



LEIGH ELLWOOD

All You Need...

IMAGINE

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All You Need...

A homoerotic short by

LEIGH ELLWOOD

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Author's Note

This work is a follow-up, of sorts, to my Phaze Books short, *Surveillance*. It isn't necessary to read that short before this one, but you're more than welcome to do so. ☺

Proceeds from the sale of this story are donated to WHY, promoting solutions to eliminate hunger and poverty. (<http://www.whyhunger.org>), a charity once supported by the late John Lennon.

This story is for all the dreamers. I know I'm not the only one.

He couldn't stop staring, and despite sensing the world slow to a mute crawl beyond the fringe of his perception, a small part of him realized how foolish he must look to passersby. His mouth gaped open, yet no breath escaped. His heart pounded in his ears, yet no intake of air fueled it to action. Nothing, it seemed, could breach his attention to this moment—not a voice imploring him to move, not a nudge to his shoulder from an inattentive pedestrian.

Dean studied the building's high gables and antiquated dormers, and noted the flag up top waving in the direction of the nearby park. A breeze circulated around them, but his numb condition—and the heavy overcoat Troy insisted he wear—shielded him from the elements. He'd seen the building many times in magazines and Internet sites, and knew at one time it had stood alone, remote from the rest of the burgeoning city. Now, it appeared dwarfed in the midst of skyscraping office towers.

He wanted to pan his gaze downward, toward that spot...and found he couldn't do it without tears forming in his eyes.

Almost thirty years. Thirty fucking years, and he could still hear Howard Cosell droning the heartbreaking news over some football game he and his dad watched. The match could have aired last night, the memory remained that clear.

"You want to move closer?"

Troy's voice finally broke the void, enough to prompt Dean to turn toward his boyfriend. Around them, others had gathered with cameras in hand or trivia to impart, bouncing on the balls of their feet in the biting winter wind. Dean didn't have to ask the reason for their interest—it would have surprised him to learn that this anniversary didn't hold enough significance for a crowd not to form.

Dean shook his head. Looking across West 72nd Street at the Dakota's entranceway—*that's where it happened*—he noticed a few, perhaps tourists, dared to stand on the very spot.

A man knelt on the sidewalk, gesturing and talking to a companion while a woman rose on tiptoes to see through the imposing wrought iron gate that separated the inner courtyard from the rest of the world.

Christ, people! This isn't CSI. Keep a polite distance and show some respect. Did that concept no longer exist? He half expected one of them to whip out a smart phone to update his Twitter status.

He couldn't move, and told Troy as much. At this distance, an eerie aura radiated toward him, softening his heartbeat. That he'd have to live another year and acknowledge the absence of his hero proved depressing enough—why trod on sacred ground and intensify that sadness?

Troy draped an arm around his shoulder and pulled him closer. "What's so funny?"

Had he laughed? Nerves, had to be. Dean drew in a deep breath, savoring the chill. "You should hear what's going on in my head. You'd think we'd come to see Christ on the cross."

"I can understand that, I guess," Troy said, and shrugged. "I think about my mom, and how bad she had it for Elvis. When he died, she cried for weeks on end. Some people, I guess we believe they're meant to be immortal and when we're proven wrong, it's difficult to accept."

"In a way, he is. Was." Dean nodded. Sometimes his fanboy worship of the musician he admired embarrassed him. Then, he'd hear a song like "Working Class Hero," and remember why exactly he listened to John Lennon, and little else.

He caught snippits of conversation swirling around them. The aroma of rich, brewed coffee tempted his hunger—they had skipped breakfast to come early. As neither of them knew what to anticipate this day, nor could Dean find any concrete instructions via the Internet, both decided it best to stake out and catch instructions from seasoned pilgrims.

Eventually the words floating past registered.

"Does she come out?"

"I hear yes, every year since without fail. Sometimes Sean, too."

"Through that gate?"

"Dunno. Haven't been here before."

“So is there, like, an official start time?”

