



SHAWN LANE

ONLY FOR
HIM

ONLY FOR HIM

...“You’re cute when you’re flustered,” Barnaby said, taking a step forward until they were an inch or two apart.

He could feel warmth radiating from the other man.

“Am not.”

Barnaby’s lips moved even closer, his breath caressing Nathan’s mouth. Nathan’s cock filled and rose to press against his briefs. He puckered to touch Barnaby’s pouty lips with his when Barnaby moved away with a mischievous twinkle in his eyes and dashed out of the kitchen.

Nathan shook his head and followed. Barnaby was already slipping through the door of his bedroom. He hoped to God he had condoms and lube. If he didn’t...well, they’d be taking a brief break to go to the all-night drug store down the street.

Even as he approached his room, doubts crept in. He wanted to fuck Barnaby like crazy, but he wasn’t really a one-night stand kind of guy and he knew any kind of relationship with Barnaby would go exactly nowhere. The younger man was too young, too impetuous, too damn gorgeous, and just...too much.

“I’m going to start without you,” Barnaby called.

Swallowing a moan, he entered his room. True to his word, Barnaby had already pulled the bedspread off Nathan’s bed to reveal the pristine white sheets, and taken off his pullover sweater. His jaw dropped, his gaze fixated on Barnaby’s sculpted, perfect abs.

“You work out?”

Barnaby smiled. “Sure. Dude, with a brother for a doctor? His gift for my birthday last year was a gym membership.”

Nathan just nodded...

ALSO BY SHAWN LANE

At Long Last
The Best Gift
Car Wash
It's Only Make-Believe
Jake's Regret
A Knight For All
Lawyers In Love
Most Likely To Succeed
Only In His Dreams
The Other Side
Pulling Away
Sorcerer's Lover
Sorcerer's Lover II
The Squire
Still The One
Sweet Reunion
Ticket To Ride
Until The End Of Time

ONLY FOR HIM

BY

SHAWN LANE

AMBER QUILL PRESS, LLC

<http://www.AmberQuill.com>

ONLY FOR HIM
AN AMBER QUILL PRESS BOOK

This book is a work of fiction.
All names, characters, locations, and incidents are products of the
author's imagination, or have been used fictitiously.
Any resemblance to actual persons living or dead, locales,
or events is entirely coincidental.

Amber Quill Press, LLC
<http://www.AmberQuill.com>

All rights reserved.
No portion of this book may be transmitted or
reproduced in any form, or by any means, without permission in
writing from the publisher, with the exception of brief
excerpts used for the purposes of review.

Copyright © 2010 by Shawn Lane
ISBN 978-1-60272-676-5
Cover Art © 2010 Trace Edward Zaber

Layout and Formatting provided by: Elemental Alchemy

PUBLISHED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

For my GR friends

CHAPTER 1

Barnaby Lassiter thought perhaps if he squinted his left eye and tilted his head a bit to the right the guy leering at him from the other end of the bar could pass for *him*. The man at the other end had dark hair and glasses like *him*. Maybe if he had another drink or two or three he could pretend.

The man, apparently feeling encouraged by Barnaby looking at him, got up and made his way toward him. Barnaby shook his head and took a sip of his chocolate martini. Nope, not even close to looking like Nathan.

“Hey, gorgeous,” the man said as he reached Barnaby. His hand smoothed over Barnaby’s jean-covered knee. “Can I buy you another one?”

Barnaby smiled apologetically. “I’m sorry. I’m meeting

ONLY FOR HIM

someone here.” Which was not a lie, actually. And he was glad of that.

The guy’s smile turned brittle. “Sure, whatever.” He moved away, but not before digging his fingers painfully in Barnaby’s leg.

Dickhead.

He sighed and glanced at his digital watch. Calvin was already thirty minutes late. Stood up by his older brother had to be the height of patheticness. Um...that probably wasn’t even a damn word.

The bell above the door jangled and Barnaby once more turned to look hopefully.

At last.

Calvin Lassiter, his older brother by seven years, was an emergency room doctor. Barnaby had dyed his hair bleached blond whereas Calvin’s was still sandy blond. His brother, dressed in dress slacks, shirt and a tie, was the picture of conservative. No hair out of place, no earrings, no nose stud.

All more than he could say for himself, of course. He had gone home from his work as an admin assistant at the Law Offices of Anderson, Llewellyn, and Stevens, and changed into jeans, a blue tank top, and a leather jacket. He had three diamond studs in his left ear and another one in his left nostril. He’d also applied eyeliner, mauve blush, and mauve lip gloss.

Calvin noticed him at the bar and walked over. He was already frowning. Not a good sign. His brother slid onto the stool next to him.

“Hey, I was beginning to think you weren’t coming.”

“I’m busy, Barnaby. I had a meeting at the hospital this afternoon and it ran late.” Calvin ordered a red wine from the bartender and then turned to Barnaby. “Did we have to meet at a

ONLY FOR HIM

gay bar?”

“You’re gay, too.”

“I don’t hang out at bars,” Calvin said, with that note of superiority he usually had when speaking to Barnaby. “And neither should you.”

“I feel comfortable here.”

Calvin glanced around the bar. “I don’t see why. All these guys want is to get laid. None of them are looking for anything serious. And you have no idea if they have diseases or are serial killers.”

Barnaby felt the muscle in his jaw tick, but he said nothing and took another sip of his drink.

“If you’re looking for someone, why don’t you try one of those online dating services?”

“Oh, yeah, right.”

“They have some for gay men, you know.” Calvin looked at him critically. “I can see how some of them might find you attractive.”

“Gee, thanks.”

Calvin sighed. “I just don’t like you in places like this. You aren’t careful, Barnaby.”

He drummed his fingers on the bar. “Look, I didn’t ask you to meet me to get a lecture on how I am going to be murdered by a serial killer.”

His brother flushed. “Why did you want to meet?”

“Well, I need some advice actually.” Barnaby couldn’t look at his brother. He’d begun to realize this whole thing was probably a huge mistake. He scowled. “I want to know how to get someone interested in me who is like you.”

“Like me? What do you mean?”

“Like you but not stuffy and pompous. I mean, he’s straitlaced

ONLY FOR HIM

like you.” He finished his drink. “And doesn’t know I exist.”

The look Calvin gave him told him his brother could understand why someone would view Barnaby as invisible. Which, of course, depressed him further.

“You know what? Forget it,” he muttered.

Calvin’s hand on his arm stopped him from rising. “Don’t go all dramatic on me. I didn’t say I wouldn’t help. But let’s start by getting out of here. I’m hungry and I can see you could stand to eat a meal or two, so let’s go find a restaurant and have dinner.”

* * *

“First, don’t expect me to start to dress like you,” Barnaby told his brother a short time later.

His brother had chosen a hoity-toity steakhouse for dinner. Since Barnaby had been a vegetarian for years and he was pretty sure his brother knew that, he was not amused.

He glared at the menu. Barnaby was very close to telling Calvin he was an asshole. Wouldn’t be the first time. Though they had been close as kids, now they were hardly the closest of brothers. Calvin was always busy and the last time he’d seen his brother was months ago. Calvin had come by the law firm under the pretense of taking him to lunch, but Barnaby suspected it had been to see if Calvin deemed it worthy of him working there. Like he needed his brother’s approval.

“I’m going to have the filet, what about you?” Calvin asked.

“I guess I’ll have a salad.”

“That’s it?”

He sighed. “I don’t eat meat.”

Calvin lowered his menu and set it on the table. “You’re still

ONLY FOR HIM

doing that?"

"Yes."

"They have chicken and a fish dish," Calvin offered.

"Uh-huh. Which of those would be a vegetable?"

Calvin shrugged. "Sorry, didn't think about it. I guess I thought it was a phase you were going through."

"It's not." Barnaby studied his brother, scowling.

"Apparently."

"Aren't you a doctor?"

"So?"

"Well, what about 'all red meat is bad for you' stuff?"

"Moderation, B. Everything in moderation." Calvin smiled. "As for dressing like me, most of the time I wear scrubs. But it wouldn't hurt for you to wear a nice suit once in a while. You work at a law firm."

"I'm not a lawyer and most of the staff dresses casual unless there's a trial or something."

His brother studied him without speaking for quite some time. Just as Barnaby wondered if he would wilt under his brother's withering regard, the waitress came to take their order. As he'd indicated, Calvin ordered a steak, rare, and he ordered a green salad.

"Why don't you tell me about the man you're interested in," Calvin said shortly after the waitress walked away.

Barnaby shrugged. "Not much to tell. He works at the law firm."

"Wait. Is he one of the lawyers?"

Barnaby felt himself blush, which he hated, damn fair skin. "Yes."

Calvin rolled his eyes. "Please tell me you aren't in love with

ONLY FOR HIM

your boss.”

“Travis? No. Don’t get me wrong, he’s nice enough to look at, but I don’t do the boss-secretary thing.” Barnaby stuck the straw of his Diet Coke in his mouth and took a sip. “Besides, he’s in a relationship with someone else from work.”

His brother grimaced. “I can’t imagine how inappropriate that place must be. And they work in the legal field.” He shook his head. “Let me tell you, not in a million years would I get involved with someone else from the hospital.”

Barnaby wanted to say he doubted his brother would get involved with anyone considering Calvin likely had a hollow chest, but he sort of did want his brother’s help, and he definitely did not want Calvin to get pissed and leave him with the restaurant bill. Insulting Calvin, no matter how much the asshole might deserve it, wasn’t the mature thing to do.

“Okay, so who is the guy you’re in love with?” Calvin asked after ending his tirade.

“I’m not *in love* with him. I find him attractive and wanted to maybe see where it could go, if he might be interested in me.” *Shit, how pathetically lame had that sounded?*

“Who?”

“Nathan Llewellyn.”

“So it’s one of the other partners, huh? Is that the African American guy or the nerd?”

Barnaby bristled. “He is *not* a nerd.”

Calvin smirked. “Doesn’t he wear big thick Buddy Holly kind of glasses?”

“So what? Are you going to help me or insult me and my choice of a guy?”

“Okay, don’t overdramatize. I think it’s cute.”

ONLY FOR HIM

“I swear to fucking—”

Calvin held up his hands. “Calm down, B.”

The waitress came by with their dinners and set them down. She asked them about refills and then once more disappeared from their table.

His brother cut a big piece of bloody red steak and popped it into his mouth. Barnaby fought the queasiness in his stomach. And the urge to punch his stupid brother in the smug face.

“You aren’t going to want to hear this, but I think if you want to get that guy, you’re going to have to resort to being more like him,” Calvin said. “The makeup is...interesting, but your nerd strikes me as the type who wouldn’t find it particularly appealing. He might even find it embarrassing.”

“What? What’s embarrassing about a little eyeliner, blush, and lip gloss?”

“Nothing if it’s on a woman. But lots of gay men don’t like it.”

Of course Calvin didn’t say it, but Barnaby heard the *including me* in his brother’s tone.

“Anyway, I suspect your nerd is one of those who don’t.”

“He’s not a nerd,” he said through clenched teeth.

“Eat your rabbit food,” Calvin said, waving his fork. “I’m telling you that you need to ditch the makeup. Flatten down your hair, too. Spiky hair is so video game character. I’d dye it back to its original color also.”

Barnaby’s jaw dropped open. “If I change my hair, stop wearing makeup, and wear dress pants and a tie, I won’t look like me anymore. In fact, I’ll look like *you*.”

Calvin smiled. “Exactly.” He shrugged. “What have you got to lose? If it doesn’t work to get your nerd’s attention, you can go back to the way you usually are. If you have to.”

ONLY FOR HIM

“Well—”

“Look, you asked my advice. If you don’t want to take it, don’t. But if you really want to get this guy to notice you, isn’t it worth it?”

Barnaby pushed aside the depression threatening at the idea of having to change so much about himself. But maybe Calvin was right. He certainly hadn’t interested Nathan the way he was. “All right, I’ll do it. But only for him.”

CHAPTER 2

Nathan Llewellyn was dying. He just knew he was.

His head throbbed, his skin burned, and his stomach roiled. He'd been poisoned. Someone had tried to murder him. Someone who had lost a lawsuit against him or something. Sweat beaded his forehead as he struggled against the queasiness.

He seemed to recall a Dennis Quaid movie from years ago where the whole premise of the movie was that his character had been fatally poisoned and before Dennis took his last breath he was determined to learn the identity of his killer.

Nathan doubted he could be so heroic. How had Dennis even managed to move being so close to death's door as he was? Nathan couldn't figure it out, because even lifting his hand to dial the phone had been torture.

ONLY FOR HIM

“Travis Anderson.”

He opened his mouth to speak, but all that came out was something close to a squawk.

“Hello? Is someone there?”

Nathan moaned and tried again. “It’s me,” he croaked.

“Nathan? Wow, you sound bad.”

He nodded, hoping his law partner and friend, Travis, could see his silent agreement so he wouldn’t waste his last breath.

“Nathan?”

Damn.

“I’m sick.”

Travis chuckled. “Yes, I gathered as much. You don’t have the swine flu, do you? Or whatever we’re supposed to call it.”

“I’m sure it’s much worse. Malaria. Or Ebola.”

“Ebola?” His friend sounded much too amused for the serious situation. “Are you hemorrhaging from different orifices?”

He was sure he must be. It felt like he was. Nathan glanced down the bed at his pain-wracked body. “Well, no.”

“Did you call a doctor?”

“I almost called 9-1-1,” he admitted. “I didn’t want to be charged with falsifying an emergency.” He closed his eyes. “I think it’s either just the regular flu or food poisoning.”

“I’m sorry you’re sick. Is there anything I can do for you?”

“I need the Sorenson file. I’ve got some preparation to do for the trial and it can’t wait.”

There was a slight pause and a shuffling of papers.

