam pivoted and headed for the door.

Beau followed. "Maybe I will."

Adam stopped, his back rigid. "I'm getting Johnny and going home. If you know what's good for you, you won't make a scene in front of my son."

Knowing he needed to keep his mouth shut before he said something he'd really regret, something even worse than what he'd already thrown Adam's way, Beau let Adam walk away. No matter how little Adam thought of him, Beau wouldn't stoop low enough to arguing with Adam in front of Johnny. It wasn't the kid's fault his father was a cock-tease.

After taking a moment to compose himself, Beau exited the kitchen in time to see Adam hustle little Johnny out of the den. He followed the pair a few steps, far enough so he could watch them walk out of his home. He stood at the end of the hall, immobile, as Adam and Johnny left. The quiet latch of the front door closing set off a tsunami of anger and regret. Beau's temper snapped, fury replacing his lament. Lashing out, his fist connected with the wall to his right. Pain burst through his knuckles, but it was nothing compared to the ache in his chest.

With a curse, he pulled his hand in close and cradled it against his chest. Deciding to hit an inanimate object wasn't his brightest moment, but he needed somewhere to direct his anger.

Goddamn it. The last thing he'd wanted to do was fight with Adam, yet they always seemed to be arguing over one thing or another. He had no problem doing business with some of the wealthiest men in America; however, he couldn't seem to articulate anything to the man he wanted to call his own. Even at the best of times, the other man turned him inside out. What should have been a minor disagreement blew up in his face.

Beau had never felt so clumsy and inept in all his life. Nonetheless, he kept going back for more. For the first time, he felt like he was being guided by something other than his libido. He couldn't deny he wanted to fuck Adam every time they were within touching distance, and even when they weren't, for that matter, but there was more to the attraction he felt than lust. So much more.

Maybe that was why he put up with Adam's hot and cold behavior.

As much as he wanted to go after Adam and smooth things over, his pride balked at chasing after Adam. He'd done it before, but that wasn't going to happen now. This time the ball was firmly in Adam's court.

Chapter Six

After spending most of Saturday and Sunday moping around the house, alternately stewing about his fight with Beau and then worrying about whether there was any chance of salvaging things between them, Adam tucked his son into bed early on Sunday night and then crawled between his own sheets with a touch of reluctance.

Several hours later, he awoke to the distressing bleat of an alarm ringing. Disoriented, it took him a moment to figure out what all the blasted noise was about. The overwhelming stink of smoke clued him in long before his foggy mind figured out the situation.

Adam was on his feet and stumbling across the hall into Johnny's room before a spike of adrenaline flooded his bloodstream. He lifted his sleeping son out of bed and slung the red and blue Spiderman blanket over his head for protection. Without knowing what they would find once they tried to exit, he could only think of trying to protect Johnny from inhaling too much smoke.

As he made his way toward the door, the Molotov cocktail of fear pervading his every thought screamed the need to get out of the building. Above his burning desire to protect their things, his most cherished photos, and the sentimental items saved from when Johnny was a baby, the need to get his son to refuge rode him the strongest. Pictures of his mother and infant son couldn't be replaced, but the squirming little boy held in his arms was more important than anything else. Adam would gladly lay down his life to shield Johnny, although he prayed it didn't come to that. He was all the family Johnny had left. God knew the child's mother wouldn't step in and take care of him if something happened to Adam.

But I'm not going to think about that right now. I'm going to stay positive and get us out of this.

Holding out hope that their one way out of the apartment wasn't blocked by fire, Adam approached the door. Out of the corner of his eye, he spotted the silver gleam of keys hanging on

a hook beside the entrance. He grabbed them and stuffed them into the pocket of his pajama pants, knowing he would need them later.

After checking the knob for heat, as he'd seen someone do on television, Adam flung open his door and stepped out into pandemonium. A herd of people trampled through the hallway toward the exit, while firemen swarmed in the opposite direction. Smoke crawled along the upper portions of the walls, growing thicker by the second.

He didn't know where the fire was coming from, couldn't see it, and for that he was grateful. If the blaze wasn't right on top of them, then perhaps they stood a chance of making it outside without any repercussions. All he needed to do was get them to the stairwell and down one flight of steps.

Johnny whimpered and snuggled closer, frightened by all the noise. Adam whispered promises to his son and clung to his small body, terrified someone would run into him and knock Johnny out of his arms. He moved as near to the wall as he could manage and stayed there as he made his way closer to the stairs, praying they wouldn't be trampled to death before he could get them to safety. People were pushing and shoving, trying to get their loved ones out of the building.

Johnny's spindly arms tightened around Adam's neck, making it even harder to draw fetid air into his lungs. His head spun from the lack of oxygen, causing him to trip over his own feet and repeatedly stumble into the wall. Each time he pulled himself together and continued on, urged forward by the drove of people behind him and the overpowering need to get his son out of harm's way.

Adam's eyes watered, blurring the horrific landscape of people all around him, until they were nothing more than vague shapes and indistinct colors. His nose burned and began to run from the acidic reek of his smoldering home.

After what seemed like hours but was probably mere minutes, the bright red glow of the EXIT sign loomed up ahead. He struggled to pick up speed, pleading with the people ahead of him to hurry. Hope yawned within him, driving him to push forward. They were so close to freedom.

Almost there...

Adam pushed through the door and stepped out the other side, inhaling fresh air. He hugged his son tighter, assuring him everything would be all right, and followed the crowd across the street. Once there, he joined his neighbors as they watched fire shoot out the windows of what looked to be the third floor.

Bracketed by strangers, he looked on in horror as the apartment building went up in flames. Everything he owned was in the apartment. All he had left were the clothes on their backs and his old car. A hotel was out of the question, because his wallet was trapped inside along with all his other possessions. Thank goodness he'd had the foresight to grab his keys on the way out of the apartment. Otherwise they'd be trapped where they stood.

One name blinked through his mind like a shining beacon of hope. *Beau*. The only problem was, Adam was no longer sure of his welcome.

* * * *

A persistent, shrill warble dragged Beau out of restless sleep. When the noise showed no signs of stopping, he reluctantly rolled out of the bed and stumbled to his feet. He grabbed his robe off the foot of the bed, wrapped his chilled body in the plush navy fabric, and tightened the belt.

The doorbell sang through the house once again. Although the urge to piss weighed on his bladder, it would have to wait. Barefoot, he strode down the hall and descended the stairs, curiosity driving him to hurry. Whoever wanted in was impatient. Beau hoped Cody hadn't been in another fight with Dante. They seemed to be getting along quite well these days, but who knew what might happen, since they were both stubborn as hell.

A glimpse through the peephole spurred a rush of surprise. He yanked open the door. "Adam? What's going on? Is everything all right?"

Adam hitched Johnny a little higher against his chest. "Can we, um, come in?"

"Yeah, of course." Beau stepped back and made way for Adam to enter. Regret welled inside him for not offering sooner. Adam's skin was paler than usual, made all the more apparent by the dark bags under his eyes. The man looked dead on his feet. Surely their argument hadn't had that effect on Adam. Something else had to have happened.

As he walked by, Adam said, "I'm sorry for bothering you so late, but I didn't know where else to go."

“Don't worry about it. I haven't been sleeping all that well lately anyway.” Beau didn't feel it necessary to mention that it was regret over the things he'd said to Adam that had kept him awake at night. Pride was the only thing that had prevented him from picking up the phone or driving over to Adam's apartment.

He closed the door, his mind spinning with myriad possibilities for why Adam had shown up in the middle of the night without even taking the time to get dressed. Not that the dancing cartoon characters all over the other man's white pajamas weren't adorable. The kiddo was sound asleep, his head lolling where it rested between Adam's upper arm and chest. Although Johnny was small, Beau could imagine how heavy the kid became after someone held him for more than a few minutes. “Do you want to lay Johnny down? You're welcome to use one of the guest rooms.”

“That would be good, thanks. It's been an eventful night.” Adam smiled, although the expression didn't reach his eyes.

Something sharp twisted in Beau's chest. He wanted to wipe away the exhaustion and worry clouding his lover's eyes. “What happened, Adam? I know it must have been something bad for you to drag Johnny out of the house in the middle of the night.”

“You can say that again. Do you mind if I get Johnny settled before we talk?”

“Yeah, sure.” Beau crossed his arms over his chest in an effort not to reach for Adam. His lover looked brittle enough to crumble under the weight of whatever had happened. Their argument didn't lessen Beau's desire to comfort the other man. If anything, it made him want to reassure Adam all the more. “Well, you know the way around. Just make yourself at home. I'll wait for you in the den.”

