

Changeling Press

# Sadie's Kiss



Sophia Titheniel

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## **Sadie's Kiss**

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Evan and his friend and protector, Sadie, have a life together. Alone. Just the two of them. And that's just the way they like it. Well, Evan, anyway. Sadie may be a dog, but she's more trustworthy than any human Evan's met since his accident.

Sadie thinks Evan needs a *human* companion. So when Casey, the social worker from the LGTB Support Center shows up to rescue Evan from himself, she puts her cunning plan into action. It starts with the little things. Like a kiss.

## Chapter 1

Casey was tall. That was the first word everyone would come up with if they had to describe him. He'd always had a head of advantage over everyone else around him, from middle school and right up to his college days as a basketball player.

The second word would be shy. Casey was well liked, but maybe because of his height and general body size, Casey went out of his way to make himself small and unnoticeable, invisible almost, and for a six foot five, strapping guy like him it wasn't that easy. But he succeeded quite spectacularly.

And to be honest, in the hustle and bustle of San Francisco, if you didn't want to be seen, people wouldn't look twice. There was too much else to engage with to pay attention to a former college basketball player turned social services major, and Casey liked it exactly like that.

Casey looked out of the tiny window of the one room, open space office he shared with Sandra, a half Black, half Puerto Rican Tasmanian devil turned accountant, and edged against the wall to throw the window open. Spring was upon them, and San Francisco was a blur of colors so bright it made your eyes sting.

Casey smiled and looked back at his computer screen, adjusting his headset, and getting back to that damned report that had kept him up most of the weekend. Not that Casey had anything else to do that weekend, but that was beside the point.

The phone rang, and Casey pushed a button automatically as he typed away. "LGTB Support Center, I'm Casey. How may I help you?"

"How much for a blowjob?"

The line was delivered amongst crass laughter, and Casey punched the off button a little too viciously, sending the phone base skidding across his meager desk, pens and papers tumbling in a flurry to the floor.

"I think we just tossed a stupendous amount of money down the toilet with that stupid ad campaign," he said to the room at large, which consisted of him and Sandra's empty desk. There were two volunteers who usually manned the reception desk, but it was finals time for every other kid in San Francisco, and the LGTB Support Center was seriously understaffed.

Which was the nice way to say that after the last cut the state had done for humanitarian work, the center could barely keep afloat with Casey, Sandra and Leo, Casey's out and proud bisexual roommate, who was widely recognized as the biggest manwhore of San Francisco. The way things were, it was a miracle they even managed to keep the books in what resembled order, and Casey suspected it had a lot to do with Sandra's creative accounting.

Casey could almost hear his parents' disapproving sighs, even if they were miles away, all the way in Sacramento. They never really minded that Casey was gay, as long as he kept up his appearances and continued his career as a college basketball star. But when Casey had called them to tell them he was switching majors, his mom had cried for a week, and his father had refused to pay his tuition.

That was when Casey left the dorms to move in with Leo. Leo was the single most obnoxious person in the world, and Casey threatened to kill him on a regular basis -- with more conviction behind the threat once Casey picked up his first shift at the center. One year later, he graduated with honors with his thesis in Social Services and Support in the Gay Community.

His parents missed their flight and never made it to San Francisco for his graduation. It really didn't take Casey's special sensitivity to read between the lines. They still called, though, mostly to remind him what a disappointment he was, but Casey had no regrets. He knew when he switched majors that he was never going to be the one whose name was written up in lights. He wasn't tall enough, for one, despite

“normal” people always having to look up when they spoke to him. And he simply wasn’t good enough. He was tired of warming a bench while his life swept by him. Once he managed to pull free from his parents’ overblown expectations, Casey had found that he liked working with other underdogs like him. The LGTB center was tiny, cramped and cluttered, but it felt more like home to him than the changing rooms had ever done.

Casey had a love/hate relationship with his job (bordering on hate during the unexpected weekends he’d get called in, or the Monday mornings when the stapler didn’t work or the printer got stuck), but Casey wouldn’t trade it for the world.

The Center was the first place where he felt like he belonged. Where no one treated him like a circus show. Where his “intuition,” as he dubbed it, earned him smiles and hugs and freshly baked cookies rather than scorn, bullying. Or a chorus of “freak.”

The phone rang again, and this time Casey closed his eyes, hands splayed wide on the desk. He let himself feel. It was hot outside. Too hot. A girl, crying. Blood.

Casey picked up the phone. “LGTB Support Center, I’m Casey, how may I help you?”

Heavy breathing at the other end. Casey cringed. He closed his eyes again, trying to reach out, letting his sense flood him, nearly making him dizzy.

“It’s okay,” he said, his voice different this time, slow and secure. “Nothing will harm you now.” He saw the back of an alley, a wrought iron lamp post sticking out under an open window. Casey knew the place, it was near the Fountainhead pub, down on the west end. “Hang in there, sweetie, I’m sending someone over to get you, okay?”

“I don’t want no cops.”

“No cops, I promise. Just my roommate.” Casey picked up his cell phone to text Leo to get him there, and fast. “We’ll prepare a room for you,” he said then, without thinking, and the girl at the other end gave a small gasp.

“I don’t... I -- how do you know?”

*Here goes nothing.* “I’m psychic.”

A beat. Then, her chuckle. "Right."

*No one ever believes the truth*, Casey thought with a sad smile. "Go into the Fountainhead and wait for Leo. He's a short guy with a face like his ass." The girl chuckled again, and Casey felt his sadness vanish. "And you can totally say I told you that."

"Right."

"Hang in there, okay? He'll be there soon."

Casey hung up and quickly texted Leo Marike's location -- that was the girl's name. Early on, he'd been so eager to help he ended up freaking out many a caller, forgetting that most people didn't really appreciate talking to someone they've never met but who apparently knew all about their problems. Casey had adjusted pretty quickly, though, learning to say just enough to make people believe they were talking to someone who understood, rather than knew, warming them up to the idea of coming to the center for anything from counseling to condoms, from HIV brochures or pregnancy tests, or even a bunk bed and a hot meal.

Sandra called him a blessing, and Casey glowed quietly under the praise. No one had ever made him feel more welcome than the people at the LGBT Support Center, and after a few months of working there, even his renowned shyness had begun to crumble. It was hard to be shy when you were talking about safe sex 24/7 or filling out abuse reports or talking to cops who'd turned a blind eye to the latest bashing.

If you asked Leo, he'd claim the whole credit for Casey's blossoming, as he poetically put it.

His cell phone trilled not five minutes later. It was Leo's simple "Got her," and Casey leaned back against his chair with a deep, troubled sigh. At least his parents hadn't kicked him out, he thought with a touch of the same bitter sadness that surged up in him whenever a kid straggled through the office because they had nowhere else to go. Casey counted himself lucky.

"Hey, cupcake!" Sandra suddenly materialized in front of Casey, out of thin air apparently.

Casey had been so lost in his train of thoughts, swaying between Marike and his own parents, that he'd missed her entrance completely, extra sense or not. "Hi. How was the meeting?"

"You don't wanna know. And you look worried already. What's up?"

"I called Leo to do a pick up," Casey spun round and round in his chair, suddenly feeling the weight of Marike's call push down on his shoulders. He hesitated half a second before voicing the thoughts in his head. "Girl's been kicked out by her folks."

Sandra clucked her tongue in sympathy. "At least they're calling us, and not sleeping on the streets." She slid between the paper shredder and the notice board, dropping her bag on her already overflowing desk, sighing as she stretched her arms high above her head and turned on the computer. "Thought Leo was supposed take the early shift this morning."

Casey snorted. "Couldn't have woken him up if I tried."

Sandra heaved a sigh. "Color me shocked. Who was he with this time?"

"Some dude," Casey said evasively, his concentration flying back to his monitor.

"You're seriously spoiling my plans of living vicariously through him."

Casey chuckled again, head ducked low to hide his embarrassment. He loved Leo like a brother, but living with a very active, very loud and very shameless roommate only highlighted everything Casey was not. And even if Casey was okay with that -- really, he was -- he couldn't help the flush suffusing from his neck up to the tips of his ears at Sandra's knowing giggle.

When Leo picked someone up to bring back to their place, Casey's gift turned into more of a nightmare as Casey's senses were assaulted from every angle, flashes from what was about to happen superimposing themselves on the noises and moans of what was happening now. The double effect usually left him high and dry, stuck in the sheets tangled around him.

Fortunately, Sandra couldn't press him for more on Leo's sex life. The wind chimes above the door tinkled loudly as a short-haired brunette with a very visible

black eye and a duffel bag over her shoulder walked through the door, Leo on her heels.

"Everyone, this is Marike. Marike, everyone." Leo said with wide sweeping hand gestures.

Sandra immediately stood from behind her desk, knocking into several things as she edged her way around the cluttered space to shake Marike's hand -- a foolproof tactic to ease people in before sneakily going in for a hug. Sandra was the absolute master at it. Casey just hovered awkwardly, out of his chair but still behind his desk, shoulders tucked inwards, as he was attempting to shrink in on himself.

"Welcome, sweetpie," Sandra said as she pulled back, holding Marike at arm's length. "My name's Sandra. I'm the LGTB Center advisor, and this is Casey, our counselor."

Marike gave them a once over, looking every bit like the trapped animal Casey felt her as. He tried to smile reassuringly and extended his hand. "Hi. Do you want to go take a look at the dorm? We don't have anyone else in, so you'll get a single room without a view."

That got a small laugh out of Marike -- it was probably more out of nerves than anything else, but that seemed encouraging enough. Sandra wrapped one arm around her shoulder and led her away, and Casey flopped back in his seat with a sigh.

"C'mon, bro, lighten up. She's gonna be all right. At least she's not been attacked. Ya know we've had an outburst of that shit to deal with after Prop8 passed."

"No, I know." Casey looked out of the tiny window on the empty courtyard.

"You've seen it already?"

Casey rolled his eyes. "That's not -- Leo, how many fucking times do I have to explain it to you?"

Leo spread his arms in surrender. "Hey, I'm just saying. I think it's cool either way. No need to rip off my head, dude." Leo tilted his head to one side, giving Casey a scrutinizing look. "What's up?"

"Nothing."

"Ha. Bull. I don't need a sixth sense to figure out something rubbed you the wrong way." Leo perched himself on the corner of Casey's overly organized desk "So, spill. Whatever it is, I'm here to listen."

"It's nothing," Casey insisted, trying to get back to his report, but Leo had placed his scrawny ass straight on the mouse. "Oh, dude -- seriously?"

"Come on, I'm your best friend."

Casey sighed and crossed his hands behind his head, trying to look unconcerned. "We got five prank calls this morning."

"Losers."

"Yeah."

Leo nudged at him with his foot against Casey's knee. "Dude. Come on. It's just prank calls. They're probably shut in virgins who unless they looked back at birth never actually saw any, much less get any."

"Well, I'd never make a stupid prank call to a social services center," Casey muttered, and then immediately regretted it, a familiar blend of embarrassment and bitterness spreading inside of him.

Leo nudged at him again. "Well, you're special. Don't let it bother you, man. It's really not worth it."

Casey sighed and went back to his report.

Being special sucked.

\* \* \*

Evan took his glass and downed the double shot in one swallow, tapping the bar for a refill. It was early in the day to be drinking, but what the hell, it was 2 AM somewhere in Europe. The liquor was cheap and warm, no ice or lemon to go with it, but Evan didn't mind. He wasn't drinking for taste anyway.

Sadie's wet nose rested atop his thigh, and she made a small sound, a clear plea for attention that made the curve of Evan's lip tip up slightly. He reached down to scratch behind her ears, absentmindedly swirling his two fingers of bourbon against the wall of his glass as his German Shepherd lapped at his wrist.

The noise in the bar was way too loud. Hockey was on TV, and really, even if Evan watched sports, what kind of sport was that? They weren't in Canada, for the love of Christ, they were in motherfucking California. Put on some NFL.

Sadie growled a little, and Evan resumed the scratching of her ears. "What's up, girl?" he asked under his breath, even if he knew the dog couldn't really answer. He felt her fur rise through his curled fingers, and put down his glass. Heavy footsteps sounded behind him.

"Hey, big guy. Wanna shoot some pool?"

"No." Evan pushed his sunglasses further up his nose.

"Come on, it'll be fun. You and me against these two."

Sadie's growl intensified, and Evan's shoulder tensed. "I said no."

"We can make it interesting." A hand curled around his shoulder, "What about strip pool?"

Evan tensed, grabbing hold of the guy's fingers and nearly cracked two of them as he pushed him off. "What part of *no* don't you get?"

Liquor tinkled down in his glass, and Evan reached for it, downing it in one go and taking one ten dollar bill out of his pocket to slap it down on the bar. "C'mon girl," he muttered, fingers curling around Sadie's leash.

"Fine," the guy spat behind him. "It'd have been my pity fuck of the month but hey, don't let the door smack your ass on the way out."

Evan gritted his teeth together. He turned toward the bar as casually as he could manage. "Hey, boss. Since when you allow dogs to stroll in without a collar?"

A ripple of laughter broke through the room at large, and Evan pushed the door open, quickly counting under his breath as he walked down the small set of stairs out of the Winking Judge Pub and followed Sadie to the sidewalk.

The late afternoon sun was warm on his face, and Evan tried to suck in a few calming breaths as he slowed down, tugging at Sadie's leash to stop her from running ahead of him. "Fucking dick," he told his dog. "Remind me again why I fucking bother at all."