“Um, Sorenson. I can’t get away from the office. Are you contagious?”

“Probably, maybe. I don’t know. Maybe it’s cyanide poisoning.”

ONLY FOR HIM

Travis laughed again. "I think you'd be too dead to call me."

Another wave of queasiness lurched in his stomach. "I guess."

"All right, I'll send Barnaby over," Travis said, referring to his admin assistant.

Oh, no. Barnaby would be the last person he'd want to see him looking like this. As if his normal appearance wasn't bad enough.

He cleared the frog in his throat. "Can't you just have it sent by messenger?"

"Sending Barnaby will be quicker. I have to go. I hope you feel better. Call me if there's anything else."

The dial tone sounded loud enough to break his eardrum. Frowning, Nathan tossed his cell phone onto the bedside table.

Crap, he hadn't felt this sick since he was a child. He ran his fingers through his dark, sweaty hair, and then reached for his glasses from the table. He was practically blind without them.

Nathan had briefly considered the corrective eye surgery everyone seemed to tout these days, but he couldn't bring himself to do it. If they screwed it up, sure, he could sue, but he'd still not have his eyesight back.

As far as contacts...well, he'd tried them a few times but they never felt comfortable. So, he stuck with glasses.

Looking around the room, it was less blurry than before, but it still seemed to sway just a bit. There was no hope for it, though. He'd have to get up to answer the door. He hadn't thought to tell Travis to have Barnaby just leave it on the doorstep. And something told him Travis would have ignored him anyway.

He swung his legs slowly out from under the sheet and blanket and forced himself to sit up. His head swam with the effort and he blew out a steadying breath. He had to have a fever. Touching his forehead with his palm confirmed his suspicions. Burning up.

ONLY FOR HIM

For several long moments, he stayed sitting on the edge of the bed, willing the queasiness to go away or at least dissipate. Nathan did not pray, he couldn't remember even the last time he even thought about praying, but he did now. Prayed for the strength to make it long enough to take the Sorenson file from Barnaby.

Maybe, if he just stuck his arm out of the door and reached for it, Barnaby wouldn't see him. Any other time he'd be delighted to see the man. Well...okay, more like nervous as a cat, but that was only because Barnaby was seriously hot and Nathan had a teensy tiny crush on him. One would think him too old for crushes, but what else could it be?

Every time he saw the beautiful blond with the spiky hair, earrings and lip gloss, his stomach fluttered, his balls tightened, his pulse raced, and he could barely catch his breath. It felt like the high school crush he had on his science teacher all over again.

He slowly rose from the bed, spreading his arms a little to steady himself. All right, so far, so good. His next move was to make it to the bathroom. One, he had to pee, and two his bathrobe hung on the back of the door.

Nathan made it to the bathroom, where he did his business, washed his hands, and then grabbed his robe. He eyed the shower longingly, but didn't figure he had the strength to pull off taking a shower. He shrugged into his robe and tied the sash.

When he made it into the kitchen, Nathan made himself a cup of tea, which he couldn't manage to drink, went into the living room to rest on the couch, and waited for the doorbell to ring.

* * *

The buzz of his doorbell startled Nathan awake. Blinking

ONLY FOR HIM

rapidly, he struggled to remember where the hell he was.

Barnaby.

Wiping his hand across his face, he rose and hobbled to the front door, but not before the doorbell buzzed several more times. He peered out through the peephole expecting to see his little bleached blond obsession. Instead, he saw someone with carefully coiffed sandy blond hair.

Okay, not Barnaby. So, Travis had sent someone else after all. He pushed aside his weird sense of disappointment and opened the door.

The young man standing there was definitely holding a large red accordion style folder with the name Sorenson on it. The sandy haired guy wore navy pinstriped dress pants, a crisp white shirt, and a navy tie. And though his face was bare of any makeup or other adornments, he had the same delicate beauty and full pouty lips as Barnaby.

Frowning, Nathan took the file from the man's outstretched hand.

"Finally. I was going to maybe call an ambulance or something." That was most definitely Barnaby's sexy, almost raspy voice.

"Barnaby?" he asked, hesitantly.

Those tantalizing lips curved into the familiar sexiest damn smile Nathan had ever seen. But all too soon the smile faded. "You look hellacious, Mr. Llewellyn."

"Nathan," he said absently.

Barnaby...or Barnaby's doppelganger...stepped close. The scent of cinnamons and cloves assailed his nostrils and any other time he would have gladly buried his face in the man's neck to inhale that smell, but just now the nausea rose in his stomach,

ONLY FOR HIM

threatening to fill his throat. He stumbled back.

Barnaby placed a steadying hand on his arm. "We'd better get you back to bed. You look really bad."

He couldn't decide which was worse. Looking really bad or hellacious. God, now he was delirious.

Barnaby's arm slipped around him. The only time he'd been this close to his obsession and he wanted to vomit. As if his day hadn't already been shot to hell, it got worse. He allowed Barnaby to help him back toward the hallway leading to the bedrooms. He felt as feeble as a hundred year old man.

"Which room is yours?" Barnaby asked.

Nathan could only point. He was led inside the room and then he pointed to the bathroom. Fortunately, Barnaby got what he meant and led him there. He dropped to his knees, quite ungracefully, and had barely leaned over the toilet when his stomach erupted.

* * *

"It's all right you know," Barnaby assured Nathan as he leaned over him, wiping his forehead with a cool damp cloth.

Easy for him to say, Nathan thought. He didn't just barf in front of the man he had the hots for. He wondered, somewhat feverishly, as he lay in bed, who that man might be for Barnaby.

Somehow, after he'd gotten over the total humiliation of having to have Barnaby clean up after him, they'd managed to get him back to his bed. Now, his own private nurse was administering to him. Maybe the day had improved after all.

He stared into Barnaby's blue-gray eyes, mesmerized by the tiny flecks of gold dotting them. Suddenly his glasses were

ONLY FOR HIM

snatched off his face and the man went blurry.

"Sorry, I should have thought you wouldn't want these on in bed. They're smudged with...um...stuff anyway," Barnaby said. "I'll clean them for you and give them back to you later."

Nathan nodded. Or thought he did.

"Have you been able to keep anything down?"

"No. I tried some tea before you came, but I couldn't really drink it."

"I think we have to keep you hydrated. I'll get you some water in a bit." Barnaby sat on the edge of the bed next to him. "I don't think you're up to doing work though."

He sighed. "You're right. I'm going to have to get one of the other lawyers to do it. Maybe Mary."

"I'll tell Travis when I get back to the office."

"You aren't leaving yet, are you?" Now that he was there, Nathan didn't want him to leave. Stupid, he guessed.

"No. I'll stay for a little bit."

"I hope I'm not getting you sick."

"I had the flu shot, so I'm probably good."

Nathan frowned. "Look, I realize I'm delirious, but, did you change your appearance?"

"You noticed huh?" For some reason Barnaby sounded happy.

"It's kind of hard not to." Nathan shook his head. "It's quite...different."

"You don't like it?"

He heard a strange note of dismay in Barnaby's voice, but thought maybe he imagined it. He shook his head to try and clear it.

"Hey, who am I to judge if you want to change your appearance?"

ONLY FOR HIM

Barnaby shifted on the bed. “Oh. Yes, I guess so. I’ll be right back.”

He heard Barnaby go into the bathroom for a moment and then leave the room. He was obviously a big sap when sick because he missed the man’s presence in the few minutes he was gone from his side.

Barnaby came in and set something on the bedside table. “I’ve cleaned your glasses and brought you some water. You should probably try to take a few sips of it every now and then. Do you think if you feel sick you can make it to the bathroom, or should I bring you a trash can before I leave?”

Nathan felt the crush of disappointment, probably far out of context, too. “So, you’re leaving now after all?”

“I should probably get your file back to the firm so Ms. Biggs can start doing the work you need on it.”

“O-okay.” He closed his eyes, unwilling to give in too much to feeling sorry for himself. He’d already done enough of that.

A little hitched gasp from Barnaby had his eyes opening again. It had been so faint he was sure he must have imagined it.

“I could maybe get a messenger to pick up the file and stay here. To make sure you’re going to be okay. You seem pretty sick.”

Nathan swallowed. “I am pretty sick. I’d appreciate the company for a while, if Travis doesn’t mind you not being at work, of course.” He’d want to smash Travis’s face in if he did mind.

“Okay, give me a minute to make some calls and I’ll be back in.”

Nathan lifted his head to watch Barnaby disappear through his bedroom door once more. Even in his wretched state, he’d watched that tempting backside. God knew he’d been checking out

ONLY FOR HIM

Barnaby's ass at the firm every chance he got. As long as the perky blond didn't notice.

Former perky blond. He had to admit he liked Barnaby blond with all his earrings and nose stud and lip gloss. He wondered what prompted the change. He decided he would have to ask.

Nathan yawned. Man, he was really tired. Listening for Barnaby to return, his eyes drifted closed.

CHAPTER 3

Barnaby returned to Nathan's room, ready to tell him he got the okay to stay with him the rest of the day, when he heard the soft snoring coming from the bed. Trying to be quiet, he tiptoed to the bed and looked down at the extremely pale man.

Biting his lip, he wondered if he should call his brother for medical advice. Should he be worried, or was it just the flu like Travis insisted? He'd been surprised how cheerful his boss sounded when he'd asked to stay. Not one hint of an argument.

He smiled a little. While it was true Nathan had seen better days, he was still as handsome as ever. His nearly black hair was a mess of curls framing his face like a fallen angel. High cheekbones, perfect aquiline nose. He'd make any girl in a fairytale sigh and every gay man weak in the knees.

ONLY FOR HIM

His gaze shifted to the black-framed glasses on his nightstand. The glasses were slightly nerdy, he admitted to himself but never Calvin. But on Nathan, they were simply adorable.

Barnaby figured once Nathan felt better he'd be back to his old self. Refusing to even look at Barnaby, like he was nothing. In spite of Calvin's advice, he hadn't been particularly impressed with Barnaby's new appearance either.

It would be selfish of him, he guessed, if he hoped Nathan's illness lingered for days so he could stay there and pretend to be his nurse. Barnaby rolled his eyes at his own foolishness.

He left the bedroom and went to the kitchen. He'd noticed it needed a bit of cleaning and since he had to wait for the messenger to come collect the Sorenson file, he might as well make himself busy. He hoped Nathan had a can of soup or something.

It was a few hours later, when he finally turned off the television after watching Oprah. He stretched and stood. He'd checked a few times on Nathan and he'd still been asleep. The messenger had collected the legal file a while ago.

Barnaby hated to admit it, but he was getting bored. He was not a particularly sedentary sort. He'd made himself cinnamon toast earlier, but he was getting hungry again.

Earlier, he'd pulled off his tie and tossed it aside and now he decided to do the same thing with his dress shirt. He unbuttoned it and shrugged out of the sleeves, discarding it with the tie. He was definitely more comfortable in the tank top he'd worn under the shirt.

Barnaby went down the hall to Nathan's room, determined this time to wake him up if he still slept. Yeah, he knew sick people needed their rest and all, but damn it, he didn't want to waste being in Nathan's home. Besides, Nathan needed to have fluids and stuff.

ONLY FOR HIM

To his relief, Nathan was stirring in the bed, which meant he wouldn't have to be mean and wake him up. He approached the bed, and looked down at his patient. Nathan's dark eyes gazed back with unmistakable confusion.

"Hey, feeling any better?"

"Barnaby?"

"Yes. I brought your file and you barfed, remember?"

Nathan groaned and closed his eyes briefly. He reopened them. "Yeah. Now I do. What time is it?"

"About four."

"Oh, God, Barnaby, I'm sorry, you've been here all day, haven't you?"

He smiled. "Pretty much."

Nathan struggled to sit up. He looked a little green around the mouth, but otherwise better than before his lengthy nap. "I feel wiped."

"How about your stomach? Any better?"

Nathan looked thoughtful. "Yeah. It does feel a little less upset."

"Good. I found a can of chicken noodle in your pantry, so maybe you can eat some of that."

"Thank you. I can't believe you stayed here all this time with me."

Barnaby shrugged. "It was better than having to type up a pleading for Travis. Do you need help getting into the bathroom?"

Nathan shook his head. "No, I think I'm good."

"Great, I'll go heat up your soup. Should I come help you to the dining room or what?"

"No, I think I'll try coming out on my own. I do feel much better."

ONLY FOR HIM

Thrilled to hear Nathan was on the mend, Barnaby went to the kitchen to heat the soup. Apparently letting the man sleep forever had been the right thing to do. While he made the chicken soup for Nathan, he made a cheese quesadilla for himself, having found tortillas and cheese in Nathan's fridge.

He had the table all set with their food when Nathan came out dressed with a robe over his pajamas. It looked as though he'd made some sort of attempt to comb his wild curls, but had given up, giving his dark hair a sort of sexy, crazy professor look. It went especially well with the black-framed glasses.

He smiled and sat down at the table with his soup and glass of water. "Wow, thanks. I can't remember the last time someone took care of me."

Barnaby took his seat, too. Feeling a little embarrassed, he ducked his chin. "Well, I was here."

Nathan eyed his quesadilla. "That looks better than my soup, but aren't you a vegetarian?"

He opened his mouth to respond, but then closed it. Wait, Nathan knew he was a vegetarian?

"Barnaby?"

He cleared his throat. "Um. Yes, I am a veggie. Just not a vegan. So while I don't eat meat, I do eat food made from animals like milk products."

"Oh. Of course." Nathan took a tentative spoonful of soup. "Mind if I ask you a question?"

Barnaby froze, his stomach knotting. "No. Go ahead."

"What prompted you to change your appearance?"

"Well..." How was he to answer? He couldn't tell Nathan that *he* prompted him to change. Exhaling slowly, he settled on a partial truth. "There's a guy I'm interested in."