“That sounds great. I'll just lay him down, and then I'll join you.”

“Just give a shout if you need anything, okay?”

“I will. Thanks.”

Beau stared after his lover until he disappeared up the stairs, and then walked into the den. Rather than sit and wait, he grabbed a crystal decanter of bourbon and two highball glasses off the bar and carried them both over to the couch.

Adam came in as Beau was pouring himself a second glass. “You started drinking without me?”

“Sorry.” Beau poured two fingers into the second glass and handed it to Adam as he sat beside him on the sofa. “I figured you could use one and that I might as well join you.”

Adam accepted the glass and took a sip, wincing at the strong liquor. “I see you spared no expense on the alcohol.”

“Sarcasm doesn't become you.” Beau smiled and sat back against the plush cushions. “I'm afraid I'm all out of the good stuff at the moment, but this'll do the job just as well.”

“I imagine it will.” Adam downed the rest of the liquid and set his glass on the coffee table. “I definitely needed that. Thanks.”

“You're welcome. Did you get Johnny settled in upstairs?”

“Yeah. He sleeps like the dead, so hopefully he'll be out for the rest of the night.”

Beau sipped from his glass and regarded Adam. His lover's hair stuck up all over his head, as if he'd been running his fingers through it all night. Something dark and sooty was smeared across one of the cartoon characters on Adam's right sleeve. What looked like the same substance was also daubed across the back of his left hand.

Unable to resist, Beau wet his index finger and rubbed at the stain on Adam's hand. He half expected Adam to jerk away from his touch, but the younger man sat still and let Beau continue. When he'd gotten as much as he could off, he threaded his fingers through Adam's and gave a squeeze. “I'm really sorry about the things I said, Adam. I didn't mean them.”

“I'm sorry too. I know I haven't made things easy on you this past week. I didn't mean to lead you on. I just have such a hard time keeping my hands off you when you're near.”

Beau snorted. “I'd say we're two of a kind when it comes to that dilemma. I promise I'll try to be more patient and understanding.”

“I'd appreciate that. It's not that I don't want to make love to you—God knows I do—but the timing has to be right.”

“I realize that; I guess it's been all too easy to forget what it was like to have a little kid. I wasn't much better than you when it comes to being overprotective.” Beau rubbed his thumb over Adam's. “Want to tell me what happened tonight?”

Adam stared down at their entwined fingers. He inhaled and exhaled, seeming to deflate right before Beau's eyes. “My apartment building burned down.”

Without thought, Beau hauled Adam closer. He wrapped his arms around his lover and held on tight, breathing in the faint scent of smoke that clung to Adam's hair. "Thank God you and Johnny all right."

"We're fine. My apartment, however, is toast." Adam shuddered and buried his face against Beau's chest. "I don't know what I'm going to do."

"It'll be okay, Adam. I promise." Beau ran his hands up and down Adam's back, trying to soothe his lover. Every muscle in the younger man's body felt rigid with stress. Beau couldn't imagine what it was like to lose everything in the blink of an eye. "You and Johnny are welcome to stay here as long as you want, and I'll help you any way I can."

"I don't know how anything is going to be all right, but I want to believe you." Adam slowly relaxed and leaned into Beau, letting Beau take all his weight.

The trust in Adam's voice made Beau want to slay dragons if it meant that he never had to see Adam so upset and out of sorts again. Pride being what it was, Beau doubted Adam would agree to let Beau take care of him, but he would do whatever he could to fix things. At the moment, he didn't think Adam was coherent enough to make any decisions.

Beau ran his fingers through the hair at Adam's nape, assuring himself his lover was fine. More than anything, he thought Adam could use some rest before having to tackle the business of sorting out his life in the morning. "It's late. What do you say we turn in for the night?"

"I don't know. I really should stay up and figure out everything that needs to be done. It would be nice to have a game plan in place before businesses open up in the morning."

"It'll keep until morning. We can make a list and get everything taken care of after a decent night's sleep."

"All right. You're probably right." Adam lifted his head and gazed at Beau with half-glazed eyes. "I guess I'll just bunk with Johnny."

"You can sleep with me, if you want to." Beau extended the invitation on the off chance Adam wasn't sure of his welcome. He hoped Adam would accept and spend the night in his bed. The thought of curling up beside Adam, whether they had sex or not, sent a quiet chill of anticipation shooting down Beau's spine.

"I appreciate the offer, but I don't want Johnny to wake up alone and get scared."

“Okay, but the offer stands if you change your mind.” Beau stood and helped Adam up, giving the slim man a tight hug before releasing him. “Let's hit the sack.”

Chapter Seven

For the longest time, Adam rested beside Johnny. Not wanting to disturb his son, he stayed as still and silent as possible. Inside, he was screaming. His mind kept waffling back and forth between what could have happened and what he needed to do now that they were both safe.

Trying to sleep was pointless.

Beau's proximity was like a thorn in his side. He wanted to crawl into bed with the other man and seek the oblivion of Beau's strong arms. However, responsibility demanded he stay by Johnny's side. Otherwise he would have happily crawled into bed with Beau and wallowed in the comfort his lover so readily offered. If he'd allowed himself, it would have been all too easy to lose himself in Beau's soft gaze and lay all his worries at the older man's feet.

Hours went by while Adam was torn between comfort and duty. Somewhere near dawn, mere hours after he'd arrived on Beau's doorstep, Adam gave up and slowly rolled out of bed, taking care not to shift the mattress too much. He couldn't give in to his need to sneak into Beau's bedroom and beg for succor, but he couldn't lie there staring at the ceiling either.

Although he didn't like the thought of leaving Johnny unattended, he felt like a moron for lying immobile and staring at the ceiling when he could be doing something more useful. In deference to his son, Adam planned to keep an ear out for any hint of stirring. Under the circumstances, that was the best he could do.

He stood by the bed for a moment, staring down at his son and thanking all that was holy that he had been able to protect his child. *If anything happened to Johnny...*

Adam hugged himself, trying to rub away the bone-deep chill building inside him. Stubborn moisture gathered in his eyes and blurred his vision. Rapidly blinking away the wetness, he strode out of the room, leaving the door ajar in case Johnny called out for him.

* * * *

Having never gone to sleep himself, Beau knew the exact moment Adam slipped out of the guest bedroom and descended the stairs. The telltale groan of the top step had given away more than one sneaky set of feet over the years.

By the time he got up and pulled on his robe, the house was silent once more. Beau crept downstairs to find his young lover, wanting to offer what comfort he could. Thankfully, he didn't have to search long.

A pale strip of light spilled from beneath the door leading into Beau's home office. Without knocking, he eased the door open and peered inside. Adam sat slumped over the desk, his forehead resting on his crisscrossed fingers. He looked up as Beau entered the room. "Hey. I didn't wake you, did I?"

"No. I couldn't sleep either." Beau crossed the room and knelt at Adam's feet, resting his hands on Adam's taut thighs. "You want to talk about it now or later?"

Adam stared down at Beau with bloodshot eyes. "Neither."

"Silence isn't going to make it go away."

Adam shrugged. "I know that. Talking isn't going to help either."

"What will?"

"I don't know."

Beau was willing to do anything he could to wipe the worry off his lover's face. He ran his hands up the insides of Adam's thighs. "I can think of something that will take your mind off your troubles."

"Oh yeah?" Adam offered a wobbly smile.

"Yep. If you're game, I guarantee I can make you forget all about your problems."

"That sounds unbelievably good right now." Adam slipped off the chair and joined Beau on his knees. He gripped Beau by his shoulders and solemnly stared up into his eyes. "Make me stop thinking, if only for a little while."

The desperation in Adam's voice tore at Beau's heartstrings. All the promises he wanted to make Adam clogged in his throat. Rather than try to put the way he felt into words, Beau caught Adam's lips and forced them apart with his tongue. He thrust inside, teasing Adam with quick flicks and nimble, circular twists.

After a moment, Adam finally began to relax and return the kiss. He leaned in closer and wound his arms around Beau's neck, carding the fingers of one hand through the hair at Beau's nape. Heat blossomed inside Beau and spread to all his extremities. The pads of his fingers itched to trace Adam from head to toe.

While their tongues tangled, sliding together on a light bed of saliva, Beau ran his hands over Adam's shoulders and arms, testing the smooth skin and firm muscle. Adam's biceps and triceps were not only tighter but slightly more defined than they used to be, a credit to the time he spent in Beau's home gym. They hadn't changed enough to be noticeable through his clothes, but Beau knew every inch of Adam's body.

