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Breathless



Alex Morgan

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Adapted from the short story Safeword

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By

Alex Morgan

To my partner

Prologue

The breeze off the bay carried a chill that foretold of the coming fall and cold winter close behind. A light fog hitched a ride on the wind and cloaked the city of Provincetown in surreal and ghostly veils of mist.

A young man stood on a doorstep, taking a drag on a cigarette and exhaling blue smoke to mix with the haze into the foggy night. The cool air gave him a respite from the heat inside. The breeze felt good on his shaved head and bare chest. The leather shorts he wore offered a little protection from the chill. A shadow fell across him from the doorway behind him.

"Watcha doin' out here, boy?" a gruff voice said.

The young man turned toward the sound and smiled. He dropped the cigarette on the stoop and crushed it under his leather boot. He faced the speaker with hands behind him in submission, chest out.

"Nothing, sir. Just enjoying a smoke. I'm boi paolo, Master," he said trying to keep the excitement out of his voice.

"I know who you are, boy." Rough hands pinched Paolo's nipples and explored his body. "Nice harness you got there, boy."

"Thank you, sir!" Paolo responded with military-like sharpness and courtesy as befitting a slave boi.

"First time to Mates weekend, boy?"

"No, sir. But I've been to leather events before. Been trained by a lot of masters." He cocked one eyebrow as if to say 'that means I'm very experienced'. "I decided to come here today, Thursday, before it gets so crazy. You can have a good time without everyone and his dog here strutting around in their harnesses they bought just before coming here, trying to look like they're in the lifestyle." Paolo stopped short, realizing that he was starting to sound a bit bitchy and queeny. And he was rambling. He hated that. Recovering quickly, he turned the focus back to the master. "So what about you, sir? Are you looking for a slave or boi?"

The master ignored the question, crooking a finger inside Paolo's leather collar and tugged on it. "Why are you wearing a collar, boy? Are you owned?"

"No, sir. I'm looking for a master though." He gave his voice a lift at the end of the sentence, hoping the master would catch the inference.

"Come back inside, boy. You've got a few lessons to learn."

Chapter One

Corey Shaw pulled his SUV into the driveway of his house, nestled in a comfortable suburb of Boston, just after 9pm. After a tough day at work and a vigorous workout at the club, it felt good to be home. One more day and then the weekend arrived. At this point, it seemed that it would be relaxing. Unless something came up at the last minute.

No, I can't think like that, he scolded himself. Ethan and I are going to have a quiet weekend together.

He picked up his laptop case, slung his gym bag over his shoulder and walked through the front door.

"Welcome home, sweetie!" Corey's partner, Ethan Brandt, wearing only boxers, met him just inside the door, giving him a hug and a kiss. Corey set his laptop on the floor and dropped his gym bag. With his arms freed, he pulled Ethan closer and probed his lover's mouth with his tongue. After a few minutes, Ethan pulled away, panting. "Whoa! You must have had a great workout!" He caressed Corey's muscular body, still held in a vice-like grip.

The tank top and shorts that Corey wore accentuated his masculine build. Ethan could smell the scent of sweat on Corey's skin. He buried his nose into Corey's chest and took a deep breath. The aroma intoxicated him and a soft moan rose in Ethan's throat.

In a reactionary move, Ethan licked Corey's skin, wanting to savor all the senses. It tasted salty, spurring him on even more. He ran his tongue over well-developed pecs and lingered on Corey's nipples, nudging the tank top out of the way with his nose.

Corey kissed the top of Ethan's head. "Hold that thought, babe. Let me take a shower and then we can pick up where we left off."

While Corey loosened his muscles in a steaming, hot shower, Ethan got busy ensuring this opportunity did not vanish. His gorgeous partner came home and was just as horny as he was.

Several minutes later, Corey emerged from the bathroom into the hallway with a towel wrapped around his narrow waist. Ethan stepped out of the bedroom behind him and watched as Corey ran his hands through his wet, short-cropped hair. With his arms raised in that manner, his torso seemed to explode outward from towel. Thick legs sprouted like tree trunks from underneath.

Corey sensed Ethan's eyes on him and made a slow turn in place. He fixed a smile on his partner. "Like what you see?"

Ethan swallowed hard and only managed a weak nod. "Would you like a back rub?" He motioned toward the bedroom. Corey dropped his arms, still smiling, and walked past Ethan, who waited until Corey stepped past him. He grabbed the towel from Corey's waist and rolled it into a tight coil. He popped

Cory on his firm ass.

"Git in there, boy!" He ordered with a drawl.

Corey glanced over his shoulder with a smile. He lay on the king-sized bed on his stomach and closed his eyes. He opened them when he heard the soft sound of crashing waves. Ethan had already started a CD of nature sounds. It relaxed and soothed Corey so he forgot he was outside a major metropolitan area. His breathing slowed as he began to unwind.

A scent of cinnamon hung in the air from a candle on a nightstand next to the bed. He closed his eyes again, luxuriating in the softness of the mattress, the sound of the waves and the aroma of spice.

Corey heard the soft footsteps of his lover enter, and then felt him climb onto the bed, straddling his waist. He flinched slightly as Ethan poured a warm, liquid into the crevice formed in his back from lat muscles.

Ethan rubbed the oil into Corey's body, starting with the neck and shoulders, and working his way down the back. Corey uttered moans of pleasure as Ethan massaged him.

Moving downward, he kneaded Corey's ass muscles, taking considerable time working them. The deep trench between his butt-cheeks like warm stone beneath Ethan's erect cock as he ran the shaft of his penis along it. Ethan rubbed more oil onto the massive muscles of Corey's legs, caressing them with long strokes. Finished, he lay down on top of his mate. He blindfolded Corey with a silk tie.

"Who knew you were so kinky?" Corey chuckled. "You know I can still 'see'."

"No cheating, lover." Ethan warned, whispering in his ear. "You only get to use four senses and that 'sixth' one of yours is not included. Besides, don't you trust me?" He feigned hurt feelings.

"Hmmm..."

Ethan laughed and rolled Corey over on his back. Corey's cock was also erect, huge and pointing at the ceiling. He reached into a drawer in the nightstand and rustled around in its contents.

He held his fingers under Corey's nose, allowing him to smell the aroma. Corey sniffed the sweet scent.

"Honey."

"Yes, dear?"

"No, dear. I meant that's honey on your fingers."

"Oh." The tone of Ethan's voice told Corey that he had not been misunderstood. Ethan was enjoying this game a little too much. He ran his fingers over Corey's chest and abdomen with random moves and drawing abstract shapes, like a child with a paint brush. Corey took deep, slow breaths.

After replenishing his fingers with the honey, Ethan touched Corey's lips, letting him lick the sweet nectar lightly at first. Corey opened his mouth and

Ethan slid his fingers inside. Corey sucked hard on the fingers, cleaning the honey from them.

To Corey, the sensation of being blindfolded by his lover and feeling his fingers explore his body made his cock swell even more, becoming painful. Ethan pulled his fingers out of Corey's mouth and dipped them again. This time, Corey's nose detected the sweet fragrance of chocolate.

"Mmmmmmm..." Corey smiled at the sugary aroma.

Ethan repeated his earlier motions, smearing the chocolate and mixing it with the honey on Corey's torso. He dipped it a second time and applied a liberal amount to the tip of Corey's cock.

Ethan took the penis in his mouth, savoring the chocolate taste, mixed with the musky flavor of Corey's member. He ran his tongue up and down the shaft, sucking the chocolate and honey off and not missing a drop.

He lapped up the sweet mixture from Corey's abdomen and chest, working his tongue like a precision surgical instrument. As before, he lingered on the nipples, licking them clean with sensuous slurps.

Corey moaned softly. "What else do you have?" he whispered.

"What can you smell?" Ethan sat back.

Corey raised his head at a slight angle and sniffed the air. "I can smell the cinnamon candle, the honey and chocolate. The soap from my shower." His grin stretched. "I can smell a tinge of sweat from you that tells me you're enjoying this as much as I am."

Ethan chuckled. "What else?"

Corey continued his olfactory task. "Champagne?"

"But, of course!"

Corey heard sounds of crystal flutes being retrieved from their hiding place, followed by the noise of a bottle pulled out of a bucket of ice. He waited in anticipation of the delicious liquid but Ethan took a drink without offering him any. He felt a mouth on his dick once again, but Ethan hadn't swallowed the champagne. He held it in his mouth while he sucked Corey.

The combination of the cold from the drink and warmth of Ethan's tongue on his dick was one of the most pleasurable sensations Corey had ever experienced. His legs twitched as he felt his loins beginning to stir. Ethan knew what that meant, but kept sucking. When the champagne warmed, Ethan swallowed and then took another mouthful, resuming his service.

Corey's whole body trembled. He wanted to remove the blindfold, but deprived of his sight in this manner raised the sensuality of the encounter beyond anything he had ever experienced. He moaned louder.

The reaction from his lover urged Ethan to work harder.

With a growl, Corey came. Every muscle in his body previously relaxed by the massage contracted in a mixture of pain and pleasure. The soreness from the evening's workout returned as a reminder of the vigorous exercise. Ethan wrapped his arms around Corey's leg to keep the massive cock and the delicious

combination of flavors in his mouth.

When Corey's contortions eased, Ethan swallowed and sat back on his heels, admiring the muscular and sweaty man panting in front of him. Ethan watched as the dim light from the candle cast shadows across Corey's body. The light and dark enhanced the sexy curves in his muscles.

Corey's breathing slowed and he reached for Ethan with one arm. The ache in his muscles disappeared.

"I'm not ready to take the blindfold off," Ethan said, as he clasped hands with Corey.

"Me, neither," Corey said. With a smooth, firm but gentle pull, he forced Ethan down on his back and crawled on top of him. "My turn now," he said, with a lustful grin. Letting his sense of smell guide him, he found the chocolate, honey and champagne.

Dipping his fingers in the chocolate, he ran them over Ethan's cock and balls, and then again with honey. He massaged, stretched and twisted Ethan's scrotum.

The pain was both erotic and exciting. Ethan squirmed in pleasure, groaning and yelling out loud. Instead of licking off the sweet, sticky liquid, Corey found the champagne bottle and dribbled it onto Ethan's chest and abs.

Although not as muscular as Corey, Ethan maintained a decent shape. The champagne on his skin caused him to suck in a quick breath as Corey began to lap it up. Ethan didn't realize what a powerful sensation cold liquid on his skin was until it was done to him. The feeling had been erotic when he did it to Corey but didn't realize how potent it was.

Corey finished with the champagne and dipped his fingers into the chocolate again. He found Ethan's hole and massaged the rim, slowly working his fingers inside.

Ethan panted heavily and moaned. Corey lifted Ethan's legs and rammed his cock deep into Ethan's ass.

"Yes!" Ethan yelled, as he was penetrated. He wrapped his legs around Corey's waist and pulled him closer, bringing Corey deeper into him. With surprising limberness, he reached out and grabbed Corey's ass with both hands.

"Come on, daddy! Give it to me!"

Now, I'm daddy, Corey thought and almost laughed out loud. *Earlier, I was boy.*

He pumped in and out of Ethan, slow, then fast, shallow, then deeper. Corey knew that his lover was reaching climax as he continued thrusting deep inside of him.

With a loud yell, Ethan exploded, coating his chest with thick, ivory liquid. He kept howling until he was spent. Corey pulled out and sniffed at Ethan's rapidly rising and falling chest and tried to catch his breath.

"You came good," Corey whispered in Ethan's ear, lying down beside him, and caressing him. He removed the blindfold.

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Ethan chuckled. "We're going to have to wash the sheets now."

Corey winked and smiled back. "Okay, but let's wait until after we're through with the next round."

Ethan laughed and snuggled next to Corey. The next thing they became aware of was the phone ringing. The dim gray light of pre-dawn filtered through the tree leaves outside.

We slept through the night, Corey thought as he extricated himself from Ethan, who was still sound asleep, and reached for the phone.

"Corey, this is Chief Richard Stewart of the Provincetown Police Department. We found a body."

Chapter Two

Ethan seethed.

Since the phone call came in from Provincetown, Corey had been a flurry of activity, getting ready to travel to the Cape for a mystery that didn't promise to be easily solved. Ethan sat up in bed, scowling, watching as Corey threw clothes into a suitcase. He trusted his partner but this situation made him too uncomfortable. There was no question of going with Corey, because he would not allow Ethan to accompany him on a case, especially one where murder was suspected.

Ethan also knew very well that Mates weekend started today. He and Corey had discussed going but decided against it. Now Corey was headed into the midst of thousands of beefy, muscle leather studs on the prowl for as many sexual encounters as they could rack up in the span of a three-day weekend. In the six years they had been together, Corey never gave him any reason to doubt his fidelity, yet Ethan remained jealous and self-conscious.

Corey's Adonis looks and chiseled body garnered glances from everyone, Ethan noticed. Even straight men did a double-take as they passed the gorgeous man. Ethan knew his own face and body did not even come close to matching Corey's. The reactions from people when Ethan was introduced as his partner did little to bolster his confidence. Although Corey scoffed whenever he mentioned this, but Ethan saw how smiles, obsequious demeanors and courtesy vanished like water droplets sprinkled onto a hot skillet when worshipers realized Corey was taken. And by whom.

He never questioned Corey's love for him, but feared the pressure from an adoring public on one of Massachusetts's most notable celebrities may be too overwhelming.

While a freshman at UMass, Corey was recruited to become a member of a new type of law enforcement entity, the psionic officer. With more and more 'psychics' trying to help police by using their so-called powers, Congress decided to create a unit specifically formed for the purpose of employing these paranormal abilities to help law enforcement agencies across the country.

Chosen because of his propensity for the psi phenomenon, Corey trained with men from every state in the union to develop and enhance their paranormal powers such as telepathy, telekinesis, clairvoyance and psychometabolism, the ability to affect the human body and all its functions.

