



**Shawn Lane**

# **SWEET REUNION**

## SWEET REUNION

...Danny gasped for breath even as Jason's tongue invaded his mouth. He'd thought for a moment he was going to have to make a move on Jason tonight like he had before when they were younger, so Jason knocking him to the mattress stunned him.

His heart slamming hard in his chest, Danny inched his hands underneath Jason's shirt and fanned his fingers over the warm, soft flesh of his abdomen. Jason's bare skin almost scorched him.

Jason growled low in his throat and flipped him so Danny lay on top. Jason grabbed Danny's ass, grinding their pelvises together.

Danny moaned and reached for the buttons of Jason's shirt. He slid the buttons from their holes and eased it off his shoulders, his fingertips grazing the hard muscles of Jason's arms.

Tearing his lips from Danny's, Jason rasped, "Have to get you naked."

His cock grew impossibly harder and he couldn't help agreeing naked would be better. "Yeah, you, too."

Jason tugged off Danny's shirt, tossing it aside even as he removed his own shirt the rest of the way. His fingers stroked over Danny's nipples causing him to tremble all over with need. "You're so beautiful, so damn sexy."

"I was about to say that about you," Danny said huskily.

"Condom and lube?" Jason asked, his lips moving to Danny's throat to suck at the pulse there.

He pushed into Jason's touch, seeking more. It was difficult to form a thought in his head while his lover's hands roamed over his ass, let alone respond to the question. Danny closed his hand around the bulge in Jason's trousers...

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# SWEET REUNION

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BY

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SWEET REUNION  
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*To Shayster, whose friendship means so much.*

# CHAPTER 1

Jason Sweet hated being back here.

For the most part, the suburb where he'd spent his first eighteen years of life had not been particularly interesting or malicious. It had just been ordinary.

The first twelve years had been entirely uneventful. He had a mom and a dad like everyone else he knew, and a brother and a sister. If the average family consisted of two-point-two children, he guessed he was the point-two in his house.

After he turned twelve, he'd figured out the truth about himself. When all his friends went gaga over bras and panties, he felt nothing. Well, not entirely true. He got excited over the guys getting excited. But he kept this revelation inside.

He'd only been back in Sutter's Bay for a week, called back to

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spend whatever time he had left with his terminally ill mother. Maybe after all this time he could heal the rift between the two of them. Even if it took her dying to force him to confront their issues.

He had some other unfinished business to deal with, too, and that's why he was here.

Jason stood in front of Jefferson High School, surprised how much it had changed in fifteen years. It was fenced in now while it hadn't been when he attended. The school resembled a prison.

He glanced at the paper in his hand. Daniel Yarrow was supposed to be teaching in classroom forty-three.

*Go.*

He wanted to walk through the gate of the school and to that class. Really. But it wasn't as easy as he'd thought before he drove over from his mother's house.

Jason had kept his homosexuality a secret from everyone until he turned sixteen. Even then it had been his best friend and classmate, Danny, who'd made the first move. For two years, Jason and Danny had kept their relationship hidden. But then the summer after high school it had all become a total disaster.

A car honked near him, pulling him out of his memories. He shook his head, opened the gate, and limped into the yard at the front of the school. The damn left leg bothered him, but he ignored the pain. According to his doctors, it would probably never go away completely.

He walked past the first three buildings, looking for the building housing forty-three. It was after regular school hours, so not many kids lingered and nobody seemed to pay attention to his presence.

The September afternoon breeze coming off the ocean was cool



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and Jason wished he'd brought a sweatshirt or something. He spotted the door for Danny's classroom and limped his way over to it. He rubbed his leg, wincing at the pain. He supposed he should have brought his cane with him, but he hated looking old and feeble. Thirty-three shouldn't feel so old.

He listened outside the door, hearing raised voices. Jason smiled, recognizing a line from *Romeo and Juliet*. He tapped once and then opened the door to the classroom.

A group of high school students gathered at the back of the room. Some sat in chairs, others on desks, and one boy and one girl stood holding and reading from several sheets of paper. Leaning against a chalkboard, slim arms crossed in front of his chest, was Daniel Yarrow. *Danny*.

The group glanced his way when he entered. The kids looked merely curious, but Danny stared, his eyes wide with shock. He straightened and cleared his throat.

"Um, that will be all for today. We'll pick up where we left off after school tomorrow, but meet in the auditorium."

The teens eagerly rose and immediately started chattering to each other. If they thought their instructor cutting rehearsal short odd, they didn't say.

They shuffled past his position by the door, once more giving Jason curious looks as they filtered through the door and outside to freedom.

Though he couldn't tear his gaze from Danny's face, Jason waited until the door closed behind the departed kids before he spoke.

"Hi, Danny."

"Jason." Danny walked across the classroom and stood before him. "When...I didn't know you were here in Sutter's Bay."

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He didn't answer immediately. He just stared. The boy he'd loved had become a beautiful man. Danny had always been gorgeous. Pretty, even. Fifteen years hadn't changed that. Back in high school Danny wore his dark wavy hair long, to his shoulders, but now it curled just under his ears. He still had the same peaches and cream complexion, the same soft green eyes and long killer lashes. And the lips. Plump and so kissable.

Jason swallowed, his balls tightened, and he fought to control his reaction. He tore his gaze from Danny, willing his cock to behave. When he glanced back at the other man, he thought he had himself back in control.

"Yeah, I just got back a couple of days ago. My mom..." His voice faltered, stopped.

"I know. I'm sorry." Danny's look was sympathetic.

Jason nodded. "Hey, I can't believe you're teaching drama at our old school."

Danny smiled. His smile was so sunny and warm it lit up the whole damn classroom. "Hard to believe, huh? Well, I did always have a flare for the dramatic though. At least I put it to use."

"I didn't mean to interrupt anything. I just thought I'd come and ask you if you wanted to have dinner with me tomorrow night."

The other man shook his head. "I'm sorry, I can't."

"Oh." Jason took a step back. Of course, someone as gorgeous as Danny probably had a boyfriend. Maybe even a husband, though he didn't see a ring. Their relationship had ended fifteen years ago. He'd even had a couple of boyfriends during that time.

Danny's hand rested on Jason's arm. "I've got the rehearsal with the kids tomorrow night. It's a long one. We're putting on *Romeo and Juliet* in a couple of weeks. But, tonight?"

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He'd promised to have dinner with his mom. "Do you think you could come to the house? We're not going to have anything fancy. I think we're just going to have take-out." He hesitated. "You can even bring your boyfriend."

"I'm not seeing anyone, Jason," Danny said softly. "I had a boyfriend, but we broke up a couple of years ago. What time should I come over?"

Jason knew he shouldn't be so damn happy Danny was unattached. They'd spent a lot of years apart and just because he came back to Sutter's Bay didn't mean Danny was going to be receptive to anything starting between them. Hell, Jason had made the decision to breakup with Danny when they were eighteen. It hadn't ended well.

"Six-thirty all right?"

Danny smiled. "Sure, see you then. It's good to see you again, Jason. You look really good."

Jason smiled back but he knew his smile was strained. He turned and walked to the door, conscious of his limp. He heard Danny gasp.

"What happened?"

Jason stilled and sighed. He turned to face Danny. "I got shot during a robbery. Hit me in the leg and the stomach. My partner got shot, too. I was lucky I lived. Hal died." His heart raced, remembering that day. "I'm retired from the force now on permanent disability."

Danny nodded. "I didn't know. That's—I'm glad you're okay."

"Me, too. See you for dinner."

\* \* \*

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The house Jason grew up in was just a block from the beach. It wasn't a large house. In fact, there were only three bedrooms, so his sister, Lucy, had gotten her own room while he'd had to share with his older brother, Kent. And the whole family had shared the lone bathroom.

Before he'd come home a few days earlier, his mom had lived there by herself. His father died a few years back. Lucy had called to tell him, but he hadn't attended the funeral of the man who'd hated him.

He parked his Civic in the driveway and slid his bad leg carefully out of the car. He had to hold onto the car to steady himself, then he closed and locked it, looking out to sea. The evening clouds rolled in, looking vaguely ominous.

He'd always had a vivid imagination. This was not Castle Rock and he was not a Stephen King character.

Jason limped down the driveway to the mailbox and took out the day's mail. He shuffled through them. Mostly bills. He'd have to handle all this for his mother now.