Sadie woofed, which Evan took to mean *because you're an idiot*.

"Yeah, evidence points that way." He chuckled humorlessly. "But hey, at least this time I said no."

Another indignant woof.

"Yeah, yeah. I get it. That's not saying much, all things considered."

Sadie barked. *Last night considered, you mean.*

Evan gave up trying to prove his point. They turned right, following the sidewalk to the old fashioned block of apartments where they lived.

Someone ran past him, nearly knocking into his shoulder, and Evan hastily stepped aside, bumping his knee painfully over what felt like a sturdy wooden bench. "Fuck," he muttered under his breath, fingers tight around Sadie's leash. "Sadie, c'mon. Go on."

But Sadie had dug her paws in the ground, her fur on end and snarling at something behind Evan's back. Evan turned around, and next thing he knew, he was falling on the concrete, sunglasses cracking as pain flared up from his gut to the back of his head.

Sadie's snarls turned into full on roars as she lashed out at whoever it was, but before Evan could push himself up to his hands and knees, the heel of a boot came down against his ribs, sending him flying and crashing against the dumpster.

*Fuck.*

## Chapter 2

*Fuck!* Casey felt the jolt of pain as though it was his own. He blinked and rubbed a hand over his forehead, stomach clenching, thoughts that didn't belong to him swirling just out of his reach.

He didn't often get outbursts like that. Over the years, Casey had learned to control it, in some measure. Not shut it off, because that would've been too good, but just direct it one way or another.

When visions hit, the headaches would cling on for hours to follow, making him dizzy and nauseous. He couldn't really see what was happening, just snippets flashing before his eyes. Sometimes he'd heard what was going on without actually seeing anything, sometimes it was like a muted film.

Other times it felt like he was the one living through it, and that Casey hated. He grabbed the edge of his desk and pressed a hand over his mouth as he nearly doubled over with a wave of nausea. He fumbled around until he managed to grasp at the edge of the wastepaper basket, barely avoiding taking one of his eyes out on the sharp desk corner as he threw up his breakfast burrito amongst the shredded plans of financing that Sandra had brought back with the "denied" stamp all over them.

"Cupcake, what's wrong?"

Casey moaned and waved one hand to try and tell her it was okay, but that's when he felt his gut getting kicked in, and heard a dog barking wildly, so close to his ear it was deafening. "Someone's hurt." Casey spat weakly in the basket, eyes closed, little stars dancing behind his eyelids.

"Where?" Sandra's voice had changed completely, now sharp and cutting. "What did you see?"

Casey shook his head, but stopped short, temples pounding. "Didn't see. There's a dog." He swallowed down another burst of nausea. "Someone's hurt," he repeated, feeling the stranger's pain throbbing through him. "I couldn't see a thing."

"It's okay, doll," Sandra took the basket out of his hands and pushed sweaty hair off his forehead. "It's okay. I'll take the van."

"I'll come with you."

"Cupcake, I don't know --"

"We don't even know where he is," Casey said, grasping the back of his chair for support as his legs wobbled. "But I can find him."

Sandra frowned, obviously torn between mothering him and going to the rescue. Casey looked at her with pleading eyes. "Okay, fine," she huffed. Then, "Leo! We're taking the van. Man the phone."

"Yes, ma'am," Leo's reply came from the photocopier room.

Casey followed Sandra outside and into the bright red van, a rainbow flag on one side and several colorful bumper stickers on the other to cover the peeling paint. He clambered in the shotgun seat, eyes closed, letting his senses flood him as Sandra kicked the engine.

Casey rarely had such a powerful connection to his visions, which he was mostly thankful for, since they reduced him to a sorry mess, but when it happened, he was usually able to let himself be guided to the source.

This time wasn't any different. "Turn right on Hayes."

Sandra complied. "Should we call 911?"

The hair at the small of his back stood on end. "He doesn't want us to."

Sandra didn't question him, and Casey loved her just a bit more for that. He couldn't even count the number of times people had poked and prodded to know more, more, more, always *more* and *how* and then beat him up behind the school because of it.

They drove in silence for a while, the setting sun bathing San Francisco in a blur of red and purple, making it easy for Casey to keep his eyes closed and let his feelings guide him.

"Right at the next intersection."

She made a displeased sound. "Here?"

Casey nodded, pressing his fingers in the middle of his forehead. Fuck, he needed to throw up again. They were in the very heart of the west end, just a few blocks away from the LGTB Center. In the last few months there had been an upsurge of unprovoked attacks on the members of the community, more than likely, as Leo had said, spurred on by Prop8 and the backlash on gay couples across the country.

"Here!" Casey impulsively undid his seatbelt and nearly bolted out of the still running van.

"Holy shit, cowboy, hold on. Let me park first!"

The pull was almost more painful than the aftermath of the vision. Casey needed to go, like a hook pulling in from behind his stomach. When Sandra finally turned the engine off, Casey tripped over his feet in his haste to run across the road, incoming traffic be damned.

"Casey!"

He didn't heed her. The pull was so powerful it put his feet one in front of the other on autopilot. *A dog.*

Casey crouched on the ground, not minding the grime and the less-than-clean. He could hear a faint growling and whining that wasn't only in his head. It came from a lump between two dumpsters. Casey shifted on all fours, keeping his eyes peeled for any sign of activity.

That's when he saw him.

\* \* \*

"Oh my God, who could do this?"

"Move over, let me --"

"Sandra, watch out. There's a dog. With lots of teeth."

"Where?"

"Behind the dumpster -- careful!"

"We must do something! He's bleeding."

Evan's head pounded severely, waves of nausea forcing him face down on the gritty asphalt. He could feel the whispers like wind on the back of his perception, even if the bursts of pain that came from his leg and gut made everything else fuzzy and distant.

"I'm calling 911."

Evan grunted at that, fruitlessly trying to crawl his way out on his broken fingernails, the word "911" echoing at the back of his head.

"Wait. Wait!"

"What for? We need an ambulance here."

"He's not gonna thank us for that."

"I don't give a damn, Casey. This man needs medical attention and I'm not running any risks."

Evan wanted to yell to leave him the fuck alone, but couldn't even muster up the strength to moan. Sadie growled somewhere above him, keeping the meddlers away.

Or so he thought.

The whisper was breathy-soft, and so close to the side of his face Evan instinctively tried to edge away. "Can you hear me?"

Nodding or shaking his head was way too much effort, and Evan was sure it would rekindle his nausea. He lay completely still, every breath he sucked in a struggle.

"Casey, don't move him, you might do more harm than good."

A big, gentle hand closed around Evan's fist where it was digging on the sidewalk, and Evan felt a rush of heady, buttery warmth spread from the point where their skin touched right to the very core of his chest. Evan sucked in a breath, and it didn't hurt quite as much.

"It's okay. Don't move. Easy does it. Help's on the way."

*Bite, Sadie*, Evan thought feebly, but he couldn't make himself pull away from the gentle petting the man -- boy, if he read his voice right -- was dishing out on him.

"I'm not gonna hurt you."

If Evan hadn't been concussed and well on his way to craving a morphine drip, he would've lashed out. He didn't want compassion with a side of pity. He could do pity very, *very* well on his own.

"It's not pity," the voice whispered again. It sounded closer now, as if it was in his own head.

Fuck, but they had beaten the crap out of him. He was hearing voices.

Evan moaned and valiantly tried to creep away, his legs shaking with tremors as he fought tooth and nail to retreat -- toward what, he didn't know.

"Easy." A strong arm wrapped around his chest, and his first instinct was to recoil, but the warmth inside of him spread further, easing some of the sharpest bursts of pain as he was carefully held up against a firm, blocky chest.

"I got you. It'll be okay."

Despite how bad Evan wanted to believe him, he gritted his teeth and put up what could only be considered as a token protest, given the state he was in. He couldn't feel his left leg past his knee, there was blood drying up against the side of his face, and if the way it still pained him, a few broken ribs would've been an accurate guess.

"Can you look up here? How many are these?"

Evan laughed. Of course. "None." His voice was so hoarse and dry; he probably had screamed, and he felt his cheeks heat up at the mere thought, shame making him angry and dangerous. "Let me go."

"Come on," the man -- boy, he corrected himself -- coaxed. "How many fingers do you see?"

"None!" Evan spat, something burning inside of him and giving him what strength he hadn't earlier to push himself away, slapping mindlessly at a wandering hand on his shoulder. The warmth left him in a rush, making goose bumps appear on his skin as he crawled on his knees to where Sadie was whimpering.

"I can't see any fingers. In fact, I can't fucking *see* anything."

A woman's voice. The one who'd called 911. Fuck. Fuck, he needed to get out of there. "That's very serious. There could be severe retinal damage -- no, honey, you shouldn't stand with that leg -- were they armed?"

Evan wanted to laugh at the irony of it all. "I don't fucking know." Yelling hurt. He did so anyway. "Because I didn't see them."

"Honey, it's okay. Look at me one moment --"

Evan finally managed to curl his fingers around Sadie's harness and fought with all his might to push himself up standing, even if his leg gave way just as he grabbed hold of something -- possibly the edge of a dumpster, he had no idea. "I can't look," he gritted out, tugging slightly on the dog's leash. "I can't *see* anything, lady. I'm blind."

\* \* \*

Oh. *Oh*.

*So, that makes sense*, Casey thought with a twang of sadness. *That was why I couldn't see anything when the vision hit*. And now that Casey could see the dog fully as the man pulled her out from behind the dumpster by her harness, it was quite obvious.

Casey felt an overwhelming surge of anger and resentment, closely followed by shame, all emotions that didn't belong to him, and Casey realized that the lack of physical connection hadn't actually broken the thread between the two of them. That, coupled with how intense the vision had been, got to Casey, making him sway on his feet.

He was inextricably wrapped up in this guy whose name he didn't even know. And it wasn't because the man was basically his dictionary definition of beautiful, despite the blood and bruises. His unfocused eyes were green, a deep tone of jade that made Casey ache somewhere deep within him, somewhere he'd never gone before. The man looked shorter than Casey by about a head, though it was hard to tell, the way he hunched against the edge of the dumpster. Short spiky blond hair and skin so fair the blood looked like black tears on the side of his face.

There was something about him, something strong enough that made Casey throw all caution to the wind. He normally wouldn't push his sense on someone who so obviously repelled any outside help, but this time it was different. Something told him that even with the severe beating that left him unconscious and wedged between two dumpsters, the man's pride would stop anyone else from taking a closer look.

The faint siren of an ambulance could be heard in the background, and Casey closed his eyes at the bolt of panic that hit him square in the chest. The man looked all but ready to make a run for it, and Casey knew that there was no amount of pride in the world that would be able to get him through more than ten steps in his condition.

*Help's here. Just let them check you over.*

"Get out of my way."

*Evan, Casey thought without realizing it. His name was Evan. Stay, please.*

"Who the fuck," his voice broke, low and raspy, and Casey watched as he brought the hand that clutched at the dog's leash against his chest, probably struggling to breathe.

Casey moved on instinct. Against all of his senses, and his best judgment considering that even if the German Shepherd looked battered, as well, she also looked ready to attack anyone who would touch her man, Casey sidestepped Sandra and wrapped his arms around Evan's middle. And just in time, too. Evan sagged, his leg unable to support him any longer, his face screwed up in agony against Casey's chest.

The warmth that filled him at the intimate touch stirred something in Casey that he most definitely didn't need with an armful of troubled, hurt Evan. He took a deep, steadying breath, and let the rhythm of his heart speak for him as the ambulance stopped in the middle of the road, only two feet shy of running Sandra over.

"Finally, took you long enough!"

The two orderlies didn't really react to Sandra's verbal lashing, rolling a stretcher out of the back of the ambulance and pushing it closer to the sidewalk.

"I don't need any of this." Evan muttered, angrily trying to shove Casey away.  
"Let me go, for fuck's sake or --"

The threat trailed into nothingness. Evan's concussion, and the obvious effort to keep himself upright for so long getting the best of him.

As Evan melted against his chest, Casey felt the same but foreign wave of tiredness washing over him, and for a moment, he had a glimpse of a black, gaping hole that threatened to drain all the warmth out of the light summer air.

"Sir? Are we going to take him or not?"

Casey shook himself out of his trance and smiled at the two orderlies. "Yes, just -- hold on." He carefully shifted Evan around until he could hoist him up in his arms and lay him down on the stretcher, paying extra care to his leg and the side of his head.

That's when he noticed Evan was still holding on to the dog's leash.

"Wait a moment," Casey intervened as one of the orderlies carelessly tugged the leash out of Evan's clenched fist. "It's his dog --"

"We can't take animals on."

"It's a guide dog," Sandra snapped. "The young man's blind."

There was a flicker of emotion on the face of the orderly who had spoken, colored immediately by regret. He shook his head again. "I'm sorry, ma'am, we can't have a dog in the ambulance."

Casey grabbed the leash from him. "I'll take her."

The dog sniffed at him and growled a little, but she was way easier on him than Evan had been. After Casey had leaned down and offered her his hand to sniff, she licked tentatively at his fingers and declared him harmless.

"Come on, Casey," Sandra climbed back into the van's driver's seat. "We have to head back to the office."

"What? I thought we were going with them."

"We can't do anything else for him. He's in good hands now."

The dog whined low, her tail wagging once before retreating between her legs. She held her paw up, her ears tucked down as she looked up at them, hurt and lonely. It broke Casey's heart.

