



# Half *of the* Other

Joanne Kells

I would like to thank my family  
for all their love and support.  
Also, a huge thank you to Teri  
for her guidance and ongoing  
encouragement with this story.

and

To my dear friend, Carole.

This one is for you.

Thank you for your wonderful  
friendship and for giving me the  
courage and strength to go for it.

I'll never forget you.

(RIP 1938-2009)

*STUPID Christmas parties! Idiot! I let a few drinks get the better of my well-balanced brain, and I actually cornered him at the office party. I put one hand up to my weary head, throbbing from too much booze and the knowledge that I have an amazing amount of stupidity running through my veins. Liking him for a year, escaping his notice, but finally allowing it to get the better of me. I never knew this sort of crush could actually take over my life. Wondering what to wear the next day before you even go to bed the night before, worrying about every little blemish, every bad hair day, and every bloated fat day that you have. I feel like fucking Bridget Jones!*

My mind is a thumping mess as I stumble out of bed and stub my toe on the leg of the bedside cabinet. I yell out in pain as I hobble over to the bathroom.

“Shit, shit, shit.”

I look in the mirror, only to wave my appearance away with one hand. I get into the shower, reaching blindly for the shower knob, and turn it. Going to work is the last thing on my mind. I want to just fall back into bed and forget that I exist. I actually want to forget that I have just made a damn fool of myself with my friend, Tom.

We’re friends, plain and simple, but now... well, by my guess, he’ll be running in the other direction. And who could blame him? I am a fucking moron. Why did I think “friends” would turn out to be anything more? Had he ever given me any indication that he felt differently? *Um, no!* Had he ever said in a seductive, come hither manner, “Let’s grab a drink and then have rampant, disgusting, lustful, full out, horny sex?” *Um, no!* Had he ever, ever said, “Hey, I fancy the arse off you; let’s make a go of it, you gorgeous being.” *Um, no, no, nooooo!*

I dress slowly, trying to make sense of what happened last night, shaking my head the whole time. If I could punch myself in the face as punishment, I would. I try to figure out what to say when I see him. Maybe I could just say it was a bet; he may go for that, yeah, he may well do.

I make my way down the empty street to begin the very early day I agreed to work a week ago. I realize I need to finish something for the presentation today, which I refrained from doing last night, abandoning the final touches to it with the hope that I would bed the guy of my dreams. Seems ridiculous now. I feel drowsy, stupid, heavy-headed, drowsy, yeah, said that already! Still, making a fool of myself is something I'm clearly very good at.

My need for coffee is overwhelming. If I smoked, I would probably be on my second pack by now. I make a detour to a coffee shop that we—meaning he and I—always used on our way to the office when we were friends.

I open the door, the ding of the bell making an almighty racket inside my skull, and head over to the counter—luckily in one piece. The look of sticky buns and sandwiches makes me want to walk in the other direction.

“Latte, please. Extra strong. Extra sugar. Thank you,” I say, unable to make a complete sentence. My head is pounding, and my legs feel almost heavy in their struggle to keep the rest of me up. Bed, God, bed is such a good idea right about now. I'm waiting for what seems like an eternity for the person behind the counter to make up his mind how to work the coffee machine. Why do you always get someone like that when you are in a rush, or have a hangover, or made a fool of yourself at the fucking Christmas party?

“There you go. Anything else?” I'm lost in a world of my own, and my thoughts are no longer on coffee as I sigh and take it, giving him a twenty pound note, which he “tuts” at.

“If you have any dignity back there,” I say, “I’ll take some of that.”

The guy behind the counter looks bewildered as he hands me my extra-strong, extra-sweet latte and my change. I wave away my comment that he doesn’t understand and has no wish to. As I open the lid to inhale the sweet aroma, I look up and see *him*, yes, *him*, walking out of the toilet. Oh, just great!

Luckily he’s not looking in my direction. My lips hover above the coffee cup, the steam scalding my mouth. With hot coffee in hand, lips burning, and looking like some idiotic fool... again, I try to slide out of the coffee shop without being seen. That works super well until I clumsily replace the lid and scald myself again. Like a fugitive, I duck behind the counter to avoid being seen by my cute friend—the one I hit on last night.

To say I was drunk as hell is not exactly the whole truth, either. Pretending to be a lot more drunk than I was is more accurate. Considering we’ve inhabited the same nightclubs, he generally knows how much I can take, and that I really don’t like to drink. What I did have to drink last night—more than usual—has left me with a raging headache this morning. I am so lame.

I am still in a crouched position; I have a throbbing headache, probably due to the lack of sleep as well; my hand and mouth are burned from the coffee; and then I hear him say, “Hi.”

Latte in hand, I raise my head with, I’m sure, a stupid look on my face. I’m bent into a position as if I’m on the toilet with a queue of people waiting to be served! Have I completely lost my mind? I slowly stand up and look at the adorable brown eyes, the strong athletic frame, and the face that could melt a thousand hearts, and then I wince at the memory of last night... yet again.

“Thought I saw you! What you doing down there?”

Good question, but I have no logical answer. “Oh, thought I lost some change. Trying to find it.” I move away from the groans and moans

coming from the people behind me and stand, exposed, in the middle of the coffee shop, wanting the floor to just swallow me up.

“Good night last night, don’t you think?” he asks.

“How do you mean, um... I mean, yeah... good night. Excellent.” I feel like an absolute arse, knowing he knows I tried my moves on him last night—moves that got me nowhere. Good night? Oh yeah, I feel fucking brilliant this morning.

“Head feels like it’s been sawed off,” he says. “Surprised at you, Charlie, you can’t drink to save your life. Shit, how much did we have?”

“Um, can’t remember... a *lot*, though. God! Major fuzzy head this morning!” I swipe my hand over my head, trying to show I have a major headache. Am I actually sweating now? God! I’m waiting for the punch line as he moves toward the door, opening it, allowing me to pass by him first.

“What you doing up this early anyway?” He closes the door after him, no mention of the kiss—yet. *Please put me out of my misery.*

“Work to do, presentation to finish off. You?”

“Early meeting. I should have thought things through last night. Early meetings after a Christmas party don’t mix.”

“You got that right. Um... did you have a good time, though? That’s the question.”

“To be honest I can’t remember a great deal, I think I had one too many tequila shots. Who ordered those?”

“Can’t remember.” *Um... guilty, guilty, guilty, trying to relax you so I could stick my tongue down your throat; shit, he has to remember that!*

“Well, all I can really remember is Kathy getting me a cab and taking me home. Shit, can’t believe I’m actually coming to work, still feel a bit drunk.” *He laughs, oh God, that laugh. I’m so horny. His mouth is*

*open; maybe I can just stick my tongue down his throat now. That would make him remember, surely!* “Where did you get to, anyway?”

*Oh, I hightailed it out of there after sticking my tongue down your throat. Everything was going so well, until you realized who I was and what I was doing; surely you must remember that!*

“Oh, felt sick, so I went home early. So you don’t remember anything else?”

“I think I may have been hit on, but it’s all a bit fuzzy. Anyway, we better hurry; I’ve got a lot to do when I get to the office, and I have to say, the way I’m feeling, I’m not going to make it past lunch time.”

We get to work, both looking like shit, and part company. I sit at my desk, feeling completely confused. He actually doesn’t remember that my tongue had taken a firm and lustful root in his mouth last night? How is that possible? Am I that bad a kisser? He had pushed me off, clearly slightly worse for wear, but he had pulled me forward, toward him in the beginning. It seemed that was what he wanted.

My head is a complete and utter garbled mess. My presentation is not finished, but I decide to make my way up to the third floor, needing to speak to him, to clear the air. Maybe he’s just being kind, knowing I’d feel awkward if I thought he remembered the groping and the kissing.

Suzy, his right hand girl, is sitting at her desk eating toast, which she always brings into the office.

“Um, is he in?”

“In?”

“Yes, Suzy, in.”

“He isn’t in today. Day off.”

I smile, thinking he has taken himself home after all. “What about his meeting?”

“Meeting?”

“Yes, Suzy, his meeting this morning, has he canceled it in favor of nursing his hangover?”

“Um, he doesn’t have any meetings today, Charlie, he has a day off. You know, holiday! His nephew’s first birthday or something; it’s been booked for ages. Can I give him a message?”

Confused and completely dense, I stare at her for what seems to be a very, very long time, absorbing the information just given me. Why would he say he had a meeting when he doesn’t? Get up at that ridiculous time when he doesn’t have to? The only person that has to do that today is me, because I had been reluctantly dragged away from finishing the presentation by my ridiculously drunk friends. I told him that last night when I was clear-headed and pissed off.

“Thanks, Suzy, no message.”

My head hurts, and I’m tired, and I have a long day ahead, and all I can think about is Tom, getting up for a meeting he doesn’t have, bumping into me at our usual coffee shop, knowing that I have an early start. I begin to wonder if he does remember something after all. I smile as I make my way back to my office.

THE air is so fucking oppressive in this air-conditioned room. *Shit!* A huge amount of seats face the front, people sitting upright, expectant faces waiting for something coherent to come out of my mouth—which, I have to say, is becoming more difficult by the second. Pretty soon their faces will show disappointment if I keep this shit up.

My shirt collar seems to get tighter the more they stare, and I can feel sweat building under my armpits and running down my back. I’m desperate to take my jacket off. I have to say, on a scale of one to ten, the



presentation is going remarkably well, really well, yeah fucking great! I keep thinking of Tom at his nephew's first birthday party, leaving me with this strange feeling in the pit of my stomach. My life had been so much simpler before I met him, before last night—before I decided to make a dick out of myself. Charlie Matherson, a number one fucking idiot. I just had to go and fuck it all up! I should get a huge slap on the back for a job well done!

“Charlie... Charlie. Earth to Charlie. Goddammit, what the hell is wrong with you today?” Rachel, my boss—as well as my mother—whispers into my ear.

I haven't even noticed she was out of her seat. She scares the living shit out of me, and of course, I probably look like a fucking startled rabbit looking into a set of headlights.

I get the perfect vision of her particularly red face glowing redder when my black file falls to the floor. I hastily pick it up with notes falling all over the place spreading precariously over the presentation table and floor. Powerpoint is on hold, waiting for me to click the button to move things along, but my mind and finger are frozen in time as the clients wait for me to come up with the image of the century for their campaign. *Shit!*

A piece of paper with scribbled notes on it is in my hand and looks strangely alien. I can't decipher the writing because all I can think about is him—Tom fucking Harris, who, I might add, has been doing my head in for a year. *Shit, shit, shit.* I'm acting and thinking like a fucking sixteen-year-old. *Get a grip, Matherson!*

Why the hell did he come to the coffee shop this morning? How in the hell does he have the capacity to make me lose my mind? It isn't hard, to be honest, given my talents of over-analyzing every little thing. No chance of getting to know what's in Mr. Smooth's pretty little head since he's not even here to answer my fucking questions.

“Really sorry... I don’t feel... could I take a break, just for a minute? I won’t be long!” I could be truthful and tell her that I have the need to throw up or bang my head against a brick wall. That might have the desired effect of someone shooting me and putting me out of my misery.

Clients shift in their seats, and I can hear someone coughing loudly as I turn and walk in the direction of the door. I quickly leave the room with mum straight up my behind. Pity it’s not Tom! She slowly closes the door, and her hands are on her hips as I turn to face her.

“Charlie, what in the hell do you think you’re playing at? What’s wrong with you? This is a big deal, or have you forgotten that?”

“No... I’m sorry, I’m not feeling so good, I’ll be okay... just give me a—”

My phone, which is jammed into the top pocket of my jacket, starts to buzz. I pull it out and look at the screen: You have one message.

“A minute, Charlie, and then get your arse back in there and turn that damn thing off. You know better than to have it switched on in the middle of a presentation, for Christ’s sake! Pull yourself together.”

Mum looks at her secretary, who is studiously staring into her computer screen. She looks like she wants an invisibility cloak to hide from Mum’s glare. I really don’t blame her. She seems to want to submerge herself into the screen, very much how I wanted to sink into my own misery this morning.