“It’s not long. Just a short procession to the memorial. She usually gives a speech afterward.”

“People sing, I hear.”

“Really? I thought you weren’t allow to play music in that part of the park.”

“Yeah, there’s a sign up there. But who’s going to tell you to stop on this day?”

“There’s no set time, people show up whenever.”

More than a few heads turned at that last statement. Dean remained silent as the blonde woman in the gray business suit—standing out among the knitted toques and sweatshirts advertising out of state landmarks—explained that the informal gatherings tended to congregate later in the day, and that nobody in particular organized any schedule of events. “It’s more of a candlelight thing,” she said. “Crowd varies year to year, and she doesn’t always show. Depends on what’s going on.”

“You’ve been before?” asked one of the hangers on, a chubby man wrapped in a Phillies jacket.

The woman rolled her eyes. “I don’t have to. I can see it from my window every damn year.” She crooked her neck toward the Dakota, but darted away before anybody could barrage her with more questions.

Troy sighed and loosened his hold on Dean. “What now? Do you want to come back later and see—?”

“No,” Dean said and closed the collar of his jacket around his neck. “We drove all this way and we’re leaving tomorrow. Let’s go up now.” He didn’t require ceremony to cement this day in his memory. Troy’s companionship proved more than sufficient. He ducked his head into the wind and followed his lover up the street and across to Central Park.

A man in a pushcart at the entrance sold memorabilia—postcards, CDs, any and all knickknacks one could emblazon with the familiar bespectacled caricature Dean swore was protected by man’s estate. He shrugged away his disgust and pressed closer to Troy.

They found the memorial easily, as Dean spotted a crowd in the distance arranged in a semi-circle with their heads bowed. As they neared, he detected a change in the atmosphere. The noise

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of Manhattan seemed to fade in volume the deeper they trekked into the park. Serenity washed over his senses, soothing his nerves and assisting every step closer. When they reached the circular mosaic bordered with tiny flowers, Dean edged in for an unobstructed view and donned the respectful silence like a protective suit.

There, surrounded by hexagonal patterns in light and dark grays, the grounds commanded only one request:

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Dean knelt low, ignoring the proximity of others snapping photos or praying. He reached into his jacket pocket and produced his St. Cecilia medal, given to him by his late mother in his early teens after he announced his intentions to take up the guitar. As the patron saint of musicians, St. Cecilia had been the musician's go-to gal for intercessory prayer, so his mother declared. Dean never achieved superstardom, but didn't abandon the instrument. The prayers to the saint ceased once he hit his twenties, so he couldn't really fault Cecilia for the twisted turns in his life's continuing path. His admiration for the man who inspired him to strum that first chord, however, never wavered.

Thanks for everything. You changed my life. What more could he say?

He set the medal within the mosaic circle, near a few scattered trinkets, then carefully rose to his full height. After a few silent nods to those around him, he elbowed his way to the clearing in the path where Troy waited. Taking his arm, Dean guided his boyfriend out of Central Park. Neither spoke until they had returned to civilization—it seemed more appropriate that way.

"You don't want to stay?" Troy asked. "I think somebody's going to set up some music in a little bit."

Dean sniffed. "No. Let's go back.

* * * *

Dean considered himself one degree from celebrity. Fame eluded him as a musician, though talent and skill did not, and

that suited him fine. Working as a security guard in the Atlanta apartment building partly-owned by legendary rock pianist Bobby Blair afforded him enough exposure to the good life than one man needed. Tonight, thanks to Bobby, Dean and Troy could enjoy a breathtaking view of the Manhattan skyline from Bobby's penthouse property near Sinatra Park in Hoboken.

Troy, dressed for bed in flannel blue pants and nothing else, stood close to the bedroom's picture window, wineglass in hand. "Gotta hand it to Bobby, he was right," he said. "If you want the best view in New York, you have to go to Jersey."