Corey discovered a natural talent for telepathy. An uncle on his mother's side of the family claimed to have traced their genealogy back to a woman, who had been accused of witchcraft during the infamous Salem Witch Trials. It couldn't be proven that this was the source of Corey's power, but he considered it to be.

Whether or not fact or fiction, it added to his mystique as Massachusetts's psionic officer. Ethan insisted that, to many men and women this made Corey irresistible. That's what he feared most.

"There are going to be hundreds of men drooling over you this weekend," Ethan managed to say. "You think you can resist all of them?"

"I have before, remember?" Corey tried to sound soothing, but his annoyance with Ethan's lack of trust still rang in his words.

"Yeah, but I was with you when we were at Mates weekend last time. Now you're going to be on your own." Bitterness crept into his voice.

"It won't make a difference," Corey drew on Ethan's caustic tone, using it to calm his own. "I have a job to do and I need to keep focused on that. I can't take a chance on chasing some ass and get distracted from solving this crime."

"I feel like a hanger-on rather than a husband," Ethan grumbled. He watched as Corey rushed to finish packing for the trip to Provincetown. "You're taking your leather?" His heart sank as his anger rose. Corey dumped chaps, a pair of leather shorts and a bundle of harnesses, armbands and accoutrements into the suitcase on the bed.

He gave his partner an impatient look. "Yes, Ethan. I may have to do some undercover work. Don't you think it's best if I try to blend in?"

Ethan's blood pressure rose as his anger increased to the point he could hear his own pulse. "Aren't you really asking me is should you look your best since you *won't* blend in?" He knew of Corey's obsession with working out and honing his body to near perfection. Symmetric chest muscles enhanced his ravioli abs, which disappeared into a narrow waist. His finely sculpted arms and legs completed the Greek god looks and build. In a leather harness, he was irresistible to any gay man.

Infuriated to the point of not thinking clearly, Ethan spun around. He jerked open a drawer in the bureau behind him and snatched a pair of scissors out of it. Turning back to the bed, he grabbed a pair of chaps and crammed them into the open maw of the scissors to cut.

"Ethan! No!" Corey shouted in surprise. He thrust a hand forward.

The scissors froze in Ethan's hand before he could ruin the chaps. Slowly but firmly, the utensil floated out of his and into Corey's outstretched hand.

With this last attempt to show his lover his frustrations thwarted, Ethan plopped down on the bed and began to sob. He hardly noticed or cared when Corey sat next to him and wrapped his arms around him.

For several long minutes, neither one spoke. Corey held Ethan and stroked his hair. Soon, the sobbing subsided and he pulled away from Corey's embrace.

Corey looked directly into Ethan's eyes, hoping to find some glimmer of trust behind the tears.

After a few more seconds, Ethan relaxed and nodded to signal he was okay. Corey hugged him and quickly finished packing. He had wasted too much time already. The call from Provincetown came in almost ten minutes ago.

He gave Ethan a passionate kiss to reassure him and then ran outside to his SUV in the driveway. Climbing into the driver's seat, Corey started the vehicle, but before he put the car in gear, he slumped against the steering wheel.

Although Ethan wasn't watching, Corey couldn't focus his psionic energy to teleport to the Cape. The argument with Ethan had jumbled his emotion to the point his concentration was lost. Ethan's concerns voiced during his outburst caused conflicting emotions of the need to be faithful versus the lure of masculine bodies pressed together. He couldn't admit that to his partner.

The drive to Provincetown took over two hours and Corey couldn't afford to lose that much time. Ethan's anger, mistrust and betrayal affected Corey's feelings, wreaking havoc on his teleportation ability. The jump would be a short one since the actual distance between Boston and Provincetown was less than sixty miles across the bay. Still, the kaleidoscope of emotions foiled any attempt to form a cohesive thought and focus on the Cape. With a snarl, he slammed the gear shift into reverse and backed out of the driveway.

Maybe in a few minutes, I can calm down enough to make the jump, he hoped.

The drive through Boston gave Corey's mind the respite it needed for him to teleport to Provincetown. The early morning rush hour didn't allow him to dwell on the argument with Ethan, but it didn't offer many opportunities to find a secluded place to dematerialize. A Park and Ride lot south of the city offered the chance he was looking for. This early in the morning, plenty of cars were already filing in to find places to park so their occupants could take the MTBA into Boston for the day. He pulled into an empty space far from the entrance to avoid being seen by prying eyes.

The psionic officers kept teleportation a close secret. Corey even hid it from Ethan, which is why he hesitated making the jump from the driveway. Even though their relationship had progress comfortably for the past six years, it hadn't reached a point that Corey felt at ease sharing secrets others considered sacred.

The short distance between Boston and Provincetown fell well within Corey's psionic reach. However, the added mass of his SUV and its contents added an additional element of danger and he needed to be able to expend as much power as necessary to encompass the vehicle.

The dunes on the north side of the cape provided him plenty of places to materialize undetected. He gripped the steering wheel and focused on the tip of the Cape southeast of his position. He found a road that wound its way through the Cape Cod National Seashore through his clairvoyance, seeing the area in his mind. Although it was empty at the moment, a car could come along just like one could enter this row any second where he sat now.

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Keeping the vision of the cape road before his mind's eye, Corey released his power. A flash of light appeared in the parking lot surrounding the SUV. It faded quickly taking Corey and his vehicle with it.

At the same instant, another flash of light appeared on the lonely stretch of road running through the dunes of sand north of Provincetown, near the municipal airport. It vanished but in its place sat an SUV with its single occupant.

Corey relinquished his tight grip on the steering wheel and looked around him to reorient himself to the change of surroundings. The early morning gray light didn't seem as bright as Boston even though he was further east. A mist falling on his windshield clued him into the reason. The clouds in Boston were much higher and thinner than the moisture-laden ones here.

As the dizziness from the teleport subsided and his breathing and pulse returned to their normal rates, Corey relaxed and sat back in his seat.

Headlights appeared in his rear-view mirror, alerting him out of his mental fog. He realized he was sitting still in the middle of the road. The car passed him on his left and honked as it drove by. He jumped at the sound and put the SUV in gear, heading toward Provincetown.

Chapter Three

Corey found the local police chief and a forensic team from Hyannis on the sandy shore below the wooden deck of the Boat Slip, one of the most popular spots in Provincetown. The size of the hotel meant that many guys were in one place and very near the crime scene. The Boat Slip's afternoon tea dance brought even more people crowding onto the outside deck which also served as a dance floor.

The naked body of a young man lay face down upon the beach. Police Chief Richard Stewart greeted him as he checked in with the officer guarding the scene.

"Damn! You didn't waste any time getting here, Shaw," Chief Stewart said, looking at his watch. "Where were you when I called? Orleans?"

"Perhaps," Corey winked at his friend.

The chief grimaced with annoyance, realizing that he probably would get no more from Corey. From the years of working together, he knew of Corey's uncanny ability to move around the state with amazing speed, but the psionic officer gave no indication of how he did it.

They walked back to the corpse.

"John Doe. Strangled," Chief Stewart said. The grim look on his hard-lined face told Corey that something had rattled the chief's staunch reserve. "And he was tortured before being killed."

Having frequent contact with the chief in the past, Corey had never noticed him being so shaken by a crime.

As they knelt next to the victim, the chief pointed out disturbing aspects of the murder. "Rope burns on the ankles, wrists, knees and across the chest and upper arms where he was tied up. The deep cuts indicate that the bonds were tight."

He motioned toward the buttocks. The man had a narrow waist and a well-rounded ass, which had been slashed many times. Long gashes crossed the tanned cheeks, drawing blood that had long since dried. "Looks like he was caned or severely whipped while he was tied up," the chief continued. Similar slashes covered his back and legs but not as severely as the ass.

"This has been done to him before, hasn't it?" Corey asked.

"What do you mean?" Stewart gave him a quizzical look. He glanced at one of the forensics officers who had knelt down on the opposite side of the body. The agent agreed, and directed their attention to several old wounds concealed and healing among the fresh ones.

Judging by the look on the chief's face, Corey surmised that he hadn't experienced anything like this in Provincetown before.

The agent, Carolyn Seger, picked up where Stewart left off. "From the angle of the rope wound around the neck, it appears that the victim was hung until

dead. There are very few signs of a struggle, which is strange."

Hmmm...maybe not so strange, Corey thought.

She pointed to the bruising on the neck. "The visible side of the face appears purple, a gruesome contrast to the white skin of his shaved head." She frowned while mumbling the latter under her breath. "Look at these." The agent indicated to marks crisscrossing his back. "It appears he was wearing a leather..." She hesitated, as if searching for the right word.

"Harness," Corey finished. *I have one that's almost the same as the one he wore.* "Do you think it played a role in his death?"

Seeger shook her head. "Preliminary indications all point to strangulation by hanging." She looked at him. When his eyebrows furrowed in concentration, she asked, "What is it?"

He pointed to faint, red markings on the back of the victim's neck that resembled the ones on his back. "It looks like he wore a leather collar, as well." He shifted his position to lean forward.

"We noticed that, too, but I don't think it contributed to his death, either."

"Can we turn him over?"

The agent nodded, and donned plastic gloves. With the help of another forensic team member, they rolled the corpse on its back. The hideousness of the crime became more apparent. The entire face, covered in purple blemishes, was contorted into a grimace as he struggled to breathe in his last few seconds of life. His tongue protruded grotesquely from the mouth. Corey's gaze shifted lower. All the pubic hair was shaved away.

"Look at this." Seeger eyes widened at the new discovery. "There's scabbing just above the penis, and it seems as though it goes all the way around the scrotum. Something's irritated his skin because it's broken out and re-healed, like the marks on his posterior."

"He wore a cock ring," Corey simply added. "I have that same trouble if I wear mine too long." Eager to contribute to the investigation, he'd let out more personal information than the chief or agents wanted to hear. To divert attention from his momentary lack of discretion, he took another tack. "Are you sure this was murder?"

"What else could it be?" The chief's jaw clenched.

"I'm thinking it could be an extreme BDSM session that went a bit too far."

Chief Stewart and the agents stared, speechless.

"In all my years in Provincetown, I've never heard of something like this, and I've heard and seen some pretty weird shit." The chief shook his head.

"Many guys have execution fantasies, where the only way they can get off is to experience a near-death situation. In such a case like this, execution by hanging," Corey explained. "The victim is hung to the point when he cums, and then is released by the 'executioner'." He used his fingers to form quotation marks in the air. "This might have been one time when the executioner didn't move fast enough." He paused for a few seconds. "Or wouldn't."

"You mean this guy let someone hang him to death?"

"No," Corey replied. "More than likely, he just wanted to experience a high similar to the choking game that's somehow got to be popular. But here, instead of doing it himself, he got a bigger rush by having someone do it for him. The idea is to release the rope or garrote before death. Unfortunately that doesn't always happen."

"So this could just be a tragic accident?" Seger asked.

Corey held out his hands in supplication. "Perhaps. Otherwise, we're may have to look for a guy who has to kill to get off. But there's something odd here."

"What?" The chief sounded as though he didn't think it couldn't get any stranger.

"Whether or not his death was accidental, where are his harness, collar and cock ring? If his executioner didn't kill him on purpose, why remove his accoutrements? Or if it was intentional, a murderer would've dumped the body and not worried about removing everything, unless he left his DNA on everything."

"Maybe the leather belonged to the executioner and he took it back?" Chief Stewart said. "You know, like a master/slave thing?"

Corey considered that explanation for a minute. "Perhaps, but not likely, I would think. Cock rings are more personal items and since they're relatively cheap, guys buy them for themselves or someone they're romantically involved with."

"Could this be a lovers' spat?" Carolyn asked.

"I hadn't thought about that but you may be right. And the murderer removed everything to keep as mementos or because they had a sentimental value?"

"Some serial killers do that, too," Chief Stewart muttered. Corey and Carolyn looked at him. "They will take something from each of their victims as a trophy."

"Or the harness could hold some concrete evidence to the identity of the murderer," Corey mused. "Something other than his body fluids." The trio paused to mull over this latest fact.

The activity below the Boat Slip attracted the attention of a few early risers and word spread quickly. Soon over two dozen men lined the railing looking at the hubbub below with more arriving every second. The forensic team covered the unfortunate man with a tarp to give him a modicum of decency even in death.

Corey moved underneath the deck and sat down on the rocks where he couldn't be seen from the prying eyes above. He needed the relative seclusion while having the protection of Police Chief Stewart and the forensic team. He crossed his legs and leaned forward, closing his eyes. His psionic powers had not yet regained full strength from the teleport a short time ago. As a result, he would not be able to summon his telekinesis and clairvoyance for sometime,

even though he did not possess much of either ability. His psychometabolic power was very weak anyway so it wouldn't be missed. However, telepathy emanated from a region of the brain separate from the area where the teleportation ability resided and so it remained unfazed by the jump.

He evoked his strongest power and used it to call across the country, sending a telepathic summons to all his psionic brethren. Huge distances did not affect its reach or strength. His mind would touch those on the west coast as far as Alaska and Hawaii, nearly a quarter way around the globe.

But half of them are still asleep, Corey remembered. Still all the psionic officers on the eastern seaboard had wakened and received his call.

Have there been any unsolved murders of men killed in this fashion? He gave them particulars of the young man's manner of death.

The other minds responded, saying they would inquire in their own states and pass his message west. If anything turned up, they would contact him the same way.

Corey ended the psionic conference call and dropped his telepathy. He rose from the ground and rejoined Chief Stewart, Agent Seger and the rest of the forensic team. The coroner arrived to remove the body for an autopsy.

Chapter Four

Corey decided that finding a place to stay should be his next concern. It would be a short while before Chief Stewart gave out assignments to the law enforcement in town to start the investigations.

He knew there wasn't a vacant hotel room anywhere on the Cape closer than Barnstable if even there, but he had other options. He dialed a number on his cell phone.

"Hey, Bruce. This is Corey."

"GIRL!" Corey nearly dropped his phone at Bruce's exuberant and nelly greeting. "What are you doin', sweetie?"