He watched the simple bungalow-style house from by the mailbox. One lamp lit the front window. He couldn't help wondering if the neighbors knew the truth of what had gone on inside the Sweet home. As often as Danny's family had invited him over, he knew they were aware of what Jason's dad had been like. His mom had tried to keep up the ordinary appearance to the outside world. But the bruises didn't always cover well.

He glanced up and down the narrow street. Most of the people living on the block were the same ones he'd grown up knowing. A lot of the older folks stayed in Sutter's Bay. It was a beautiful seaside town with an annual tourist income. Sighing, he headed back up the driveway to the house.

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“Ma?” he called when he stepped through the front door.

“In here.”

Jason set the mail on the table inside the door and went into the living room. His mother, mere skin and bones now from the pancreatic cancer, lay huddled on the couch, wrapped in a blanket. She held a paperback novel in her frail, shaking hands.

He forced a smile. “Hey, Ma.”

She smiled back. “Hi, honey. Did you have a nice visit with Danny?”

“Yeah. Actually, Ma, I invited him over to have dinner with us tonight. Is that okay? I can tell him not to come if it’s too much.”

His mother shook her head. “Don’t be silly. I like Danny. It’s nice that you’re trying to get reacquainted.”

Jason nodded. “You want to sit out on the back porch for a little bit? I can bring you a cup of tea and we can just sit there and enjoy the breeze.”

“Oh, yes, that would be wonderful, Jason.”

He scooped her up in his arms, making sure to take the blanket with her. Her arms wrapped around his neck. She didn’t weigh much more than a puppy. His heart twisted.

It should have been a breeze to carry her outside, but with his messed up leg, carrying her to the sliding glass door and out to the covered porch made him break out in a sweat. He winced and set her down on a cushy lounge they’d set up for her earlier.

She studied his face when he pulled back. “I’m sorry. You should have made me walk out here.”

“I’m all right.”

“You are not. That hurt.”

He sighed. “Yeah, it did. But watching you try to make it out here yourself hurts more.” He sat on the edge of the lounge,

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straightening his leg out before him. Jason closed his hands over hers. “Do you hate me for the years we’ve missed?”

“No, never.” She turned her palm up and squeezed his hand with as much strength as she could manage. “Your father—”

Jason’s throat clogged and he couldn’t speak so he nodded.

“I know you must think I was terrible for not standing up for you or for your brother and sister,” his mother whispered. “And when you told us you were gay...I didn’t know he would react like he did when you told us.”

Jason freed one of his hands and touched his jaw, remembering the pain when his father broke it that day. He’d had to have it wired. His bones had healed, but the heartache hadn’t.

“I didn’t either,” Jason finally managed to say. “It’s okay, Ma. I know it had to be hard to go against Dad. With everything. And I know...you loved him.” That was the hard part to deal with sometimes. Knowing in spite of everything his father did, even to her, she still loved him. He knew all the psychobabble about love and abuse. He tried to understand it. For her sake.

“I did. But I didn’t approve of the way he treated you that day, Jason. I didn’t know he was so against homosexuals until that day.”

“Yeah.” That day his older brother took him to the hospital. He never saw his father again, nor his mother, for that matter, until he arrived here just days ago. The guilt over leaving her with his father ate at him until he thought maybe he had only half a soul. He leaned over and kissed her forehead. “What kind of tea do you want, Ma?”

The smile she gave him was just a ghost of the one he’d grown up with. “The orange spice.”

“Great choice. I’ll have that one, too.” He stood. “I’ll be right

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back.”

The numbness had nearly returned by the time he poured boiling water over the tea bags in the kitchen. He inhaled the scents of the tea, cloves, orange rind and cinnamon, letting them soothe him. He'd get through this. He'd already survived a lot of crap. This was just more.

Back outside he handed one of the steaming cups to his mother and then sat in the rocking chair next to her lounge. They sipped in silence for a few moments, looking out over her roses and gladiolas.

“I'm sorry about the other policeman.” His mother's voice was so soft it was nearly carried off with the breeze. “But I'm glad you made it through.”

“Me, too,” Jason said automatically, ignoring the tightness in his chest. “Tell me about Danny.”

“What do you want to know?”

“About his boyfriend, I guess.”

“Maybe you ought to ask him.”

Jason nodded. “Probably, but I can't.”

She took a sip of her tea and then pursed her lips. “Well, let's see. He left Sutter's Bay for a while. Not long after you, I guess. I heard from his mother he went down to San Francisco. I don't know what he did while he was there. I didn't really have a lot of contact with him or his mother because your father wouldn't permit it.”

“Right.” He was proud of himself for not sounding too bitter.

“Anyway, he came back here probably eight years ago now. And he brought a man with him. I never spoke to them, of course, you know, with your father, but I'd see them together at the grocery store. They looked happy.”

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“Did-did Dad say things to them?”

She shook her head, smiling slightly. “He just ignored them. Pretended they didn’t exist. I’d say Danny and the other man did the same thing with your father.”

“Danny said they broke up a couple of years ago.”

“Yes, I heard. I don’t know why. I do know the other man, um, Harris was his first name, left Sutter’s Bay.”

Sooner or later most people left Sutter’s Bay, Jason mused. Yet, here he was.

“And you?” she asked. “Don’t you have a-a significant other?”

Jason sighed. “I did. He left me when I got shot. He didn’t want to deal with the aftermath.”

“Well, that’s just terrible.”

He wasn’t sure he wouldn’t have felt the same if he had been in Rick’s position. “So, what do you want for dinner?”

His mother smiled. “Chinese.”

Jason hated Chinese food. “Then Chinese it is. I’ll go get the phone book.”

“Are you sure?” She looked uncertain and afraid. It cracked his heart just a little more.

“Anything for you, Ma. Anything for you.”



## CHAPTER 2

Danny stepped past the threshold of the flower shop and smiled at the tubular bell sound. Only someone as eccentric as Jude would have such a creepy sound announce the arrival of customers. He could see where *The Exorcist* theme would put off all but locals to buying flowers there.

“Hi, Daniel,” the proprietor of the shop called out. Jude, originally from England, had bought the florist shop from Mrs. Pinkerton five years or so ago. If he had a last name—and didn’t everyone?—he’d never shared it with anyone in Sutter’s Bay. He’d declared he came up to Sutter’s Bay because San Francisco was too stressful for his delicate constitution.

“Good evening, Jude,” Danny said, smiling as he approached the counter. The scents of intermingling flowers filled the shop. He

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thought he detected the potent scents of roses, carnations, gardenia, and star lilies. A few plants hung from the ceiling above him and he brushed at the fronds of a particularly friendly fern. He opened his mouth to speak his request when he noticed Jude had dyed his hair...green. Danny blinked.

“What can I do for you today, love?” Jude asked, leaning on the counter. The diamond stud in his right eyebrow winked at him.

“Er, lovely shade of green.” Danny pointed at Jude’s hair. Last time he’d seen the Englishman his hair had been bleached blond and down to his shoulders. Now it was short, spiked and St. Patrick’s Day green.

Jude snapped his gum. “Thanks. Rather goes with the shop, don’t you think? Need some flowers for a school production or something?”

“No, actually I want a bouquet of some spring flowers, I think.”

“Ah, got yourself a new sweetie? It’s about time. Far be it for me to stick my nose in your business, Daniel, but that Harris chap was a real creep.”

“I know.”

“Smelled, too.”

Danny laughed. “Did not. But, no, actually I’m going over to visit the Sweets so I thought I’d bring some flowers.”

“The Sweets?” Jude wrinkled his nose for a moment and then nodded. “Oh, right. You had something going with Mabel Sweet’s son, didn’t you? I heard he was back in town. Josh or John, isn’t it?”

“Jason.”

“Terrible about Mrs. Sweet.” Jude clicked his tongue. “I’ll be right back. I’ll see what I have in the back.”

After his breakup with Harris, Danny had gone on one date

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with Jude. Things had ended rather abruptly between them when they learned both of them preferred to bottom and neither intended or wanted to change that. But Danny liked Jude. He had a feeling the man had had a bad breakup himself before relocating here.

Jude returned, holding a bouquet wrapped in purple cellophane. It contained a breathtaking array of colored daisies, carnations, tulips and lilies.

“Wow, gorgeous.”

Jude winked. “Thanks, but what do you think of the flowers?”

Danny laughed again. “You’re incorrigible.” He removed his wallet from the back pocket of his jeans and extracted his debit card.