"It's gorgeous. You'd think, living where we do, I'd be used to a sight like that, but I can't stop staring, either." Dean eased up from behind, snaking an arm around Troy's bare waist.

"That song was great, why stop playing?" Troy nodded to dresser against the far wall, where Dean had seconds earlier abandoned his acoustic guitar.

"Eh, my fingers are getting raw. I'd rather work them out with other exercises." He played with Troy's nipples as he spoke.

Troy turned his head and captured Dean's lower lip in a quick kiss. "It's not too late to go back to the park," he offered. "I know how much that meant to you, and I don't want you missing out on anything. You could bring the guitar and—"

"I appreciate it, but I'm fine." Dean eased away and crawled into bed. "No, leave the curtains open," he told Troy as his lover moved to draw them. The myriad of city lights, coupled with the moon shining directly into the bedroom, provided a comforting glow. Dean could sleep at the height of day, outside in a tanning bed without the light bothering him, though he hoped he and Troy wouldn't succumb to the sandman straight away.

He removed his t-shirt, underwear, and pajama pants as Troy joined him underneath the covers. "You want to know a secret?" he asked.

"Always," Troy said, his tone teasing.

Dean snuggled into Troy's neck. "Don't laugh," he warned.

He did anyway—gut reaction, Dean guessed, so he let it pass. "I know how it is when tragedy brings people together. You're passionate about something, and you find common

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ground with complete strangers. For one moment, you feel like you're a part of the greater community."

Troy said nothing, and presumably waited to hear where this would go.

Dean sighed. "I've always been grateful for your understanding how intensely private I am. After my divorce and coming to terms with being gay, I tended not to open myself to public opinion. Lennon's music...it changed my life, and even though he touched so many thousands of lives, more even, I was reluctant to share what it means to me."

To his relief, Troy refrained from laughing again. Instead he leaned in to kiss Dean's shoulder. "You're sure that's it?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well," he began with a shrug, "maybe it wasn't so much that you felt uncomfortable sharing yourself with the crowd, but sharing John Lennon with everybody else."

Dan pondered that for a few seconds, processing Troy's words carefully to make sure he understood.

He looked at Troy. "You're saying I'm jealous of other Lennon fans?"

"Are you?" Troy smiled. "I can get pretty possessive myself. I'd go to DragonCon and watch people stroll past in better costumes, toting prize memorabilia I desired. When you get the mindset that somebody is a better fan than you, it kinda sucks."

"I'm not *that* vain, or occupied." Dan snorted.

Troy raised an eyebrow. "No? This from the guy who asked for the night off before the Beatles' remasters went on sale?"

"Hey, I was due for a personal day. You know I get two floating holidays..."

"One of which we spent camping outside the Buckhead Best Buy, next to four guys in Sgt. Pepper costumes, waiting for 12:01 to roll around."

Dean offered him a sheepish smile. "At least I didn't dress up that night."

"Truthfully, I don't mind if you do." Troy leered, moving closer to cover Dean's body with his. "Though I'll admit I'd probably close my eyes and think of Paul."

“You asshole!” Dean laughed, however, and savored the press of Troy’s lips against his heated skin. Troy kissed a trail from one pec to the next, pausing to swipe each nipple before lowering to his navel. Quietly, as though with great concentration, Troy dipped his tongue and traced the open rim. Practice for another body part? Dean’s cock hardened at the thought.

Dean fisted the comforter covering them and pulled it aside, granting him a better view of Troy’s ministrations. His lover still wore his flannel pants, and Dean watched the man’s lower body twist and contort to stay fully on the bed. He longed to rip them off so he could pound that deliciously tight ass until sunrise, yet understood Troy’s desire to give pleasure. He could wait, though Troy made that excruciatingly impossible to do.

Troy hovered, barely, over his cock. The tip brushed the other man’s chest, grazing warm skin with every dip and exhale while Troy continued to kiss him. When Troy reached around to cup Dean’s sac, Dean thought he might explode right then. He shifted and thrust his hips upward in a silent plea for Troy to hurry along his seduction. He needed satisfaction, now.

