

In Search of Fireworks by Ariel Tachna

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When he came to work for TwinStar Optics straight out of college, Cody Prescott had considered himself pretty worldly for a twenty-two year old. He'd had his share of girlfriends, and he'd discovered that guys were interesting, too. He'd given and received his share of handjobs and blowjobs. But he'd never been in love, and he'd never gone all the way with a guy. His friends at Florida State had been willing to experiment, but only up to a point. And some mostly buried, old-fashioned part of Cody's soul told him to wait for the right moment. And the right man.

Out of habit, he'd checked out his colleagues when he first started working there, but nobody had particularly caught his eye. Then, his partner had transferred to another team, and the manager had hired someone new. He'd taken an instant liking to Seth Williams, but that had been the end of it. No vibe. No jolt, just a warm friendship that Cody had come to treasure, as he did all his friendships with the product team. Except that Seth's had become the most important. And Cody had realized that he wasn't very worldly at all. Not next to Seth.

They shared an interest in conservation, but Cody's experience was all local and mostly theoretical, his years as a Boy Scout giving him a certain appreciation without a lot of practical experience. Seth, on the other hand, had traveled all over the world, but especially to Central and South America, spending his vacation time exploring the rain forests and seeing first hand what he worked so hard to save at home.

Then, two weeks ago, everything had changed. Cody and several of his friends from work had gone out clubbing as usual, dragging Seth along this time. They had all been drinking and all of them except Seth had been dancing. Cody had gotten tired of seeing Seth sitting off to the side by himself and had dragged the older man onto the dance floor, rubbing up against him provocatively. He hadn't really meant anything by it; he'd just been dancing. But suddenly, he had heard Seth mutter

something under his breath, something that sounded vaguely like, “Fuck it,” and then Seth had grabbed him by the shoulders and latched his mouth onto Cody’s. Shock had kept Cody from reacting at first, but the kiss had continued anyway until Cody’s brain caught up with reality and he had kissed Seth back. It wasn’t a tentative kiss. Seth didn’t do things halfway. No, it was a full-bore possession of his mouth, a kiss so deep Cody swore he could feel it in his toes. Then Seth had pulled away abruptly and left the bar before Cody could stop him. Cody had been trying since then to figure out what had happened and to talk to Seth about it. He hadn’t succeeded in doing either. Seth had turned into a master of the disappearing act, staying only until his job was done for the day and then high-tailing it out of the office as quickly as possible. Which meant Cody needed a plan.

The only problem was who to ask for help. It had to be somebody Seth wouldn’t suspect, which left out everyone who had been there that night. Cody didn’t think John, the one team member who hadn’t gone out with them, would help, either, just because John seemed to disapprove of on-the-job relationships on principle. Which was probably good advice that Cody would have followed. Until Seth kissed him. That meant throwing himself on Tessa’s mercy and paying whatever price the admin set. He only hoped it was something he was willing to give.

He caught up with her at the end of his shift the next day. “Hey, princess,” he called after her, “let me buy you dinner.” The offer was unusual enough to catch her interest. She often went out with her co-workers, but rarely did they treat her to dinner or drinks. That would be too much like dating, and they all knew she was engaged to Roy, who was overseas in the Army.

When they settled into a booth at a little Italian restaurant, Tessa fixed Cody with a commanding stare. “What do you want?” she asked.

“To have dinner with a pretty girl,” he said defensively.

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“Try again,” she answered. “If that’s what you wanted, you would have called up some girl you met at a bar. That way, you’d have a chance of getting some action after dinner. Tell me the truth this time.”

“Fine,” he pouted. “I need some help, and you’re the only one who can give it.”

“Help with what?” Tessa asked, intrigued.

“Help with Seth. Two weeks ago, he kissed me. Since then, he’s been avoiding me. I need to talk to him, but he won’t let me catch up with him. I need a plan.”

“What kind of kiss?” Tessa wanted to know.

“What do you mean, what kind of kiss?”

“Men,” she sighed. “It obviously wasn’t a quick peck on the cheek or you wouldn’t be worried about it. I’ve seen you out in clubs. Was it a light, ‘I’m a good friend’ kind of kiss? Or an ‘I want to screw you through the carpet’ kind of kiss?”

Cody blushed. “I’m pretty sure it was an ‘I want to screw you through the carpet’ kind. But he hasn’t come near me since. I’m a little confused.”

Tessa thought about it for a minute. It was late January and Gasparilla, Tampa Bay’s huge pirate festival, was coming up. Fireworks, a blanket, a dark night on the water. Sounded perfect to her. “Okay, here’s what we’ll do. I’ll ask Seth to meet a group of us to watch the fireworks for Gasparilla. I’ll just forget to include anyone else but you. What you do with him once you get him alone is up to you.”