Beau yearned to feel Adam's smooth skin quiver beneath his touch. The thin pajama top his lover wore did nothing but tease him. He wanted it gone. Impatient, he slid his palms beneath Adam's arms and down the younger man's torso. The hard body he felt up registered, as did the sweet, soft lips fluttering against his own, but Beau's focus was on ridding Adam of his clothing. He gripped Adam's shirt at the hem and lifted it, only backing away when the fabric bunched beneath Adam's chin. After creating just enough space between their lips for the clothing to pass by, Beau yanked the shirt over Adam's head and tossed it aside.

The second the garment cleared Adam's face, Beau took up right where he'd left off. He crushed his mouth over Adam's and thrust his tongue within, sipping from his lover's mouth as if it would be the last taste of heaven he'd ever get the chance to sample. Adam kissed him back, twisting and turning his tongue in tiny circles until Beau didn't know which way was up. He gripped Adam's shoulders and pulled his lover closer, near enough to feel the heat radiating off Adam's skin and smell the smoke that still clung to his curly hair.

The reminder of what Adam had gone through didn't go unnoticed. If anything, it made Beau more desperate to put his stamp on his lover. He wanted to claim Adam in the most elemental way possible, over and over again, until there was no doubt whom he belonged to: mind, body, and soul.

Adam's hands sneaked between them and slid under the lapels of Beau's robe, parting the fabric. Beau shrugged, encouraging the robe to slide down his shoulders, and then pulled his arms from the offending clothing. The plush fabric puddled around his knees as Adam threaded his fingers through the dense golden fur between Beau's pecs and then moved on to settle his

palms over each of Beau's nipples. He squeezed Beau's taut chest muscles and used the pad of each thumb to flick back and forth over the rigid copper peaks.

Beau arched his back, pushing into Adam's hands like a cat looking for a good rub. The comparison wasn't far off. The only thing better than Adam's hands was Adam's mouth. Beau wasn't about to turn down either as long as Adam kept touching him.

Adam stopped kissing Beau long enough to transfer his mouth to Beau's collarbone. Beau ran the fingers of one hand through Adam's silky hair and used its mate to caress Adam's back and shoulders. He wasn't sure how long he could sit idle on his knees, but he'd try to hold still and let the other man play for a moment. The feel of Adam's hot, slick mouth traveling across his chest certainly wasn't a hardship. Neither was the way Adam latched onto his right nipple and sucked.

Beau swallowed a plea for more and closed his eyes, delighting in the sensation of Adam's tongue flicking back and forth over his skin. The addition of Adam's nimble fingers tightening down on the neglected nipple went straight to Beau's cock, making it throb and ache for similar stimulation. While a lot of men didn't get off on tit play, Beau wasn't one of them. He loved the attention and how Adam knew just the right amount of pressure to exert with teeth and fingers. Manipulating the small buds was a direct line to rousing Beau's groin in a flash. Not that he wasn't already hard at the mere thought of stripping Adam out of his childish pajamas.

Speaking of which... Adam still has on entirely too many clothes.

Beau slid his hands down Adam's back and beneath the elastic waistband of his sleep pants. Firm flesh filled his palms. He gave Adam's buttocks a squeeze and then released them, turning his attention to the garment standing between him and satisfaction. He got the cloth pushed down over Adam's hips and halfway down his thighs before Adam chipped in and helped, wiggling the rest of the way out of his pants.

Beau took advantage of the distraction. He traced the smooth curve of a shoulder; loitered around the rise of firm pectorals and blushing, stiff-peaked nipples. He caressed the shallow dip of silken skin between Adam's defined abdominal muscles and laved the whorl of fine, dark hair surrounding Adam's navel.

All the while, Adam squirmed and promised retribution for the languorous torment Beau was inflicting. Quite frankly, Beau looked forward to Adam turning the tables on him—just not

right then. He was much too content doling out all the pleasurable sensations. Before the sun finished rising, he wanted to hear Adam beg. Unlike anything else, the crescendo of Adam's moans made Beau feel ten feet tall and bulletproof.

"Want you." Adam caught Beau unaware and pushed him backward. Once he lay sprawled on his back, Adam climbed on top of Beau and straddled his hips. "Feels like it has been forever since the last time."

"Mm hmm." Beau would have said more, like how he missed cornering Adam in his office during downtime or the way he'd barely been able to restrain himself from groping the younger man when his son wasn't looking, but Adam's tongue pushed through his lips, silencing him. It was just as well. He'd always found actions preferable to words anyway. He put all his pent-up desire into their kiss, trying to broadcast his feelings loud enough for Adam to hear what he couldn't articulate.

Long before he'd had enough, Adam pulled away and slithered down Beau's body, lissome as a snake. He peppered kisses down Beau's chest and stomach, rubbing his cheeks against the hair covering Beau's torso. Once crouching between Beau's thighs, Adam gripped Beau's shaft in his loving hands and wrapped his generous, pale pink lips around the tip of Beau's cock. Beau wallowed in the feel of Adam's tongue slithering back and forth over the crown and dipping into the slit. He lay passively and took a moment just to bask in the feel of Adam's mouth, hot and wet and *so fucking good*. Then the need to participate refused to be ignored any longer.

He fisted his hand in Adam's hair and gave the silky locks a tug.

Adam's mouth popped off his tool with a loud *squelch*. He glanced up, his lips red and swollen. "Hey! Can't you see I'm busy down here?"

Beau groaned. "I can, and it feels damn good. But I have something a little different in mind. Spin around here, baby. I want to play too."

Adam wasted no time twisting around on top of Beau. His knees had barely settled beside Beau's head when the younger man bent forward and took up right where he'd left off, sucking Beau's cock in nice and deep.

Adam's package dangled like ripe fruit over Beau's mouth. In need of a better angle, he tilted his chin up and guided Adam's cock into his mouth. Rolling his tongue back and forth, he laved the smooth, spongy cap and the sensitive depression beneath. He compressed his lips into a

tight ring, pushed them over the soft rim, and moved higher, taking in a few more inches of Adam's shaft. Excess saliva pooled on his tongue and moistened Adam's flesh, making the sleek skin glide over Beau's tongue as he began a steady up-and-down motion.

Beau took Adam in farther, until his nose was pressed up into Adam's plump, dangling balls. He released Adam's cock, gripped his lover's narrow hips, and yanked them lower, tonguing Adam's sac.

The scent of sweat and sex saturated Beau's senses, driving every muscle in his body to quiver with a tightly leashed desire to rut. He would get his turn to come, of that there was no doubt, but seeing to Adam's need came first. Only then would he give in to his body's demand for satisfaction.

With that goal in mind, Beau gripped Adam's bottom and spread his firm cheeks. The first swipe of his tongue through Adam's musky crevice caused Beau's taste buds to sing. The second made Adam quiver and moan. His mouth vibrated around Beau's flesh, enhancing the pleasure tenfold.

Beau zeroed in on Adam's tight pucker, interspersing long laps with rough jabs against the taut ring of muscle and surrounding skin. Adam's entrance fluttered and contracted, beguiling Beau to do unspeakable things. He couldn't resist. He rolled his tongue and stabbed at the small portal, piercing through the ring. Tender tissues parted and gave way, letting Beau in. Come hell or high water, he was going to be inside Adam. Tongue fucking him was almost as good as the real thing. The way Adam pushed back against his mouth, wordlessly begging for more, shot straight to Beau's ego and made his dick throb.

The heat around Beau's shaft disappeared as Adam cried out, his hips bucking. "Oh. Oh yes."

Adam's slick mouth dropped down over Beau's flesh, sucking hard in retaliation. He consumed Beau all the way to the root and swallowed, dragging a hoarse moan from Beau's throat. Snug, undulating walls gripped Beau and held him tight for a scant moment before Adam pulled back and then did it all over again, taking Beau deep over and over again. Adam bobbed his head and fondled Beau's balls, rubbing his fingertips over the tautly pulled sac and the smooth strip of skin beyond.

“Fuck, yes.” Beau longed to give in to the pleasure crashing over him, trying to drag him under. Instead, he pulled his mouth away from Adam's opening and stuck two fingers in his mouth. After getting them good and wet, he pressed his slick digits against Adam's back passage and eased them inside. He slowly pumped his fingers in and out of Adam's greedy channel and gave them an upward twist, searching for the one spot guaranteed to drive Adam wild.

Adam grunted, his entrance tightening around Beau's digits. “Ah. Right there, Beau. Don't stop.”