Troy peered up at him, aware of Dean’s urgency, yet he appeared unwilling to rush the moment. He massaged Dean’s balls, then slid his hand to cuff the base of his shaft and guide it toward his mouth. His tongue teased the cut edges of the reddening crown before Troy swallowed him whole. Dean closed his eyes and relaxed into the mattress, sighing as tiny sparks popped and sizzled low in his belly.

“Damn, you’re good.” He kept the rest of his body still to imprint Troy’s wet warmth in his memory. Once again time slowed, now for an enjoyable purpose, and Dean reached down to run his fingers through Troy’s hair, and to keep the rhythm going.

The first tingle of a pending orgasm, though, brought Dean back to consciousness. He pressed his fingers against Troy’s temples in an attempt to lift him. “Stop,” he whispered. “I need to be inside you now. C’mere.”

He scooted to the nightstand where a bottle of lube stood. His cock ached with want, and seeing Troy rise momentarily

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from the bed to remove his pants intensified his passion for the man he loved.

Troy rolled onto his back and lifted his knees to his chest, presenting his puckered hole for Dean. Once he completed lubricating his shaft, Dean tossed the bottle aside and walked on his knees, positioning himself to tease Troy's entrance with a dab of precum mixed with gel.

"Yeah, payback's a bitch," Troy murmured. "I keep you waiting, turnabout's fair play."

"Not exactly," Dean said, and gently pushed past the outer ring of muscle. He wanted this as badly as Troy, and with the imposing view of Manhattan his only competition for attention, Dean faced his lover and began a gentle thrusting pace that excited them both. He enjoyed the play of emotions on Troy's face and his quickening breath. After nearly two years together, Dean had all the cues figured out. He knew exactly when to pivot for that one spot that drove Troy wild, and when to pick up speed.

"I could do this all night," Dean said on an exhale. So he'd end up driving down the Jersey Turnpike with his eyes drooping from lack of sleep. God made coffee for a reason.

"Me, too, but I don't think I could wait all night to come. I know you won't." Troy reached for his cock and stroked it to its full, erect length. He thumbed the tip and Dean caught a glimpse of pearly white seed oozing from the tip. The sight of Troy's pleasure imminent increased his own, and after three final hard thrusts he released his load with a loud wail. Troy followed soon afterward.

"I love you," he told Troy once he caught his breath.

"I love you, too, Dean."

And I love New York.

* * * *

"Can I ask you a question?"

They spooned underneath the covers with Dean wrapped around Troy, both facing the window. Into the wee hours, New York showed no visible signs of shutting down.

Dean eased back as Troy addressed him, and allowed him room to turn in his embrace. "Sure," he said.

"Did you make a wish earlier today?"

"Huh?" Dean frowned at that, confused.

Troy shrugged. "I was thinking of the song. Imagine all the people, and so forth. What did you imagine while you were there?"

Dean thought a moment and closed his eyes to return to their pilgrimage. Right now, he pictured dozens of people, maybe more, huddled together against the cold to sing that same tune. They held lighted white candles in tight fists, shielding the flames from the wind.

All the people, living life in peace.

"What I'm imagining now," he said instead, "is this moment, replaying every day for the rest of our lives. That's my idea of peace. Make more love, not war, and we'll all get along. What about you?"

Troy cleared his throat, then turned back to snuggle into Dean. "Pretty much the same thing, only we're doing it as a legally recognized couple."

Dean smiled. "Maybe when we come back next year, it'll happen."

Troy shook with silent laughter.

"For now," Dean continued with a kiss behind Troy's ear, "as a wise man once said, love is all you need."

"I have plenty of that to give," Troy said.

"So do I."

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About the Author

Leigh Ellwood writes spicy romances and sassy mysteries. She is the creator of the award-winning Dareville series for Phaze Books, as well as numerous shorts for other small publishers. Readers are invited to visit her website for more information on Leigh's books.

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