Corey switched his phone to the other ear. "I'm here in Provincetown and I remember you were staying in a townhouse up on Franklin just off Race Street. I need a place to stay this weekend if that extra bed is still available."

"Sure! Get yo' ass up here, bitch! It's just the four of us old gals this weekend. The basement bedroom is all yours."

Fifty-somethings Bruce Ramsey and Karl Santorini often traveled with another couple, who were in their sixties, George Davis and Lloyd Daly. Corey had known all of them since his early days as a psionic officer and their friendship remained strong.

They made frequent trips to Provincetown, preferring to stay in a development of townhouses away from the noise and commotion on Commercial Street but still convenient to the festivities. The units sat on a hill which gave them a beautiful view of the city and the bay. The owners of the townhouse the four men rented consisted of three floors with a basement. The front door opened into the living area that had been converted to a spare bedroom. The basement on the level below contained the laundry room and another bedroom where Corey planned to stay. It had a back door that opened into the courtyard of the townhouse development. He could come and go through this entry without disturbing anyone in the room above.

The master bedroom and bathroom occupied the floor above the spare bedroom and the small kitchen, dining room and den took up the top floor. A staircase from the kitchen led up to a deck on the roof, from which the breathtaking scenery of the Cape could be seen. Corey stayed in these townhouses on occasion also and enjoyed the rooftop deck even in inclement weather. It gave him a sense of calmness and serenity, which helped rejuvenate his mind and recharge his powers.

"Wait a minute, girl," Bruce's voice had an edge to it. "You said 'I need a place to stay'. Not 'we' need a place to stay? You by yourself, honey?"

"Yes," Corey responded. "Ethan's back in Boston." He heard a very faint exhale on the other end. *Was that a sigh of relief*, he wondered?

"Well, come on up, girl!" The edge in Bruce's tone had vanished.

* * * *

Bruce and Karl had been partners for twenty years and knew George and Lloyd, together for almost forty, since the beginning of their relationship. All four of them discovered a common bond early in their friendships. They all had come out of the closet about the third grade. In those pre-Stonewall years, a sissy boy could expect to be teased, harassed and even beaten in school. The four of them in their own ways and their own situations survived childhood and attained adulthood with grace, style and finesse of movie screen sirens. They found their previous experiences drew them closer together than brothers. But they acted more like sisters.

When Bruce hung up the phone, he let out a nelly scream of delight and bolted up the stairs to the living room level. Lloyd, wearing a robe and slippers, stood in the kitchen preparing breakfast while Karl and George enjoyed cigarettes on the small balcony overlooking the street below.

"Girls, such news!" Bruce exclaimed as he reached the top of the stairs.

"You know, sweetie. You really shouldn't run up the stairs like that at your age," Lloyd said over his shoulder.

Bruce stopped in his tracks and put his hands on his hips, scowling. "Fuck you, bitch. I'm half your age."

"And twice my weight."

"Oh, no. You did NOT go there, missy."

"I'm just reminding you that after queen-size, no more panty hose for you."

"With the emphasis on 'queen'!" George shouted from the balcony.

"At least now we're on a subject you know everything about," Bruce glared at him as he entered the living room with Karl following. Lloyd carried dishes of scrambled eggs and hash browns to the table.

Karl kissed Bruce, knowing full well he wasn't angry and only pretending to be insulted. This sort of banter between the four of them was as ubiquitous as the oxygen in the air. "So what's the big news, sweetie?"

Bruce brightened immediately. "Corey's on his way over here! He's in town and coming to stay with us."

All of them screamed with high-pitched shrieks.

"I'm getting the basement bedroom ready for him." Bruce headed down the stairs while George and Lloyd began fussing over making more food for breakfast.

"You're not putting him in that room, bitch!" Karl called after him.

"He asked for the basement, bitch," Bruce shouted back indignantly, stopping on the landing at the curve in the staircase.

"We can give him our room and we'll stay in the basement."

"How about you stay in the basement and he can sleep in our bed with me?"

"Girl, you know you couldn't handle him."

"I wouldn't mind trying," Bruce gave him a sly grin and continued downstairs.

Corey arrived a few minutes later and found the household in a flurry of organized chaos. He heard the shouting of orders and the loud retorts when he stepped out of his vehicle which he parked next to the courtyard. Bruce opened the backdoor before he reached the steps.

"Girl, it's so good to see you!" Bruce flew down the short stairs and embraced him with a big hug and a kiss. He grabbed Corey by the hand and pulled him inside. "Come on inside. Drop your stuff in the spare room. Then come upstairs because George and Lloyd are fixing breakfast."

"It smells awesome." Corey managed to get a word in. He hadn't realized how hungry he was until he caught the savory aromas of food wafting down from above. Since he left his house so early and suddenly, and made the jump to Provincetown, he forgot about breakfast. Now his body yearned to be fed.

When he and Bruce reached the kitchen level, another round of nelly screams went up followed by hugs and kisses.

"The food smells good," Corey smiled.

"Well, sit right down here and let Mama feed you," Lloyd said, fussing like a mother hen and making sure the table was set and ready. "A growing boy like you needs to have nourishment."

"If you grow any more, Lloyd, they could show drive-in movies on your ass," Karl quipped.

"And it's white enough, too," George added to everyone's laughter.

Lloyd merely smirked. "Glass houses." He minced back to the kitchen.

"So you came to enjoy Mates weekend?" Bruce asked spooning hash browns onto Corey's plate.

"Well..."

"Where's Ethan?" He didn't come, too?" George added.

"He, uh..."

"Duh! Do you see Ethan here, bitch?" Karl said snidely to George.

"I..."

"Don't get snippy with me, bitch," George rounded on Karl. "Just because Missy isn't here right now, that doesn't mean she's not coming at all."

"We thought..."

"Remember Corey asked if HE could stay here, and not WE?"

At this point, the discussion turned into an argument with all four of them seemingly forgetting that Corey sat amongst them, eating the delicious breakfast, not saying a word. Not that he could. Despite their lively discussion, they kept dishing food onto Corey's plate and refilling his coffee cup. Finally they reached

the consensus that Ethan had not accompanied Corey and looked at him for verification.

"He did not come with me this weekend," he answered.

"Why not?"

"Shush, girl. That's none of your business."

Another round of debate ensued. Having finished his meal, Corey picked up his mug and, rather than try to interject a word, motioned to them that he was headed up to the rooftop deck.

Leaving the big deliberation behind, Corey mounted the narrow staircase and stepped out into the cool, gray morning. From this vantage point, he could see much of the tip of the Cape. Provincetown lay sprawled out below him with the Pilgrim Monument standing proudly in its midst.

The dunes rose up on the horizon opposite the city and the bay spread out all around. Pockets of fog dotted the landscape playing hide-and-seek among the low hills. The scene setting eased Corey's mind from the gruesome one he left on the shore. He felt a familiar sensation in his psionic field that signaled a telepathic contact. He sat down on a patio chair and opened his mind.

Corey, it's Travis.

And Brian.

Two of Corey's psionic brethren. Travis was from Maryland and Brian hailed from New York.

Hey, guys. Find anything?

Yeah, Travis started. Way back in January, the Washington, DC police found a body on the shore of the Potomac just inside the district from the Maryland state line, near the Woodrow Wilson Bridge. From what they told me, the manner of death sounds a lot like your man.

This past June, the New York Police Department found two men in one weekend, Briand added. Same MO, naked and strangled like they had been hung.

Were either of you brought in to help solve the murders? Corey knew the answer but had to ask.

Travis spoke first. Since the body here was found inside the district and not in Maryland or Virginia, none of us were notified for a while.

And the NYPD is very territorial so they had no inclination to call me down from Albany.

And so all three crimes remained unsolved?

A telepathic assent.

Do you think they could be related?

A brief pause followed.

It's hard to say, Corey, Brian put in. Both DC and New York City are large metropolises with high crime rates. They could be random killings.

But something like this would have been more likely to happen in Boston rather than Provincetown. Were the victims ever identified?

Yes, but not right away, Travis said. Right after the body was found in DC, a hotel in Virginia reported that a guest had left without checking out and left behind person belongings. They had his credit card so they charged his account and called the police. The City of Alexandria police noted the call from the hotel but did not send anyone to collect the items. It was a couple of weeks later that the DC police started following up on the hotel lead so they were able to identify the body that way.

Who was he?

A young man from Texas. He didn't have much family and they weren't aware that he was even in Washington, DC. They never had much contact with him and didn't know he was dead until the Texas authorities contacted them.

Wow! That's gotta be a nasty surprise.

A little different situation here, Brian took up the conversation. The family of one of the men murdered here contacted the NYPD after he didn't come back home after a weekend trip.

What was he doing in New York City?

They don't know. He told them he was going to Manhattan, which surprised them since he had never been there before and was traveling by himself. They didn't know if he was meeting anybody or if he was just touring the city.

What about the other victim? Corey asked.

Nothing. He remains unidentified.

So there isn't anything connecting these cases except for the age and sex of the victims and the method of death. Frustration crept into Corey's thoughts.

That would seem so. If they are indeed connected, Travis added.

Three similar murders in one year in a relatively small geographic location is a little too odd for mere coincidence, Brian said.

Is there any DNA evidence from any of the crimes?

Let me look, Travis answered.

I'll have to contact the NYPD for more information, said Brian.

A few seconds later, Travis came back in the conversation. This report says that there was semen found in his rectum. There is a DNA profile of it in the file. This says that when his relatives were told of this finding they wanted nothing to do with him. Against their religious beliefs.

That's rather cold. Not wanted in life or death, Corey put in.

Yes, it seems to be a recurring theme, Brian added.

With Brian's promise to update Corey later in the day after following up with the New York Police Department, the telepathic conversation ended.

Corey went back downstairs and found that the breakfast dishes were cleared, the dining room straightened and the four men getting ready for a quick day trip to Chatham. He turned down their invitation to join them to the picturesque Cape town. He walked down Franklin Street back to Commercial turning east. The Coast Guard Station sat on the south-east corner of the intersection. He walked up the rise in the street and past the Boat Slip. The Providence Police had blocked access to the beach from the motel but it still bustled with activity.

Nothing like a mysterious death to excite the people, Corey thought wryly.

Drag queens buzzed back and forth on the street, from sidewalk to sidewalk, on scooters, handing out fliers for a show that evening at the Post Office Café and Cabaret.

He continued walking Commercial, enjoying the scenery of the good-looking men, many of whom were shirtless or in shorts, in spite of the cool weather.

As he passed the post office and bank, he heard his name called from across the street. A young man in a ball cap, pushing a stroller, waved at him. Standing next to the man was a very pregnant young woman.

"Keaton!" Corey called back in surprise. He ran to the opposite curb to greet them. "I'm surprised to see you here this weekend. Hi, Barbara." He leaned over to kiss her on the cheek after shaking Keaton's hand. He peered down at the toddler in the stroller. "Hey, Ricky." The youngster grinned at the sound of his name, giving Corey a gap-toothed smile with enormous blue eyes. "How you doing, kiddo?" Ricky let out a shriek of delight at the attention.

"I'm glad we bumped into you," Keaton said.

"Why?"

Keaton pointed to a small red building named the Little Store across the street near where Corey had been standing. "I need you to buy a lottery ticket for us."

"Your legs aren't broken," Corey asked curiously and noted Barbara rolling her eyes and shaking her head behind her husband's back.

"No, it's just that you can probably pick the numbers better than me," Keaton pressed on enthusiastically.

Corey recognized his friend's line of reasoning, although it was flawed. "We've been over this before, Keaton. My powers don't work that way. I can't predict lottery numbers. We've all tried and had very limited success."

"That's okay! I haven't had any success so limited is better than nothing," Keaton protested. "But I thought you could predict the future."

Corey crossed his arms over his chest and fixed what he hoped was his best I've-killed-people-for-less-than-that look on Keaton but his friend wouldn't be swayed. "Some of the guys experience precognition, in which they get flashes from the very near future, but it's not on command. It happens spontaneously and the events which they see are somewhat extraordinary in scope, affecting a significant number of people. The more traumatic and widespread, the easier it is to see. The lottery doesn't qualify."

"It qualifies for me! Come on, Corey. Help a guy out."

"Give up, Corey. You're not going to win this. He's the most stubborn man I know," Barbara could understand anyone's frustration with Keaton.

Seeing that Keaton wasn't going to take no for an answer and Barbara refused to intercede on his behalf, Corey surrendered. "How many lottery tickets do you want?" he said with a sigh.

"I don't know," Keaton shrugged. "How many do you think I'll need?"

With a look of disgust, Corey turned and crossed the street. He entered the Little Store, trying not to slam the door. He approached the counter where several customers had already gathered, forming a line to check out. The lottery tickets were sold from a small area next to the cashier. He picked up a blank lottery slip and a pencil and stared at the small encircled numbers.

I'll give this another shot just for Keaton, he decided. He called up his clairvoyance hoping some flash of intuition or precognition would come to him. I don't even know what to focus on. The numbers? The paper? They guy at the end of the line?

A thin, good-looking man with Asian features smiled back at him.

So much for my concentration. Feeling and sensing absolutely nothing, Corey quickly darkened circles at random with the pencil and got in line behind the cute Asian guy.

After a short conversation ending with "Catch you 'round" he paid for the lottery tickets and received the slip with his chosen numbers. He crossed the street where Keaton waited anxiously, grinning from ear to ear in anticipation. Corey held out the lottery ticket for Keaton, but snatched it back when he reached for it.

"No. Guarantees. Understand?" He enunciated each word slowly to be sure that Keaton got the message.

"Yeah, yeah, yeah. Got it, got it, got it."

Not convinced, Corey handed the ticket to his friend who grabbed it greedily.

"Thanks, Corey!" Keaton headed off down the sidewalk, studying the numbers without looking up.

Barbara started after her husband but stopped to speak to Corey. "Don't worry. If he wins, I'll kill him in his sleep so neither of us will have to deal with him anymore."