Danny walked to Jason’s family home from the florist shop. It was only a couple of blocks and more often than not Danny either walked or used his bicycle around Sutter’s Bay. With a population of just over ten thousand, the little city by the bay wasn’t very large. Danny liked it that way.

He stopped just below the driveway and studied the house where he’d spent many childhood days. He’d met Jason when they were both in kindergarten. When other kids would pick on the much smaller Danny, Jason would defend him. Over the years Danny grew to look upon Jason with something close to hero worship.

After their friendship began in earnest, a young Danny soon realized the Sweet children came to school with bruises and bandaged cuts and they weren’t just normal childhood injuries. Or Danny hadn’t thought so anyway. He didn’t know how to ask Jason if his parents were beating him, so he just made sure his mother and granddad allowed Jason to stay with them as often as possible. One day on the beach as teens, Jason admitted things

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were far from perfect at home.

Danny made the first move to take their friendship into romance, kissing Jason when they were both sixteen. At first, he'd been mortified he'd gone too far, certain Jason would be repelled by Danny's action. But to his relief and happiness, Jason welcomed the kiss and their relationship progressed from there. Until the day Jason's dad beat the shit out of his son for being gay.

He walked up the driveway and to the front door. His knock was answered mere seconds later, as though Jason had been waiting behind the door.

"Hi," Jason said, holding the door wide open. "Come in."

Danny was surprised the house hadn't changed much since he'd last been in it fifteen years ago. Mabel Sweet had held a gathering at the house after her husband died, but Danny hadn't attended the funeral, although he had sent flowers. He was sorry for her loss. Not so sorry Ralph Sweet was dead.

The house was a simple bungalow-style, pretty similar to most other homes in Sutter's Bay. Danny's childhood home looked just like it. The home he'd bought when he returned to Sutter's Bay was one of the newer built tract homes not quite as close to the beach as this one.

He thrust the flowers at Jason. "For you and your mom."

"Thank you. They're beautiful."

Jason smiled. It did something funny to Danny's insides. Sure, when Jason chose to end their relationship when they were just kids really, Danny had moved on. What choice did he have? But no one had ever appealed to him quite like Jason had.

His chestnut brown hair was cut short, not quite military style, but pretty short. Jason was even more gorgeous than he'd been before with his hazel eyes and a sexy-as-sin five o'clock shadow.

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The faded jeans hugged his ass and the maroon T-shirt accentuated his muscular arms. Danny's mouth watered.

He followed Jason into the kitchen. The man bent over and reached into a cabinet and extracted a vase.

"We're just waiting for the Chinese food to be delivered. My mom's out on the patio," Jason explained, filling the vase with water.

"Can I do anything?"

"No. I'm just glad you came. It's really great to see you, Danny." Jason looked away, his cheeks reddening. "I'm sorry I haven't kept in touch."

Danny nodded. "I know your father didn't make it easy for you to want to come back here." Danny only wished Jason wanted to come back for him. But, well, that was the past. No point dwelling on it. He ignored the tightness in his chest. "Speaking of, I'm sorry about Kent."

Jason's older brother had been killed in Afghanistan while stationed in the army.

Jason swallowed. "Yeah, we all were." The doorbell rang and Jason looked relieved. "That's the food. Be right back."

Danny made himself useful by opening the cabinet and taking out plates and utensils from the drawer. Same cabinet the Sweets' had always kept them in.

His friend returned carrying several bags of Chinese food containers. He set them on the counter.

"Smells good."

Jason's nose wrinkled. "I hate Chinese food."

Danny laughed. "Then why order it?"

He shrugged, but grinned. "Ma wanted it. Why don't you show her your flowers and I'll bring out the food in a second."

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Danny picked up the vase and headed to the patio out back. He'd seen Mabel Sweet around Sutter's Bay, of course. Since her husband's death she'd even acknowledged him. The door was open with just the screen door across it, so he slid the screen door and stepped outside.

"Danny," she exclaimed, smiling brightly. "Oh, how beautiful."

"I thought you two could use something to cheer you up." Danny set the vase down on the small patio table near her lounge.

"They're lovely, thank you. Sit down, Danny. Jason's in the rocking chair." The frail woman gestured to a cushioned chair next to her lounge and a rocking chair. "How are you, dear?"

It amazed him she could act as though all those years of ignoring his existence had never happened. He guessed people coped with things in life as best they could.

"I'm good. How are you, Mrs. Sweet?" Danny asked when he was seated.

"Well, not so great. I'm a little better now that Jason's with me." She sighed. "We wasted a lot of years, the two of us."

Danny pretty much figured the years were mostly wasted on the part of Jason's parents, but he kept his opinion to himself. Instead he said, "Yeah, I'm glad to see him back myself."

Jason came outside carrying two plates of food. "Here we go." He handed one to his mother and the other to Danny and then sat in the rocking chair after handing out forks.

"Aren't you going to eat, honey?" Mrs. Sweet asked Jason.

"A little later. I'm not that hungry now."

Danny's lips twitched but he took a bite of the cashew chicken. "Mmm. It's good."

"Definitely," she agreed. "You don't know what you're missing, Jason."

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He smiled and reached over to pat her shoulder. "I'm sure you're right. More tea?"

\* \* \*

"I've got her settled in for the night," Jason announced to him later that night after they'd eaten and done the dishes. They stood on the front porch, gazing up at the stars and the rolling waves of the ocean.

"You're so gentle and kind with her, Jason. I'm really impressed."

"Well, she is my mother."

Danny nodded. "Yeah, but I know lots of guys who wouldn't be so forgiving as you."

Jason exhaled. "It's not been easy. Do I wish she'd done more to stand up for me and be a part of my life? Sure. But she was a victim of him, too, and it's hard to hate her, especially now."

"I feel the same way. She's so weak and frail. I just...wish someone in your family besides Kent had been on your side. You know? I know it would have been hard for her to leave him and take you all somewhere safe. Hell, if she had done that, you would have been gone out of my life so much sooner. It's just I wanted you to have a family like mine. My mother and grandfather were so great to me, I wish you could have had that."

"I know," Jason said softly. "And I was such an ass to you."

"Nah."

"Yeah. I couldn't wait to get away from Sutter's Bay and everything to do with it because of my dad." Jason grasped Danny's hand and threaded his fingers with Danny's. "Only that meant getting away from you, too. I thought that was what I

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wanted. What I needed.”

“It’s okay, Jason.”

He shook his head. “No, it wasn’t. God, Danny, how can you just stand here and be so casual about this? Act like it was nothing. We were everything to each other. Best friends, first lovers. I just threw that away.”

Danny looked away and bit his lip. “What do you want me to say, Jason? That it hurt me? Okay. It did. I was devastated. You ripped my heart into shreds. Happy?”

Jason gripped Danny’s upper arms tightly. “No,” he whispered. Jason pulled Danny closer, brushing his lips over the other man’s in a light, almost hesitant kiss.

Danny whimpered and pushed himself closer still to Jason, their bodies melding together. He forced his tongue into Jason’s mouth. He tasted of the orange spice tea he’d been drinking. Danny slipped his hands down to cup Jason’s ass, pressing their jean covered erections together.

The screech of a bat directly over their heads broke them apart, reminding them they were outside on the front porch.

Danny smiled and stroked his thumb over Jason’s bottom lip. “I better go home.”

Jason sucked on his thumb. “I have a better idea. Want to walk to the beach? To our special place?”

Danny’s stomach fluttered with excitement. He glanced back toward the house. “Do you think we can?”

“Yeah, hold on, I’ll go tell her we’re going to go for a walk.” Jason went back inside.

Danny walked down to the end of the driveway. There was a cool breeze coming off the ocean and he was glad he’d thought to grab his windbreaker before he left his house.



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Jason came back outside pulling a sweatshirt over his head. He smiled. "Okay, let's go."

As they made their way down the sidewalk toward the path leading to the beach, Danny couldn't help remember how many times they'd done this very thing as kids. He shoved his hands in the pocket of his jeans and followed Jason down the small set of wooden stairs.

In the distance the light from the lighthouse spun around, glistening on the sea around it. Other than that and the lights from the houses near the beach, it was dark. But the darkness and the quiet lull of the waves soothed him.

Just to the left of the stairs, a few hundred yards down the beach or so, was the little alcove where they'd often gone to talk as children and then teens.

One evening in particular, Jason had been late to their arranged meeting. They'd been fourteen then and Danny already knew he preferred guys. He'd been in love with his best friend then, though he hadn't gotten up the nerve to admit it.

