

Spurs and Saddles: From Away
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By Drew Zachary

The weather was perfect, no matter which way Freeman looked at it. It was warm enough that the tourists were out walking around the wharf, but there were enough clouds floating by that the water wasn't reflecting up so much that it was hard to see. It was a good day to head out to deep water, and it would be a good day to see whales.

It would be a completely perfect day if he could fill his boat with people who would pay for the gas it took and didn't spend all their time ignoring him when he said to sit down.

Freeman fished with his cousin, both of them working Freeman's father's boat. Once upon a time the family had taken cod, but those days were long over; now it was mackerel in the mornings and ten weeks of taking the paying public out in the afternoons. The sad truth was that the tourists paid for the licenses and the gas. The fishing kept body and soul together.

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Freeman and his cousin John were cleaning up, making sure that the Merry Pride was ready to take guests. The morning had been okay, with calm water and a good take. If he could get the cabin presentable for the inevitable tourist who would get off shore a couple of miles and then get bored, they'd be set to start touring the wharf in search of a fast lunch and the latest gossip.

"Hey, John?" Freeman came out of the cabin with two Thermoses. "Can you take these up to the canteen for a refill?"

John nodded and took them both in one hand. "I'll get lunch, too. Burgers?"

"Yeah, fine. Get me a bottle of Coke for later. Don't forget to come back this time, neither."

John laughed and jumped out to the dock. "Back in a few." He wandered off, going no more than a boat length away before stopping to talk to someone.

Freeman shook his head and went back to cleaning, washing down the deck. The sun would dry her off fast enough. A while later he heard footsteps returning, but a glance up proved it wasn't John.

No, this guy looked like he belonged on the dock about as much as a fish belonged out of water. Cowboy hat, boots, Wranglers and a denim shirt, the man's hands were stuffed into his jeans' pockets as he slowly wandered down the dock.

Well, didn't that beat all. The east coast didn't see a lot of the cowboy look; most just wore work boots and ball caps with the logo of their feed company on them. This guy looked like he needed a horse under him and not anything a fishing town could offer.

Though Freeman could think of a thing or two he wouldn't mind putting under the cowboy.

He stayed where he was, though, and nodded hello. "Help you?" he asked politely. Tourists were money.

"Could do. I've got a ticket for a ride out to see the whales." The man handed over one of the tickets Sheila Parsons over at the travel agency gave out as a part of her package deals. She made good on them, for a ten percent discount off the price.

Freeman nodded and held onto it, but didn't put it in his pocket just yet. "Yeah, I can do that for you. You alone or do you have people with you?"

"Just me." Oh, this one was a big talker.

"Well." Freeman looked around for John and didn't see the bastard anywhere. "Give me ten minutes or so and we can head out. I need to run up to the canteen there and get some food. You can come aboard, though, and make yourself comfortable." The voucher would cover the gas, but another passenger or two would make for profit. Then again, Freeman didn't often get to be alone with cowboys. Maybe it would be like a day off, whatever that was.

"Lunch included?" the cowboy asked as he climbed aboard, boots loud on the deck.

"Only if you like burgers and fries." Freeman offered his hand. "Freeman Gallant. And this here is the Merry Pride."

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The man had a firm grip, but not one of those over-manly ones. "Joshua Stubbins, and I do, thank you." Nice warm hand, calluses -- this man worked for a living.

"Welcome aboard." Freeman pointed to one of the lockers on the port side. "Have a seat and I'll be right back with lunch. You ever been off shore before, Mr. Stubbins?" God, he hoped the cowboy didn't get sea sickness.

"Nope. Call me Josh." He wandered over to the side of the boat instead of to the locker Freeman'd indicated, looking out over the bow toward the ocean.

Freeman watched him and only incidentally checked out his ass. Oh, Freeman was totally leaving John behind this trip. Day off it was, then. "Be right back, Josh."

Freeman left Josh there and went up to the canteen, hoping to hell that John had gotten himself into a long and drawn-out discussion with Willy Patterson. "Give me four, Ida, thanks."

Ida didn't even raise an eyebrow, used to dishing out large orders to working men. She even had them ready to go, given it was that time of day. "Taking Johnny with you?" she asked, passing him the bag and taking his money.

"Don't know where he got to. When you see him, tell him I'm out past Founder's Bay, be back after a three hour."

Ida nodded and jotted it down on her order pad. "Have a good one."

"It'll be good if there's a tip." He took his lunch and headed back, still hoping John was MIA.

John was nowhere to be found when he got back to the Pride, and Josh was right where he'd left the man.

"So, we'll head out, spend about three hours around the point over there." Freeman was talking before he'd even gotten on the boat. "Got burgers, fries and water, help yourself." He smiled when Josh turned to face him. "Ready? We can head out right now, if you like."

"Sure. Nobody else out to see the whales?" Josh grabbed one of the burgers and went to sit.

"Not today, it looks like." No sense in telling Josh the whole truth. "Some days it's like that. You got a camera?"

"No, sir. I got eyes, though."

Freeman nodded. "Good enough. You watch and eat, I'll pilot us out of the bay. If you get lonely, come and talk to me." He grabbed a burger and headed into the cabin. "Oh, it'll be noisy until we get far enough out to cut the engine. Nothing I can do about that, sorry. Don't let the gulls steal the french fries."

Josh tipped his hat and settled in, munching on his burger, eyes out on the horizon.

In the cabin, Freeman put his burger down and then went back out to cast off the lines, being methodical as he moved. He knew what he was doing, where he was going, and how the tide was sitting; it wasn't anything he hadn't done hundreds of times before. When they got underway, the engine roaring and the smell of fuel mingling in with the salt, he adjusted his hat on his head and watched the horizon come to him.

He loved leaving the bay, just loved it. Day or night, middle of the afternoon, Freeman always got a bit of joy as he headed away from land and the arms of the harbor had to let him go.

It wasn't long before Josh was standing, moving as close to the bow of the boat as he could get, no doubt to get a better view. His back was stiff and straight, knees bending a little to keep with the movement of the boat. He knew how to balance, that was good, and he didn't seem to have any fear of the water -- that had happened a time or two with people from away.

Freeman nodded to himself and finished his lunch as he took the Merry Pride out to deep water, watching his speed and the time of day, one eye on the tide chart. They'd be out of sight of land within a few minutes and there had been reports of a pod of whales pretty close in. Hopefully they'd still be there, and Josh would be able to fill his eyes.

About a half hour out, Freeman was surprised Josh hadn't moved from his spot, hadn't shifted or fidgeted or come on back for someone to talk to. It wasn't often someone was as single-minded as Josh.

Freeman kept his eye out, starting to wonder if something was wrong, and then he saw a dark shadow rise out of the water a few hundred feet away. He cut the engine immediately, and silence fell around them. "See that?" he called, stepping out of the cabin.

"I did. That was a whale?" Freeman thought maybe he heard a hint of excitement in that low voice.

"Uh-huh." He stood next to Josh and pointed. "Keep an eye out right around there. There should be several, they tend to group together. Watch for tails and big humps."

Two more surfaced about a hundred feet to the right of them, glorious and slow, cutting through the water.

Josh gasped softly. "Well, I'll be..."

"Pretty, huh?" Freeman smiled. He enjoyed people being awed by the whales, maybe because he never quite got over his own awe. "Not something you see back home, I'm guessing."

Josh shook his head. "I came to see the ocean and the whales." Those hat-shaded eyes kept scanning the sea, Josh's whole body tight.

"Well, this is the ocean. Those are the whales." Freeman sat down on one of the lockers, his back to the cabin so he could look up at Josh without going blind from the sun. "Where are you from, Josh?"

"Alberta. Brooks'd be the nearest town you might have heard of that's near the ranch."

"Ranching and not oil?" Freeman shook his head. "Never heard of Brooks. Nearer to Edmonton or Lethbridge?"

"Lethbridge. Yeah, we ran cattle, wheat, some horses." Josh never stopped scanning the ocean, breath catching a little every time one of the whales surfaced. They were getting a good show today.

"But not any longer?" Freeman could relate to that, unfortunately. Fishing wasn't the way to get rich and
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a lot of guys were leaving. Most were heading out to the oil fields, actually, getting stuck in Calgary without a cheap place to stay. As it was, Freeman and John were one man too many for their boat, if they were honest about it.

"Nope."

Well. Josh was a talky fellow. Freeman nodded and watched the whales for a while, until they started to move away. "Want to follow them?"

"I got my look; it doesn't seem right to chase 'em down for more." Josh tilted his head up to let the sun hit his face. "This is...bigger'n I thought it would be."

"The ocean?" Freeman looked around at the water. "It's pretty big, yeah. It can be fierce as hell when the wind comes up and the swells start tossing. But it's an amazing thing."

"I'd like to see that." Josh glanced at his watch. "We've got a couple hours left, right? Is it okay if we just stay out here?"

"Yep. You can flake right out and nap if you want, or you can sit and watch the ocean. It's your time."

Freeman stretched out his legs and stayed right where he was. The sun was warm and there was food in his belly and four in the morning had been ages ago. He wouldn't sleep, but he'd rest if he could.

"Oh, I won't waste it napping. I just want to look." Josh seemed content to do it by the side, too, standing there and looking, watching the waves and the sea and the sky.

Freeman watched Josh do his watching and wondered how a man could be so damn quiet for so long. There wasn't anything to see, after all, other than the flash of light on the water. "You come all the way from Alberta by yourself?" he finally asked.

"Yep. Never seen the ocean, but I felt a pull to."

"She does pull pretty hard." Freeman nodded. "I've never been on a horse," he offered by way of conversation. "How long are you down east for?"

"A week, 'less I find work."

Freeman winced. "What kind of work?" God, everyone was looking for a job. Work wasn't easy to find unless you wanted to pour coffee or had a degree or two that you could use in the city.

"Whatever I can put my hands to. Got a good back, not afraid of hard work." Josh shrugged and he was given a glance and a wry smile. "I'm what you'd call at loose ends."

"Nothing unusual about that." Freeman grinned at Josh. "Fishing is seasonal. This boat comes out of the water in October and I take a week to sleep in before I decide what to do with myself for the winter.

You're not thinking you'll miss your horses, though?" Oh, hey. Johnston's boarded horses, maybe they needed help. He should go and radio in, see if he could find out.

"They're not mine anymore." It was said with a shrug of Josh's shoulders, seeming to dismiss it, but he caught the note of pain and anger in the words.

Oh, that had to suck. Freeman looked out at the water. "When the cod fishery closed, a lot of people

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lost their boats. Lots of people left, lots of people just stopped living. Communities dried up. Now it's just happening slower. This was my father's boat. John, my cousin -- he and his dad had a boat, too. Now it's me and John on this one and that's it. And we're too many, really, for the money. Takes more than one to work it, but the prices we're getting... John, he goes to Halifax each winter to work. I'm always surprised when he comes home."

Josh nodded. "It's getting harder for a man to make an honest living." The man ambled back and sat next to him. "Some things are bigger than all that, though." Josh nodded out toward the water.

"Water's pretty damn big." Freeman nodded. "Water and sky and out here on days like this it doesn't seem to matter that there's hard fishing."

"Yeah, I can feel that. All that matters right now is the sun sinking into my bones." Josh stretched out, leaning back to let the sun get to more of him. Long-limbed and looking good, Freeman couldn't help but check it all out. Hard work made for a hard body, and Josh had it all. He had broad shoulders and tight thighs, and jeans were a very, very good thing for him to be wearing.

Freeman looked his fill and kept right on looking, pretty sure that Josh couldn't see his eyes behind sunglasses and the bill of his hat. The man's jeans were tight enough he got a good look at Josh's package. A good enough look that he wanted more, and he'd be damned if he didn't catch what he was looking at starting to grow before Josh cleared his throat and stood up, going back to the railing to look out over the water.

Okay, then, he'd look at Josh's ass and wonder what exactly it was about the ocean that got a cowboy going. There still wasn't anything out there to look at, and even less now that the pod of whales had left.

"Where are you staying?" Freeman suddenly asked, his gaze glued to Josh's ass.

"Bed and breakfast called Millie's Crossing." Josh turned to give him a look. "Why?"

Damn it, Freeman just knew he hadn't looked up fast enough. "I'm nosy, is all," he said, hoping he wasn't blushing.

That gaze stayed on him for a long minute and then Josh turned back toward the ocean. "So where's a good spot to go swimming? Is there a beach around?"

"Ain't nothing but beach. There's a whole tract of National Park land, but if you want to know the good places, you'll need a local to show you the way. There's a couple of sandy coves that we don't tell no one about." Freeman sat up straighter and tugged his T-shirt out of his jeans to hang loose over his groin. He was going to need camouflage.

"Yeah? You know any locals who might want to do that?"

"I think I can name one, yeah."

"Then I guess I've got something to do tomorrow."

"Assuming my ass of a cousin takes the boat and does the whale tour, yeah. If he flakes, it'll be a late afternoon swim, given the tide." Good Lord, did he really want to put himself through the torture of near-naked cowboy? He took another look and decided he really, really did.

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"I appreciate it, Freeman. Can I buy you supper tonight as a thank you? Providing you know of a good spot to eat."

Freeman laughed and went to stand next to Josh. "It's a small place. I know all the spots. Each and every single one of them."

"Yeah? That'd be real handy -- having a tour guide."

"Happy to do what I can." He looked out over the water. "I can take you around, introduce you to a few people if you want. Summer businesses, farmers who lose their labor when school goes back in."

"Oh, now, that would be something above and beyond and I'd appreciate it. I was only half joking about finding work here, but I don't have anything to go back home to and I'd not say no to a job here."

Freeman shrugged. "If you got nothing to go back to, might as well take an evening of drinking tea and talking to people. Never know what might happen, you know?"

Josh nodded. "Yep." Then a hand was held out to him. "Thank you."

Blinking, Freeman shook Josh's hand again. "No trouble at all." It really wasn't. And if he was honest with himself, he was just happy to have someone new to look at for a change, and wow, Josh really did have nice hands.

And the handshake was lingering just a little longer than it should have, Josh staring into his face. The moment was gone seconds later, but it had happened. It had.

"So." Freeman cleared his throat and made sure that he really had tugged his shirt out. He needed it for sure. "What made you head east instead of west to see water?"

Josh watched him play with the shirt. "My mother's people were from here, long time ago."

"Seriously? How long ago?" Freeman made himself stop fiddling but then he had no idea what to do with

his hands.

"Couple generations. There's no one here now, but I figured it was a reason to come."

"Any reason is a good reason." Freeman yanked his hand away from his shirt again and shoved it in his back pocket. "Maybe you'll find family land or something."

Josh gave a bark of laughter. "Seems to me I wouldn't have any luck if I didn't have bad luck, so I wouldn't bank on that."

"Well." Freeman shrugged and offered him a grin. "It's your vacation, sort of. Go with it. Good things happen on vacation."

Josh smiled back at him. "Yeah. Yeah, they do. Maybe they already have."

Freeman looked away, fast. "You think, maybe?" he asked. He couldn't help but look back at Josh.

Josh nodded. "Maybe."

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"Cool." He had no idea where to go with that, though. "Um. You still got ages of time. Try looking at a different horizon, see if it matters."