“And if he mentions it to anyone else?” Cody wanted to know.

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"I have enough blackmail on the guys on your team to make them keep their mouths shut. They might give you hell about it later, but they won't tip your hand."

"Okay," Cody agreed. "Where are you going to tell him to meet you? I mean me."

"Does he know you have a boat down at Lands End Marina?" she asked.

"I don't think so. He hadn't joined our team last summer when we all went out on the Bay."

"Then I'll tell him to meet us there and give him the slip number. He lives out that way, so he won't think about riding with anybody. Now, let's talk about what you should bring along." The rest of the meal passed as they finished making their plans.

On the way out, Tessa added, "Oh, and I'll want details the next day."

There it was. The price. He supposed it was a reasonable one. He could still decide what to tell her and what not to.

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Cody made a point of not being seen talking to Tessa over the next three days. He didn't want to do anything to make Seth suspicious. He'd searched around and found a couple of thick blankets they could wrap up in for the fireworks display because out on the Bay, it got cool after dark. He had a bottle of decent wine picked out, a kind he'd seen Seth order when they were all out together. Now it just needed to get dark so Cody could get everything ready for the evening.

When dusk came, Cody gathered his supplies and headed out to the marina. If everything worked as planned, he would finally get his explanation. Seth would have a hard time getting away from him out on open water! Cody was also looking forward to watching the fireworks. He loved fireworks displays. The thought brought an old, half-forgotten memory to mind. He'd had a friend in school who had always used the expression "fireworks" when she wanted to talk about sex. He would ask her how her evening was, and she would say something about there being fireworks and he would know what had happened. The expression had always amused him, though, because, while he enjoyed sex as much as the next man, he'd never equated it with the stunning beauty and explosive power of fireworks.

Cody stored the blankets in the dry box and opened the picnic basket Tessa had found for him, uncorking the wine so it would have a chance to breathe. There were other goodies in the basket as well: cheese, crackers, pâté, all designed for easy eating. He could get those out later, if he got Seth to stay. He shivered a little in the cool air. It wasn't freezing, but it was definitely not summer. He hoped Seth would get there soon. He wanted to wrap them up in a blanket and share some body heat. Of course, that assumed Seth didn't take one look at the situation and run.

A few moments later, he heard footsteps on the dock and Seth appeared out of the darkness. "Cody," he said, surprised, "what are you doing here?"

"This is my boat. I'm going out on the Bay to watch the fireworks," Cody replied. "Join me, why don't you?"

"I don't know," Seth hesitated.

"Please," Cody asked.

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Seth couldn't resist that word on Cody's lips. He stepped onto the boat, but as far away from the younger man as possible. Cody was less than thrilled at that, but at least Seth had agreed to stay. By Cody's estimates, they had about twenty minutes until the fireworks began. He steered the boat out into open water, wanting to get a good vantage point.

"Would you like some wine?" Cody offered when he killed the motor so they could watch the fireworks in relative peace.

"Sure," Seth said, latching onto an excuse that would keep his hands busy. If he had wine in his hands, he wouldn't be reaching compulsively for his coworker.

Cody poured two glasses of wine and handed one to Seth. Seth tasted it and looked at Cody in surprise.

"This is my favorite," Seth exclaimed.

"I know," Cody replied. "That's why I bought it."

Seth didn't respond to that immediately. Finally he said, "You and Tessa set this up, didn't you?"

Cody screwed up his courage and nodded before finally asking, "Why have you been avoiding me?"

"Cody," Seth said discouragingly.

"No," Cody insisted, "I have a right to know. We were friends. Best friends, I thought, right up until the moment you kissed me. Since then, you've been treating me like I have the plague. The least you can do is give me an explanation."

"I don't trust myself anymore," Seth answered softly.

“What does that mean?” Cody wanted to know.

“I had no right to touch you the way I did in that bar. There’s no excuse for it. If I stay away from you, I’m less tempted to do it again.”

For all of thirty seconds, Cody was completely speechless. Seth misunderstood his lack of reaction. “I should go,” he said, reaching for the ignition to start the boat and head back to shore.

“No!” Cody cried, grabbing his arm. “Don’t run from me again. Why do you think you have no right to touch me?”

“Look at you, Cody! And look at me. You’re twenty-two and I’m not. I haven’t been for years. You deserve someone your own age, not some middle-aged tree hugger who...” Seth didn’t finish his sentence. He couldn’t. He had his arms full of Cody. And his mouth as well. Cody was kissing him with the same single-minded determination he had used two weeks ago and it broke down Seth’s barriers. He found himself returning the kiss without conscious thought, lips and tongue moving of their own accord to meet Cody’s.