A full thirty minutes had passed since the time they were to meet and Danny had been about to go home when Jason finally showed up. Danny knew from the watery shine to Jason's eyes something bad had occurred.

"My dad's drunk again," Jason had told him. "He was pissed and he went to hit me, but Kent stepped in front of me."

"Shit. What happened then?" Danny's heart had pounded. He desperately had wanted to hug Jason, but didn't. He just stared at his friend, feeling the misery, the pain coming off him.

"He beat the crap out of Kent," Jason whispered. "Kent says one day he's just going to leave and join the army."

Danny shook his head, coming back to the present as they

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reached the alcove. He automatically reached for Jason's hand. Jason wrapped his fingers around Danny's palm.

Jason smiled. "God, it's been ages since I've been here."

"You haven't come here since you got back to Sutter's Bay?"

"No. I don't know. It might be stupid, but it's our place, you know?" Jason stabbed the toe of his sneaker into the sand.

"Yeah." Danny's throat constricted.

"I'm sorry, Danny. I know I keep saying that, but I wish I had done things different then."

"Me, too." Danny squeezed his hand. "But we were just kids, Jas. And you were going through some bad shit."

They fell silent, staring out at the dark sea. He could smell the salt water intermixed with Jason's spicy cologne. With all the memories and the hurt, Danny shouldn't be turned on, but it was hard to ignore the sexy man next to him. His cock certainly couldn't. It grew thick, pressing against his jeans. He shifted.

"Danny, can—"

"Jason, I—"

They turned toward each other, their lips meeting, crushing together. Danny groaned when Jason's hands grabbed his ass and pulled him close, their erections pressing against each other.

"God, Jas," Danny said into Jason's mouth. "Want you."

Jason nodded, and broke the kiss abruptly, dropping to his knees in front of Danny.

Danny almost stopped breathing as Jason's fingers undid the buttons of his 501s. Jason's hand was cool as it slipped inside Danny's briefs, closing over his throbbing, hard dick.

Jason pulled it out and for a moment just stared. Danny began to wonder if that was all he intended to do, but then Jason's hot, moist mouth closed over the tip and he thought maybe he'd died

## SWEET REUNION

and gone to heaven.

“Jason.” His knees buckled, but Jason’s hands locked around his legs, preventing him from going down. Danny grabbed Jason’s head, holding him, even as Jason sucked him farther in.

Jason let go of one of Danny’s legs to run his fingertips over Danny’s balls.

“Ah, fuck.” His whole body shook, his breath hitched. Unable to stop, he pushed himself farther, fucking Jason’s mouth. It had been so long since he’d been with anyone, Danny knew it wasn’t going to take long. Plus, this wasn’t just anyone. It was *Jason*.

Electric jolts tingled through him, from his toes to his ears, or so it seemed. His balls tightened and he tried to pull out and away from Jason. The man wouldn’t let him move, he held on with a strong grip, working his mouth on Danny’s shaft.

“Jason, I’m...please.” His cock spurted, his balls drawing close to his body.

Jason kept sucking, taking whatever Danny would give him. He swore he saw stars as his orgasm slammed through him. Finally, Jason released him with a loud pop. He sagged against a rock, heaving heavy breaths.

Jason wiped his chin, grinned and stood up. “Good?”

“Shit, yeah.”

The man chuckled.

Danny straightened and did up his pants. “What about you?”

“I really should get home to Ma. Can I take a rain check?”

Danny closed his hand over the back of Jason’s head and pulled him into a kiss. “You got it.”

Jason returned the kiss and then started walking back up the beach toward the stairs. Danny sighed and guessed that meant their little interlude was officially over. He ran his fingers through his

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curls, exhaled and followed after his friend.

At the top of the steps, Jason waited. He smiled when Danny reached him. "I'm sorry to rush you. I just don't want to leave her alone too much."

"Hey, I totally understand. No worries. I should probably get home anyway. I need to get to school early to get some stuff together for classes."

Side by side but silent, they returned to Jason's house. Danny walked him to the front porch.

"If you don't mind leaving your mom alone for a few hours, you could come by to watch the rehearsal tomorrow night. We'll be rehearsing from six-thirty to eight-thirty."

"All right. See you then." Jason grabbed his hand and pulled him close again. He stole another kiss, but Danny didn't mind.

## CHAPTER 3

Jason applauded just as Romeo and Juliet finished their big balcony scene. There were a few parents also in the auditorium applauding along with them. The young boy and girl bowed and waved to the crowd.

“All right, that’s a wrap for the night. Next rehearsal is after school Friday night. See everyone in class tomorrow,” Danny told the students.

Jason admired him from the auditorium seats. Danny was dressed in black jeans and a black button-down shirt. To Jason he looked scrumptious. He thought back to their kisses last night on the back porch and the blow job he’d given Danny at the beach. He hoped Danny would want more.

He stayed in his seat while the kids and their parents shuffled

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out. Danny stopped to talk to several of the parents, so Jason just waited. When the auditorium emptied out save for him and Danny, he rose and walked out of the aisle.

“That was pretty cool.”

Danny smiled. “Yeah? I was sure you were bored out of your mind. At least judging by your expression.”

“No, definitely not. It reminded me of the days when we were in drama.” He grinned. “Damn, you were such a ham.”

Danny laughed and the warm, rich sound flowed through Jason, thawing him just a little.

“I had to be to make up for what a terrible actor I was.”

“You were good and you know it,” Jason said. “I expected you to go into acting, really.”

Danny led him to the doors of the auditorium. “I did some theater work when I was in San Francisco. In fact, that’s where I met my ex-boyfriend, Harris. He directed me in one of the productions I did. But I decided I’d rather teach.” He pushed the doors open and pulled a set of keys out of the front pocket of his jeans. “Listen, if you think you can leave your mom for a while longer, would you want to come over for coffee or tea? My house is within walking distance of the school.”

“I’d really like to. Our neighbor Mrs. Henry was visiting with her. Give me a second, I’ll call her.” Jason pulled out his cell phone and took a few steps away from Danny so he could talk to his mom with just a little privacy. He didn’t mind Danny hearing his conversation all that much, but if his mom begged him to come home and stay with her he wouldn’t be able to keep the disappointment from his voice. And that probably made him horrible.

While his home phone rang, he watched Danny lock up and

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casually walk a few paces even farther away. He exhaled.

“Hello.”

“Hi, Ma, it’s me.” It occurred rather suddenly to Jason that he was taking a step back to his childhood days where he called his parents for permission to stay out late. How messed up was that?

“Are you having a good time?”

“Yes. Are you all right for a bit longer or do you need me to come straight home?” He held his breath, just waiting for her to tell him she wanted him to come home. He would, too. He was all she had and he knew it. It killed him inside. Even his sister, Lucy, had turned her back on their family, refusing to come home to care for their dying mother. She had her own life, she explained to Jason, and wasn’t going to look back and pretend they were the Nelsons from *Ozzie and Harriet*.

“It’s all right, honey. Stay out as long as you want. I’m feeling good tonight. Mrs. Henry and I are watching some television. I think I’ll go to bed in an hour or so.”

And just like that his heart beat so hard he thought it might rip right through his chest. He told himself to remain calm. Just because Danny invited him over didn’t mean they were going to hit the sheets. But he couldn’t stop an image of a naked Danny writhing under him from flashing through his mind, especially after the promises from the night before.

“Okay, thanks, Ma. I’ll look in on you when I get home. Love you.”

“I love you, too, Jason. Bye.”

“Bye.” He hit *end call* and returned the cell phone to the pocket of his leather jacket.

“Everything good to go?” Danny’s plump kissable lips curved into a small smile. He wanted to taste those lips again. Kiss Danny

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so thoroughly he wouldn't remember the kisses of any other man.

"Yeah. Let's go." He limped over to Danny.

Danny frowned. "Hey, you know, you can drive us to my house if you want. It's only half a block, but maybe you don't want to leave your car at the school."

Jason patted Danny's shoulder. "That's a nice way to ask if my leg can take the walk, huh?"

Danny blushed. "Well, I—"

"It's fine. But I think maybe I will drive us. If Ma needs to call me to come home or something, I don't want to have to hobble down here for the car."

"I'm sorry. I'm just used to walking most places. I absolutely hated driving in San Francisco. It was a nightmare."

Jason nodded. "Driving in Los Angeles was no fun either. Come on, my car's out this way."