"I'm good with the one I'm looking at."

"You're not looking at the water."

Josh blinked, and then nodded and turned, looking out over the bow. "Right."

"Not that I mind." Freeman coughed and felt himself blush. God, that was stupid.

"No?" Josh looked back over at him.

Freeman shook his head and sat himself back down. "No. There's a lot of wide open space here.

Nothing wrong with looking at everything there is to see, is there?"

"Some people take offense when folks look at them."

Freeman nodded. He knew all about that, far too much about it. "Like I said. There's no one out here. There's just us. I'm not taking offense."

"Then I guess I can look where I want." Josh's gaze stayed on him instead of the water.

"Uh-huh." Freeman looked back and worried at his lower lip with his teeth. "You can look all you want out here. Can do what you want, too, I'd say."

"So could you."

Freeman's heart began to pound and he bit down a little hard on his lip. "Really?" His cock was pressing up against his zipper and his fingers twitched, just wanting to adjust it.

"Hell, it's your boat, right? I imagine you could do anything you wanted."

"I." Freeman blinked. "Yeah, I guess." He had no idea what that meant, but he was suddenly sure he'd misread the whole thing.

Josh watched him for a few more minutes and then turned back to look out over the water.

Freeman sighed and got up. "I'll just be in the cabin." He adjusted his aching erection as he walked, wishing it would just go away.

It was going to be a long couple of hours.

Josh changed his shirt for a white one, combed his hair, and guessed as it was evening and he was going out for supper, he should leave the hat behind. At least he didn't have to eat on his own, and it seemed he'd picked himself up a tour guide, too.

For a while there he'd thought he'd picked up more than just a tour guide, but he must have read the signals wrong. Which wasn't surprising, given he didn't do the flirting and the pick up thing. Nobody back home knew he preferred guys to gals. Hell, he'd never done anything about it, aside from not try to feel up Annie Simpson at the prom.

But he hadn't come here to get his rocks off, and it would be nice to have someone show him around rather than wandering idly on his own, so he wasn't complaining. He brushed his teeth and washed his hands before heading down to the front hall to see if Freeman had arrived yet. He could hear voices outside, and when he went out he found Freeman sitting on the porch railing, talking to Millie herself.

"Oh, hey, there you are." Freeman stood up and smiled at him. "Are you in the mood for home cooking or pizza? We've only got five places and they all have fish and chips, if that's what you want."

Millie didn't say anything, just kept rocking and snapping beans.

"It's your thank-you supper, I imagine you should choose."

"Haven't done anything yet to earn it." Freeman pointed at a faded red Ford half-ton. "Come on, we can figure it out on the way. Night, Millie."

Josh nodded at her. "Night, ma'am."

"I'll leave the porch light on for you, son."

Freeman nodded. "Have him home by ten," Freeman promised.

Well, that confirmed that he'd been picking up the wrong signals. It was good to know ahead of time.

Josh climbed into the cab and tugged on the seat belt.

Freeman climbed in and started the truck up; it wasn't much quieter than the boat and didn't have air conditioning. "I have to be up by three-thirty in the morning," Freeman said, throwing his arm back along the top of the bench seat and looking over his shoulder as he backed out. "So you're my whole night's entertainment."

"Well, I'll try to make sure you have a good time."

Freeman gave him a sideways look as they headed down the road and into the town. "I'm thinking I might have messed up on the water."

"You saying those weren't whales we saw?"

Freeman looked startled and started to laugh. "Yeah, that. No, those were swimming elephants. We import them, just to amuse ourselves." Freeman was pretty cute when he laughed.

Josh chuckled, the sound rusty even to his own ears.

Freeman drove, shaking his head a little. "So, I'm not going to let you have steak. Meat here isn't anywhere like what you're used to. But we do seafood up good. You were actually looking at me out there, right?"

Oh, fuck. He was about to get the crap beat out of him. Josh couldn't deny it, though. So he nodded briefly.

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"Oh, thank God." Freeman visibly relaxed. "I totally suck at reading those things right. Which is probably why I don't ever get anywhere. Well, that, and there's no way in hell I'd ever let anyone around here ever know what turns me on."

"Oh. I see." At least he thought he did. "So..."

"So." Freeman slowed as they passed a sign advertising an ice cream stand and approached a turn for a side road. "So, I guess I did mess up on the boat. Pretty private out there. Not so much, on land."

Josh still felt they were dancing around the topic a little bit. He supposed they were both a little gun shy about possibly getting the shit beat out of them. "Unless you live alone..."

Freeman glanced at him. "I sold the house to keep the boat. Got a little place in town, above the men's clothing shop. It's not much."

Well, did that mean the man lived alone or not? Josh guessed yes. "So, where are we headed?" he asked.

Freeman didn't say anything as he pulled out and passed a man riding a bicycle. "I don't know. I mean. I thought I knew. Now, I just." He looked at Josh. "Want to go to my place and order a pizza?"

"Sure. Long as there isn't any fish on it."

"Not even an anchovy." Freeman's fingers drummed on the steering wheel. "Uh, you don't like fish?"

"I like fish well enough, but not on pizza." Josh shuddered, thinking of the "gourmet" shrimp pizza he'd had once.

"Pepperoni, mushroom and sausage." Freeman was still drumming nervously. "Something to drink?"

"I'm easy."

Freeman stared. "What?"

"I'm easy -- I'll drink most anything."

"Oh!" The truck slowed as they entered the tiny maze of streets. "Right. Of course. I think I have stuff in the fridge. Some pop, a couple bottles of beer, maybe, if John hasn't stolen them."

"So you don't live alone." Too bad. Freeman was a good-looking man.

"No, I live alone -- John just takes stuff when he's around." Freeman checked his mirrors and signaled for a left turn. "He's out tonight, anyway. His girlfriend's family is having a thing or something, so he'll be off with that lot. As long as he shows up to fish in the morning, I'm happy."

"Yeah? Now that's something I'd be interested in seeing. Fishing. Real fishing, I mean." He wasn't hinting or anything, but if Freeman needed someone to go out with him... well, he'd volunteer.

"For real?" Freeman made the turn and drove down a narrow street, looking over at him. "It's a dark and cold way to start the day, but if you want you can come with us. We'll put you to work, though."

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"Yeah, I'm serious." It was farming in a way, and he was interested in it. Best way to know something was to do it.

"Cool." Freeman looked pleased with the idea. They pulled into a narrow lane between two buildings and then around the back into a small parking lot. "Downtown, the back way. Come on, I'll take you up to my place."

"Cool." He checked out Freeman's ass as he followed the man. It was a good one, filling out the blue jeans nicely.

They went up a flight of exterior stairs and through a heavy, unlocked door on the second floor, and then Freeman unlocked a door with a brass "3" on it. "It's kind of crammed," he said as he opened the door.

"I sold the house, but I kept a lot of the family stuff."

"We basically sold everything off." His father had died, the farm mortgaged to the hilt, and he and Tommy'd lost all the land, and pretty much all of the stuff from the house had gone to auction to pay creditors.

"I should do that, really." Freeman went in and headed to the right, into a tiny kitchen. "Yep," he said, looking in the fridge. "I got beer. You want one?"

"If you're having one, sure." He looked around and Freeman was right, it was a little crammed.

"Turn on the TV if you want -- you can see best from the couch." He heard a clink as Freeman flipped the beer bottle caps into the garbage. "Or you can look around. There's only the living room, my bedroom and the bathroom, and the kitchen here. Not a lot to see."

"Oh, I don't want to go poking through your space on my own." Now, if Freeman wanted to show him the bedroom that was a different matter...

Freeman handed him a bottle, pushing it into his hand. "What if I give you the big tour?"

"Sure." He raised his bottle toward Freeman. "Thanks, man."

"Cheers." Freeman drank from his own bottle and then swept his arm around. "Weâ€™re standing in the kitchen. Right thereâ€™s my living room. The closed door is the john." He then pointed to a shelf of books.

"The library. I keep the movies in the other room, because that's where the bigger shelf fit. Come pick one out." Then Freeman turned and headed into what had to be his bedroom.

Josh followed, panicking a little. Was this a come-on? If it was, what was he supposed to do? What if it wasn't and he made a fool of himself?

It turned out to be a normal bedroom, also crammed with stuff. There was the bed, of course, which was actually made. Then two dressers, one that had a small TV on top, and a huge bookshelf that looked like it might actually have been a sideboard at one time, but had the doors off. It was packed with VHS cassettes and DVDs.

"See anything you want?" Freeman asked, poking at a few DVDs.

He was nervous enough that he shot his mouth off without thinking. "I do." He wasn't looking at any DVDs, though.

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Freeman nodded slowly and Josh couldn't miss the slight shake of the beer bottle in Freeman's hand.

"Like on the boat?" He wasn't looking away from the movies.

"Yes, sir."

"And it would be... I don't want to mess it up again." Freeman very carefully set his beer bottle down on the shelf. "So don't beat the shit out of me if I do this wrong, okay?"

Josh handed over his own beer, figuring it would be better if he wasn't still holding onto it, either. "It's not beating you up I have in mind."

"Oh, good." Freeman made sure that the two beer bottles were standing up fine and then rubbed his palms on his jeans. "Um. I. This is a lot easier in my head than in person, you know?"

"I... I don't know. I never..." He'd only ever kissed a girl or two. He licked his lips, eyes slowly moving over Freeman's body. Looked like the man was hard like him.

"I have. But only once. Um. This is different. Good different. Can we sit?" Freeman pointed to the bed.

Josh nodded, trying not to trip over his own feet as he moved to sit on the edge of the bed. He wiped his hands on his jeans, and then folded them together in his lap to keep from fidgeting.

Freeman sat down next to him and the bed dipped enough that their legs touched. "I was watching you on the boat," Freeman whispered. His hand lifted and almost touched Josh's cheek. "I was."

"I watched you, too." Josh looked into Freeman's eyes. They were blue. Dark like the ocean water.

"I kind of didn't wait for John. At all." Freeman was looking right back, his voice low and his face easing closer, so, so slowly.

"You knew before we even left the dock?" Josh wanted to know how to do that, how to know when someone mowed their hay the same way you did.

"No. But I wanted to look at you. I wanted to... not have John there." Freeman's cheeks grew pink. "I had no idea. Not until you were sitting next to me. And even then, I wasn't sure if it was me or just being on the water."

"I thought I felt you looking at me," Josh admitted. It had made him hard. Almost as hard as he was now when he knew Freeman was looking. When he knew Freeman was probably going to kiss him.

"I looked until I had to pull my shirt out to hide my--" Freeman stopped talking and blushed redder.

"So."

"So," he answered, gaze glued to Freeman.

"Now?" Freeman's hand rested suddenly on Josh's thigh. "Can I now?"

He nodded, wishing Freeman would.

Freeman's eyes closed. "Oh, good." Then Freeman closed the few inches' gap, and Freeman's lips

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brushed over his own, then again. Freeman's lips were warm and soft, and even the gentle touches went through him like a shot, making something warm start to tighten in his belly.

Closing his own eyes, he moved into the kiss, the pressure increasing. The hand that had floated near his face brushed over his cheek and Freeman kissed him again, lips lingering. And then the tip of Freeman's tongue darted out, tasting.

Josh gasped, that touch making him jump, his cock getting harder in his jeans. He slid his own tongue against Freeman's lips, moaning at the sensation.

"Oh." Freeman seemed glued to him, kissing him again and again, and the hand on Josh's thigh was like a weight. The other one left Josh's face and got buried in his hair, and Freeman's kiss grew deeper.

Josh opened up to the kisses in a way he never had with the girls; never had wanted to. This was nothing like those pecks, this kept getting bigger and bigger inside him. He made a noise, reaching out and grabbing onto Freeman, catching the man's arm and shoulder in his grip.

Freeman groaned and shoved his tongue into Josh's mouth for a moment, then did it again, his hands starting to move. He changed the angle of the kiss into something even more intense, and the heavy weight on Josh's thigh shifted, moved up his leg an inch or two.

Oh, God. Josh's whole body went tight, anticipation stringing him tight as a bow; Freeman was going to touch him.

They were in a free fall, easing back on the bed, not quite lying down and not quite sitting up. Freeman kept kissing him and that hand kept moving, and Josh could feel the way Freeman was breathing, all shaky and intense. And then Freeman's hand lifted, just a little, and fingers dragged over his jeans before the solid, hot, heavy weight of Freeman's hand rested on Josh's cock and balls.

And rubbed.

Josh bucked. He could feel that touch through his whole body. He'd never imagined someone touching him could feel like that. A low, needy moan filled the air and he was only half aware it had come from him.

Freeman's hand rubbed again, all the way up and all the way down, and Josh let Freeman kiss him even harder, let Freeman push noises into his mouth to mingle with his own moan. The rub from Freeman's hand turned into a squeeze and he could feel Freeman's hips jerk against him.

He was pretty sure if Freeman didn't stop, he was going to come all over the inside of his jeans. And, while he might not be experienced at this, at all, he was pretty sure that it was better for Freeman to have actually gotten into his pants before he blew his top.

"Zipper," he muttered, focusing hard to make his mouth say the word.

Freeman moaned and broke away, and Josh fell back on the bed. He could hear Freeman better, the harsh breathing and the panted gasp as Freeman yanked at the button and shoved his hand in. "Oh, God."

Freeman sounded just as stunned as Josh felt.

"Freeman!" His hips bucked, his prick sliding through Freeman's fist. He'd never felt anything like it. Not even his own hand felt like this. Not at all. "More," he demanded. He wanted more.

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"Hang on." Freeman kissed him once more and then moved, shifting on the bed and yanking Josh's jeans down over his hips. "Oh, man. Yeah." Freeman sounded positively reverential as he took Josh's cock into his hand again.

Josh's hands slid into the quilt covering Freeman's bed and he held on, his hips moving instinctively, a keening sound pouring out of him. He could feel his balls draw up against his body.

Freeman stroked him carefully, all the way up and down. "Tell me what you want. Faster? Slower? Tighter? God, you're gorgeous."

Josh opened his mouth to say something when the tip of his cock hit the side of Freeman's thumb and he jerked, come pouring out of him.

"Oh." Freeman sounded surprised. "Never mind. I got it, I think."

Josh panted, hands opening and closing, wondering if he should apologize or something. He didn't think it was supposed to be over that quickly.

"Wow. That was amazing." Freeman was grinning down at him. "Wow."

He grinned back, relieved, which let him enjoy the happymelty feeling. He wanted another of those kisses then, so he looped one hand around the back of Freeman's neck and tugged the man down to meet those warm lips and hot tongue.

Freeman seemed happy enough to kiss Josh, even if he did fumble around with his now-sticky hand. But he was smiling, and the kissing was good, and it wasn't until Freeman moaned that Josh remembered they were only half done.

His fingers trembled a little as he fumbled with Freeman's belt.

"Please," Freeman whispered. "Yeah." He helped, which was good, and his zipper came down as soon as his belt was taken care of. Josh could feel Freeman's dick pushing out like it was about to burst.

Josh got it in his hand, wondering at how different it felt to be holding someone else's and not his own. It was so hot and silky, and the skin was stretched so tight it almost felt like it might split if he squeezed too hard.