“Did it ever occur to you,” Cody asked when he broke the kiss and came up for air, “that I might have enjoyed the kiss we shared? Might have even wanted more?”

“No,” Seth replied honestly.

Cody stared at him, dumbfounded. “How much more strongly did I need to react when you kissed me the first time? I thought I’d made my response pretty clear.”

“You were drunk. You had no idea what you were doing.”

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"I wasn't that drunk," Cody retorted. "I knew exactly what I was doing and with whom. And I've been trying for the past two weeks to tell you that, but you've been avoiding me."

"Lot of good that did me," Seth muttered, but there was no anger, only resignation in his tone.

The first shower of fireworks went off just at that moment. Cody turned in Seth's arms so that his back was pressed against the older man's chest, his hands firmly clasping Seth's wrists so he could not remove his arms from around Cody. With a contented sigh, Cody settled in to watch the display.

The colors and patterns were beautiful, as always: showers and blooms, sprays and stars, in blue and green, red and orange, white and even purple. The particular combination was unique, but the individual rockets were all things Cody had seen before. But Seth's arms around him and Seth's heat behind him made it a magical experience.

Seth stared blindly at the fireworks, not actually seeing them. Cody was in his arms. That was all he knew. All he cared about. Through some miracle that he could not possibly deserve, the young man returned his interest. At least partially. Seth doubted Cody was ready to make declarations of undying love, or to hear them, for that matter, but he clearly felt something beyond simple friendship for Seth or he wouldn't have kissed him earlier. Not like that.

Despite the warmth of Seth's embrace, Cody shivered when a cool breeze kicked up. "Do you have a blanket?" Seth asked.

"Under the seat with the lifejackets," Cody replied, indicating the spot where he'd stowed the blankets earlier. Seth pulled away long enough to grab one and wrapped them in it, shutting out the breeze and shutting them in their own little world.

“Mmm. Feels good,” Cody murmured when the blanket closed around them. He sank further into Seth’s arms, completely relaxed as he observed the pyrotechnics.

Seth was caught between heaven and hell. He had what he’d wanted for a long time. Not since they first met. It hadn’t started that long ago, but he had wanted Cody for far longer than the two weeks since he had kissed him. But he’d convinced himself that the younger man was off-limits. Now Cody seemed to be saying the opposite, and his current position, in Seth’s arms, practically lying on top of him, certainly seemed to corroborate his words. But the fears that had held Seth back, besides the fear of rejection, were still there. Cody clearly wanted something, but did he really want Seth or was this just a phase, an experiment? He had no way to tell, and it really bothered him. And even if he wanted Seth now, what happened when Cody stopped wanting him?

Cody suppressed a sigh when Seth didn’t take advantage of their situation. How much more obvious could he be, Cody wondered, short of stripping naked, and it was too cold for that. Well, if Seth wouldn’t start this, Cody would. He might have been waiting for the right moment with the right man before sleeping with a guy, but he had plenty of experience with foreplay. And no qualms about using it! Seth wouldn’t know what hit him.

Seth’s arms were still around him, his hands resting at Cody’s waist. He started slowly, just intertwining his fingers with Seth’s, his thumb resting on the palm of Seth’s hand. When that caress wasn’t rejected, he circled his thumb slowly, exploring Seth’s calluses with the pad of his finger. Behind him, he heard the slightest hitch in Seth’s breathing, just enough to let Cody know that the other man was indeed susceptible to that kind of touch. Emboldened, he separated their hands to trail his fingers across the back of Seth’s hand and around his wrist to the sensitive underside. That resulted in an indrawn hiss of breath, but still no indication that Cody should stop. He grinned into the darkness

and raised the hand he had been caressing to his lips, drawing one finger into his mouth as his fingers continued to trace random figures on Seth's wrist.

Seth froze when he felt Cody's fingers in his, tensed when Cody started caressing his palm, and melted when he lifted Seth's hand to his mouth. The shot of pure lust coursing through him was way out of proportion with the relative innocence of Cody's actions. But then, Seth had often thought that his hands were the second most sensitive part of his body, and Cody was doing a superb job of making love to his fingers. If the wet heat of his mouth felt that good on his hands, Seth could only imagine how good it would feel on his cock. He tried to remind himself that he wasn't supposed to be having such thoughts about the young technician, but it was a little difficult with Cody sucking his fingers deeper into his mouth. His fist clenched convulsively when Cody's tongue lapped at the calluses from the sandlot baseball he played on the weekends.

The teasing tongue paused for a minute as Cody spoke, one hand enfolding Seth's fist. "You're allowed to touch me," Cody assured him with a reassuring squeeze. Then his mouth went back to business with Seth's hand, biting gently at the heel of his hand. Seth let a little moan escape.