ONLY FOR HIM

“Okay.”

“And, he’s different than I am. More...polished. So I thought he might like me more if I had more of an accepted appearance.”

Nathan took another spoonful of soup and shrugged. “Far be it from me to judge, but in my opinion he should like you the way you are. Normally I mean.”

“Even though he’s more conservative?”

“So what? Personally, I thought you were cute before. I liked the earrings and makeup, too.” Nathan suddenly set his spoon down and turned a dark shade of red, which looked extra strange considering he’d been ghostly white before.

Barnaby stared, his pulse kicking into high gear. “You-you liked the way I looked?”

Nathan lowered his gaze to his soup. “You looked, you know, okay for that sort of look, yeah.”

Hardly a ringing endorsement of his prior appearance, Barnaby thought, but he was so pathetic, he decided it was better than nothing. “Maybe I’ll go back to the other way, then.”

“Sure, if you want.”

Barnaby forced back a sigh and searched for something else to say. “How’s your soup?”

“It’s fine.” Nathan smiled.

“I guess you can’t do much to harm canned soup.”

“Unless you forget it’s on the stove and burn it dry,” Nathan said somewhat sheepishly. “Can I ask you another question?”

Tensing, Barnaby nodded.

“Where’d the name Barnaby come from?”

He laughed. *That* was easy. “My grandmother. She loved seventies television. One of her favorites was Barnaby Jones with Buddy Ebsen. Thus, the name.”

ONLY FOR HIM

“You’re kidding?”

“Nope. I’m just lucky she didn’t name me Maude or Rhoda.”

Nathan chuckled. “Oh, Lord.”

He grinned. “Yeah, my grandma’s something else.” He noticed Nathan had pushed his bowl away. “Had enough?”

“Yeah, I think so. Thanks again.”

“Drink some water, too. You feel pukish?”

“Surprisingly no. I still feel weak, but I don’t think I have the fever anymore.”

Barnaby nodded, realizing this pretty much meant he should go home. He finished off his quesadilla and rose, grabbing Nathan’s soup bowl as well. “You want me to save the soup in a container for you to reheat if you get hungry later?”

“That would be very nice of you. There are some in that cabinet there.” Nathan pointed. He pushed away and stood up from the table. “Thank you for everything, Barnaby.”

“Anytime.”

Nathan cleared his throat. “I’m sure you want to go home and all. But, maybe, when I’m feeling a little better, I could take you to dinner.”

Barnaby blinked. “Dinner?”

“As a thank you,” Nathan said quickly.

“I’d like that.”

“Good. Um. Great. I should probably go rest.”

He swallowed, nodded. “Yeah. I’ll let myself out when I’m finished. As long as you think you’ll be okay.”

Nathan smiled. “Sure. Goodnight, Barnaby.”

“When?” he blurted out before he could stop himself.

“When what?”

He felt his cheeks warm. “When do you think we might go to

ONLY FOR HIM

dinner?”

“Oh. Soon.”

Barnaby bit his lip. It sounded way too vague for him, maybe like it wouldn't really happen, but he couldn't really demand a more definite answer. “Goodnight then.”

CHAPTER 4

Nathan tossed his pen on his desk and rubbed his eyes. If he had to look at one more motion that week he'd scream. Well...no. But he was damn sick of them.

He'd been back to work a week since his illness and hadn't gotten up the nerve to schedule the dinner with Barnaby. He didn't even know what possessed him to suggest dinner. The two of them had absolutely nothing in common. And Nathan was certain Barnaby would be too nice not to pretend he was having a good time.

Nathan had caught sight of the man a few times since he'd returned. Barnaby hadn't gone back to the bleached blond spiky hair, but he was once more wearing makeup and earrings. He'd been glad. Barnaby was gorgeous no matter how he dressed or how

ONLY FOR HIM

he fixed his hair, but Nathan had to admit he preferred the more flamboyant look.

On the other hand, it reminded him how different they actually were. Someone like Barnaby would never be attracted to someone like him. Geeky, dull, and conservative versus cool, hot, and fun-loving.

Nathan shook his head and shut down his computer. Even though it was just a little after six and he often stayed way beyond that, he knew he was done for the day. He pushed his chair back, stood, and stretched.

As he grabbed his suit coat, he was already deciding on which fast food drive-through to go to tonight. The firm was mostly deserted. He knew from the closed door down the hall with light streaming from below that one of his fellow partners, Mark Stevens, was still there. Mark kept longer hours than any of them. He was the epitome of a workaholic.

His other partner, Travis, had been at a trial all day so had never come in, and most of the associate attorneys left by six every day. They'd never required the lawyers to keep long hours as many of the other firms had, unless there was an ongoing case that required it.

The three of them had met in law school and had bonded over all of them being gay. Though they'd never dated each other, they'd developed an easy friendship, and later, when they were all tired of the firms they worked at, they'd formed their own law practice. They did quite well and were able to limit the practice to mostly taking on cases they believed would be victorious. Keeping things small had worked out for them.

Turning toward the doors leading out of the office, Nathan was surprised to see Barnaby's lithe body just ahead of him.

ONLY FOR HIM

“Still here?” he spoke before he could stop himself.

Barnaby jumped a fraction and turned around. He smiled, but it was strained. “Oh, hi.”

“I didn’t mean to startle you.”

“You didn’t,” Barnaby denied. “Well, goodnight.”

Nathan frowned. There was a sadness about Barnaby he was not used to and he definitely didn’t like. “Are you okay?”

“Yeah, sure, I just...never mind.” Barnaby turned to grab the door handle.

“Wait, what?”

Barnaby faced him again and flattened himself against the closed door. The younger man wore skinny jeans, a T-shirt with the words *Exercise Kills*, and a plaid long sleeved shirt over that. His blue-gray eyes mesmerized Nathan and he knew he was staring, maybe even drooling.

“Well, it’s just that you asked me to dinner and then you didn’t. So now I don’t know what to think.”

“Oh.”

A little more sadness showed in those eyes and an almost profound disappointment. “Yeah, I get it. Have a great weekend.”

Nathan forced himself to speak before Barnaby went through the doors of the firm. “What about tonight?”

“Really?”

He figured someone like Barnaby probably had a different date every night or close to it. Barnaby was the kind of guy who would have ten guys interested the second he walked through the door of a gay bar.

“Too short notice, huh?” Part of him hoped it was, he was damn nervous. When Barnaby was over nursing him while he was sick he felt too bad to care very much, but now being alone in a

ONLY FOR HIM

romantic sort of way caused fluttering in his stomach.

“No, I think it sounds great,” Barnaby said. “But can I ask that we choose a place that has vegetarian choices?”

“Oh, definitely not a problem. In fact, why don’t you choose where you want to go?”

Barnaby nodded and went through the firm doors and outside. He hesitated just a second to admire the man’s firm round ass and then followed him out.

“You want me to follow you or you want me to just take you?”

Barnaby raised an eyebrow.

Feeling himself blush, Nathan quickly said, “To the restaurant.”

“I’ll ride with you. It’s easier that way.”

* * *

Nathan thought it was a minor miracle he’d been able to calm his racing pulse on the drive to the casual chain restaurant Barnaby had chosen. Sitting next to him in the front seat, Barnaby smelled of cinnamon, cloves, and orange. It reminded him of his favorite tea.

The restaurant was open and cheery with a skylight in the ceiling and a large rectangular bar in the middle. It was crowded, but not enough to cause a wait and they were quickly seated by a bubbly hostess who openly gawked at Barnaby.

He was actually glad for the well-populated restaurant. He didn’t know if he was ready for a dark, cozy, candlelit setting.

“Nice choice.”

Barnaby flashed his blinding white smile. “I figured we both needed a place like this to put us at ease.”

ONLY FOR HIM

It would never have occurred to him that Barnaby might be nervous. He had thought the perky man was unflappable.

“You didn’t go back to the bleached hair,” he blurted out.

The other man nodded. “I would have but my stylist suggested waiting a bit to prevent too much damage. Are you sure you like me better this way?”

He swallowed. “Yes. Well, I mean, you definitely have the look to pull it off.”

Barnaby frowned, looking a little confused, and Nathan couldn’t blame him. He hadn’t known what the hell that meant either. He raised his menu to cover his face.

The waiter came by and Nathan ordered a chicken sandwich and Barnaby the spaghetti marinara. Both of them ordered iced tea.

Nathan realized as the waiter walked away just how bad he was at small talk. He didn’t have a clue what to say. Clearly I’m socially inept, he thought with self-disgust. He glanced to the table next to theirs. It was occupied by a woman and two children who were chatting away. Great, kids were better at conversation than he was.

“So, your grandmother named you? Your mom agreed to that?”

Barnaby nodded. “My grandmother raised my brother, Calvin, and me.”

Nathan vaguely remembered Barnaby’s brother coming to their firm once a few months ago to visit Barnaby, but he really didn’t remember much about Calvin. He smiled a little. “Calvin? She didn’t name him, too, did she?”

The other man laughed. “Nah. But growing up Calvin hated the name. He used to try to use other shorter names. For a while he was Cal and then Vin. In the end, he just went back to Calvin. I think he figured it was still better than Barnaby.”

ONLY FOR HIM

"He's older, isn't he?"

"Yep, by seven years. He's a doctor. Way smarter than me. We're pretty much opposites."

"Straight?"

"Nah, that's one thing we do have in common."

That did surprise him. "You and your brother are both gay?"

"I know, what are the odds, huh? I don't know, it's just the way we are."

"How come you were raised by your grandmother?" He smiled as the waiter set their dinners in front of them.

"Well...my mom died right after giving birth to me."

"Oh. Wow."

Barnaby shrugged like maybe it was no big deal. "Yeah. I never even knew her. Calvin was seven so he did some, but I don't think he remembers her much."

He let the silence lapse for a moment, but then heard himself ask, "What about your father?"

The other man stiffened and looked away. *Uh-oh*. Apparently curiosity did kill the cat.

"I'm sorry. I don't know when to shut up, obviously."

Barnaby's gaze returned to him, his expression bland and unreadable. "It's all right. I just expected to get a few more dates in before we got around to this."

More dates? Well, that was sort of promising. If *he* wanted more dates himself, of course. Nathan was definitely attracted to the younger man, but they didn't have anything in common other than both working for the firm and even then they didn't have similar jobs. Wasn't it important to be compatible? His parents didn't have anything in common but initial physical attraction, according to his mother, and they ended up in a bitter divorce.

ONLY FOR HIM

Barnaby had stopped eating his spaghetti and folded his hands in front of him. "He's in prison. For killing my mom."

"Shit," Nathan whispered.

Barnaby nodded. "I've never known him either and don't want to. He got life without parole so I doubt I'll ever have to worry about it, because neither of us has any desire to visit him."

"God, I'm sorry."

Now the younger man shook his head. "Don't be. I know it sounds bad, it *is* bad, but I had a great childhood. My grandmother was the best. She never let us down for anything, she went to all our functions, supported us. We couldn't have had a better life than with her raising us."

Nathan smiled and found himself reaching across the booth to cover Barnaby's clasped hands with one of his. "Sounds like she was terrific. Is she still around?"

"Oh, yeah. You would love her."

"I'll bet. Go on, eat. I'm sorry I brought up painful stuff." He went back to eating his own food and was relieved when Barnaby dug into his spaghetti with renewed gusto.

After that they steered the conversation to more mundane things such as movies and current events. Nathan was pretty glad Barnaby didn't ask him about his own family. It wasn't that he had anything near as bad as what happened to Barnaby, but he figured they'd had enough serious topics for the night.

Later, he drove Barnaby back to the firm parking lot where his Volkswagen Beetle had been left. When he pulled up next to it, Barnaby lifted the handle of Nathan's car door.

"I had a nice time. Thanks for dinner."

"You're welcome. Thanks for coming to my rescue when I was sick." He didn't know if he should ask Barnaby out again or give

ONLY FOR HIM

him a kiss or...what. Lord, he was a big time clod. It wasn't as though he'd never dated before. He had, although never with someone like Barnaby. Always with guys just like himself. *Dull.*

"What time are you picking me up tomorrow?"

Barnaby's question cut through the haze of self-loathing descending over him. "What?"

The other man's smile was bright and sunny in the barely lit car. "We're going to the movies tomorrow night." He wriggled forward a bit, stuck his hand into his back pocket and pulled out his wallet. "Got a pen?"

Nathan pointed to the glove compartment and watched as Barnaby extracted the pen and wrote something on a little piece of paper he'd taken from his wallet.

Barnaby returned the pen and then handed him the paper. "That's my address. Pick me up at seven."

Befuddled, he glanced down at the address. He was staring at it when the other man shot forward and plastered his mouth to Nathan's in an all too brief kiss. He tingled all the way to his toes.

"Goodnight." Barnaby bounced out of the car and shut the door.

Nathan waited, as anyone should, for Barnaby to get in and start his car, then he drove out of the parking lot and home to his empty house, looking forward to tomorrow in a way he hadn't in a long time.

CHAPTER 5

“Hold on a second!” Barnaby yelled when the doorbell to his apartment rang for the second time. He recapped his lip gloss and spritzed hairspray over his hair and then hurried from his bedroom to the door.

He’d pretty much been trying to decide what to wear for his date with Nathan all day. He wanted to look good but be comfortable. Finally, Barnaby had settled on his skinny jeans, a green pullover sweater, and ankle boots. Maybe not *GQ*, but he didn’t think he’d be a candidate for *What Not to Wear* either.

Barnaby opened the door with a ready smile. “Hey—what’s wrong?” Nathan frowned and kept looking back over his shoulder.

He pushed Barnaby slightly out of the way and stepped into the apartment. Nathan’s gaze barely flitted across Barnaby, which he

ONLY FOR HIM

had to admit he found annoying. All the time he'd taken with his hair and face and he barely registered?