Corey chuckled at her weak joke. "And I'll say you were with me so you'll have an alibi."

"Thanks, sweetie, but no one would believe you on that." She gave him a quick peck on the cheek and followed after Keaton.

* * * *

More of the bars were open even at this hour, which was shortly before noon. Corey stepped into each one, trying to get a sense of the place. Was there anything that his psionic powers could pick up? Could any of them been the site of a murder?

One by one, he eliminated them from suspicion since he found nothing that would indicate BDSM activity of the sort he anticipated. The bartenders he spoke to were willing to help but could not give him much information.

Willie, who tended bar at the Wave Video Club next to the Crown and Anchor Inn opened Corey's eyes to another more frightening possibility.

"You're kidding me, right?" The lean young Cuban man looked up at Corey in disbelief. "Do you have any idea how many BDSM scenes are being played out in all the hotel rooms and B&B's this weekend?"

Corey cursed inwardly that he had not thought of that himself. He had never been interested in the scene and neither was Ethan so he hadn't considered the possibility of it taking place anywhere other than a club. It remained a mystery to him. "I guess I never knew what's involved in a scene."

"Corey honey," Willie said, leaning on the bar. "All you need is two willing people and an active imagination. Many guys bring in their own toys with them. A lot of them drive in to avoid embarrassing questions at the airport. Any hotel room can be turned into a dungeon. No elaborate apparatus required."

Corey sank down on a bar stool as the enormity of the situation sunk in.

"I've think I've heard every version of the pick-up line 'You've been a bad boy, go to my room' there is.

"Guys fall for that?"

"Trust me. It's a mating call. Sure you don't want a drink?" Willie teased.

"I may need one now," Corey chuckled nervously. "Just iced tea, please."

"Long Island or Long Beach?"

Corey fixed a look on him.

"Oh, all right. One boring, non-alcoholic iced tea coming up," Willie said with a cheerful voice.

As Corey took a sip of the refreshing beverage, he felt another telepathic contact.

Corey, we need to talk.

Ray? What's going on?

It looks like we do have a serial killer and he's in your town. Ray, the California psionic officer, did not mince words.

Oh, boy.

That's right. Last weekend, three bodies were found in exactly the same condition as your body here in San Francisco. One Friday morning, one Saturday morning and one on Sunday.

What happened there last weekend?

Folsom Street.

Again, Corey chastised himself for forgetting that fact. The Folsom Street Fair was one of the biggest leather events in the world.

How do they tie in with the victims in New York and Washington, DC?

I've chatted with Travis and Brian. The body in DC was found the weekend of Mid-Atlantic Leather. I found out from Chuck in Illinois that a man was murdered in the same fashion over Memorial Day Weekend.

International Male Leather, Corey realized. And Brian's victims were killed during Folsom Street East in New York City.

Apparently, we've got someone preying on young gay men at leather gatherings around the country.

Corey told Ray about his theory of a BDSM scene, leading to the death of the victim and the execution fantasy.

That's really creepy, Ray said after pondering what Corey told him. But it does fit with the facts. Several of the bodies had semen on them and in them that didn't come from the victims. Since it looks like these murders are related, we're having the DNA profiles of those cases sent here so we can compare them. If they match, we can definitely link these together with one killer.

And if they don't?

Ray didn't respond, but he didn't have to. Both of them knew what would happen and it wasn't a pleasant thought.

* * * *

Corey left the Wave and continued eastward. More and more people were arriving. Commercial Street was packed with cars and pedestrians and it would only get worse as the day progressed. The increase in the population meant more minds. Even now, the presence of so many mental impressions crowded his psyche. He felt more determined to find the one responsible for last night's brutal murder but Willie's revelation added a heavy note of frustration.

Although relatively small, Provincetown was a resort town and hosted dozens of hotels and bed and breakfasts. At this rate it would take several days to investigate all of them and with his power reined in, the task could take much longer.

Corey spun on his heels and walked back to the townhouse. He jumped in his SUV and drove to the Provincetown Police Headquarters on Shank Painter Road. He told Chief Stewart what he learned from the other psionic officers.

"You found out all this in just a few hours?" The chief was skeptical and gave him a challenging look.

Corey refused to be pulled into the argument. "All of the victims were killed in the same manner, in cities where a major leather even was being held."

"And you think that this maniac is here in Provincetown?"

"You saw the body yourself, Chief."

"But none of the others."

"You will very shortly."

"What do you mean?" Chief Stewart said in surprise.

"The files from those cases are being emailed to all communities involved to each other," Corey answered. "You'll be able to make your own conclusions. Please ask Agent Seger to forward anything she finds back to them."

Chief Stewart began to grasp the scope of the crime. "Any connections between the victims?"

"So far, none that we can tell," Corey sighed. "They were all young men from around the country, just visiting leather events."

"San Francisco, New York City, Chicago and Washington, DC are all huge compared to Provincetown. They always have hundreds of events going on all the time. Can they say for certain that those guys were in those cities for those events?"

"In a couple of the cases, surviving relatives knew what their kin were up to, attending a leather gathering. Unfortunately some of the men were closeted, it seems, and the families had no idea where their family members went. It was only after the death that the relations realized there was a part of him they had never expected. In the two cases where the victim has not been identified, not counting ours, it's theorized that he was so far in the closet, he gave his family and friends no clue to where he was going, so they have no idea where to start looking for him."

"Or," Chief Stewart held up a finger. "The family knows where he went but so disapproved of their man's lifestyle that they don't care if he's missing. It doesn't matter to them if he's dead, as long as he's not bugging them anymore."

Corey nodded throughout the chief's hypothesis. "Sad but very possibly true."

Chief Stewart told him that he would let him know when the files from the other cases came in and Corey left. He drove back to the townhouse. Although the drive was only a mile, it seemed to take much longer to make the trip with the weight of the mystery pressing on him.

The very early wake-up call, the teleportation and the constant drain to keep his telepathy in check while expending it to talk with his colleagues across the country began to take their toll on him. He felt a serious headache forming. He needed to lie down and take a nap. Sleep rejuvenated and recharged their paranormal powers, and since this case had taken a dramatic turn, he had to be on top of his game.

The basement bedroom offered some isolation that would help him refresh his mind and body. A thought that he should call Ethan passed through his mind just before sleep claimed him.

* * * *

Corey woke two hours feeling re-energized and hungry. His friends wouldn't be back from Chatham for several more hours. Why they wanted to take a trip that would put them in massive traffic jams heading back into Provincetown was beyond his comprehension. He walked back down to Commercial Street in search of food. The traffic and crowds had increased in the short time he left his surveillance a few hours earlier.

He made his way to the Lobster Pot, a favorite restaurant choice in town, and to his surprise, was seated right away.

"You're here before the dinner crowd comes in," the waiter explained.

"Right now, I suppose everyone's getting checked in and hitting the bars right away?" Corey asked.

"You got it, handsome," the waiter winked. "Carbing up for tonight?"

Corey couldn't stifle a laugh. "I guess you could say that."

"I'll be at the Vault later. Maybe I'll see you there."

Corey enjoyed a bowl of clam chowder and blackened tuna with lemon caper sauce. The food felt good in his stomach as he started out the windows across the bay. Although the weather remained cool and rainy, he could tell the sun was setting. It seemed evening came earlier in Provincetown. That meant the bars would fill up soon, if they weren't packed already.

Somewhere in the city, a murderer lurked, waiting in the shadows for his next victim.

Chapter Five

The traffic clogging Commercial Street was worse than Bradford Street, both pedestrian and vehicular. Corey had returned to the townhouse to change into his leather harness, exposing his muscular chest, and a pair of tight jeans. He felt the excitement and the anticipation in the new arrivals as they looked forward to a weekend full of unbridled revelry and anonymous sex.

He shoved his hands into his pockets and pressed his arms to his side, bracing against the chill. The walk from the townhouse to the center of town took about five minutes and he used the time to prepare. The police had not identified the dead man and still no one had reported a missing person.

From this distance, he could already hear the increase in noise and traffic as more people arrived for the weekend. Cars packed Bradford Street bumper to bumper, forcing them to a crawl in both directions. He decided to start his surveillance at Club Purgatory, a few blocks to the east along Bradford. He dodged between vehicles as he walked. Several drivers honked their horns while they or their passengers hung out the window, whistling at him. Corey acknowledged a few of them with a polite wave but kept his pace.

He began to feel the press of so many more minds on his consciousness. He pulled his telepathy back as far as he could but a small amount of the power was inherent, an annoying drawback to his ability. However, it did offer a bit of a safety margin, allowing him to maintain a mind's eye on his surroundings.

He spent only a short time at Club Purgatory before heading down to Commercial, checking out the Vault. If the waiter from the Lobster Pot was there, it would've been impossible to find him. So many men crowded into the place, they spilled out into the parking lot next to the Crown and Anchor. But neither place showed any evidence of BDSM activity, despite the number of men wearing leather.

How does one go about hooking up for a scene, Corey wondered? If I can't find the waiter, someone I'm acquainted with, how am I to find a complete stranger? At least, I hope he's a stranger. Do I just wait until someone calls me a bad boy? He chuckled.

He made his way through the throngs to the Atlantic House, a popular two-story club set off of Commercial on a narrow lane. As with every other place he had seen or tried to go into, bar patrons clogged the entry and the immediate area.

Corey had trouble pressing through the mob to reach the staircase, which was only a few feet inside the door, to the second floor. He found the upper level just as crowded as downstairs. The smaller space up here made the entire area seem claustrophobic. With so many bodies pressed together in a small space, the air in the room did not move, becoming stale. The smell of sweat assaulted his nostrils, accentuated by the undetectable scent of testosterone. Unnoticed it had a profound effect on his paranormal ability. His enhanced perception sensed it,

invading his mind with mental images and thoughts of the bar patrons, no matter how hard he tried to block them. Their base clear emotions aroused him.

Corey's cock swelled and pressed hard against the fly of his jeans. His nipples, exposed to the world since he'd chosen to wear a harness instead of a shirt, were so hard, he felt he could etch glass with them. Corey noticed that he had one of the most muscular bodies in the place, though arrogance played no part in his thoughts. He found it insignificant given the large number of great physiques in the place. Most of them were somewhat less than ideal, but every single one of them assumed some sort of predatory mode. Whether a dominant or top seeking someone to control, or bottoms and subs looking for domination and control, everyone relished in the hunt.

A good-looking man in his mid-thirties squeezed up to him through the crowd. He gave Corey a leering smile. He nodded in silent greeting, but did not return the smile. Nonplussed, the man leaned forward and began sucking on his nipple.

A wave of ecstasy washed over Corey. He sucked in a quick breath, and his cock throbbed, yearning for release. *I gotta stay focused*, he scolded himself. With a gentle shove, he pushed the man back, his nipple chilled in the fresh air by saliva.

This didn't rebuff the man, as Corey's chest rose and fell with rapid short breaths in excitement, belying interest. He reached down and stroked Corey's erection through his jeans. This time, he suppressed the surge of pleasure with great difficulty. He grabbed the man's wrist and pushed it away.

The man's eyebrows furrowed in frustration, and his jaw dropped open before turning into a sneer. He made an obscene gesture and disappeared into the phalanx of bodies.

Sighing, Corey continued to scan the crowded room, listening with his ears, and telepathy, trying to lessen the pain in his head caused by the mental din.

A strong mixture of lust, envy and frustration bellowed through his consciousness like a shout in a quiet room. It staggered his exhausted mind. He closed his eyes to control the wave of feelings threatening to overwhelm him. *So concentrated. It must come from one person. How many different emotions can a single mind handle?* Corey glanced around the bar for its source.

He saw a short man, shirtless, with a simple harness and black jeans across the dance floor. He wasn't handsome, or even striking, and his build suggested he spent more time lifting donuts, pizza and beer rather than weights. Pallid skin stretched over a thick torso and gut, indicating that he didn't spend much time in the sun, either. There was a small amount of grey at the temples in an otherwise dishwater-blond mop.

Is he fifty? Fifty-five?

Their eyes locked, and the short man gave him a leering smile and nod. Corey felt a lurch of excitement in the guy's thoughts as if he'd realized that he'd been seen. He looked to his right, and Corey followed his gaze. In the back of a

recessed portion of the large room, a doorway stood, almost hidden in the shadows. The rotund stranger turned to lock eyes with him again, and nodded to indicate that he should follow through the door.

Corey's interest piqued. *What's in there? And, why didn't I notice it before?*

He pushed his way through the mob. Men ogled and grabbed his tight ass as he squeezed past. He responded with a thin smile or a quick nod, but didn't pause to interact.

Above the heads of the bar patrons, he saw the short man had reached the door, but a bouncer appeared from the shadows, blocking his way. Also shirtless and wearing an elaborate harness, the bouncer looked to be in his sixties, but sported an incredible body for his age. He was almost as tall as Corey, towering over the short man.

He shrugged, and held up his arms to a question the short man asked. After a quick and animated conversation, the guard waved the man off. Corey felt a sharp stab of anger and hatred from the short man as he skulked away.

As if sensing his mental probe, he glanced over his shoulder with an upset, but hopeful look.

Angry at the bouncer, and hoping I'll still follow him, Corey mused. But I gotta find out what's behind there.

He arrived at the entrance and looked at the bouncer, expecting a confrontation like the one he'd just witnessed. The bouncer winked, and nodded with a smile.

He reached for the handle and opened the door, which revealed nothing but blackness beyond. As his eyes adjusted to the darkness, he made out a faint light below him and discerned a flight of wooden stairs descending to a landing. The soft glow came from a turn in the stairs.

The bouncer stepped up behind him and winked again as Corey glanced at him over his shoulder. "Enjoy yourself, stud," he said. "Just remember your safe word."

He turned back to the darkness, and crept down the stairs. The door banged shut, leaving him in the low light from below. He reached the landing, and turned to face the next flight of stairs. A doorway at the bottom of the steps opened into a dim room.