Seth hesitated a minute more before deciding to take advantage of Cody's offer. Maybe this wasn't permanent. Maybe it didn't mean to Cody what it meant to him. But if tonight was all he was going to have, he intended to make it the best night of his life. He relaxed his fist and raised his hand to Cody's neck, feeling the smooth skin above the collar of the sweater he wore. Cody tilted his head back, keeping Seth's other hand at his mouth.

Knowing fingers explored the sensitive skin, the tendons and muscles of Cody's neck before sliding down over cloth to trace the muscles of his chest. When the fingers lingered around his right nipple, it

was Cody's turn to moan before biting more firmly at Seth's other hand and moving on to his wrist.

Seth's hand slid down, finding the hem of Cody's sweater and moving beneath in search of bare skin. He pressed a gentle kiss to the side of Cody's neck and slipped his other hand from Cody's grasp. "Watch the fireworks," he whispered, nibbling on Cody's ear as he spoke.

Cody tried to focus outward, to see the fireworks as Seth requested, but it was hard to do with Seth's lips on his ear and Seth's fingers on his skin. He had to force his eyes to stay open when Seth sucked gently on his earlobe. And when he combined that caress with a gentle pinch of Cody's nipples, Cody failed entirely, eyes closing in bliss.

"Watch the fireworks," Seth repeated. Cody levered his eyes open again, trying to take in the colors and shapes in the sky in front of him.

Seth waited, timing his next caress to the wave of sound from the next rocket, so that his fingers and the show assaulted Cody's senses at the same time.

Cody was trapped in the sensual world of Seth's making. He knew what Seth was doing, using the fireworks as part of the seduction. Some still-rational part of his brain even admired the strategy, but it didn't help him resist it. He arched into Seth's hands as they kneaded and caresses his muscles, playing languidly over his nipples, all in time to the release of the fireworks. Then one hand moved lower, finding and releasing the button on his jeans. Cody braced himself for the feel of Seth's hand on him, anticipating the caress as the next rocket shot into the sky, but nothing prepared him for Seth's touch. When Seth's fingers closed around his erection, he felt the fireworks inside him.

Then Seth's other hand joined the first, setting up a rhythm that pushed Cody to the edge of ecstasy. Between the bursts of fireworks, Seth's fingers would stroke teasingly over the head of his arousal, its

length, his balls. Then, when the burst came, his fist would close around Cody, pulling strongly, making his hips jerk in pleasure. As the display built toward the finale, the rhythm of Seth's hands also increased. Boom, stroke, boom, stroke, until there was no time between them and Cody was teetering on the edge of release. He had no idea what was babbling out of his mouth: pleas, obscenities, Seth's name. He was aware of only two things: the fireworks in the sky and Seth's hand on his cock.

"Let go," Seth whispered in his ear, and Cody did, abandoning control and giving in to release. As the last of the fireworks crashed in the sky, his body convulsed, covering his lap and Seth's hand with sticky fluid.

Cody lay in Seth's arms, on the edge of unconsciousness, aftershocks running through him, as the smoke cleared from the sky. Seth just held him, waiting patiently for his heartbeat to slow, his breathing to calm, awareness to return. Cody was loath to move, to break the spell that held him, but he couldn't hold reality at bay forever.

"Don't run from me this time," he pleaded when he felt Seth finally shift behind him.

"I don't think I could if I tried," Seth replied honestly.

Cody twisted in Seth's arms and kissed him tenderly. "Thank you," he said. "I've never felt anything like that before."

The words were little arrows in Seth's heart. It hurt to think of others touching Cody the way he had just done. It hurt to think that Cody only saw the physical side of what they'd just shared.

"You made me feel like the center of the universe," Cody added.

Okay, Seth admitted to himself, maybe Cody saw more than just the physical.

“You are,” Seth replied softly, “at least of mine.”

“I... I had no idea,” Cody stuttered. “I didn’t know you felt that way. Why didn’t you tell me?”

“Lots of reasons, the first being the difference in our ages. I’m old enough to be your father.”

“But you’re not my father. You’re my friend, a friend I have respected and admired since we met.”

“Yeah, I know,” Seth said. “But friendship isn’t love.”

“I’m not that young,” Cody snorted. “I know the difference. What else?”

“Your career. Mine, though to a lesser degree. I’ve got enough of a resume that nobody would blink at me being in a gay relationship, but you’ve got your whole career ahead of you. You don’t need a job-site romance weighing you down.”

“Isn’t that my choice to make?” Cody asked.

“I just don’t want you to regret it. I’m afraid if you had to choose between your career and me that your career would win.”

Cody sighed. “Let’s cross that bridge when, no, if we come to it. What’s to say that you won’t be bored with me long before we ever have to face that decision?”