“Won't,” Beau murmured, licking around his fingers. He wanted in so bad, but there weren't any condoms downstairs. In his haste to find Adam, he hadn't thought to grab any. Hell, there wasn't even any lube. He was making do on spit and a prayer. Even if Adam was willing to trust him and go raw, there was no way he was getting inside the younger man without some kind of slick. Saliva wasn't enough for someone so tight. It might have been possible if they fucked more often, but penetration was rare when they were both working on the spur of the moment more often than not. Handjobs and blowjobs were the main course for stolen moments.

Now isn't the time for discussing barebacking anyway... That conversation would have to wait for another day, when his brain wasn't trying to squeeze out through his dick. Too many stupid decisions were made in the heat of the moment.

Adam whimpered and sucked harder. His cock throbbed in Beau's fist, growing larger.

“That's it,” Beau said, pumping his fingers in and out of Adam's ass. “Come for me, baby. Show me how good I make you feel.”

Adam moaned, long and low, and began to convulse, his hips jerking. Wet heat spilled over Beau's neck and chest. The lips around Beau's cock went slack, Adam's tongue moving in lazy circles around the swollen head.

Through sheer force of will, Beau held his own climax at bay long enough to watch Adam shiver and shake. He loved how responsive Adam was, how little it took to unwind the young man's reserve and bring out the wanton sensualist hidden beneath the prim outer persona. Knowing he was the only man who'd ever taken Adam, the one person granted the privilege of seeing Adam lost in the throes of passion and satiated from pleasure, filled Beau with a sense of pride and possessiveness. Although he'd made it his personal mission to make Adam smile and loosen up, Beau loved the way Adam took his life and responsibilities so seriously.

Oh shit. I'm in love with Adam.

“Ah. Adam!” Beau threw his head back, thumping his skull against the floor as his orgasm slammed into him from out of nowhere. The muscles in his groin went taut and pulled tighter with every musk-laden breath he inhaled. His skin tingled and burned. Tiny white lights erupted behind his closed eyelids, dancing in glee. “Yes!”

Right then and there, lying in a sweaty heap on the cool floor with Adam draped over him, Beau resolved to keep his young lover. The future stretched out before him in blinding Technicolor; myriad days and nights spent with Adam and his son, doing everything under the sun. Together. Like a family.

All he had to do was convince Adam they were meant to be together.

Chapter Eight

Adam spent all of Monday making calls. He filed a report with his insurance company to claim what he could through his rental policy, had his credit cards and identification replaced, and shopped for a few changes of clothing for Johnny and himself until he could provide more. Accepting an advance on his pay from Beau in order to get the bare minimum of things they needed murdered his pride.

By that evening, he was ready to drop from sheer exhaustion. Not having slept more than a few hours before the smoke alarm went off the previous night had left him groggy and fighting to stay awake. Just eating a simple dinner consisting of ham-and-cheese sandwiches became a chore.

Johnny, however, was as energetic as always. He thought of the night before as nothing but a bad dream and considered staying at Beau's home to be a grand adventure. Adam was damn thankful Johnny remembered little of what had happened. Regardless, he fawned over his son and watched his every expression to make sure there were no lingering effects.

Once they'd finished eating, Beau talked Adam into lying down for a while. Although reluctant, Adam gave in when Beau promised to keep a very close eye on Johnny. The next thing Adam knew, light spilled through the shades in the guest bedroom and splashed cheerful illumination all over his face. A hard, hair-roughened arm was slung over his waist, and Johnny was nowhere to be found.

Panic exploded inside him like a cherry bomb. He bolted straight up in bed, leaned over his sleeping lover, and shook the hell out of him. "Beau. Beau, wake up!"

Beau grumbled and rolled onto his back. His eyelids lifted much too slowly for Adam's liking. "Huh?"

"Where's Johnny? You were supposed to be watching him." When Beau didn't immediately answer, Adam repeated the question. "Goddamn it, Beau. Where's my son?"

“Good morning to you too.” Beau brushed a stray lock of blond hair from his eyes and glared at Adam. “As far as I know, Johnny is sleeping soundly in the guest bedroom next door. What did you expect me to do, stay up all night and watch him snore?”

“No.” A frown tugged at Adam's mouth. “Of course not. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to growl at you. Fuck. I just woke up and freaked out.” He took a deep breath, trying to calm his racing pulse. Everything was fine. There was no reason for the rush of fear still coursing through his blood.

“I'll say...” A rustle of the bedsheets was all the warning Adam received before Beau jolted upward, grasped him by the shoulders, and tackled him to his back on the mattress. Beau hovered over Adam, a self-satisfied smirk curving his lips. “How many times do I need to remind you to relax? You're going to give yourself a heart attack before you're thirty at this rate. Johnny's fine, and you're here, with me.” Beau stretched out by Adam's side and slung an arm over his midsection. “If we're going to be together, you have to learn to trust me.”

“I do.” Even as he said the words, Adam realized the truth behind them. He knew Beau would never intentionally hurt him or Johnny.

Adam stared up at his lover and willed his body to chill out. He was torn between checking on his son and checking out his lover. Realistically, he knew Johnny was fine. If his son had woken up, he would have come looking for Adam by now.

Waking up with Beau was something Adam had never done before. Now that his minor panic attack had subsided, he realized how much he liked it. Beau's sleep-warm body exuded enough heat to melt a polar ice cap. The sheets even smelled of an enticing mixture of Beau's and Adam's scents combined. Kind of like when they made love, only without the pungent scent of cum and sweat.

Adam inhaled and willed his body to relax. Johnny was fine and so was he. They were both safe. One by one, he felt his muscles loosen. Tension leaked from his body like hot air pouring out of a popped balloon. “This is nice.”

Beau caressed Adam's side. “I think so too.”

“Not that I'm complaining, but why are you in here instead of in your own bed?”

“The truth?”

As if he wanted him to lie... “Of course.”

"I wanted to be close to you."

"Oh."

"Is there something wrong with that?"

"No. Not at all. I like being near you too." Maybe a little too much, since Beau stayed on his mind more often than not. He'd tried so hard not to fall for someone so far out of his league, but there was no denying how very far he'd fallen for the older man. Beau was everything Adam longed to be: rich, charming, and universally loved by all who knew him. Add in the strong magnetism between them, and there was no way Adam could resist.

What was it Oscar Wilde had said? *I can resist anything but temptation.*

Adam thought the quote fit his situation perfectly. Regardless of how much it would hurt when the other shoe dropped and Beau moved on to someone new, Adam's poor heart didn't stand a chance. It belonged to Beau, whether the other man knew it or not.

Adam rolled over onto his side to face Beau and snuggled closer. He shut his eyes, threw his right arm over Beau's trim waist, and breathed in the scent of his lover's skin. If he were lucky, he could catch a little more sleep before Johnny woke up and demanded attention.

Beau's hand rubbed small circles on Adam's lower back, lulling him to sleep. The featherlight caress of Beau's lips whispered against Adam's temple in a soft benediction. Lying in his lover's arms, Adam drifted away on a wave of contentment.

When he awoke for the second time, Adam found himself alone in bed. The clock by the bed shouted that it was noon in bright red letters. Reluctantly, he climbed out of bed and rose to his feet. While his mouth split in a wide yawn, Adam stretched his arms over his head and wondered why no one had woken him. There was no doubt Johnny was awake by now. In fact, he was probably terrorizing Beau while Adam stood blinking the sleep from his eyes.

That thought more than anything else jarred Adam into motion. After dressing in one of the three outfits he'd bought the day before—stiff black jeans and a plain white T-shirt—Adam trailed out of the room in search of his son and Beau. He hoped Beau wasn't too frazzled. Johnny could be a handful first thing in the morning.

Adam wished he had half the boy's energy.

Entering the kitchen, Adam heard the others before he spotted them through the window over the sink. It was kind of hard to miss his son's boyish giggles and the loud *whoosh* of

splashing water. Moving closer to the sliding glass door, Adam spied Beau's nephew, Cody, playing with Johnny toward the shallow side of the pool. It wasn't until he stepped outside that he saw Beau climbing up the ladder at opposite end.

His lover rose from the water like some mythical sea god. Moisture dripped from the tips of his short blond hair and spilled over his broad shoulders in slick rivulets. The hair on his chest gleamed like spun gold in the sunlight, while the muscles in his chest and arms flexed with every move. Snug navy blue swim briefs clung precariously to his hips, tempting Adam with the outline of what lay beneath. Strong thighs and hairy calves appeared as Beau propelled himself over the side of the pool.