Strange sounds emanated from within. Loud smacks followed by yelps of pain lingered above the noises of low moans. Corey descended the last several steps and entered.

His wildest and most secret fantasies splayed out in front of him. A dungeon, equipped with every instrument imaginable for sexual pleasure, lay before his eyes. Leather straps and ropes bound naked men to large X-shaped crosses, chairs and benches, or shackled them spread-eagled to the walls, while other men beat them with floggers, whips and wooden paddles.

A few of the dominants wore chaps, but most wore nothing except a harness or single leather band worn around the left bicep. All the men were muscular

and handsome.

Corey walked through the myriad of leather, ropes and chains. He'd been in such places before, but not near as huge as this. He stopped to watch a man secured to a bench with leather straps and buckles at his ankles, wrists and around his waist. A Master thrust his cock in and out of the man's ass, while another forced his down the guy's throat. The bound man's body jerked and convulsed with each shove as if in pain, but Corey's percipience told him that he was near ecstasy.

Watching from a few feet away, an enormous black man, muscled to the point of freakiness, stroked his gigantic cock and reveled at the discomfort of the sub. His torso exploded upward out of the narrow waist of his leather chaps, stretched taut around thick thighs. He glanced at Corey and did a double take. Releasing his cock, he turned to face him, and stepped closer with a lusty grin.

The dark man's rugged good looks got his attention, especially how his eyes glowed from underneath his leather cap.

Gotta stay foc... The thought faded into the recesses of his mind as the black man grabbed him by the shoulders and stroked his arms.

"Come here, boy," the man ordered in a hoarse whisper and pulled Corey to him, planting a hot kiss on his lips.

No, I have to... A wave of pleasure coursed through his body, thwarting the warning of his consciousness. He returned the black Master's press, probing his mouth with his tongue. He reached for the man's narrow waist.

"Not so fast, boy," he breathed out, pushing Corey's arms away. "Master Darryl's in control of you, now." With surprising strength, he grasped Corey's wrists behind his back and held him together with a large hand. Keeping his lips pressed against him, he reached with his free hand to the waistband of his chaps.

Corey heard a familiar clink of metal, one that he knew from years in law enforcement.

No, he thought in refusal rather than fear. Darryl paused, and Corey sensed a confused hesitation in him. *Did I say that out loud? No! I didn't*, he realized with sudden confidence...and pleasure.

Taking advantage of the temporary halt, he freed his wrists and grasped Darryl's hand, taking the handcuffs away. Corey now held the Master's wrists behind his back and, pushing forward, he forced him away from the bondage scene.

He maintained his mental advantage, controlling the controller. Darryl's eyes went wide with confusion, surprise and amazement. Corey stopped a few feet away, holding the large man's gaze.

He forced the black wrists above his head and handcuffed them to a chain hanging from the ceiling before stepping back to examine his prize.

Master stood helpless. Ebony eyes revealed that he couldn't understand how he'd been maneuvered into such a position. Corey had reversed dominant positions within seconds.

It was easy to read the confused thoughts of Darryl's mind, and his cock, already swollen, pushed hard against his jeans. He enjoyed this newly realized power of his. He used it without reservation, often on criminals, thugs and other lawbreakers, but never in a sexual situation like this. The sensation filled his mind and loins with a confident bur, exhilarating him.

He took slow steps around the massive man who was under his control, and at his mercy. As he stepped behind him, Corey wrapped his arms around the man's narrow waist. "Who's the daddy now, boy?" he whispered in his ear.

At the word 'boy', Darryl's nervousness and discomfort increased. Corey's mind registered the rise in emotions, and adrenaline surged through his body, enhancing his powers.

"I don't know," he mumbled with uncertainty.

"Quiet, boy," Corey warned in a low voice. He grabbed a black handkerchief hanging out of the chaps, and gagged him. Fingers rubbed the man's barrel chest and pinched his nipples hard. Darryl twisted in response to the pain.

"Never been controlled before, have you, boy?" Corey taunted.

He shook his head.

"Ever been fucked in the ass, boy?" He pressed his domination. Fear shot through the other man's eyes, and Corey's cock responded with a lurch. He grabbed his captive's ass and squeezed. He noted with pleasure that the other Masters and Daddies had ceased the torture of their slaves. He sensed their amazement that someone had captured one of the most dominant men in the room.

Corey ignored them, his confidence level rising to new heights. *For now*, he thought with satisfaction. *I'll have them whenever I want.*

He turned his attention back to his prize. Grabbing the buckles, he unfastened the chaps and, in a flash of telekinesis, unzipped both legs simultaneously with a mere thought. The chaps crumpled to the floor, leaving the Master wearing only boots.

Corey stepped in front of him, and removed his low combat boots and jeans, taking his time to prolong Darryl's discomfiture. He felt everyone's attention focused on him. Unashamed and unembarrassed by his own nakedness in front of so many strangers, he moved behind his captive, who panted in helpless surrender, and shoved his large cock into the Darryl's ass.

His slave cried out in pain through the gag as he forced his shaft deep inside. He twisted and turned in an effort to escape the bonds of his tormentor.

Corey used mental dominance to maintain control, enjoying his position with sadistic glee. His ass muscles tightened and released with each thrust, but Master's cock had long since drooped when the tables turned.

The scene entranced everyone in the dungeon, and slaves tied to crosses and benches craned their necks to see why their Masters had stopped the beatings. Corey didn't acknowledge any of them. Instead, he kept his mind open, reading their thoughts, plotting how to take control of them. For now, he was satisfied

taking this black ass.

His body twitched at the sensations racing through him. Darryl interpreted his movements, and braced for the inevitable. Seconds later, Corey exploded inside his captive, growling through clenched teeth.

It had never been like this. A wave of lightheadedness came over him, as he became aware of the marvel of the experience. The awe of the men watching only added to his pleasure.

Once spent, he pulled out of the tight, black ass, and took his time dressing. He picked up his boots and stepped in front of the gagged, wide-eyed face of his conquest. "Good boy!" he said, with a triumphant arch of an eyebrow. He turned and left the dungeon, and bar, barefoot, with his boots in hand.

Outside the October air stung his chest with sweet coolness, and the pavement chilled his feet. Many people were still up and walking around at this late hour. His mental powers raged from the incredible push from his exploits in the dungeon. Without a conscious thought, men and women turned to watch him pass.

In his heightened state of awareness, Corey plodded back to his hotel, blissfully ignoring everyone and everything around him.

* * * *

A hulky figure stepped out of the door and cast a large shadow on the ground, nearly blocking out the light above the threshold to several men standing around, talking in groups of twos and threes in the cold wet night. All of them turned and looked at the muscular man, ceasing their conversations. He enjoyed the attention he received but pretended not to notice. The silence at his appearance stroked his already large ego.

This is too easy, he thought smugly. He passed through the small groups without looking at anyone and stopped at the edge of the light, facing the gloom beyond. He raised a muscular arm overhead and rotated it as if it was stiff and sore. He reached over with the opposite hand to massage his shoulder.

"May I help you with that, sir?" a voice said from behind him.

Like shooting fish in a barrel. He smiled to himself. "Just a little sore, boy. Can you rub me right about there?" He indicated a spot out of his reach on his shoulder blade.

"Yes, sir!" The skinny young man began to rub the Master's back with clumsy strokes.

He endured the awkward rubdown for a few seconds. "Okay, boy. That's good." He said it with a finality that the boy would know he was being dismissed.

The young man looked disappointed as he stepped back. The master pulled a cigarette from a pocket inside his leather vest, but held it down by his

side nonchalantly. Three of the other men behind him produced lighters and held them up with expectant looks.

Hmmm...The one in the middle looks like he's the best trained but too old for me, the Master thought. He motioned to him to come light his cigarette. He nodded thanks to the man but gave him no further encouragement. As he took long drags, he assessed the men standing in front of him, hoping to be picked as his boi or slave for the evening and he relished the attention. His muscular build made him larger than any of them and that increased his sense of dominance over the diminutive. He could take all the time in the world to make his selection.

Chapter Six

Corey woke to the grey light of an overcast morning filtering into his bedroom through the shades on the window. Although he'd had just a few hours of sleep, he felt refreshed. He smiled, recalling the events of last night, and the domination and control of another man. His cock swelled at the thought of the sweaty, erotic session. His cell phone rang, snapping him out of the pleasant reverie.

"Did you sleep well last night?" Chief Stewart's cheerful voice asked.

Corey's smile widened. "Yes, I did. How about you?"

"No complaints. Any progress on the murder?"

His heart skipped a beat. The memory of the young man's body from yesterday morning pushed to the forefront of his mind. "No," he answered, trying to sound nonchalant. "Have you?"

The chief sighed. "Well, let me think. We still haven't received any word on the dental records of the first body and —"

"What? Did you say first body?" Corey sat up, wide-awake. "What are you talking about?"

"Oh, haven't you heard?"

He listened as the chief spoke in a calm, controlled tone, but he sensed the man's sarcasm.

"There was another murder last night. Where the fuck were you? You're supposed to be here preventing this from happening. So, what the hell were you doing last night?"

He sat in stunned silence, the euphoric awareness of his power and the erotic sensation of a strong ejaculation evaporated. "Wh-what happened last night?" he repeated, sounding more feeble than curious. His face flushed with heat.

"Forget it, Corey. I don't want to interrupt your relaxing weekend with another murder, but thought you'd like to know."

The chief hung up before he could ask another question. Perched on the edge of the bed, his pulse racing and breathing fast, thoughts rushed through his mind like a movie playing on fast-forward.

He'd screwed up big time. He allowed his sexual exploration to distract him and another man lost his life. His actions could mean serious implications, especially if the chief discovered where he'd been and what he was doing when the latest murder was committed. The act of Congress that formed the Psionic Officers years ago contained specific wording that could remove him from his position if proven his negligence resulted in a homicide. His only hope at this point was to find the person, or persons, responsible for the murders, and demonstrate that the second couldn't have been prevented.

Regaining a small portion of his confidence, he pulled on the jeans from last night, and stuffed his feet into sandals. He grabbed a T-shirt as he raced upstairs to the upper deck.

From his vantage point he scanned the entire city with his telepathy, no holding back this time. Maybe it was his constant suppression of his power that allowed the murderer to strike again. In instances like this, psionic capability was a double-edged sword. He could wield it to read everyone's mind in town and it may yield the murder with no more loss of life. If only it was that easy. In the process, thoughts of the populace would be desecrated. Many people believed that the intrusion into one's mind was more egregious than murder, but he psionic detectives weren't convinced the families of murdered victims would agree. Too many such relatives still railed against the officers, blaming them for not doing enough to save their loved ones.

Siding with the vast majority and their own values, the psionics refrained from using telepathy to breach minds to prevent crimes to protect the privacy of others. The evidence would be intangible and thrown out, if not laughed out, of court. Therefore, they kept their power hidden. As a result crimes continued. Predicting transgressions remained beyond their reach by their own limitations in their abilities and the morals of the populace.

A friend of Corey's, unclear of the concept and with poor timing, once asked him after a failed attempt to prevent a premeditated killing why he hadn't used these 'weird' powers of his and read minds to find out when and where the assassination would take place. Corey picked up the nearest object to him, a paperback book and throwing it at his friend in anger.

The friend managed to avoid the missile, but barely. "Touched a nerve?"

Corey looked around for another weapon but paused when he realized his fury wasn't directed at his friend. Although he failed to prevent the murder, he hadn't failed in bringing the killer to justice. The courts system considered the case a success, but not the family of the victim. Their rage against Corey and several Massachusetts law enforcement agencies resulted in lawsuits and negative public campaigns. Even though the cases were never brought to court, the stench of those days still continued after several years.

The pain of that memory could not be erased and though not always in the forefront of his mind, it lingered in the darkest corners of his psyche, sowing seeds of doubt and cultivating lack of confidence.

Not today, Corey thought defiantly. The relatively small area to scan allowed him to unleash his power full force and unfettered.

A cacophony of thoughts, emotions and mental static of thousands of people filled his mind. Years of practice and training kicked in and Corey filtered through the noise, which appeared to him as the din in a huge, crowded room. He picked out lust, anger, love and the unmistakable grogginess of minds waking up.

He had been trained and conditioned to sense police activity. The heightened emotions centered on the hubbub of a crime scene would stand out like shouts against the background noise of the community.

His scan of the city revealed nothing unusual.

I know you're out there, Stewart, Corey snarled under his breath. *Where are you?* Finding nothing out of the ordinary, he let his mind encompass the entire tip of the cape. *I'll track you back to Boston if I have to.* A familiar sensation entered his mind. *There you are!*

Race Point sat on the northern shore of Cape Cod, a wide stretch of sand beaches relentlessly assaulted by winds from the North Atlantic Ocean. Nevertheless, it was a popular spot as well as a romantic getaway for many people during Mates weekend. Or for those who just needed a semi-private place for sex. The north beach was only one of many spots on the cape for that purpose.

The Race Point Life Saving Station peered over the beach grasses like a nosey neighbor as Chief Stewart rose up from his crouched position. He ignored Corey as he joined the small group. A tarp covered a body to keep prying eyes from ogling the gruesome scene.

"Look, Chief," he began. "I'm sorry I screwed up —"

"If you're too inconvenienced, Corey," the chief interrupted, "I can ask your Rhode Island comrade, Paul, to assist in this investigation."

He knew that Paul would never usurp his authority in his own state, no more than Corey would in Rhode Island. And Chief Stewart knew this too. Nevertheless, he stiffened at the threat.

"Look, Corey," the chief said, cooling off somewhat. "I like you a lot, but —"

"But nothing, Chief," he jumped in, hoping to end more of the scolding. "I fucked up. I won't let you down again."

The man sighed. "You didn't let me down. I know you can't be everywhere at all times of day and night. It's just..." He paused. "It's just that this is the second murder in the last two days. Make that the last two decades."

Corey understood the reason for the man's frustration, and breathed a sigh of relief that he wasn't at fault. The chief took this personally.