“Which is yet another reason. We have to work together, no matter what happens between us. We can’t let anything interfere with that.”

“We worked together these past two weeks when you weren’t speaking to me. We’ll deal with it if it comes to that. Any more excuses?” Cody challenged.

The choice of words was enough to jerk Seth out of his train of thought. They *were* excuses, he realized. Slightly different ones than in past relationships, but excuses nonetheless. If he found enough excuses not to get involved, he didn’t get hurt. He also didn’t get to live.

“No,” he said firmly. “No more excuses.”

Cody smiled, though Seth could barely see it in the moonlight. “I think there are napkins in the basket. So we can clean up a bit.”

Seth reached for the basket and retrieved the napkins, using them to gently wipe Cody’s skin and his own hand.

Cody straightened his clothes and looked back at the now silent sky. “I think the show is over. Shall we go home?”

Seth nodded and helped Cody fold and stow the blankets. As they steered the boat back toward the pier, Cody reached out and took Seth’s hand.

“Where’s your car?” Seth asked, looking around after they’d docked.

“Tessa dropped me off,” Cody replied. “I was afraid if you saw my car, you wouldn’t come.”

“Let me give you a ride home, then,” Seth offered.

Cody didn’t speak, just helped Seth put their things in the trunk. As they drove back toward town, he debated with himself. Seth had given him release on the boat but hadn’t found his own. As he stared at

Seth's profile, he knew he'd found the right man and the right moment. "Can we go to your place instead?" he asked softly.

Seth had to concentrate on keeping the car on the road. Cody's words sent shock waves through him, dulling his senses to everything else. Including the road in front of him.

"If that's what you want," Seth replied, trying not to read too much into Cody's offer. For all Seth knew, he could just want to talk some more.

When they reached Seth's house, Cody headed to the trunk. "We should take the basket inside. There's food in it. It would be a shame to waste it."

"Oh?" Seth asked. "What did you bring?"

"Pâté, cheese, some crackers, but we didn't get around to eating them."

"Are you complaining?"

"God, no!" Cody exclaimed. "But we can eat them later if we put them in the refrigerator."

Seth nodded and unlocked the door. Cody followed him inside and moved comfortably to the kitchen. It was hardly the first time he'd been at Seth's house, the team often gathering at each other's homes on the weekends to relax and socialize, and for a few moments, normalcy set in, as if their encounter with the fireworks hadn't occurred. When Cody came back in from the kitchen, he found Seth standing in the living room, waiting for him. Suppressing the nerves that assailed him, he walked straight to Seth and tilted his head to kiss the older man. Seth let Cody have his way with his mouth, standing still as Cody kissed him.

At first, it was just a brushing of lips. Then Cody licked softly at Seth's mouth, tasting him before nibbling gently at the full lower lip and sucking it into his mouth. Seth's arms came around him as the kiss continued, but he made no move to take control of it.

Cody lapped at Seth's lips with his tongue before beginning a gentle invasion of his mouth. Slowly, almost reverently, he explored Seth's teeth and tongue, the roof of his mouth. It was a claiming kiss, an inflaming one, and Cody could feel Seth's arousal pulsing against his stomach as they pressed together.

He undulated slowly against Seth, increasing the pressure on the other man's erection. "We should do something about that," Cody murmured, ending the kiss.

"You don't have to," Seth said.

"But I want to," Cody assured him. "I want you to show me what I've been missing."

Seth didn't know what to make of Cody's words at first. Then realization dawned. Cody was a virgin, at least to this kind of sex. That didn't bother Seth, but he didn't want to be just an experiment. "Why?" he said without elaborating.

Cody understood. He and Seth had become good at guessing each other's thoughts. That was what had made the kiss and the past two weeks so strange. "I wanted to wait," Cody said, "for the right moment, with the right man. I've found what I was waiting for."

Those words shattered Seth's resolve. If Cody thought he was the right man and that this was the right moment, then Cody thought this was special. Maybe not head-over-heels, falling-in-love special, but still special. And since that was the case, since this wasn't just another fling, Seth wanted the night to live up to those expectations. He kissed Cody

tenderly, pouring all the love he was feeling into the kiss along with the passion. He would show Cody what it meant to be cherished. Treasured.

Loved.

His thoughts raced as he tried to decide how to achieve that goal. He had candles in the kitchen he could light to set the mood. The sheets on his bed weren't fancy, but they were clean. He'd changed them that morning, fortunately. Music. His tastes in music were eclectic, and he had a large number of choices at hand. The only question was what to play. Something by which he could make love to Cody.

"Give me five minutes," he asked.