“Sarah, bring the coffee in now, would you? Clients need something to do while Mr. ‘Have a Moment’ gets his act together... thank you.” And with that, she briskly goes back into the conference room. Sarah looks at me, her little piggy eyes accusing me of something; she raises them to the ceiling and gives a loud tut. She stands up, turning her back to me and muttering under her breath, but then catches me mimicking her silently when she suddenly turns back again to face me. She tuts again and walks

off, leaving me rolling my eyes and thinking she needs to get off her fat arse anyway.

I scurry up and down the corridor like an overexcited mouse that has just picked up a huge piece of cheese, because looking at the phone again, I see Tom written across the screen.

Cum round 2 mine l8ter, round 7,

surprise cumin your way, you'll like

Oh dress nice!

T

I read it and then re-read it and read it again just to make sure I'm not hallucinating. At this point I wouldn't put it past my overactive imagination. I see Sarah take in the cart, giving me more time to answer him before I turn it off. My thumb is actually shaking, how pathetic is that?

Wot s'prise?

Why dress nice?

C

What seems like hours later, which is always the way when you want a quick reply, my phone buzzes again.

Won't be a s'prise then. c u @ 7

I turn the phone off, excitement literally bubbling under my oh-so-calm exterior! Yeah, right! I've never had a calm exterior in my life. So being me, my mind goes into overdrive as usual. Why does he want me to dress nice? Maybe so he can undress me and flip me onto the bed and do whatever he wants to me. I take a deep quivering breath, and I think I actually moan out loud.

Looking at the door in front of me, I become aware that Sarah has come out and is watching me very suspiciously, frowning. She has a somewhat disgusted look on her round face. I stick my tongue out because it just feels right! I take a deep breath and walk back into the dragon's den, feeling considerably better than I did when I left it. Four more hours to go until I can get home and figure out what to wear. I roll my eyes, there I go again—Bridget Jones, eat your fucking heart out!

After getting a sizable telling off from my mother at the end of the day and still feeling like a grade A prick, topped by also feeling like a four-year-old, I make my way back to my office to get my jacket and briefcase. I'm unhappy with how the presentation went, but at least we got the account. I'm an art director for an old, established advertising agency in London owned by my mother.

Luckily I pulled it together long enough to apologize and give them something worth seeing. One of the guys in the conference room put my "not feeling so good" down to something going round. There was a growing debate about that in the room as they all had children. I refrained from telling them how gay I was—and single with no kids in sight.

One guy said his daughter felt really rough this morning. I agreed with him, not mentioning that I was feeling bad because last night I drank so much that I stuck my tongue down my straight friend's throat. So I went along with the idea that I must be getting a temperature. Well, by now it was probably true, with all the worry last night was giving me. I think I've aged a hundred years since last night, anyway.

I pass Mum's office on my way home and gently knock on the door. She beckons me in as she talks on the phone. I wait patiently, looking nowhere in particular, thinking of him. He's always in my head, just never quite leaving me alone long enough to think straight. *Well, as if!*

"It must be love, darling."

"Huh?" I look at Mum, completely taken aback by her comment.

“You... must be love... head in the clouds and all that. I know it wasn’t the alcohol last night; you don’t drink the stuff!”

“Sorry, Mum, I’m disappointed in myself. I should have been more on the ball today. Great idea to have a presentation after the Christmas party, though.”

“Avoiding the question won’t help. Is it love or the drink?”

“I did drink last night... yes.”

“So it’s the drink giving you your dazed appearance today, is it?”

“Let’s just say yes to that, shall we?”

Mum looks at me for a long moment, almost as if trying to figure something out, drumming her long fingernails slowly on her desk as though trying to read my mind. Trouble is, most of the time she knows exactly what I’m thinking. Transparent Charlie Matherson. I’m suddenly concerned that she can see straight through one ear all the way out the other side. Nothing seems to be in there at the moment that doesn’t revolve around Tom. Tom in his underwear, Tom in the shower, Tom under me, over me, on the floor... table... car... bed... oh yeah, the bed.

I get the strangest feeling that this isn’t the most appropriate time to be thinking about things like this. I look up from the trance-like gaze I have that must be piercing a hole in the carpet, realizing that she is still looking at me.

“What?”

“Oh, just thinking... well, whatever was eating you today, snap out of it. I need an on the ball Charlie, not a dopey Charlie. So go home and sleep it off, or go home and take a cold shower. One or the other, because I want you back here tomorrow in a normal state. We only have so long to get this together before the Christmas break. Tom will be getting involved; you seeing him later?”

“Why would I be seeing him later... why would I... I don’t see him every day... I mean... yeah... yes, I am, actually.” *Oh yeah, Charlie, very, very cool.*

Mum just stares at me, eyebrows arched in a sort of questioning look, eyeing me up and down as if I have just put a beacon on my forehead and a sign that says I KISSED TOM HARRIS LAST NIGHT... ON THE LIPS AND IT WAS GREAT!

“Go home, Charlie, rest is probably what you need. *If* you see Tom later, let him know he has work to do tomorrow.”

“Okay, see you tomorrow.”

“You too, rest... don’t let Harris keep you up all night.”

I walk toward the door, cringing. God, good choice of words. I wish! I breathe deeply, trying to control the incessant itch that needs scratching when I think of him. Shit, I really have to get a handle on how I’m feeling. I make my way home, constantly looking at my watch as though wanting time to stand still or move forward or both. Afraid of seeing him and needing to see him at the same time.

I rush up the stairs to my flat, open my door, kick off my shoes, take off my clothes, and promptly fall over the rug again in the bedroom, landing face down on the floor before getting up and heading into the shower. *Such an idiot.* I’m shaking the whole time in anticipation of what’s to come. I keep thinking of the surprise he has in store for me.

All I can think of is kissing him again, being with him. I dress, spike up my hair for the hundredth time, check myself out in the mirror for the... yes, the thousandth time, I’m sure, before heading out the door. My nerves almost shatter before I even reach the pavement and get into my car. I am surprised I remember how to open the door and wonder if I can drive the damn thing.

I take several deep breaths before I turn the ignition key. I suddenly realize that the surprise could be Tom telling me he feels something for me, too, and that he's just a gay as me. Yeah, now that would be one hell of a surprise. Wear something nice, he said, which I was doing. Black sweater accentuating my upper body and black trousers; he always says I look good in black. *Yeah... good.... I look buff; I feel confident. Yeah, I can do this. Oh, who the hell am I kidding? I'm a fucking nervous wreck.*

I pull up to his house, thinking that we may be going out for something to eat, or we may stay in and talk. It would be good just to talk about last night, if nothing else. I reach his door and tentatively ring his doorbell, hearing him shout "Coming!" from the other side. He abruptly opens the door with a drink in his hand and a huge smile on his face. Looking striking, breathtaking, good enough to eat. *Please let me eat you, Tom.*

He stops short, his smile faltering as I just stand in the doorway looking at him, saying nothing. He literally has to pull me in. "Come in, Charlie." I'm transfixed to the spot, like a fucking tree with very stubborn and amazingly strong roots. His touch sends me spinning. He smells so good, like he always does. He lets go of my arm, shuts the door, then turns around, and looks at me.

"Black, good color on you; you won't believe what I've done for you."

"What... what have you done for me, Tom?"

Tom looks at me, puzzled, as my voice seems remarkably high-pitched for a man all of a sudden. *What am I, a girl?* My hands feel clammy, waiting for my surprise... waiting for him.

"You all right, Charlie, you seem a bit dazed... still got a headache?"

"No, I—"

"Is this him, Tom? Is this my date for tonight?"

Tom looks over my head; I turn and look at two girls coming toward me, one blonde, and the other with brown hair. They stand directly in front of me, smiling... well, giggling really.

“Charlie, this here’s Louise, and this here’s Isabelle.” The blonde one smiles and nudges her friend Isabelle forward.

“Hi, Charlie. It’s really nice to meet you.” Isabelle has a huge smile on her face. I vaguely remember my manners and smile, saying likewise. They both head back into the living room. I turn to Tom, seeing him nod at them as if he’s been the one to indicate that’s what they should do. I glare at Tom in disbelief. He stands by my side looking ahead of me watching the girls, admiring his handy work. He then looks at me, smiling, and frowns again when he sees my expression.

“What?”

“Um, who the fuck are they? You never said *this* was a blind date!”

“Well, if I’d done that it wouldn’t have been a surprise, would it now, you idiot? Don’t thank me or anything, will you?”

“Oh, believe me, you don’t want to know what I want to say to you right now, Tom Harris.”

“Jesus, Charlie, what the fuck? I thought you’d be pleased. You’re acting as if I’ve cut your fucking dick off or something.”

“Yeah, or something.”

“What, Charlie... come on, tell me. You got something to say, say it.” His face is so fucking close, dangerously so. I want his lips to travel all the way down to my.... Oh shit, this is not good. I feel something short and soft growing into something long and hard down south. Of all the times for that to happen!

I try to ignore the growth in my pants as I keep looking at him, hands on my hips, aware of the gagging geese waiting to cluck or pounce or whatever. Oh yeah, I can see us having this conversation with both girls



waiting for us to play happy families for the evening. I keep staring because it's impossible to look away. I'm wondering what the fuck he's thinking at the same time as wanting to jump him. What is fucking wrong with me? I feel my body temperature rising, and it's not because it's hot, it's because before the night is over with, Tom Harris will get to hear exactly what I have to say.

My mind is running wild as I see him casually move back into the living room. Does he actually think that this, what he's done, is a good thing? *Fuck!* What the hell is he playing at? I hear laughter and can't stop the bile rising up in my throat at the thought of Tom wanting me here for a different reason than what I thought. I rub my face, feeling like a fucking fool for believing that he may have remembered the kiss. What the hell was I thinking?

"Charlie, what the fuck... come on... what's wrong?"

I look up to see him staring at me, his head poking round the living room door, a puzzled look on his goddamn gorgeous face, and that does it for me. I'm out of here.

"Gotta go. I don't feel too good. Sorry, I'll see you tomorrow."

I'm turning around and walking quickly to the door when I see him, out of the corner of my eye, make his way hastily toward me. He puts a hand on my shoulder. I shrug it off more forcefully than intended, not wanting him to touch me, not now, not feeling the way I do.

"Jesus, Charlie, what the hell is wrong with you? I thought I was doing a good thing here."

I turn back around to look at him: his eyes boring into me, his body strong, tall, and overbearing right now. I can't think when I'm near him; that's the trouble. I can't move. He's got me so riled up I want to fucking shake him and tell him it's me he should want.

"How's that?"

“Oh sorry—two gorgeous girls? In my house. You know, to some guys that would be a good thing.”

“Well, not this guy.” I’m so goddamn mad I want to end this conversation now. Looking straight at him, his eyes melting into me, I’m completely lost for words yet again. I look away, facing the door, holding onto the handle, so aware that he’s behind me, his breath on my neck. He slowly walks around to stand beside me. For Christ’s sake, I feel myself crumbling, wanting to fall into his space, show him what he’s missing.

“Look Charlie, I’m sorry,” he says. “I thought... well I didn’t think, but I just wanted to do a nice thing, thought it would be a good laugh, that’s all. Louise and Isabelle babysit for my sister. They’re from Kyle’s nursery school. It’s not like you have to see Isabelle again, please, Charlie.”

“Does that mean you’re going to see Louise again?”

He frowns, looking at me confused; I lower my eyes and sigh, feeling completely embarrassed.

“I don’t....”

I know I sound like some goddamn fool. I can hear myself and I sound ridiculous. *Does that mean you’re going to see Louise again? Fucking hell!* What kind of idiot says that, like that, accusatory, as if it’s a problem if he does? *Shit!* I have to save this hideous situation.

“Look, Tom, I’m sorry, alright? It was a stupid thing for you to do. I had a bad day, and to top it off I rush over here, barely able to shower and change to get here by seven, to be told it’s for a fucking blind date. Jesus, I can get my own dates, alright? I don’t need you doing it for me. Making idle chitchat with Isabelle tonight is really not what I want to do. I’ve got a hard day tomorrow, and so have you, actually.”

“How do you mean?”

“Um, guys... are you having your own special party out here or what? Me and Isabelle are getting lonely.”

I look at Tom. His eyes tell the story of a man in need as he cocks his head toward the living room, his eyes pleading. Yeah, you got it; I’m just about to help the guy I like enjoy his time with a girl. Don’t judge, ’cause things will have to get better, because if they don’t, I’ll shoot him—better yet, I’ll shoot her! It’s time to shoot *something*.