"Do you know there's a homeless person lying next to the stairs?"

"Oh, sure. He's there a lot."

Nathan stared at him. "And you don't call someone?"

"Like who?"

"The cops."

Barnaby laughed. "Why would I call the cops? He's not doing anything but sleeping."

Nathan folded his arms across his chest. He'd dressed in jeans and a blue button-down shirt. "He could try something anytime. You need to be careful, Barnaby. This is a terrible neighborhood."

Barnaby didn't roll his eyes, but it took a great deal of effort. Well, it was true, it wasn't the greatest neighborhood, but it wasn't populated with crazed killers either. Nathan was sounding just like Calvin.

"It's not that bad," he said defensively.

"It is. Travis doesn't pay you enough to afford something better than this? Hell, I'm going to have to talk to him."

Barnaby exhaled and counted to ten. "He pays me fine. Although now that I think of it, I am due for a raise. The truth is I am planning on getting a new place soon, but I'm saving up for the down payment."

Nathan nodded. "Well, good. How long have you lived here?"

"About five years. When we first moved here, it was better. It's only gotten this bad in the last year."

Nathan frowned again. "We?"

"I had a roommate originally, but he bailed on me."

"A...roommate?"

ONLY FOR HIM

“Yeah, no sex, if that’s what you’re asking. He decided to go back to living with his parents and I’ve been living here by myself since. I got into a little bit of credit card debt, which is why it’s taking me a bit to find a new place. But I will.” He felt a bit like he was explaining himself to his older brother.

“Okay.” Nathan visibly relaxed. “Sorry. I guess I came on a little overbearing there. I was just a little startled when I got here.”

“No problem. But don’t sweat it. I can handle my own stuff, all right?” Barnaby definitely wasn’t some fair maiden who needed a knight to come to the rescue. And he damn well didn’t need another pain in the ass brother.

Nathan reddened a bit, but nodded. “Yeah.”

Barnaby smiled. “You look great. What about me?” He turned around, pausing just a moment to give Nathan an extra look at his ass.

“Fine. You look fine.”

Squelching his disappointment, Barnaby didn’t let his smile fade. “All right, I’m ready.” What was that line? *He’s just not that into you?* Barnaby wondered how long it would take him before he finally just realized that about Nathan and gave up.

* * *

“That movie was so awesome,” Barnaby enthused as they came out of the theater at close to ten.

Nathan smiled. “It was pretty good.”

Barnaby realized the last thing he wanted was for the evening to end. He searched his brain for something they could do at night. Nathan didn’t really seem the bar type, though, he’d suggest that as a last resort. They’d eaten a large container of popcorn so he

ONLY FOR HIM

wasn't sure suggesting going to an all-night diner would be best either.

And then it hit him. *Perfect.*

"Let's go bowling," he said just as they reached Nathan's car.

The other man froze. "Pardon?"

"Cosmic bowling. There's a bowling alley on Ventura Boulevard that has it. Come on, it'll be fun."

"I don't know."

Barnaby couldn't keep the pout from his mouth. "Please?"

Nathan's lips curved into a small smile. "Okay. But I'm not really very good."

"Me either! We can laugh at each other. We'll rent shoes and everything."

"Okay, okay, I can see you're determined." Nathan laughed. "We'll go bowling."

Barnaby could barely stay still on the drive over. He hadn't been bowling in ages. He sucked rocks, but all he cared about was that it meant he could spend more time with Nathan.

When they got to the alley, Barnaby practically ran inside. He knew he should probably calm down, but well...he couldn't.

A short time later, shoes rented and loaner balls obtained, they found a lane to use. It was fairly crowded, but there had been a couple still available. They had also stopped at the snack bar for some pretty bad fries and some nachos.

It had been kind of amusing, really. Barnaby had asked if they used animal-based oil for frying and the gum-snapping teenager working the snack bar stared at him like he'd just asked if the fries were made out of space aliens. He'd finally decided he would just eat the nachos and leave the fries to Nathan.

"So, I thought you weren't very good at bowling," Barnaby

ONLY FOR HIM

said as Nathan prepared to bowl his next set. He'd started the game out with a strike and then picked up a spare on the next set.

"Back in high school they offered bowling as one of the choices for PE." Nathan shrugged. "It seemed slightly more doable for me than basketball. I haven't really bowled much since then, but I guess I still remember some stuff from the class."

"Uh-huh. If we'd made a bet, I would have realized I'd been hustled." He popped a cheese-covered chip in his mouth. "Tell me about your family."

Nathan smiled. "You aren't trying to distract me are you, Lassiter?"

He laughed. "Nah, if I was, I'd be doing so with my delectable body not questions."

The other man turned away to throw the ball. *Right down the middle, damn it.* Barnaby sighed and noted it on the score sheet.

Nathan sat down while Barnaby got up. "As for my family, not too much to tell. My parents divorced when I was a teen. I stayed with my mom. I was their only child, but both of them remarried. Mom doesn't have any other kids, but my dad and his wife had three together and his wife had a son from a previous marriage as well."

"Do you see them much?"

"Well, my mom and her husband retired to Hawaii."

"Lucky them."

Nathan smiled and wrote down Barnaby's score after eating a fry. He'd missed his spare. No doubt about it, Nathan was kicking his ass.

"I've gone there to visit them a few times and they are definitely lucky. My dad and his family live in Irvine so I see them a few times a year. I see them at holidays mostly, though I talk

ONLY FOR HIM

with them on the phone and the computer. As for my stepbrother, Matt, I haven't seen him in some time, but I think my stepmom said he'd been trying to get a job at UCLA Med Center."

"Hey, that's my brother's hospital. Doctor?"

"Nurse."

"So you don't get along with him or what?" Barnaby wondered, stuffing the last few chips in his mouth.

Nathan shrugged. "He's all right. We used to talk more. He's gay, too. Actually that's how my dad met his mom. The two of us came out as teenagers and his mom and my dad went to a support group meeting for parents of gays and lesbians. Anyway, we don't really have much in common other than our sexuality and our parents so we were never close friends."

Barnaby nodded and managed to keep a smile on his face, but the truth was he was really rather concerned. If Nathan wouldn't even be friends with his stepbrother because of differences what chance did he have?

"So, um, had a lot of boyfriends?" Nathan asked.

Barnaby shrugged. "I guess it kind of depends on your definition of boyfriend. If you mean like a long-term relationship, well, there were two. One I had in high school and we broke up not long after that. The other one I met a couple years ago and we broke up last year. How about you?"

"I'll be thirty-five this year so there've been four. None of them really worked out. The most serious was when I was about your age. We were pretty hot and heavy for a while."

Barnaby swallowed. He didn't exactly like hearing about Nathan being hot and heavy with anyone. "What happened?"

"We were really different. Too much so. The last one I think we broke up because we bored each other to death." Nathan

ONLY FOR HIM

laughed a little.

He laughed, too, though he thought it sounded vaguely hysterical. He gazed at the score sheet. “You won, of course. Want another game?”

Nathan smiled and shook his head. “Nah, I’m done.”

After returning their shoes, they made their way back out to the car. Barnaby was once more trying to think of a way to extend the evening. Well, he’d never been accused of being shy.

“You know, I’m a little nervous about returning to my apartment.”

Nathan stopped at the car and raised an eyebrow behind his thick glasses. “Is that so?”

Barnaby grinned. “Yeah, so I was thinking maybe I should go home with you instead.”

Nathan’s lips twitched. “Well, then, let’s get going.”

CHAPTER 6

Now that he had the too-sexy-for-his-own-good Barnaby in his house, Nathan's stomach fluttered nervously. He felt like a damn virgin. While it was true he'd never been attracted to anyone as much as he was to Barnaby, that didn't mean he had to resort to gawky teenager behavior.

Nathan tossed his coat on the back of the couch. "Can I make some coffee?"

Barnaby had reapplied his violet lip gloss in the car and now the shine on his pouty lips really turned him on. Hell, he was pathetic. He had ten years on Barnaby and was Buddy Holly to Barnaby's Elvis. Or not even. More like Buddy to George Michael or—

"Nathan?" Barnaby waved his hand in front of him.

ONLY FOR HIM

He cleared his throat. "Sorry?"

"I said no coffee, but maybe a beer? I saw you had some in your fridge the other day." Barnaby flashed him a beautiful smile.

He nodded and headed into the kitchen with Barnaby close on his heels. So close he could smell his cinnamon clove smell again. He loved that scent. Was it from the shampoo or shower gel Barnaby used? He reached into fridge for two long-necked Coronas, opened them and handed one to Barnaby.

As Barnaby took a long swallow, Nathan watched it slide down his throat. For some reason the movement of Barnaby's throat and those violet glossed lips wrapped around the bottle made him think of—

"Nathan?"

He blinked and looked into Barnaby's eyes. *Oh, fuck.* "Damn."

"Excuse me?"

"I...uh...forgot to DVR a program I wanted to see," Nathan blurted lamely.

Barnaby gave him a quizzical look and then took another swallow of beer. He set it on the granite counter and then gifted Nathan with a devastating smile. "Why don't you show me your bedroom?"

He frowned. "You saw it the other day—oh."

"You're cute when you're flustered," Barnaby said, taking a step forward until they were an inch or two apart.

He could feel warmth radiating from the other man.

"Am not."

Barnaby's lips moved even closer, his breath caressing Nathan's mouth. Nathan's cock filled and rose to press against his briefs. He puckered to touch Barnaby's pouty lips with his when Barnaby moved away with a mischievous twinkle in his eyes and

ONLY FOR HIM

dashed out of the kitchen.

Nathan shook his head and followed. Barnaby was already slipping through the door of his bedroom. He hoped to God he had condoms and lube. If he didn't...well, they'd be taking a brief break to go to the all-night drug store down the street.

Even as he approached his room, doubts crept in. He wanted to fuck Barnaby like crazy, but he wasn't really a one-night stand kind of guy and he knew any kind of relationship with Barnaby would go exactly nowhere. The younger man was too young, too impetuous, too damn gorgeous, and just...too much.

"I'm going to start without you," Barnaby called.

Swallowing a moan, he entered his room. True to his word, Barnaby had already pulled the bedspread off Nathan's bed to reveal the pristine white sheets, and taken off his pullover sweater. His jaw dropped, his gaze fixated on Barnaby's sculpted, perfect abs.

"You work out?"

Barnaby smiled. "Sure. Dude, with a brother for a doctor? His gift for my birthday last year was a gym membership."

Nathan just nodded. He watched as Barnaby's fingers worked the button fly of his jeans. He thought maybe Barnaby should have been a stripper because those long fingers slipping across those buttons was sexy as fucking hell.

The jeans inched down Barnaby's hips in such slow motion he began to wonder if he had started drooling yet. Nathan blindly unfastened his own pants. In the back of his brain he still tried to tell his cock this was a bad idea. Barnaby was an employee of the firm and totally wrong for him and—

Barnaby's jeans shimmied down to his knees. He'd gone commando.

ONLY FOR HIM

“Fuck,” Nathan whispered as the other man’s cock pointed up.

The younger man winked and then turned his back on Nathan as he removed his shoes and the last of his clothing, giving him a great view of Barnaby’s tight, round ass.

Nathan tripped trying to toe off his own shoes.

Barnaby turned his head to look. “You okay?”

“Um, yeah.” He felt his face burn. He got his shoes off and then his pants. He now stood in his underwear and shirt feeling shy and embarrassed. He wasn’t hot like Barnaby.

Barnaby faced him again. “Should I help?”

Nathan watched as Barnaby stepped up to him. Those delectable fingers stroked his throat as they curved around the collar of his shirt and undid the first button. A simple brush of fingertips on his neck had never felt so erotic. He shivered.

“Are you cold?” Barnaby whispered against his lips, pressing them lightly across his mouth.

“No, I want you.”

He felt Barnaby’s full, plump lips curve just before his tongue entered Nathan’s mouth, searching and finding his. He groaned and lifted his hand to grasp the back of Barnaby’s head, crushing their mouths together hard.

Barnaby’s fingers sped up on his shirt, tearing at the buttons even as he whimpered low in his throat. Without breaking the contact of their mouths, Barnaby tugged Nathan’s shirt sleeves off his arms and tossed the shirt to the floor. His hand slipped into Nathan’s briefs and closed over his aching erection.

Nathan pushed against Barnaby’s hand, his eyes closing, a moan torn from his throat as those long fingers shoved down the briefs, freeing his cock and stroking his length.

“Oh, my God, Barnaby.”

ONLY FOR HIM

The other man ran his tongue across Nathan's bottom lip, and then nibbled. "Hmm, like that, huh?"

"Like it?" He laughed. "You're going to give me a heart attack."

"Hope not. I'm not done with you yet."

Barnaby released his grip on Nathan's cock and he moaned in protest. Until he realized Barnaby was going down on his knees in front of him. Nathan inhaled sharply.

Barnaby's dark pink tasty tongue darted out and scooped up the drop of pre-cum from the slit of his cock. Then the gorgeous tongue darted across the spongy head, sending powerful fingers of intense lust from the base of his cock all the way up his spine and to the roots of his hair.

"Yum." Barnaby grinned up at him and then those pretty, kissable lips parted and closed over the head. Though his eyes wanted to close, he forced them open. He wouldn't miss the sight of Barnaby's mouth wrapped around his dick for anything. It was like watching a debauched angel suck him.

The angel's hand came up to cup his sac, squeezing gently, and his knees almost gave out. He heard heavy panting and realized it was him. Nathan was pretty sure he would happily fuck that delectable mouth all night given the chance and the ability, but he also had a perfect view of Barnaby's round ass, which wiggled a little as he swallowed down more of Nathan's cock. This might be his one and only chance of getting into that ass.