Cody agreed. He thought about telling Seth that he didn't need to do anything special, that just being together made it special enough, but he didn't say anything. Why settle for special enough when Seth seemed determined to make it extraordinary? He sat on the couch and closed his eyes, trying to imagine what the next few hours would bring. He wasn't scared; he knew Seth would take care of him. It was just a big step, one he had deliberately not taken before. Then he reminded himself who he was with. He reminded himself of how he had admired and respected Seth from the moment they met. He reminded himself of the feelings evoked by that first kiss in the smoky club and of all the feelings that had coursed through him since then. He reminded himself of the power of Seth's touch, discovered only that night. No one had ever made him feel the way Seth had made him feel while watching the fireworks. It should have been no different than any other hand job he'd gotten, but it was different. Seth touched him differently. As if all that mattered was his pleasure. Cody's pleasure. Seth hadn't asked for anything in return. They were here, about to make love because he had asked for it, not because Seth had. Seth would have taken him home, dropped him off with a good night kiss, probably, but no pressure to do anything else. Cody didn't know if he could promise Seth forever. He didn't know if he would ever be able to make that promise. But he did know without a doubt that he

cared more about Seth, and in a different way, than he had ever cared about anyone else. He wanted Seth to be the one to show him what magic they could create with their bodies and their hearts.

When Seth came back into the room, Cody opened his eyes and sent Seth what he hoped was an inviting smile. “Make me a promise,” Seth said, dropping one knee to the couch beside Cody and kissing his lips.

“What promise?” Cody asked, a little warily.

“That you will tell me to stop if you change your mind,” Seth answered. “I need to know that you want this, want me, as much as I want you.”

“I promise,” Cody replied. He certainly didn’t expect to change his mind, but he would tell Seth if that somehow happened.

“Then come upstairs,” Seth suggested, rising back to his feet and offering a hand to Cody.

The nerves came back as Cody rose, but when he put his hand in Seth’s, they all fell away again. All that mattered was Seth’s hand in his. Cody didn’t know when Seth’s touch had become so reassuring, but he decided it didn’t matter. He let Seth lead him up the stairs to his bedroom.

Cody took in the candles set out to give the room a soft glow, the music playing in the background with a sultry rhythm that pulsed in the air and in his blood. This was a scene for seduction. “You don’t have to seduce me,” he told Seth. “I’m already here and willing.”

“Maybe I want to seduce you,” Seth replied. “First times are special in a relationship. Our first kiss didn’t happen the way I wish it had, but our first night together is going to. If that’s all right with you?”

Cody couldn't answer at first. He was too overwhelmed. He couldn't quite take in that Seth wanted to go to all this trouble for him. "It's all right with me," he said finally.

"Good," Seth said, pulling Cody into his arms and beginning to move slowly to the seductive beat of the music that filled the room.

Cody relaxed into Seth's embrace. There were a lot of things he didn't know, but he knew how to dance. He let Seth lead, but he took advantage of every opportunity to brush against Seth, to let him feel the effect that he was having on Cody.

It didn't take long before dancing wasn't enough for either of them. Seth lowered his head to Cody's neck, kissing the elegant curve of muscle before nipping at it, just hard enough to leave a little mark. Cody moaned. It felt so good, so right to be held in Seth's arms, to be kissed by Seth's lips. He thought they'd left the fireworks behind on the boat, but they seemed to have followed the two men home and were now going off inside him. When Seth's hands slid under his sweater and up his back, Cody gave up even trying to dance. He just leaned against Seth and let the older man do what he wanted.

What he wanted, though, appeared to be simply to touch Cody's skin, to trace the lines of his muscles, up his back and down again, fingers finding and caressing his skin. When Cody thought he'd go mad if he didn't get more, Seth trailed one hand lower, cupping Cody's behind, pulling their groins into alignment. Cody moaned again. "Take me to bed," he pleaded, suddenly unable to wait any more.

As if those words were the signal Seth had been waiting for, he began moving toward the bed, still in time with the music, but no longer the directionless swaying from before. When they reached the bed, Cody would have fallen back across it, but Seth stopped him, hands going to

the hem of Cody's sweater and pulling it over his head. "Is that all right?" he asked.

"Are you kidding?" Cody rasped as he attacked the buttons on Seth's shirt. When both of them were naked to the waist, Seth pulled Cody back against him, bare skin coming into contact with bare skin. Cody's hiss of indrawn breath mirrored Seth's as they assimilated the new sensations.

Seth took off his shoes as he undid Cody's belt and the button on his jeans. He knelt and removed Cody's shoes and socks before helping him step out of his jeans so he was left wearing only his boxers.