A short time later, Jason found himself in Danny's sterile looking white kitchen. Danny filled water in the tea kettle and set it on the stove.

"When I first came back to Sutter's Bay I wondered if my old house would be for sale," Danny said. He shrugged. "It wasn't. I was disappointed at first, but then I remembered something."

Jason leaned against the counter and folded his arms across his chest. "What was that?"

"How the plumbing sucked. My granddad always had to fix it. That house was a piece of shit." Danny laughed. "So, I went for one of these new ones."

"It's really nice. I like it. I loved the way you painted the living room red. Very cool."

Danny smiled. "Yeah? I like it, too. I'll show you the rest of the house when the tea is ready."



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Jason bit his tongue to keep from saying he really wanted to see the bedroom. He did, but thought it was pretty presumptuous. Just because they'd kissed and Danny had let Jason give him a blow job last night didn't mean he'd let him fuck him. He hoped so, of course.

The tea kettle whistled and Danny poured boiling water over two Chai tea bags. Jason inhaled the spicy aroma.

"Milk and sugar?"

"Of course."

Danny brought the tea mugs into the dining room and sat down. Jason followed. They sipped the tea in silence for a moment or two but he could tell the other man had something on his mind.

"What is it?" he prompted. He tasted ginger, cloves and a touch of cinnamon

Danny blew out a breath and tugged his bottom lip with his teeth. "I don't know. I guess I wondered how you ended up being a cop. I mean, I'd heard you joined the LAPD, but I couldn't help being a bit surprised. I thought you wanted to be an artist."

He snorted. "Yeah, painting didn't pay the bills. Dreams change, Danny, that's all."

"Do you ever pick up your brushes?"

Jason looked away from the too perceptive gaze of the other man. "Not in a long time. I got rid of the canvas, paints and brushes. Why keep them when I wasn't painting?"

Danny sighed and blew on his tea before taking a sip. "Tell me about the shooting."

The deep pit in his gut widened. His heart practically leapt into his throat. "I don't like to talk about that."

Danny covered his hand with his. "I'm sure. But I want you to do it anyway."

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“Why?” He swallowed, unable to meet Danny’s dark eyes.

“I think you need to.”

He did look at Danny then, to roll his eyes. “What are you a psychiatrist now?”

“Don’t joke your way out of this, Jason. You’re hurting. I know you.”

“You don’t know me, Danny. You knew the boy I used to be. You have no fucking clue what I’m like now.”

The other man grimaced and took several more sips of his tea. Jason didn’t want to be an asshole, but he hoped his friend would just drop it, but then he noticed the determined glint in Danny’s green eyes.

“You can’t piss me off or hurt me enough to get me to stop asking,” Danny said softly. “When we were growing up, who was the most stubborn person you knew?”

“You.”

“I haven’t changed.”

“Just leave it alone.”

“I don’t want to. I won’t. So tell me.”

Jason clenched his eyes shut, like it could block out the memories, block out Danny’s voice. “It was terrible.”

“I’m sure it was.”

“It...it was a bank robbery. We didn’t usually handle that kind of thing, you know. We were homicide detectives not robbery detail or uniformed police. We were at the bank because Hal wanted to make a deposit.”

Jason remembered it was just after Thanksgiving and Hal wanted to deposit a check he’d gotten from his mother to pay for half of a Christmas present they were going in together on for one of Hal’s little girls.

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Danny's thumb stroked the palm of his hand and for some reason, Jason found it comforting.

"One of the robbers had been busted years before and Hal was the arresting officer. He recognized Hal and flipped out. He had a machine gun and he just opened fire." Jason chest constricted so tight he could barely breathe. "I don't really remember what happened after that. I went down and so did Hal. I woke up in the hospital. The doc told me I had been hit in the gut and the leg. The stomach wound ended up not being as bad as the wounds in the leg."

"And Hal?" Danny asked when he'd clammed up.

"He got hit multiple times in the torso. They took him into surgery, but he didn't make it." Jason's eyes burned with the tears he couldn't wish away. "And I don't know why."

"Why?" Danny frowned.

"Why I lived and Hal died. I'm just a nothing guy nobody cares about. Hal was a great guy. He had a wife and two beautiful little girls. He went to church, he volunteered at shelters, coached softball. He'd been decorated multiple times by the force. He was a fucking hero and *he* died."

He choked on his own sob even as Danny's arms came around him, pulling him close.

"God, why did you make me think about that?" He buried his face in Danny's chest.

"Jas, shh, it's all right." Danny's hold tightened.

Jason didn't know why he was crying again over Hal. He'd cried his tears for the loss of his friend. Or thought he had anyway. The last thing he wanted was to turn into some sort of crybaby.

After a moment, his tears slowed and he pushed away, gently but firmly from Danny's embrace.

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“Better?”

“I don’t know.” And Jason realized he didn’t know.

“I’m sure Hal was a terrific man who did not deserve to die. But that doesn’t mean you did. It wasn’t an either-or situation. It was a tragedy and I’m sorry Hal was killed. Really. I can’t help being glad *you* weren’t killed. People do care about you. I do, your mom does, and I know Kent did. Hal did, too, didn’t he?”

He nodded.

“Okay then.” Danny smiled and reached for his hand again and tugged him up from the chair. “Want to continue to see my house?”

Jason allowed himself to be led through the house. Danny showed him the backyard, by flicking on the porch light, a bathroom and a couple of spare bedrooms.

He loved the feel of Danny’s warm hand wrapped around his. It felt so natural. Back when they were lovers they were in the closet so they could never openly show affection. Not even something as simple as holding hands. He supposed that was why it felt so special to him now.

“I’ve saved the best for last.” Danny winked.

That sexy, saucy wink sent a jolt of pure lust from his brain straight to his cock. The truth was, he hadn’t had sex since before the shooting. Jason had never been into recreational sex. He’d broken up with his last boyfriend just after the shooting because Rick admitted to him he was too selfish to deal with an injured lover.

Maybe lack of action was the reason he wanted to push Danny onto the big king-sized sleigh bed in his bedroom, yank down his jeans and fuck him until he couldn’t stand. *Yeah right.*

“So, what do you think?” Danny spun around, holding his arms out wide.

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What he thought was that he couldn't care less about the room. It was a blank canvas. All he saw, all he wanted to see, was Danny.

Jason launched himself at the man, knocking him onto the bed. He framed Danny's face with his hands and without letting him catch his breath, Jason crushed his lips over Danny's.

## CHAPTER 4

Danny gasped for breath even as Jason's tongue invaded his mouth. He'd thought for a moment he was going to have to make a move on Jason tonight like he had before when they were younger, so Jason knocking him to the mattress stunned him.

His heart slamming hard in his chest, Danny inched his hands underneath Jason's shirt and fanned his fingers over the warm, soft flesh of his abdomen. Jason's bare skin almost scorched him.

Jason growled low in his throat and flipped him so Danny lay on top. Jason grabbed Danny's ass, grinding their pelvises together.

Danny moaned and reached for the buttons of Jason's shirt. He slid the buttons from their holes and eased it off his shoulders, his fingertips grazing the hard muscles of Jason's arms.

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Tearing his lips from Danny's, Jason rasped, "Have to get you naked."

His cock grew impossibly harder and he couldn't help agreeing naked would be better. "Yeah, you, too."

Jason tugged off Danny's shirt, tossing it aside even as he removed his own shirt the rest of the way. His fingers stroked over Danny's nipples causing him to tremble all over with need. "You're so beautiful, so damn sexy."

"I was about to say that about you," Danny said huskily.

"Condom and lube?" Jason asked, his lips moving to Danny's throat to suck at the pulse there.

He pushed into Jason's touch, seeking more. It was difficult to form a thought in his head while his lover's hands roamed over his ass, let alone respond to the question. Danny closed his hand around the bulge in Jason's trousers.

"Ah, fuck. Condom and lube, Danny?" he asked again, more urgently this time.

"Um, o-okay. H-hold on." Danny pressed his lips to Jason's, slipping his tongue inside. Their tongues twirled together. His eyes drifted closed as Jason's fingers dug into his jean-clad ass.

He heard a sort of humming and realized it came from him. Even as his fingers itched to bury within the strands of Jason's hair, Jason groaned and flipped him onto his back once more. He felt Jason yanking at his jeans without bothering to undo the snaps. He lifted up a little to make it easier.