At least I get to look at him even if I can’t touch. Yeah, I sound like some lovesick fool, which I am. Okay, it may just be better to shoot myself—it will be a lot quicker that way.

“Yeah, sorry, I just had to tell Tom about work tomorrow; we’re coming.”

Tom smiles at me and gives me a *knew it* type of a wink, which just makes my knees go weak and my heart beat faster than normal, which seems impossible, as it’s already racing like a goddamn steam train. We both walk into the living room where the Christmas lights are twinkling on the tree, and the room is cozy and warm as the fireplace crackles with bright flames. There are only two weeks to go before Christmas arrives. No doubt Santa will burn his arse on those flames before I ever get to burn *my* arse with Tom.

Louise lies in wait to be wowed by my stunning personality and charm. Maybe I should just come right out and tell her that I’m gay and that I am actually in love with the guy she wants to get her claws into. That should be titillating conversation. That little gem is bound to keep us going all night.

However, I don’t say that. I listen to what she does for a living with amazing accuracy and care. I listen to what she has to endure in her job: screaming babies, poo, the smell, the crying, moaning, snoring, and the play they actually get to do to make it all worthwhile. I think at one point I actually fall asleep, but maybe that’s just wishful thinking. Finally, after

another bottle of red emerges—both girls drink like goddamn fish—she asks about me and Tom overhears.

“Charlie’s amazingly talented,” he says.

We all look at Tom, my eyebrows rising. I’ve never heard Tom say anything like that before, and I’m all ears.

“Thanks, nice of you to notice. You’re not so bad, yourself.” Tom looks at me and smiles before his eyes divert to the floor. He’s looking a little flushed.

“Do you work together a lot, then?” Louise asks, questioning Tom, her head tilted to one side, her body upright, showing the outline of her breasts through her tight-fitting top. My eyes roll up a little. That old chestnut, eh? Jesus, can she make it any more obvious? Unable to stop thinking how much she wants to get into his trousers and hating her for it, I answer, letting her know that he’s my friend and not hers. Besides, my trousers have extra pulling power, if only he would see it.

“Yeah, quite a lot. Tom puts words to my designs for clients, which capture people’s imaginations, harder than it sounds, some clients can be arseholes... not liking one goddamn thing. Isn’t that right, Tom?” I look at him and he nods in agreement.

“You got that right.”

“Ahhh, that’s so sweet,” Louise says. Her voice is somewhat high-pitched, irritating, and really sickly sweet. It turns my stomach. “Tom, you’re Charlie’s voice, and Charlie is your imagination, your other half, your better half.” Louise and Isabelle giggle at her apparently wonderful observation while I start actually feeling a little sick and seriously having a hell of a time keeping down what little I have in my stomach. It’s really not the girls who are getting me into this state; it’s the wonder of how I’ve actually gotten into this situation in the first place.

I see that Tom looks a little perplexed, his eyes fixed on me. My mouth goes dry, my brain freezes as his stare pierces straight through me. And then it's gone—a moment, fleeting and possibly imagined—as he breaks the spell and reaches over to fill both the girls' glasses, before filling his own. He goes into the kitchen and brings me back a Coke, drinking some from the bottle before handing it to me.

“If you want a Coke, Tom, why don't you just get one for yourself? You always drink from mine, bloody hell.” I take it off him, his eyes going to the ceiling, not caring one little bit about it. The girls giggle at him again as he makes a supposed cool gesture pointing his thumb in my direction. I sigh heavily and just shake my head, secretly loving the fact that Tom's saliva might be on the bottle that I am about to drink from.

The next couple of hours I start to relax; the best thing is just to be here with him, seeing him laugh, listening to his voice, watching him move. I talk to Isabelle because he has asked me to, but I know that it's all for nothing. My interest is sitting to my left. I notice Louise flicking her hair and see Tom's obvious appreciation of her attention.

Eventually it proves too much. I get up and make my way to the toilet. I stare at my reflection in the mirror, wondering why I can't get Tom to look at me the way he looks at Louise. I shake my head, thinking how stupid that sounds. *He's not fucking gay, you idiot.* But I am, and I can't do this anymore. I close my eyes and rest my back against the door, lowering my head, breathing deeply, knowing it's time.

I lick my lips, my mouth suddenly dry again, as I walk back outside. I want to run out the front door, to be honest, but I've made up my mind and now just have to do it. I've seen Tom with girls in the past, but something in me has snapped. My feelings for him, the kiss, his apparent amnesia, and a blind date to top it off is too much.

Maybe the feeling of sticking my tongue down his throat every five seconds will evaporate if I just allow it. Living in hope is something I've done for far too long. Three pairs of eyes look at me as I sit back down

and pick up the Coke bottle. I stare at it, thinking I could burn a hole straight through the glass rather than make anymore conversation tonight.

“Okay, Charlie?” Tom frowns and looks at me, concerned.

“Yeah, fine. I’m sorry... tired. I have to get going.”

“Oh, Charlie, could you give me a lift home? It’s not far.” Isabelle’s expectant puppy dog look really doesn’t entice me at all. However, I have no other offers on the table, and I just want to leave.

“Sure.” I look at Tom, who seems a bit put out to be honest, as if I’ve just upset the evening or something. Fuck! He gets to spend time with Tweety Bird. What’s his fucking problem?

“That’s great, thank you.” She makes her way with me to the front door. I look back to see Louise and Tom walking toward us. I take a deep breath as the feeling to crush him up against the wall and make him remember that kiss is overwhelming. Isabelle opens the door and we step out into the coldness of the night, the moon high and my mood low.

He doesn’t see me, not the way I see him, not the way he sees Louise. They stand at the door as Isabelle and I walk to the car and wave goodbye. They look as if they’ve known each other all their lives. My heart skips a beat, and I now feel as if I really am going to chuck up. *Shit*. My mind goes into overdrive thinking of what they will probably do now that we’ve gone. I hate Tom for making me stay tonight because of it.

I open the car door for Isabelle; she smiles at me and gets in. My mind is frazzled and my heart crushed. Having to endure this evening will no doubt give me a headache for the next week. Well, my head is about to explode already, but I’ll wait until I’m in the safety of my own home before that happens.

I’m just about to open the door to the driver’s side when I feel a hand resting on my shoulder.

“You okay with this, Charlie?” Tom asks. “I wasn’t expecting the night to end this early.”

“Don’t worry about it. I’m tired and just need to get home.”

“You taking her home with you?” he whispers in my ear. This is my undoing. That’s it, no more. I look at him and shake my head, aware of Louise waiting for him and Isabelle waiting for me. They shouldn’t even fucking be here. No more games or lies or stupid wishful thinking.

“I doubt it,” I say.

He frowns, crossing his arms and looking really confused this time. “Why?”

I shake my head and smile—not like a good smile, but a smile of a man who feels doomed for what he’s about to say. I search his confusion in the reflection of his eyes, and I honestly feel that he doesn’t have a fucking clue. Of course he doesn’t, why should he?

“Because, Tom, I’m gay.”

His eyes seem to pop out of his head, and I move away quickly, like a panther or something, because I don’t want to hear his response. I’m already in the car, leaving him behind, not wanting to know what he thinks about that little piece of explicit, all-telling news. Mmmm, yeah, Tom—your friend, buddy, pal, is as fucking bent as a soft dick, which I very rarely have around him.

Isabelle and I drive in virtual silence, my mind wandering to last night, when my emotions got the better of me and I decided that I would give Tom something to remember. Obviously not!

“I hope I didn’t bore you. I can talk a lot when I’m nervous.”

I look at Isabelle, knowing that this situation tonight is in no way her fault. It’s Mr. Doesn’t Have A Clue’s fault, standing in his doorway and playing house with her friend.

“No, I hope I didn’t bore *you*. I’m sorry if I did. I’ve just got a lot on my mind.”

“Oh, turn here; it’s the house on the right, by that tree. You didn’t bore me, far from it.” I pull up keeping the car running. Isabelle looks at me and smiles sweetly. “Well, this is me. You want to come in for a coffee?”

I look at Isabelle’s house, noticing white Christmas lights dancing on the trees and roof, the snow starting to fall on the ground. It’s just beautiful and could be the most romantic setting with the right person.

“Better not, busy day tomorrow.”

She nods, looking slightly disappointed. I’ve never had any problem getting female attention, that’s for sure. I’ve even tried it with a few, but it never felt right. Now all I want to do is get her out of the car so I can go home and try and piece my life back together.

“I’d like to see you again, Charlie. Here’s my number if you want to get together again.”

I take it and nod “Thanks, I’m... not quite in that place at the moment to want to date, but....”

“Bad break up?”

“Something like that, yeah.”

“Well, if and when you get there, remember my number, okay?”

“Yeah, if and when... it was nice to meet you. I’ll wait until you get in the house.”

“Kay... night, Charlie.”

“Night, Isabelle.” She gets out of the car and walks up the driveway to the front porch. She unlocks the front door, turns, and waves before going into the house. Once she’s gone, I groan and hug the steering wheel, pressing my face firmly against it.



After a while I raise my head, breathing deeply and trying to make sense of my feelings. I slowly pull away and make my way home. Normally I'd look forward to the next day at work when I'd get to see him, work with him. But now, and for the first time in a long while, I don't even think about the clothes that I'm going to wear. I've just told Tom Harris that I'm gay. *Good one, Charlie Twiterson!*

And the look on his face was... what? Disgust, amazement, revolt! What the fuck was I thinking? I need to step off this merry-go-round I'm on. I thank God that the kiss isn't remembered, because tonight proved once and for all that Tom Harris may well be my voice, and I may well be his imagination, but that's where it ends. For two people to put certain things together, to be the half of the other, it really helps to be each other's type. The simple truth is I'm not his type, and it kills me to know I'll never be his better half.

I look at my life: I'm twenty-six and have had more sexual fantasies about men than the real thing. I've thought about Tom non-stop for a year and have only ever had two girlfriends where bodily parts just got in the way of any decent sexual thought I owned at the time. Everything just felt so wrong and wobbly. Almost put me off for life. My life is a disgrace, and it's time to take control and get on with living and—for Christ sake—fucking!

Once home I take a much-needed shower, wondering the whole time how good it would be to have some horny man take it with me. Suddenly I have a hideous thought of Tom doing things with Louise or still feeling disgusted with me. I wonder what the hell my day will be like tomorrow once we see each other face-to-face. I'm determined not to back down and say that I was only joking.

I dry myself off a little, feeling hotter than maybe I should, and then I check my cell phone and landline for any signs of life from Tom. Nothing, great! I go back into the bathroom and look in the mirror. I can

see that I'm okay to look at. I work out, and I have a good body, brown hair, and blue eyes.

Maybe it's my personality that lets me down. Falling for straight men doesn't help, obviously. I shake my head, walk out of the bathroom and into the kitchen to get a Coke from the fridge, when I hear a knock at the door. My first thought is that Abby has locked herself out of her flat again. My thirty-something next-door neighbor would forget her own head if it wasn't screwed on.

I walk over to the door with a towel around my hips, making sure it's tight because she has been known to pounce. However, at the same time, I don't care because when she told me she was interested in me six months ago, I blurted out my sexual orientation just to get her the fuck off me, and she had been my saving grace ever since. I need to talk to her now.

"Forget your key?" I ask as I reach for the latch, turn it, and open the door expecting to see a leggy, ginger-haired, sexy-looking dancer, but what I get is—*fuck me!*

Like a bee to a honeycomb, his eyes are immediately glued on me—all of me—and seem to drink in the sight as I stand there holding onto the door so tightly I might break it in two. His eyes already work their way down my damp torso to rest where I wish he would touch. My mind goes blank, but unfortunately my dick doesn't catch up as quickly, and it suddenly starts to harden. *Shit!*

He's staring. *Shit, shit!* Then he looks back up at me and smiles slightly, leaning his upper body against the door frame, hands in his pockets and one leg crossing the other.

"So, Charlie Matherson, is that a gun in your towel or are you just happy to see me?"

OKAY, so you might think that having Tom at my front door, looking good enough to eat and saying *that* to me might be the sign I've been waiting for, longing for. Well, you'd be wrong, because now I'm nervous as shit, and like a fool I'm standing in the doorway with a towel around my hips, a hard-on, and an unbecoming scowl on my face, saying absolutely nothing. I'm not in the slightest bit amused by Tom's observation.