"Josh!" Freeman fell back on the bed, his eyes wide open. "Yes. Kiss me. Please."

He leaned over and kissed Freeman, pressing their lips together and pushing his tongue into Freeman's mouth. It felt good, not as intense, but warm and swirly in his belly. He moved his hand up and down along Freeman's cock, just like he would his own.

Freeman's hips rose and fell and Josh could feel the way his legs were shaking. Then Freeman yelled, right into the kiss, and his hand clamped around Josh's, squeezing even harder as he came. His cock throbbed and come got everywhere while Freeman shook and moaned.

"Oh, wow." Now Josh knew why Freeman had said it. He'd never seen anyone with that look of bliss on their face.

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The noise Freeman made didn't make a lot of sense, but he sure as hell looked happy. He was grinning and his eyes were closed and his look was totally goofy. Josh thought it was pretty cool, knowing he'd had something to do with that. He gave Freeman's cock a last squeeze and then flopped back down on the mattress, grinning up at the ceiling.

"And that's what I wanted to do on the boat," Freeman finally said happily. "Can we do it again later?"

"I'd like that. A whole lot." He was kind of hoping they could do it every evening until he had to go home again.

"Oh, good." Freeman sat up and reached, then handed Josh his beer. "I was really hoping you'd say that."

Josh smiled shyly and took a long drink of his beer.

"I'll order pizza in a minute." Freeman stretched out, his legs long and tight, then fell back onto the bed.

"Man, I feel good."

"Yeah. Me, too." Josh had never realized how good it would be with someone else. Oh, he'd guessed and imagined, but the reality was way better. Way better.

And they were going to do it again later.

He drained his beer and lay back, too, grinning like a fool up at the ceiling.

"An' we can watch a movie. Or, you know. Have it on playing when we do it again." Freeman was wearing a matching grin, looking adorably dorky.

"We could watch the movie while we eat." It was a tiny bit awkward, because Josh wasn't sure what to say and pouncing on Freeman all over again right now seemed greedy.

"Multi-tasking. I like it." Freeman rolled off the bed and onto his feet. "I'll order the pizza, you pick a movie, okay? Anything is good with me." He adjusted his clothes and made a face. "And I think a fast wash would be a really good idea."

Josh felt his face heat up again. "Yeah, I suppose I could benefit from one of them, too."

"There's plenty of water and washcloths in the bathroom." Freeman smiled at him and held out a hand.

"C'mon."

He let Freeman pull him up, offering a smile in return.

Suddenly a week didn't seem like any time at all.

The pizza had been pretty good, Freeman thought. Well, he assumed it had been, since it always was. It was really hard to mess up a pizza, after all. He and Josh had sat with the box between them and watched a random movie off the shelf, just scarfing the food back. They'd even had another beer, because pizza needed cold beer. But when the box was cleared away and greasy fingers had been wiped off, there was just the movie left.

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Freeman watched the TV intently, not paying one bit of attention to it. The only thing he was aware of

was Josh, next to him. Damn, the man was hot. And Josh had let Freeman touch him! Freeman was pretty sure that his cock had never actually gone back to soft after that. It certainly wasn't right then. Josh laughed at something in the movie, hard enough he was snorting with it. "I do love the stupid shit." Freeman nodded, still watching the movie, still clueless, but willing to talk. He liked the way Josh laughed, liked the way Josh sounded. Hell, he liked the way Josh breathed. Freeman glanced over and grinned. "It's like a vacation for your brain."

"Exactly!" Josh laughed again and gave him a goofy grin. It took Josh a long moment before he turned back to the television.

Freeman reached down and tugged his jeans a bit; the seam was just killing his crotch and he couldn't think of a discreet way to take care of it. So he did what he had to and hoped that speed would make up for being a bit crude. He glanced at Josh to see if itâ€™d been noticed, hoping to hell that he wouldn't blush. Josh was looking, eyes lowered, and Freeman could tell they were looking at his crotch and not at the TV.

Josh cleared his throat and shifted a hand to cover the bulge growing in his lap.

Oh, man. Freeman's prick went real hard, real fast. He'd been there, but now he was really there. He couldn't even make himself watch the TV anymore.

Freeman swallowed hard and watched Josh's hand, wondering how he could shift closer to Josh without... without what? It wasn't like he didn't want Josh to know. With his lip held between his teeth, Freeman moved about three inches closer to Josh, his fingers just itching to reach for the man.

Josh turned to look at him when he moved and he caught the color rising up across Josh's face. "You not enjoying the movie?"

"I've seen it a bunch of times." Freeman licked his lower lip real fast, nervous energy all caught up and feeling hot in his chest. "You want to keep watching it?"

"I, uh..." Josh watched his tongue. "I don't need to."

"You can if you want." Freeman leaned forward a bit, not really knowing he was doing it. "Or we can pause it and watch it later. Or tomorrow. Or something."

"Yeah, okay."

He had no idea which suggestion Josh was agreeing to. He supposed it didn't matter much, either, not with Josh leaning in, too, their lips pressing together.

Freeman hoped the moaning sound he made was louder in his head than it really was. He kissed Josh like he had earlier, trying not to just pounce, wanting to taste and be closer and feel . The rush of actually doing it, of feeling Josh's mouth on his, made Freeman's breath catch.

Josh shifted closer, their knees knocking together. That didn't slow them down, though, the kiss going deep, their tongues sliding from Josh's mouth to his and back again.

Freeman had no idea where to put his hands. He knew where he wanted them, but he couldn't seem to make his body cooperate with any kind of grace at all. When he tried to put his hand on Josh's hip, he missed and got Josh's thigh. That wasn't too bad, really. Between one kiss and the next, Freeman dragged the hand higher, wanting to tug Josh around so they could push together.

Their noses bumped and there seemed to be far too many elbows happening, but they kept kissing and soon enough were turned to face each other, more or less pressed together. It wasn't perfect, but he could feel the heat from Josh's body and the kissing was really working for him.

"This okay?" Freeman whispered. He wanted to grind against Josh's body, but even more than that he wanted to keep it together long enough to maybe get naked. As soon as he thought about that, though, being naked and kissing, his hips flexed and he rubbed hard.

"S'okay." Josh pressed more kisses on him, sort of listing to the side, and they wound up leaning against the back of the couch with him half on top of Josh. Oh, better.

"Man." Freeman rubbed again and found not only a way to balance, but a way to get some leverage. An inch or two to the side and he could feel Josh's cock pressing against him, and he had a thigh to push on. "Oh, man." He plunged his tongue into Josh's mouth and kissed Josh harder, his blood rushing in his ears. Josh made an inarticulate noise, one hand coming around the back of his head to hold him there, the other sliding up and down along his back as Josh tried to meet his movements, bucking up against him. They were totally going to ruin their jeans.

Freeman humped him hard, his spine curling as he felt the thick length of Josh's cock against him. He knew it would feel a million times better if they didn't have clothes in the way, but he couldn't seem to make himself stop.

There was a loud explosion from the TV and it made Josh jump and gasp, breaking their kiss.

Panting, gasping with Josh, Freeman looked at the TV. Fire filled the screen and then there was flying

debris all over the place. Freeman still wasn't sure what they were watching. "Saved by the bomb," he said weakly.

"Huh?" Josh blinked up at him, looking rather dazed.

Freeman felt himself go scarlet. "I was gonna go off again." There was still a danger of that, honestly, but the urgency had backed off.

Josh blinked again and nodded, added a slow smile to the look. "Me, too. Isn't that what we're going for?"

"Uh-huh." Oh, it so was. "But I was kind of hoping that we'd be out of our clothes when it happened. Maybe. To save on laundry, you understand." Right. Laundry. God, he was such a dork.

"Oh. Yeah, that's a good idea. We could maybe... well, the bed was way more comfortable," Josh finished up in a rush.

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Freeman nodded and climbed off Josh, thoughtfully waiting until the man was upright before heading back to the bedroom. Maybe he'd even be lucky and there would be a decent disc in the stereo in there and he wouldn't even have to mess around with music when all he really wanted to do was get undressed. See Josh undress. God, he bet that cowboys had really amazing muscles. They worked.

Things got a little awkward again, once they were in the bedroom. There was a sense of anticipation with it, and Josh's gaze was on him. Josh seemed to be waiting for him to... well, go first, he supposed.

"Um." Freeman shifted his weight to his other foot and turned on the stereo, thankful that the music didn't suck. He couldn't even guess what it was, other than "not making me cringe," but that was okay. "Okay. That'll do."

But Josh was still looking at him, so he swallowed hard and took a step forward. "It's okay. We're fine." He wasn't sure who he was talking to, himself or Josh. So he kissed Josh lightly and then peeled off his own T-shirt.

Josh's gaze went to his chest, and so did the warm hands. Callused fingers slid over his muscles, Josh's breathing speeding up.

Freeman's nipples tightened up and he gasped. "Oh. Yeah." Josh's hands were warm and he wanted to feel them a lot more. He wanted to touch, too, but he couldn't quite make himself reach for the hem of Josh's shirt.

Josh's fingers swept past his right nipple, and then came back when he groaned. "Sensitive?" Josh asked, running his fingers over them again.

"Yeahuh." Who knew? But it seemed like they were hardwired right to his balls.

It seemed that was Josh's cue to stay right there and play with them. Over and over again, callused fingers driving Freeman out of his mind.

Freeman swayed and reached out to hold onto Josh's hips. "Oh, man." He closed his eyes, since they were rolling back anyway, and moaned. His entire body was thrumming with energy. "Josh. Man, don't stop."

"Okay."

Josh flicked his nipples, rubbed them, even pinched them a little once or twice.

"God!" Freeman swayed again and then simply dragged Josh to the bed with him and tumbled down.

"That's amazing." He felt hot all over, like he was going to both come and burst into flames. "Take off your shirt."

Josh sat up to do as he was told, tossing the shirt toward the floor before flopping back down next to Freeman. "Show me."

Freeman grinned and wiggled against him. "I hope you like it." Man, it would suck if it did nothing for Josh. With one more kiss to Josh's mouth, Freeman fanned his fingers out over the tanned skin and brushed over Josh's nipple a couple of times, bringing it to a peak.

"It's nice," Josh murmured.

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"Uh-huh." Freeman nuzzled Josh's jaw and tugged a bit at the peak, to see if that did anything more for him.

Josh's head went back, hand coming up again to hold his mouth there. Obviously that was doing more for Josh than the nipple thing. Well, okay. Freeman could work with that. He nuzzled again and started kissing his way to Josh's neck, grooving on the way Josh smelled and tasted.

Moaning, Josh pushed their hips together and rubbed against him.

When the callused fingers came back to Freeman's nipples, he couldn't help but think there they were again, all hot and bothered and still wearing their damn jeans.

"Hold up." Freeman forced himself to pull away a bit. "God, that's..." He had to shake his head to clear

it, then he got right to the point, before he could get lost again. "We still have an issue."

"What?" Josh looked like he'd been sucker punched, and he sat up, reaching for his shirt.

"Whoa!" Freeman put his hand in the middle of Josh's chest and then dragged it down. "I meant this."

His thumb brushed at the top button of Josh's jeans. "As in, we're still wearing them."

"Oh." Josh rolled his eyes. "Well, we can take them off, then."

"That'd be good." Freeman's mouth went dry and he watched his fingers shake a bit as he smoothed his palm down over Josh's fly. "Real good."

"Uh-huh." Josh pushed into his hand.

Freeman sat up a bit so he could work Josh's zipper with his other hand and keep feeling Josh up. He could feel the heat just pouring off Josh, and it was absolutely amazing to feel how hard the man was. They were never going to get naked if they kept getting distracted.

Josh reached over and started working on getting his jeans undone, their hands tangling, making Josh chuckle.

"It always looks so easy in the movies," Freeman said, laughing too.

"It does. 'Course, they have a director."

Oh, that was funny. "We don't need one of those." They so didn't. God, an audience? That would kill a stiffy, for sure. Laughing again, Freeman moved back and shoved his jeans down. "Graceless, but effective."

"Yep." Josh copied the move, kicking off his shoes and shoving the whole kit and caboodle off.

Josh's cock was hard, curved up toward a working man's belly, tip glistening. Freeman was absolutely captivated by it. He thought maybe he was rude, not even looking at the rest of what Josh had to offer, but he couldn't seem to help it. He waited until he'd managed to get his own clothes all the way off, and then he reached for Josh's prick, wanting to touch it again.

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Josh cried out as Freeman's fingers closed around it. Hips bucking, Josh reached for him, too, grabbing hold before scrambling to get closer.

And like that, they were right back to the edge. Freeman got as close as he could, their legs tangling a bit, and kept on touching. "Okay?" he managed to ask, right before his heart started racing again.

Josh only nodded, pushing even closer, free hand shoving between them to grab at Freeman's nipples. There was no finesse in any of it, but then there didn't need to be. Josh had him speeding to the finish line.

When Josh's fingers tugged, Freeman's eyes rolled again and it was all he could do to keep jacking Josh's cock. They were both getting slippery, pre-come making them slick and hot, filling the room with the smell of sex. Then Josh twisted his nipple and Freeman yelled, his balls like rocks in their sac.

"Again!" God, he was going to come so hard he'd pass out, he just knew it.

His nipple was tweaked again, and then the other one, nice and hard as Josh's hand worked his prick.

Freeman couldn't even speak as he started to come. He wanted to say Josh's name, say something to let Josh know, but all he could do was groan and feel his balls let go, feel everything push out his cock to splash between them. Every single bit of tension in his body was shoved right out his cock, and he could barely breathe when he wound up dizzy and spent, his hand still loosely around Josh's cock.

Josh rubbed against him, hips working hard, breath panting from him like he was running a race.

"God." Even to his own ears, Freeman sounded lazy. "Come on, Josh. Your turn." He made himself squeeze, made himself stroke up and down. "Next time, blow jobs, maybe."

"Oh, God!" Josh blew all over his hand, come splashing up onto his belly and chest, too.

Freeman grinned. "Yeah. Cool, huh?" He didn't let go of Josh at all, just grinned and nodded. "Nice."

Panting, Josh pushed close to him. "Better'nice."

"Better'nice cream." Freeman snuggled Josh up and went looking for more kisses. "Way, way better."

Josh murmured something he assumed was agreement, and pushed their lips together. The kisses were lazy now: sated and soft and also better than ice cream.

"We need to check the time." Freeman whispered it and kept on trading kisses. "She'll be waiting for you."

"Huh? Oh!" Josh nodded and jerked away, sitting up and fumbling for his clothes.

Freeman blinked. "Are you always so... skittish? So fast?"

"I don't know. I never..." Josh waved a hand between them.

"Well, I haven't either, really, but you don't need to jump up." Freeman smiled at him. "Besides. I'm driving you and I'm totally not rushing."

"Right." He got one of those shy smiles from Josh, and then those pretty eyes focused on the clock radio. "I guess we've got some time."

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"We have enough time to clean up, kiss a bit, and make plans for tomorrow." Freeman's smile turned into a blushing, dopey look, he just knew it. "I mean. If you wanna hang out again."

"I do." Josh lay down next to him again, close and warm, hand landing on his hip. "You were going to show me the beach."