With an extreme amount of reluctance, Nathan gave a tiny push to Barnaby's head. Barnaby paid no attention and kept on moving Nathan's shaft in and out of his mouth. Now his eyes did drift closed. Damn, Barnaby knew how to suck cock.

Those long fingers moved from his balls to knead his cheeks.

ONLY FOR HIM

Nathan knew then if he didn't stop Barnaby he was going to blow. He opened his eyes and pushed a little firmer. When Barnaby still ignored him, he tugged on a silky spiked chunk of hair.

Barnaby released his cock with a pop and a frown. "Hey."

"Hey yourself. You...on the bed."

Barnaby's eyes lit up with excitement and he hopped up from the floor. Before he could take the few steps to the bed, Nathan grabbed his wrist and pulled him back, turning him roughly toward him so that their chests pressed together. Barnaby's eyes widened just before Nathan crushed their lips together.

The rough, assertive behavior was totally not him, but he found he liked it and he definitely liked the little whimper coming from Barnaby. He broke the kiss and then practically shoved Barnaby at the bed.

Nathan opened his mouth to apologize for the Neanderthal behavior, but the words froze in his mouth as Barnaby lay on the bed on his stomach, two perfect cream globes of flesh teasing him. He almost swallowed his tongue. Instead, he stumbled over to the nightstand he hoped contained a supply of lube and condoms.

He couldn't decide if he had the patience to prep that ass himself or if he wanted to watch Barnaby prepare himself. Whatever, he tossed the lube and watched it land on the left cheek.

"Why don't you let me put that on you?" Barnaby asked, looking over his shoulder at Nathan.

"Nope." Nathan tore open the wrapper with his teeth and rolled the condom on his cock.

Barnaby sighed and sunk his teeth into his plump lip. "Maybe next time."

His heart stuttered for a moment, thinking there'd be no next time, probably. He went to remove his glasses, but Barnaby shook

ONLY FOR HIM

his head. "Leave them on, they're sexy."

Nathan laughed. "You're mental, but okay."

Barnaby lifted his ass a little in a blatant invitation.

Nathan knelt on the bed and, ignoring the lube for a moment, trailed his tongue along the crease of Barnaby's ass. The younger man gasped and Nathan wasn't sure who was more surprised, Barnaby or himself.

Shrugging a little at his own unusually bold behavior, Nathan brushed the tube of lube to Barnaby's side. Nathan's fingers parted the cheeks and he ran his tongue along the line once more. This was something he hadn't done with any other sex partner before. Even with his few more serious relationships. His tongue hesitated over the opening to Barnaby's ass and then he decided he wasn't quite ready for that intimacy.

Nathan straightened and reached for the lube, his gaze fixated on that perfect pink hole. He sloshed out a generous amount of lube and pushed a finger inside.

"Oh, geez," Barnaby breathed and pushed back. He spread his legs wider, giving Nathan even better access.

Adding more fingers and more lube, he prepared Barnaby for his cock, which was about to fall off now from needing to come. He leaned down to speak in Barnaby's ear.

"Think you're ready?" The tip of his cock rested between Barnaby's cheeks.

"Yes, fuck me."

Those words in Barnaby's sweet, raspy voice made him slightly insane. His fingers dug into Barnaby's slim, pale hips as he drove inside. He drew in a breath, trying not to thrust too hard, too soon.

"Please," Barnaby begged.

ONLY FOR HIM

Nathan couldn't resist that plea and he thrust in again and again, pumping Barnaby's sweet ass hard and fast. Barnaby pushed back against him, riding him rough, digging his fingers in the sheets.

If anyone had told Nathan he'd be fucking Barnaby Lassiter into the mattress even yesterday he would have laughed in their face. But now here he was, his balls slapping, ramming the sweetest ass he'd ever taken.

"Oh God, oh God, oh God," Barnaby moaned, his hand underneath him working his own cock with frantic strokes.

With one hand still holding Barnaby's hip, Nathan threaded his finger through the other man's soft tresses and yanked. Barnaby whimpered and pushed back harder against him.

"Like that?"

"Yes, please."

He tugged a chunk of hair again and Barnaby practically came unglued. He thrust back against Nathan, rough and frantic. Nathan's orgasm slammed through him, pulling a hoarse cry from his throat. Just a few heartbeats later, Barnaby came, too.

After withdrawing and discarding the condom and setting his glasses on the nightstand, Nathan wrapped his arms around Barnaby's middle for a moment so that they were spooned together, not wanting to end the connection just yet. His chest heaved with the effort to breathe and the intensity of the sex scared him a little, but still he could not force himself to move away.

By the time Nathan figured he'd caught his breath enough to move and speak, he noticed a change in Barnaby's body. He'd gone all warm and limp. The faintest snore he'd ever heard came from those perfect bow lips. Closing his eyes, he smiled. Sleep definitely sounded good.

ONLY FOR HIM

CHAPTER 7

Barnaby woke to bright light shining in his eyes. Damn, when did he get a window in his bedroom? He blinked and tried to turn over. The heavy weight of an arm around his waist stopped him.

Oh.

Now that it was morning and he wasn't hot to have sex with Nathan...well he was, but it wasn't as urgent, he was able to take in his surroundings. When he'd been there for Nathan's illness he hadn't paid that much attention to the room, but now he noticed he had French doors leading out onto a deck. *Nice.*

He sighed contentedly. The night had been amazing. Better than he ever imagined. Nathan was so *hot* in bed. Barnaby smiled, looking forward to doing it again.

Right now though, he really had to pee. He struggled out from

ONLY FOR HIM

under Nathan's arm. He stared down at the sleeping man. Nathan had such an innocent look while he slept. A lock of his dark hair rested on his forehead and there was a faint blush to his cheeks. He nearly leaned forward to kiss the tip of Nathan's nose, but decided he didn't want to take the chance of waking him if he needed his sleep.

Barnaby walked past the bed as quietly as possible and over to the bathroom. After doing his business, he washed his hands and then frowned at the image looking back at him from the medicine cabinet mirror. Eyeliner was smudged all over his eyes.

With a quick glance around the bathroom, he didn't notice any wash cloths, so he bent over and looked under the sink. He found a chocolate brown one with a matching hand towel and, using the soap on the bathroom sink, he scrubbed his face clean.

By the time he exited the bathroom, the bed was empty, as was the bedroom. Barnaby noticed the clothes he wore the night before had been placed on the made bed. He didn't like wearing dirty clothes but since he was at Nathan's he had little choice, so he dressed and went in search of Nathan.

He could hear noises from the kitchen, so Barnaby headed there. Nathan's back was to him, pouring coffee from a coffeepot. "Good morning."

Nathan's back stiffened, but he didn't turn around. "Morning."

Barnaby tried to ignore the uneasy fluttering in his stomach. "That coffee smells wonderful."

Nathan finally turned around. He looked gorgeous with his hair tousled and his glasses not quite straight, but his expression was grim. "Help yourself."

He bit his lip, but didn't move to pour himself coffee. Dread sat in his stomach like a ball of steel. Barnaby swallowed, not

ONLY FOR HIM

knowing what to say to this cold Nathan. He hugged himself.

Nathan leaned against the kitchen counter and sipped his coffee, studying Barnaby silently. After a moment, he straightened. "Barnaby, last night was a mistake."

Oh God. One, two, three, four, five. Take a breath.

He nodded and opened his mouth, but a squeak came out instead of words. He vaguely heard Nathan speaking words like *one-night stand* and *never happen again*. Tugging at the collar of his sweater, which now seemed to be suffocating him, Barnaby backed up. He held up his hands to stop whatever Nathan was saying.

"It's fine. I'm just going to get out of here." He turned and walked out of the kitchen and headed for the front door. His hand closed over the knob when he remembered he'd come with Nathan and didn't have his damn car. He fished his cell phone out of the front pocket of his jeans.

"What are you doing?" Nathan asked, approaching him.

"Calling a cab or something."

"No." Nathan shook his head and took Barnaby's phone out of his hands. He took a deep breath. "I'm-I'm an idiot."

"Forget it. You're just not that into me. I get it. Can I have my phone back?" He was on the verge of seriously losing it and he didn't want to do that in front of Nathan. His cool rejection was killing him, but there was no way Barnaby intended to let Nathan know that.

Nathan slipped Barnaby's phone into the pocket of his own pants. "Barnaby, I'm sorry. I just realized what an absolute ass I am. When I first work up, I freaked out a bit. I mean, you work for the firm and you're Travis's assistant and we're so different and I had a bit of panic attack."

ONLY FOR HIM

Barnaby nodded, but he didn't really want to hear why he was a mistake to Nathan. Since he was a kid, he'd had the ability to tune out stuff he didn't want to hear, and now was the perfect time to use that skill.

"All right, if you don't want me to call a cab, you're going to have to drive me home. It's too far to walk."

Nathan's eyes widened behind his thick glasses. "No, please. I want you to stay."

"Why?"

"I'm trying to explain. I'm sorry about what I said to you in the kitchen about not wanting it to happen again and you being a mistake. I'd say it's because I'm not a morning person but that's a lame excuse." Nathan inhaled and reached for his hands, grasping them in a tight grip. "Please stay. I want you to spend the day with me."

The ball of dread sitting in his stomach went away, but he was still wary. "And then?"

Nathan frowned. "Then?"

"Tomorrow is Monday. Are you going to pretend I don't exist? Or are we going to keep seeing each other?"

Nathan shook his head.

Barnaby tugged on his hands still being held by Nathan. "Then I—"

He tugged him close and encircled Barnaby's waist. "No. I won't pretend you don't exist. I could never do that."

Barnaby shivered. "Okay. Kiss me."

Nathan's thumb brushed over his bottom lip, forcing his lips open just before Nathan's mouth crushed over his. A hot, coffee tasting tongue thrust inside.

Ah, man.

ONLY FOR HIM

Nathan's fisted his sweater, pulling him in closer. Barnaby's cock came to attention. He could hardly believe just a few moments ago he was close to leaving with a broken heart.

Finally coming up for air, Barnaby sighed. "Wow."

Nathan laughed. "Yeah. Are you hungry?"

A little startled at the change of subject, Barnaby blinked, but then realized he was. "I am. You going to make me breakfast?"

Nathan tugged him into the kitchen. "I have a can of cinnamon rolls in the fridge. Will that work?"

He laughed. "Yum. Works for me."

Nathan nodded. "Be right back."

"What—" But Nathan had already dashed out of the kitchen. Shrugging, he opened the fridge and found the cinnamon rolls. He found a cookie sheet in one of the cabinets and then stuck them in the oven.

Nathan came back and smiled. "I see you got things started."

"Where'd you run off to?"

"Come here."

Barnaby tilted his head questioningly but went to Nathan. "What?"

Nathan slid his hands under Barnaby's sweater, spreading over his naked skin. "We have some time."

His breath caught. "What do you have in mind?"

He was led out of the kitchen and into the living room. Nathan eyed the couch and he thought perhaps he intended to fuck him there. He went to move around to lie down, but Nathan stopped him.

Nathan had him stand behind the couch and brace his hands on the back of the couch. "Bend over," he said in an authoritative voice.

ONLY FOR HIM

Excitement and anticipation making him shake, Barnaby did as Nathan said.

Nathan stood behind and reached around to undo his jeans. Barnaby went to help and Nathan slapped his hands away. "Let me."

Nathan pushed his to his knees and then squeezed Barnaby's cheek. He closed his eyes when he heard the slosh of lube squeezing out and then a slicked finger entered him.

"God."

"You are so damn hot," Nathan breathed and then rubbed his now sheathed cock along Barnaby's crease.

He bit his lip. "Fuck me. Nathan, please."

"Damn, I love it when you beg," Nathan growled just before he entered him. His hand closed around Barnaby's erection and he began to stroke him.

Each thrust hit his prostate, sending him near the edge. It was a quick, hard fuck and Barnaby didn't mind a bit. He planned on Nathan taking his time later. He was so close to coming himself as Nathan's hand jerked him fast, Barnaby pushed back, clenching his muscle over the other's man's cock.

Nathan tensed and rammed him so hard he nearly stumbled over the couch. Barnaby's cock released gobs of creamy fluid and he fleetingly hoped it wasn't getting all over the backside of Nathan's couch.

He straightened as Nathan pulled out of him, panting heavily. Barnaby dropped to his knees and glanced at the couch. He winced at the wet spot. "Um, sorry."

"Hmm?" Nathan had pulled off the condom and was refastening his pants.

Barnaby flicked his head in the direction of the spot. "Got any

ONLY FOR HIM

cleaner?”

Nathan laughed and reached down to pull Barnaby up. “Somewhere. I’ll get it later.”

He encircled Nathan’s neck with his arms. “Now that’s a better good morning.”

“Yeah, I am sorry about earlier. I can be a prick sometimes. I will say it pays off in court.”

“I know.” He sighed. “You’re always so cold to me at work I figured you didn’t like me at all.”

Nathan raised both eyebrows. “Cold to you? Barnaby, believe me, I was not trying to be cold.”

He bit his lip. “No? Then why didn’t you ever even look at me? Every time we were in the same room you’d look anywhere but at me.”

Nathan smiled. “I was always looking at you. I just didn’t want you to realize it. Or anyone for that matter.”

“How come?”

“It’s hard to explain, but you’re young and hot and definitely not my type. Even though I do pretty well in court cases, I’m fairly shy for the most part. And geeky besides. I figured if anyone noticed I was gawking at you they’d realize just how pathetic I am drooling over someone so out of my league.”

That definitely earned Nathan a big kiss. “You aren’t out of my league and you aren’t geeky either.”

Nathan deepened the kiss and Barnaby started crawling up his body. He pulled away when the smell of baked cinnamon rolls drifted out to the living room. His stomach growled and he broke the kiss.

“Smells like breakfast.”