Jason broke their kiss and abruptly stood. He bent over the bed and pulled off Danny's jeans and shoes the rest of the way. His sneakers went flying.

Danny swallowed, startled by the blazing lust in Jason's gaze. "In the bathroom, under the sink."

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His lover disappeared, so he used the opportunity to get rid of his boxer briefs. He threw them toward the straw hamper in the corner of his bedroom.

A fully naked Jason came back into his view and stood over him holding the lube. He'd already dressed his rigid cock with a condom. He dropped the tube of lube onto Danny's stomach.

Jason knelt on the bed beside him.

Danny grabbed the tube and squirted a large amount into the palm of his hand. He couldn't tear his gaze away from Jason. "Come closer."

The man did as requested and Danny planted a kiss on his soft lips before he reached for his lover's erection, rubbing the lube over the sheathed hard cock. It jumped in his hands even as he swirled a fingertip around the fat head. Smiling, he stroked up and down the length.

Jason lowered his lips to Danny's, but the kiss was over sooner than Danny wanted, a fleeting thing. Jason rubbed his thumb over Danny's bottom lip. "Easy, Danny. Let's go slow, I want to taste you again first."

"T-taste me?"

"Uh-huh." Jason slid down his body and placed himself between Danny's quivering legs.

Danny expected Jason to pull his dick into his mouth, so he was a little startled when Jason hands raised Danny's ass cheeks and his tongue dove in. This was something they hadn't done fifteen years ago.

"Ah, geez." He curled his hands into fists.

Jason's tongue thrust inside him again and again, liberally wetting his entrance and sending pinpricks of pleasure throughout him. His heart hammered, thumping against his chest. Sweat



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beaded on his forehead.

“Please.”

Jason hummed, causing exquisite vibrations.

“Oh, God,” Danny whispered.

A finger slipped inside in place of the tongue and Jason’s hand closed around Danny’s cock just before Jason’s warm mouth swallowed the tip.

Danny thought he’d died and gone to heaven.

Jason drew his cock farther into his mouth, and the fingers of one hand grasped Danny’s sac while the other’s slicked fingers thrust inside him.

“Jason, please, I can’t bear more.”

But his answer was an increase in suction. Jason sucked harder and faster, taking him deeper still. His gut tightened, tingles of his orgasm shooting up his spine. Spunk shot out violently from his cock. He screamed Jason’s name.

Jason released him, but slowly, placing a kiss on the tip, and another on his thigh. Danny gasped. Jason lifted Danny’s legs and wrapped them around his waist. Their eyes met and Jason gave him a sexy smile just before he pushed inside.

Danny winced at the sting, biting his lip. He shifted a little.

“All right?” Jason’s eyes searched his, looking for some reassurance, Danny supposed.

“Yes.” He cupped Jason’s cheek.

Jason’s fingers gripped his hips hard as he filled him all the way. He stopped just a moment, allowing Danny to adjust, and then he drew back and speared forward. He hit Danny’s prostate, nearly making his eyes roll back in his head.

Danny let out a shuddering breath, closing his eyes as his lover slammed into him again and again. His own body felt on fire with

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sensations, almost too sensitive.

Jason moaned low and sped up his thrusts. “Ah, God, Danny. So tight, so good.”

He clenched around the man’s shaft, pushing up, trying to get Jason in deeper, if that were possible. He grabbed one of Jason’s hands and threaded his fingers through Jason’s. Except for the wrinkles around his lover’s eyes, it could have been fifteen years ago.

“Jason,” he whispered, his throat raw from his earlier scream. Never in a million years had he thought this man would re-enter his life. And want to start something with him again. That is *if* Jason wanted more than just sex.

Jason leaned down, straining to reach Danny’s lips. Danny leaned up to meet him. They kissed lightly, their tongues twirling.

Jason broke the kiss with a gasp, and then stiffened, shuddering and moaning just before he collapsed.

Danny shifted to his side and wrapped his arms around his lover, drawing him closer. He gently pushed Jason’s head onto his chest.

He wasn’t sure how long they lay together listening to each other breathe, but eventually he heard Jason’s even breathing. He debated whether he should wake Jason since he knew the man would want to go home to be with his mother. Danny closed his eyes. He’d wake him in a few minutes.

“No!” Jason bolted upright. The single word was infused with panic.

Danny’s heart hammered in his chest. He sat up and quickly touched Jason on the shoulder. “Jason, Jason, it’s okay. Jason, it’s Danny, I’m here.”

Jason shook and tried to push him away.

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“Jason.”

Jason stared at him, his eyes wild with fear and pain. “D-Danny.”

“Yes, it’s me. I’m here. You’re all right.” He pulled him into his arms. “Shh. Nightmare?”

“Yes,” Jason whispered.

“Want to talk about it?”

“It-it was about Hal. I was in the hospital after the shooting and this doctor came to see me and then he turned into Hal, all covered in blood, you know, and he asked me why I let him die.”

“It’s just a dream, Jas. From what you’ve said you couldn’t have done anything. It was just a dream.”

“Yeah.” Jason let out a shaky breath. He relaxed into the embrace for a few minutes more and then gently pushed out of Danny’s embrace. “I have to go home.”

“I know,” Danny whispered. He knew he couldn’t keep the regret from his voice.

“My mother. I have to check on her.” He struggled up from the bed.

“It’s okay.” Danny sat up. He smiled. “Help me up.”

Jason offered a hand and Danny grasped it and rose from the bed.

“If you’re available, I’d like to take you to dinner tomorrow.” Jason wasn’t looking at him, but rather bent over picking up his discarded clothes.

“Are you trying to woo me, Jason Sweet?”

Jason did glance at him then. His lips quirked just a little. “Yes. Will you go?”

“I’d love to, actually.”

## SWEET REUNION

\* \* \*

Jason got off the phone with one of his buddies from the force down in Los Angeles. Even though he knew he could never go back there, it felt good to talk to some of the guys once in a while. Guys who knew Hal.

“Ma?” he called out, tossing aside the cordless phone. When she didn’t answer he went to the back sliding door. Peering through the slightly smudged glass he spotted her frail form kneeling in her garden by her marigolds.

Jason slid the door open and slipped outside. “Hey, Ma, I was going to take care of the garden tomorrow.”

She glanced over her shoulder and smiled. “It’s all right. I like coming out here.”

Jason walked over to where she knelt and sat down on the dirt. He tucked a stray gray curl behind her ear. “How are you feeling, Ma?”

“A little tired. The crap they give me to make the pain better tires me out.” She sighed. “But I like looking at the garden. Before I got sick I still grew vegetables. You remember, I did that when you were young, too.”

“I remember. The best cherry tomatoes around.”

She chuckled. “Yeah. And you kids would come out here and weed for me. That was fun, you know.”

His throat constricted. “It was. We did have a lot of good times.” *Before Dad started drinking and became an abusive asshole.* But he didn’t say that. He guessed his mom knew anyway.

“I get to thinking more about the good days now. Everyone’s gone but you, Jason.” There was a catch in her voice that nearly split his heart in two.

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Jason decided right there and then he would call his sister tomorrow and make her come to Sutter's Bay. He didn't care what her problem was, she was going to come, damn it.

"I'm sorry, Ma. I should never have left you."

She reached for his hand and held it in her weak grasp. "I know why you did. I'm sorry I didn't support you when you told us you were gay. Or before, when your father...the drinking. It changed him."

Jason's father had lost his job at a factory outside Sutter's Bay when he was only nine. The whole place shut down. The drinking started then and just got worse. The man was a mean, angry drunk.

After his dad had broken his jaw and Kent had taken him to the hospital and then out of Sutter's Bay, Jason hadn't looked back. He had been glad to get away. He'd been too stupid and self-centered to think about his mom still being there.

He hung his head, ashamed. "Was it really horrible when we left?"

"At first," she admitted. "But after a bad fight and Charlie Wainright's intervention...you remember Charlie, don't you?"

"Sure."

"He did one of those interventions you see on television and got your father into Alcoholics Anonymous. It got better then." She smiled wanly. "I don't blame you, honey."

Jason nodded and brought her hand to his lips. He placed a kiss on her knuckles. He couldn't seem to find the words anymore.

"Hey, don't you have a date to get ready for, sweetheart?"

He'd almost forgotten his dinner date with Danny. He smiled. "Yeah. Thanks, Ma. I love you."