I don't know why I'm so mad with him, but he's looking all innocent, as if butter wouldn't melt in his mouth. The fact that he looks so fucking gorgeous with his blond curls, eyes the color of dark syrup, strong, and warm, makes it all that much harder for me to be annoyed at him, which I hate!

Is there any known medical condition for temporary lower limb paralysis due to an erection the size of a tree trunk? I should be so lucky, but it feels as if I've swallowed a hundred Viagra with what's growing between my legs. I can't move in any direction, because turning sideways will make it look even bigger, showing him how turned on I am in his company. Tom also isn't helping the situation by staring at it like a meat eater in a vegetarian tasting seminar, looking hungry as hell!

"Well, can I come in, or are you going to keep me out here all evening?" *Yes, there you are, Tom Harris, making eye contact with me at last.* I feel hot, flustered, and I really do think I'm about to combust.

I sigh in mock defeat, pretending to think about it. I want to act mad and macho, but the truth is I don't want Tom to go anywhere. I want him to come in, ravage me, kiss me, touch me, fuck me, and be with me forever. Is that so much to ask?

Something tells me that we have to get a few things sorted out before any of that can happen, if *that* is going to happen at all. I know one thing for sure, it's not going to happen if I don't fucking move. So I find myself pushing the door open some more so he can walk past me into my flat. I

notice that he looks down again at my “gun” before walking into the living room. If he looks in that direction one more time, I might inadvertently fire my loaded weapon without needing to cock it first!

“What are you doing here, Tom?”

“As if you didn’t know, Charlie.” He looks at me, almost accusatory! As if I’m the one that’s done something wrong. *Jesus, he has a nerve.*

“Well, if you’re here to talk, let me at least put some clothes on first. Help yourself to a drink.”

“It’s not a drink I want, and don’t get dressed on my account.” He turns and walks over to me, closer than he needs to be. He looks hungry, and his eyes are moving south to my dick again, which is throbbing and ready to be played with. *Shit!* He really needs to leave; what was I thinking letting him in? What the fuck does he think he’s doing here at this time of night? I look at the clock on the wall, seeing it’s only eleven o’clock. *Jesus!* I really didn’t stay long at his house did I?

I take a step back; he moves forward again; I take another step back; he moves right up close, almost pinning me up against the wall.

“What are you, some sort of starving vulture?”

He smiles. “Possibly.”

“Tom, I find it hard to believe that you’ve suddenly found me so irresistible that it warrants you standing this close to me. What the hell are you doing?”

“What does it look like I’m doing?”

“Right, so you want a piece of this... of me. Because tonight it sure didn’t look that way. Now back up or... leave.”

“You want me to leave when I’ve only just walked in the door? Okay, but I don’t think that’s what you want at all, Charlie. Is it?”

*Shit, he's right.* We look at each other for what seems to be a really, really long time. In fact, it's a new record in the Charlie Matherson Book of Records. I have a load of them where Tom Harris features very strongly. Oh yeah! Longest time of being in love without his knowledge; longest time going without blinking when I first laid eyes on him; longest time as a stuttering idiot trying to make coherent conversation when I first tried to speak to him—oh, and my favorite—the longest time spent being an absolute dickhead by thinking of this list in my head instead of talking to him now.

So this is now the longest time without the two of us saying anything at all. We just stare at each other for what seems like hours, although I know it's only seconds.

Truth is I don't know what the fuck to say. Do I want him to leave? Um... that would be a big *N-O*. How can I want him to go anywhere, when I can feel his warmth, his breath, his very being taking over all my bodily parts? Dick hard, nipples hard, breathing, you guessed it, hard!

Seriously, in a moment I'll just drag him into the bedroom, consequences be damned. I really won't be responsible for any of my actions, whatsoever!

"Move, Tom," I whisper pathetically.

He looks at me, his eyes traveling all over my body one more time before he steps closer. *Shit, shit, shit!* I think I have actually stopped the most important function you can have—breathing—as he places his hands on either side of my head.

"So, Charlie Matherson, you're gay?" he asks, smiling at me. His eyes shine brightly like he's just found the gold at the end of the rainbow. They gaze into mine; his mouth hovers—not quite touching mine. This is no good. I feel his dick briefly rub up against mine like an upside-down Eskimo kiss.

We need to talk, because this could be a game to him, but I'll have everything to lose if it is. Thinking that this could mean more to me than to him, even though I have his hot rod poking straight to my groin, I push him away with my hand on his chest.

"Shit, Tom, what the fuck? First you set me up with a blind date, now... fuck... now you're coming on to me. Why? You enjoy teasing me or something? See how far you can get before you're forced to stop by the fact that it's not me you want."

"That's what you think of me, Charlie? That I'm doing this for a joke, playing with you? Jesus, how come you're so fucking paranoid?"

"Why did you set up that blind date this evening?"

"Because I wanted to do something nice for you."

"Why... why the fuck would you do that?"

"Why do I have to have a 'why'?"

"Because in all the time I've known you, you've never done that, okay? And now, after last night, here you are setting me up."

"What about last night?"

"Nothing... forget it... just forget it."

"Mmmm, well... easy as that may sound, I find it hard to forget your tongue in my mouth."

I can't actually breathe now. I feel my air flow being restricted by my own balls, stuffed down my throat, threatening to choke me to death.

"What?"

"You heard me."

"You... you remember that?"

"Well, it's hard to forget it, Charlie."

“Why didn’t you say anything this morning?”

“Why didn’t *you*?”

I shake my head, not wanting this conversation and making a hasty move toward my bedroom door. I don’t think this is the best time to tell him how idiotic I feel about last night, especially considering how underdressed I am, a very big disadvantage.

I really don’t have time for the luxury of escaping as I suddenly feel Tom move up behind me, placing his hand over mine, preventing me from opening the door.

“Why didn’t you?” he whispers into my ear.

“Because... I was embarrassed, okay?”

“Why?”

I turn to face him, now he’s being the idiot.

“Why the hell do you think, Tom? You’ve just said it yourself. I stuck my tongue down your throat. Seems that’s good enough reason to feel a little embarrassed, don’t you think?”

“Jesus, Charlie, how much did you have to drink last night? I know I had more than you, but were you really that gone that you can’t remember the exact reason why you kissed me?”

“Well, I would say it’s fucking obvious why I kissed you.”

“I asked you whether you remembered the exact reason.”

I turn away again, wanting to get into my bedroom. He places his hand back over mine, not allowing me to move. *Jesus*. His touch is sizzling hot against my skin. Why are we talking so much? Why am I thinking so much?

“Well?”

“What, Tom? What do you want me to say? Want me to blow up your ego a little? Well, you’re out of luck, because I’m not into stroking anything at the moment.”

He actually laughs at that before he lets go of my hand and turns me to face him. I feel his warm hands on my shoulders. God, it feels so good.

“I’m going to get myself a drink like you suggested. Of course you can change into something less revealing which, to be honest, would certainly help me out a great deal, under the circumstances. I’ll give you a little space to remember a few details that you seem to have forgotten, my friend. I’ll be here waiting, as long as it takes you, but I’ll give you a clue to help you on your way... blond hair, brown eyes.”

I frown, not really understanding what the fucking hell that’s supposed to mean. I watch him move away from me and head into the kitchen. He looks back; our eyes lock briefly before I walk into my bedroom. *Sweet Jesus*. You could melt plastic with the looks he’s flashing my way. Why aren’t we heading to my bedroom together? Oh yes, because I have *issues*.

I start to think about last night, trying to multitask, and change quickly. I choose a pair of pretty heavy-duty underwear to keep everything in place down there. I think briefly that maybe I should tape my dick to my leg; it may help the spring reflex I have whenever I’m near him.

“THERE you are, Charlie, come on, come join the party.”

I looked up to see Mary staring at me, the girl from human resources who put the shindig together. Christmas music played in the background, making it hard to concentrate.

“Um, yeah, okay, I’ll be there in half an hour, I’ve just got to finish—”



“What the fuck? Charlie, get your arse upstairs now.”

Tom stood next to Mary, by all accounts, looking hot and a little drunk.

“Yeah, just give me—”

“No. Now. Shit, it’s Christmas, for fuck’s sake. By the time you’ve finished up, we’ll be into the New Year.” Tom did have a point.

“And Jess is asking after you.” Mary smiled, nudging Tom, as they both looked at me.

Yuck! Jess. Great, one of the reasons that I didn’t want to join the party. Having some leech burning holes into my arse from afar was getting pretty fucking obvious, tiresome, and old.

“Oh, terrific!” I put my hand over my mouth pretending to yawn, “I’ll stay here, then.”

“No, you don’t.” Tom said as he and Mary dragged me out of my chair and pushed me out of my office, guiding me upstairs to the party that was in full swing.

The truth was that I’m not one for parties—even if it was Christmas—booze, or women. Obviously, being gay may have something to do with that last one, but everything else? Yeah, pretty fucking pathetic. I think I have an old soul or something, because all I really want is a good job and nice place to live with a good man who will love me forever.

The music and people were loud, and Jess was ogling me, mistletoe in her hand. I don’t really drink, but Tom seemed to be having enough for both of us. Jess eventually started to make her way toward me, so I swiftly took Tom’s drink off him and drank fast, hating the taste. He laughed and went to get us two more, while Jess did her best to engage me in some sort of enthralling conversation and attempted face sucking and body groping.

Tom came back with another drink for me, which I have to say I drank pretty damn fast, still not engaging in Jess’s drunken attempts to

ravage my mouth. I was fully aware, however, of my friend standing next to me talking to Emma, whom he had taken out once. So I eventually dumped Jess in favor of going to the toilet, just to get away from her and him. It was a good bet that she wouldn't follow me in there.

The toilet door opened about five minutes later and Tom walked in. I was washing my hands when he smacked me on the back and unzipped himself to take a leak.

"So what's wrong with Jess, Charlie?"

"What d'you mean?"

"Well, she's hot, good figure, funny. Why do you run a mile every time she tries to talk to you?" He finishes up and walks over to the sink to wash his hands.

"Just because she's hot doesn't mean I have to fancy her." I stare at his reflection in the mirror, knowing full well why I didn't want her.

"Well, that is a point. What the fuck is your type, Charlie? When was the last time you had a date?"

I thought too quickly on that one, trying to cover my tracks. "Last week." Oh yeah, he's really going to believe that!

"Bullshit."

"Why bullshit?"

"Because I would have known about it! Besides, you didn't have the time last week; you were here most evenings, as usual, making me look bad, finishing something or other."

"How do you know that?"

"Because I got it from the boss, that's how I know."

We stood looking at each other, I suddenly felt so exposed, thinking maybe he could see straight through me. “Probably a couple of months ago,” I finally admitted.

“Shit, you should join the priesthood or something.”

“Fuck you, it’s not that bad.”

“When was the last time you... you know?”

“Oh fuck off... that’s personal.” I made a move to leave. Tom laughed a little as he followed close behind me.

“Oh come on, Charlie... when?”

“That’s for me to know and for you to find out.”

He held onto my arm, and I thought I felt his thumb stroke it, but I wasn’t sure.

“So, I’m asking aren’t I? If Jess isn’t your type, Charlie, who is?”

“What?”

“Who’s your type?”

The room felt as if it was spinning with his hand on my arm and standing so close to me. I took a deep breath, almost tired of the charade that I had been playing for so long. The drink seemed to help me along a little, giving me added courage.

“Blond hair, brown eyes.”

The door opened before he had time to say anything, the comment forgotten in the haze of drink, music, and the overflow of people. As the night wore on, I saw him drink a little bit more, and to be honest, I just wanted to leave, so I headed back downstairs to get my jacket. I’d been in my office for about fifteen minutes when Tom walked in.

“So this is where you’ve gotten to. What the fuck are you doing now?”

“Just looking over this for the presentation tomorrow.”

Tom walked up to my desk looking at the pictures and drawings spread over it. “They look good.”

“You can’t even see them; you’ve had way too much to drink.”

“Fuck off. I have not.”

“Yeah, right.” I shook my head a little, looking at his glazed eyes.

He walked around to my side of the desk and stood closer to me, picking up one picture at a time, stroking his lips with the tip of one finger.