“Yeah, I guess we’d better get them before they burn. What do

ONLY FOR HIM

you want to do for the rest of the day?” Nathan asked as he went into the kitchen, followed closely by Barnaby.

“I want to spend it in bed with you.”

Nathan grabbed a potholder and took out the cookie sheet of rolls. “Won’t that be boring?”

He laughed. “Seriously?”

The other man turned a slight shade of pink. “Well, maybe it wouldn’t be that boring.”

Barnaby winked. “I can guarantee it won’t be.”

CHAPTER 8

Just before lunch Monday morning, Barnaby poked his head around the cubicle of the firm's financial manager, Darrell Lincoln. The handsome, African American man had his reading glasses perched on the end of his nose as he studied the computer intently.

"Hey, D."

Darrell glanced his way. "What is it?"

"I was wondering if you want to go to lunch with me."

Darrell removed his glasses and leaned back in the chair. "Okay. Where?"

"I don't care, you pick. No places that only have meat, though. I'll pay." Barnaby smiled.

"You?"

ONLY FOR HIM

“You look skeptical. Actually, Travis is paying. I have his corporate credit card.” He laughed.

His friend rolled his eyes. “I have to pay those bills when they come in, you know.”

“Sure, and you’ll already know about the charge, so you won’t be surprised. Come on, Travis is at court, so he won’t miss either of us.”

Darrell stood. “All right. But I’m driving. I still have gray hairs from the last time you drove us to lunch.”

* * *

Darrell ended up driving them to a salad buffet restaurant a couple miles from the office. After they’d filled their plates, Barnaby chose a booth in the back corner of the restaurant.

“So, what’s the real reason for the lunch?” Darrell asked after they’d settled in to eating.

“Can’t friends just have lunch without an ulterior motive?”

“Yes. But, I get the feeling this time is more than that.” Darrell dug into his clam chowder. “Are you having trouble at work?”

Barnaby had just taken too large a bite of his salad, so he paused to chew it up before answering. His grandmother would kill him if he talked with his mouth full of food.

“Because, I have to say talking to me about any trouble you have working for Travis puts me in an awkward situation.”

He nodded and chewed.

“I understand the need to vent, but—”

He swallowed. “I’m not, dude. This isn’t about work. Travis is an awesome boss.”

Darrell looked relieved. “Okay, good.”

ONLY FOR HIM

Barnaby laughed. “D, I’d never complain to you about your boyfriend even if I did have a problem with him. I’m not a moron.”

“I know, but, well, we’re friends and friends talk about crappy bosses and boyfriends.” Darrell shrugged.

“Actually, that’s sort of what I do want to talk about. The last part I mean. Not that I have a boyfriend...um, not yet anyway.”

“*You’re* coming to me for man trouble?”

He smiled at the other man’s incredulous look. “It’s not trouble exactly. And, geez, why wouldn’t I ask you? You have a hot boyfriend, which is more than I can say.”

“Well, okay. So what’s up?”

He clasped his hands together and stared at them for a moment. Finally, he looked at Darrell. “I know about guys, but not so much about, you know, *relationships*. Like *adult* ones. The thing of it is, I really like this guy. I mean *really* like him. I’m not sure he feels the same.”

“And he’s not a boyfriend?”

“No, not yet, anyway. We have had sex though. A few times.”

Darrell grimaced. “Like sex in the parking lot of the bar?”

“*No*. Geez, D, it’s not like that. We’ve even had a couple of dates.”

“What kinds of dates?”

Barnaby poked at his salad with his fork. “The first time we went to dinner. And the next date we went to the movies and then to cosmic bowling.”

“That the bowling at night thing?”

“Yes. And that night, Saturday night, we went to his house and had sex.”

“All right,” Darrell said. “That sounds promising. So, what’s the problem?”

ONLY FOR HIM

He sighed and set his fork down, pushing his plate away. “Basically I’ve been the pursuer. Which is okay I guess, it’s not like I’m shy, but you know, in the past, guys have come to me. The first dinner we went to wasn’t even really a date. He was thanking me for taking care of him when he didn’t feel well, and even then he didn’t really want to go. And when it was over, I kissed him. He didn’t really have an intention of kissing me.”

“I see.”

“He wasn’t even going to ask me out again I think. I asked him to go to the movies, then bowling.”

“What about going to his house?”

He sighed and rested his chin in his hands. “I invited myself over.”

Darrell winced but said nothing.

Barnaby was beginning to get more and more depressed. “And here’s the thing. We had sex and all and he seemed really into it, but the next morning he started talking about how it was a mistake and all it could ever be was a one-night stand.”

“Ouch.”

“But wait, then when I was trying to leave, he stopped me and said he was an idiot and we ended up having sex again.” He bit his lip. “And again. And—”

“I get it,” Darrell interrupted quickly. “And this was yesterday?”

“Uh-huh.”

“How did it end?”

“He drove me home.”

“No plans for another date or to see each other again?” Darrell asked.

He shook his head. “Just see you tomorrow.”

ONLY FOR HIM

Darrell frowned. "See you tomorrow? Well, that sounds like you did have a date."

Barnaby rolled his eyes. "No. He meant at work."

"What? Wait. Who is this guy?"

"Nathan Llewellyn, like I told you."

Darrell threw his napkin down. "You did not tell me."

He glared. "Well, you had to know it was him. Sheesh, I've been lusting after him for months."

"Barnaby, you lust after everyone. How am I supposed to know which guy of the many you've lusted after it was."

"You know now," he pointed out.

"Oh, my God." Darrell shook his head and took a bite out of an oatmeal cookie. "I can't believe you spent the weekend sexing up Nathan."

"I wasn't sexing him up. Well, I was, but there was more to it than that. You of all people should be giving me sympathy."

"Me?" Darrell's mouth dropped open.

"Duh, have you forgotten you're sleeping with our boss?"

Darrell squirmed. "It's not like I planned on it."

Barnaby couldn't really say he hadn't planned on being with Nathan, because, really, he'd thought of little else since he started working there, and he figured if Darrell was being honest he would admit the same about Travis. But none of that mattered.

"This isn't about you, anyway," Barnaby said. "This is about me and Nathan."

"Right, and from the sound of it, there is no you and Nathan."

That hurt. He ducked his head.

"I'm sorry, Barnaby. I'm not trying to be cruel. It's just from what you've said, it sounds like he's not interested in anything long-term with you."

ONLY FOR HIM

“Yeah, I guess you’re right. And why would he be anyway?”

“Hey.” Darrell touched his hand. “What do you mean?”

“He’s said several times I’m not his type. Remember that day I came in looking all different? More like you.”

“Sure.”

“I was trying to get Nathan’s attention.”

“Oh, I wondered.”

He shook his head. “But it didn’t work. He didn’t like nerdy Barnaby any better.”

“I know it sucks when someone you are interested in doesn’t feel the same way, but put this into perspective. There are a lot of gay men out there panting over you. Lots of us envy you.”

Barnaby nodded, but he didn’t care about any of those men. He only cared about Nathan.

* * *

It was after five Wednesday night when he stood outside Nathan’s office door. For the last two days, Barnaby had not pressed him. He’d seen him across the office or in the hallway and exchanged polite pleasantries that nearly killed him. Not once had he seen him privately or called him. He had hoped Nathan would make the next move. If there was a next move.

Now, as Barnaby stood outside the closed door, his heart was heavy. He guessed Nathan was sending a message loud and clear that he just needed to get.

It would be incredibly pathetic if he were to knock on the door and demand another date from Nathan. Barnaby didn’t do pathetic. Okay, well, he did. But not this time. He shoved his hands in his pockets so he wouldn’t be tempted and made to walk away.

ONLY FOR HIM

The door opened, startling a yelp out of him.

Nathan's dark eyes blinked behind his big glasses. "Barnaby, you're still here."

What had he expected? "*Wow, am I glad to see you?*"

"I was just leaving. Goodnight."

"Goodnight."

Honestly, he prayed that maybe Nathan would prevent him from walking away, but he didn't. He walked down the hall and out the office front doors and didn't look back.

Swallowing heartbreak and disappointment, he decided to hell with Nathan. He would go out tonight and have a good time and forget the asshole had ever existed.

He stuck the key in his car's lock and a hand closed over his wrist. He jumped.

"Shhh, it's me," Nathan soothed, not letting go of his wrist.

"You scared the crap out of me." His heart beat hard in his chest.

"I'm sorry. I thought you heard me."

"Well, I didn't." He tugged his wrist but Nathan didn't let go.

Nathan looked around the mostly deserted parking lot and then pulled him even closer. "I've missed you."

"You...are you kidding me?"

The other man frowned. "What?"

"You've missed me? I've been right here under your nose."

Nathan's frown melted into a smile. "Believe me, I've noticed. You're very distracting."

Barnaby blinked when Nathan brushed his thumb across his bottom lip.

"This lip drives me crazy," Nathan murmured, leaning forward to nip it. "I'm sorry I've been busy the last couple days. The

ONLY FOR HIM

Sorenson trial got continued, but the plaintiffs are really getting ugly. Come home with me.”

His pulse raced. “Really?”

“Mmm.” Nathan’s hand cupped his ass. “I want this.”

“Uh,” he stammered, feeling himself heat in a blush, for crying out loud.

Nathan laughed. “I think I’ve shocked you.”

“A little.”

The man’s tongue darted across Barnaby’s lips, slipping in just briefly. “Come on. I’ll make us dinner. You can spend the night.”

“I don’t have any clothes for work tomorrow.” He shivered when Nathan sucked his earlobe.

“We’ll stop by your place on the way so you can get some.” Nathan tugged Barnaby away from his car and toward his own. When they reached Nathan’s sedan, he looked questioningly at Barnaby, his expression vaguely vulnerable for the first time since approaching him in the parking lot. “You do want to, don’t you?”

The heaviness in his chest gone, Barnaby nodded. “Oh, yeah.”

“Good, let’s go.”

CHAPTER 9

“So, I have to tell you, I was thinking you were done with me,” Barnaby said, standing at the blender in Nathan’s kitchen. He tossed crushed ice in with the rum and strawberry daiquiri mix he’d thrown in previously.

Nathan frowned. “Done with you? Why would you think that?” He opened the fridge and took out the ground meat. Damn, he’d nearly forgotten Barnaby didn’t eat meat. He put it back in and closed the fridge.

The younger man shrugged. “Um, you hadn’t talked to me since Sunday.”

“I told you I was busy with a case.”

“Yeah, I know now.” He pressed a button on the blender and its loud noise prevented any conversation. When it finished, he

ONLY FOR HIM

poured the drink into two glasses. "But until you told me tonight, well, I thought maybe you didn't have a good time when we were together."

Nathan linked his hand with Barnaby's. "I'm sorry. I didn't know I was giving you that impression. I guess I'm just not used to seeing someone at work. You know?"

Barnaby smiled. "I'm not either. It's okay if you're busy, but you could have called me after work or something. Even just to talk."

"I'm not one just to talk," Nathan admitted. "I'll try to do better."

"Okay." He thrust a strawberry daiquiri into Nathan's hand. "What are you making?"

"Good question. I had thought about chili but then I remembered you don't eat meat."

"You can make chili without the meat, right?" He gestured to the canned tomatoes and beans he'd set on the counter.

"Yeah, I guess I can." He nodded. "Cool, that works."

Barnaby threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. "I'm glad you invited me over."

He groaned and returned the kiss, deepening it and sucking on Barnaby's lip. "If we keep this up, dinner will be really late."

"Is that so bad?" Barnaby leaned into him, rubbing his erection against Nathan's.

Nathan set his drink down and grabbed Barnaby's ass, pressing their bodies closer together still. "At the moment, it doesn't seem to matter about dinner at all."

"Oh, God, Nathan, fuck me," Barnaby gasped against his throat.

The makings of their dinner discarded, at least temporarily, he

ONLY FOR HIM

grabbed Barnaby's hand and pulled him down the hall toward his bedroom.

He shoved Barnaby toward the bed, maybe a little too roughly, though Barnaby didn't protest, and with Barnaby facedown on the mattress, Nathan tried to tug down his skinny black jeans. It wasn't working and he gave a snort of frustration.

"My belt's in the way," Barnaby said with a laugh. He shimmied onto his knees and unfastened his belt. Fortunately, when they'd first gotten to Nathan's house, Barnaby had removed his shoes, so that was one piece of clothing already out of his way.

* * *

As soon as Barnaby's belt was undone and his jeans unzipped, Nathan once more yanked them, this time successfully, and he threw them across the room. His cock jumped against his pants at the sight of the naked round ass just begging to be fucked.

Barnaby wore only his socks and his faded olive T-shirt. Nathan thought about ripping off the shirt, tearing it in two, but decided not to spend the time. He undressed quickly and grabbed a condom and lube out of the bedside table drawer.

He'd never been this hungry for anyone before. It was a little startling and he wasn't quite sure what to think of it. But who the hell wanted to think right now anyway. This time he set his glasses on the table and crawled onto the bed.

Nathan lay across Barnaby, placing several kisses on the back of his neck. Barnaby shivered. Nathan wanted those lips. He flipped Barnaby over onto his back and stared into his gorgeous eyes.

"Hi." Barnaby's lips curved into the sexiest damn smile.

ONLY FOR HIM

“Hi, yourself.” He lowered his mouth to Barnaby’s, one hand slipping between their bodies to wrap around his lover’s long, thick cock. Barnaby moaned and closed his eyes.

Nathan finally broke the kiss, reluctantly, sucking in that full bottom lip one more time, before sitting up to reach for the condom wrapper.

Barnaby snatched it out of his fingers and tore it open. “Me.”

He nodded, his jaw tightening as Barnaby teased the tip of his cock with this thumb. He gritted his teeth when Barnaby rolled the condom on. Nathan was panting by the time he was done. He reached for the lube.