Cody could feel the heat of Seth's gaze and read appreciation in the cerulean depths as the older man nudged him to sit on the bed. Cody complied, scooting back until he was sitting against the headboard. He watched eagerly as Seth removed his own jeans. He'd seen Seth in various states of undress before – they often worked out at the corporate gym at the same time – but it had always been out of the corner of his eye or with his attention elsewhere. He'd never had the opportunity or the reason to study the man before him. He took it now, relishing every inch of the broad chest, trim waist, long, lean, powerful thighs as they were revealed. And though it was still veiled, he could see the outline of Seth's erection tenting his boxers. It appeared that his cock was just as well proportioned as the rest of him. Cody licked his lips in anticipation.

"Keep looking at me like that," Seth warned, "and I might forget what I'm trying to do here."

"I'll remind you if you forget," Cody assured him.

Seth chuckled as he joined Cody on the bed, crawling on all fours until he could sit facing Cody, straddling his thighs. With an almost frightening look of concentration, Seth began caressing Cody, starting at his neck, working his way down his arms and back up again before

exploring his chest and stomach, fingers sliding teasingly under the edge of Cody's boxers, revealing his Sigma Nu tattoo that rode low on the left side of his stomach.

"How many times have you come in a row?" Seth asked conversationally. His eyes never stopped their perusal of Cody's body.

"Just...just one," Cody stuttered. "Come and you're finished, right?" Seth smiled again, predatorily this time. Cody shivered. "Right?"

"Ask me again in the morning," Seth answered. "We'll see what you say then."

Cody shivered again. Seth had more control than anyone he knew and from the sound of it, he planned to use that control to wring as many orgasms as possible out of Cody. Come to think of it, that didn't sound bad at all. He grinned at Seth and leaned his head back against the headboard, eyes closing.

Seth's fingers continued to drift delicately over Cody's body as they learned his every contour. Cody relaxed into the touches. They were just firm enough to avoid tickling, all the while heightening his senses. Seth urged him to bend his knees so that he was sitting with his knees almost to his chest, legs spread, a posture that would have been terribly vulnerable if he'd been completely naked. With his boxers still in place, though, Cody was perfectly comfortable as Seth caressed his calves, the sensitive sides of his knees, his thighs, tracing the edges of his shorts, but never straying inside. Cody's cock throbbed, bereft as it was of attention. "Touch me," Cody pleaded.

"I am touching you," was Seth's reply.

Cody let out a needy moan, one hand capturing Seth's and guiding it to his erection. Seth bestowed a single caress before returning to his earlier fascination with the inside of Cody's elbow. Before Cody could

protest, Seth leaned forward suddenly and took one of Cody's nipples between his teeth, not biting, just holding. A hand moved to catch the other nipple in an equivalent vice. The intensity of the sensation was more than he was expecting. Apparently Seth's gentle caresses had sensitized more than just Cody's cock.

He let out a sharp cry at the pleasure that ran through him even before Seth began sucking at his dusky brown nipple. He arched his back, pushing eagerly into Seth's caress. Seth pulled harder, drawing more of Cody's flesh into the hot cavern of his mouth, circling the taut peak with his tongue, teasing and laving it with alternately gentle and firm caresses. Cody squirmed under the lash of feelings. He'd never much cared for having his nipples sucked, preferring to have his cock sucked instead, but then, no one had ever lavished attention on him the way Seth was.

Just when he thought he couldn't stand any more, Seth's lips slid lower, playing across the ridges of his stomach to his navel. Seth's tongue thrust playfully into Cody's belly button, tickling even as it mimicked the action that Cody fervently hoped their bodies would soon be engaged in. Then the seeking tongue moved even lower to lap at Cody's tattoo. The skin under the tattoo wasn't really more sensitive than the skin around it, but Cody had always found that attention paid to the tattoo was more erotic than attention paid to the rest of his skin. Seth seemed to realize that instinctively, focusing his attention on that one patch of skin, nipping and biting, licking and sucking, until Cody was quivering in delight.

Then his head moved lower, his breath hot on Cody's erection through the fabric of his boxers. "Seth!" Cody pleaded. Seth gave in, at least a little, mouthing Cody through his shorts. Cody raised his hips and grabbed the waistband of his boxers, pulling them down. If Seth wouldn't do it, he'd do it himself.

Seeing Cody's determination, Seth helped free the younger man from his boxers, tossing them carelessly aside and gazing down on the perfection spread out before him. He had such plans for his lover – oh,

he liked the sound of that word! He only hoped his control held long enough to carry them all out. He grinned and got back to the very pleasurable task at hand. The longer he delayed, after all, the more precarious his control would become.

Seth's fingers were back to their wandering games, Cody discovered as soon as his boxers were removed, skimming back over his chest, his hips, his legs, studiously avoiding the one spot that most wanted attention. Then they were there, skimming over his cock with the same delicacy that they had used on the rest of his body. Cody's hips bucked up into the touch, wanting more than just that fleeting contact. Seth complied, closing his fingers around Cody's erection, lifting it away from his stomach so he could bend and flick his tongue over the weeping tip. Cody shrieked. There was no other word for the sound that came out of his mouth as he threw his head back in ecstasy. Such a minute touch, and yet so powerful. Anticipation was an incredible aphrodisiac.