\* \* \*

## *SWEET REUNION*

“Sutter’s Bay has certainly come up in the world since I was last here,” Jason said as they approached the doors of the steakhouse Danny had told him would be a good choice for their dinner date.

“Well, yeah, progress and all.” Danny grinned and held the door open for him.

The entryway was dimly lit. Jason assumed the lights had been turned down for atmosphere. Fine by him as he wanted it to be fairly romantic.

So maybe he was trying to woo Danny just a little. He couldn’t remember the last time he’d gone on any real date with a guy. Never had with Danny.

“Two,” he informed the hostess.

He noted, as they were led through the restaurant, that it was filled with mostly heterosexual couples. None of them seemed to pay particular attention to the two of them.

Jason waited until they were seated and had both ordered iced tea from the waitress before he spoke again.

“I’m not even sure I know how to do this.” He buttered a piece of bread.

“Do what?”

“Make small talk and stuff you usually do during a date.” Jason sighed. “Rick, the last guy I was with, we met at a bar and started out having sex that first night. We just sort of went from there. We ended up having sex regularly and I guess you’d call it a relationship.”

“Have your doubts, huh?”

Jason shrugged. “We’d just spend weekends or days off together. We never lived together, never met each other’s families. Never even really talked that much. Which in the end ended up

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being the problem.”

“Yeah?”

He smiled. “I was emotionally unavailable. Probably why he couldn’t handle things when they went bad after the robbery. What about you, Danny? Why did you and Harris break up?”

Danny sighed. “He wanted to enjoy recreational sex with others. I didn’t.”

“I can see why that would be a problem.” Jason wondered what kind of idiot Harris had been. He glanced at the menu. “What are you going to have?”

“The filet. You?”

“The same.”

The waitress returned to their table and took their order. Jason picked up his glass of tea.

“The truth is, Danny, I don’t know if now is any different.”

“You mean you want us to be just about sex?” Danny looked away but not before Jason saw the hurt in his eyes.

“I don’t know.” He wanted to be as honest as possible. He wanted more, but didn’t know if he deserved it. “I’m not the idealistic kid I was when you knew me, Danny. Circumstances changed me.”

“They change everyone. It’s called life, Jason. Everything that happens to us changes us. Do you think I’m the same as then? No one is the same as when they were eighteen.”

“I know but—”

“Well, well, Daniel,” a cultured British male voice came from near their table.

A man slid in across from Jason and next to Danny in the booth. He had dyed green hair, lashes dotted with mascara and purple lipstick on his lips. He thrust his hand at Jason.

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“Good evening. You must be Jason.” The man batted his eyelashes. “But what I’d like to know is, are you?”

“Am I?”

“Sweet.”

Danny rolled his eyes. “Cut it out, Jude. Jason, this is Jude. He doesn’t have a last name. One that he’ll admit to anyway.”

“Um, hello,” Jason said. He raised an eyebrow.

“Hi. I heard you were yummy. You definitely are. No wonder Daniel still pines for you, hmm?”

“I don’t pine,” Danny insisted.

Jason looked at him curiously.

Jude waved his hand dismissively at Danny. “Are you going to be staying in Sutter’s Bay, Jason?”

“Well, my mother—”

“I know. How terrible for you both. She’s a nice lady. I mean, after...” Jude smiled in Danny’s direction.

Jason didn’t like the flirtatious smile aimed at Danny. Or how close Jude was to him either. He frowned. “Yes, I think I’m staying.”

“Splendid.”

“Jude, if you don’t mind, Jason and I were having dinner,” Danny spoke up. “Privately.”

“Very well. I know when I’m intruding.” Jude slid out of the booth, stood, and pulled a card out of his tight jeans. He gave it to Jason. “See you around, Jason, Daniel.”

Jason glanced at the card. *St. Jude’s Florist Shop*. He shook his head and put in the pocket of his shirt.

“Sorry, he’s a bit much.” Danny smiled.

Jason opened his mouth to reply when his cell phone buzzed to life. He flipped it open and noted the number was from the



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neighbor next to his whom he'd asked to watch after his mother.  
His heart beat hard in his chest.

“Mrs. Henry?”

“You'd better come home, Jason. It's not good.”

## CHAPTER 5

Jason stood outside the open door of his mother's hospital room. This might be the last time he talked to his mother. She'd been brought in last night by the paramedics when he returned home after the call from his neighbor. She'd been very weak.

"Do you want me to go in with you?" Danny placed a hand on the small of his back.

"No, but thanks. You didn't have to come here this morning with me. I really appreciate it."

Danny rubbed Jason's back. He leaned back into the comforting touch. "Do you want me to do anything? Call anyone? Lucy perhaps?"

Jason shook his head sadly. "She doesn't care. I called her last night. The thing is, she had some issues with my mother after I left.

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She came back for my father's funeral, but I guess they had a pretty big fight when she was here and told Ma she wouldn't come back again. She meant it, apparently."

"I'm sorry. Families can be...difficult." Danny squeezed his shoulder. "Go on. I'll be here."

Jason nodded and stepped inside the private room. His mother lay in a bed hooked up to all sorts of tubes. A nurse stood near her taking her vitals. She gave him a sympathetic smile.

"How is she doing, Angela?" He'd been surprised to see another of his old classmates as his mother's nurse. He supposed Sutter's Bay really was still a small town.

"I don't think she's in a lot of pain, Jason. I'll leave you with her for a few minutes."

"Thanks."

Angela stepped out and Jason pulled up the chair in the room next to his mother's bed. She was very pale, but her eyes were open and alert.

"Hi, Ma."

"Morning, honey. I guess...I guess it's getting close, huh?" his mother asked softly.

His eyes blurred and his throat clogged. He could only nod, but he grasped her bony, cold hand in his hand. She had faint bruises on her white skin and her arm was bruised where they'd inserted the tubes.

Jason recalled seeing a number of bruises on her when he was younger. She'd always say she didn't remember where they came from or that she was just clumsy. He let out a shaky breath.

"Ma, I—"

She patted his hand that rested on her bed. "I know, sweetheart."

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“Are we out of time?” Tears blurred his vision. “So soon?”

“I’m just really tired, Jason. You know?”

“Yeah. I’m sorry. I’m so sorry.”

“It wasn’t your fault.”

“I should never have left you. How can you even look at me?”

“You’re my son, I should have taken care of you. Of all of you. I was afraid to leave when he was really bad. I should have. I was the weak one. Letting Kent take the brunt of it. He always seemed so strong but he was just a boy, too.” A tear rolled down her cheek.

“Shh. Don’t think about it anymore, Ma.”

She sighed, nodded. “I guess it doesn’t matter now, honey. Kent’s gone.”

“I miss him.”

“Me, too.”

Jason wished for just a moment that his dad was alive again so he could kill him. Stupid, he guessed. Totally irrational. No wonder his whole family was so fucked up.

His father had slapped him around before he admitted being gay, and most of the time Kent had stepped in for the worst of it. But when his father hit him and broke his jaw he hadn’t expected such a violent reaction.

“What about Lucy? She’s not coming?” his mother asked.

He shook his head. “Sorry, Ma. I tried.”

She smiled faintly, full of sorrow. “I know. We fought when she was here. After your father. She adored your father, even after everything. She always was his favorite.”

“Was that what you fought about?” He wondered if had the right to ask.

“Well, I...she found some old letters when she was here going through our things.”

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“Letters?”

She closed her eyes and didn't open them again for several moments. When she did her eyes were watery. “When you were all very young I had an affair. I planned on leaving your father and marrying the other man, but he got killed by a drunk driver one night after we'd been together. There were some letters I kept. Your sister found them and was furious.”

Jason had trouble wrapping his mind around his mother being young and in love with another man.

“I always thought you and dad loved each other, in spite of everything,” he whispered, swallowing past a lump.

“I did love your father, honey. Sometimes it was just hard to love him. Even in the early years before the drinking, we used to fight a lot. He wasn't physically abusive then. Just verbally, mostly.”

He nodded. “Why didn't you leave then?”

“I'd never worked and wasn't sure if I could support you and there was no way I was going to leave you behind. When the man I'd had an affair with died, I decided to stick it out. And then, well, as long as he wasn't drinking he usually wasn't abusive. It's hard to leave the life you're used to, Jason.”

“I wish things would have been different, Ma. For all of us.”

“We can't change the past, honey.” Her hand slipped a little in his grasp. “But I'm very glad we've had this time together now. Even if I wish it could have been longer. It's nice you came back to Sutter's Bay. I always worried about you when you were on the force down there in Los Angeles.”