“They’re really good, Charlie, really good!” We looked at each other, and he smiled at me. My heart thumped as he slowly looked back at them. The pictures were forgotten as I quietly observed him. He was so fucking beautiful. I was lost in my own thoughts when he suddenly said, “You know, Charlie, I have blond hair and brown eyes.”

He looked back at me, dropping the picture he was holding, suddenly standing upright and close to me again. The room sizzled with electricity, I was sure of it. At that moment, you could have heard a pin drop. I held my breath, because breathing would have broken the spell. His breath caressed my skin as he continued to stare. He said nothing else, but he didn’t move away, either.

I wanted him so badly at that moment, wanted him to know the real me. I found myself tentatively moving forward, hardly believing what I was going to do. I couldn’t stop myself even if I tried, my hand brushing his cheek, him grabbing at my shirt and pulling me forward, and then—God, yes—I remember meeting him halfway as we kissed.

I remember his taste as our tongues found their way in, thinking that I may never get another chance to do this once he was sober. My knees felt weak as I felt myself losing a little bit more control. He pulled me toward him, our bodies rubbing together, feeling his rough stubble grazing

my skin, hearing our heavy moans urgently joining together. I frantically pushed farther forward, pulling his hair with both hands, wanting him so fucking much... so fucking much it hurt.

*BLOND hair, brown eyes....*

Sitting on the bed, thinking back now, I remember I was too panicked and embarrassed to recall everything clearly this morning. I thought I initiated the kiss. I was so blinded I didn't realize what he was saying to me last night. Moving toward him, stroking his cheek, I thought I started the ball rolling, but it was him all along.

I walk back into the sitting room; his back is to me as he looks out the window. I stand behind him, putting my hand on his shoulder. He turns around to face me, searching my eyes.

"Blond hair, brown eyes, male, and my friend... you. That's my type, Tom. Nothing else will do."

He smiles at me. I notice how his body relaxes on hearing that, shoulders dropping as he moves toward me again. This time I don't push him away. "I couldn't sleep last night at all, Charlie. I came to see you this morning because I thought I'd really blown it; you left the party so quickly. Then you hid from me in the coffee shop, didn't mention anything on the way to work. Isabelle, well, she was a desperate peace offering, to show you that I'd obviously got *us* wrong and that nothing had changed between us. I didn't want to lose you. I just wanted to show you that I was okay with you not wanting me."

"God, that's not what I was thinking. When you didn't say anything this morning, I just assumed you couldn't remember or didn't want to."

"I came onto you, remember?"

“Now I do!” I smile at him. “I’m sorry, Tom. I was so scared I’d fucked everything up. Thought you’d probably hate me.”

“How could I hate you?” He places his hand onto my cheek, rubbing his thumb against my stubble. I put my hand over his, not really believing what was happening between us, and that I was wrong about him all along.

“Would you have been okay with it? You know, been able to forget last night, remain just friends.”

“No, of course not. Didn’t you notice? Isabelle has dark hair.”

I smile at him, so relieved to hear that.

“I didn’t want you to fancy her; I just wanted to see you tonight, be with you, to make things better. God, you fucking blew me away, Charlie. Saying what you said tonight, I was so happy, thought that I may have a chance with you after all. I mean you being gay is a good start, right? I’ve tried to keep my distance because we work together. I couldn’t read you at all anyway. I didn’t know how you felt. You’ve been driving me crazy.”

“How about now, Tom, am I driving you crazy right now?” Both sets of eyes begin moving south.

“Yes... God, yes.”

I grab hold of his shirt, moving backward, pulling him toward the bedroom. I finally have Tom Harris exactly where I want him, and amazingly, I feel nervous and calm all at the same time. It’s a fucking wonderful feeling to have.

“Then let me show you just how good I feel.”

SO I had Tom Harris exactly where I wanted him, and you might think that would make everything that much easier. I mean, what could actually

go wrong? He was in my flat, going toward my bedroom. He was smiling and there was no doubt his body was willing. I could see it very clearly from where I was standing!

Tom had come on to me just as much as I had come on to him. Thinking about it now, I can see that. I mean, it's easy to see once he pointed it out to me. Tom likes me, too, which makes everything so much easier. Well, you would think, wouldn't you?

I was dragging him forcefully by his collar, sticking to him like Super Glue because there was no way that I was going to let him go, not on your life. Well, the thought that I actually hadn't done anything like this for a long time did have me slightly concerned. However, I decided to try and forget about that. Yes, I was a big gay virgin, so what? He didn't have to know about that, did he? So, I went along with this cool demeanor that I am so obviously good at. Well, in my head anyway. My last words before entering the bedroom, I believe, were, "*Let me show you just how good I feel.*" Laughable, really, considering I didn't have a fucking clue what I was doing or how I would actually feel. Well, I do now, that's for sure.

I got laid in college. Okay... it was by one girl, but still, it's not totally lame to be seduced by just the one girl, is it? So yeah, my sexual experiences had mostly been with girls—well, okay, two girls. However, I have had one or two guys who liked the look of me, let me tell you. Yeah, this buff bod has had quite a few encounters where, um... well, when it came down to it, I mostly ran the other way.

Still, at least I've gotten close to *it*. I'm just not that confident with the whole, "*Hey, I'm gay, how about you?*" or "*Come get me, 'cause I'm gorgeous*" kind of pick-up lines. I think I would piss myself if somebody came over to me and took me up on whatever I had to offer.

No, I'm more subtle, which means I'm a virgin because subtle for a guy like me means shy. *Yuck!* I hate that word. Anyway, being subtle is

quite hard for someone who is very accident prone, which I am. It makes my life a lot harder, so why change the habit of a lifetime?

Look, I'm not a total gay virgin. I mean, I'm not one to brag, but I have had quite a few hand jobs and some blow jobs and some other stuff which I won't go into, because that's just rude! Even so, Tom would be my first full-on fantasy on a stick, wanting to go all the way as soon as possible before I go cross-eyed from despair. I just don't want to blow it. *Oh God, I'm too funny!*

Anyway, I'm getting off the point. *Even funnier!*

The thought of Tom in my bedroom was almost ludicrous, with me in control and him looking like some Greek god waiting to part the waters or something. He is the cream in my coffee, the butter on my muffin, the foam to my stubble, and the eggs with my bacon. I had a lot riding on the fact that I knew which sausage goes in the right hole, if you get my meaning. I cringe now with how it all went down. Charlie Matherson can be cool in my head, *right?* When Charlie Matherson is nervous and left to his own devices, he is like a high-speed train wreck. Yeah, a fucking disaster!

Everything went quite well as long as I didn't talk or move much. Believe me, we stood in my bedroom not talking or moving much for a remarkably long time. His tongue is amazing and made moves in my mouth that seem absolutely impossible. Well, he's just a damn good kisser. I really can't wait to see what other moves he has. I know I'll learn a lot from him, that's for sure. Our bodies were so close that our dicks rubbed together through clothes that really had no reason to still be on our bodies. Who the fuck needs clothes when you have Tom Harris next to you?

*Reminder: Always stay naked when in the flat, at least when Tom's around. Otherwise it would just be me naked in my own flat on my own, and that wouldn't make any sense at all.*



I can't quite believe I actually put clothes back on at his request! What a waste of fucking time. Anyway, his tongue makes me shiver like a cool sea breeze. He almost choked me with how far his tongue could reach down the back of my throat.

Under his shirt, his body felt like smooth, solid wood. I had waited so long to get my hands on that kind of grain, to rub him down and lavish his six-pack with love. My hands urgently traveled underneath the fabric, reaching skin that drew away when I touched it as he caught his breath. Our tongues virtually rubbed each other out with the intensity of the kiss.

Making love would come—this was just a need to get at each other. My hands were shaking so much they felt completely separate from the rest of my body. Looking at it like that, I found the courage to work my hands all the way up to his chest, catching each nipple between thumb and forefinger and squeezing a little.

“...hit arlie, that eels so ood... so ucking ard for you,” he moaned into my mouth.

As he was still kissing me at the time, I deciphered this as, “*Shit, Charlie, that feels so good... so fucking hard for you.*” That made me feel so good and so much hornier, if that were possible.

While I was thinking about his dirty talk, I had no time to respond as he plunged his tongue back into my mouth. No complaints from me. Firstly, I think I died and went straight to heaven. Also, I was sure that my eyeballs rolled all the way into the back of my skull, which is virtually impossible, isn't it?

Make no mistake where his hands had wandered to. *Jesus*. One hand cupped my eternally hard dick, which I knew I should've strapped down. It really was quite painful as it strained forward in my ridiculous ironclad pants. His other hand was squeezing my arse.

“God, Tom... need to get out of these.”

His eyes lit up like a lighthouse showing me the way. He looked like he was just about to have me for dinner. I have to say I made pretty swift work of getting out of my underwear. Well, I was almost desperate at this point. My calmness never could really take over with him touching me and looking at me that way.

What could go wrong? I had my underwear off and the T-shirt lifted up over my head by Mr. He Who Can Undress Me With His Eyes. I was standing there naked, dick erect, breathing somewhat erratically with him calmly looking at me. In one sexy move, he removed his shirt, pulling it off over his head. He kicked off his shoes and then just stood there staring at me. He looked so incredibly edible it made me wish I had whipped cream to hand. I mean we were virtually good to go, right?

His breath was inches from my face, our bodies were touching, and then my mind went blank, totally blank. He smiled at me, as if he was seeing the nerves, the absolute panic written all over my face. To top it off, I was sweating, I mean I really was. I could feel the dampness on my forehead and above my top lip, and it felt as if I had a waterfall underneath my armpits. Well, I was naked and he wasn't, so give me a break.

He reached his hand down and stroked my dick, which made me jump. He slowly licked the wetness away from my top lip, and then licked and kissed my jaw, pulling me forward by my erection. Oh God, I actually whimpered. Oh yes, I did. *Smooth—very, very smooth.*

“Undress me, Charlie.” He leaned his forehead onto mine, took hold of my hands and guided them to his zip. “You are so fucking gorgeous. Do you have any idea how much I’ve wanted you?”

Well, my balls were firmly lodged in my throat because I didn't know what to say to that. It was very difficult to imagine doing this with him anyway, let alone the thought that he had wanted me for quite some time as well.

“Tell me how long.”

“Since the very first day.”

“Jesus, how come you never said?”

“Because, I didn’t think it would be polite to fuck the boss’s son.”

“And now?”

“Well, I don’t want to be polite anymore. I want to be naughty.”

“Really? Well, it was probably wise to keep your distance. Mum *can* be temperamental.” I may have sounded calm but my insides were doing a belly flop, screaming, *he wants me, he wants me, he wants me* like a big girl’s blouse!

“Think I’ll go crazy any second now, that or simply spontaneously combust.” *Me too!*

“Can’t have that now, can we?”

“Thank God she loves me now. Besides she’s a pussy cat.”

“Really?”

“Yeah, she was a little cold in the beginning, but like her son, she warms up nicely to my charms.” *Warm, I was on fucking fire!*

“Is that right?”

“Oh yeah!”

I slowly undid his jeans, sliding his underwear down with them, showing off legs that had muscle definition far beyond sheer perfection—strong, athletic, and perfect in my eyes. His trail of hair framed the most beautiful dick I had ever seen. Yeah, okay, not that I had seen that many. All I wanted to do was bury my face in his crotch and just breathe it all in.

My eyes stayed where I wanted my face to be, daydreaming for what seemed like a hundred years, just lost to that perfect vision. His voice brought me out of it as I felt his fingers tangled up with mine. Picture us

both naked and my out-of-control thermal system heating up the room, radiating warmth for both of us.

“You know you’re worth it,” he whispered into my ear. My utter weakness for him went straight to my legs as he kept his lips close to my ear, not moving.

“Worth what?” I couldn’t help whispering back.

“Losing my job.”

Feeling the lightness of breath brushing gently over that most sensitive of erogenous zones made my heart skip and my dick jump like a leap year. I almost crash to the floor at his words, but I would have taken him with me so as not to lose a single second of his company.