"I need to take him his dog."

"He won't need it tonight. I doubt they'll be letting him out and we've left Leo alone, which most likely means I'll have to spend the night reorganizing the archives."

"You go ahead." Casey scratched the dog's ears. His heart jumped when he saw the specks of blood covering her nametag, and he tried to see if it belonged to her or Evan. She didn't seem to be bleeding anywhere, though Casey couldn't be sure. He wiped the blood off with his thumb, and the name "Sadie" blinking back at him. "I'll take Sadie."

"Casey..." Sandra shook her head. "Is this another one of your intuitions?"

"Maybe. I don't know."

It was true. Casey really had no idea what it all meant. It had never happened to him before, and surely not to the point of missing the person so bad it was actual physical pain. He looked into the deep brown eyes of the German Shepherd, and she blinked back at him, her tongue lolling out as she took a half a step closer and nuzzled his leg.

"All right, all right." She sighed and pushed the door open, stepping out of the van. "Go on. I'll get Leo to pick me up."

Casey's heart skipped a beat, and he beamed. "You sure?"

"I'm sure. Go on." She gave him an affectionate pat on the arm, which was probably the only point of him she could reach without straining. "Your sense got you this far, after all."

That was true, Casey thought as he got in behind the wheel, Sadie barking happily away in the back of the van. His sense had led him to Evan, and Casey knew that even if he'd wanted to turn his back on him and run as fast as he could in the opposite, and safer, direction, something or other would always pull him back there.

It was just easier to hold his breath and take that leap.

## Chapter 3

It took forever for Casey to convince the nurse at the admissions desk to let him and Sadie both through. Apparently Casey's hawk sight was a great deterrent to his argument for bringing a guide dog in, no matter how much Casey tried to explain that the dog belonged to an ER patient who was, in fact, blind, and in need of his guide if he wanted to ever make it home without being hit by a bus.

Casey hated red tape. How could anyone not understand that you could not separate an eyesight impaired person from his guide? It was fucking absurd. You'd think Casey was trying to lead an angry bull by its horns, with all the fuss they were making. Still, be it because they were tired of his continuous arguing or because Leo had finally rubbed off on Casey, lending him some of his natural charm, he finally managed to pass the keeper of the holy gates with Sadie's leash in one hand and a slip of paper with Evan's room number in the other.

Or not.

The room they pointed him to had an elderly lady with her arm in a cast, reading a copy of *GQ*. Confused, Casey looked down at Sadie, who tilted her head to the side with an expression that could only be labeled as puzzlement. "What do you say, baby girl," Casey said, lowering himself to be eye-to-eye with the dog. "Can you help me find him?"

The dog licked his nose as though she understood. She wagged her tail once, and took off (surprisingly fast, considering she was limping only moments ago), Casey hot on her heels. The ER was crowded no matter what day, time, or season it was, and most of the staff turned their noses up at seeing Sadie sniff around corners, and despite the

lack of outward comments, Casey could feel their disapproval as loud and clear as a CNN broadcast.

Sadie barked and suddenly broke out in a run. Casey nearly tripped over his feet as he tried to keep up with her, trying not to care about the stream of negative energy bouncing from every angle in the ER crowd.

Sadie pulled him around a corner and down a long corridor, past patients in wheelchairs and on rolling beds and IV drips stands, obstacles of a dangerous nature for someone as accident prone as Casey was. Sadie lunged forward, yanking the leash out of his hands and running all the way down the corridor until she rounded the corner and disappeared.

Casey cursed under his breath and tried to follow her, doing that half run half walk that earned him more disapproving stares and mutterings as he tried to keep up with Sadie.

And then he heard him.

"Girl, c'mere, c'mere. Good girl. Good girl. You found me. It's all good, baby. Just a scratch. Are you hurt? Did they hurt you? C'mere. Here we go. It's all good now."

Casey smiled to himself. He could hear the slight tremor to Evan's voice, the touch of vulnerability he would've hated for anyone to witness. He gave it a minute before loudly tromping around the corner, choosing to give Evan fair warning of his approach rather than sneak up on him, only to stop dead in his tracks at the sight he was met with.

Evan was sitting in a wheelchair, only a pair of sweatpants over the temporary cast on his leg, his chest bare, stripes of gauze going round and round his mid section and his jacket thrown over his shoulders in an attempt to keep warm. The wound on his head didn't look much cleaner, and there was still congealed blood at the side of his face.

"Who's there?" Evan snapped, sounding almost nothing like the man who'd just been whispering to his dog. His eyes were narrowed, his glare aimed straight at Casey, even if he couldn't see him.

"My name's Casey." That was a good way to start. Now what? *I'm the guy who found you in that alley* didn't seem the best way to start the conversation. "How are you feeling?"

"I know you." Evan scowled. "You're the one who sent me here."

That wasn't really the reaction Casey was expecting. He recovered quickly then, and took one step closer. Cautious but steady. "How are you feeling?"

"Super, that's how I'm feeling," Evan snarled, his shoulders hunched over. Defensive. "What the fuck were you thinking?"

Casey frowned. "You were hurt."

Evan snorted. God, such bitterness, Casey could taste it, hanging around the air like a black cloud. He almost took a step back, but managed not to. Barely.

"I'm fine. I can take care of myself." Evan got to his feet, swaying a little as he clutched Sadie's harness. "Now if you're done helping, get out of the way."

"You can't leave yet -- your head --"

"I'm fine," Evan gritted out as he fought to put on his jacket. God knew what had happened to his shirt. "I just need to get home. I fucking hate hospitals."

Evan tried to move past Casey, but Sadie dug her claws into the floor at Casey's feet, whining.

"Come on, girl," Evan muttered, tugging at her harness. "We're going home."

Sadie whined again, then woofed and jumped up on Casey's leg, nearly throwing him off balance.

"What the hell -- Sadie!" Evan sounded unnerved. "Come on." He tugged on her harness again, but Sadie didn't budge.

Casey crouched down on the floor, and quietly scratched Sadie's ears. "She's very cute."

"Careful. She bites strangers."

Sadie barked and licked at Casey's face, making him giggle. "I can tell."

Evan pouted, and Casey's heart skipped a beat. Even if his eyes were staring somewhere off to the side of Casey's face, there was no denying how gorgeous Evan

looked. He realized with a pang that Evan was probably completely clueless about his own appearance.

"She was very worried about you," Casey said as he looked up.

Evan's expression was unreadable. "You brought her here?"

*No, she walked ten miles and caught an elevator.* "Yes," he decided to say instead. "She was pining away for you, so I thought it'd be better to reunite her with her master."

Evan's expression didn't change. Casey didn't know what to make of it. He wondered if maybe he could try and reach out to him, but at the same time he was scared -- he didn't want Evan to close up on himself completely, and pushing to get through to him would do more damage than good in the long run. "If you -- uh, if you're sure you want to go home, I can hel -- I mean, you can get your paperwork sorted now and um. I have the van," Casey said. "I can give you a ride, maybe?"

"Sure."

Casey's arms erupted in goose bumps. This couldn't be good. There was something odd to that bland acceptance, especially coming from the same man who fought tooth and nail to stand on his own broken leg. Still, though. At least he would get home safe.

Casey squared his shoulders and stood, smiling a little and hoping it could be conveyed through his voice. "Let's go, then."

\* \* \*

It turned out Evan was living not far from where Casey and Sandra had found him. Three more blocks, and he'd have been safe. It made Casey's stomach churn.

He pulled over in the visitor parking of the dilapidated four story condo, stealing a secret glance toward the passenger seat. Evan was holding Sadie's leash tight in his fist, the dog curled at his feet.

"Here we are," Casey said, trying to sound cheerful, and not like the tension between him and Evan was pushing at the back of his neck like a ton of bricks.

Evan opened the door, allowing Sadie to jump out first. Then he turned his head slightly, chin touching his shoulder as he looked -- not looked, Casey chastised himself. Not looked, but addressed Casey. "I'm fourth floor."

Casey blinked. That was something else that came unexpected. Casey wasn't used to surprises. His sense didn't mean that he could predict the lotto or anything like that, but after the powerful connection he'd experienced with Evan, not knowing what was going through his head was unnerving.

Evan closed the door of the van, and Sadie barked. Casey shook himself out of his vortex of thoughts and clambered out, following them up to the front door. There were four sets of stairs, and no elevator in sight.

"I'm blind, not crippled," Evan said, and Casey blushed.

"I didn't say anything."

Evan snorted. "You didn't have to. I could feel your disbelief from here."

"Fair enough." Casey looked up at the first staircase. It was not something easy to manage with Evan's cast, but something told him -- either his heightened sense or pure intuition -- that Evan would refuse help. So instead he rolled his shoulders and tried to put his smile in his voice. "Race you up there?"

"Ha, ha," Evan drawled, but it wasn't quite as cutting as his previous remark. It felt more like a joke than a snap. "I'll give you a head start."

\* \* \*

Evan followed Sadie up the stairs, one hand tight around her harness, the other on his crutch, even if his leg was hurting like a motherfucker, not to mention that every time he sucked in a breath, he could feel with painful clarity every single crack of the three ribs they'd broke with their kicks. Still, he'd die before letting the kid help him out. Evan could feel him -- hovering a few feet ahead, watching him like a hawk, waiting for Evan to slip.

He'd have to wait a long time.

Evan didn't want or need help. He was self-sufficient, had always been, and he was going to prove to Casey that he didn't need anything from him, or anyone else for that matter.

Of course, that's when Sadie decided to woof excitedly and turn left, pouncing on Casey and making Evan stumble. Evan grunted in pain as he swayed, his head pounding as he fought to keep his balance.

Casey's arm sneaked around his waist and held him fast, and Evan groaned as he swayed on his single good foot, nearly tripping over his own crutch. "Fuck."

"It's okay." Casey's voice was dangerously close to Evan's ear. He could feel the toned muscles of Casey's arms and upper chest, and realized with a jolt that he was way taller than Evan himself was. Evan sighed and tried to shrug him away.

"I'm good." Evan said, trying to keep his voice steady. This was not how it was supposed to go. Casey let go of him, slowly, his hand stroking the small of Evan's back, gently, way too gently.

Evan shook his head, trying to clear it, but it turned out to be a bad idea as the pounding intensified. Getting to his apartment was way harder than he'd first thought, and by the time they made it to the fourth floor, Evan's head was swimming and every breath made his ribcage throb.

He patted his pockets for his key, sighing in relief when he closed his fingers around it. Casey didn't offer to open the door for him, something that surprised Evan, given that every single guy he brought home wanted to do a big show of being chivalrous and shit. He smiled to himself. Good start to an otherwise shitty night.

"This is very nice," he heard Casey say as they walked through.

Evan snorted. He would usually say that he'd have to trust him on that, but what came out instead was, "I never clean up."

"Neither does Leo. Ugh. I don't know how I still live with him and he still lives, period. Trust me, you're doing just fine."

Evan frowned. So Casey was taken. Well, not a complete surprise, not really. Considering how the day had gone and the number of stupid decisions Evan had made

in his life, it was a good enough result that Casey hadn't turned out to be a mass murderer.

Come to think of it, it was good enough that Casey hadn't left him bleeding and unconscious on the street.

He let Sadie go, patting her head as he limped his way to the kitchen counter and took her bag of cookies from the side of the microwave, crumbling a couple and sweeping them in her dish.

He heard water trickle from the sink, and he realized that Casey was filling up her water bowl.

Fuck, this wasn't going like Evan wanted. He could feel Casey moving around in his kitchen and it was getting to him in a way nothing else did. He blamed the concussion.

"I always wanted a dog," Casey was talking again, "but Leo's allergic, and it's his house after all. Even though it would be funny to douse him in dog's hair just to have him scratch his balls blue --"

Evan snorted at that. "You're a terrible boyfriend."

A clank, sloshing. Casey had dropped Sadie's water bowl -- hopefully in the sink, Evan thought absently as he turned around to assess the damage.

"I don't have a boyfriend," Casey rushed out in one go.

Evan stilled. "Leo's not --"

"Oh God no. I don't want any STDs!" He was laughing, the sound like a waterfall. It was the first time Evan heard him laugh and it made heat suffuse in his chest. "Leo's my roommate. He'd hump anything that moves -- in fact I think I'm the only one who he hasn't humped yet."

That changed things.

Evan nodded to himself. "Well yeah. That doesn't make for a healthy relationship." Not that he'd know anything about healthy. Or relationship. Or a combination of the both of them.

"Hey."

Evan nearly jumped out of his skin. Motherfucker had snuck up on him, and he shivered as Casey's hand curled around his shoulders from behind. Too close, way too close. Evan shifted and regained his personal space, wobbling precariously on his damaged leg.

"Sorry," Casey was saying, and he sounded very embarrassed. And -- young. "I mean... I know you probably don't want any help, and all that, but... well, if there's anything I can do..."

He didn't finish the sentence. Evan cursed. Fuck all this. "Yeah. There's something you can do," he whispered, pushing the nagging feeling that this was going to be another one of those monumentally bad decisions that had led him to where he was now -- at a dead end, and handicapped.

"Yeah, sure, anything --"

This time Casey didn't finish the sentence because Evan's hands cupped the back of his head and pulled him forward. He could feel Casey's breath on his mouth, the surprised half gasp, and Evan shut his mind off as he brought their mouths together.

Casey's lips opened without question, and Evan's fingers tangled in the long, soft strands of hair at the back of Casey's head. Casey's breath hitched, his tongue giving way to Evan's demanding, rough one.