Freeman knew just the place, and if they were lucky they might even have it all to themselves. "Right." He kissed Josh again, thinking he could really develop a habit of that. "Meet me at the wharf around four tomorrow afternoon?"

"I can do that. You have any suggestions for how I could spend my morning? Iâ€™m still up for going out fishing with you if you want an extra set of hands."

"Well, you could, but if you want to, you could talk to Mr. Johnston out on Route Ten. It's only about two kilometers out, can't miss it. It's the only boarding stable around the immediate area. I'll bet he needs help -- and if he doesn't, his niece will talk your ear off and give you lunch anyway. That might be more productive in the long run than fishing with me. Not as early a wake-up, either."

"Thank you. Would be nice to find work here."

"He's a good place to start, then. And when I'm done for the day, you and me will find a nice bit of beach."

Josh gave him a long kiss. "Thanks. I mean it."

Freeman shook his head. "Welcome to the east coast." He did take another kiss, though. Which led to another, and then another, each one thorough, easy.

Freeman could have stayed there for hours, just kissing and touching and holding Josh. He wanted to. It would have been easy to, but Millie really would be waiting up. She wouldn't stay up for just any guest, but for one who was hanging out with a local, hell, yes. Reluctantly, he finally eased back. "We should go."

"Yeah, okay." The smile in Josh's eyes would be with him until they met up again.

Not able to help smiling back, Freeman got up and they started getting ready to call it a night. There would be another one, he knew, and that made all the easier to head out. He was already looking forward to the next afternoon.

Josh took a taxi out to the Johnston stables, paying the man and sending him on his way. He figured he could walk back. God knew money was tight. So tight, if he didn't get work when he got home, he'd be out in the street. His father had been so in debt when he'd died that everything had gone to pay it.

Everything.

He figured finding work here would delay being put out on the streets back home. Plus, well, he wouldn't mind getting to spend more time with Freeman. He wasn't in a hurry to go back to being celibate.

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He looked around as the cab drove off, hands in his pockets as he took it all in.

There was a nice big farmhouse, but more important than that were the three barns. Two were clearly stables, the third a big hay barn with a tractor parked just inside. And off to the left was an indoor riding ring, huge doors wide open as well. There were two trucks and a car in the yard, and horses in the paddock.

It was clearly a functioning and fully operational business. The buildings were in good shape, and the animals looked good from a distance. Now he just had to find people.

"Hello?" he called out, wandering toward the barns, figuring that would be his best bet.

A dog came dashing out, tail wagging, but it didn't bark. A moment later a teenage girl popped out of the larger stable building. "Help you?" she called, taking off heavy work gloves and slapping them on her rubber boots as she walked.

"I'm looking for Bob Johnston."

"Oh, he's around here somewhere." She rolled her eyes and laughed, then pet the dog. "I'm Mary. You got a horse you want boarded or are you looking to ride?"

"Hi, Mary. Josh. I was told he might need help, actually." Not an easy thing to admit, but he knew not asking for work would get him nothing.

"Help?" She tilted her head and then her eyes went big. "Oh, help. Got it, you want a job! Cool. There's always stuff to be done around here. Come on, let's go see if he's in the ring, laying sawdust." Easy as that she was marching him into the riding ring, her stride long. "Uncle Bob?" she yelled.

"Yep?" A deep voice yelled back, coming out of the sudden gloom as they stepped into the shadow of the building.

"Man to see you." She nodded at Josh and turned around again, whistling for the dog as she went back

the way they'd come.

Josh waited for his eyes to get used to the shadow, looking in the direction the voice had come from. He took off his hat. "Hello, sir."

"Hey." Mr. Johnston was about fifty or so, strong and grizzled, and he barely paused spreading sawdust until he'd finished what was in his bucket. Then he set it aside and took off his glove before offering his hand. "Morning. What can I do you for?"

He shook the man's hand. "I'm looking for work."

"Are you, now?" Mr. Johnston took a moment to readjust his cap. "What can you do?"

"Well, sir, I've spent my life working the ranch back home. Cattle, horses, crops."

"You know horses?" Johnston looked a little more interested. "More than riding, I mean. You know how to treat 'em?"

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"Yes, sir. There wasn't anyone else but us to look after them back home. I know how to do them right."

Mr. Johnston looked around. "Well. How are you with people? We have a lot of boarded animals here, gotta deal with owners. Some are good, some aren't so much. Plus, there's riding classes. Kids in and out, need to be taught to groom. Plus stall work."

"I don't mind people, but I gotta be honest with you, sir, I'm not much of one for idle chit chat."

"Just don't insult them with the truth, son. Some of 'em will try to argue blue is green." Johnston started moving, walking across the ring to the benches. "What'd you say your name was?"

Josh followed, realizing he'd been rude enough not to introduce himself. "Joshua Stubbins. Call me Josh, please."

"Well, Josh. I don't know you, and I don't think I know your people. How'd you hear about us?"

"Freeman Gallant told me you were maybe looking. Especially once school starts up again."

Johnston nodded. "He'd be right at that. Say hey to him for me. How about we give it a week and see how things work out? I'd expect you here by seven in the morning for feeding and turn out, done by three or so in the afternoon."

"Could we make it four days instead of a week, sir? I've got a flight back home on Saturday, and if I don't have the job, I have to take it."

Mr. Johnston looked at him. "I see your point. All right. Four days, and if you turn up on the fifth we'll do some papers up. Until then, I'll pay you cash at the end of each day. You got boots?"

"I do." He was wearing his everyday boots and they'd do. "Just show me where to start." He held out his hand.

"Well, let's just go and get you raking stalls with Mary. Don't let her talk you to death, though. There's a reason I'm out here." Mr. Johnston shook his hand, and just like that Josh had a job. For four days, anyway.

He'd have to see where it went from there.

The water had been fine, fish had been caught and sold, and there had been a full boat for some deep sea fishing. The tourists had even caught a few, which was good, and there had been a pod of whales. All in all, it had been a damn good day.

Freeman was totally looking forward to it getting better.

John, thankfully, was intent on getting to his girlfriend, so they'd cleaned and locked up quickly, and John didn't say anything about Freeman's eagerness. Probably didn't even notice. As soon as they were done, John just took off, saying he'd see Freeman in the morning, and that was that.

Freeman hoped that kept up; the longer he could just not talk about Josh to anyone, the better. He could keep the man to himself and not have to share any part of it.

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The sun was still beating down, not as hot as it had been, but sunset was hours away as Freeman made his way to his truck, going slower as he looked around for Josh. He spied the man strolling up the road. Or at least he assumed the man in the cowboy hat headed his way was Josh. It was still a little far to know for sure. He leaned on the truck and watched, then decided it pretty much had to be Josh. He could tell because he was getting hard just watching the man. Then that cowboy hat tipped up and he was given a quick wave. Oh, yeah, that was Josh. Looked like the man had been walking quite a while, and that his jeans were covered in more than just road dust.

Freeman waited until Josh got close enough to hear him over the sound of the water and wind. There was always wind, always. "Found Johnston's okay?"

Josh gave him a bright smile. "I did. I got myself a four day trial." Josh came up and shook his hand.

"You pointed me in the right direction."

"You like it?" Freeman wanted to kiss Josh. Right there. But instead he aimed a thumb toward the cab of the truck. "Get in, tell me all about it while we're driving."

"Sure."

Once they were settled in, buckled up, and moving, Josh gave him a lazy grin. "It's good work. I've missed working with horses since my father died."

Oh, ouch. Freeman glanced at Josh as he started the truck and pulled out. "Been a long time?"

"Four months or so. There was some debt needed to be dealt with."

"I know all about that part." Freeman sighed and took Josh's hand. "I'm real sorry for your loss."

"Thanks. He had a heart attack out in the barn doing chores. It's how he would have wanted to go."

"Still. Recent." Freeman squeezed his hand. "And then debt. That why you're out here?"

"The vacation was bought and paid for before he passed. Non-refundable, so it didn't make sense not to use it. But that's why I can find work here and stay. There's nothing much pulling me back home."

Freeman nodded and mulled that over. The trip made sense, if it was already paid for. What's the guy going to do, take a loss for no good reason? "No other family out there?" he asked, checking his mirrors as he drove into town and had to slow down.

"My brother. He went up Calgary way to get work at the refineries. There isn't anyone else."

"Are you close?" Freeman wondered if maybe he should just shut up with his prying. "Hey, want to take a picnic to the beach?"

"I could eat." Josh was quiet for long enough Freeman wondered if he was going to answer at all, then Josh shook his head. "Well, he's my brother, but we weren't in each other's pockets or anything."

Freeman thought about John. "That can be a good thing. Save you from doing something dumb like tossing him overboard."

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Josh's chuckle was slow, but deep and sexy. "That's not much of a problem where I'm from."

"I suppose not." Freeman pulled into the SaveEasy's parking lot. "Ever have lobster? We can get a couple and eat 'em out there. Cold, but that's the way I like 'em. I got a hammer and a set of pliers, so we're good for getting them open."

"No, I haven't ever. Bit pricey back home. I'll give 'em a try."

"Great!" Freeman parked the truck and climbed out. "Couple of lobster -- shit, I should've bought 'em at the wharf -- a bag of chips, bottle of pop, and we're good. We'll swing by my place for a couple of towels and a blanket."

"Sounds like a plan. I haven't been in the water yet."

"It's cold," Freeman warned. "But that's okay. Right?" He led them inside and right to the fish counter. He'd put an even twenty on the swim being short.

"Sure. I just need to get my feet wet to say I was in the ocean, right?"

"Sounds about right to me." Freeman grinned. He picked out two lobsters and had them bagged to go.

"Okay. Chips, drinks, and we're heading out." He couldn't wait to see Josh on the beach, soaking up the sun.

Josh grabbed a bag of apples as they headed toward the chip aisle. "In case we get munchy later on."

"Healthy choice. I like it." Freeman hurried them along, grabbing at chips and bottles. "So? You like being at Johnston's?"

"It was good to have solid work to do again. I don't like having empty hands." Josh pulled out his wallet as they got to the cash.

"My treat," Freeman said, stepping ahead of him. "Got a nice tip today from a guy from the States. So really, it's his treat."

"You sure? You picked up the pizza last night and that was supposed to be my treat. Plus I got paid by Mr. Johnston today."

"You can get it next time." Freeman figured that was a way to make sure there was a next time. "We can maybe go by Thompson's tomorrow night, if you're not too tired from working."

"Well, I've got to eat whether I'm tired or not. Thompson's is a restaurant?"

"Yeah, little homestyle place. Not fancy, but they do up a good plate." Freeman nodded and paid for their supper. "It's good." He handed Josh one of the bags and grinned. "Promise. I'm going to show you all the good parts of the area, trying to convince you to stay."

"I think I can live with that." Josh tipped his hat at the folks they passed.

Freeman didn't miss the way girls giggled and checked Josh out when he did it, either.

"Good enough. Come on, then. Let me show you the beach." They'd make a fast stop for towels and

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then head out. The drive wasn't that far, but most of it was off road and there was at least one field they'd

have to go through. He hoped there wasn't anything growing in it this year.

Josh settled back in the cab and they chatted about this and that. He did most of the talking, but whenever he petered out, Josh would be right there with another question or a differing opinion, and it kept them going until they reached the bit of bad road.

"Hold on to the pop bottles," Freeman said. He wished he had four-wheel drive, but he didn't. At least they weren't in a car. "This is why we'll be alone." He slowed down and took the turn, then headed right for the ocean. They'd be able to just walk over a dune and be in a cove; best place around and too much trouble for people to trek to.

"A little bouncing seems a fine price to pay for privacy."

"You say that now. But it means the pop is gonna have to settle before we can drink." Freeman laughed and then hooted as they bounced and jounced their way down the track. "Almost there." If there was going to be anyone there, he'd know as soon as they got around the brush at the end.

When they turned the corner and he had space to turn the truck around for the return trip, he found the whole area empty. Not even a bicycle. "Awesome. We're alone."

"Can't wait to get over those dunes and see the water."

Freeman nodded. "Go for it. I'll bring the stuff. Tide should be about right for this, too; it's on its way out." If there was one thing Freeman always knew, it was the tide.

Josh gave him a tilt of that hat and took off, not running, but moving quickly, making for the beach on the other side of the dunes.

That cowboy had a great ass.

Freeman watched for a bit, and then shook himself when Josh headed down the far side of the dune. He could watch Josh taking off the jeans if he hurried up. With one hand he grabbed the food bags and with the other he snared the blanket and towels. He really didn't want to miss that.

Josh had stopped on the beach and was watching the waves. In a few moments he worked off his boots, socks, jeans and T-shirt, revealing a pair of swimming trunks already on.

Well, rats. Freeman had been hoping for naked. He went down and spread out the blanket, his gaze still fixed on Josh's body. "Go ahead," he said, waving a hand at the water. "I'll be right behind you."

Hat still on, Josh waded on in, giving a shout as the waves rushed in around his feet. "Shit! That's cold!"

"I tried to tell you." Freeman grinned at Josh and put the food, still in plastic, safely on the blanket and started shedding his own clothes. "This ain't no South Pacific getaway."

"It'll do," Josh called back, wading bravely in up to his knees.

Freeman watched and laughed and stripped right down to his skivvies. "How's the rocks under your feet? Mostly sand or is it sharp?" He wasn't going to go running out there to show off in a rush if he was going to trip on sandstone. Very uncool.

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"A few rocks, but they're pretty smooth." Josh laughed, running back a little as a wave came in.

Oh, boy. That boy needed to get wet.

Freeman shook his head and tossed his hat on the blanket. "This is the way you do it!" he yelled. Then he ran full tilt into the water, splashing like mad until the water was deep enough to throw himself into. When he came up, Josh was laughing at him, looking happy as a pig in shit.

Freeman would rather cut off his right nut than let it show how damn cold the water felt after the warmth of the sun. Really, it wasn't that bad, just a bit of a shock. "Come on," he said, gasping. "The water is fine."

Josh snorted and then headed back up to shore. Freeman admired the view a moment, and before Freeman could get indignant about being abandoned and shout out something about Josh being a wimp, the man put his hat down on his pile of clothes and then waded back in.

"I'm not sure I'd use the word fine, but it does seem better the longer you stay in it."

"Oh, you'll do just fine." Freeman stood in the water and watched Josh come closer. "You know, the buddy system is really important for swimming."

"Yeah? So you've got someone to splash?" Josh asked, doing exactly that as he got closer.

Freeman swung his arm wide over the surface, sending up a huge spray. "Yeah, exactly. But no!" He laughed and shook water out of his hair. "So you have someone to keep you warm, of course."

"That'd work better out of the water, I bet." Josh splashed Freeman again and then ran for the deeper water, throwing himself in and letting the waves carry him back to shallower water.

"There's sand out of the water," Freeman pointed out when he could be reasonably sure Josh would hear him.

"What's sand got to do with keeping warm?"

Freeman raised his eyebrows. "There are places you just don't want sand to be. Trust me. And I

promise you, you'll get sand there anyway, no matter what you do."

Josh looked confused for a moment and then light dawned in his eyes. "Oh! No, no doing that in the sand. I don't think the water'd be much better, though."

"But at least there can be kissing and touching in the water." Freeman beamed at Josh and swam a bit closer. "As long as we don't drown, anyway."