Well, as it was, I just pulled him forcefully down on top of me. I fell on the bed, loving the fact that he was sprawled all over me, our bodies moving together and our dicks angled so that his erection was rubbing up against mine. His hand skimmed down my waist, gripping my arse as he thrust his hips back and forth. I kept moaning over and over while he just stared at me, faces so close. He certainly enjoyed driving me insane as I tried to get to his mouth. He played with my hair as he worked his hips. I gave up trying to kiss him as he kept pulling his face away smiling, fucking teasing the hell out of me.

I let my head just fall onto the bed and stared back at him. My arms were loosely wrapped around his shoulders as my hands stroked the dampness around the nape of his neck, and my legs curled around his lower half. I could not believe that he was actually on top of me. There I was, thinking he was into Tweety Bird and I was all set up to suck face with Isabelle. Well, thank God being gay finally paid off, because I knew who I wanted to suck and it wasn’t her.

“God, Tom, you’re so hard.”

He laughed a little and slid his hand down to my incredibly hard dick, frowned, and said, “Mmm, well, you’re not doing too bad yourself.”

We looked at each other for the briefest of moments before it all kind of just undid us a little bit. Something very intense took over because we were rutting up against each other like two wild animals. It felt incredible. His dick was pressed so hard into mine, his body fully on top of me, we were both moaning frantically as our tongues reached where other parts simply couldn’t.

With sweat building and our bodies sliding, there wasn’t anything else to do but come—come all over each other, because there was no way on hell’s Earth that I could stop what was building up inside me. I knew I loved him, wanted him. God, I fucking loved Tom Harris, and I had his come, his smell, and his sweat all over me. It was the sweetest scent I had ever smelled and the best feeling I had ever known.

All things considered, at least we got that far, and I felt a little clap—not that kind—I felt some applause was in order because I achieved more with Tom than I had achieved in a very long time with any guy.

“Shit... shit!” I murmured into his mouth as he kissed me slowly; his lips tasted salty, and when we came up for air, his eyes were just as glazed as mine. My bedsheets had somehow made their way off the bed and lay in a crumpled heap on the floor. Our breathing was short as we both tried to catch it, and I was in heaven, never wanting it to end.

“Damn!” he whispered, looking completely out of it. My head lay on the pillow with him still above me and our come mixed together like a sweet, sticky dessert.

“Stay with me tonight?” I asked, hoping that I didn’t sound too desperate.

He stroked the sweat out of my eyes and rolled onto his back, pulling my head gently onto his chest. “Don’t want to leave, Charlie.” Our bodies were connected, and everything was so calm, everything finally so perfect.

What could Charlie Matherson possibly do to fuck it up? Well, just because we were tired, and we had tranquility and a bed, didn't mean a damn thing.

"What... what do you want?" I knew what I wanted; it was all in the bathroom cabinet, unopened.

"You. I want you." My adrenaline was running on overdrive, and my condoms and lube were finally going to see the light of day. All the items were bought roughly around the time the ark was built.

All it took was a split second. It was nothing spectacular except for the crack that was heard when I fell and the bump on my head when I came to. Getting off the bed: such a simple exercise for some people, but something I was good at making look very hard, obviously. Needing to get the stuff that would allow us to make sweet music together, I remember sliding out of his warm embrace.

"I'll be right back." *Yeah, famous last words.*

Tom watched me the whole time as I ran around to his side of the bed to get to the bathroom. I didn't really see where I was going; I was too busy looking at Tom to notice what was on the floor. Then I was falling hard and hurting badly. I had tripped over the cover on the floor and then did a somewhat long and amazing slide along the wooden floor. It all seemed to happen in slow motion of course, and I felt the searing pain in my ankle before I hit the floor with a loud thump.

SO, HERE I am now lying in a hospital bed and waiting for X-rays to tell me whether I've broken my ankle or not. To top it all, I've got a raging headache from the rather large bump on my head. It was a perfect way to end the evening. *Fucking brilliant!*

Tom sits patiently next to my bed, his hand stroking mine and simply waiting with me. My ankle may hurt and I may have a bump the size of fucking Vesuvius, but just having him here makes things seem a little easier.

“So, Charlie, if you wanted me to leave you alone, all you had to do was say. You didn’t have to go this far!”

“Damn, I just didn’t know how to get you out of my bed.” Trying to be funny really isn’t easy with all the pain I’m in. However, I can feel the painkillers starting to do their job really, really well, thank God, making me feel a little light-headed. That’s dangerous, because I’m already light-headed from Tom. His sympathetic smile is just about the sexiest thing I’ve ever seen.

“So, you do this a lot? End the evening just lying on your back?”

“That was the plan, yes.” I laugh but suddenly have to stop as I feel a sharp pain in my ankle as my body jigs up and down. I can’t quite believe that he had to wrestle my sore and aching body into my clothes so he could take me to hospital; wiping off the come was a very awkward moment. “Stick with me and I’ll take you to places you’ve never been before, that’s for sure.” I close my eyes, trying to concentrate on the medication taking me to new heights, but not the ones that I’d been hoping for.

He laughs a little. I feel him stroking my face with his other hand. “Believe me, Charlie; you took me to an amazing place not so long ago.”

I open my eyes and look into perfection. “You liked that, did you?” I whisper, knowing that *he* took me to the stars and back.

His hand squeezes mine gently, and then he withdraws it, very aware of where we are. “Tell you something,” he says. His voice is low, husky, and sexy as hell!

“What?”

He leans into me, sweeping his breath against my ear, which makes me shiver all over. What's a little pain when Tom Harris is doing that to me again? He sparks up my senses with the game he plays with his lips against my skin. "You felt really, really good while you were taking me there, and I'm going to want to do a hell of a lot more traveling."

YES, so I fucked it up big time. Well, I always say if you want something done right, do it yourself! Story of my life, that's for sure. I'm guaranteed to make a grade A idiot of myself. If I didn't, I suppose I wouldn't be me. Yep! I certainly know how to make an entrance and an exit! Just about to have sex with Mr. Hottie, and I end up breaking my fucking ankle. I mean, how in the hell did that happen? I was in my own flat for Christ's sake, not running a marathon or leaping off a building.

Maybe I need to go and get my eyes tested, or maybe my brain. Better yet, maybe I should just throw myself off a cliff and be done with it. It's not even one break, oh no; Charlie Matherson has to go and break his ankle in *two* places, really hindering my chances of having sex anytime soon!

*Note to self: stay in bed the next time Tom Harris wants to have the backbreaking task of fucking you into oblivion. Rather than you continuing to break every bone in your body, because that can happen very easily if you have anything to do with it!*

Now I'm in a cast. I have the enjoyable task of sitting on my arse and trying to figure out how the backbreaking task can be accomplished at all during eight weeks of bone repair. It just doesn't seem possible with a twelve-ton plaster on my lower leg.

Every which way I work it out, it seems as if all the jerking—*not that kind*—but jerking around, you know, bumping—*not that kind either*—umm, bouncing—*yeah, that's the right word*—bouncing up and down at



the moment really hurts this useless limb below my knee. Not to mention the “limb” just below my waist; it’s been deemed pretty useless, too, since this happened.

Just when I thought we were going to wipe off the dust of my condom packet, not forgetting the lube, I’m stuck to just sticking my leg in the air instead of what should be stuck straight up! The other appendage seems to be hanging on to its own misery, lying useless in between my legs, trapped with nowhere to go and nothing to do.

Finding any upside to that is hard, but I’m trying. However, I’ve had to give Tom a key to my flat because he wanted to help me out. At the moment I’m pretty useless trying to help myself, which is completely pitiful even for me. But Tom helping out is turning me on way too much, which hurts more than the leg. He oozes sex appeal just by putting out the rubbish or bringing me a drink, for Christ’s sake.

However, if there’s one thing that’s going to turn off my sex-crazed mind, it’s a cast that I’m sure has been put on far too tight; every move is uncomfortable and brings tears to my eyes. My leg feels as if it’s going to drop off at any minute if I turn the wrong way or make a sudden move. It’s quite obvious that I’ve not really been in the mood for any kind of foreplay, and to be perfectly honest, Tom has been a complete gentleman—damn him!

He could try a little harder to be a bad boy. Instead, he’s keeping as far away from me as he can, because at times the pain has been a little too intense for me to hide it. *Fuck!* He’s been worried that if we started something he would do more damage. I’ll say, and not in the department he thinks.

So instead, Tom has been helping me out with shopping and shit like that. Can you believe that? Instead of my lover, he’s temporarily turned into my housemaid. The only action I’ve had from him is the tender kisses he places on my lips and neck, driving me crazy with the need for him!

And that man can kiss. God only knows what else he can do with his mouth, and I can't wait to find out.

The added perks of Tom being my beck-and-call man, apart from plumping up my pillows and cooking for me, are when he lies next to me, staying as close as he possibly can, not leaving my side, and his toothbrush next to mine in the holder when he stays over. Maybe lying on my back incapacitated is what I should have done a year ago when I realized that Tom was the answer to my universe. I only hope that the toothbrush will not be the only thing of his to live here. I've gotten used to him cuddling up to me, whispering in my ear as I try to ignore the throbbing in my leg as well as my dick; each is just as uncomfortable as the other.

When I do stand, the most fun I've had in the exercise department is trying to get from A to B while juggling two crutches, a drink, and a plate of food. That's a sight to behold all by itself. Not easy, I can tell you! That in no way has topped telling my mother that I broke my ankle and won't be back to work for a while.

I'm surprised she hasn't brought my work in progress over to my flat for me to carry on with, because apparently, we Mathersons never give into pain. Unfortunately, I can't turn around and tell my workaholic mother that she's a fucking pain in the arse. Anyway, when this sort of thing happens, you really get to appreciate having all your limbs in working order. Otherwise, what tends to happen is it stops you from having the fun you so desperately want. Or so I thought.

Okay, don't get me wrong, I don't actually have a low pain threshold. If I concentrate, I can do things for myself. I feel triumphant when I actually shuffle and maneuver my way from the kitchen to the living room and remain fully intact, not breaking anything else. However, imagine having the man of your dreams coming to help you every day, taking care of you. Some might say I planned it. I might have thought it a fucking good idea myself if it wasn't so damn painful, especially at night.

So, the options were to stay with my mother, which would be worse than having all my teeth pulled out, or her coming to stay with me, which is worse than having all my teeth pulled out and being interrogated under hot lights at the same time. The other option of course was Tom helping me out, which is also like torture. The last two weeks have passed in a blur of pain, painkillers, throbbing appendages, and sheer frustration—plus the utter embarrassment that he’s helping me but we haven’t moved past first base yet. Yes, the man’s a saint.

The painkillers have given me a steady flow of peace and tranquility as well as a fuzzy head. Nothing new there, because my head has been a little fuzzy since Tom told me he liked me too. A choice between Tom Harris or my mother? Well, there really wasn’t any choice to make. The thing is, he’s staying more and more, to the point that one day, there really will be no reason for him to leave.

For instance, at this moment Tom Harris lies next to me, in bed, naked, it’s Christmas Eve, and his arm is snaked around my waist, holding me close. He’s even bought me a tree and decorated it, brightening up the flat and making it feel more like Christmas. Yeah, there’s no reason to leave now that we’ve found out how good it can be. If it’s as good as this with a cast on my leg, just think what it’s going to be like when it comes off, no holds barred.

As I start to drift off, I have the added luxury of going over and over in my head what happened roughly three hours ago to get me here. I’m thinking myself into frustration because I really wouldn’t mind him doing it again.

I’d had the usual four calls from my mother asking how I was, the threat of her coming over thrilling me no end because there was another visitor I was looking forward to seeing. Her prattling on about how accident-prone I had been as a child—her favorite topic of conversation. Then there was the conversation about Christmas Day.

“Are you sure you’ll be all right to come over here, darling, with your ankle the way it is?”

“Mum, I’ve hardly moved out of the flat in two weeks. I’m bored and it’s feeling better, itchy as hell, though. Just don’t ask me to carry anything.”

“There are seventeen of us; I think I’ll have enough help. You can sit and watch us do all the work.”

“Sounds good to me.”

“Um... is Tom still helping you out?”

I bit down on my bottom lip wondering whether I should say what I was about to say. “Yes, in fact I was wondering whether—” I stopped myself, thinking maybe I should just shut up.

“What?”

“Whether... um....”

“Spit it out, Charlie.”

“You wouldn’t mind him coming with me tomorrow?”