Evan skimmed his hands down Casey's chest -- firm, solid muscle quivering under the threadbare cotton of his shirt -- and God, Evan didn't care if this was the last bad decision in a long line of bad decisions.

God, he just *wanted*. His stomach pulled in, his breath short and painful already.

"Wait --" Casey gasped, his fingers skimming against Evan's cheeks almost as though he couldn't, wouldn't, didn't want to touch him.

"No," Evan whispered, tightening his hand in Casey's hair as he kissed him again.

He didn't want to listen. He didn't want to be treated like he was going to break. He wasn't going to be treated like he was special.

Casey groaned and his hesitant hands finally settled on Evan's shoulders, almost as if he didn't know what else to do with them. A wave of heat radiated off him, and Evan knew he was blushing.

"Oh God," Casey whispered, his lips softly skimming to the side of Evan's jaw. Soft. Delicate. Evan had no use for that. It wasn't what he wanted; he didn't want gentle, hesitant. He wanted rough. He wanted painful.

He wanted sex. And he said so, biting at Casey's wandering mouth as he pushed him backwards. He groaned in pain as he hit his broken leg against the corner of the counter.

"Careful," Casey whispered, a touch of worry in his voice, but Evan wasn't going to listen.

He tumbled back on the couch, dragging Casey along. Casey groaned in his mouth as their hips ground together. A shock went through Evan. He clutched at Casey's shoulders as Casey's hard dick rode the side of his hip.

Fuck, Evan couldn't stand it. His own dick was pulsing in his hospital-issued sweats, all of his blood pumping southwards with a ferocity he hadn't experienced in quite some time.

"Oh God," Casey moaned and clutched at Evan's biceps, rocking up against him. "Oh God, Evan -- wait. Wait, I don't -- I'm gonna crush you -- your ribs --"

"I don't care," Evan groaned. He spread his legs, his hands shifting from Casey's chest, up, up, up -- God he was tall -- to his shoulders and around, spreading his hands over the wings of Casey's shoulder blades. "Christ, how big are you?" Evan groaned, hands traveling down to the small of his back to grab at his strong, muscular ass.

"I'm -- it's -- I'm --" Casey stuttered.

"It was a compliment," Evan whispered.

Evan could feel Casey's cheeks heat against his skin. He was blushing. Evan thought that was adorable for about three seconds. Then he shoved the thought as far back as he could and he bit into Casey's neck. Lips pursed, he suckled the sweet, soapy taste of his skin as he tugged and pulled at the waistband of Casey's jeans.

"Evan --" Casey's hips kept rocking against Evan, small, clumsy jerks that Evan was sure Casey wasn't even aware of doing. It was hot as hell.

Evan's hands slipped into Casey's jeans, finding nothing but smooth, warm skin, and it made Casey's breath break on a moan. "Oh God, oh God, oh God," Casey chanted and Evan's dick jumped in his pants. Casey's mouth closed on the side of Evan's neck, kissing everywhere he could reach, nearly desperate.

When Evan's fingers shifted down the crease of Casey's ass, Casey groaned, his body seizing up, and he clutched at Evan's shoulders as he rocked their groins together, spilling warm and sticky in his pants, against the bulge in Evan's pants.

## Chapter 4

Casey wanted to die. Really. If the floor could open up and swallow him whole, that would've probably been the best solution to the single, most humiliating moment of his life. "Oh God." He could feel everything, Evan's own arousal thrumming through his veins like two different people were tangled up inside of him, and it was driving him crazy.

Evan chuckled, his amusement doing nothing to ease Casey's ever-growing shame. "I am -- I am so -- sorry, oh fuck, I'm just -- I shouldn't --"

"Where do you think you're going?" Evan rasped, his voice sensual and low. His eyes were glistening in the dim darkness of the room, and Casey's heart stuttered. He couldn't believe those eyes weren't taking in any of it. He couldn't stop looking at him. He was the most beautiful creature Casey had ever seen, and part of him couldn't shake the idea that if Evan had the gift of eyesight, he'd never even consider him.

"It's all right," Evan whispered, kissing the hollow of his throat, his hands pushing Casey's jeans past his thighs. "It's all right."

"I'm sorry." He blushed like a child, his dick jumping back to attention the moment the wet material of his pants dragged over it as they were slid down his legs. "I've -- never done this before."

There was shock, then another rush that went straight from the base of his spine straight up to his head and down to his cock again. "You serious?" It seemed almost as though Evan was trying to put him into focus as he shifted his face just slightly toward him.

"Yes," Casey whispered. *God, kill me now.*

"That's the hottest thing I've ever heard," Evan whispered, nudging at his face to get another kiss. Casey's heart jumped in his throat and he kissed him back, a tad too enthusiastically, because a flash of pain hit him at the same time as Evan grunted and tossed his head back, trying to suck in gulps of air.

"Shit, shit -- I'm sorry," he gasped, struggling to climb off Evan's lap and kneeling on the thick carpet in front of the couch.

"I'm fine," Evan gritted out. "Come on." His hand reached out to try and grab his hand to pull him back up. "It's all right."

"No, it's not." Casey couldn't understand what the hell was going through Evan's mind. "I can't -- I don't want to hurt you."

Something flared in his gut, and he didn't know what it was -- he couldn't quite put his finger on it. Evan grunted and tried to push himself up, but as he did so another sharp burst of pain made the both of them groan in unison.

Casey couldn't explain it. It had never happened before, and he couldn't stop it, but even if he'd known how, Casey wouldn't have wanted to. Evan was already under his skin, and Casey would not give that up for the world.

Evan fell back against the cushions of the couch, panting hard. Casey bit his lip, his hands tentatively brushing over Evan's thighs as they inched closer to his bulging crotch. Evan whined, nape digging back against the couch as he spread his legs wider. Casey thought it was a good sign and swallowed, shifting closer to the couch as his fingers played with the strings of Evan's sweats.

Evan's hips rocked up, and Casey's hand slid inside his pants, pulling out Evan's hard, thick cock, a twitch of fear blending with anticipation as he fit it in his hands, unsure and determined at the same time.

"Oh fuck." Evan bucked and thumped his head against the back of the couch, hissing as Casey's thumbnail caught on the leaking slit, collecting a thick dollop of precome as Casey stroked all the way down to his thick, full balls.

Casey's own cock pulsed in answer, already as hard as though he'd not just come in his pants mere moments before. He stroked Evan firmly, feeling bolder the louder

Evan became as he thrashed on the couch, breath heavy and torn, pleasure and pain blurring together in a line so thin neither of them knew where the one ended and the other began.

Evan gasped, his hands reaching down to grab at some part of Casey, trying to urge him on. Evan's cock was glistening now, slick with precome as it pushed through the tight fist of Casey's hand, and Casey couldn't keep his eyes off Evan, the way his chest was heaving under his bandages, a slick sheen of sweat making his skin glint in the moonlight.

Casey's heart was beating so loud, it was a wonder that Evan couldn't hear it in the quiet of the room. He couldn't believe it was happening for real. He dipped his head and licked at a droplet that was running down the throbbing vein on the underside, a heady, bittersweet taste exploding on his tongue. The drawn out moan it got out of Evan was more than enough incentive to have him try again, pressing his tongue flat and dragging it all the way up to the slit, curling it over the crown and sliding back down on the other side.

"Fuck, fuck --" Evan's hips jerked up again, cock bouncing against Casey's lips and smearing precome all over them, white and sticky. Evan's nape pressed back into the couch cushions, breath heavy and ragged, the neat stack of his abs trembling with the strain. He looked raw, wild, completely bared under Casey's touch, and Casey's own dick throbbed as he stared his fill. He licked his lips, the fluids thick on his tongue, and put his hands over Evan's hips, both to try and brace himself and to keep Evan from thrusting up too hard or doing anything that would make him hurt himself.

Casey closed his mouth around the head of Evan's cock, trying to cover his teeth and breathe through his nose at the same time as Leo kept drilling into him during that one face palming session with the banana, and sucked. Evan keened loudly, one of his hands snatching up to curl clumsily at the base of Casey's head, half petting, half pulling at his hair, and Casey swallowed, lips stretched wide around the thick girth, spit-slick and bruised. He wanted to make it good for Evan, but his eyes began to water after a handful of seconds. Evan was huge, hard and heavy inside his mouth, and even

though he wanted to try and take more, there was simply no way he could make it all fit. Didn't mean he wasn't going to try.

"Fuck -- Casey --" Evan's fingers flexed in his hair, tight, making his eyes water and his cock leak against his stomach. He bobbed his head up and down, hollowing his cheeks and moaning when his mouth filled with precome again, some of it dribbling down his chin as he tried to swallow around it all. He looked up at Evan, and he realized with a jolt that Evan had closed his eyes, his face scrunched up as though in pain, and let go of his cock with a wet popping sound, Evan's low groan of disapproval sending a shiver down his spine.

"Come on." Evan guided him back up by the grip on his hair. "Hey. Hey, it's okay," he whispered, and Casey had to wonder how he knew what was going on inside his head, or if he could just feel his agitation, like a wild horse smelling fear. "Kiss me."

Casey complied. He knew already he could not deny Evan anything.

Evan groaned low in his throat when he felt soft, hesitant lips brush against his jaw, the side of his chin, then over his cheeks, light touches that messed with Evan's head more than he cared to admit. He'd never been one for niceties, but God, even if he still had the mental capacity to speak as Casey's fingers caressed his chest, up to his pecs, shyly brushing against his nipples, Evan had no idea if he'd have it in him to stop Casey's quiet journey on his body.

*You're beautiful.*

Evan shuddered. "Don't." His fingernails sunk deep in the small of Casey's back as he dragged him closer. "Don't say anything."

"I --"

Evan's mouth came down on Casey's, stealing his next line.

There were no endearments Evan would believe in. He wanted rough, and hard, and fuck, if Casey wasn't going to give it to him, Evan would just have to take it. He shuffled on the couch, trying to get rid of his sweats even with a plaster cast that went from his knee to his foot, and when he finally managed, he planted his foot on the side

of the coffee table, spreading himself open as wide as he could. "Do it," He grunted, tugging at Casey's shoulders. "Now."

"Evan, I --"

Another kiss of silence. Evan wasn't going to beg, for Christ's sake, but if Casey didn't do something, and soon, he'd just fucking implode. "Come on." he whispered, going for seductive, but his voice was too rough, too raw for it to come across. His hands fumbled against Casey's hips, following the perfect V of his hipbones to his hard, hot, fucking huge dick. Evan's breath broke around a moan as he fit it in his palm, stroking it firmly.

Casey grunted and thrust roughly with his hand. "Oh God, oh God -- Evan, fuck, I don't -- I never --"

"It's fine." Evan dug through the cushion of the couch until his fingers closed around a small packet of lube and a condom. "I'll guide you."

Casey's shudder went through Evan as though they were the same person. Sweat poured in rivulets down his back, soaking the bandages, his ribs hurting like a bitch with every struggle for breath, but Evan couldn't care less. He wanted the weight of Casey's body crushing him, the heat of his dick splitting him open, the burn, the breathless touch of his mouth, God, he just wanted.

The first touch of cold, lubed fingers against his hole made Evan squirm and wriggle. "Sorry," Casey whispered, and he sounded it.

Evan shook his head. "Don't worry -- I'm all right." He meant it. He wanted Casey so badly he could taste it, and if he had to go through preparation he would probably not be able to hold back.

"Shhh," Casey whispered, making Evan's skin erupt in goose bumps. "Let me learn."

Evan's heart stopped for a second, only to start again twice as fast when the tips of Casey's questing fingers started circling at his hole again. Sweat broke down Evan's back, and his lip bled when he bit into it to stop from moaning out loud. Casey took his sweet time with him, shifting and thrusting and coming back with more lube, cold

shivers leading the way to hot bursts of pleasure that made Evan whimper and thrash against the couch.

It wasn't hard to believe Casey had never done this before, but even if his fingers moved tentatively inside of him, they managed to hit all the right spots. Dark coals of pleasure curled at the base of Evan's spine with each push and pull.

Evan didn't even know how much time had passed, but he did feel when Casey went from two fingers to three, making him gasp and go boneless against the couch. A low moan escaped his lips as he fought to spread himself wider, his ass sliding down on the couch and sinking lower on Casey's hand.

"Oh God." Evan thumped his closest fist down on the couch, grabbing the end of the cushion to try and ground himself. "Fuck, fuck, Casey, just do it."

"But --"

"No buts." Evan groped around for Casey's wrist, feverishly clutching at it and forcing Casey's fingers in deeper. "Now. Now, please, Casey."

Maybe it was the begging. Maybe it was because Evan's desperation was so thick it had replaced the air between them. Maybe because not even Casey could stand it anymore.

His fingers slipped out of Evan, and he nearly sobbed again at the sensation. In his fuzzy mind he could hear a condom packet being torn open, and next thing he knew he was crying out Casey's name as he pushed inside of him, his thick girth splitting him in two, filling him more fully than he could've ever imagined.

*Please move*, Evan thought, moisture collecting at the sides of his eyes as every single nerve of his body was bared raw. *Please, God, please, do something -- anything --*

"Anything you ask me," Casey whispered, lips brushing at the side of Evan's face. "Anything, I'll give you anything."