The younger man looped his arms under his legs, hoisting his ass up for Nathan to lube him. Nathan squeezed the tube and used his fingers to slick up his lover’s entrance.

“Ready?”

Barnaby nodded, his gaze locking with Nathan’s. The lust and adoration he saw made him quake with need. He lined his cock up to Barnaby’s hole and pushed in.

“Nathan,” Barnaby groaned, wrapping his legs around Nathan’s hips, settling in for the ride.

He drove in, balls-deep, letting Barnaby adjust to the invasion. Then with a nod from Barnaby, he moved, withdrawing and pushing back again and again. He lifted Barnaby’s legs, thrusting deeper and harder still.

Barnaby worked his hand over his own cock, frantically stroking the length. His eyes glazed over and his cock jerked, globs of nearly clear cum shooting out. It sent Nathan over the edge and he pumped his lover’s ass through his own release.

They collapsed on the bed, reaching out to touch each other.

Barnaby yawned. “Now I’m *really* hungry.”

ONLY FOR HIM

He laughed. "Yeah, okay. I admit, my stomach's growling a bit. Let me get a quick shower and then I'll make the chili while you shower."

Smiling, Barnaby's eyes closed and snuggled into the bed.

* * *

"Well, it's all melted, but it still tastes good," Barnaby announced taking a sip of his daiquiri.

"Sorry." Nathan grinned. "Somebody distracted me."

"I'm not sorry." Barnaby peered over his shoulder at the pot of chili simmering on the stove. "That smells so good."

"It does. I'm not sure if it's because I make a mean chili or if we're both just starving."

Barnaby walked over to the island in his kitchen and jumped up to sit on it. Nathan opened his mouth to tell him not to sit there, but decided what the hell.

"You have a great house."

"Thanks, I think so. It took me forever to pick a house I liked that had a good-sized backyard."

"Hmm? Why'd you want a backyard?"

"Growing up, my mom had a garden. I don't know, I always liked it."

Barnaby bounced a little on the island. "You have a garden?"

Nathan laughed. "No. I plan to someday though. I hated the idea of buying a house without a yard for when I have time to make one. I'm so busy all the time now I never have a chance."

"You work too hard."

He shrugged. "Sometimes. But I take time off, too. Stop kicking."

ONLY FOR HIM

Barnaby blushed and stopped moving his legs. "Sorry."

Nathan stirred the chili and then tasted. "Just a few more minutes."

Barnaby's teeth sank into his full lip and even though he'd just had sex with him, Nathan couldn't help wanting him all over again. His cock was already half-hard. First, they needed to get through dinner.

"I've been thinking," Barnaby said slowly.

He moved to stand between Barnaby's legs and placed his hands on them to keep them still as he'd once more started the kicking. "Should I be worried?"

Barnaby gave him an irritated look. "No. Well, maybe. I mean, what are you now?"

"What am I?"

"Do I call you my boyfriend or still just the guy I'm seeing?"

He frowned. "Is there a difference?"

"Uh, yeah."

He smiled and leaned close to kiss Barnaby. "I like this."

"This?"

"You and me together like this. And the sex is fantastic."

"Yeah?"

He nipped Barnaby's lip. "Oh yeah. I don't know what to tell you about terms or whatever, but I know I want to keep seeing you and spending time with you and having sex with you. Is that a good enough answer?"

Barnaby kissed him with a sweet, all too brief brush of their lips. "Yes, that's a good enough answer. For now."

Nathan pulled him off the island. "Come on, time for dinner. And then, after that, back to bed."

ONLY FOR HIM

CHAPTER 10

Nathan pulled the sedan into one of the last spaces available in the club parking lot.

“There’s Darrell and Travis. They’re here before us,” Barnaby pointed to where their friends stood a few spaces away.

Nathan did not want to be here. He didn’t like clubs. Never had. He’d been before with others he was dating and he didn’t like it. Every guy he’d ever been with to a club ended up paying more attention to the meat that was there than to him.

They got out and Nathan locked the doors with a push of a button and trailed after his lover who was bouncing his way toward the others.

He’d had a pretty bad week. The Sorenson case had soured quite a bit and he was fairly sure he was going to lose it. He’d been

ONLY FOR HIM

buried in legal briefs. At least his relationship with Barnaby was going great. They'd been together, if you counted their first dinner, for almost four weeks now. Even he had started to think of Barnaby as his boyfriend. It had been a long time since he'd had one, and never any as hot as Barnaby, and he did not want to go the club.

Unfortunately, Barnaby did and so did Travis and Darrell. They were the only reason he'd agreed to this at all. He figured with them along things wouldn't be the disaster they usually were.

Nathan had to figure out what to wear, too. He'd stood at his closet realizing he had no club clothes. He finally settled for a pair of plain blue jeans, cowboy boots, and a blue buttoned down shirt. *Boring.*

Of course, Barnaby had declared he looked hot. Ridiculous, really.

Barnaby, on the other hand, had dressed in skintight black leather pants, a red silk shirt opened at the throat, and ankle boots. Now *that* was hot.

Even Darrell and Travis were dressed better than him. Travis wore jeans and a jean jacket while Darrell wore tan slacks and a nice pinstriped dress shirt.

Travis smiled, looking his unconcerned self. "Ready?"

Barnaby returned the smile and reached for Nathan's hand.

Nathan wished he could drum up the enthusiasm Barnaby had for going out. As they approached the club doors, Barnaby was practically bubbling over with energy. If he hadn't been in a bad mood it might have been contagious.

They stepped inside and found a booth in a dark corner. The dance floor was full of bumping and grinding men and loud dance music threatened to burst his eardrums. He hadn't even liked this

ONLY FOR HIM

scene when he was in his twenties.

He waited for Travis and Darrell to seat themselves and then slid into the booth. Before Barnaby could follow, a man dressed all in leather came running up to him and pulled him into a tight embrace.

“Oh, my God, Barnaby, it’s been forever!” the man exclaimed, right before kissing Barnaby full on the mouth.

To Nathan’s annoyance, Barnaby just laughed. “Hey, Jimmy. It has been a while.”

“Everyone from the old gang’s here, this is so cool,” the man said. He barely glanced their way, and then turned back to Barnaby. His hand rested on Barnaby’s arm. “I hope you came here to dance.”

“I definitely did. But we just got here, so maybe later, okay?”

Jimmy nodded. “I’ll come back in a few. See ya later, babe.”

Nathan watched with a scowl as the man danced away toward the dance floor. Had Jimmy been Barnaby’s lover at one time?

Barnaby scooted in next to him and grabbed his hand. “Wow, this is crowded tonight. It’s been a while since I’ve been here. It’s really hopping.”

“Who was that?”

“Oh, that was Jimmy.” Barnaby waved his hand. “Old friend.”

Nathan bit his tongue to keep from asking Barnaby how many *old friends* he had. He did not want to turn into a jealous shrew.

A waiter came by and took their drink orders. Nathan took a deep breath and told himself to be cool. He didn’t want to ruin anyone’s evening because he was in a bad mood and didn’t want to be here.

Barnaby smiled. “Want to dance?”

The last thing he wanted to do was get up there and make an

ONLY FOR HIM

idiot out of himself in front of Barnaby. He'd always had two left feet.

"I don't like to dance," he muttered.

"Oh." He hated seeing the disappointment in his boyfriend's eyes. He opened his mouth to say he would dance after all when yet another too thin young guy ran up to their table.

"Barnaby, come dance with me," the man said with a lisp.

"Um." Barnaby looked at Nathan.

"Go ahead."

"Thanks!" Barnaby scooted out of the booth and the skinny twink grabbed Nathan's lover's wrist and dragged him out to the dance floor.

Travis turned to Darrell. "How about you? Want to dance?"

"Sure."

Nathan watched dispassionately as his friends followed Barnaby onto the dance floor. The waiter came by with their drinks and he immediately ordered another scotch.

He felt like a world-class chump. He downed his drink, ignoring the burn of the alcohol.

On the dance floor, Barnaby and his partner gyrated together to some slow, sexy song. It was just a dance, but it made him angrier and angrier. The waiter came back and gave him another and he ordered his third.

Nathan looked at the other patrons and shook his head. He just didn't get this scene. Crowded dance floors like this made him nervous. What if there were an earthquake? He could just imagine the panic.

The song changed and now Barnaby was dancing with Jimmy, who had his hands all over him. Jimmy's hands covered Barnaby's ass and pulled the man against him as they moved to the song.

ONLY FOR HIM

Nathan rubbed his temples. Fuck, this was just what he didn't want. He knew he had the potential to become jealous and possessive, especially with Barnaby, and he'd known Barnaby was a big time flirt.

When the third drink came, he downed it. He knew he should cool it but he tapped his fingers on the table, staring hard at Barnaby with another man. It was his fault Barnaby was on the dance floor with some asshole's hands all over him. But he couldn't stop thinking this is what he could expect in their relationship. Other guys would always be all over Barnaby.

Right now, Barnaby probably thought it was cool that Nathan was a geek. It was new and exciting. But sooner or later one of his friends would point out something about Nathan that would make Barnaby reconsider or, worse, think less of him. *Nathan's such a drag. He's such a nerd, what do you see in him?*

How long would it take their differences to destroy any feelings they had for each other?

Jimmy nuzzled Barnaby's throat and Nathan saw red. He left the booth and stormed onto the dance floor. He pushed other dancers out of his way and ignored Travis when he called to him.

His hand closed over Barnaby's upper arm and he yanked him away from Jimmy. "Stop touching him," he said in a low voice.

"Dude, what are you a caveman?" Jimmy exclaimed, backing away.

Barnaby frowned. "What's wrong?"

"We're leaving." He pulled his boyfriend off the dance floor and away from his group of gaping friends. Nathan was glad they'd come in a separate car from Travis and Darrell. He threw money down on their booth and continued walking with Barnaby toward the entrance.

ONLY FOR HIM

“Nathan, what the hell is wrong with you?”

He ignored him until they were outside of the club and heading to his car. He then released Barnaby’s arm. “As I said, we’re leaving.”

“But why? Weren’t you having a good time?”

“No, I wasn’t having a good time watching my boyfriend let guys feel him up and kiss and practically fuck him on the dance floor.”

Barnaby stared at him. “I-I wasn’t doing that. They’re just friends, Nathan.”

“Right. Funny, none of my friends try to give me hickies.” His cell phone rang and he glanced at it to see it was Travis. He answered. “I’ll call you later. Sorry, but we’re leaving. Yeah, I know. I’ll tell him.”

“Tell me what?” Barnaby asked as he ended the call.

“I’ve had too much to drink. You should drive.”

Barnaby nodded. “Okay. Let’s go.”

Nathan was glad Barnaby didn’t say anything on the drive to his house. He was fuming mad and the alcohol was fogging his brain a bit. He was pretty sure any conversation he made right now wouldn’t make a lot of sense.

By the time they made it back to his house, Nathan felt like a gigantic ass and he was not proud of his Neanderthal behavior. He didn’t like himself like this at all.

When they got inside his house, Nathan turned to Barnaby. “We need to talk.”

“I agree.”

He led Barnaby into the living room and sat on the couch, pulling Barnaby down with him. “First, I want to apologize for my behavior. I was an ass. I’m sorry. Did I hurt you?”

ONLY FOR HIM

“No.”

Relief washed over him. He would never ever hurt Barnaby and he would have hated himself more than he already did if he did so even accidentally. He exhaled.

“Those guys were nothing. Just friends, Nathan.”

He nodded. For a moment he just stared at Barnaby. He was so damn beautiful with his red silk shirt and leather pants. His full lips glossed a delicate mauve. Barnaby was so gorgeous he could have had any guy at the club. Hell, he’d seen them all panting after him. What in the world was Barnaby doing with him?

“I’ve never even had sex with any of them. Ever.” Barnaby’s eyes were pleading with him to believe him.

Nathan swallowed. “Barnaby, I don’t think this is going to work.”

“What?”

“You and me.”

Barnaby shook his head. “That’s crazy. We just had a bad night. A misunderstanding.”

“Tonight was bad. I don’t like how jealous I got. You say those guys were just friends but they were all over you and you didn’t stop them. I know that’s part of your personality, but I don’t like it.”

“Well, okay, I won’t let it happen again.”

“But that’s how you are. You flirt and you’re affectionate and adorable and everyone loves you. Why should you have to change?”

“Because it bothers you.”

Nathan sighed. “Maybe if tonight was all I had a problem with, I’d agree. It’s more than that.”

“I don’t understand.” Barnaby tugged his bottom lip with his

ONLY FOR HIM

teeth.

"We're not compatible. I know you don't really believe that, but it's true. We're too different. You like clubbing and your friends and I like quiet nights at home. You'll be bored with me in six months. I watched my parents go through a terrible marriage and then a divorce because they were so different. I don't want that to happen with us."

Barnaby shook his head. "But it won't. You think we're not compatible. That's not true. We've gotten along fine. Great, in fact."

"Yes," he agreed. "Right now we're both really attracted to each other and the sex is fantastic."

"It's more than just good sex."

He forced the words out, "I don't think it is."

The excruciating hurt he saw in those blue-gray eyes cut him. Nathan wanted to take the words back, but wouldn't it be better to end it now than months from now when Barnaby realized he didn't really love dull Nathan?

"I can change," Barnaby whispered. "I did before. You know, with the clothes and I took off the makeup. I can do that all again and be more like you."

His heart twisted, guessing now that the change in Barnaby's appearance had been for him. He felt like a big prick for what he was doing. He was a damn coward and he knew it. But the more time he spent around Barnaby the harder it would be later when his heart was broken.

"It would be fake, Barnaby. You'd do all that and it wouldn't make any difference to who you really are. You'd still be—"

"Still be what?"

"Too much."