Adam licked his lips, his mouth as dry as the Sahara. His eyes should have been scorched from looking at someone so damn hot. As it stood, the crotch of his jeans suddenly felt a tad too snug. Adam inhaled a deep breath filled with the scent of chlorine and summer sunshine and willed his chubby to go away. He didn't want to sport a hard-on in front of his kid or Beau's nephew.

Beau strode toward Adam, a smile curving his generous lips. "Hey, you. I was starting to think you were going to sleep the day away."

"You could have woken me."

"Nah." Beau kissed Adam softly, careful of his dry clothes. "You were sleeping like a baby. I figured you could use the rest."

"I must have. It's been years since I slept till noon." *Probably since before Mom passed away, if not longer.* "Has Johnny been behaving himself this morning?"

"He's been an angel. We had breakfast and then came out here to play. Cody just showed up about a half an hour ago. I hope you don't mind, but I told him it was all right to swim in his underwear."

"Yeah, it's fine. I guess we'll have to get him a couple pairs of trunks if we're going to be here very long. I didn't think about it when I was out picking things up yesterday, but I should have. He loves the water." Adam glanced over at where Cody was tossing Johnny up into the air and catching him. "You just, um, need to keep a close eye on him, because he doesn't really know how to swim yet. He plays at it, but I worry..." Adam's words trailed off as Johnny squealed and clung to Cody's neck.

"I will, hon. Johnny's safe with me. I promise."

"I know he is." With a smile, Adam returned his attention to Beau. "I guess I need to lighten up, huh?"

Beau held up two fingers about an inch apart. "Maybe just a smidgen."

Johnny chose that moment to notice Adam. He yelled, "Daddy. Come play."

Beau nodded. "That sounds like a good idea."

"I don't know. I should probably..." He went silent, imagining himself trapped inside, doing what needed to be done, while everyone else was outside enjoying themselves. "What the hell. Wait. *Shit*. I don't have anything to wear." It wasn't as if he could run around in wet briefs like his son.

"There might be an old pair of Cody's trunks in the pool house. You're about the same size. Although..." Beau moved closer. He reached around Adam and gave his ass a squeeze. "I think your ass might be just a little plumper."

"Beau." Adam glanced at the pool. Cody and Johnny were oblivious of anything outside of the water they were splashing back and forth. "You might want to save the groping for later, when you're wearing more than a spandex napkin." An image of Beau naked and fondling himself flashed through Adam's mind. "Or not."

Beau smirked, as if he knew what Adam was thinking. "I tell you what. I'll be good on one condition."

"What's that?"

"I want to take you out tonight. Just you and me for a little while."

Disappointment filled Adam. "I'd love to, but you know I can't. Someone has to stay with Johnny."

"Not to worry. I have it all taken care of. Cody agreed to keep an eye on Johnny tonight."

"He did?" Adam looked at Cody and Johnny. Johnny did seem to like Beau's nephew.

"Yep. What do you say? Wanna come out and play with me tonight?"

"Okay." Adam's body quickened in response to the heat in Beau's eyes. He didn't even care what they did, as long as they were alone together at some point in the evening. It had been much too long since he'd felt Beau moving inside him. Before his dick could react to that thought,

Adam changed the subject. "I think I'll go check out what's in the pool house. Maybe I'll get lucky and find something that fits."

"Great. I can't wait to see what you look like in one of those skimpy suits Cody likes so well."

Adam groaned at the thought of walking around in a banana hammock. "I'll be back in a sex—I mean sec. I'll be back in second."

"Freudian slip?" Beau chuckled, following Adam toward the pool house.

Adam shrugged as heat crawled up his neck. It was kind of hard not to think about sex when Beau was all wet and buff. Skirting the right side of the pool, Adam stepped off the warm cement into the damp grass. The slick blades tickled his bare feet.

He sincerely hoped Beau wasn't going to follow him inside. He didn't think he could be alone with the other man and not jump his bones, or do something equally inappropriate. He'd love to drag Beau inside, strip them both down to nothing, and rub up against all that wet, hot skin. However, getting naked together would have to wait until later, when there weren't any interruptions.

With that thought in mind, Adam stopped and turned to face Beau before opening the pool-house door. "Is there a reason you're following me?"

"Actually there's something I wanted to mention without little eyes and ears around."

"Oh." Adam's curiosity blossomed. Rather than assume Beau wanted to speak with him about something negative, as he would have done weeks earlier, Adam found himself trusting that Beau wasn't going to kick him in the teeth. The man had been nothing but good to Adam. Although his pessimistic nature didn't make it easy, he felt it was past time he had a little faith in his lover.

Beau shuffled closer, crowding Adam between him and the door. "How would you feel about staying here with me?"

"Um, I don't follow you. I am staying with you right now."

"Shit. I'm screwing this up. I meant, how would you like to stay here? Permanently."

Adam blinked at Beau, unsure of what to say. "Are you serious?"

“Yes. You and Johnny seem comfortable here. God knows the house is big enough. I'd love to have you both stay.”

“I appreciate the suggestion, Beau. Truly. But I don't know if it's such a good idea.” If it had just been him, Adam would have jumped on the offer. However, he had Johnny to think about. What would happen if Beau got sick of having them around? They'd be kicked out on their asses. Adam would be heartbroken. More importantly, Johnny would be hurt and confused. Adam didn't want his son to grow attached to someone, only to have the person disappear a few months down the road. Then again, wasn't he doing them both a disservice by letting fear of what may or may not happen in the future color his actions in the present?

Christ. Why does everything have to be so complicated?

For once, Beau was the one who appeared uncertain. “Can I ask why? I care about you, Adam, and I'd like to think those feelings go both ways. I adore your son, and Johnny seems comfortable with me too.”

“I'd really like to, but...” *How can I wager the future against a relationship that's so uncertain? I care about you doesn't translate to I love you.* Adam sighed. *So much for a lighthearted afternoon of basking in the sun and playing in the water.* “Can I think about it and get back to you later?”

“Well, that's not the answer I was looking for, but it's better than a firm no, I guess. We can talk about it a little more over dinner, if you want.” Beau smiled, although the expression didn't reach his eyes.

“Sure. Let's do that.” Adam was just thankful his lover was willing to drop the subject for now. There was no way he could answer at the moment. Not while his mind raced with the implications of what Beau offered. The prospect of spending every day with Beau, not to mention sleeping in his bed every night, set Adam's heart alight.

But how could he agree to move in with Beau when he wasn't even sure how his lover truly felt about him?

What should have been an enjoyable night out with his lover had now become a noose with which to hang himself. He only had scant hours to make a decision that could alter the course of all their lives, for better or worse.

God help him if he made the wrong one.

Chapter Nine

Beau's palms slid around on the steering wheel as he navigated through traffic. Kamikaze butterflies dive-bombed his stomach, making him fear the prospect of dinner. He was almost ridiculously antsy about something that should have been simple and beautiful. Confessing his love to Adam should have been one of the best moments of his life. Instead, Beau feared Adam would say *thank you* and build yet another wall to keep Beau on the outside looking in.

That was exactly what Beau deserved for falling in love with someone so skittish. Yet he wouldn't change a single thing about Adam. Even if it meant he had to work twice as hard to make Adam believe in him.

He could feel every sidelong glance Adam cast his way like a cattle prod to the balls. After finally managing to coerce Cody into babysitting for the night, Beau didn't want anything to go wrong. He hadn't exactly planned to blurt out his desire for Adam to move in with him earlier, but Adam had looked so damn sweet all rumped from sleep, still sporting creases from the sheets on his lean cheeks. Beau had wanted to eat him up. Then he'd gone and ruined what could have been a relaxing day out by the pool by putting Adam on the defensive. He didn't know what the hell he'd been thinking.

Upon realizing he was in love with Adam, Beau had begun making plans for how best to tell his lover. Knowing himself as well as he did, Beau didn't want to chance blurting out his feelings in the spur of the moment. Being a cautious person at heart, Adam tended to overanalyze everything. The last thing Beau wanted to do was give his young lover reason to doubt the validity of Beau's declaration of love.

Since he'd grasped the notion of Adam being who he wanted, for present and future, Beau damn well planned to take care of the man as the cherished person he was, rather than the fuck buddy he'd been treated like in the past. Well aware he had some courting to do, Beau had believed the first step to making Adam consider something more serious with him was simply

admitting he didn't want to see other people. He'd done that, but nothing had changed. Adam seemed as reserved as ever.