Casey's hand found Evan's and he clutched at it, kissing his palm as he started to pull out. Evan moaned, strength leaving him in waves as he surrendered against the slow, purposeful thrusts Casey delivered until he didn't know up from down any longer. Everything narrowed down to the center of him, and the delirious, burning

pleasure that spread from where Casey's hips were thrusting up into him to every single particle of his body.

Casey moved so flawlessly, hitting all the right spots in him, his mouth panting against Evan's, too strung out to do anything but trade ragged breaths. Evan clung desperately to his back, his good leg twisted around Casey's waist as he tried to urge him on, but Casey wouldn't budge, his hand braced against the back of the couch, next to Evan's head to avoid crashing against him with the quickening pace of his hips.

"God, Evan, you --" Casey's voice broke and he moaned, his lips dragging down on Evan's neck, kissing licking biting, never rough, just there, driving Evan to the point of no return. When Casey's hand closed around his cock, Evan cried out, his balls pulling tight against his body as he writhed in Casey's arms, incoherent sounds slipping from his mouth as his orgasm caught up with him.

Evan's body tensed, seizing up straight like a bow, fingernails sinking in Casey's shoulders as he clutched him as tight as he could, breath leaving him in a rush as he came, messy and fast, coating Casey's fingers and wrist, some of it even landing on Evan's own chest.

Casey smothered a long, drawn out groan in the curve of Evan's neck, his spine going rigid as he, too, came, his hips stuttering to a stop, a rush of warmth filling Evan up from inside out, despite the thin barrier of the condom.

"Oh God, Evan," Casey whispered, completely strung out, breath damp on Evan's skin. Evan had no voice to spare. He just clutched at Casey's back like a shield from the outside world, weightless and floating, only anchored to this world by Casey's arms, and his still hard dick inside of him.

*I'm falling in love with you.*

Evan's heart stopped like a bucket of ice had just been dumped on his chest.

The pain was back.

Casey had no idea what happened. One moment he was buried deep inside of Evan, feeling like the whole world suddenly made sense again. The next moment, Evan was shoving roughly at his shoulders, his eyes wild as he stared to the side, blocking

Casey out completely -- not only physically, which hurt, yes, but Casey was almost expecting that.

What cut through Casey like steel was the abrupt emotional rejection -- made worse by the absolute completeness of their connection up to that point. It felt as though something had been ripped out of Casey, and he staggered as he tried to adjust.

Evan was so far away he could've been on another planet. Casey stumbled to his feet, nearly tripping over his lowered jeans and flushing as he struggled to get dressed.

There was no need to speak for either of them. Evan looked dangerously close to the breaking point. Everything in Casey screamed at him to do something, talk to him, reach out, anything to try and catch the pieces of Evan, crumbling to the floor. Instead Casey simply collected his clothes and stumbled out of Evan's home and out of his life.

## Chapter 5

The drive home wasn't easy. Too much had happened in only a few short hours for Casey to even wrap his mind around it. As he pulled in the parking spot of the center to hand off the van, he realized it was only eleven pm.

Christ, it felt like the afternoon belonged to another life. And as Casey took the stairs to his office to drop the keys off, that life felt foreign and empty. He tried to tell himself it was because he rarely stopped at the center at night, because Sandra wasn't there, but he wasn't that stupid. He didn't like lying to himself. He'd gone through several varying stages of denial when he'd first figured out his sense, and none of it had ever helped him out.

Casey looked around the dark office and took a deep breath, running a hand through his too long hair, and wincing when he realized just how badly he needed a shower. Maybe he could grab one there. The last thing he wanted was to go home to Leo, and whoever Leo had brought along with him.

Some quiet would do him good. Somewhere he could be alone with his thoughts, despite those not being the happiest.

He stepped in the too small shower of the common bathroom next to the dorms, letting the lukewarm jet of water trickle down his face and back, but he knew nothing would wash away the phantom of Evan's touch on his skin. There were fingernail marks on his arms, long scratches on his back, all of them brands that spelled out Evan's possession. Casey still couldn't figure out what had gone wrong. He knew Evan wanted him -- he had felt it so deep in his gut he had acted on instinct, without worrying about the consequences for once in his life.

Maybe he should have. It had been his first time, after all.

Casey wasn't a fool. He wasn't a dreamer. He'd not allowed himself that since high school. He knew love at first sight was a fairytale, not real life, but if he was to be honest with himself, he knew that there was no other explanation for how strongly he'd felt toward Evan, even before they'd found him beaten up and vulnerable on that sidewalk.

So maybe he'd fallen in love. But that didn't mean Evan felt the same way.

"Oh, fuck!"

Casey yelped and nearly fell on his ass in the shower as Marike quickly backpedaled in the hall.

"Oh, oh, oh Jesus -- I am so sorry! I am sorry, I had no idea someone was -- shit!"

Casey wanted to slam his head against the wall. This was getting better and better. Maybe his senses needed some fine tuning, because the night had turned out to hold some major crooked turns. "It's okay," he gasped, turning off the water and scrambling to get his towel. "I wasn't supposed to be here, uh. I'm -- just --"

"It's all good." Marike's hand waved from behind the doorway. Casey could hear her trying to stifle a giggle. "I didn't mind the view."

Okay, now if the shower's floor could open up and swallow him whole, that would've been good. Jesus. It ranked up there with coming in his pants with Evan as one of the top five most embarrassing moments of his life.

"So, seriously," Marike asked him fifteen minutes later when Casey had regained his decency and they were both sprawled on the small loveseat jammed in between the bunk beds of the dorm. "You're a psychic."

"Yep."

"And you can, like, see the future and stuff?"

Casey chuckled. "On occasion."

"Can you read my palm lines?"

"No."

"Tea leaves?"

"I'm not Harry Potter." Casey laughed, pouring a cup of scalding hot coffee from the patched up machine in Sandra's corner of the office. "I just... perceive feelings. Sometimes I see things before they happen... never quite early enough to stop them, though."

"That sucks."

"Not really. I mean, I used to think it sucked." He shrugged. "At least now I use it, or try to, at least, to help people out."

Marike nodded, her jet black bangs bobbing against her forehead. "And this guy..."

"Evan."

"Right. This guy's been bashed, you say?"

Casey's stomach lurched. He nodded. Marike clucked her tongue in sympathy. "Did he see who did it?"

Casey swallowed a mouthful of dreadful coffee. "He's blind."

"Get out of here. Are you serious?" Another nod. "Wow. Man, the world sucks hardcore."

Casey snorted. That, he could agree with.

"So let me get this straight. The guy is blind, he's got his ribs kicked in, and then you ran out on him?"

"I did not!" Casey said in indignation.

"Well, you're here, aren't you?"

"He threw me out!"

"But of course he did. He was all messed up, and then you two --" she made a crude gesture that made Casey blush "-- well obviously that threw him for a loop."

"How do you know?"

"Dude, I may be a lesbian, but I'm still a woman. In fact, I'm amazed all of you manage to keep up a relationship without a girl telling you what you do."

Casey chuckled, rubbing the back of his head. "So what's your suggestion?"

"You know where he lives." She raised her cup at him, as though she were toasting. "I say, if you're serious about him, don't let him go. He's probably used to that way too much."

Casey finished his coffee. "But what if he doesn't want me?"

"You're the psychic. Can't you think of a way you could change his mind?"

"I don't have superpowers, you know."

Marike smiled. "Did you ever stop to think that maybe it has nothing to do with that?"

Casey blinked. "What do you mean?"

"Maybe it's not about what you can see or foresee. Maybe this time you're just like the rest of us who need to make it work the hard way." Marike was smiling at him, like she'd just let him on a big secret. Maybe she had.

Casey looked at the dark stains of his coffee at the bottom of the cup, and thought they almost looked like a smiling face. He shook his head and put it down on the box that served as a temporary nightstand. "I don't know."

"Well, that's a change," Marike mused, taking another sip of her coffee.

Casey was about to say something, but a jaw-splitting yawn prevented him from finishing his sentence. He looked at his wristwatch and was surprised to see it was past three in the morning.

"Bed." Marike nudged him. "You can mull it over all you want it in the morning."

Casey looked around at the bunk beds, small but inviting, and yawned again. His head hurt, his chest hurt, and he was missing Evan something fierce.

Sleep right then sounded awesome.

\* \* \*

Evan's leg was hurting like a sonofabitch. He hadn't slept one wink that night, every single other position uncomfortable -- not only thanks to those motherfuckers who'd kicked the crap out of him. Every time he shifted on the bed, his ass throbbed in

that hot painful way that Evan usually cherished, the memory of a good, hard, anonymous fuck getting him through one more day, making him feel alive.

This time, his gut burned every time a spike of pain snuck up on him, the emptiness something physical. He couldn't believe he'd been stupid enough to go through with it. He should've known Casey would be all about feelings and emotions and all that jazz he'd sworn he was done with.

Sadie barked at his feet, her tail wagging and hitting his cast rhythmically. "Can't take you out again, princess," Evan said as he reached down to scratch her ears. "Not for awhile. After lunch, okay?"

Sadie whined and lapped at his fingers. Evan felt his way around the kitchen, getting a can of beer out of the fridge. So what if it was early. Beer was the only food group that didn't go to waste, and that was the only kind of food group Evan felt like keeping in his house. That, and Sadie's treats.

The lady who lived down the hall came once a week to clean his apartment, and after the first few times of finding Darwinism projects in his fridge rather than food, she started bringing over trays of meatloaf and lasagna and other home cooked meals to carry him through the week. Evan had tried to tell her she didn't have to do that, but either she was deaf, or pretended to be, because every Friday like clockwork Evan would come back from his afternoon walk to find his fridge cluttered with delicious smelling food.

The beer wasn't cold enough or strong enough. Evan finished it, wishing it were whiskey, and limped his way to the couch. His ratty apartment was sparsely decorated, to avoid him slamming into things. He always refused to use a cane to walk around, preferring to trust Sadie completely, but as he knocked into the coffee table -- which was out of place, incidentally, pushed over to the side after last night's activities -- he cursed under his breath and wished --

He didn't often wish.

Wishing was dangerous.

Evan took a deep breath, wincing in pain and trying to hoist his leg up on the back of the couch without knocking it into anything else.

Sadie whined again. Evan sighed. "Girl, come on. We've been out this morning, haven't we? Daddy can't get to the stairs right now."

Sadie's wet nose poked at his hand and Evan sighed again. "Sadie, please." He was sure that if his dog could talk she would tell him how much of an idiot he was to rent a place on the fourth floor with his "Impairment," as his case worker called it. Why not say blind? He wasn't impaired, he was blind, and blind wasn't a fucking bad word, for fuck's sake.

"I should be mad at you," Evan said out loud, and felt Sadie's head tilt sideways under his fingertips. "You betrayed me for that -- dude, last night."

*I wasn't the one fucking him, though,* Sadie barked again.

"You're supposed to chase them away afterwards, not get cuddles," he said, trying to sound stern.

*I thought that was your job?*

Fantastic. Evan was losing an argument with his own dog.

He needed more beer for this.

\* \* \*

"You slept here."

Casey tried to avoid Leo's leer as he fiddled about with the blasted coffee machine. It was seven thirty am, and Leo should not be awake and alert and at work. It was against the natural circle of life or something.

"You look different," Leo observed, squinting at him. "I thought you didn't go for chicks."

Casey blushed to the very roots of his hair. "I don't. And I'm not having this conversation with you."

"Why not? I'm your roommate. I could've been worried, you know. You went off to play Mr. Nurse and never came back --"

"Were you worried?"

"Well, no..."

Casey punched the coffee machine into submission. "So why are we even talking about it?"

"Well I could've been. And you're not fessing up, and you're blushing, by the way. All clear signs that tell me there's something going on you're not sharing with us." Leo grinned and stole his coffee from Casey, taking a sip on it and nearly spitting it right back out. "Eww. How the hell does Sandra even drink this shit? Never mind, irrelevant. So?"

"So nothing."

"Bull. I'm your roomie and your best friend. I know you. Something must have happened."

"He got laid," Marike said as she walked into the office with an empty cup.

Casey glared at her.

"What? It's true."

"Are you shitting me?" Leo was positively Cheshire-like. "Oh this is too good! Who was the lucky lad?"

"Leo, I swear to God, if you don't shut the fuck up --"

"His name's Evan, he's the guy that got bashed yesterday," Marike finished as she filled her coffee cup. "Don't look at me like that," she scowled at Casey. "He's your friend, right? He's got a right to know."

"Damn straight I do!" Leo nodded seriously. "Wait a second -- you tapped that?"

Casey felt like banging his head against the table. He took his coffee and hid behind his computer -- not quite managing, however, given that Leo shuffled around the cramped studio until he could stand right in his face.

"What!" Casey snapped, sloshing the coffee over the rim of his cup and cursing as it soaked a bunch of papers on his desk.

"Look, man," Leo said, trying to adopt Sandra's usual soothing voice. He failed spectacularly. "I've known you for three years now and this is the first time you've actually shown interest in anyone. I'm concerned. I am the concerned friend."

"The role doesn't suit you."

"Ouch! Dude. That hurts." Leo put a hand over his heart, mock-hurt. "So you slept and ran?"

"I didn't run, since you want to know," he snapped. "He kicked me out."

"Harsh. What did he say?"

"Nothing."

Moment of silence.

"So how did he exactly kick you out?"

"He didn't have to talk," Casey said, his chest constricting again.

"So you just assumed he didn't want you there."

"Pretty much," Marike said with a grin. "I told him he was an idiot."