Josh looked around, like he was checking to make sure they were alone, and then he sidled a bit closer as well. "I like the waves."

"Waves are nice." Freeman nodded encouragingly and dug his toes into the sand. The shock of the cold water was wearing off and the heat of the sun was on his head. Josh was warming him through, just by being there. "And they hide a lot, too." The Atlantic wasn't exactly murky, but it was a distant cry from the clarity of warmer water.

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Josh shook his head. "I'm not dunking my head under water to kiss you."

"I wouldn't suggest that, no." Freeman laughed and held out his hand. "Come here. I'll show you."

Josh took his hand and moved closer.

Freeman didn't pull, since a wave would easily knock them both over if they were off balance, but he did urge Josh closer. "See?" he said softly, when they were almost chest to chest. He held their hands together under the water and let the back of Josh's hand bump against his erection. "Even in cold water."

Groaning, Josh reached with his free hand, tracing the outline of Freeman's cock through his shorts. "Never thought I'd do something like this outdoors."

It took Freeman a moment to get his breathing under control before he could reply. "You never messed around when you were out working in your fields? Never took a look around, realized you were alone, and got yourself off?"

Josh looked shocked, and he shook his head. "No, sir."

A little tingle went down Freeman's spine. "I do it all the time on the boat, if John's not there." Freeman shifted one foot for better balance and put his hands on Josh's hips.

"Yeah?" Josh stepped closer, too, eyes finding his, full of wanting.

"Uh-huh." Freeman nodded and leaned a bit, hoping for a kiss before he went insane or started to shake or something. He could feel the coolness of Josh's skin under his hands, and heitched to touch lower, to explore and feel.

Josh's hand kept moving on his erection, tracing it over and over like Josh expected it to suddenly disappear or something.

"Oh, God." Freeman thought he might be whispering, but he wasn't sure. He felt his hips push a bit and he gave in, leaning closer as he let go of Josh's hip with one hand. "Kiss me?" With shaking fingers, he felt Josh's cock, stiff and warm and standing out toward him.

Josh nodded, eyes doing a nervous sweep of the shoreline first. Then Josh pressed their lips together in a quick but firm kiss.

Freeman almost giggled, suddenly catching some of Josh's nerves. "No one can see," he promised. "And it's better to be in the ocean, where water is covering this, than on shore where it's right out there." He cupped Josh's prick and squeezed a tiny bit, still surprised that he was being permitted to touch like that.

The next kiss was still quick, but as it ended, Josh's lips lingered and he stepped close enough to press their lower halves together, both their hands trapped between their bodies.

Breathing a bit harder, Freeman squeezed again and slid the hand still on Josh's hip around to Josh's ass.

"You feel good," he whispered, barely holding back a moan as his own cock flexed.

"I do." Then Josh blinked and he ducked his head. "Oh, you mean..."

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"Uh-huh. I mean." Freeman did moan then, his hips twitching a bit. "You feel amazing." He felt hard and strong and Freeman wanted nothing more than to get his hand inside Josh's trunks. Well, that wasn't true. He also wanted to lick the taste of salt water off Josh, but he wasn't about to just blurt that right out and scare the man away.

Josh's mouth pressed against his again, and this time Josh's lips opened, the kiss going deeper, becoming warm.

That was it. Exactly. Freeman let the water keep him up and he tasted Josh's mouth, holding Josh close. He couldn't quite get his hand into Josh's swimming trunks, but he could move and stroke and feel and maybe Josh would go with it, let him do it, let Freeman make Josh come again.

Groaning, Josh leaned against him, tongue sliding out to touch his, to push into his mouth. Josh's hand tightened around his prick, jacking him awkwardly through his undies. They were not going to fall.

Freeman wouldn't allow it. With one hand practically clamped on Josh's ass, Freeman moved his hips

back and fought to get his cock free, then went after Josh's.

"God, yes," he said into the next kiss, just before he shoved his tongue into Josh's mouth and his hand into Josh's trunks, fighting past the clinging fabric.

Josh jerked hard when Freeman's cold hand finally wrapped around his hot cock, but then Josh moaned, hips pushing the hard length into Freeman's fist.

Freeman gasped and held himself as still as he could so they wouldn't fall. He couldn't believe this was happening to him, of all people, but he wasn't about to let it get away. He kissed Josh hard, again and again and stroked Josh's tight, strong erection, eager to make the man come, eager to feel it happen.

Josh's hand flailed around his hips, and finally found his prick, wrapping around it and sort of matching his movements.

Shock swept through Freeman as his blood pooled and rushed. He'd not exactly forgotten about his own need -- he couldn't be that horny and not notice -- but he'd been focused on Josh. When Josh touched him, though, an arc of need ran through him and landed in his balls, making the ache there feel like he'd never come in his life.

He tugged faster at Josh's cock, his palm sliding on the wet skin, and he thrust hard into Josh's hand. He hoped to hell that Josh was close, because Freeman was going to explode.

Josh kind of fumbled at his cock as he sped up, sweet little gasps pushing into his mouth. "Oh." The word was tightly spoken and followed up by a whimper as heat poured out over his hand to be quickly stolen away by the water.

That was it. That was enough. The feel of Josh's come, the way Josh's prick pulsed a bit when he came, was enough to push Freeman over. Freeman moaned and ground himself against Josh's thigh, the friction just perfect. "Oh, God. Yes."

Josh stepped back a bit, blinking at him, panting softly.

"Oh, nice." Freeman let Josh go and fell back into the water, letting himself float in the afterglow, his gaze still on Josh. "Very nice."

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Josh ducked his head and gave a little laugh. "I can't believe we..."

"We did." Wow, was that smug voice his? Cool. "And now we can just swim and wait until our legs stop shaking." Freeman laughed and put his cock away while he floated, utterly content.

He thought maybe Josh was blushing pretty hard, but he couldn't quite be sure with the sun reflecting off the water into Josh's face. Josh did drop and start to float next to him, though.

"No one saw," Freeman said, trying to be reassuring. He thought maybe he was still smug, though. Sex with a partner was way more fun than alone.

"I know. Feels... naughty." Josh gave him a shy grin.

"Exactly!" Freeman grinned right back at Josh. "Naughty can be good sometimes."

"Yep."

Freeman shifted and started swimming in a circle around Josh, kind of herding him back toward land.

"Are you hungry?"

"Yes, sir." Josh stood up and walked slowly back to shore, pale skin glistening with water.

Freeman's stomach did a strange little roll as he watched Josh move, but he wasn't sure why. "Well, we have lots of food, anyway. We can watch the sunset in a while."

Josh nodded. "Wanna see what lobster tastes like." Getting to shore, Josh grabbed his towel and began to wipe himself down.

Freeman followed, unable to look away. "Uh, it tastes like... lobster." Oh, that was helpful. God, Josh was hot. Lean and strong and built in the very best way. "Hard to get into, though. I'll help."

"Thanks." Grabbing one of the blankets he'd brought along, Josh spread it out on the sand.

Freeman made himself dry off before sprawling next to Josh and reaching for the food. If he didn't look at Josh, maybe he could go an hour or so without getting hard and looking like a total sex fiend.

"First thing," he said, holding up a lobster, "is to take off the tail. Like so." He twisted the body and tail and held up the two parts. "Easy."

Josh took his lobster and copied what Freeman had done. "Ow. It's got prickly parts."

"On the knuckles, yes." Freeman nodded and twisted off the two large claws, removing them at the body. "Set those aside for now -- they're really hard and will take the hammer or the nut crackers to get into. Probably both."

"A hammer. I've never eaten food I had to beat up first." Josh had put the hat back on, so Freeman couldn't see Josh's eyes, but he was pretty sure he was being teased.

"You should try sea urchins." Freeman grinned and showed Josh the underside of the tail. "See how this is hard under here, but not as hard as the red part? In fancy places they use a knife and cut down the

middle. We're country folk, though, and fishermen. We do it a bit more rough." He put a hand on either side of the tail, the bottom facing him, and squeezed it until the underside cracked and he could bend the back lengthwise to snap the hard shell.

Grinning now, Josh did the same, the tail popping apart in those big hands like it was nothing.

"Awesome!" Freeman dug out the wide piece of meat and showed Josh how to peel away the dirt track. "Now, most will tell you the claws are the best, but I like the tails. Try it." He bit off a chunk and started chewing.

Josh took a tentative bite, his eyes going wide. "It's sweet."

"Uh-huh!" Freeman nodded happily. "It is. Chewy and a little salty from the water, but the meat itself is sweet. What do you think?"

"S good." Josh munched enthusiastically on his piece of tail.

Ridiculously pleased, Freeman ate his own and got ready to show Josh how to open the claws. They were pretty easy, just needing a solid whack at the base to split the shell open, and once more he put the finicky knuckles to the side. "See if you like the claw meat as much." Water poured out of the claw he was holding, making a puddle on his leg.

Learning from watching, Josh was more careful, holding his claw over the sand to get rid of the water. Then he tasted the meat. "This is good, too."

"It's a different texture. I've always thought it wasn't quite as sweet, but some swear it's sweeter."

Freeman shrugged and ate his, enjoying watching Josh.

"Idunno, but it's good." Josh licked his fingers when he was done, a sure sign that he really did like it.

"Ready for the tricky part?" Freeman looked around and found a plank of driftwood a few feet away.

"Actually, maybe just let me do the smashing part. You can use your fingers and the nut cracker."

Lobster knuckles were a bitch, each joint needing a good thwack with the hammer and then some twisting and prying to get them to come apart. "The meat is little in there, but worth it. Try not to cut yourself on the shell."

Josh got the little strips of meat out without too much trouble and he nodded as he ate. "Good."

Impulsively, Freeman leaned over and kissed Josh really fast, just his shoulder. "I'm glad you like it. I'm glad you're here."

That earned him one of Josh's slow smiles. "Me, too."

Freeman felt himself flush, Josh's smile going right through him. "And I'm glad you found a job. I hope it works out for you."

"It's good, honest work. Have to see if it lasts beyond the trial period and then tourist season." Josh shrugged, but he was looking right at Freeman. "I'd like to stay."

Freeman nodded, his mouth going dry. "I'd like that. A lot. You'll need a place, though. Can't stay at the B&B for too long, it'll cost too much."

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"Yeah. You know of anyone wanting a lodger?"

Freeman assumed Josh meant anyone other than himself. "Could do. I mean, there's always small places opening up. Do you want room and board, or are you looking for something like what I have?"

Josh was quiet for a bit before he finally spoke up. "Well... I guess that depends on whether we're gonna keep seeing each other. If so, I don't need more'n a room."

Freeman's chest got tight and he made himself keep breathing. "I want to keep seeing you." Wow, that was an understatement. "But don't you have things you want shipped to you? Stuff from home?"

Josh's face went tight. "Not much left."

Oh. Oh, man.

Freeman put his hand on Josh's knee. "Okay," he said softly. "A room it is, then. I'll see if there's anything in my building, and then we'll just ask around a bit."

Nodding, Josh kept looking out over the waves. "Thanks."

"I'm sorry." Freeman said it softly, so maybe Josh could ignore it if the man wanted to, and he left his hand where it was. "I know what it's like. 'House or boat, take your pick, son.' I was lucky enough to keep some things, though."

"I'd picked the boat, too." Josh seemed to make an effort to shake it off. "Being out in the water, seeing those whales... now that was something."

"Plus, it kind of means food." Freeman looked back at the water and nodded. "There's just something amazing about being out there, yeah. You must feel it with the horses."

"Yes, sir. It's not the same thing, but there's nothing like it. I think... I think I like that I'll be able to do both -- horses and water."

Freeman got that weird little flutter again, but he nodded. "You're welcome on my boat anytime, Josh. Hell, I might even need the help if John goes looking for winter work early."

"Yeah? That's something to think on, thank you." The sun had started to set, the light hitting Josh's face beneath his hat.

"You do that." Freeman nodded slowly, not looking away. God, Josh was beautiful. "Do you want to swim again before dark?"

"It's getting a bit cool with the sun going. We'll have other days, eh?"

"A lot of them." Freeman smiled and lay back in the dying sun, watching it set. They'd have a lot of them, if he had his way.

Josh was settling in, more or less. He'd told Mr. Johnston he'd keep the job if the man would have him. It was great being able to work with horses again, to be able to ride.

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Freeman had helped him find a tiny, one-room apartment over a dress shop. It had a dorm fridge, a hot plate, a microwave, and enough counter space for a coffeemaker. It was just down the road from Freeman's place, which was handy.

He found someone willing to give him a lift out to the farm for gas money, and he usually caught a lift back in at the end of the day, often with Johnston's niece, Mary. She was a little perky, especially after a long day of work, but she was a good egg and he didn't have to worry about keeping up his end of the conversation.

Him and Freeman were getting along like a house on fire.

Most of the last two weeks they'd hung out in the evenings, either on the beach or at Freeman's, swimming, watching DVDs, and making out. It would make him blush if he thought about how many hand and blow jobs he'd been on the giving and receiving end of.

He was happy, he realized as he sat on the pier, waiting for Freeman to bring the boat back in. He hadn't been happy since his dad had died and they'd lost everything. Hell, maybe he'd never been this happy, ever.

And he liked Freeman for more than just the sex. The man was easy to be around. They liked the same movies and the same food. They cheered for different teams and could argue for hours about it, but it was always good-natured.

It made him glad he'd followed that strange call in himself to see the ocean.

He sat and watched for a while longer, then saw Freeman and John coming. He'd been watching for enough days that he could tell the Merry Pride from the others at a distance now, something that he was kind of proud of. He was even prouder that when Freeman grinned and tossed him a line, Josh knew what to do with it.

"Nice job," Freeman said, handing tourists out of the boat and nodding toward where Josh had tied the boat to the pier. "Man'dthink you were born to the sea instead of the plains."

He grinned and nodded his hat at the tourists as they went on by, chattering and exclaiming over the whales they'd seen. Josh hadn't had a chance to go out with Freeman again, but he wanted to. He was hoping for a day it could be just the two of them again, though.

"I got hamburger meat and buns." He raised his plastic grocery bag. Mary'd dropped him off at the store earlier in the day.

"Oh, great! Supper!" Freeman looked at John and nodded. "See you in the morning?"

"Yep. Have a cold one for me, man." John was already cleaning, since it was his turn. "Hey, Josh, when are you coming out with us?"

"Well, I've got Saturday off this week..." He was hoping John didn't want to work on the weekend, maybe Freeman would take him out.

"Well, crap." John rolled his eyes. "I'm not going to be here. Got a family thing with my girlfriend."

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"Gotta keep the little lady happy," Josh suggested, trying not to look too happy about John having a prior engagement.

John smirked and Freeman whapped him. Hard. The way only family really could, Josh expected.

"I'll be going out," Freeman said, climbing to the wharf. "Want to come with me?"

"Yes, sir, I would." Josh felt his cheeks heat some as he thought about both ways of taking the word come.

"You know, I think I figured it out." Freeman was walking them away from John and the boat, his voice low.

"Figured what out?"

"Why I sometimes get all butterflies around you. At first I thought it was because you're you and you're really hot."

"I am not," Josh denied immediately.