When Seth's lips closed around the head of his erection and began to draw on him, Cody thought he'd found paradise. When Seth sucked him deep, swallowing him whole, he realized he'd never felt anything so intense. When he climaxed in Seth's mouth moments later, he understood that he hadn't known the first thing about pleasure. Until now.

"That's one," Seth said when he had licked Cody clean. He didn't count the orgasm on the boat watching the fireworks. There had been too much time between then and now. "How much more can you take?"

Cody didn't know, but he was ready to find out. "Try me," he replied.

Seth grinned at the challenge as he reached inside the drawer of the bedside table and withdrew some lube. He couldn't help but wonder how long Cody's cockiness would last. All the way to the end, he hoped. He coated his fingers and went back to the gentle caresses, over Cody's

balls and down into the cleft of his ass this time. Cody immediately slid down on the bed, opening himself more completely to Seth's exploration.

Cody started to lose patience with those slowly questing fingers, until they started circling his puckered hole. That was a new sensation, one Cody didn't mind savoring slowly. "Relax," he heard Seth murmur before one finger breached him, just up to the first knuckle. To Cody, it felt huge. His sphincter spasmed around Seth's finger. "Relax," Seth whispered again, patiently waiting for Cody to do as he said. When the tension eased, Seth slid his finger in a little more, curling it just enough to brush Cody's prostate. That took care of the remaining tension as pleasure so intense it stole his breath washed through Cody.

"What was that?" he asked when he caught his breath again.

"Your prostate," Seth told him, rubbing it again.

Cody could feel himself getting hard again from the stimulation on his prostate and from the rhythm of Seth's finger as it thrust and withdrew from his body. After a few minutes, the finger withdrew completely. Cody whimpered at the loss of contact. Then, the fingers were back, two of them this time, stretching him a little more as they immediately sought his pleasure spot to help counteract any burn. Cody was panting by that point, completely lost in the feelings Seth was inspiring. Seth scissored his fingers gently, stretching Cody's entrance even as he continued to stimulate his prostate. Cody rocked his hips in time with Seth's fingers, pushing back against them as they pushed into him, learning the rhythm of their bodies. His cock was starting to throb again in time with Seth's thrusting fingers, each brush of his prostate sending another burst of desire through his veins and his erection. When Seth added a third finger, Cody writhed with pleasure on the bed, his over-stimulated nerves crying out for completion again. "Finish me off," he begged.

Seth took pity on him and fisted his cock in time with his thrusting fingers, pushing Cody over the edge for a second time. He continued his stroking as Cody's tremors subsided, leaving him limp and completely open to Seth. He reached back in the drawer and pulled out a condom. He was about to open it when Cody took it from his hand. "Let me," he said softly, knowing he was clean. If he and Seth stayed together beyond tonight – and he hoped they did – he would suggest getting tested as soon as possible so they could do away with the latex barrier, but for the moment, he resigned himself to using them.

Seth trembled at the thought of Cody's hands on him, unrolling the condom down his aching shaft.

Condom in place, Cody spread his legs a little wider, offering himself to Seth. Then he reached for the lube and spread it on Seth's erection.

Seth took him up on his invitation, sliding Cody down to lie flat on the bed and moving over him so that their bodies aligned from mouths to chests to groins. Cautiously, Seth positioned himself at Cody's entrance and pushed inside, moving slowly, trying to let the younger man set the pace. Another time, Cody might have hesitated, but not this time. All he wanted was to finally feel Seth inside him. He felt the penetration, partial at first, then the gentle thrusting of Seth's hips that took him deeper each time. After what seemed like an eternity, Seth was finally seated all the way, and for the first time in his life, Cody felt complete. "Move," he urged Seth. Seth did as he asked, setting a steady pace. Cody felt his prostate come to life again as Seth's cock brushed it with every thrust. Soon he was matching Seth's rhythm, driving them toward the brink. Their release came simultaneously.

Seth collapsed on top of Cody, struggling to breathe normally. When he could, he rolled to one side, bringing Cody with him and snuggling them together. "Stay," Seth said softly.

“For as long as you’ll have me,” Cody replied, drifting off to sleep. His last conscious thought was of his friend who had used fireworks as a euphemism for sex. He finally understood.

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Cody managed to avoid Tessa all morning, but she cornered him at lunch. “So?” she asked. “What happened?”

Cody gave her a big grin, telling in and of itself, he was sure. “Fireworks,” he said and walked away laughing.

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