"I second that."

"Who's an idiot?"

Casey groaned and faceplanted into the keyboard as Sandra made her way into the office, carrying her briefcase and a box of muffins. "Hi, sweetie pie, did you sleep well?"

"Yeah, thanks." Marike smiled as Sandra petted her cheek and edged along between her and Leo toward her desk. "So, who's the idiot? What did Leo do?"

"Why do you automatically assume it's me!?"

"Well why would I assume it's Casey?"

"He slept with the blind guy last night and then ran out on him."

"I didn't!" Casey nearly yelled.

"You didn't run off or you didn't hit that?" Leo asked, his tone mildly curious.

Sandra's eyes were the size of dinner plates. Casey blushed beet red and covered his face with his hands. "Hold on. Did you really sleep with that poor boy?"

"The poor boy is in his thirties, at least," Casey gritted out, "and he started it!"

"So why did you run?"

Casey had thought he liked Marike. Now he wasn't quite as sure anymore. "He pushed me away. And before you ask me how he did that without talking, I fucking felt

it. It was just as I was feeling it when they were beating him to a pulp. He could've punched me and it wouldn't have been clearer," he exploded.

There was silence. Casey regretted raising his voice immediately. "Sorry," he whispered. "I didn't -- I'm sorry."

Sandra put down her bags and came to perch herself next to Casey on his desk, wrapping her arm around his shoulder. "Honey, look," she started, her voice soft. "You know I care for you like a son. But I think that sometimes you hide behind your senses a bit too much."

Casey sighed and rubbed at his eyes with the back of his hand. "What do you mean?"

"You play it safe. And sometimes it would probably pay off to go against your better judgment and take a risk."

"I just did that," Casey muttered. "I am not -- I never -- and then he kicked me out."

Leo rolled his eyes at him. "So what, are you just going to give up on him?"

"Cos that's probably what he's expecting," Sandra put in helpfully.

Casey stayed silent. He had been so sure everything about last night had been a mistake. But now...

"Could you like, read his mind right now?" Marike asked curiously.

"I don't read minds." Casey couldn't get mad at her. She was actually taking this a lot better than most people, and curiosity about his gift was something he was used to dealing with when it was genuine and not scathing.

"Well then, how did you know he didn't want you to stay? Maybe he was just upset about something."

Casey stopped to consider it. Was it even remotely possible that the rejection he'd felt hadn't been about him?

"Did you even ask him?"

Casey looked up at Sandra. "Are you reading minds too?"

She snorted. "I'm a forty-five year old lesbian, cupcake. Superpowers come with the job description."

That broke the seriousness of the moment as Leo rolled his eyes, Marike giggled and high-fived Sandra, and Casey made his decision. It might have been the wrong one, but at that point, he thought that maybe, maybe this time it would pay off.

\* \* \*

Evan was dozing off on the couch, clutching a pillow to his chest to try and protect his ribs from jolting when he shifted. Sadie's barking jarred him out of his semi-comatose sleep, and he heaved himself off of the couch with a grunt.

"Sadie, enough of this," Evan said with a touch of annoyance in his voice. "I've called Mrs. Lamar, she said she'll come soon. Quit harassing me."

Sadie barked again, and just like that, the doorbell rang.

"There we go." Evan grabbed his crutch and thumped toward the door. "One moment, Mrs. Lamar."

"Uh... I'm -- it's Casey."

And just like that, Evan was wide awake and alert. His mouth ran dry, and between Sadie woofing and barking excitedly, and the insistent ringing of the doorbell, he felt like he was caught between two opposing fires.

"Evan, please. I got something for you to eat -- I mean, I didn't actually make it, Sandra did, and just -- can you let me in?"

Fuck, did he even know what he was asking? "It's not a good time," he managed. He waited. There was a long beat of silence, and he almost thought that he'd managed to get rid of him.

"Just give me a minute," Casey said, earnest and quiet, like a whisper. "Just hear me out, okay? You don't even have to open the door. I can talk from here."

Evan's insides were tangled up like balls of string. Sadie was whining and scratching at the door, and he didn't dare take one step forward, too afraid of what he would find on the other side.

"I'm sorry last night ended the way it did. I meant it when I said I've never done this before. I was... very out of my element. I don't know what I did to upset you, but I am truly sorry."

Evan tried to block Casey's voice out, he did, he really did. But it was as though Casey was speaking from right inside of him. Just as he had when Evan heard that terrifying *I'm falling in love with you*.

"I don't know if I can make it right, or if I ruined everything... any chance of having a-a -- relationship, hell, a friendship, even, with you, but I hope not. Because... there's something in you that just speaks to me in a way nothing, no one else does. And if you just give me a chance, maybe I can tell you why... why I found you and why I couldn't let you go even when you told me to fuck off, basically," a nervous laugh. "But I did leave in the end, and I made a mistake. And I'm sorry. I've known you for less than twenty-four hours, but you've already got under my skin. And I don't know what else I can say to make you change your mind and open that door. But I hope you will."

Sadie barked, as though to underline a point.

Evan clutched his head with both hands, his breath harsh and ragged. "Are you done?"

He could feel Casey's hesitation. "Yes."

"So you can go now."

The silence stretched on. And on, and on. Evan hoped, prayed that Casey would just give up and leave, for cryin' out loud, just leave him be like everyone else, but the silence was too long. He should've heard Casey's steps going down the stairs a long time ago.

"Evan."

Oh God. "I'm not going to say you had me at hello."

"Please."

Evan was ready to scream. He pushed himself up unsteadily on his good leg and staggered over to yank the door open. "What!" he yelled. He was probably not even a foot away from Casey's face. He could smell a faint trace of soap and blueberry muffins,

and he regretted, not for the first time, having lost the ability to glare. "Please, what? What do you want, Casey? You want me to talk? I won't. You want to be my friend? You won't. So what do you want now?"

"You have so many friends you can't do with one more?"

Evan gritted his teeth. "Did you even stop to wonder that maybe I don't want them?"

"Why not?"

Evan shook his head and turned to go back inside, but Casey took hold of his wrist -- not a powerful grasp, but a touch, just enough to ground Evan to that doorway.

"Why not, Evan?"

"Because I don't need no one's pity!"

"It's not pity!"

"I don't need no one's help --"

"Evan, you can't even walk down the stairs with the cast."

"So what is that to you?" Evan ground out, his voice going from screaming to low, painfully gritty. "Why don't you just get the fuck out of my life like everyone else?"

"Because I'm not everyone else!" Casey yelled, and as he tugged at the wrist he was holding Evan spun around, and his mouth crashed into Casey's.

## Chapter 6

Casey gasped and staggered as Evan fell against him, electricity running like a shock between the two of them. He'd never been quite as overwhelmed. The vortex of feelings pouring out of Evan was something that he'd never felt in his life, anger and resentment and fear and a black, dark hole of loneliness that nearly threatened to suffocate them both. The box with Sandra's muffins fell to the floor, and Casey wrapped his arm around Evan's waist, the kiss desperate, ferocious, more like a fight than a real kiss.

"Fuck," Evan gasped, grabbing Casey's face with both hands as he pulled him in again, breathless, their lips stinging, bitten and swollen. "Fuck."

"Evan," Casey whispered as he fought to keep on breathing, his heartbeat so loud in his ears it was the only thing he could hear. "Evan, please."

"Why won't you go away," Evan breathed as his hands splayed over Casey's chest. "Why, what's in it for you?"

"Nothing," Casey said as honestly as he could. "I don't want anything."

Evan's breath was hot against his neck, hard and fast as though he'd been running a marathon. "I can't deal with this," Evan said quietly. "I just can't."

"Will you at least eat a muffin?" Casey muttered, and Evan chuckled, nearly hysterical.

"You actually brought muffins."

"Sandra baked them."

"Who's Sandra?"

"She's my boss at the LGTB support center. She was with me when I found you."

Evan's back went rigid, and Casey cursed. Probably not the right thing to say. Fuck.

"Can we just sit down and talk?" he tried again. "I really don't want anything -- okay, anything else. I'd really love to just have a chance to get to know you, but --"

Evan sighed and pushed himself back up slightly, as though he was trying to look at Casey in the eye. "Why?"

"Because --" Casey swallowed. "Because I think I could fall in love with you. I might be more than halfway in love with you already."

And here it was again. That surge of rage and rejection, but this time Casey was prepared. He took hold of Evan's shoulders, stopping him from wriggling away. "I can feel you," he whispered, urgently, afraid Evan would shut himself off completely. "I could feel you when they attacked you, even if we were miles away. It's never happened before, not like this, and I know there's something that's destroyed you. Don't push me away, Evan, fuck, please. Just tell me --"

"Don't talk about love," Evan ground out. "We can do -- if that's what you want, fine, but -- don't even go there. Just don't."

"Why?" Casey knew he was playing with fire, but he couldn't stop himself.

"Because it left me like this," Evan squeezed his eyes shut, snapping them open again and fixing Casey with a blank, empty stare that chilled him to the bone. "Because he left me like this."

\* \* \*

Casey opened and closed his mouth a couple of times. He couldn't wrap his mind around it. He just couldn't. "I thought..."

"I wasn't born blind," Evan said in a quiet whisper. "There was... It was a car crash. I wasn't driving. He was. I was in the hospital for months. They'd hoped I'd see again but, well. That didn't work out." He laughed again, so bitter it chilled Casey's blood.

"And... him?"

"Didn't work out, either."

Now everything made sense. Casey wanted to say something, but he found he had no more words. A lump the size of a brick was stuck in his throat, and as he fought to regroup his thoughts, he saw the beginning of tears gather at the corners of Evan's eyes.

That kicked him into motion. He gently cupped the sides of Evan's face and leaned in to kiss him. Evan opened his mouth, and allowed Casey in, their hearts beating in unison, Evan clutching at Casey's shoulders with a soft, nearly desperate sound.

Casey held him close, his hands molding across the wings of Evan's shoulder blades. He pressed his lips over his eyes, with reverence almost, his fingertips skipping down the juncture of Evan's chin, then down to his jaw, to the hollow of his throat. Evan kissed him again, his head ducking low, trying to get back to Casey's mouth.

Casey's heart was still thundering in his chest, the crumbles of Evan's carefully constructed walls still lying scattered in pieces around them. The dust was settling, and Casey was treasuring the moment, the kisses becoming slower, longer, deeper, heat glowing between them.

Casey let his hand slide down to the small of Evan's back, pulling him closer. He took Evan's hands and guided them on his own face, letting Evan's fingertips trail over his features with care, rediscovering him. "I'm not much of a looker," he managed, grinning nervously. Evan's answering smile made his heart skip a beat.

"I see you better this way," Evan whispered, and even if he tried to add that little bit of edge to his voice to keep in control, Casey knew he was giving in.

He kissed the tips of Evan's fingers as he pulled him closer, their groins grinding together, slowly, a sensual roll of hips that made his skin tingle. "Can we -- again?"

Evan leaned in to bite at Casey's lip. Casey's blood flew straight to his cock, which pulsed to attention faster than Evan could get the sentence out. Teeth knocked together, tongues tangling, Evan fell against Casey's chest and they stumbled back into the hallway toward Evan's bedroom.

As Casey pushed the door closed, he caught a glimpse of Sadie munching away at the abandoned muffins, and broke out in laughter against Evan's lips. "I think Sadie got into your food."

Evan snorted. "Wouldn't be the first time." Then -- "Fuck. Wait."

Casey's heart sank like a stone as Evan slid past him and limped back out of the room and toward the living room.

"I'm just going to take her to my cleaning lady," he said as he turned toward Casey again, a small smile on his lips. "She was supposed to come and get her and I kind of don't want to have to get up again and open the door."

Casey chuckled, running a nervous hand through his hair. "Makes sense."

The five minutes that it took for Evan to get to the apartment at the other end of his floor and leave Sadie with Mrs. Lamar felt like five months for Casey. Finally, finally he heard the door close, and the lock turn, and the next thing he knew Evan was hovering in the doorway, a crutch under his armpit and an almost hopeful look on his face. "Uh. I'm -- back now."

"Yeah," Casey said, jaw slack as he took in just how beautiful Evan looked. He didn't mind the scruff. In fact, Evan's almost grungy look made his blood run faster through his veins, heading straight down south.

They made quick work of each other's clothes, lingering only moments as they discovered warm skin before going back to the next item. "So beautiful," Casey whispered, kissing Evan again, his lips searching Evan's, nimble fingers undoing Evan's belt.

He faltered as Evan tugged his shirt off over his head, but returned to his task as soon as the shirt hit the ground. Evan's mouth began to search out all of the sensitive places on Casey's throat and chest as he struggled with the heavy buckle of Casey's belt.

"Fuck!" Casey swore, a slick sheen of sweat breaking out all over his skin. "Just so you know," he panted, kissing Evan again as he gently guided him to lie down on the bed. "This would be the second time I do... this. And... well..."

"Fuck." Evan reached up to clutch at some part of Casey, tugging him down for another kiss. The bandages on his chest had gone, Casey noted with a pang, and the bruises and cuts on his right side looked ugly and painful. Evan must've showered, and then decided to trash the soggy gauze. Casey made a mental note to get new ones later as he bowed his head to bestow the lightest of kisses to the scratch that ran down the middle of Evan's chest, his palm skimming up the other side, raising goose bumps all over Evan.

"Are you naked?" Evan whispered as he let his hands explore Casey's body. He made a displeased sound as his fingers closed around his belt. "I want to feel you," he muttered. "Not fair if I don't."