“I never meant to worry you.”

“Do you think you'll stay now in Sutter's Bay?”

He didn't know, really. There were still so many memories

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here. But, Danny was here, too.

"Maybe," he said softly. He brought his mother's hand to his lips and kissed her knuckles. "I love you, Ma."

"I love you, too."

\* \* \*

Danny bent and set the lilies on Mabel Sweet's grave. The grave next to hers was Ralph Sweet's and next to his was Kent Sweet's. He'd already set flowers on each of theirs.

He straightened and reached for Jason's hand. He threaded their fingers together. "Okay?"

"Yeah." Jason wore dark glasses. He knew it was to hide the red eyes. Jason had cried a lot since his mother's death.

Mrs. Sweet's funeral had been yesterday. He'd stayed at Jason's house last night after all the guests from the service had left. He'd spent the night holding and comforting Jason while he slept.

Danny watched Jason carefully. He seemed to be doing all right, but last night he'd told Danny about his last days with his mother.

"It bothers me, you know?"

Danny squeezed his hand, hearing the bitterness in his voice. "What?"

"His grave being next to theirs." Jason released his hand and crouched down. "He was a bastard. He doesn't deserve to be near to them, even in death."

"You gotta let it go, Jas. I know it's hard, but you can't let it eat at you. The way Hal's death eats at you."

Jason nodded, his head bowed. "It does. I don't want it to, but I

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keep seeing the blood and his...face. I have nightmares about it. Kent, too. I wasn't there when he died, but I can't stop thinking about it."

"I know." Danny reached down and helped him up, wrapping his arms around Jason. "Maybe you should see a therapist. There's a good one here in Sutter's Bay. Dr. Carew."

"Maybe. Maybe I will."

Danny hugged him hard and released him. "You ready to go home?"

"Yes, only—"

"What?" Danny put his arm around Jason's shoulders. "You can tell me anything."

"I don't think I want to stay there tonight." Jason's gaze met his and his hazel eyes were filled with sadness, doubt and need.

Danny's heart squeezed and his hand grasped the back of Jason's neck and he lightly kissed his lips. "Come home with me."

## CHAPTER 6

Jason couldn't wait to get inside Danny's house. Nearly overwhelmed by sadness and regret, he needed the human contact. Not just any human. He needed Danny.

Danny had asked him if he wanted to stop at home for some things, but Jason decided not to bother. He'd just return to his house tomorrow. He'd have to get used to being there by himself eventually. If he decided to stay in Sutter's Bay, he could live on the police pension. The house was paid for so that wouldn't be a concern.

Danny turned the key in the front door and opened it wide. Jason preceded him inside.

"Want anything to eat?" Danny asked.

Jason shoved him against the nearest wall. He framed Danny's



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face in his, staring into those deep green eyes. "Later."

"Jason, what—"

Jason slammed his mouth over Danny's hard and rough.

Danny's lips parted under the assault and Jason slipped his tongue inside. Danny instantly sucked on it.

"Mmm." Jason broke the kiss. "God, baby, let's get to your room."

Danny nodded, kissed him again, their lips softening together.

"Your room?" Jason said, nipping his bottom lip.

Danny tugged him down the hallway to his bedroom. He reached into his nightstand and pulled out the lube and a box of condoms. He tossed them at Jason.

Danny pulled his shirt over his head without unbuttoning it. Then he stopped and stared at Jason, biting his lip. "Are you sure about this? You want to talk or...or something else?"

"No. No talking. We can talk later." He reached for the waistband of Danny's pants and slipped his hand inside. His hand closed around Danny's hard cock. "I want this." He moved his hand around to cup Danny's ass. "I want this even more."

"Take it. It's yours." Danny panted.

Jason undid the snaps on Danny's pants and pushed them down. "Take these off."

Danny licked his lips and nodded. He sat on the bed, kicked off his shoes and pulled off his pants. "Now you."

Jason made short work of his own shirt and pants. Then he tumbled Danny on the bed, lacing their hands together. Bare skin to bare skin.

"Jason." Danny gasped just before Jason kissed him. His fingers pinched Jason's nipples.

"Jesus, Danny, I'm burning up. I want you. God, I need you.

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Please.” He pulled away and flipped Danny on his stomach. He palmed Danny’s cheeks. “I want this ass.”

Danny closed his eyes and pushed his ass up, “Touch me.”

Jason shook, placing kisses along Danny’s perfect spine and heading down to the crease, trailing his tongue wherever his lips touched. “I want to be inside you, but are you ready for that?”

Danny grabbed the lube and handed it back to Jason. “I’m ready.”

“Are you sure? I’m finding it hard to slow down right now.”

“Yes, we can take our time later. Right now I just want to feel you fucking me.”

Jason grinned. “The condom, babe?”

Danny tossed a foil packet and then scooted up on all fours, exposing his tight, sexy ass for Jason. He reached under himself to wrap his hand around his cock. Jason watched him rub in the pre-cum that appeared on the tip.

Jason shook and sat up to slip the condom over his leaking cock. He slicked it up and then turned to give his full attention to Danny’s ass.

“One?”

“No.”

“Two?”

Danny shook his head.

Jason drew a deep breath. “Three?”

“Yeah, do it.”

Jason squirted lube on his fingers and spread Danny’s cheeks. He teased the entrance just a little with the tip of his finger. Goose bumps appeared on Danny’s hot, bare skin.

His cock jumped in anticipation, but he didn’t want to hurt Danny. “Are you sure?”

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Danny buried his face in the blanket and just moaned.

Jason decided that was a yes. He slipped his three fingers inside Danny, holding his breath. Danny gasped and pushed back, spreading his legs wider. Danny's ass tightened against his fingers, drawing them in farther.

"Damn, Jas, please, fuck me, please."

"Ah, God." A drop of sweat fell from his forehead. He pulled his fingers out, grabbed Danny's hips and pressed his cock inside.

They both inhaled as one. He could hear their beating hearts, matching beat for beat.

Jason pushed past the tight ring of muscle. "Touch yourself, Danny. Stroke it."

Danny reached beneath himself again and closed his hand over the shaft.

He closed his eyes, thrusting deep and fast inside Danny, groaning each time Danny's ass tightened around him. He wanted to go deeper. Wanted to reach all the way to Danny's heart if only he could.

He dug his fingers into Danny's flesh, pulling him closer, slamming in harder and with longer, quicker strokes. He could block out the pain when Danny was here. Think of the future even. Maybe.

This was good, this was *life*.

His orgasm hit him unexpectedly, tightening his balls, tingling through him, tearing a roar from his throat. Underneath him, Danny moaned and shook, finding his own release.

\* \* \*

"So, are you hungry yet?" Danny asked him a little later. There

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was a smile in his voice.

Jason held Danny close and he kissed the top of his curly head. He couldn't help smiling in response. "I am a little."

"Okay, I can make us some omelets."

"Thanks, Danny." He hugged him even closer. "I don't think I could have gotten through the last few days without you."

Danny kissed him. "I'm glad I could help."

"You did. You've been great. Coming back to Sutter's Bay has been good thanks to you. I was so glad when my mother said you were here."

"Does that mean you're going to stay?" Danny asked softly.

Jason threaded his fingers through Danny's dark hair. His chest constricted for a moment, reminding him of those early years. But still this place felt like home. "Do you want me to?"

Danny smiled. "You know I do."

"Then, yeah, I think I will. I'm sorry...I'm sorry about what happened between us before. I never really gave us a chance. I just ran like a coward. That was unfair to you. To us."

"You aren't a coward, Jason. I know why you did it. I'm sorry things weren't good for you. I wish you had given me a chance to stick by you, though. But that was the past. Maybe, we can look forward to the future. Do you think you can trust me to stick by you now?"

Jason kissed him. For all the sadness he felt over his mother's death, and would feel for a long time to come, his heart lightened. Hope he hadn't allowed himself to feel in too many years had started to flow through him. Life could be good. With Danny. "I'd really like that. In fact, I'd love it. Tell me something."

"Anything."

"Jude said you were pining away for me. Is that true?"

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Danny blushed. “Yes. I guess I was.”

Jason ran his thumb along Danny’s jaw. “Yeah? Well, no more pining. Not for either of us.”

His lover smiled and drew his thumb into his mouth. “Guess I’d better go make those omelets.”

“Later. There’s plenty of time.”

## 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.

\* \* \*

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