ONLY FOR HIM

Barnaby gasped, such a quiet little catch in his throat he almost didn't hear it. Nathan loathed himself.

His lover stood up suddenly and turned away from him. "I'm just going to go."

Nathan opened his mouth to say something, but he couldn't find the words to take it back and Barnaby had already practically run for the front door. He got up from the couch and went to the door. The younger man had already made it to his car and he wanted to call him back.

This is what you want, right?

He was an idiot. He knew it the minute he watched Barnaby drive away without stopping him. He was in love with Barnaby and he'd just sent him away.

CHAPTER 11

The last place Barnaby wanted to go to was his dumpy apartment. He couldn't face it. Couldn't face anything really. He just wanted to disappear.

He kept driving, getting as far away from Nathan as he could. He couldn't believe he'd been so wrong. So stupid. He'd thought...well it didn't matter what *he* thought. Nathan didn't love him and didn't want to be with him.

Barnaby realized he had driven to Calvin's house. Knowing the hours his brother kept at the hospital, he might not even be home, but he parked, got out and hurried to his brother's front door. If he managed to catch Calvin home, he hoped his brother didn't have a guy over.

He knocked, waiting, his heart pounding. He didn't know what

ONLY FOR HIM

he would do if Calvin didn't answer.

The door opened a crack and then wider. "Barnaby?"

He nodded, feeling the tears he'd desperately tried to keep at bay, pouring from his eyes.

"What's wrong?" Calvin pulled him into his arms and closed the door.

Barnaby shook his head, burying his face in his brother's shoulder. His breath shook as he tried to get the words out. "Nathan dumped me."

Calvin's arms tightened around him. "Ah, B. I'm sorry."

"Can I stay here tonight?"

"Of course you can. The spare room's already set up. I'll make us some tea and we can talk, okay?"

Barnaby pulled away from his brother with a nod, and his brother took his hand and led him to his big leather couch in the living room and pushed him down.

"I'll be right back. Are you going to be all right for a minute?"

His throat clogged, he just nodded.

Calvin crouched down in front of him and took his hands in his. "He's an idiot, B."

"Maybe."

"I know he is. I'll bring your tea." Calvin stood and went into the kitchen.

Barnaby closed his eyes and rested his head on the back of the couch. Maybe he'd drifted apart from Calvin, but he'd known he could count on his brother. At least someone cared about him.

Calvin came back with two mugs of tea he set on the coffee table and then he sat on the couch next to Barnaby and waited.

"He said we were too different."

"I see."

ONLY FOR HIM

"I guess I was stupid. We went to a club tonight. I knew he didn't really want to go, but he'd had a bad week at work and I thought maybe going out would loosen him up, and Travis and Darrell agreed to go, too, so you know I thought it would be okay."

"It wasn't?"

"No. He was grouchy and didn't want to dance. I danced with some other guys and he got mad and we left. He said his parents got a divorce because of differences and he didn't want to go through that."

"And you tried the things I suggested?"

Barnaby snorted. "Yeah, he didn't care about any of that. He said I was...too much."

"What does he know?"

"You've said that yourself."

Calvin nodded and touched his cheek. "I'm your brother. I can say what I want. He can't. You're the best thing that ever happened to him and he's just an ass."

"I love him, though."

His brother squeezed his hand. "I know."

Barnaby closed his eyes. "I'm going to end up an old maid."

"I don't think guys can be old maids."

He looked at Calvin. "Well, but you know what I mean. I'm going to be alone forever."

"I don't believe that. Maybe Nathan wasn't the guy for you, but I know he's out there and you'll find him."

He blinked his tears back. "Thanks, Calvin. That means a lot."

"Drink your tea. Are you hungry? I could make you something. I've got cauliflower."

"No, but I am tired. I don't think I can face going to work on Monday."

ONLY FOR HIM

Calvin nodded. "So don't. Spend a few days here. I'll be working most of the time anyway."

* * *

Nathan pressed the auto dial for Barnaby's cell one more time. He'd been calling it all day. Really, since the night before when he'd driven away.

Barnaby wasn't answering his home phone either and a short while ago, he'd gone to the man's apartment. There'd been no sign Barnaby had ever gone home.

He was sick to his stomach. What if he couldn't ever reach Barnaby? But that was stupid. His lover was out there, probably just ignoring him.

He punched Travis's number. "I still don't know where he is," Travis answered.

He groaned in frustration. "What about Darrell?"

"He doesn't know either. Give it some time, Nathan."

"I'm such a jerk."

Travis sighed. "Yeah."

"Thanks, friend."

"You know you screwed up. Do you expect me to say otherwise? Look, you need to figure this out. Do you want to be with Barnaby or not?"

Nathan lay down on his bed and stared up at the ceiling. He'd thought about little else since sending Barnaby away. Some things hadn't changed. They were different. But was that so terrible?

"Nathan? Did I lose you?"

He swallowed. "No. I'm here. I just hope I haven't lost Barnaby."

ONLY FOR HIM

“So you’ve changed your mind?”

“I just think I didn’t know what I wanted before. I don’t know what I was thinking.”

“Do you love him?”

“Yes. I only hope it’s enough.”

“Life is full of risks, Nathan. Yeah, you have differences. You have to decide if the risks outweigh the possibility of heartbreak. I have to go. Talk to you later.”

Nathan tossed the cell on the bedside table. He’d fucked up badly.

Barnaby.

Nathan didn’t like to take risks in relationships, but for Barnaby...only for him.

* * *

Monday morning Barnaby left Travis a message saying he hadn’t been feeling well all weekend and was staying with his brother.

He’d spent most of his time while Calvin was at the hospital in bed. He’d cried a lot of tears over Nathan and hoped they’d dried at least temporarily

Barnaby had a decision to make about his job. He didn’t know if he could continue to work at the firm now. He didn’t want to see the man who broke his heart every day.

In the afternoon he finally took a shower. He hadn’t gone back to his apartment so he’d been wearing some of Calvin’s things. They wore the same size even if they didn’t always wear the same style.

Since he didn’t intend to go anywhere, he just put on flannel

ONLY FOR HIM

pajama bottoms with some expensive label, he noticed, and a white designer T-shirt. Who but Calvin would buy those?

He was in the kitchen fixing himself his fifth cup of green tea when the doorbell rang.

Shoot.

Barnaby put down the teakettle and walked out to the front entry hall. Probably some religious missionary or something. He peered out of the peephole but he couldn't see anything. He stood on tiptoes and looked again, but all he could see was the back of someone's dark hair.

Frowning, he opened the door and said, "I'm not—"

The man turned around and it was Nathan holding a red wallet folder. His lips curved up just the tiniest bit.

Déjà vu.

Barnaby couldn't believe Nathan was here, holding a file, just like he had done all those weeks ago when Nathan was sick.

"What are you doing here?" Just the sight of Nathan had his chest hurting. He took a step back.

"I heard you were sick and needed this file." Nathan held up the folder. "Kind of lame, I know. I just thought...can I come in? Please?"

"No." He went to close the door and Nathan's foot stopped him.

"Barnaby, please."

He bit his lip, released the door and turned away. "Fine. But what do you want? I don't think there's anything else to say."

Nathan walked in and closed the front door. He set the file down on a table in the entry hall. "I love you."

Barnaby gasped and faced him. "What?"

"I had to say that before anything else. Over the last few days

ONLY FOR HIM

I've realized I'm in love with you. I'm just a big jerk and I'm sorry I hurt you and sorry I was such a prick." Nathan took a step toward him. "I've been trying to find you since you left."

"I didn't go home."

"I know." Nathan looked miserable. "And I didn't know how to get in touch with your brother either. I was so damn worried about you. But today when you called in, you told Travis you were here. He had Calvin's number from your emergency contacts, so I took a chance and called him."

"Calvin told you where I was?" He was both surprised Nathan had gone to the trouble and that Calvin had told Nathan where Barnaby was.

"I guess I made my desperation clear," Nathan said. "I'm the biggest ass on earth, and I'm sorrier than I can say about the other night."

A tiny spark of hope had his heart racing, but he tried to ignore it. The pain of Nathan's rejection was still so raw. "We're still different, aren't we?"

Nathan was now close enough to touch him. His hand rose as though he intended to, but it dropped again. "Yes. But, I don't think that matters."

"You thought so before." He turned away, not sure he could forgive and forget. Maybe Nathan had been right and they didn't have a future.

Nathan did touch him then. His reached for Barnaby's hand and turned him back to face him. His thumb brushed the top of Barnaby's hand.

"I did because I was afraid. I've seen other relationships fail and I've even had a taste of that myself in the past. I didn't think I could take the chance with you."

ONLY FOR HIM

Barnaby searched his gaze, hoping he would see what he desperately wanted to see. “And now?”

“You’re worth any risk. We’re different, but that doesn’t mean we can’t make compromises and learn to trust each other. I meant what I said, Barnaby. I love you.”

“Are you sure that’s enough?”

Nathan exhaled slowly and curved his fingers around Barnaby’s palm. “I hope so. And I think, maybe, you love me, too. I’ve been praying you do.”

He smiled for the first time in days. The dark eyes behind Nathan’s thick glasses showed him Nathan spoke the truth. “Yes, Nathan. I love you.”

Nathan pulled him against him, wrapping his arms around him. “Thank God.”

Barnaby brought Nathan’s lips to his in a deep kiss.

“You forgive me?” Nathan asked, breaking the kiss and squeezing him tight. “Please say I haven’t fucked everything up for good.”

“You haven’t,” Barnaby assured him.

“Great. Come home with me.”

“Don’t you have to work?”

“I’m taking a few days off. And so are you. I cleared it with Travis. I’m going to spend days trying to make it up to you.”

Barnaby grinned. “I gotta say I like the sound of that.”

* * *

Barnaby fidgeted next to him. He kept twisting and untwisting his hands and shifted in the passenger seat. Then he’d tap his long fingers on the car door.

ONLY FOR HIM

“Relax,” Nathan said.

“How can I? I’ve never introduced any guy to my grandmother before.”

“Good. I love the sound of that.”

“I hope she likes you.”

Nathan frowned as he parked in front of the two-story house that reminded him somewhat of a gingerbread house. “What’s not to like?”

“Well, I love you, of course, but you know. This is all new. Neither Calvin nor I have brought a guy here at all, let alone on her birthday.”

“I get it, I get it.” Nathan got out of the car and so did Barnaby. He reached in for the birthday gift bag they brought with him. “What happens if she doesn’t like me?”

“I guess I’ll have to dump you.”

“What?”

Barnaby smiled and threaded his fingers with Nathan’s. “I’m kidding. I’m not worried.”

They approached the house and the door burst open to reveal a thin, short old woman with her gray hair worn in a bun on the very top of her head and big thick glasses that kind of reminded him of his own.

“Cool glasses,” Nathan said.

Barnaby’s grandmother laughed. “You, too. So, you are Nathan.”

“Yes, ma’am. And you are...um...Barnaby’s grandmother.” He realized he didn’t know her name.

“You can call me Kay.” She turned to Barnaby and hugged the stuffing out of him and then ruffled his hair. “Go inside and don’t touch the cake.”

ONLY FOR HIM

Barnaby kissed her. "Okay, sheesh. Calvin here?"

"Of course. You know he's always prompt."

Barnaby mumbled something and headed into the house and Nathan was left facing his lover's grandmother. He cleared his throat.

She folded her arms across her small chest. "Well."

"Ma'am?"

"What do you have to say for yourself? Calvin says you've already broken my boy's heart once."

He swallowed. "I didn't mean to. I can only say I'll never do it again."

"Is that so?" She gazed out in the distance for a moment. "I lost their mother, you know?"

"Barnaby told me."

"To a man who claimed he would love her forever. Those boys are all I have."

Nathan nodded solemnly. "I'll do anything and everything for him. For the rest of our lives. I promise."

The old woman snorted. "All right. Come inside before you catch a cold or something."

He smiled and moved past her. "Thanks."

Barnaby waited for him just inside the door. He looked questioningly at Nathan.

He grabbed Barnaby and kissed him thoroughly. "I think I passed the first test anyway."

Barnaby glanced at his grandmother who'd come inside. "I would say so. Come on. Let's go sneak a piece of birthday cake."

SHAWN LANE

Shawn Lane believes love and passion know no boundaries. Shawn writes both erotic love stories involving men in historical or contemporary settings and interracial romances between men and women. Shawn is always looking for new stories and new characters to create while holding down life in California.

* * *

**Don't miss *Only In His Dreams*
by Shawn Lane,
available at AmberAllure.com!**

Shy, conservative Darrell Lincoln has worked hard to get his job as billing manager for the law firm of Anderson, Llewellyn, and Stevens. For a conscientious worker like Darrell, the job is perfect except for one thing. He has a big-time crush on one of the partners, Travis Anderson. Darrell thinks a gorgeous, wealthy, hotshot lawyer like Travis would be interested in a guy like him only in his dreams.

Lonely after the death of his longtime partner, Travis isn't the dashing, smooth playboy Darrell imagines him to be. In reality he's just as interested in Darrell.

Both men are after the same thing—each other. Their relationship is the stuff of dreams...until Travis meets Darrell's not-so-welcoming family.

Can Darrell convince Travis he's still his dream man?

AMBER QUILL PRESS, LLC

THE GOLD STANDARD IN PUBLISHING

QUALITY BOOKS
IN BOTH PRINT AND ELECTRONIC FORMATS

ACTION/ADVENTURE

SUSPENSE/THRILLER

SCIENCE FICTION

DARK FANTASY

MAINSTREAM

ROMANCE

HORROR

EROTICA

FANTASY

GLBT

WESTERN

MYSTERY

PARANORMAL

HISTORICAL

BUY DIRECT AND SAVE
www.AmberQuill.com
www.AmberHeat.com
www.AmberAllure.com