Casey undid his belt and nearly fell off the bed as he tried to wriggle out of his jeans. Evan laughed, soft and throaty, and it made Casey's heart jump in his chest.

Everything was heightened, everything was *more*. Evan's hands tangled in his hair and he was pulled down, painful in the way he crashed against Evan's tender chest, both of them gasping and groaning at the contact. "Yes," Evan breathed, his hips rocking up against Casey's thigh. "God, yes. Come on, Casey, come on."

Casey had planned on things being slow and gentle, an apology maybe, but if Evan wanted it hard and fast, Casey was perfectly capable of adapting. He could give Evan that, and then spend his time worshipping every inch of Evan's flushed, loose limbed body.

"Lube," Casey managed, hoisting himself up on his elbow as he kissed his way down the middle of Evan's chest.

"Under the pillow," Evan gasped, pulling his legs up. "Hurry."

Casey groped around the dip between the bed and the headboard, and managed to close his fingers around a half-squashed tube of KY and a few condoms. His heart sunk a little -- Evan was probably used to bringing people home. It made him feel both sad for Evan and even more determined to be a change for the both of them.

He pulled the lid off the lube with his teeth, coating his fingers and bringing them down to the crack of Evan's ass as he rubbed them in a circle, trying to warm up the chill of the slippery lube before pushing the tip of his index finger inside of him.

"Not gonna break," Evan gritted out.

"I'm still learning over here," Casey said, trying to joke but being completely serious at the same time. "Give me time."

Evan's skin felt hot and slippery under Casey's hands. Evan threw his head back, groaning as he pushed his legs further apart, careful to lay his broken one at an angle so that Casey wouldn't crush it, his knuckles white against his own knee.

Casey looked up at him, the pale, pale skin of his abs stretched over solid muscle, only marred by the dark blossom of the bruises on his side. Evan was so breathtakingly gorgeous, and Casey knew he had no idea just what Casey saw in him, what went beyond the physical attraction. His heart was swelling in his chest, three sizes, like a modern day Grinch. If he dared he would've whispered those three little words as he leaned in to kiss him, two fingers breaching through. Evan whimpered, his fingernails raising red welts on Casey's biceps as he let go of his knee, both his legs falling apart as he clutched at Casey's back, feet planted down on the sheets and his cock hard and leaking, pointed toward his belly.

"More," Evan commanded, his voice hoarse as he pushed back on Casey's hand. Casey obliged, scissoring his fingers and crooking them the right way up, once, twice, searching, sweat rolling down his back as he opened Evan up.

"Yes," Evan breathed out, his eyes rolling in the back of his head, and Casey felt the same white hot, pulsing spark of pleasure as he managed to hit that spot inside of him. "God yes."

Casey did it again, and again, and again, reducing Evan to incoherent babble, his head lolling against the pillows as he fucked back on Casey's fingers. Casey was near delirious with the effort of keeping himself in check and not embarrassing himself a second time, but damn, the syncing of Evan's pleasure with his own was almost too much to handle.

"Casey, please, just do it," Evan begged, biting his shoulder as he fought to keep himself grounded. "I'm ready, Christ, just do it -- do it, please --"

Casey nodded, leaning up to press a hot, wet kiss over Evan's heart. "Yeah, okay. Anything. Anything you want." He swiftly pulled out and used both palms to spread Evan's ass cheeks as he pulled him closer. Evan's good leg wrapped around Casey's waist and impatiently yanked him forward.

"Do it," Evan groaned. "Do it, Casey, do it, please, I can't -- I want..."

Casey shushed him with a kiss, using one of his fingers to slowly probe at Evan's hole, brushing against the head of his own cock in the process, electric jolts running down his back. "Yes, come on, yes." Evan pleaded.

Casey kissed his throat, then up to his cheek and his lush lips, slowly spreading Evan open, just enough for his cock to slide in alongside his fingers. They both moaned, Casey's head tossed back, his eyes at half mast as he tried to focus on Evan's beautiful, sweaty face.

God, he'd give anything to have Evan see himself as Casey saw him now. It was hard. Evan's beautiful, unseeing eyes swam with a mixture of suppressed emotions before they fluttered closed, a quiet breath flowing from his parted lips.

Casey nuzzled the side of Evan's neck, open, honest, raw, sinking into Evan like he belonged. Like they belonged.

*I love you.* Casey swallowed back the words, but the sudden acceleration of Evan's heartbeat and the way he clung to his back made him wonder...

"Don't, not now," Evan whispered, his voice broken open.

*But I do,* Casey thought again, kissing Evan's parted lips. *I love you. I loved you before I met you.*

Evan's breath hitched and he bit his lower lip, shuddering, his hands scrabbling for purchase on Casey's corded back. "God," he choked out. "Casey..."

Casey kissed the corner of Evan's lips, slowly pulling back, until only the head of his cock was spreading Evan open, his fingertips fondling the stretched red skin.

Casey's lips brushed close against Evan's ear, then down his neck as he pulled his fingers out and let his cock slide all the way in, filling Evan up to the core.

A shudder ran through Evan's body, his shoulders tensing for a split second before going liquid again in Casey's arms. Casey used his superior height and body strength to pull the both of them up, arranging them with care, until Evan was seated across his lap, straddling his thighs, his broken leg in no danger of being crushed.

Evan moaned, long and drawn out; the huge length inside of him was splitting him in two, but any worry Casey might have had were wiped away in the face of Evan's blissed out expression.

Casey's fingers curled under Evan's ass, squeezing the warm, tight muscle as Evan began to raise himself up before dropping down again. They got into a rhythm, and as Evan's thighs raised him up off Casey's cock, Casey spread Evan's ass cheeks. As he slammed back down again, Casey squeezed his hands, feeling the bursts of pleasure sizzle up his own spine as though he and Evan were the same person. And in that moment, their bodies joined together, Casey knew no one could tell where one ended and the other began.

Evan kept his balance on Casey's wide shoulders, his head thrown back, sweat pooling in the hollow of his throat. "Will never leave," Casey whispered, because that, he knew he could promise. His breath got cut off abruptly as Evan sank down on him again and he bit his own lip bloody to keep in a scream. "Never."

Evan shivered. He parted his mouth as though he wanted to say something, but Casey's hands spread him even wider, rocking up inside of him, and all that left Evan's lips was a startled cry, body spasming around Casey.

"God," Evan breathed, pulling his lower lip between his teeth. "God, do it again."

Casey complied, rocking up against Evan's prostate as they sped up their rhythm. Casey's hands skimmed down Evan's thighs before going back up again, as though he had no idea what to do with all that glorious skin. "Again," Evan begged, his

back arched perfectly as he rocked back on Casey's dick, wanton and blissful. "Again, oh God, Casey, yeah, yes, like this --"

Casey gasped, his breath leaving him in a rush as Evan stuttered his hips in counterpoint with Casey's own. Casey instinctively raised his knees, propping Evan up, letting him lean against them as he snapped forward.

Evan screamed, a long, prolonged keen that Casey was sure could be heard thorough the crappy four story, and the mere thought had heat curl up at the base of Casey's spine. Casey's mouth found one of Evan's nipples and he bit down on it lightly, keeping Evan's ass cheeks spread wide as he thrust up into him.

"Never," Casey breathed again.

"Please," Evan whispered, strung out and dazed, burying his face in the crook of Casey's neck and shoulder.

Casey grit his teeth and tangled his hand in Evan's short hair, his breath coming shorter and faster as his orgasm built up at the base of his spine. He grasped a hold of Evan's cock, not wanting to come alone, and Evan mewled as he writhed on Casey's dick, his whole body jerking with each twist of Casey's wrist.

"Come with me," Casey pleaded, branding his words against Evan's skin. "Come on, Evan, so close, Evan, please --"

Evan cried out, biting into the hard curve of Casey's shoulder as his whole body went rigid, clamping down like a vise on Casey's cock as he came, white spurts of come painting his mark on Casey's stomach and chest. That was all it took for Casey to tumble over the edge -- just watching the blissful abandon of Evan's body as his orgasm hit, the tremors in his muscles racking up as he tightened around Casey, pulling his release out of him so fast and hard, everything blacked out. There was only Evan, his harsh breathing, the heavy weight of his chest against Casey's, and the feeling of completion that overwhelmed them.

Casey pulled out, gently, tied up the condom and tossed it away before he guided the both of them sideways on the sheets, arranging Evan's broken leg against a pillow as he pushed the comforter back and off the mattress before lying down next to

him. Evan's hair tickled as he reached up to brush their lips together but ended up kissing the side of his throat. Casey smiled and took Evan's hand, pulling him closer.

Casey knew they should probably get themselves cleaned up. He could feel come drying on his fingers and on his belly, and after last night, he knew letting it dry completely only brought waves of unpleasantness in its wake. Still, he couldn't begin to move.

He held Evan in his arms, his heartbeat a steady drum against his chest, and nothing else really mattered.

## Chapter 7

When Evan woke up next, he had no idea what time it was, what hour of the day, or even if it was the same day he'd gone to bed. He felt around the mattress, and his heart tumbled in his chest when he found a warm body not inches from his own.

"Morning." Casey's voice was raspy low, completely fucked out.

Evan's flush heated him up from inside out, and he tentatively rolled on one side, hoping to be facing Casey. "What time is it?"

"Five thirty in the afternoon." Casey's fingers slowly cupped the side of Evan's face. "I was gonna wake you up in a minute."

Evan's hair stood on end, and he marveled again at how quickly Casey picked up on the smallest sign of distress, because the next thing Casey was saying was, "I'm not going anywhere, but I'm starving. I thought I could take you out to dinner, do this properly at least."

Evan could feel his blush intensify. "I'm not -- I don't do dates."

Casey laughed. "Neither do I."

"Then, am I missing something?"

"Thought we could give it a shot together," Casey said, his voice low and hesitant. "If you still feel like trying."

Evan felt like one of those horrible people who abandoned puppies in summer. He didn't regret spilling his guts to Casey, but he wasn't ready to commit himself to anything.

"I know that," Casey said again, and Evan startled.

"I didn't say anything."

Another quiet chuckle. "Yeah, well. This is the part I wanted to talk to you about over dinner."

"You're married."

"What? No!" The bed bounced slightly, and Evan wished he could imagine Casey flailing around and blushing at the accusation. "No. But uh, some things aren't easy to digest and well... this is going to sound a bit crazy. Or a lot crazy. And plus, I'm really, really hungry, and Sadie got into all the muffins --"

"You're babbling." Evan chuckled and felt around for Casey's hand, squeezing it once. "Hey. Calm down. Just tell me, okay? I can take it... whatever it is."

A long moment of silence. Then Casey heaved a sigh. "I'm what you would call a psychic. I mean, I can't... I can't see the future or shit like that. But uh, I have... like... perceptions."

"Like Whoopi Goldberg?"

Casey groaned. "I'm being serious!"

Evan couldn't help but laugh a little. "Sorry. Sorry, okay. That was bad of me. I'm listening."

"I mean it. I can... I can feel people, sometimes. And with you... it's the strongest I've ever felt anyone's feelings before. It's like you're already inside of me. That's why -- or how, really -- I found you yesterday afternoon."

Evan thought he should be more resistant to the idea. He didn't really believe in that kind of hocus pocus, but then again... "Makes sense," he said, shrugging a little. "It was you then, wasn't it? I mean, I wasn't hearing voices."

"Was me -- what?"

Fuck. Okay, that wasn't how he'd planned it to go, either. Evan blushed. "Saying... uh... those things. Thinking those things? I don't know. But I thought I heard -- never mind."

"That I love you?"

Evan's heart stuttered, and his mouth went paper dry. "Something like that."

Silence again. "I never heard of it working the other way around, but you're a first in many ways." Casey took Evan's other hand and brought them together, holding them as though in prayer. "Don't freak out. Please? I will... try and stop thinking it if it makes you uncomfortable. I can wait, I'm not... I mean, it's not like I've got the best track record, or any track record at all in relationships, so... I'll give you time, and space, and anything you ask me for, just... can we try?"

Evan thought about it, his mind and heart warring with each other once more, like they hadn't in years of random hook ups and meaningless routine, with only Sadie to care for. He swallowed against a thickness in his throat that he didn't quite know how to explain, and nodded. "Just -- slow, okay?" He leaned in against the side of Casey's face, seeking out his lips. "I'm not good at this either."

"We can learn together." Casey sealed his promise with a kiss, his fingers entwined with Evan's, and for the first time in over seven years, Evan could see a bright light ahead.

The magic of the moment broke when Evan's stomach gurgled, loudly, and Casey laughed again, that tinkering laugh that made Evan's stomach swoop. "I'm ordering Chinese," he said, in a no-bullshit voice. "And then I can go pick Sadie up from your cleaning lady and she can have the chow mein."

"Why would you order Chinese if you don't like the chow mein?"

"I like the rest!"

Evan shook his head with a chuckle. There were lots of things he would have to learn all over again -- things he'd grown unaccustomed to, things that had left him with a big gaping hole in his heart -- but right now, for the first time, he almost thought he'd missed. The quiet noises of Casey milling about his apartment, calling for Chinese, cooing at Sadie as he filled her water bowl, made Evan smile in a way he hadn't remembered he could.

"Done, and done." Casey grinned, his voice much stronger now as he came to a stop in the doorway.