"God, youso are." Freeman looked him up and down. "And we need to be in my truck and driving very soon. Or everyone will know I think so."

His face heated for real and he hurried toward Freeman's truck. "What was that about butterflies?"

"Huh? Oh! Right." Freeman hurried, too, but waited until they were in the truck and the key was in the ignitions before he said anything more. His face looked like it was as pink as Josh's felt. "Um. I like it when you say 'sir.' I think it's the accent. Makes my stomach all fluttery."

Josh blinked at that. "Isn't my accent the same no matter what I say?"

He watched as Freeman blinked, too. "Uh. Yeah. Okay, so maybe it's just the politeness that I like. All I know is that I get..." Freeman waved his hand in the air and started the truck. "Like that. When you say it." The blush grew a lot darker. "So, my place for burgers?"

Josh decided to test it out. "Yes, sir."

Freeman's eyes went wide and he sucked in a breath. "You're teasing," he said with a half grin, looking dead ahead as he pulled out of the parking lot.

"Wanted to see if it really worked." It was just how Josh was raised was all, but if Freeman liked the way he said it, well, he could make sure he did more often than not.

"It really worked." Freeman looked pointedly at his own crotch. "Trust me."

"Yes, sir." Josh's eyes widened as Freeman's cock jerked visibly beneath his workpants.

"Josh. Honey. You really need to stop doing that until we're home." Freeman's fingers were gripping the steering wheel so hard his knuckles had gone white.

Heat flooded Josh's cheeks and he folded his hands over his lap to hide his own growing erection. It Generated by ABC Amber LIT Converter, <http://www.processtext.com/abclit.html> was kind of neat, getting that kind of reaction just for saying things.

Freeman didn't exactly speed to get them to his place, but he sure as heck didn't waste any time, either. They took the fastest way, and Freeman wasn't terribly particular about how straight he parked the truck when they got there.

"Got everything?" Freeman asked, grabbing the bag with the meat and hamburger buns.

"Yes, sir." Josh slapped his hand over his mouth as soon as he said it. "That was just... I was being polite."

Freeman made an odd noise and leaned over the seat, reaching for him. "Kiss me or get upstairs. Now."

Josh opted for getting upstairs -- it wasn't dark yet and he didn't want to risk anyone seeing them. He could hear Freeman hard at his heels all the way up the stairs, then they were at the door.

"When we get in there I want you to say it again." Freeman leaned against his back, hand fumbling to get the key in the door lock, and Josh could feel how hard Freeman was, how long and hot.

A shudder of need went through him. "Yes, sir," he said automatically.

"Good Lord." Freeman shuddered, too, and rocked against him. "Inside. We need to be inside." The door popped open and they tumbled through.

Josh tripped over his own feet going in, and wound up staggering to the couch, falling on it with relief that he hadn't landed on his ass.

"Sorry." Freeman stumbled with him, the grocery bag landing on the floor and the door slamming behind them before Freeman landed on the couch, too. "I didn't mean to."

"It really does something for you, eh?" Josh reached over for Freeman's hand.

"Seems to." Freeman was breathless, almost quivering against him. "Don't know why. But I like it."

"Yes, sir," he said again, so he could feel what happened against his hand.

"Oh, God." Freeman's cock throbbed, the length of it swelling and twitching. "Please. Josh."

"Should I keep saying it? Sir."

Freeman scrabbled at his fly and ripped the zipper down. "Josh." He sounded desperate and his hips were lifting rhythmically. "Want. God, I want you."

Bending, Josh licked at Freeman's cock and said, "Yes, sir."

The sound Freeman made was kind of like a strangled gasping moan. His cock flexed again and started leaking, pre-come sliding down the crown. "Not going to last long. I swear I'm not."

"Okay, sir." Josh felt a little silly, repeating the word over and over on purpose, but it sure was making Freeman happy, so he kept doing it before wrapping his lips around the head of Freeman's cock.

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Freeman rocked up, pushing slowly in. Josh could hear Freeman breathing hard and fast and he could feel Freeman's hands fluttering around. "Don't know why," Freeman said between one moan and the

next. "God, look at you. I can't believe -- oh, God." The hand fluttering got faster and Freeman's cock started to pulse. "Honey. Josh. Gonna shoot."

Josh pulled off, wrapping his hand around the base to jack Freeman the rest of the way -- he'd discovered the hard way he didn't like getting a shot of come in the mouth. Of course, this left his mouth available for talking, so he said, "Yes, sir. Come now, sir," just for Freeman.

Freeman yelled, really loud. Louder than he ever had before, even, and his whole body tensed when he came. A white arc shot up and came splashing down, making a mess all over the place, and then another one did the same. Freeman looked kind of stunned, and his cock gave another hard throb as he shot a third time.

Okay, that was freakish and also kind of neat and Josh couldn't believe he'd been responsible for it. He kept slowly working the long cock, cheek resting on Freeman's hip.

"Holy wow." Freeman was still breathless, and his cock was still hard. "God. Come here. Please. I want... something. I want you."

Josh wriggled up happily, settling against Freeman so his erection rubbed along Freeman's thigh. He pushed their mouths together, holding onto the man's shoulders.

"Always want you," Freeman whispered into the kiss. Then his tongue slid in and hands started petting and stroking.

Josh knew the feeling. Whenever they were together it was like he was in heat, wanting to rub and suck and touch and kiss.

One of Freeman's hands, rough from work and water, slid up Josh's spine and then down to his ass, holding him close. "How do you want to do it? How do you want me to touch you?" They were shifting on the couch, Freeman working at Josh's clothes, at his own as well.

"Sucking's good." He liked blow jobs the best. Hands were good, no denying that, but mouths. That was so much better.

"Sure is." Freeman nodded fervently. "God, the way you look when you do that..." He actually shivered again, and then he started making his way down Josh's body, licking and kissing as he went.

Josh very kindly lay back against the couch, legs spread -- to give Freeman more room to work.

"That's it." Freeman's hands, heavy and warm, worked Josh's jeans open and then pushed at his thighs. The kisses to his belly went a lot lower. All over the tops of his thighs, until Josh thought he might just have to lose his mind. Freeman's hair tickled at him, and then a soft, wet kiss was pressed to his balls.

He groaned, fingers pushing into Freeman's hair, tugging on the short strands, doing his best not to pull too hard.

Freeman's mouth was warm and soft on his balls, and then on his cock. Up one side and then down the other, Freeman licked and kissed, pausing to lap at the head for just a moment.

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Josh kept his eyes open, because half the thing about blow jobs was watching Freeman's mouth on his cock. Okay, maybe not half, but it was a good thing.

"Love the way you taste." Freeman licked him again and looked up to meet his gaze just as Freeman opened his mouth enough to take Josh's prick in. Their eyes locked and Josh's hips jerked as he unconsciously tried to get deeper, to take more of Freeman's mouth. Freeman seemed to nod, or at least let Josh in a bit more, tongue slipping and the suction light.

Josh finally closed his eyes, head dropping back onto the couch as he just felt, Freeman's mouth so hot and wet and a good place to be. He could feel the vibrations of Freeman's moan and he could feel the heat that slid up and down his cock as Freeman's head bobbed slowly, so slowly, taking him in a bit more each time. There was a hand on his balls, and every once in a while Freeman would pause the sucking to actually lick Josh's balls, getting them wet and making the sac wrinkle.

It wasn't long before he was holding onto Freeman's head and pushing up into Freeman's mouth, the pleasure going up his spine. "Oh, God. Soon."

Freeman moaned again and took him in even farther, so far that Josh could have sworn he'd bumped into Freeman's throat. The fingers between his legs pushed up behind his balls and Freeman moaned again.

"Free!" He cried out and shot, his balls emptying in long pulses.

The moan got louder and Freeman sucked, swallowing around him and licking his cock again and again to get it all. Freeman had told Josh that he hadn't expected to like that part, but he was glad enough to find out that he did. Josh was glad, too.

Freeman licked him clean and crawled up to meet him on the couch, his jeans still open, his cock still hard. "God, you're hot," Freeman insisted, yet again. "Tell me you'll stay tonight. Or on the weekend. Stay with me this weekend."

"Can we go out on the boat, just the two of us?" Not that it was a condition for him staying -- God knew his little room wasn't awful, but it had nothing on anywhere with Freeman.

"Sure." Freeman looked a little surprised, but then he smiled. "Of course. Ocean, no one around, and you. We'll take lunch with us."

"I vote for lobster." Maybe it was because he'd never had any before two weeks ago, but Josh just couldn't get enough of it. Kind of like how he felt about Freeman.

Laughing, Freeman nodded. "Lobster it is. We can throw the shells over the side, even." He curled into Josh's side, one leg draped over Josh's, his cock rubbing slowly on Josh's thigh. "And salad. Lobster and salad. We can take a blanket, too, for afternoon naps."

"Sounds good, Freeman." It truly did. Relaxing and exciting at the same time, if they got to see whales, and just about perfect.

Freeman hadn't made Josh get up before dawn, but it had been damn close. They'd loaded the boat and set out by seven-thirty, with a full tank of fuel and a boat empty of tourists. Freeman didn't often spend his day off on the water, but he really liked the idea of being out there with Josh. They could have hauled in a load, but he didn't want to and he deserved this day off, darn it all.

Josh didn't seem to mind the early hour, and he was being real good about spending time on the boat. Freeman thought maybe he liked it because it was so open, like the plains, but maybe he just really liked the way the boat moved or the chance to see whales.

With that in mind, Freeman headed to open water, intending to pull back to a cove in a few hours. For right then, they could just be out in the water and maybe drop a line or two in and see if they'd get a mackerel or something for supper.

Or maybe they'd just cut the engine and make out a lot. Freeman could do that, too. Happily. He was kind of counting on it.

Josh was standing up near the bow, looking out over the ocean like he had that first time. Only this time, he'd look back every now and then and smile at Freeman.

That was pretty cool. Freeman smiled back and guided them out, thinking about how, that first time, Josh hadn't looked at him more than necessary. Well, until they'd gotten their wires crossed and Freeman had missed out on getting to know Josh a whole lot better, a whole lot faster.

Now he knew. He knew what it was like to kiss Josh, what it was like to hold the man. But, better, he knew what it was like to talk to Josh and to watch Josh sleep. Granted, the sex part was more fun than the sleep part, but it was all important.

When he could, not nearly as soon as he wanted, Freeman shut off the engines and went to stand next to Josh. "What do you see when you look out there?" he asked, wondering if he was being too forward.

"The water goes on forever. Makes my problems seem kind of small." Josh leaned just a little against him.

"Not small." Freeman put his arm around Josh's waist, nice and easy. "But maybe possible to deal with. I'll help, if I can."

"You have. A lot. Got me a job, found me a place." Josh turned to smile at him. "I never expected to find someone to... you know."

Freeman knew.

"To care." To care for, to care about, who cared back. It was all the same thing. "Me, neither. But I'm real glad I did."

Josh gave him a smile that he knew was just for him, all happy and soft. "Me, too."

Freeman could get lost in that smile. He tightened his arm a bit and didn't look away. "I'm going to kiss you, you know. I won't let you get off the boat without kissing you this time."

Josh's laughter filled his mouth as their lips pressed together, the strong hands grabbing onto his arms and holding on.

Freeman smiled his way through the kiss and pushed closer, wanting to feel Josh everywhere. "See?

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Better trip already. I bet I can make it the best trip ever if I try really hard."

Grinning, Josh nodded. "I'd like to see you try."

"Oh! A challenge!" Freeman reached between them and fondled Josh's package. "What do you think?"

Josh groaned and pushed into his touch. "Yeah, a challenge. I think you can do it."

"I have a few ideas, actually. Most of them involve a lack of clothing." He had a lot of ideas. He also had some movies that Josh didn't know about, and those movies made some stuff look really, really hot.

"That'd be okay if we stick to the shade. Don't want to burn my goods."

"Last thing I want is that." God, if Josh burned his cock and balls, that would mean that Freeman would have a lot less fun until poor Josh healed up. "We have shade." He pointed to the cabin. "And this afternoon we can turn to face east, so the shade will fall on the deck. Then we can do it outside."

He had a lot of plans.

"Works for me." Josh leaned in and kissed him, lips soft against his own, the kiss starting out gentle.

Freeman couldn't even begin to say how happy he was with that. He kissed Josh back, going with the gentle and easy feel of it. They had all day. They had the entire day and the whole ocean. They made out like that for a while, standing there in the middle of the water, mouths working, hands exploring.

When Freeman's breath was catching in his chest and his cock was like iron in his jeans, he pulled back a little. "Hey. We got some time. We can even sit before we fall." Mostly he wanted to catch his breath and get rid of some clothes. Then he wanted to explore a bit.

Josh didn't say anything, just took his hand and tugged him into the cabin.

Freeman went happily, one hand adjusting himself as they walked the few steps. There was a bench in there, though it wasn't comfortable. Freeman had spread the blankets out on the floor, though, and there would be room to stretch out without getting important parts sunburned. "Okay?" he asked, peeling his T-shirt off and tossing it on top of his jacket in the corner.

"Yes, sir." Josh's eyes were twinkling, so he knew Josh had done it on purpose.

"You're naughty," Freeman told Josh with a grin. Still, his cock gave a jump and he had to kind of give it a rub to calm it down a bit. "And far too dressed."

"You like the first one, and I can fix the second." Good as his word, Josh was soon stripped out of his clothes, cowboy hat resting on top of Josh's neatly folded pile.

It still made Freeman a little breathless, the way Josh just was there. For real. And the way he let Freeman touch him and kiss him and do all that other stuff. Freeman watched him taking off his clothes and damn near forgot to do that, too. When Freeman remembered, though, he stripped off fast and kicked his shoes out of the way before going to his knees and reaching to hold Josh's hips. "Lean back," he said, looking up into Josh's face.

"Oh, God." Josh leaned back against the side of the cabin, hands reaching back to hold on.

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Freeman made sure Josh wasn't about to fall over, then started licking. This was probably his most favorite thing, the feeling of Josh in his mouth, and the smell of him all around. Freeman closed his eyes and sucked slowly, not really wanting to bring Josh off yet but totally into it, wanting to be with Josh.

He could feel Josh watching him, and he could hear the sweet noises Josh made, one little moan after another. When the earthy taste of Josh got strong and thick in his mouth, Freeman opened his eyes and looked up at Josh. Another lick, one more suck, and he let Josh go, then reached for his lover. "Come here," he invited. "Down here with me."

Josh went to his knees and wrapped his arms around Freeman, their cocks bumping and rubbing. "Yes, sir." Josh said.

Need flashed through Freeman. The flutters, once identified, had only ramped up, and while Freeman didn't totally understand why he got off on hearing Josh say that, he was more than happy to let it happen. He tangled their legs together and got their pricks lined up, then said, "You want to be saying that only if you want me rubbing on you hard, honey."

"Yes, sir!" He knew Josh didn't understand it, either, but that didn't stop Josh from saying it all the time. On purpose.

"You asked for it." He was laughing, but he was also following his body, and what his body wanted was the hump and grind and holy God it felt good to move up against Josh like that. There was friction and a little slick, and Freeman wanted as much as he could get. Maybe even some of the stuff from the movies. Later. Not when he was kissing and touching and rubbing.