Pure old-fashioned jealousy may have opened Beau's eyes to what he had right in front of him, but it was going to take perseverance to gain Adam's trust. Beau wanted to be more to Adam than his employer or the man he turned to in order to scratch an itch. He wanted to be the person Adam came to in times of joy and need. He yearned to make Adam and Johnny a more permanent part of his life and take pleasure in spoiling them both. He just didn't know if Adam was interested in more than casual dating. Adam said he only needed Beau; however, that didn't necessarily mean he wanted more than sex.

Beau's pride demanded he tread lightly; his heart had no such compunctions. The ignorant organ traveled full steam ahead, recklessly ignoring what could be a major collision lying in wait further down the track. Regardless of the outcome, Beau knew he had to take a chance on Adam. What other choice did he have, when the younger the man was all he could think about? God help him, he loved the contrary, stubborn man.

So he'd called up Cody and managed to coerce him into babysitting Johnny. Then he'd given himself the arduous task of talking Adam into going out and leaving his son in Cody's capable hands. Fortunately, he'd thought ahead and come to the realization that Adam would be a lot more comfortable leaving Johnny with Cody if Cody came early and got to know Johnny a little better before they left.

Even so, Adam had seemed a little reluctant to leave. He'd paced a bit, hugged Johnny twice, and repeatedly asked Cody to call if there was absolutely *any* problem. If Beau wagered a guess, he'd say Adam was as nervous about leaving Johnny as he was about the discussion they'd both agreed to have over dinner.

Beau prayed it wasn't because Adam planned to say no. Rejection would be a hell of a blow after he opened himself up to Adam and admitted how he felt. Either way he planned to put himself out there and see what happened. He was unused to being turned down, but it was a very real possibility tonight.

Adam was difficult to read at the best of times. If possible, he was even quieter than usual. Beau fully intended to broach the subject of their relationship, but he needed to cajole Adam into relaxing a little first. The man hadn't stopped fidgeting since they'd left.

“Hey,” Beau said, laying his hand over Adam's where it rested on the console between them. “Relax. Cody's perfectly capable of entertaining Johnny while we're out. You really have nothing to worry about.”

“I know.” Adam twined his fingers through Beau's. “I'm just not used to leaving Johnny with strangers.”

Beau snorted. “Cody's hardly a stranger.”

“Not to me, no, but Johnny doesn't really know him all that well.” Agitation was clear in Adam's voice, more so in the way he continued to rub his right hand up and down his thigh.

“I suppose that's true, but they had fun together today. I'd say they're fast friends as far as Johnny's concerned.” Beau signaled, slowed the car down, and turned into the parking lot of La Famiglia, the Italian restaurant where he'd made reservations for the evening. The small, family-owned establishment wasn't fancy, but the food was delicious. Beau was considered something of a regular.

Adam quieted as they exited the car and made their way inside. The mouthwatering aroma of tomatoes and garlic infused the air, making Beau's stomach rumble for sustenance. They were promptly led to a booth all the way in the back, where the old smoking section used to be. Beau had specifically requested that table because it was more private than the others. No one would have to walk by them on their way to the bathrooms or to get into the kitchen. Once Beau broached the subject of their relationship, he wanted to ensure as few interruptions as possible.

Beau smoothed down the hunter green tablecloth and looked around, comforted by the familiar sights and sounds of the restaurant. He rather liked the simple cream decor. Bits of green and maroon were interspersed here and there as accents, along with a menagerie of hanging plants dangling from every stationary surface.

Before they could strike up a conversation, a cute waitress breezed up to their table. She batted her eyelashes at Adam while taking their orders and then scurried away disappointed. Adam seemed oblivious, which Beau found charming as hell. Beau certainly didn't blame the woman for hitting on Adam. With his curly black hair and finely chiseled bone structure—not to mention those large, expressive eyes—Adam was unquestionably the prettiest man Beau had ever seen.

Once their waitress was out of hearing range, Beau said, “I think you broke her heart.”

Adam's forehead crinkled. "Huh?"

Beau nodded toward the waiters' station across the large, open room. "The waitress. She was trying her best to flirt, and you didn't even notice."

Adam twisted, took a glance, and then quickly turned back around in his seat. A pale pink hue saturated his cheeks. "God, I think she just winked at me."

Damn, he's cute. "I promise I won't let her molest you when she comes back to serve our food."

"Very funny." Adam plucked a breadstick out of the basket in the center of the table and picked at the crusty bread. "Have I mentioned that Johnny has a case of hero worship toward Cody?"

"No." Beau smiled, watching Adam play with his food. "What makes you think that?"

"He pulled me aside while you and Cody were getting dressed and asked if Cody could be his big brother."

"Really?" That was so sweet.

Adam nodded. "You know, I remember asking my mom nearly the same thing. The only difference was that I wanted a little sister to play with."

"I bet you were cute."

Adam snorted. "I was a spoiled little snot."

"I'm sure you were adorable, spoiled rotten or not."

"I guess I was okay. I was just a typical only child." Adam bit off a piece of bread and swallowed. "I really hate the thought of raising Johnny by himself, like Mom did with me, but there isn't much I can do about it."

This was the first they'd talked about children. Beau was strangely pleased that Adam wanted more kids. "You could always adopt or hire a surrogate mother."

"Even if I wanted that, I'd never be able to afford it. Do you have any idea what something like that costs?"

"Actually I do."

Frown lines creased Adam's forehead. "Really?"

"I considered adoption, once upon a time. Then I remembered how hard it was being on my own and raising Cody when he was little, and decided to put it off until I was more settled and had someone special in my life." It sounded silly when said like that. After all, it wasn't as if he were getting any younger. But part of him had always yearned for the American dream. He had a career that he loved and a nice home. Cody may not have been his own child, but Beau considered him as such. The only thing that had ever been missing was a partner. No one had come close to fitting that description until now. For whatever reason, Beau's stubborn heart was determined Adam would be that man.

Oh so casually, Adam asked, "Is that something you might still want in the future?"

"Maybe. That would depend a lot on you."

Adam dropped what remained of his second breadstick on the bread plate in front of him. "On me?"

"Yes." Beau leaned back and regarded his lover. He didn't know why Adam would be so surprised about being included in Beau's future plans. After all, he had asked the man to move in with him. Wasn't that alone an indication of permanency?

"Why?"

"Well, if we're going to be together—" Beau fell quiet as the waitress arrived with their food. He waited until she'd laid out their meals and walked away before resuming. "If you and I are going to be together, I feel like it's something we should discuss in depth before any decisions are made."

"I suppose so." Adam tucked into his food as if he was starving.

Beau saw through Adam and knew the younger man was stalling for time. That didn't bode well. He wouldn't be so nervous if he had good news to share. Beau's heart sank even as his determination ratcheted up another notch.

He wasn't giving up. Not by a long shot. However, spilling the depths of his soul over dinner didn't seem like such a good idea now. It lacked dramatic flair. What he needed was a grand gesture to show Adam how very serious he was about their making a life together. Something sweet but not overly cheesy.

Without a doubt, he knew that he could charm his way into Adam's pants. Unfortunately, the organ he sought was located a little farther north. When it came to winning someone's heart, Beau was at a loss for what to do. All he could do was persevere and hope for the best.

No longer hungry, Beau picked at his linguine and watched Adam eat. His mind raced, trying to come up with a new plan for the evening.

God, I may need a little help here. I'm in over my head and sinking fast.

* * * *

Adam sighed with relief as he climbed back into the vehicle with Beau. He'd been sweating bullets all day, trying to figure out how best to explain his viewpoint on moving in together without making himself sound like a needy, lovesick fool, for absolutely nothing.

Beau hadn't even brought up the subject. They'd talked about kids—during which Adam had been shocked to learn Beau wanted them—and then eaten their meals in relative silence. However, Beau's mention of their being together, as in a real couple rather than fuck buddies planted a seed of hope within Adam. The possibility of making a home with Beau, raising Johnny and perhaps even another child or two somewhere down the line, germinated inside Adam and blossomed like a flower. He couldn't get the thought out of his mind, regardless of the fact that nothing concrete was discussed or decided upon.

As much as Adam wanted to pin all his hopes and dreams on the man sitting next to him in the darkness, he knew better than to assume anything. He fought to shove back the irrational slide show his mind had labeled *family* and chose to face reality as he saw it. Beau liked him. Beau possibly even wanted to live together and fuck as often as they could manage. However, Beau was not in love with him. At best, he was willing to settle for creating a stable home with Adam rather than risking the future on one hot fuck after another.