"Here's the autopsy report from the John Doe we found yesterday." He handed Corey a folder he'd been holding, the cover crinkled where he clenched it in his fist during his outburst. He turned and approached the tarp, raising a corner to show him what lay underneath.

In a gruesome recreation of yesterday's scene, Corey saw the naked body of young, black man, lean, but muscular, lying face down in the sand. Bloodied slashes lined the buttocks, and the face showed discoloration, frozen in a hideous expression. "Strangled by hanging?"

"And tortured prior to death. Just like yesterday's victim," Chief Stewart's tone resonated with frustrated sadness.

Corey scrutinized the face of the victim. Even though contorted from strangulation, he thought he might be able to recognize the young man. He closed his eyes and replayed the evening before in his mind. He reached into the recesses of his memory, evoking total recall; an uncanny ability to remember every detail of events. The faces of the people he'd met on Commercial Street

while on his way to the bar, and the patrons and men in the dungeon all raced through his mind. He shifted his focus back to the bar, searching his memories for anyone resembling the unfortunate soul at his feet.

He remembered the first man to hit on him, the one who became mad when he spurned his advances. He saw the image of the fifty-something man with the strong emotions, and the older bouncer. Every male he laid eyes upon last night paraded across his awareness, but no one even remotely looked like the victim.

He opened his eyes and found the chief staring at him suspiciously, perhaps still holding on to the last vestiges of anger.

"He wasn't in the bar I visited last night." He tried to sound more confident than he felt. Although he didn't doubt his powers, the chief's trust in him had wavered. "If he were, I'd have seen him." To avoid the chief's glare, he opened the folder to read the autopsy report.

Above him, police cordoned off a large section of the pier to keep the growing crowd from getting a closer look. The forensic team from Hyannisport arrived. Corey ignored all activity around him, focusing his efforts and mental powers on the report.

"This says there was no semen in his rectum, just on the skin of his legs that wasn't the victim's," he mumbled, more to himself than anyone else. The chief heard him speak, and turned away from the activity surrounding the body. Corey continued. "And the medical examiner found semen in his urethra, which suggests he was ejaculating at the time of death."

"Sounds like you were right about him getting off on his own death," the chief said.

"So did his executioner," he added. "I'd say we're looking for a true sadist. One who reaches climax only at the torture and death of others."

Chapter Seven

"There you are, bitch!" Bruce's exuberant greeting boomed down the stairs just as Corey entered the house.

Shit, he grumbled. He hoped he could walk in the door without announcing his arrival to his friends. He couldn't risk materializing inside for fear of being seen. Forcing his anger down, he walked up the stairs to the living area. In a flashback to the previous morning, Karl and Lloyd sat out on the balcony smoking cigarettes while George busied himself in the kitchen, making breakfast. Bruce stood at the top of the stairs, hands on hips. Although he tried to look angry, the twitches at the corner of his mouth spoke otherwise.

"So," he said with a smirk. "What time did you get in last night? Or maybe it was this morning?"

Corey returned the smugness. "I got in before you did."

A chorus of 'no's and negative responses rose from his friends.

"I didn't see your car when I came back last night," he continued with a know-it-all attitude.

Bruce's amused look didn't change. "Huh-uh. I checked on you when we got in just after one this morning. You weren't here."

"I didn't sense...I mean, I didn't realize you were here when I got back," Corey's confidence began to falter.

George came out of the kitchen to hand Corey a cup of hot coffee. "I know he came back in a little before two, but I wanna know if he was alone." He winked at Corey with a sly smile and went back to his cooking.

Stunned, Corey realized they were telling the truth. Not only had he missed their vehicle when he returned, he had not felt their presence in the house. His telepathy hadn't told him that.

How could I have been so dense? He suddenly realized that Karl and Lloyd had finished their cigarettes and come back inside. All four were waiting for a response. Recovering quickly, he regained his confident look.

"I came back alone."

"And before you came home, you were where?" Bruce continued his cross-examination.

Corey felt his face grow hot. Not as a result of his exploits but from embarrassment at the fallout. The four of them misunderstood the sudden reddening of his face and erupted in laughter. Realizing he would never convince them of anything other than what their wildest imaginations concluded, he kept quiet. The look on his face told them they would get no more details, but satisfied with their victory, they returned to their previous activities.

"You're still young and energetic," George said over his shoulder.

Impatience finally took hold of Corey. "Compared to you, George, dirt is young." The words came out of his mouth before he could stop himself. Silence fell over the room and Corey put a hand to his mouth, his eyes wide open in

shock. Before he could react, all four men burst out laughing.

George walked over to him and wrapped him, still frozen in shock, in a big hug and kissed him on both cheeks. "Finally, a bitchy comment from you!"

"George, I'm so sorry," Corey whispered frantically.

"Oh, girl, don't be," George beamed back at him. "We're proud of you. After all these years and at long last you say something as snarky as that."

Bruce came over to join the hug, wiping away an imaginary tear. "Our little boy is finally growing up."

Corey recovered from the shock of embarrassment to be replaced by the shock of realizing George was by no means insulted. He was even laughing about it.

"Welcome to the fold, sweetie," Karl forced his way into the circle, kissing Corey. Lloyd followed right behind with his own comment.

"Don't let it go to your head now," he warned. "This was only once. You have a long way to go before you get as bitchy as us."

"That takes years of practice," George added.

"Years and years and years of practice in your case," Bruce jibed.

"Bitch, that's Corey's line," George scolded.

"Oh, that's right. Sorry, dear. Go ahead."

Realizing that his gaffe had not resulted in hurt feelings, Corey finally laughed with his friends. However, he still stung from Chief Stewart's chastisement. Corey turned down their invitation to stay for breakfast. He showered and changed as fast as he could and returned to the investigation.

With renewed vigor, Corey made his way back to Commercial Street with his mind open to the thoughts and feelings of the weekenders as they emerged into the gray light. He walked slowly to absorb and process the mental input, refusing the overwhelming psychic crush to seduce thoughts.

Wow! What a night. I'm going back to that club this evening!

I'm starving. Having sex all night long makes me hungry.

Who will it be tonight? Him or him? Or maybe both?

Varied thoughts wafted through his mind as he filtered through the mental din. He felt no notions of murder or hatred, nothing to account for the brutality of the two killings. He continued southwest on Commercial Street, past the post office and up the rise.

The outdoor seating areas of the restaurants and cafes that lined the street began filling up with people who chose to ignore the cool and cloudy weather. A familiar stab of emotion pierced his telepathy, causing a slight, painful sensation. He looked around for the source, scanning the open patio of a restaurant he passed. It was crowded, but Corey located the familiar mind in seconds.

The strong emotions came from the fifty-something man who had made eye contact with him last night; the same one who had an animated exchange with the bouncer before disappearing. He sat alone at a table on the opposite side of the patio from where he stood, reading a book and sipping coffee from a ceramic

mug.

Corey waded through the tables, ignoring the glances, smiles and rude facial expressions from the restaurant customers, and ordered a cup of coffee.

With the hot liquid warming his body, his mood lifted and his powers enhanced. He made his way to the man's table. "Mind if I join you?" he asked in a friendly tone.

The man glanced up and in an instant, recognition flashed in his eyes. A flood of conflicting thoughts and strong emotions—happiness, confusion, and suspicion, surged through his mind like a tidal wave. Had he been caught off-guard, he might have swayed from the onslaught, but he managed to remain upright, his expression never wavering.

The man settled on suspicion. "Please do," he offered, feigning nonchalance as he placed a marker in his book.

He sat in the chair opposite, and stuck out his hand. "I'm Corey." He kept his power in check as the man returned the gesture. Physical contact enhanced telepathic abilities, and this man had already proven himself a challenge to his powers.

"Mitch."

"Nice to meet you, Mitch. I hope I'm not bothering you."

The man shook his head. "Just a little suspicious, maybe."

At least he broached the subject, Corey thought. "Why so?" He raised an eyebrow.

Mitch stared back, like a teacher ready to reprimand a student for a stupid question. His hooded eyes conveyed pity. Corey sensed an internal struggle as the man decided on what to say.

"I came out sixteen years ago, and I've had fewer boyfriends," he said with a jeering curl of his lip. "And I'm using the term 'boyfriend' in the broadest sense of the word. Guys don't even look at me." His voice oozed with more than a hint of acid. "Now, the most gorgeous man I've ever seen wants to talk to me. You wanna tell me what's going on?"

Corey shrugged. "I remembered you from last night, and thought I'd say hello."

Mitch's eyes narrowed in suspicion. "You remember me? Yeah, right. You looked right through me."

"I followed you to the door of the dungeon."

"Then, you must've seen that I wasn't allowed in, and yet, you were." He snarled. When Corey didn't answer, he continued. "I didn't get near the door, but you got to touch the knob and open it. You were given a smile, and you didn't even have to close it on your own. The old geezer guarding the door like a well-trained, flea-bitten mutt wouldn't allow you to go to all that trouble." His blue eyes blazed with such furious energy, Corey forced himself to rein in his telepathy. Mitch directed all his anger and resentment toward him.

A waiter stepped up, asking if the men needed anything. While Mitch

ordered another cup of coffee, Corey contemplated their conversation, and this man's reactions. His emotions were all-or-nothing and nowhere in the middle. It was as if when he got mad, he went purple with rage. If happy, he was ecstatic. Love was head-over-heels. *But could he become so enraged with a person to kill him?* It was plausible given the amount and number of emotions and thoughts he experienced in the bar last night. However, this didn't jive with the theory that the murderer got off on killing. Being motivated by ecstasy was not the same as being motivated by fury. Climaxing upon the death of another was, in itself, an extreme emotion. "You seem to be a bit perturbed," he ventured, with caution.

"Ya think?" Mitch sneered, his eyes burning the all too obvious.

"Why?"

The pudgy man took a deep breath. "Because I can't get laid in this town on a weekend where the men are so horny, the sporting goods stores have to lock up the bowling balls."

Despite Mitch's obvious anger, Corey couldn't refrain from laughing.

"You laugh, but I've been here since Thursday morning. I haven't so much as garnered a glance from even the ugly guys. Oh, wait," he added sarcastically. "I am the ugliest one here."

This time, he stifled his laughter. "You're not the ugliest one here."

Mitch rewarded him with a snarl. "Let me ask you a question, Corey. Without limiting the answer to fucks, how many times this weekend have you been in physical contact with a man for erotic reasons? Wanted or unwanted?"

He thought back to the previous night. He remembered the man who sucked on his nipples at the bar, the numerous attempts at seduction from various others, and the frequent times being groped or pinched by walking through the crowd.

"That many?" Mitch smirked.

Corey's face warmed.

"All right, let's narrow the field. How many fucks did you have in the dungeon last night?"

"What makes you think I got fucked down there?"

"Just because I couldn't get fucked if I wore a sign around my neck that said 'Free Mustang Convertible for Sex' doesn't mean I don't know what's going on around me. Try being invisible sometime, even though that would be impossible for you. You just might learn a lot.

"Very well." He lifted his chin. "I had sex with only one man.

Mitch eyes narrowed. "Not applying yourself, are you?"

"Hey, I have a partner," Corey defended. "We've been together for almost six years."

"And does the little hubby know you're out here, playing the field?" He sipped his coffee, glaring over the rim.

Corey's blood ran cold. He'd forgotten about Ethan in the excitement of the investigation, and in the throes of ecstasy last night. Ethan had been furious

when he learned that he'd been called in to investigate a murder during Mates weekend. He came close to accusing him of fabricating a hoax just to go to Provincetown without him. Now, it seemed he'd just confirmed Ethan's fears. In the midst of his mortification, he felt Mitch's anger subside.

"I can't blame you, Corey," he sighed. "If I were as gorgeous as you, I'd be doing the same thing."

"Do you really think I'm that attractive?" He heard the same compliment many times, but this time, the words sounded different. *Maybe because he's sincere?*

"Don't believe just me?" He nodded over Corey's shoulder. "Ask him. Table of four, behind you to the right. The guy wearing a Patriots ball cap."

Corey turned around to look at the man. The guy in the ball cap met his glance and flashed him a big smile.

He shifted back to Mitch, who kept his eyes lowered as if he hadn't witnessed the exchange. Without looking up, he twitched his head to his right. "Handle-bar mustache in the cowboy hat at the end of the bar. He hasn't taken his eyes off of you since you sat down."

The man he'd pointed out leaned against the bar, staring in his direction. When Corey returned the gaze, he nodded and raised the cup he was drinking in a greeting.

"Military guy at the opposite end of the bar." Mitch pretended to read his book.

A young man in a military haircut touched his right temple in a salute when Corey glanced in his direction. "Anyone else?"

Still keeping his eyes lowered, Mitch propped an elbow on the table and rested his head in his hand, swirling the contents of his coffee with the other. "Two muscle bears at the table next to us," he said, in a low voice.

Corey looked at the pair. Both beamed as he caught their attention.

"Morning!" one of the men said in a cheerful tone, while the other winked at him.

"Shall I continue?"

"No, I get your point." Corey couldn't believe his powers hadn't alerted him to such attention. In different situations that lapse in awareness could be fatal.

Am I allowing myself to become complacent because I think there isn't a threat to me? he wondered. When did I get so careless? Here's someone with absolutely no psionic ability and yet, he's more aware of our surroundings than I am. How can that be?

As if reading his mind, Mitch remarked, "Like I said earlier, try being invisible."

He thought that if this man wasn't the one responsible for the murders, he just might help in the investigation. *His powers of observation are astonishing. And if he was the murderer, he might slip up. Mitch seems very shrewd, if a little bitter and jaded.* "Well, Mr. Invisible Man, have you heard about the murd...deaths?" Corey inwardly grimaced at his gaffe.

If Mitch noticed, he gave no indication. "All I know is that a couple of guys have died," he said with nonchalance. "Most people think they OD'd or something."

"What do you think happened?"