“Oh no, not at all, but doesn’t he have family to go to?”

“Well, he does, but... um....”

“Charlie, what?”

“Don’t freak out.”

“About what?”

“I’m seeing him... we’re seeing each other.”

“Seeing him, what, like ‘boyfriend’, seeing each other?”

“Yes.”

I shut my eyes and waited for some sort of outburst like, “it’s unprofessional to date a colleague,” or “it may affect your work,” but there was just laughter on the other end of the phone.

“Mum.”

“Oh God, Charlie, that’s kind of old news.”

“You know?”

“Darling, I suspected, the way he’s been rushing off to see you from work, and he talks about you all the time. His eyes are just as dopey as yours when he says your name, which kind of gave it away. You’ve become almost inseparable the last year; it was only a matter of time. I’m surprised it didn’t happen sooner.”

“He didn’t think it would be a good idea, and we didn’t know that we batted for the same team.”

“How can you be friends and not know *that* about each other?”

“Yeah, well, I didn’t tell him I was because I’m not exactly forward, and he seemed so straight that I didn’t want to lose his friendship. It wasn’t nice of me because he was in no way homophobic, but I didn’t want to have to test it out just in case he felt uncomfortable around me. Turned out he kept his distance because he didn’t want to make a pass at the boss’s son. He dated a couple of girls to throw me off the scent, but he didn’t want to lose my friendship either. In effect, we’ve done our damndest to hide who we really are from each other!”

“Oh, well, now I suppose you can relax and just enjoy your friendship with added perks.”

“*Mum! Shit!*”

“What? I can’t talk about sex with my own son?”

“No, you cannot.”

“So much like your father, always so shy and timid about it all. Well, your father became so much more adventurous once he got married to me. He’s a tiger now.”

“*Mum, Jesus!* Thanks for that little bit of insight. I may just throw up now.”

“Oh, the younger generation never thinks that we oldies still do it.”

“I’m hanging up, Mum.”

“We do, you know.”

“Bye, Mum.”

I ended the call listening to her laughter. Eccentric is the only way to describe her. I would have pitied my Dad, but they have been married thirty-one years and were still bloody happy about it.

Anyway, there I was dozing in the middle of the bed, listening to some music, my left leg finally at rest and propped up on some pillows. It had been annoying me all day and itching like hell. The dip of the bed, and the touch started off lightly, brushing up my good leg, causing me to stir and open my eyes to find Tom hovering above me with one knee on the bed and a smile on his face.

“What in hell am I supposed to do with you, Charlie?”

“Mmm... anything you want.”

“I come home with you looking like this. It’s getting pretty hard for me to continue to remain good to you.”

“Well, then... maybe you should start off by being just a little bad.”

Tom bit his bottom lip, as our fingers connected, and I pulled him down onto the bed fully so that he was now sitting beside me.

“Home?” I asked.

“Figure of speech.” He smiled at me as I tried to hide my disappointment, wishing that he had meant it in every sense of the word. God, I’m so lame! My disappointment was short lived because he put his hand gently on my dick, which had one year and two weeks’ worth of fire and frustration to expel.

I just looked at him as I placed my hand on top of his and pushed down; my dick was just as hard as my head at that point.

“All I can think about is the thought of you inside me,” I said, “which isn’t good considering I’m on my own most of the day. A man could go mad thinking without doing.”

“Well, try being on the other side. I have to look at you half-naked, desperate to sink myself into you. Instead, you’re laid up with a cast on your leg and unable to move properly. We’re both in our own kind of living hell.”

“Well, I want to make you work for it, you know; I’m not that easy, I broke my ankle to test you.”

“Test me?”

“Trying to see what your tolerance levels would be and how imaginative you are. Of course, I also wanted to see whether you can resist my charms.”

“Oh... and have I passed the test?”

“Completely surpassed it. God... come here.”

The kiss was warm, wet, and so unbelievably heated. Talking about how much we wanted that crazed-out intimacy was making it so much worse not doing anything about it. My leg ached, my dick throbbed, and my heart was continually exploding into tiny pieces every time he looked at or touched me. Only Tom could do that to me; it’s only Tom I wanted to do anything with.

The window was slightly open, the cold air making my body shiver, which was welcome considering I felt so hot. Wearing only boxer shorts, well, let's face it, there really was no need to wear anything more than the cast and a smile. His hand was warm even through the material of my underwear, and all I wanted was his body pressed tightly against me, filling me up.

"Ow... *shit*, ow... ow... fucking ow!"

"Shit, what?" he asked.

"Cramp... fucking cramp." It couldn't have been timed any better! My leg felt as if it was in a vise, being squeezed to death, which was excellent considering I hadn't really moved a muscle—apart from certain parts of my anatomy, that is.

"You want me to do something?"

I squirmed on the bed trying to position my leg more comfortably on top of the pillows.

"Just give me a minute... *shit*." It was taking all of my concentration not to cry like a big baby. Humiliation would definitely be complete if that happened! Tom moved off the bed and came around to the other side, gently re-adjusting the pillows so my leg was more relaxed. "You're so good to me." He smiled and winked at me, sending me into another living hell, because, Jesus, if that wasn't the sexiest thing I'd seen in my life! He really shouldn't be anywhere near me. If I could, I'd have jumped him! "Shit... that's been happening all day. God, it's so frustrating."

"What can I do?"

"Well, if you have a time machine you could take me back to before this happened. Now that would be great, and I'd like you even more."

Tom laughed, leaning down and stroking my cheek with his hand. "I kind of like you all helpless and needing me."

"I've always been helpless... and... in need of you."



We just stared at each other, cramp forgotten as he sat back down on the bed and leaned closer, slowly starting this thing all over again. He then maneuvered himself so he was lying fully on the bed. His upper body moved across me as he kissed my neck, trying his hardest to stay well away from the leg that seemed to be disobeying this moment. His hand gently teased my skin as it traveled up and down my body, stroking and pinching my nipples.

*Jesus!* I think I must have sounded like the lovesick person I really was, sighing continually, over and over again. His mouth was made out of pure sweetness, warm and melting into me. He was making me think that this was possibly what heaven was like on the inside. His other hand sank into my hair as our tongues familiarized themselves with each other again and again. My brain shut down as my body took over my thoughts, leaving me in some sort of trance-like ecstatic state. My body squirmed, my dick ached, and my mind continued to go pleasantly blank.

“God, Tom, suck me... do something... anything!” I really wasn’t above begging at that point.

He traveled farther down my body, his mouth sending shock waves of pleasure into every crevice, nook, and cranny as he kissed my stomach and licked my skin. I was pretty close to coming about—oh, I don’t know—a hundred times, watching him move his way down my body. I managed to just hold off, though. There was, however, a very strong possibility of coming then and there if he continued to go any further. Well, let’s face it, I’d broken my ankle, so it stands to reason that I’m just a dangerous loose cannon waiting to shoot. I wouldn’t put it past me with the joy of watching his blond head bobbing up and down below me. Shit, a man only has so much restraint.

“Shit... Tom, just please... do it....”

And, oh my fucking God, he did. Even before I could finish my sentence his head moved lower, taking my dick out of my underwear and capturing it with his mouth. The hotness was like nothing I’d ever felt

before. It was fleeting, but I felt it all the same and wanted more—so much more—of anything he wanted to throw my way. My fingers moved into his hair. All I could think about was Tom and that mouth, my dick and a lot of happiness heading my way.

“Ow... fuck... fuck... stop... shit... ahhh!”

Tom stopped suddenly, looked up at me, and saw that my leg had fallen off the fucking pillow because of me squirming around like a wild animal. It’s safe to say that I nearly blacked out from the pain, which was definitely not the way I wanted to black out at all. I had a lot of dreams of how Tom could get me to that stage, and that wasn’t one of them.

“Shit... you alright, Charlie? Fuck.”

“Oh... my leg... *God!*” To be honest it was laughable, because no matter what I wanted to do, and whatever Tom had in mind for us; it seemed any pressure on my leg either took it into involuntary spasms or pain. I actually thought that my sex life for the next six weeks was doomed to failure.

Tom helped me put my leg back on the pillow, putting another one underneath to make it slightly higher. My dick had deflated into a depressing droop, and my leg wasn’t feeling that much better either. If *I* felt like crap, God only knew what Tom felt like, his dick still cooped up in his pants, probably going up and down like a fucking yo-yo.

“Sorry, Tom... this isn’t working.”

“You think?” I looked at him, his face tender. “You want to forget it or try something else?” he asked.

“Do I want to forget it? Do *you* want to forget it?”

“I’m asking you, you’re the one that’s in pain,” he whispered.

“No, I want you. My leg’s fine when I don’t move it.”

“Well, that gives us a lot of scope to play with.” He smiled at me, rubbing my dick a little, making me feel even more frustrated and horny all over again, not that it ever really stopped when I was with him.

“If you’re going to get me hard again, you better have a plan.”

“Oh, I have a plan.”

“What?”

“Well, I don’t think that fucking you is an option.”

“Yeah, figured that out all on my own.”

“Well, if your leg moves, my plan is to get you so delirious that you won’t even feel it.”

I laughed at that as he moved closer to me again and kissed me tenderly. “You’re sure of yourself, aren’t you?”

“Not really, but if I don’t do something with you soon, I think I might just spontaneously combust. How about you?”

“I’m almost there.”

“Okay, well then, I’ll be right back.”

Tom left for a moment, leaving me feeling kind of pathetic, useless, and strangely nervous, wondering what he was doing. He came back moments later, rolling the full-length mirror from the spare bedroom into the room. It was a mirror my mother bought me as some kind of weird housewarming present. *Yeah, nice!*

“Um... just so you know my mother bought that for me, don’t really want to be thinking of her when we’re doing naughty stuff...”

“Oh, don’t worry, Charlie. Where I’ll be taking you, she won’t get a look in.”

He positioned the mirror at the foot of the bed, dipping it slightly so I could see myself. I looked somewhat pitiful but horny as hell with my dick

sticking back up in the air. There was a mixture of fright and anticipation on my face as I wondered what the mirror might be for. I watched as he came back around to the side of the bed and proceeded to take off his clothes, torturing me a little with his frustratingly deliberate slow pace and lack of contact.

“Touch yourself,” he whispered. Well, I just about came there and then.

We watched each other, him stripping and me tentatively stroking myself up and down, all the while not breaking eye contact. His pants fell to the floor, and—God in heaven—if I didn’t think that he had a body built for giving me the fucking of my life once his shirt joined them there. I cursed myself all over again for getting us in this situation in the first place.

“Jesus, Tom.”

“Like that?”

“Yeah,” I whispered hoarsely.

“See, we don’t have to touch each other to have a good time.” *Oh yeah!* I think our eyes were as dilated as they could have been, full of lust and need for each other. His eyes were dark, smoldering, and ready for just about anything. After two weeks of feeling like shit, I really needed to feel something so much more, and I did, oh fucking hell, yes!

He smiled, standing still, finally naked, looking down on me playing with myself. He trailed his fingers lightly up my arm, along my shoulder and collar bone all the way to my very dry lips. My breath quickened at his touch, but I tried my hardest to go slow and steady, not like an express train arriving early. I felt the tip of my dick oozing slightly as I feasted on his beauty.

“Look in the mirror,” he said. I was having a very hard time concentrating on not coming, and he really wasn’t making it easy for me. I

looked into the mirror, seeing my hand working my cock and his naked body standing beside me. His excitement was evident as he slowly started to stroke himself too.

*“Oh fuck.”*

*“Mmm.”*

I watched as he continued to play with himself. Truly blinkered, I found it amazing that I hadn't seen him with the lube earlier, but he certainly had it with him now. What? Was he a fucking magician or something equally magical?

*“Where... ”*

*“Ssshhh... don't speak... just stroke.”*

He slowly got onto the bed, seductively and carefully taking off my underwear, easing my leg up to get them off fully. He then drizzled the lube onto my dick and hand as I continued to play with myself. I felt the coolness of the liquid as it covered me, trickling in between my balls. He lay beside me, my bad leg well away from any action that could bring this to an abrupt halt.

We looked at each other and smiled before he moved his head forward and pressed his lips to mine, sinking his tongue into my mouth. Both of us continued to stroke ourselves. He tasted like fresh rain on a hot summer's day, pounding his wetness into the dry patch where my life had been. Fucking could wait, because this was love, making me realize that I never wanted him to take that toothbrush out of the holder. I wanted him to never leave.