The only choice Adam had to make now was whether he was willing to settle for less than everything. For however long their relationship lasted, he would be able to call Beau his own. Or he could tuck his tail between his legs and go now, before his heart was so invested he didn't know which way to turn after Beau came to his senses and found someone better. The safe bet was to leave while he was still rational enough to think clearly. Unfortunately, his emotions were already tied up in a big old knot when it came to Beau. Leaving wasn't even an option. For the first time in his life, he found himself in a situation he couldn't think his way out of.

The man he loved wanted to move in together and share a home. It should have been a no-brainer. Instead, Adam was scared to death. Deep down, he feared reaching for what he wanted, only to have his hand slapped for being greedy. He didn't feel like he had the right to make demands—after all, he didn't have a pot to piss in or a window to throw it from—but he wanted more than friendship and sizzling sex from Beau. He wanted love.

Adam had seen the kind of men Beau had slept with before he came along. They were all wealthy and charismatic, so far above Adam on the social ladder of life that he was surprised Beau had lowered his standards far enough to be with Adam in the first place. It wasn't low self-esteem that made Adam doubt himself. It was cold, hard reality. The best person didn't always come out ahead or get the happy ending they deserved. Lucky breaks went to those in a position of power, not the little people of the world.

At the moment, the only power he wielded was over himself, and that was thready at best when it came to dealing with Beaumont Bradbury. The older man made him more timid and indecisive than when he'd been a teenager, as if one wrong step was going to screw up everything.

Adam gazed out the window, only then realizing that he had no idea where they were. The bucolic scenery that flew by wasn't familiar in the least. He'd been so lost in thought that he hadn't been paying the slightest attention to where they were headed.

He turned to Beau. "Where are we going?"

Beau answered without taking his gaze off the road. "It's a surprise."

Adam didn't care for surprises. They were usually bad news wrapped in a pretty package. "I thought we were going home. I mean, back to your home."

"Not yet. There's something I want to show you."

Well, at least he hadn't said he wanted to talk. "All right. But we probably shouldn't stay out too late."

"Don't worry. I'll have you home before first light."

That wasn't very comforting. "Okay..."

The car slowed as Beau turned right onto a narrow road that was more grass than gravel. Shrubbery slapped at the sides of the car as they inched toward whatever destination Beau had in

mind. Adam was staring to think Beau planned to take him out into the middle of nowhere and drop him like a stray animal.

They drove in silence, Beau barely making the car crawl forward, until the bushes and trees began to thin out. Beau pulled into a clearing directly ahead of them and stopped the car. Without the dim glow of the dashboard, night encroached on the vehicle's interior.

Without speaking, Beau popped the trunk and got out of the car. Adam quietly followed suit, while wondering what was going on. The blanket Beau pulled from the back of the car didn't help his curiosity. Surely Beau wasn't intent on a little outdoor nooky. Was he?

Adam's breath quickened at the mere thought of making love to Beau under the stars. His mind, however, wasn't so fond of the idea. Sure, the weather was warm enough, but there were bugs and dirt, and God only knew who might be lurking around outside watching them. The prospect of being spied on sent a shiver of dread creeping up Adam's spine. "Uh, Beau?"

"Yeah?"

"What are we doing out here?"

"You'll see." Blanket in hand, Beau closed the trunk and then started walking toward a narrow rock ledge. "Come on."

Adam trailed along after his lover, his curiosity rising. He skirted around the edges of the blanket as Beau spread it out on the ground and glanced beyond the ledge. There was a steep drop off ahead of the border, overlooking what looked like the entire town. Lights twinkled from the ground below, as well as from the sky above. "The view's beautiful from up here. How did you know about this place?"

Warm arms wrapped around Adam from behind. "A friend owns this land. We used to come up here and hide out when we were kids."

Adam crossed his arms over his chest, hugging Beau's forearms where they circled his waist. "When you were kids, huh?"

"Yeah. We'd come up here when we skipped school. It was a good place to smoke and drink without worrying about being caught. I haven't been up here in years, but I thought it would be a nice place to bring you tonight."

"Why?"

Humid breath wafted over Adam's neck, followed by the soft press of Beau's lips. "Can you think of a more romantic spot to tell someone you're in love with them?"

"What?" Heat flashed through Adam, warming his face as surely as his heart. He turned in Beau's arms, facing his lover. "Say that again."

A teasing grin spread Beau's lips. "I said, I can't think of a more romantic spot."

Adam shook his head. "Not that. The other part."

Beau's gaze softened. He cupped Adam's cheek and gently kissed him. "I'm in love with you, Adam."

"Oh."

"Oh?" Beau smiled sadly. "That's all you have to say?"

"No. I—" Adam pulled away and sank to his knees on the blanket. "I just didn't expect that." In fact, hearing Beau was in love with him was about the last thing he had expected.

Beau knelt in front of Adam. He ran his palms over his own thighs and sighed loudly. "Do you not feel the same way? Is that why you don't want to move in with me?"

Something in Adam's chest twisted hard, making his eyes and nose burn like fire. He blinked and lifted his gaze to meet Beau's. "No. I—"

"I see." Beau's jaw tightened.

"You didn't let me finish." Adam took his lover's hands and gave them a squeeze.

"I'm sorry. Go ahead and finish what you were saying."

"Truthfully, I was hesitant to move in with you because I feared you didn't return my feelings. I didn't want to stay, only to have you change your mind later, when you found someone better than me."

"Why would you—" Beau quieted and then shook his head. "Adam, there isn't anyone more perfect for me than you. You keep me grounded and remind me of what's important. I've witnessed the way you love your son and put him first no matter what, and it's the most beautiful thing I've ever seen. All I have to do is glance at you, and my breath hitches in my chest. No one has ever affected me like you do. I can honestly say I've never loved anyone the way I love you."

Adam stared at Beau, unable to believe what he was hearing. It was as if Beau had stepped inside Adam's head and yanked out one of his most cherished fantasies. For once, he squashed

his typical pessimism before it could make a peep. Beau was a good man. He wouldn't claim to love Adam unless he truly felt that way. *Which means he's telling the truth; Beau really loves me.*

"God, Beau..." Tension drained from Adam's body, replaced by a dawning wonder. "I love you too. So damn much."

He wasn't sure who moved first, whether it was him or Beau who closed the distance between them. All he knew was that Beau's lips were covering his own, stealing his breath and his ability to think, and he couldn't have been happier about it.

Their hands roamed as the kiss grew deeper, taking on new dimensions. Strong fingers kneaded Adam's arms and shoulders, while Adam touched every inch of skin he could reach. When that wasn't enough, he wrapped his arms around Beau's waist and ran his palms over Beau's broad back, feeling the muscles bunch and relax under his fingertips. He pulled Beau's shirt from his pants and slid his hands beneath, caressing miles of warm, silken skin.

Adam swallowed Beau's groan and searched for more, exploring his lover's mouth. He flicked his tongue over and around Beau's, glorying in every puff of hot, humid air that Beau exhaled against his lips. The sound of chirping crickets accompanied their labored respiration and the echo of Adam's pulse throbbing in his ears.

Adam tore his mouth away from Beau's and buried his face in the curve of his lover's throat. He ran his lips up Beau's throat, stopping beneath the meaty lobe of an ear. "I want you."

"Thank God." Beau's arms tightened around Adam and then released. "Let's go home."

"No. I can't wait that long. I want you right here, under the sky."

Beau's eyes widened, glittering in the darkness. "Are you sure?"

Adam nodded. "What harm would it do? There's no one out here except you and me."

"I wasn't going to argue." Beau pulled his shirt over his head and dropped it onto the blanket. "I think it's a brilliant idea."

"Mm hm..." Adam skimmed his fingers down the center of Beau's chest, letting the silken hair graze the pad of each digit as he made his way south. "Me too." He tugged on the waistband of Beau's slacks. "These need to go."

Beau yanked open his pants and shoved them down his hips. "Yours too."

Feeling oddly giddy, Adam tore his shirt off and tossed it. "Race ya."

"You're on." Beau dropped to his back on the blanket and wiggled out of his trousers, kicking off his shoes as he went.

Adam's jeans were a little tighter. He stood and squirmed out of them, toeing the sneakers off his feet. By the time he stepped out of his pants and boxers, Beau was lying naked in the moonlight. Adam stood over his lover, staring down at the muscular planes of Beau's body. Broad shoulders narrowed into an impressive chest and flat abs. The *pièce de résistance* jutted from a trimmed bed of curls. Adam couldn't make out the golden hue in the dim light, but he knew Beau's body almost as well as his own. After all, he'd had his hands and mouth on nearly every inch. He didn't need to see the details to know how thick and long the other man's dick was, or that the head flushed a deep rose when Beau was aroused. Adam could smell Beau's desire, pungent and musky beneath the earthy smell of ozone and fresh-cut grass.