He shook his head, unconcerned. "Everybody is here for cheap sex with lots of different men." The bitterness in his tone had returned.

"Have you heard anything about the guys who died?"

"I just know that they were young, good-looking and well-built."

Corey noted that too, but wasn't convinced it was a trend. "Do you know how they died?"

Mitch shrugged. "No one seems to know. Like I said, they probably OD'd. Or, maybe they just thought they were size queens."

He chuckled. Mitch was being facetious, but he remembered many occasions being told he was too large for someone. "You don't seem too concerned."

"Speaking for me, the victims were young, cute and built. I'm old, ugly and fat. No, no, no..." He held up a hand when Corey opened his mouth to protest. "As for everybody else, let me put it this way. Of the roughly half a million men here for Mates, there are probably ten, maybe twelve max, Daddies, Masters, or tops like yourself. A couple of bottoms out of the way won't diminish your pool of tricks. For us bottoms, only two out of half a million doesn't increase our odds of getting laid by any of you." He sat back, sipping his coffee, his cold, blue eyes boring into Corey.

Again, he had no answer. This time, the uncomfortable silence between them was broken by the old bouncer from the bar. The well-built, grizzled old man sauntered up to their table, wearing the same lusty smile from the night before. His open shirt exposed a broad chest, and his gray hair looked slicked back with an entire can of mousse. Mitch looked in the opposite direction, crossing his legs and folding his arms across his chest, still keeping a firm grip on his coffee mug.

"Hey, there!" the bouncer greeted in a cheerful tone. "Did you have a good time in the dungeon?"

"Actually, I did." He glanced at Mitch, who pretended not to notice the new arrival.

"Good. My name is Jerry, and if you need anything, just let me know."

"Thanks, Jerry. I'm Corey, and this is Mitch."

"Nice to meet you, Corey." Jerry beamed. His smile faded when he turned to the opposite side of the table. "Mitch."

Mitch glared at him, ignoring Jerry. "We've met. Remember?" His eyes blazed with disgust, but Corey knew the source of his fury. The bouncer appeared oblivious.

"Why didn't you let Mitch go down into the dungeon last night?" He felt torn between wanting to prove Mitch wrong and defending him. At the question, Mitch turned his icy stare to Jerry, awaiting an answer.

The man stammered as he fumbled for a reply. "Well...you had

to...uh...have an invitation to be allowed in." He tried to sound confident and stubborn all at the same time.

"I didn't have an invitation," Corey challenged. "You never even asked me if I had one."

Jerry became uncomfortable with his questioning, and under Mitch's unrelenting gaze. "We can only allow so many people down there at a time."

"No one came out between the time Mitch asked for entrance and when I asked. If you were limiting the number of men in the dungeon, my friend here should have been granted entrance." He felt a small surge of surprise from Mitch, who appeared shocked that someone actually stuck up for him.

Jerry seemed to struggle for another answer, but failed.

"Face it, Corey." Mitch snarled "You were let in because you're extremely good-looking and built like a brick shit-house. Did anyone down there even come close to my age?" He didn't seem perturbed when Corey didn't respond.

"What do you care?" Jerry got defensive. "You got to go in and had a great time. You even topped Master Darryl." It was obvious he was impressed.

"Maybe I'd have liked my friend, Mitch, to join me." He could see the muscles in Jerry's jaw clench and sensed the excuses racing through his mind.

"Yeah, sure. No problem." He left the table without acknowledging Mitch.

"Thanks, Corey. But I'm okay. Really." He shrugged off the snub.

Corey was about to respond when the freakishly-muscled black man, whom Jerry called Master Darryl, stepped up to the table. He didn't need Mitch's observations to feel the reaction of the crowd to his presence. His own heart gave a subtle leap at seeing the man whom he forced into submission with the power of his mind last night. He still found him handsome, but not as desirable since he wasn't restrained.

"May I join you gentlemen?" he asked, in a surprisingly soft voice.

Mitch's thoughts transcended Corey's telepathy so unexpectedly, he flinched from the pain it caused.

I may not get any action this weekend, but damn! The two hottest men in town are at my table!

"I'm Darryl, by the way." He offered his hand to Corey, who introduced both of them. "Hey, Mitch. Nice to meet you. How's it goin'?"

With a simple handshake, Corey sensed Mitch's bitterness and anger evaporate as he took in the handsome spectacle sitting next to him. Almost. That much emotion couldn't be erased by a mere visual distraction, no matter how good-looking he was.

A waiter appeared from nowhere. "Would you like something to drink, Master Darryl?"

Mitch was quicker than the waiter. "A mimosa or Bloody Mary?"

Darryl smiled, showing bright white teeth. "If you're buying, I'll take a Bloody Mary."

"Make it two. Corey?"

"No, thank you," he answered, and the waiter withdrew. He could not afford to have any alcohol surging through his system and disrupting his powers. He was amused at the quick reversal in Mitch's emotions. It was the quickest one hundred and eighty degree turn around he'd ever witnessed.

Corey began to sort through the noises and maze that were Mitch's feelings and thoughts. He had never met anyone as complex and difficult to understand as he was. There was still a subject that needed broaching; the reason Darryl was here.

"Hey, Darryl. I hope you're not mad at me for turning the tables on you last night. To his surprise, big man waved dismissively.

"No, that's okay. I don't like being topped, so I'm glad that it was by a good-looking guy like you."

An emotional arrow of anger and jealousy stabbed Corey's consciousness, causing him to flinch even more than earlier. *Damn the man! Can't he reign in those emotions?* He stole a quick sidelong glance at Mitch, whose icy blue eyes caught the look.

Darryl continued, unaware of the exchange. "I like to go down into the dungeon because a lot of guys don't go for the heavy stuff. It's not crowded there."

"But a lot of guys can't enter either, even if they wanted," Mitch put in.

Darryl gave him a confused expression. "Why not?"

"Apparently, you must have an invitation to be admitted." Sarcasm laced his words.

"I didn't have an invitation." He furrowed his brows.

Mitch gave Corey an I-told-you-so look.

"You want to go down there, Mitch? I can get you in." Darryl sounded confident.

Mitch's eyes brightened with hope. "That'd be great! Wait a minute. His lips thinned into a white line. "Are you sure they'll let me in? From what I gathered, I don't fit the mold."

Corey grew angry. "Mitch, you're not ugly or too old. And you're in great shape for your age."

He looked at him with a smirk. "My age? How old do you think I am?"

I can do this without telepathy, he thought, but decided to err on the side of caution. "Forty-eight, forty-nine."

"I'm forty-two."

Uh-oh.

"I'm fifty-one," Darryl said, maintaining his confidence.

Corey felt as stunned as Mitch looked.

"You're shitting me!"

"No way!" Corey knew he spoke the truth, however.

Mitch scooted his chair closer to Darryl, and signaled to the waiter for another round of Bloody Mary's.

He sensed Mitch's excitement rising to a new level. *Should I rescue the poor Master?* Then he realized that the large, black man seemed as intrigued with the short, white man. Their conversation turned to a discussion of the roles and responsibilities of Master and Slave, and the expectations of both.

"The problem with younger slaves is their attitude," Darryl said. "Older ones like you don't have so much.

Oh, hell. If you only knew, Corey mused. He gave a start, thinking he'd probably projected that opinion as well, but neither Darryl nor Mitch reacted. They appeared focused on each other to the point that he felt like an intruder. As they discussed Power Exchanger and BDSM relationships, he mulled over the two murdered men.

So far, no one had identified the bodies, and more disturbing, no one had reported any missing persons. That wasn't surprising in itself, since many men came alone into town for the weekend, wanting to be anonymous. Closeted at home and work, they allowed themselves to be free to explore their most extreme fantasies without the threat of exposure and humiliation.

The desire for anonymity impeded the identification process, unless the two victims had friends with them. With the absence of any missing reports, the scenario seemed unlikely.

As Corey's mind wandered back to the conversation, he heard Darryl telling Mitch about his frustrations with training slaves.

"None of them are serious about training. They just want to be tied up, spanked and fucked. They're not interested in anything beyond that. There's no servitude to a Master. It's all about them." Darryl snarled.

Mitch hung on every word. "Very few Masters out there have the patience or the knowledge to train a slave properly," he added with a sad shake of his head.

"Yeah, that's something I noticed last night." Darryl leaned closer to Mitch. "It was all about the sex. I didn't expect anything else, though. It's the typical scene one expects, even for this kind of weekend."

Mitch nudged his chair a few inches toward obsidian man. "I'd like to prove that I'm a Slave who knows how to please his Master."

Darryl responded with a leering smile. "Well, now. I might have to take you up on that challenge." He leaned back in his chair, pensive, but interested. "If I do, I'm not going to start you out in one of these dungeons here."

Corey's ears perked up. "One of these what? I only know of the one from last night. I've been trying to find more, but with no luck."

Darryl grimaced. "There's several of clubs, almost all of them are about what you saw last night. There's another one, however, that's pretty extreme. That's too heavy for me, and I wouldn't take a slave there. At least, not at first." He winked at Mitch, who grinned like a schoolboy.

"Where is it?" Corey tried to sound nonchalant.

"It's in a house on the edge of town near the dunes. Kinda secluded. I can't tell you how to get there, but I can show you."

Breathless

"That'd be cool." He managed to keep his excitement in check. *This could be the break I need, because so far, this mystery is going nowhere.*

Chapter Eight

Master Darryl's F-350 Ford pickup was the perfect match for him. The black, sleek vehicle sported an extended cab, with dual wheels on the rear axle and a suspension jacked so high, he had to help Mitch climb into the back seat. Corey took shotgun.

He guided the huge truck with little effort through the narrow streets and throngs of foot traffic to Highway 6. It took several trips back and forth along the road before Darryl got his bearings and found the turnoff he was looking for.

A new housing development set off the highway interspersed through a narrow band of trees lining the road up against a backdrop of the dunes. At the end of the unpaved road, a large, finished, two-story house sat a short distance from the others.

"This is it?" Corey gazed at the dark windows of what appeared to be a typical, brand-new abode for the Cape.

"Yeah, I'm sure," Darryl said. "It's pretty normal on the inside, but I haven't been upstairs. The dungeon is in the basement."

Corey rolled down the window and leaned forward to peer at the house. His clairvoyance reached beyond the brick and wood, penetrating the structure. In a flash, his mind's eye entered the house and flew room to room, passing through walls, furniture and floors. Chairs, pictures and appliances appeared as white outlines against a gray field. He guided his power downstairs toward the basement. His percipience passed through a mental presence as it dove to the dungeon. "Someone's inside," he muttered aloud. He continued his psionic surveillance, ignoring the person for now.

The dungeon was nothing like he'd ever seen before. It truly looked like a torture chamber. The usual structures were present, but cages and shackles hung from the ceiling above, and electrical devices placed with extra care in special holders. Whips, canes and paddles, all covered in sharp spikes, hung from one wall. On the opposite side, a wooden structure stood. It resembled a gallows.

As Corey pulled his power back, something alerted him to another disturbing aspect of the room. Small, dark spots of dried liquid splattered the floor in many areas. His bones chilled when he realized it was blood. Although many men had hard limits against breaking the skin, there were others who enjoyed the painful sensations of drawing blood.

His mind snapped back to himself. "Let's see if we can get in." He hopped out of the truck, and strode to the front door, taking long strides. His eagerness to get to the source of the murders boosted his confidence. Darryl and Mitch followed, albeit much slower.

Corey knocked on the door. He felt the mind inside react with alarm and anger. A few seconds later, the door opened with a violent tug. A large woman with very short, slick-backed hair in a pseudo 1950's style glared at him, the

corners of her mouth pulled down in a scowl.

"What?" she demanded. The oversized sweatshirt she wore stretched over a large stomach making her breasts barely visible beneath the fabric.

"We'd like to see the dungeon," he asked, with wide-eyed curiosity.

"No!" She stepped back to slam the door, keeping her glare focused on him.

With a small nudge of his telekinesis, the door refused to budge. Corey sensed the woman surprise, but covered it well. Her expression never changed from the scowl she wore since opening the door.

"But my friend here," Corey said, making a casual gesture over his shoulder at Darryl as he and Mitch approached, "is allowed in."

"It's closed!" she shouted. She grabbed the door with both hands and threw her weight behind it in another attempt to slam it shut in his face. Her face reddened at the exertion, but it wouldn't yield an inch.

"Perhaps we should come back later," Corey said, nonplussed to his companions. As they turned to retrace their steps back to the pickup, he relinquished his power on the door, but slowly. Behind him, he could hear the woman grunting as she thrust and shoved against the wood. Then Corey let go.

The door slammed shut, and the entire house shuddered.

* * * *

Darryl dropped Corey off at the police station, and left with Mitch to start his training. Chief Stewart was in a better mood and glad to discuss the case, despite the lack of any developments. The two young victims remained unidentified and the motive of their deaths still elusive. An early report from the forensic team indicated similar conditions with both victims.

"I've been reviewing the files from all the cases you've uncovered for hours now," the chief said, looking up from a stack of printouts. "It seems that the FBI will have to be called in since this crosses state lines. A lot of them."

"So the murders are linked in your opinion?" It could have been taken as a challenge but Chief Stewart was not offended. He knew Corey was asking for corroboration.

"Yes," he propped his elbows on the desk and rubbed his eyes. "The DNA results link the locations but not all of the murders."

"How so?" Corey took a seat with a puzzled expression on his face.

"Most of the victims, at least one from each location, had the semen of the same person on them or in them. The rest of the guys had multiple partners because of the number of DNA markers present in the samples from those cases."

"But the markers that came from the one person are in the DNA results with multiple markers?"

"Exactly. And there's more." Stewart arranged a stack of photos into neatly placed lines. Corey moved around behind the desk for a better look. All were

pictures of wounds found on the victims; rope burns, slashes and other markings indicative of long-term leather wear. He grimaced slightly at the gruesome photos but watched as Chief Stewart pointed out the similar aspects of the crimes. Each victim had been tied up in almost the exact same manner, with ropes at the ankles, knees, wrists and around the chest pinning the upper arms to the sides. Autopsy reports and pictures indicated that they had been gagged as well, from bruising and saliva patterns found in the corner of the mouth. The freshest wounds on the buttocks, made just prior to death, were made with a cane.