"You're awesome," Evan teased as he shifted a little on the bed. He was still completely naked, and the soft ache in his legs and lower back made his heart skip a beat. "Come here?" he asked, waving his hand a little and hoping Casey would get the message.

Casey padded, barefooted, toward the bed, and Evan felt the mattress dip as Casey climbed in next to him. "Hey," Casey whispered, his fingertips caressing Evan's cheek.

Evan took his hand and squeezed it, leaning into the touch. "Hey."

He leaned closer, their noses bumping together as he tried to align himself to kiss Casey. They both laughed, low and intimate, and Casey framed the side of Evan's face, kissing him deeply.

"You're something else," Evan muttered as he parted his lips, allowing Casey's tongue to slip into the warmth of his mouth. He could feel Casey's blush and the slight hitching of his breath, and Evan wanted nothing more than to pull him down between the sheets again, learning everything about him until he wouldn't have yearned so deeply for the chance of seeing him.

"Can I ask you something?" Casey kissed the hollow of his throat, fingertips slowly tracing down the back of Evan's neck. Evan nodded. "I -- can you... I mean. Uh. I just never thought I'd be -- and then you came along..."

"You're not making any sense."

Casey's sigh was frustrated. "Can we... again?"

Evan laughed. "You want to have sex again?"

Casey made a little embarrassed noise, his lips still hovering close to Evan's. "Yes. Uh. That. But... I want you in me this time."

Evan's heart stopped beating, only to start again one second later, faster than ever. No one asked him that. Ever. Everyone just assumed that because Evan was blind, he'd be the nelly little bottom. Who would want a blind guy behind the wheel after all?

"Evan?" Casey muttered, sounding unsure. "We don't -- we don't really have to if you don't --"

"I want to," Evan finished, nearly breathless. "I want to."

"Oh." Casey's relief was evident even in that one syllable. He quickly kissed the tip of Evan's nose, then his lips, then the side of his chin. "Okay. Okay then." He laughed, halfway between excited and embarrassed. "I really suck at this."

"Trust me," Evan said, his voice shaking with emotion as he pushed Casey down on the bed, his heartbeat drumming in his ears. "You're doing just fine."

Casey didn't have the faintest clue what he was supposed to do, but he thought stripping down to nothing was a good first step. When he lay completely naked and hesitant on Evan's bed, he sort of cleared his throat and shuffled, trying to fight the urge to cover himself up with a pillow -- which would've been ridiculous even if Evan had been sighted. "I'm. Um. I'm ready," he said, pleased that his voice didn't shake too much.

Evan rolled next to him, feeling his way up his chest until he could bury his face in the crook of Casey's neck, kissing his way down the middle of his chest. Casey hesitated, then reached out to run his hand down Evan's arm, guiding Evan's fingers toward his half hard cock. Evan smiled, his lips stretching as he kissed Casey's nipple and he closed his fingers firmly around the base of Casey's dick.

Casey felt the now familiar spark in his belly and shuddered, his mouth pressing hot and wet and open on Evan's shoulder. He let his legs fall apart on the bed, adjusting his position on the mattress to make more room for Evan to fit in, mindful of Evan's cast. Casey let his hands trail down on Evan's back, then up his thighs, spreading them slightly, aligning Evan's groin with his own. Evan shuddered and moaned against Casey's chest, hitching his good knee up and rocking his hips over the juncture of Casey's thigh as his grip on Casey's dick tightened.

"Oh God. Just like that." Casey held Evan with one arm around the small of his back, while Evan's free hand moved up and down the inside of Casey's thigh, his fingers brushing against Casey's clenched hole. Casey gasped and mouthed down the curve of Evan's shoulder to his biceps, his heart drumming in his chest, low and dull as though underwater.

Evan rolled his hips, his cock hardening against the groove of Casey's hip, his fingers circling Casey's entrance before shifting back up to trace his balls. Evan rocked himself slowly back and forth, his fist a loose circle around Casey's now fully hard dick. He mouthed breathlessly at Casey's throat, sloppy kisses that didn't seem to have a specific target in mind.

Casey realized with a jolt that Evan had never done this before, either. The way he moved against Casey, the tentative, exploring touches, it had nothing of the urgent, harsh taking he'd demanded earlier. Casey swallowed around the lump in his throat and reached up to help Evan settle between his open legs, letting their cocks rub lazily together as Casey rolled his hips up to meet Evan's.

"Do you want me?" Casey asked, kissing him again as though he couldn't get enough.

Evan's eyes fluttered closed. "Yeah." One of his hands skimmed down Casey's flank, caressing his thigh before going back to roll Casey's tight balls. "Yeah."

Casey spread his legs further and pulled Evan in, his fingertips sinking into the broad muscles of Evan's back.

"How do you want me?" Casey asked, suddenly shy about the whole process.

"Just as you are." Evan gently hoisted one of Casey's legs up, his palm caressing the back of his thigh until he could dip his fingers between Casey's ass cheeks.

"But -- your leg --"

Evan chuckled. "It's fine."

"Are you sure?"

Evan kissed him on the lips, tongue slipping past and lazily tangling with Casey's. His hips rolled, pressing up closer now, more insistent, his eyes half closed, heavy lidded with lust. Casey moaned and mimicked Evan's movement, their cocks sliding together and sending spikes of deep seated want down his spine.

Evan whimpered and cupped Casey's ass cheeks, pushing his legs slightly up higher, his knees shuffling on the bed to put himself in position. Casey winced in sympathy -- he wanted to suggest maybe switching positions, let Evan lie down as

Casey fucked himself on Evan's cock, but something told him that it was better to let Evan have his way.

The look on his face told him that didn't often happen.

Casey reached up to grab Evan's biceps, pulling him closer, his dick jumping and leaking a fat drop of precome on his abs. "Yeah," he whispered.

"Come on then, baby."

Casey blushed so fast he could feel steam rising from his neck to his face. Evan smiled, lazy and crooked, fumbling about for the lube as he rocked his hips in encouragement. Evan's hands slid down lower, following the lines of Casey's body until he could curl his hands around the swell of Casey's ass. "Yeah, that's it."

Evan bit down on his lower lip as his lube coated fingers carefully traced the skin between Casey's hole and the fullness of his balls. Casey groaned, trying to spread himself wider and allow Evan more room. "I'm not gonna break, either," he muttered, wriggling a little against the teasing touch. Evan snorted and kissed him clumsily on the corner of his mouth.

"Let me do things my way," Evan whispered. "I'll make it good for you."

"Okay," Casey whispered, letting out a long rush of breath. "Okay." He needed Evan to know that he could do whatever he wanted with him; if Evan wanted to take hours on foreplay, well, Casey would let him. Even if it meant he would die of blue balls.

Evan kissed the dip of Casey's throat and rubbed the tip of his finger on Casey's outer ring of muscle. Casey keened and threw his head back against the pillow, his own hands skimming over Evan's back and ass.

"Beautiful," Evan mumbled, kissing a wet line from Casey's throat down to his pecs, his tongue sneaking out to tease his nipple.

Beautiful? Casey's chest constricted. He wanted to object, he did -- how did Evan even know? But he kept quiet, a flood of emotion taking over him. Maybe Evan was seeing something else there. Casey wouldn't question it.

Evan's teeth tugged and pulled at the hard nub of muscle until Casey whined and writhed underneath him. Evan's index finger pressed a little more insistently at Casey's opening and Casey immediately rocked back against the touch, wanting more.

Evan shifted from one nipple to the other, puckering his lips around it and suckling, just as he pushed his finger in, knuckle deep. It slid in easily, and Casey gasped out and clutched at the back of Evan's legs, teeth sinking into his lower lip as he tried to keep himself from pushing back and forth on that tantalizing finger.

"Shh," Evan shushed him, kissing his way back up to Casey's mouth. "Shh. I'll take care of you."

Casey nodded and looked earnestly into Evan's flushed face. Evan was smiling, at him, for him, with him, and Casey knew he would do anything for that smile.

His body was lax and malleable under Evan's hands as he was pressed down more firmly into the bedding. He reached for Evan's face, wanting to brush his knuckles over the curve of a cheekbone and the swell of full lips. Evan caught his hand, kissed his palm, then pressed it down beside Casey's head.

"Stay still."

Casey nodded rapidly, then remembered, kicked himself, and voiced his assent. "Okay."

Evan's fingers returned to probing Casey's hole. Two this time, sliding in deep and scissoring him open. Casey sighed and closed his eyes, fingers flexing, clutching air. He breathed out and spread his legs wider, feeling sweat break out over his chest and abs, his cock swelling and dripping precome against his stomach. "Beautiful," Evan repeated again, a touch of awe to his voice as he whispered the word into Casey's skin. Two fingers became three. Evan took his sweet time working Casey open, so long that Casey's hips had started shifting impatiently on their own again, rocking back and forth as he tried to get Evan's fingers to go deeper.

Evan kissed him again, a brush of lips on lips, before pulling his fingers out and pushing Casey's legs back against his chest. Casey grabbed his own knees, pushing them to the side and holding himself wide open.

Evan let his fingers guide him to the center of Casey's body as he lined himself up, and slowly slid home, inch by inch, not stopping until his balls were pressed flush against Casey's ass.

Casey shivered and tentatively raised his arms, caressing Evan's shoulders. "Can I?" he murmured, eyes shining, fever bright. Evan caught Casey's hands and tangled their fingers together as he lowered his head to kiss him again.

Evan rocked into him slowly, almost an apology, lazy waves of pleasure that rolled over them with each gentle thrust. Casey moaned and closed his eyes, fingers squeezing Evan's hands as he sunk into the sensation of having Evan inside of him.

"I love you," Casey breathed, not thinking it through.

Evan faltered, but just for a moment. Then his lips came back with a vengeance, kissing every piece of Casey he could reach as he thrust in deeper, slow and purposeful.

Their fingers were still laced together, and as desperately as Casey wanted to pull Evan against him, he waited, wanting to beg Evan for more but not knowing how.

"Fuck, Casey --" Evan groaned, eyes squeezed tightly shut. He bit down lightly on Casey's neck, his tongue darting out to follow the pattern left by his teeth, soothing the sting. He tightened his grip on Casey's hands, pressing them back against the mattress, on either side of Casey's head as he kept up his intense, slow pace.

Casey opened his eyes to find Evan staring straight at him, deep, impossibly deep pools of dark jade green boring into his very soul. His heart jumped up in his throat and he arched up to kiss him again. He wanted to say something, something deep and meaningful, but all that came out of him was a low, desperate moan as Evan hit his prostate, over and over, the bed frame shaking with the intensity of their lovemaking.

Evan's fingers were slippery with sweat in Casey's grip, his body feeling too hot, skin too tight to hold him together. Evan blanketed Casey completely, soft whispered words and reverent touches, and Casey's chest heaved with broken gasps.

He could've died that way and he wouldn't have minded.

"Beautiful," Evan murmured, kissing Casey's open mouth. "My beautiful."

Evan rolled his hips, a slow, twisting move, and the deliberate drag against his sweet spot made Casey see stars. "Please," he begged, unashamed and desperate, "Evan, please..."

Evan's rhythm faltered, then picked up again, his hips stuttering madly against Casey's ass, making him whimper and rock back into each thrust. Evan reached for Casey's straining cock and let it slide through the channel of his fist.

That touch was all it took. Casey felt as if he had let go of everything inside of him, and as Evan kept moving inside of him Casey shook and trembled, the edges of his orgasm darkening the corners of his sight and leaving him breathless as he came, and came, and came.

He slumped down on the bedding, boneless, weightless, and more at peace than he could remember being in years.

The kiss Evan laid on his lips was like a seal on a promise, and Casey knew he would guard and treasure anything Evan gave him until his very last day. As Evan came inside of him, only moments after Casey had stopped shaking and trembling, he knew they were in it for the long haul. It might take time and tears and patience, but he was willing to give it all, for this. For Evan.

Evan pulled out and rolled over to the side with a whimper, his leg sticking out at an odd angle, and Casey cursed under his breath. "I told you," he said with a pout, trying to figure out how he could prevent Evan's stubbornness from getting them into any more trouble.

Evan smirked and turned sideways, in an attempt to stare at him. "Don't think you get to boss me around." He grinned, and Casey had to laugh. "I'll set Sadie on you."

"That's pretty terrifying. I could get licked to death."

Evan poked his tongue out at him, in a way that made him look about five, and before Casey could lean down to suck that tongue back in his mouth, the doorbell rang, the sound suddenly followed by a series of loud, excited barks.

"Evan, darling?" came Mrs. Lamar's voice. "Your food is here."

Casey smiled at Evan and pressed a pillow under his broken leg, kissing his cheek. "I'll get it."

Evan sighed and sprawled back on the pillows, tugging a sheet over his body as he snuggled back into the mattress. "Fine. Only this time though."

Casey chuckled as he put on his jeans and went to get the door. And as he found himself with an armful of furry, happy Sadie and a box of Chinese in his spare hand, something told him that even though it was going to be a head-on struggle for every single little thing, it would be all worth it in the end.

## **Sophia Titheniel**

After spreading terror, heart attacks and M/M cooties all over her film instructors in Vancouver, Sophia has left British Columbia to bounce over to Los Angeles, looking forward to conquering another city with glitter, rainbows, and naughty boys doing naughty things.

Blunt and a little eccentric, Sophia's part Elf and part pastry chef. She enjoys tattoos, good wine, and good books. Okay, and good boys too. But she doesn't discriminate. Bad boys can be lots of fun!

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