My other hand caressed his back, feeling his warm skin as his hand moved from his dick to my balls, gently squeezing them—not so tight that I had to move a great deal, but just enough for me to rock my hips a little in encouragement, willing him to continue.

*“Feel good?”*

“What do you think?” I could barely breathe, let alone comprehend that my best friend and longtime wet dream was beside me on the bed.

“Look in the mirror, Charlie; look at what I’m doing to you.” I saw his dick humping my leg, my hand on my dick, and his hand on my balls. Jesus, it was enough to give anyone a heart attack. What I felt increased when one of his fingers started to stroke that sensitive skin in between my balls and entrance, sending me into all kinds of ecstasy as I fought not to close my eyes. The mirror gave me a perfect view of where his hand was placed. He continued to rock his hips into my good leg very slowly, as my own hand got faster and faster, my finger brushing over the wet head of my hard-on.

“God, Tom, that feels so good.”

“Looks good as well.” We were both looking in the mirror, angled well enough to see it all.

Considering I get embarrassed easily and my face often goes as red as a baboon’s backside, I was impressed that this seemed so natural. Tom naked and doing things to me was the most erotic thing that I had ever seen. His finger continued to stroke gently, the pace even and slow, the liquid making it easy for his finger to slide farther back to my entrance, which was actually throbbing for him to go inside.

I moved my good leg slightly, feeling his dick pressed firmly into it, wanting to give him better access to where his finger was headed. My other leg was still resting on the pillows. Tom was being so gentle; I actually admired his restraint and thought he deserved a medal.

“Want to put my finger into you.”

“God, Tom, don’t talk about it, just do it, because I’m really struggling here to keep in control.”

He smiled again and gently starting probing my hole, rubbing it back and forth.

“Oh God!” I closed my eyes, loving the sensation and trying my hardest not to buck my hips too much.

“Look in the mirror, Charlie; concentrate on that, okay?”

I watched as his hand moved, and then I felt his finger slowly working its way into me.

“Oh... oh.” I almost raised my hips off the bed, but he whispered in my ear, soothing me, telling me to keep looking at what he was doing. I still had my hand on my own dick, knowing that I would come soon if I continued to look and feeling his hardness like a tree trunk rooted to my leg.

His finger moved farther in, a welcome invasion, not rough or hurried but keeping me in a tortured slow rhythm that would soon gratify my senses and send me into excessive sexual overload. It was something Tom was very good at initiating, as the mirror was adding to the experience of me losing my mind completely.

His finger started to go farther in, and then he withdrew only to do it again and again, still slow and restrained. Tom continued to hump me like a dog in heat, kissing my ear before looking in the mirror where I watched him, and he watched me. His hips were moving back and forth, and my hand was moving up and down as his finger moved in and out while I tried to remain as still as possible.

Our chests were heaving with the effort to breathe, our bodies glistening with sweat, and the room smelled of sex. Then I felt the one thing that will make any man explode. Tom hit that one spot that is guaranteed to stimulate the pleasure zone; that is the center of the universe; and the answer to life as we know it.

“Oh Tom... ahhh... I’m coming... *I’m gonna come so hard....*”

There was no way in hell that I could look in the mirror as I started to erupt all over my hand, the warmth spreading over my stomach as I

heard Tom right alongside me, wetting my leg with his come, his breath in my ear as he grunted and pushed himself against me.

“Oh yeah, Charlie... so fucking good.” He pulled his finger out of me, locking my hips with his arm to keep me from bucking up too much and moving my leg. He waited for my dick to stop the immense task of getting rid of weeks of frustration. It took a while, I have to say!

“*Shit... Wow!*” I had to laugh because I had just seriously made out with Tom Harris, who, if I’m not mistaken, had his finger very much up my arse. Now that’s something I thought would never happen. “Oh my God.”

“You alright there, Charlie?”

“Oh yeah, I’m just fine and dandy.”

“Dandy... well that’s not the word I would have used... but... Yankee Doodle fucking doo.”

We both burst out laughing as we wrapped our arms around each other, my leg bouncing around anyway with both of us giggling like fucking school kids.

When the dust had settled and the laughter subsided, we simply looked at each other. We were both wet, spent, and feeling the intimate closeness that I had always dreamed of. We didn’t have to have full penetration to feel it, because whatever was happening had happened months ago. He moved off me long enough to reach for his shirt to clean us both up, before throwing it on the floor and lying back down beside me.

His naked body against mine felt so right. Fitting into me would be easy because he was already there, nestled up close to me, and starting to doze. What a lucky son of a bitch I had turned out to be.

“Charlie... you okay?”

“I’ll say. Have you done anything like that before?”



He opened his eyes and looked at me thoughtfully for a moment. “Enough to know that I like guys, if that’s what you mean.”

“Oh.”

“And what about you, Charlie Matherson?”

“Me?” I felt slightly out of my depth now and really wished I hadn’t opened this can of worms. *Fucking stupid idiot.*

“Yeah, how much had you gotten up to before I came along?”

“Umm.” I knew that lying next to him was something more than just sex, and I hoped he knew that, because there was no mistaking what I felt for him. “Maybe not as much as I could have done over the years.”

His incredible hypnotic gaze made me spellbound once again as I sank several feet into the vast depths of his eyes. He nodded, and my heart was beating at a rate of knots. He kissed me tenderly but with growing intensity.

His tongue thrust right back inside me, making me feel dizzy all over again. *Shit!* He really should stop doing that. Well, that seemed to last forever, because I kind of lost track of where he finished, and I began. We pulled apart; our breath intermingled as we caressed each other’s faces, smoothing out the passage of time.

“Charlie... have you... you know... done it?” he whispered.

“Umm... well... I’ve had... plenty of offers, just not the right one.”

He kissed me again then laid his forehead against mine, our cheeks resting on the pillow. We remained like that for a while, taking each other in. When he pulled back slightly, our eyes connected, and I hoped he knew what I meant and what I truly wanted. It really did seem like a torturously long time before he spoke again, but when he did, it made me realize that we were on the same page, and that he had been thinking of what to say to me to make me see that.

“Charlie?”

“Yeah?”

“That... figure of speech I referred to earlier.”

“Yeah... what about it?”

“That’s... what I want... you know... eventually.”

“What, a home?”

“Yes.”

“Well, you have one of those?”

“No, Charlie, I have a house, but I want my home to be with you.”

*Oh my fucking God, I couldn’t believe he had said that!*

“Well... you may reconsider once you’ve spent Christmas with my family.”

He looked at me and frowned a little. “Christmas with your family?

I felt like a right arse not asking him first. “If you want, I mean, you don’t have to... just a thought. Spoke to my Mum, she’s expecting us both.”

“What, just as friends?”

“Friends with added perks,” I said. He looked surprised. “Her words, not mine.” I smiled as he dropped his head onto my shoulder and groaned.

“God, your Mum is unbelievable.”

“Yeah, well, she’s fine with the news, so... do you want to come?”

He laughed at that and raised his head up to look at me. “Always.”

“You know what I mean.” I shoved him playfully.

“I’d like that. I’d like that a lot.”

“You would? What about your family, won’t they be disappointed?”

“Not when I tell them I’ll be spending Christmas with the man I love,” he whispered into my hair.

“You love me?”

“When I said I wanted a home with you, I didn’t mean as your landlord. Yes, you dope, I love you.”

*Oh my God, oh my God, oh my God!*

“I love you too.”

“You do?”

“Oh yeah.”

We kissed slow and lazy, my mind a jumbled mess. Things had happened so fast, but the buildup felt like a lifetime. I’d fallen in love with him months ago. As we pulled away from each other, I smiled at him, blushing slightly. He smiled back, nudging my cheek with his nose.

“What are you thinking?”

“Just wanted to say thank you for everything... for all your help. These past two weeks have been amazing, really amazing.”

“Even with a broken ankle and all the pain?”

“Can’t feel any pain.”

“You can’t?”

“Not now.”

“You have very good medication, then.”

His smile widened as he looked at me so tenderly my heart did flip-flops over and over again. I stroked his arm with my hand before drawing him to me, feeling his body heat radiating onto my skin as we lay together, cozy and warm, our body heat raising the temperature inside. Our two halves had finally made their way to each other to make a whole. I had cursed the Christmas party but now found myself thanking it for bringing

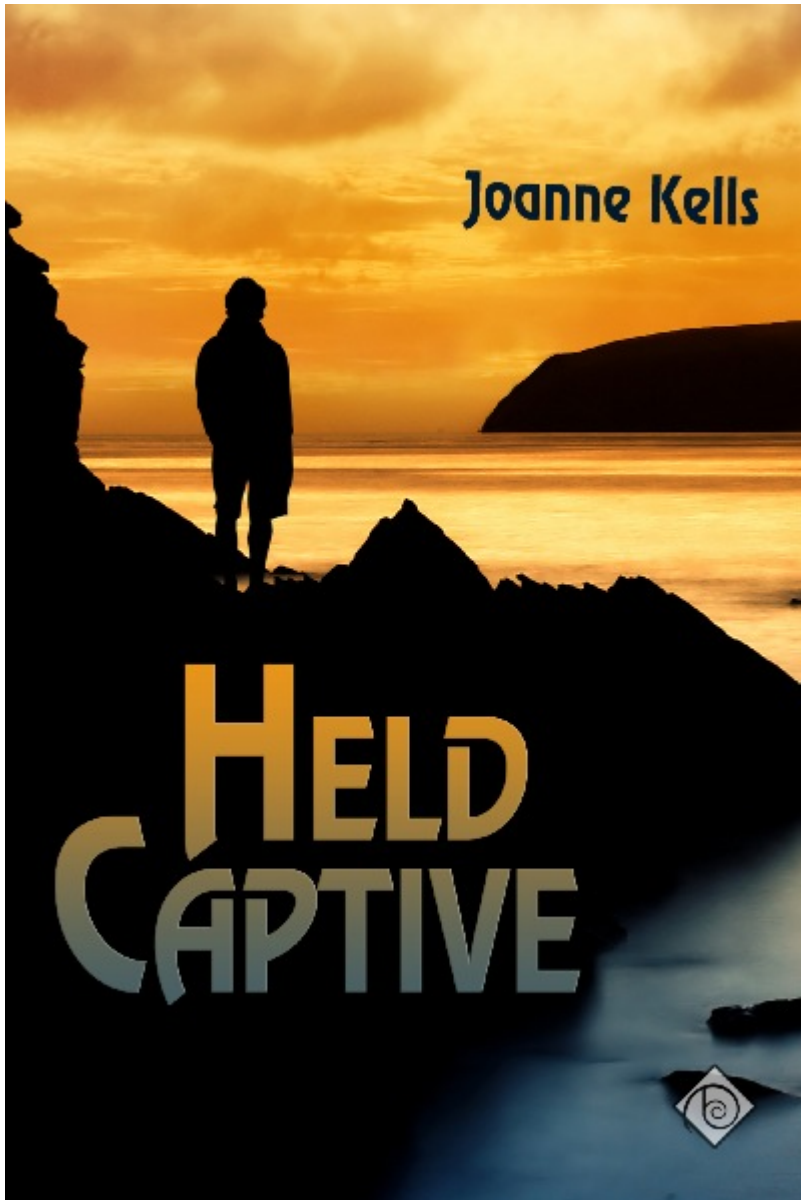
us together. I was lucky to have a steady stream of painkiller in the name of Tom Harris.

As I held him closer and squeezed him tightly, I managed to whisper back, “Oh yeah, Tom, believe me, it’s the best.”

JOANNE KELLS is forty years old, British, and lives in Dorset with her husband and two children. She started writing at an early age and eventually went to stage school in London at the age of eleven. After graduating she became an actress, writing stories and plays in her spare time until her late twenties. A traffic accident put an abrupt stop to her acting career, and through intensive rehab therapy, she was encouraged to go back to school and retrain as a rehab therapist.

She now has her own rehab therapy clinic, but her passion for writing continues. She tries to balance her life between family, her business, and her dreams of eventually writing full time. For now she enjoys living in a romantic setting by the sea, which drives her imagination forward. She is ever thankful for all the support she receives from her family to someday realize her dream.

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