Josh groaned and rubbed back, the friction making everything hot and good.

"Oh. Oh, yeah." Freeman braced his legs and moved faster, harder. He could feel heat moving up his spine.

Josh grabbed a hold of his ass, fingers digging in as they moved faster. It felt like he was going to explode into a million pieces any second now.

"Josh. God, Josh." Freeman buried his head in Josh's neck and held on tight. There couldn't be anything better than this, not really.

"Uh-huh." Hips working hard, Josh's hold tightened on him, the long cock spraying come up between their bellies.

"Yes!" Freeman arched and drove against Josh, slipping through Josh's come. The thought of it made the heat in his spine shoot through his body and then he was coming, adding his juice to Josh's, their scents

mingling together and with the ocean air.

Josh groaned and kind of toppled sideways, bringing him down as well. At least they hadn't been that far from the ground to start with.

"Oh, better. You're smart." Freeman took a kiss and then another. "Smarter than me."

"Nah, just couldn't stay upright anymore."

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"Still. Smart." Freeman burrowed in and snuggled up. "There's some water and cloths around here somewhere, if you want to clean up." Like he was going to let go long enough for that.

"Sure. In a minute." Josh seemed happy to stay just where they were.

Smiling to himself, pleased that Josh seemed pleased, Freeman felt his heart start to beat at a more normal pace. "Is there anything in particular you want to do today?"

"More of this, see the whales. Can we swim in it out here?"

"Too cold. I can do the whales, though. And more of this." He could do a lot more of this.

"Nap first," murmured Josh. "Someone woke me awful early for a day off."

"I just kind of wanted to get you alone." Freeman could feel himself blush. "Napping is good, though.

You can nap. I promise to wake you up in a very special way."

"Okay." Josh smiled and cuddled in, head on his shoulder.

Freeman held Josh and felt his boat moving on the water. He'd been wrong -- there were things that could feel better than sex, and this was right up there. "I care," he whispered, not sure if Josh was asleep already or not.

Josh sighed a little and cuddled closer, making Freeman think that even if Josh was asleep, he'd heard it.

Smiling, Freeman noted the time, calculated the tide, and let Josh sleep. He'd make sure they found whales. What Josh wanted, Josh was going to get.

It was turning out to be a perfect day.

They made love and napped and watched the whales and sat and watched the waves rolling on endlessly. They had lunch -- two lobsters each, along with some salad and a couple soft drinks. It was too bad it was too cold to go swimming -- Josh would have liked to see what it was like, being in water that was so deep you couldn't even begin to see the bottom.

But then it probably would be a perfect day and he'd just up and die or something because he'd had that perfect day everyone wanted.

His meal was settling nicely when he noticed Freeman moving the blankets from the cabin to the area on the deck that was now sitting in shade. He did like the way the man thought. His prick did, too, starting to fill at the sight of those blankets.

God, he must be easy; Freeman hardly had to do anything to make him hard and wanting.

"Have a good day?" Freeman asked, adjusting the blankets until they were just right.

"I was just thinking it was almost perfect." Josh moved over to the blankets, smiling down at Freeman as he fiddled and fussed.

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"Almost is good. Can I make it all the way there?"

"I don't know. Perfection would be hard to reproduce -- I'm happy with almost." He sat on the blankets, stopping Freeman's rearranging.

"Happy is good. Almost perfect is good." Freeman gave him a long look, face open and smiling, warm like the sun had been. "I'm really glad you're here." Freeman came closer, moving toward Josh in a slow crawl.

"Me, too." Josh reached out to draw Freeman into his arms and lie down with the man. They'd both stayed shirtless and their chests and bellies rubbed, skin so warm. It felt good.

"I can't keep my hands off you," Freeman said softly, kissing one of Josh's shoulders. "I look at you and I want."

He nodded. He felt the same way. It scared him just the tiniest bit sometimes, that he'd forget himself and do it in public.

"I'm real glad I live alone. Real glad that John goes out a lot and doesn't seem to care what I do with my time."

"Uh-huh. Me, too." He touched Freeman's nipples, knowing the man liked that a whole lot.

"Oh." Freeman's eyes closed for a moment and his nipples peaked up, both of them. "I like the way you touch me."

"Good." Wouldn't be much point otherwise. He gave Freeman a smile, and then wriggled down a little, licking at the hard little tit.

Freeman's groan was deep and rich, and his fingers slid through Josh's hair, not quite tugging. "Oh, man. Bite. Just a little. Please?"

Josh knew Freeman wouldn't have asked if he hadn't wanted it, so Josh bit, teeth closing carefully over the nub. He'd kind of expected Freeman to make a sound or to twitch or something, but he wasn't really prepared for the full body jump or the roughness of Freeman's breathing.

"God. That's... it's like electricity."

So he did the only thing he could -- he did it again.

"Josh." Freeman writhed, his hands reaching and grabbing on tight. "Josh. Like that, yes." One of Josh's hands was dragged down to lie over the thick ridge of Freeman's cock.

Josh rubbed Freeman through his pants, and bit down again.

Freeman yelled, his voice lost in the wind, and he pushed up hard. "Yes. God, yes." He thrust against Josh's hand almost frantically before stopping, his cock throbbing and his chest holding still as he clearly fought not to come.

"What's wrong?"

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"Nothing!" Freeman's eyes rolled. "God, too soon. That's all."

"Want me to stop?" He'd bet Freeman at least wanted to have his pants off.

"Just for a moment." Sure enough, there went the jeans, Freeman almost ripping them as he tried to get them off.

Josh almost laughed, but he figured Freeman might not like that, so he worked on taking off his own jeans.

Freeman's cock was standing out, hard and ruddy, but Freeman was looking only at Josh's. "I just..." He seemed to run out of words and he blushed. "Sometimes it's just amazing to me that you're real."

"I'm just a man." Noone'd ever thought he was special before.

"You're not just a man." Freeman reached for him and tugged him close, hands holding Josh's face.

"You're a brave man. A beautiful one. You're a strong man. And you're here, on my boat with me."

"That last bit's right, anyway." Before Freeman could say anything else, Josh pressed their lips together, kissing hard.

Freeman kissed him back, tongue pushing deep, hands roaming everywhere. Josh was touched and petted and kissed and then they were on the blanket again, moving together.

Josh grabbed Freeman's butt, tugging him close so their pricks bumped and rubbed, making him jerk and gasp.

They moved like that for a moment or two, but Freeman couldn't seem to get enough; Freeman kissed Josh's mouth, his jaw, his shoulders, then started licking down Josh's chest, clearly hungry for something else.

Josh had a good idea what. Freeman loved sucking his cock. He wasn't going to complain about that at all.

Sure enough, Freeman kind of swooped down on him and started sucking. He was, as far as Josh could tell, good at it. He certainly seemed to like it, and Josh liked the way it felt. So, if Freeman wanted to lick and kiss and suck, he wasn't going to do anything but encourage.

Josh liked it when Freeman hummed, too. This time there was humming, and Freeman was settling right between Josh's legs, spreading them wide as he licked and played.

Josh dug his heels into the blankets, hips pushing up, pushing himself deeper into Freeman's mouth.

That made Freeman hum louder and suck harder, and the rocking of the boat was an interesting counterpoint. Freeman's hands were there, too, one rolling his balls and the other petting at Josh's belly. It felt neat, the contrasts and contradictions between wet and hot and dry and rough. The fingers on his balls slid back a bit and that was neat, too.

Moaning, he ran his fingers through Freeman's hair, restless and needy. The sucking got a bit more intense and the fingers rubbed at the spot between his hole and his balls, nice and gentle, and that was a whole new feeling to explore. It made a shiver ripple through him and he called out, legs spreading wider

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instinctively.

He could hear waves slapping against the hull and he could smell sex and salt, but all he could feel was the way Freeman's fingers vanished and came back wet and warm to trace around his asshole, over and over, and the way the head of his cock was suddenly, amazingly, in Freeman's throat.

Josh started shaking, sensations shooting through his body. "Freeman..." His hands slid to the blankets, opening and closing.

Freeman moaned; Josh could feel it everywhere. Then Freeman swallowed and the finger slipped past

Josh's hole and into him, going slow.

"Freeman!" he cried out, shocked.

The heat on his cock went up and down, Freeman's head bobbing for a moment longer. The finger didn't move, didn't withdraw or go deeper, and then Freeman lifted his head, his eyes dark and glittering. "Want me to stop?"

"I... I don't know," Josh admitted, body tense, tight around Freeman's finger. He panted a moment or two longer. "No?"

"Okay." Freeman dipped his head again and licked Josh's cock. When he took it back into his mouth, the finger slid back and then in a tiny bit more, the speed matching the sway and bob of the blow job.

It was strange. It didn't hurt, but it wasn't comfortable, but... Well, it tingled. And the longer Freeman did it, the better it felt. Soon he was rocking, gasping as he pushed between Freeman's finger and mouth.

Freeman was looking at him, watching with his mouth full, his lips swollen, and the finger felt amazing. It was a bit of friction in a very good way, and then there was another finger, teasing at the edge of his hole. Freeman didn't push it in, but he did something with the one already in, and "very good" became

"outstanding."

Josh shouted out, his hands grabbing at Freeman's head, his hips pumping as he came.

Freeman kept on sucking, but he eased the finger out before it could get really irritating, and then he knelt up, way above Josh, and started jacking off furiously, his eyes wide.

Josh would have reached out and helped, but he was utterly boneless, so he just lay there and watched. Oh, there was something Josh could do. "Come on, sir."

"God!" Freeman's hand flew and his eyes actually rolled back. "You -- oh, God!" He froze and shot, come landing in white streaks across the blanket and Josh, both. "Oh, man." Freeman was panting and shaking.

"Yeah." Josh managed to reach out and tug Freeman down next to him.

"Holy crap." Freeman shook a little bit as he curled into Josh, and his mouth slid in sloppy kisses. "That was okay? Yeah?"

"Uh... yes?" Josh was kind of melted. Stunned.

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"You don't sound sure." Freeman was still breathing hard, all draped over him. Josh could feel Freeman's heart thudding.

"I don't have the words, Freeman." He didn't. At all.

"Okay." Freeman nodded and settled against him. "You... think on it a bit. Later. Lemme know. You looked amazing."

He wasn't sure how time was gonna find him the words, but he curled in happily enough, body just limp all through. He could stay right here like this forever.

Summer was supposed to be winding down, but Freeman wouldn't have been able to tell by the weather.

The days had been coolish for a week, but right then it was hot and sunny, the light spilling through Freeman's windows in the late afternoon. It wasn't humid, thank God, but it was a far cry from what he remembered as "back to school" weather.

He had the windows open and the apartment door open for a cross breeze as he made supper, hoping that Josh would be by before too long; it had been a long day on the water and Freeman really needed some face time with his man.

A goofy grin crossed his face as soon as he thought the words. His man. His. Who would have thought? He just hoped that Josh would stick around, through the fall at least. Winter was going to be a whole other matter, with there being no fishing once the ice came in, not even deep sea rod fishing for his own food. A lot of people would be looking for a very few jobs. Freeman was hoping to have enough saved that he wouldn't have to panic between his bank account and the government.

A bright knock came at the door a few minutes later, Josh's three quick taps followed by one more.

"Hey, you," Freeman called out. "Come on in. I'm just getting the salad together." He tossed mushrooms into the bowl and reached for the cloth to wipe off his hands. "How was your day?"

"It was great. Bob asked me to stay on for the winter. His niece is off to university and he needs someone to come in three-four days a week and help out with chores, ride the horses through the winter, that kind of thing. Be less money than now, but it's a job and it's mine, if I want it." Josh came right up and gave him a hug, looking well pleased.

"For real?" Freeman thought maybe he shouldn't hold so tight, but he couldn't seem to help it. "You're not going to leave?"

"Nope. I keep telling you there's nothing for me to go back to." Josh was still holding on, too. "Now that I got work through the winter, there's no reason to leave."

"Awesome." Now, there was an understatement. Freeman kissed Josh and then did it again.

"Awesome." He didn't seem to be able to say much else.

Josh laughed and nodded. "Bob's got an old clunker he's willing to sell me -- take the money out of my

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wages a bit every week so I can get there and back. He's good people."

"He is." Freeman's hands ran down Josh's back to his ass. "You're staying." Freeman seemed to be a little fixated. "Getting a car. Or a truck? And staying."

"Truck. 'Bout a million years old, but she runs. Things'll be tight, but..." Josh shrugged, his gaze meeting Freeman's, a warmth in them.

"It's always tight 'round here. We make it work." Freeman couldn't look away. "I can throw some time your way, especially if John takes off for Halifax early this year. I'll need help until the boat comes out of the water."

"Yeah? Bob's doing morning feedings, I could go out with you."

"That would be good. We'd have to fish, though." Freeman grinned as he teased. "Leave the making out for after. When the deck's all gross. Whole other thing out there when there's work to do."

"Mostly too cold to be making out on the water, anyway. Gotta wait to come back here." Josh was looking at his lips now, like mentioning making out put Josh's mind to it.

"Uh-huh." Freeman nodded slowly. "Where it's warm and private." He couldn't help it -- with Josh looking at him like that, he felt like his mouth was actually tingling. "It's private here now. If you were interested."

"What about supper?"

"It'll keep." Freeman glanced at the salad on the counter. "There's steak for grilling. In the fridge. I mean, the steak is in the fridge, not the grilling. Um." God, he hated it when he got so worked up that he didn't make sense.

Josh helped him out by pushing their mouths together, shutting him right up.

Well, that settled that, and just the way Freeman had been hoping. He tugged Josh closer easily and kissed him eagerly; he'd have to make sure to kick the door closed as they went past it, assuming this was going to get even better.

Josh was staying.

Freeman moaned and held Josh tighter to him, almost clinging. That was a very, very good thing.

After dinner found them doing the dishes, him washing, Josh drying. He kept feeling Josh's eyes on him, but when he'd look up, Josh'd be looking at the dish he was toweling. After the third or fourth time that happened Freeman didn't look away, but waited for Josh to do it again. "Ha! Caught you." He bumped his hip into Josh's and grinned. "What's up?"

Josh went about four shades of red and shook his head. "Nothin'."

Freeman tilted his head and watched the color get even darker on Josh's cheeks. "It doesn't look like nothing. Is something bothering you, honey?" Oh, God. Maybe Josh was staying but he wasn't staying with Freeman. That would suck.

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"No." Josh picked up the last dish from the rack, dried it and put it away. He nodded at the sink. "You gonna finish?"

"Uh-huh." Freeman swished his hand in the sink and came out with one fork. That appeared to be it. So he washed the fork and thought and eventually passed it over. "You feelin' shy about something?" Because maybe that'd make Josh turn purple, if it wasn't something bad.

Sure enough, Josh's face went a few shades darker. He dried and put away the fork, carefully hung the dishtowel on the stove handle to dry. "Isn't nothin'." Josh shoved his hands in his pockets.

Freeman looked. Freeman took in the hard on and the blush, and Freeman had an epiphany. "You don't gotta use words to ask," he said softly. "Can just... let me know what you want. In other ways, maybe."

Josh shrugged and glanced up at him, want heavy in Josh's eyes. "I..."