"Something that can easily be stowed in a checked suitcase at the airport," Corey mused. "It'd be risky to try transporting floggers or paddles in case your luggage gets searched," he added in response to Stewart's questioning look. He told the chief of the dungeon in the house he'd just left. "Especially when dungeons like the one I saw today supply those items for visitors."

"I'll get a warrant to search the premises," the chief said, setting his jaw and reaching for the phone on his desk.

Corey shook his head. "We need to hold off. There's no one there right now except the attack lesbian guarding the place. I doubt we'd find anything of importance, anyway."

Chief Stewart sighed in frustration. "It'll be a few more days before the DNA results from these two murders here in Provincetown will be available," he said. "Tonight could be our last chance to find him before he disappears again. Any ideas to catch him?"

Corey nodded. He shared with the chief what he had in mind, but omitted one major detail. He planned to offer himself up as bait to set a trap.

Chapter Nine

Darryl parked his truck in the first available spot along the road leading to the house with the mysterious dungeon. Nearly a dozen other vehicles crowded the narrow lane, giving the sense this place was a little well known than some might think. Regardless, Corey intended to find out.

He and Mitch exited the vehicle, both dressed in nothing more than leather shorts and a band around their right biceps. Darryl had resumed his Master persona, dressed in chaps, a black jock strap and the same leather band around his left arm. He wore his cap low, shielding his eyes, though his vest did little to cover his enormous chest.

As they approached, Corey unleashed his telepathy.

Neither of his companions knew what could happen, and that was just as well. Mitch appeared euphoric. He'd found a true Master to trust, ready to do anything Darryl commanded.

Corey sensed the black man's thoughts. Though happy with his new slave, he felt inconvenienced by a trip back to this particular dungeon. He didn't consider the place conducive to his Slave's training, but knew better than to refuse Corey, the man who so easily took control of him the night before.

Lights lit up the house though no sound filtered out. Corey felt an overwhelming surge of ecstasy from inside. The leather-clad man answering Darryl's knock gave them a cursory glance without speaking. He stepped aside just when Corey expected to be heading back to the truck.

Darryl brushed by him with a cockiness that dared anyone to challenge him. Mitch followed, ignoring the look of confusion and disgust from the guardian. Yet, the greeter beamed at Corey with a wink, and tweaked his nipple as he stepped past.

"Hey!" Darryl snapped. In two strides, he stepped in front of the greeter until their noses almost touched. "You touched my Slave, boy!" He spat as he spoke, like a drill sergeant, muscles flexed and fists clenched. All color drained from the man's face. "Did I give you permission to fuck with my Slave?" His voice increased in volume and irritation.

"No, sir," he responded, his voice quivering. "I'm sorry, sir." He looked to the floor as though he wished he could crawl under a chair.

Darryl stared him down with an icy gaze before stalking away. Corey sensed Mitch's delirious ecstasy at the machismo of his Master.

Leaving the doorman trembling in terror, they followed Darryl through the house to a door leading into the basement.

Instead of hearing moans of pleasure like the night before, the cries of pain and agony resonated in Corey's ears. Louder cracks of whips and paddles echoed off the walls of the staircase that descended into the depths of the basement.

Stepping into the room, Corey surveyed the exhibition before him. He found

it oddly erotic although he felt revulsion emanating from Darryl, and amusement from Mitch. The scene looked far more brutal than the setting he'd visited the previous night. Men were tied in positions that made him cringe. Whips and spiked paddles broke the skin of several Slaves' backs and buttocks. The extreme pain elicited levels of ecstasy and pleasure like nothing Corey had ever sensed before. Bulging muscles of arms wielding the whips, and the physiques restrained by ropes and leather ignited a fire in his loins, stirring subdued cravings buried deep in his sexual psyche. It drew him in, enveloping him in an essence of bliss and desire unknown to him.

Few men noticed their arrival, except a man at the opposite end of the room under the wooden gallows Corey had seen earlier. Though not as muscular as Darryl, the leather harness he wore stretched taut across a barrel chest. A light covering of blond hair graced his curves and the lines of a tanned torso. A navy blue jock with 'SFPD' embroidered onto the waistband housed a cock that stretched the elastic fabric in front to its limit. His shaved head gleamed in the dim light as he grinned at him through a dark mustache and goatee, speckled with gray streaks. Black eyes locked with Corey's, drawing him down into their sensual depths. The man exuded masculinity that he hadn't felt even with Darryl.

As the man beckoned to him, Corey took a hesitant step forward. He felt entranced by the mesmerizing, erotic stare, and his cock responded, pushing against his leather shorts, begging for release. He noted a similar response in the man's jockstrap. He moved closer until within arm's reach.

"Hey, boy." The Master greeted him in a low, gravelly voice. The tone of his words slithered deliciously in his ears, crude, yet sensuous, bathing him in pleasure.

"Hello, Master," he whispered.

"Do you need to be punished, boy? Does Master Greg have to teach you some discipline?" He rubbed Corey's shoulder with one hand while stroking the front of his jockstrap with the other. "Remove your clothes, boy." He commanded.

With quick movements, Corey let his leather shorts drop to the ground. His cock, freed at last, sprang forward with eagerness.

"Nice dick, boy."

"Thank you, sir."

Pressed forward by the hardness of the Master's manhood, the soft fabric of the jockstrap scratched at his flesh with delightful abrasiveness. Hands grabbed his arms and looped rope around them, tying his wrists behind his back. Another rope encircled his chest, securing his upper arms to his torso. His engorged cock ached to be touched.

Corey glanced over his shoulder as the Master bound his ankles and then his knees with a final piece of rope. He saw Darryl and Mitch completely engrossed in an amazing demonstration of fire play on the opposite side of the dungeon.

"Open up, boy." Master Greg reached behind and held a rolled up bandanna in front of his face.

"What about my safe word, sir?" Corey asked. "If I'm gagged, I won't be able to say it."

Greg softly chuckled. "You don't need a safe word. Boys who need punishing don't get to use safe words." He stuffed the bandanna into his mouth, and tied it into a tight knot behind his head. "You've been bad, boy." His tone took on a more sinister turn, his words raw and direct. "I will be your punisher now."

Corey waited, fully aroused. The tables were now turned on him, and he reveled in the feeling of being dominated as much as he'd felt last night topping Master Darryl. Helplessness proved just as powerful as control. His cock stood rigid, the surging pressure painful, yet exhilarating.

A sharp sting of excruciating pain seared across his ass. Corey grimaced in agony, and ecstasy. Before he could respond, Master Greg struck him again.

"What's the matter, boy?" Greg sneered. "Can't take a little caning? Too bad." He struck several more times while Corey cried out in pain, muffled sounds mixed with moans of pleasure slipping through the gag. His body shuddered in the throes powerful sensations coursing through his muscles.

While Greg continued his torture, his mind reeled in erotic waves of gratification. He felt a drop of liquid slide down his ass. Master had stopped the lashing. He rubbed a rough hand over Corey's butt that burned from the punishment, and explored the open wound, wiping his finger in the blood that formed.

"Still hard, boy! I guess you like being punished."

Corey heard sounds of Greg stripping off his jockstrap. He then slapped at his legs with a cock that felt like the size of a baseball bat, and just as hard.

"Do you want more, boy?"

He sensed Greg approaching ecstasy, and the sensation enhanced his own pleasure. He didn't know how much more pain he could endure, no matter how erotic. He shook his head.

"That's too bad, boy. Master Greg wants to cum."

Desires and cravings laced his words, the whispering voice heightening his sense of helplessness and sensuality. A loop of rope passed over his head, tightening around his neck. Greg whispered in his ear again. "I was your punisher, boy. Now, I'm your executioner. You want to please Master Greg, don't you?"

The rope constricted even further, pulling him up by the neck, biting deep into his skin. As pain surged through him like electric currents, and discomfort increased, he welcomed the surging fire in his loins, the searing heat boiling in his balls.

Breathing became difficult, and his throat squeezed shut as the noose pulled higher. His heels rose, then his toes, until he swung freely. Moans, loud and

guttural, escaped Master Greg as he reached climax without touching his cock.

Corey struggled to suck in air. With his own orgasm close, he twitched and writhed on the rope. Warm liquid squirted onto his thighs.

“Corey!”

Mitch’s alarm pierced the mist and shadows fogging his mind, pushing aside the waves of ecstasy. The powerful emotion and the horror of the moment snapped Corey back to reality. With profound, focused thought, he sliced through the ropes using his telekinesis, and fell to the floor, gasping for breath.

Darryl and Mitch rushed to his side. Master Greg backed away, but Darryl blocked his escape. Despite their similar size, Greg withered under the black man’s furious gaze.

Mitch helped him to his feet. Corey coughed and gasped, trying to clear his mind of submission and dominance. Using the same techniques he’d used on Darryl, he forced Greg into obedience. Within seconds, and with Darryl’s assistance, he tied him securely with ropes to a bench built to a perfect height, placing his ass at the level of their dicks. Greg’s eyes grew wide with fear, and excitement, just as Darryl’s had the night before.

Corey slammed his raging cock, still rigid and aching, into Greg’s ass, thrusting in and out with vengeance. Darryl shoved his dick down the man’s throat.

Their captive squirmed and tried to cry out, but the restraints prevented any plea for mercy. Darryl’s monster cock engorged his mouth, almost suffocating him. They switched positions, after a while and continued their use of the master.

Mitch stood by taking in the wonder with wide-eyed excitement. Corey knew the man had never been a witness to such a display of BDSM in his entire life.

The physical contact caused Corey’s powers to flood his brain with images and visions of multiple scenes like the one he’d just experienced. He saw Greg’s fascination with death and the effect it had on him. He watched images as the desire grew to an obsession, and one Greg could not resist. Two vaguely familiar faces flashed through his mind—the murdered victims. He was so close to cumming, but in order to protect himself from the cruel obscenities of the man’s recollections, Corey raised impenetrable mental shields so that Greg’s memories of the two men he’d murdered wouldn’t affect the swells of pleasure racing through him. He grunted, and emptied inside the Master. He remained inside Greg, panting and sweating from the angry exertion, while Darryl exploded in the master’s mouth.

With his anger spent, Corey pulled his shorts back on and left their prisoner in the capable hands of Master Darryl. He knew that he would be sure that Greg stayed where he was until Chief Stewart arrived. As he exited, he noted that throughout the entire ordeal, the other men in the dungeon barely noticed the encounter.

Epilogue

The cool dryness of central Oklahoma was a dramatic change from the New England coast. Corey looked out the patio door at the fading sunlight. The wounds on his butt had almost healed, but mental ones remained.

A short man with long, blond hair pulled into a ponytail walked up behind, and handed him a bottle of beer. Corey glanced over Ian's gymnastic build with an approving eye, but ripped his gaze away.

"It's okay, Corey." Ian said, his tone laced heavy with concern.

"No, it's not okay," he protested. "That's how I got into this shit in the first place."

"How can you expect to conquer this and move on if you keep beating yourself up for everything?"

He turned back to his friend. "Thanks for letting me hang out here for a few days."

"Not a problem, Corey. Stay as long as you need." Ian's voice had a soothing cadence.

He smiled. Ian's use of the word 'need' instead of 'like' revealed his concern and worry. "The governor of Massachusetts gave me permission to take two weeks off. He understands the importance of getting away."

"You didn't tell him all the details, did you?"

"No way. Right now, you're the only one who knows how badly this incident freaked me out."

"What about Ethan?"

Corey knew this subject needed to be addressed, even though it was painful. His partner hadn't taken the details well. Upon finding out that he'd sex with two other men, and was almost killed, Ethan had been stunned, shocked and mortified. Corey accepted his suggestion of a brief separation and left him at their home in Boston to stay with Ian, an Oklahoma psionic detective, like himself. Buttocks and necks had not suffered nearly as much as egos or trusts.

Corey shrugged and heaved out a heavy sigh. Ian gestured to some chairs in the living room after he didn't speak for a few seconds. "I don't know what to say to him." He sat with care, as the cuts on his butt still stung. "I don't even know what to say to myself."

"What do you mean?"

"I'm so ashamed to think that I was turned on by those situations." His voice rose to a shout as a roller coaster of emotions took their toll. "Doesn't that make me a freak? The thing that concerns me most is how it almost got me killed."

Ian's features remained unreadable to him. Corey had struggled with this new realization, a side of himself he was too embarrassed to face.

"You zoned out, Corey. Something that all of us have done," Ian reassured. "This guy, Mitch...you said that his emotions were always full-throttle open. Do you think that might have had an affect on you? Think about it. You didn't have

these extreme erotic feelings until after you met him.”

He sat in silence as he mulled it over. “You may be right. I’ve never been turned on by dominating someone or being completely helpless.” He stopped himself before saying ‘or death’. It was still too scary. He shuddered at the memories.

Ian set his bottle down. He pulled Corey toward him and wrapped arms around his body, engulfing him in warmth and trust.

For the first time in years, Corey broke down and wept.

About the Author

Alex Morgan was born and raised in western Oklahoma where he attended college and majored in chemistry and mathematics. Later, he moved to the Dallas area where he obtained his master's degree and then a doctorate in analytical chemistry. He now lives and works in the Washington, DC area. He is an avid reader, particularly mysteries, since being introduced to the Hardy Boys in grade school. After reading his first Agatha Christie novel, *Murder on the Orient Express*, in junior high, mysteries have been one of his biggest enjoyments. He has always enjoyed reading comic books and loves the super-hero genre just as much.

Combining these two concepts, he has written two mystery novels prior to "Murder in Provincetown", in which he introduced gay, paranormal sleuth Corey Shaw. He is also the author of several gay erotica short stories published by loveyoudivine Alterotica.

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