Adam dropped to his knees and crawled toward Beau, desperate for his lover's touch. Beau's words "*I love you*" echoed in his ears, playing over and over again. Sex with Beau had always been hot. Making love to Beau, and knowing it was truly an expression of their feelings, sent Adam's need into overdrive. Unlike all the other times they'd been together, he'd no longer have to bite back endearments. He could be open and honest, without having to worry about scaring Beau off with emotions the other man wasn't ready to share. The realization lifted him up and liberated him, unleashing the chains he'd kept tight around his heart. Love welled up inside him and spilled forth, blurring his eyes with tears.

Beau wrapped his arms around Adam and pulled him close as Adam blinked away the proof of his emotional overload. Weeping wasn't something he normally allowed himself to do, much less when it was over something as silly as being told he was loved. To distract himself from his inner turmoil, Adam caught Beau's lips with his own and concentrated on the slick glide of mouths and tongues. Beau's tongue cycloned around Adam's, tasting and teasing until Adam's head spun with longing. The kiss went on and on, their lips frantic and rough.

Lying side by side, they kissed until they were both panting and eager for more. Beau's cock pressed into Adam's stomach, hard and leaking against his skin. Adam's own erection throbbed against Beau's hip, unattended and in need of notice.

With one last lick to Beau's lips, Adam slowly pulled away. He ran his right hand down Beau's torso, continued over the rise of hip and dip beneath, and wrapped his fingers around a dick as stiff as his own. "Beau... Make love to me."

A deep moan rumbled from Beau's chest. "My pleasure. Shit, Adam. We don't have any lube."

Adam pumped Beau from base to tip, thumbing moisture around the slick crown. "I don't care. You have a condom in your wallet, don't you?"

"Uh-huh." Beau's hips rocked, pushing his cock through the tight ring of Adam's fingers.

"It's lubed, right?"

"I guess, but—"

"No buts. You can get me wet the old-fashioned way, and the condom will take care of the rest." Adam squeezed Beau's cockhead, milking precum from the slit. "Please. It's been so long. I want you inside me, loving me."

Beau smashed his lips over Adam's, kissing him quick and dirty. Then he rose up on his knees, towering over Adam. "All right. Roll over and show me your sexy little ass."

Adam flipped over and rested his head on his arms. His face burned as he pulled his legs beneath him and presented his ass, just as Beau had requested. Part of him was thankful for the dark that hid his embarrassment, while a large portion was too horny to care how wanton he looked with his ass in the air, nearly begging for his lover to take him. What difference did it make, as long as he got what he wanted? It wasn't like there was anyone else around to see him act like a slut.

A firm set of hands stroked down Adam's sides and over the outside of his ass. Cool air teased his crease as his cheeks were spread wide. A stiff finger teased his hole, rubbing around and around the taut muscle.

"So pretty."

Adam bit his tongue, forcing himself to stay still for the intimate touch. While he'd never seen his own hole, he highly doubted there was anything pretty about it. Any further thought was obliterated by the hot, wet tongue swiping through his crease.

“Oh God...” Adam shifted, trying to get Beau's tongue where he needed it most. Moist heat bathed him from balls to ass and back again, barely touching his entrance before moving on. “Beau...”

“Hmm?” Beau lapped the tender skin behind Adam's balls.

“Fuck, *please...*” Pure sensation ripped through Adam as Beau's tongue moved higher, centering over his entrance. The short, back-and-forth flicks weren't enough. If anything, the sensation made him ache for something more substantial.

Beau made a slow circuit around Adam's hole, and then his mouth disappeared. A tepid stream of air blew over the wetness left behind, causing tingles to race up and down Adam's spine. Foil crinkled and ripped, sight unseen. Under other circumstances, Adam would have been ashamed by the whine that slipped from his throat at the loss. Tonight he just didn't care.

He tilted his ass up higher, anxious for Beau to fill him. His hips twitched as he impatiently waited for Beau to smooth on a condom. Desire pooled low in his groin and demanded satiation. If the man took much longer, Adam feared he was going to start humping the air.

Beau's hands skimmed Adam's ass. Strong thumbs bit into Adam's cheeks and spread them wide for the slick rub of Beau's sheathed dick. “Ready for me? I'm not sure I can go slowly.”

“Just do it.” Adam squirmed, pushing back against the pressure. “Take me.”

The blunt crown of Beau's dick pressed against his entrance and forced its way inside, one hot, burning inch at a time. Adam breathed through the initial sting and shoved his hips back for more. He didn't want slow or easy. He wanted every single inch Beau had to share, and he wanted it now. The extra zing of pain from his impatience was well worth it.

“Damn.” Beau's hands clamped down on Adam's hips, forcing him to hold still. “Warn me before you do that.”

“Sorry,” Adam murmured, although nothing could be further from the truth. He wanted to throw Beau off guard, yearned to unravel the tightly leashed control Beau held so well in the face of pleasure. Just once he wanted to reduce Beau to a mindless fucking machine, hell-bent on nothing but giving and taking the passion he served up so well. Adam didn't want to be the only one controlled by his endless desire for one man. He wanted Beau right there with him, living for the time they spent in each other's arms.

“Fuck, baby.” Beau ground against Adam's ass. “You're so tight like this.”

“Come on.” Adam rolled his hips, urging Beau to get things going. “Give it to me.”

Adam lowered his head and groaned, concentrating on the feel of Beau sliding home. The sharp sting faded as Beau slowly slid out, then back in again. Each stroke felt better than the last.

Adam cried out every single time Beau pegged his gland, his breath exploding from his lungs as he chased his orgasm. He reached down and grabbed his cock, pumping hard and fast. Before he could establish a rhythm, Beau's hand covered his own and took over, setting up a slow, languorous pace at odds with the long, deep thrusts into his ass. Adam whined, needing more friction on his dick, more of the thick length slamming in and out of his body.

On the next inward thrust, he squeezed down on Beau's cock, using his muscles to help propel things forward. He wanted Beau to lose all control, to slam-fuck him until they were both limp and sated. The movement backfired. Tightening down made Beau feel even larger, escalating the burn of already tautly stretched muscles.

Adam's breath hitched; oxygen suspended in his lungs, as electricity zapped his balls and shot up his prick. His body clamped down on Beau's cock. “I'm coming. *Oh God*. I'm coming.”

Beau fucked him through the contractions, drawing out his orgasm until Adam's balls felt like they were going to turn inside out. The hand on Adam's shaft disappeared, reappearing on his hip. Beau's grip constricted, fastening down on Adam's skin, as his tempo faltered. He thrust deep, once, twice, and then froze, jerking against Adam. “Fuck. *Adam!* Love you. Love you so fucking much, baby.”

That was the straw that broke the camel's back. Adam collapsed forward, taking Beau with him. Beau rolled onto his back, his chest heaving from exertion. Sweaty and sated, Adam curled up by his lover's side and slung an arm over his shoulder. Cool night air wafted over his damp skin, making him shiver in spite of the heat radiating from his lover's body. “It just keeps getting better between us.”

“Let's hope not. Any better and it might kill me.”

“We can't have that. Now that I've agreed to stay, I plan on taking advantage of you as often as I can.”

Beau groaned and snuggled closer, pulling Adam into his warm embrace. “I plan to thank God for that every day for the rest of our lives.”

Adam smiled into the curve of Beau's neck. “I'll see to it that you do.”

 THE END 

Other Loose Id(R) Titles by Amanda Young

Candy Man
Eye Candy
GWM Wanted
Man Candy
Pyromancer
Reckless Behavior
Secrets and Lies
Something More
The Hard Truth

Amanda Young

Amanda Young spends her days basking in the sun by the seashore and her nights surrounded by dozens of serenading male strippers whose only desire is to make her happy...

Yeah, right.

In real life, my husband chases away all the hot men, right before asking me what's for dinner and reminding me to do the dishes for the umpteenth time.

Always an avid reader of romance, I was thrilled when I discovered erotic romance and e-books. For a long while, I toyed with the idea of writing my own but couldn't ever seem to find the time to do it.

When I found myself unemployed in 2006, I decided that it was high time I gave it a shot. I sat down at my trusty computer and, according to my very patient husband, haven't moved since.

I love to hear from readers. You can visit my website www.AmandaYoung.org or email me at Amandasromance@aol.com.