Freeman nodded, hoping to encourage Josh. Like there was anything Josh'd ask for that Freeman would say no to. "You want something." He took Josh's hand and started moving them slowly out of the kitchen. Maybe leaning on a counter wasn't the best place to talk about stuff like this.

They'd opened the door for the breeze again just before eating so he made sure to close and lock it, too, while Josh tried to come up with words.

"Was just wondering 'bout some stuff."

Wow, a whole string of words, they were getting somewhere.

"Okay." Freeman took Josh into the bedroom and turned on the stereo, keeping the volume way down low. "I wonder stuff all the time. What are you wondering about?" He sat on the bed and held Josh's hand. He really kind of wanted to just kiss Josh senseless, but talking was important. Especially when it was about something Josh wanted.

Josh squeezed his hand and opened his mouth, closed it again. "What you did," he finally mumbled.

Freeman waited but there didn't seem to be much more. "What I did." He nodded and thought and waited, and when he thought he might have figured it out his cock went harder than ever. The semi he'd had since they'd finished supper went full and stiff and he hope to hell he was on the right track. He hadn't tried again because Josh hadn't said, and he sure as hell didn't want to piss Josh off, and now he was babbling in his head. "You mean..." He took a breath and lifted one hand for maybe all of a second and a half.

Josh met his eyes briefly and gave a quick nod.

Freeman made himself be good and not simply roll Josh onto the bed and ravish him. That wouldn't get either of them what they wanted, at least not for half an hour or so. "You wanna do that again?" he asked hopefully, trying not to assume too much.

"If you wanna."

Freeman nodded so fast he thought he might have just blown his cool. "Yes. Uh-huh. Want." Wanted more than that, but he wasn't going to push. "And sometime in the next year or so or whenever you let me, I wanna..." Oh. That was out loud. He thought his blush might match Josh's.

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"Huh?" Josh frowned, looking at him again.

"Nothin'." Freeman felt hot all over. "Um. I mean. God, I want you. So bad."

"M right here." Josh leaned in then, mouth on his. As soon as they made contact, Josh's whole body pressed against him.

Freeman kissed Josh and his hands roamed; he loved touching Josh and couldn't seem to ever really stop, not when they were like this. Still. He got a hand under the waistband of Josh's jeans and rubbed on the man, not really daring to think that Josh meant what he wanted Josh to mean.

Groaning, Josh pushed into his touches, working his clothes off with unsteady fingers.

"Shh. I'm here." Freeman had no idea why he said that, it just seemed like the thing to do. He helped with the clothing removal and kissed as much of Josh as he could, all the while getting them farther back on the bed, with room to move. "I'm here. Want you." God, he wanted. He'd been wanting for weeks.

"Me, too." Josh rubbed against him, cock hard and hot against his thigh.

"Uh-huh." Freeman rubbed right back, his thighs already shaking. "Gotta slow down or it'll be over before we start." He also had to locate the lube he'd bought -- and hadn't that been a hair-raising trip to the pharmacy -- so he wouldn't hurt Josh. "Hang on." It was in the drawer, he just had to reach over Josh to get it.

Josh kept touching him, mouth finding his nipple as he leaned over.

"Oh, man!" He waited there for a moment, unable to keep moving. God, he loved that. He loved the way it made his dick harder, the way it made his balls tight. "Josh. God." He made himself grab the lube and back away, his cock throbbing.

Josh grinned at him and he had to grin right back. Sucking on his nipples and making him shout had become one of Josh's favorite things, if Josh's actions were anything to go by.

"Just you wait." Freeman held up the lube and waved it. "Nice and smooth this time."

"Oh." Josh's cheeks went dark again, and he buried his face against Freeman's neck, skin so hot. That cock didn't go down, though. Not one bit.

"It'll be good," Freeman whispered, promising himself as much as Josh. "Like last time, yeah?"

Josh nodded and then took his mouth, shutting him up and bringing him back down on top of Josh's eager body.

That was fine with Freeman; he'd much rather do than talk about doing. It proved hard to kiss and rub and get lube neatly on one's fingers, however, but it didn't matter. That's what laundry was for, to wash away the extra. Besides, too much was better than too little, he figured.

Balanced on one arm, Freeman used his knee to nudge Josh's legs apart. "Okay?" He said it softly, already smoothing lube behind Josh's balls.

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Josh shifted restlessly, but nodded, legs spreading a little more for him.

Freeman looked down, not able to actually see what he was doing but blown away by watching his hand move between Josh's legs. "Oh." Josh's cock was hard, and it lifted up when Freeman brushed his finger over Josh's hole. "Oh, man."

Josh groaned, hands sliding to his shoulders and holding on. "Is it okay?" Josh asked.

"Hell, yes." Freeman nodded and watched, utterly fascinated. "Is it okay with you?" He slid his wet fingers around a bit more, marveling at how different it was with lube, how easy it was to ease the tip of one finger in. His cock leapt, aching, and he moaned softly.

A shiver went through Josh. "Like it." He shifted restlessly, eyes meeting Freeman's for a moment. "It doesn't... make me weird?"

"It might make you a little gay, but not weird." Freeman kissed him and pushed a little, his finger surrounded by warmth. "God." He could just imagine his dick in there. He had been, for weeks and weeks, but he'd never pushed for it.

Josh chuckled at his words, and then gasped, legs spreading restlessly.

Freeman started fingering Josh slowly, watching Josh's face and then his cock for reactions. "Okay? Tell me if it's not."

"Okay." Josh gasped, his cock leaking. A lot. "Don't stop."

"Not gonna stop." Oh, hell no. Freeman wasn't stopping. He moved back, though, kneeling between Josh's legs so he could see, and absently stroked himself with his free hand. "Oh, wow." Josh was amazing, spread like that. His little hole was so tiny and it just swallowed up Freeman's finger, as easy as anything. "Can I put another one in?"

Josh went still for a moment, and then looked at him and nodded slowly.

Freeman held his breath, pretty sure Josh was, too, as he slid his middle finger around and started to push very gently. There was a bit of resistance, but then Josh kind of relaxed and it slipped in right next to the other one.

"Oh, God." Josh's eyes dropped closed and he swallowed.

Freeman stroked into him with both fingers, hardly breathing. "Wow." Wow, wow, wow. "I. Wow."

When Josh started meeting his fingers, pushing up into the invasion, the wow factor increased.

Panting, Freeman was totally unable to look away. He watched Josh's ass and he watched Josh's face and he felt his own cock lifting and flexing. "I want to fuck you," Freeman blurted, unable to keep it back any longer. "I do, Josh. But not until you're ready."

Josh's mouth opened and closed a few times, and then he nodded. "Kay. Do it."

Freeman froze. "For real?"

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"Yes. C'mon. Just do it." Josh shifted, riding his fingers.

"Oh, shit." Freeman leaned again, probably doing something bad in Josh's ass by the sound of the yell, but he had to get to the rubbers. It had been a horrible day to go to the pharmacy.

"What? Freeman?" Josh leaned up on his elbows, looking at him in confusion.

Freeman held up the strip with his free hand and sat back before he could do any more damage. "I... um. Better safe than sorry?" God, that was lame.

"Oh. Oh!" Josh was red again. "I didn't think of it. It's never, um... come up before."

"It's up now." Freeman giggled, his head swimming. "God. Okay? We're okay? We're going to do this and I can stop acting like a tool?" He still had his fingers in Josh's ass.

Josh reached out and stroked his cheek, said, "Shh,shh," like he was a balky horse. "It's good. We're good."

"We are." Freeman nodded slowly, not looking away. "We are, yeah." Carefully, he withdrew his hand and leaned down to kiss Josh's mouth. Even doing that was still a thrill for him, but he had to get a grip on himself somehow. "I'm real glad you're staying."

"Me, too." Josh's hand went behind his head and held him there as they kissed.

Freeman could get lost in kisses like that -- warm and soft and wet -- but there was a strip of condoms in his hand and he was naked and he could feel Josh's legs spread on either side of his own. The reminders of what they were doing were too strong to really put off or ignore. With another kiss, a thorough tasting of Josh's mouth, Freeman knelt back up and looked for the lube.

Josh's hand slid across the quilt and wrapped around the lube, handing it over to him.

Freeman had no idea what to say and he was kind of worried he'd start babbling again, so he merely smiled as he took the lube. When he tore the rubber packet open it sounded huge in the room and he just knew he was blushing as he rolled it on. But at least he didn't spill lube all over the bed this time. "Okay?" he asked again, just about ready to slide his fingers back into Josh.

"Just do it." Josh's voice sounded ragged, his hands grasping at the sheets.

"I don't want to hurt you is all." Freeman pushed two fingers in, the pressure less this time. "Oh, man." Oh,man. Yeah.

Josh's hips started to move, Josh fucking himself on the fingers.

Freeman watched for a moment, almost hypnotized, then remembered the motivation of the moment. Get Josh happy enough and relaxed enough that he'd willingly let Freeman put his cock there. Taking a breath, Freeman moved his hand to meet Josh's hips and added another finger. With his free hand he had to grab at his own cock and squeeze hard, just to keep the ache down.

"Oh, God. Freeman. Need you." The last two words were whispered, Josh almost vibrating.

Well, that was that. No matter what Freeman had intended, no matter how out of his senses he was,

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Josh wanted and Freeman wanted and it was time. Freeman nodded and pulled his hand away, then shuffled closer. His hand shook as he tried to line up his cock with that little, tiny hole, but, God, yes. Yes.

"I'll go slow," he promised in a whisper, not even looking up.

"Just go." Josh grabbed his arms, hips bucking, back arching.

"Shit!" Freeman braced himself as best he could, but instinct was far stronger than he'd planned on. His hips moved, his back curled, and he pushed right in. "God!"

Maybe if he never moved again he wouldn't come right then. Maybe.

Josh cried out, entire body going tight. Josh's hands clamped down on his shoulders, Josh's ass clamped down around his cock.

Freeman closed his eyes tight and hung on. "Honey. God. Oh, God." He was wrapped in wanting, surrounded by heat and want and his cock had never, ever, ever felt like this. He wasn't even sure if it was better than getting head, but it was damn fine. Shaking, Freeman couldn't hold back anymore and he started to thrust, praying he wasn't hurting Josh.

"God!" Josh bucked a few times and then his cock spurted, streams of come splashing between them.

Freeman yelled as soon as he felt it, before he even saw it, and watched with wide eyes as Josh came. Then his belly got tight, his hips flexed, and he buried himself in Josh's ass. His balls felt like fire, hot and hard and then bliss washed over him as he came in long pulses, still feeling the last of Josh's orgasm.

Josh's arms wrapped around him, holding on tight.

"Oh. Oh, man." Freeman let himself relax onto Josh, his muscles still twitching and his cock still hard.

"God. Josh."

"Yeah." Josh nodded, hand petting his back. "Yes, sir."

Freeman's cock twitched. Hard. "Honey. Save some for later. The night is young." He tried to laugh but he was still trying to catch his breath. "Can we do that again sometime?"

"Yes. Yes."

"That sounds like you liked it." Freeman grinned and lifted himself up so he could see Josh's face. "You were beautiful."

"Stop it." Josh brought him down again and kissed him.

Freeman rocked his hips gently and kissed Josh back, smiling into the kiss. "Beautiful," Freeman whispered, licking at the corner of Josh's mouth before kissing him again.

"Crazy," Josh whispered back.

"Gorgeous." Freeman rocked again, slowly.

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Josh only groaned, hips meeting his movements.

"Yes." Freeman nodded and kept on kissing, from mouth to jaw to across Josh's cheeks, all the while moving in long and slow thrusts, his cock still hard. He'd go until Josh said enough. "Sexy."

"God." Moving with him, Josh's hips pushed back, hot hands on his face.

"So, so, good." Freeman braced his arms and moved a little more forcefully, pretty sure he'd actually be able to concentrate this time.

Each push in was met, Josh right there with him.

Freeman didn't bother trying to be fancy or anything; he just did what felt good. He pushed in, he pulled out. When their rhythm faltered he waited for Josh to set the pace and they did it some more. When he felt like he needed faster, he went faster and the same for deeper. When Josh moaned, that was the signal to do something again.

It was possibly the best thing he'd ever done in his life, and that included learning to pilot the boat and drive the truck.

Soon enough they were moving fast and hard, Josh undulating under him, their mouths pushing together over and over. The fire was back in his balls and Freeman could feel Josh's prick, hard again and sticky with Josh's first orgasm, pushing between them. "Honey." It was more a gasp than a word. "Gonna come again. Oh, God."

Josh didn't answer, just kissed him hard, body moving desperately beneath him.

Freeman plunged his tongue into Josh's mouth and shook as he started to climax, his hips grinding down until his whole body froze up and spasmed. He didn't shoot as much, but the waves rolled right through him.

He felt more heat spreading between them. Moaning, every nerve he had on overdrive, Freeman reached down to hold the condom as he eased out of Josh's body. "Did I hurt you?" He sprawled, panting and unable to even reach for the tissues.

"Nope." Josh turned and curled up into him. "Was good."

Freeman couldn't argue with that. He cleaned up as best he could with one hand, the other already tossed over Josh and holding him close. "It was." Freeman kissed Josh's shoulder and then his mouth. "I feel like I want to say thank you. How stupid is that?"

Josh chuckled softly. "Just go to sleep, Freeman. We can do it again later."

"Awesome." Oh, man, that would rock. Freeman closed his eyes and knew he had that same goofy grin on again. Oh, well. He'd earned it.

Josh patted his arm and lay heavily against him, breath slowly going deep.

"Real glad you're staying," Freeman whispered, just before he let himself fall asleep.

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Epilogue

Josh stood out on the bow, watching the clouds chase each other across the sky, the water still pretty choppy and definitely too cold. His hands were shoved down into his pockets and would hopefully be warm soon. The hold was full of fish. It had been a good morning, and, even if it had been long months since he'd been out helping Freeman, his body had remembered what to do from the fall.

John was still working at the cannery in Halifax, and Josh's job at the Johnston place was still part time. It would pick up when the tourists came back, which was still a couple months off.

Which meant he got to work with Freeman. That right there was an amazing perk.

He shivered as the wind cut right through him, and he turned and headed into the cabin.

"There's coffee left, honey." Freeman passed the Thermos and smiled at him. "Not sure how warm it is, but we'll be back to the wharf in half an hour or so. You can get us some more while I start offloading."

"Be quicker if I help offloading and we go back to yours for coffee..." He gave Freeman a look from beneath his hat. The man still made him hot just by looking.

Freeman caught the look and gave him a startled smile. "Yeah? Well, that sounds like a fine idea. I might even have other stuff there that'll warm you up fast."

"I think you've got other stuff right here, but I can wait." He wasn't good at flirting, but he liked doing things that made Freeman happy, so he did what he could.

"Josh!" Freeman laughed, clearly delighted, and held out his hand. "Come and sit with me. There's nothing out there but cold wind."

"And waves." Josh did love the waves. He wasn't sure what it was, but they'd drawn him out here in the first place.

And they'd given him Freeman.

While he might have lost everything when his father died, while money had been damn tight during the winter and he saw no reason for that to change, he figured having Freeman made him pretty damn lucky. He took Freeman's hand. "Yes, sir."

END

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