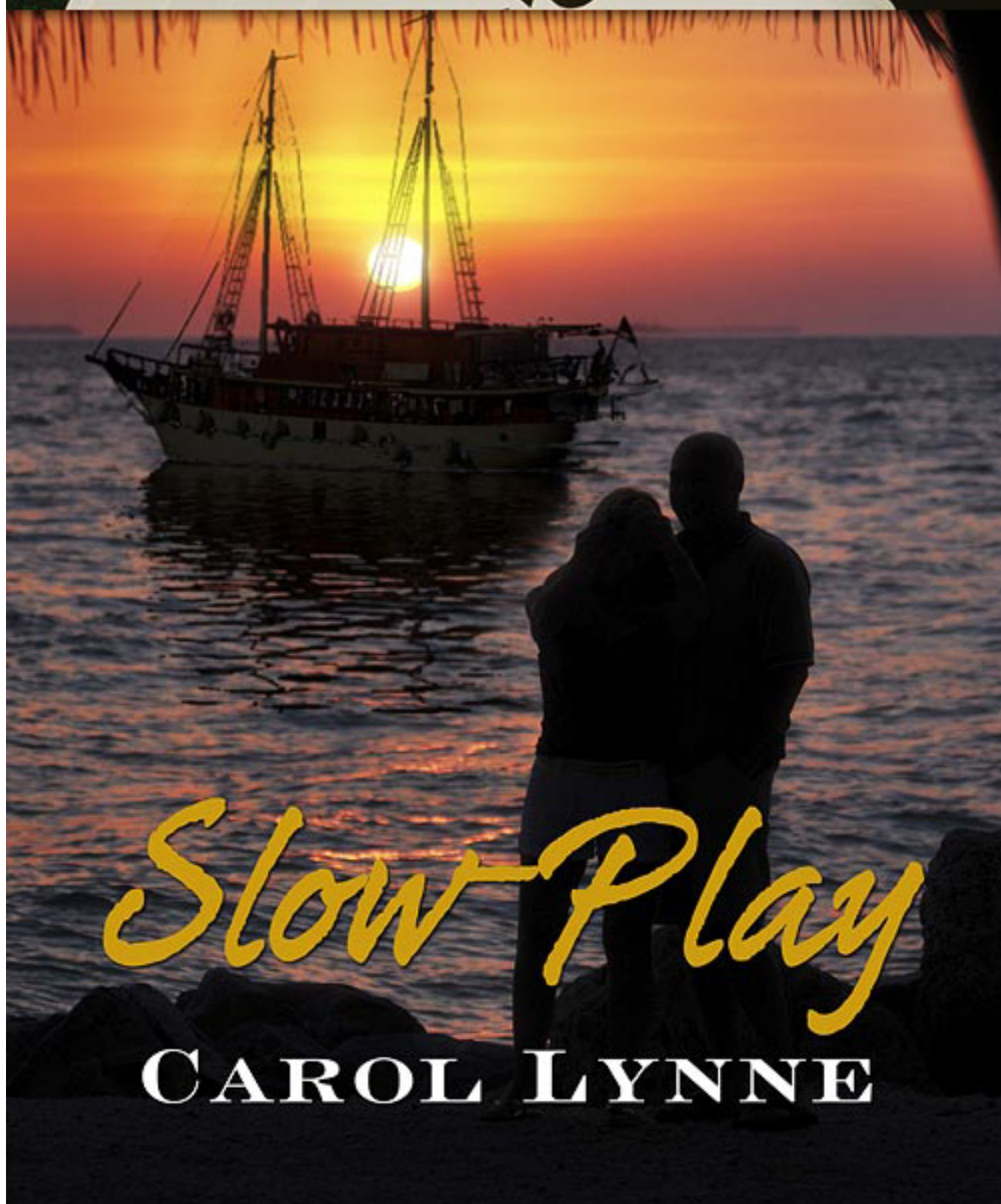




POKER NIGHT



Slow Play

CAROL LYNNE

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Slow-Play

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Warning: This book contains sexually explicit content which is only suitable for mature readers. This story has been rated *Total-e-burning*.

Poker Night

SLOW-PLAY

Carol Lynne

Dedication

Thanks to everyone in my Carol Lynne yahoo group. You make me smile every morning, especially Silver and her Good Moaning emails.

Trademarks Acknowledgement

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Grand Banks Trawler: Grand Banks Yachts, LTD.
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Chapter One

"Is this what I pay you to do?"

From his position on the lounge chair, Bobby Quinn opened his eyes and stared up at the silhouette of his brother Brad. God he hated the sonofabitch. "I'm not out on a charter, so you aren't paying me at all."

"So why aren't you out busting your balls to get a charter?"

Bobby sat up and gestured towards the virtually empty marina. "It's Wednesday. Do you see a lot of tourists around?"

Brad made that little sound in his throat Bobby hated. "Could be something to do with the location, or maybe I need to find a captain who's willing to get out and drum up business."

Standing, Bobby's hands clenched into fists. "You threatening me? Your own brother?"

Brad stuck his hands in his designer suit pockets and shrugged. "Half-brother. Besides, it's business."

Bobby knew Brad was lying. It wasn't business at all. Since the day he'd been born, Brad had hated his guts. Was it his fault their mutual father had fucked his secretary and then divorced his wife when his mistress, aka Bobby's mother, turned up pregnant?

From the way Brad treated him, Bobby guessed his half-brother's answer to the question would be a resounding yes. "And just where am I supposed to find people who can afford the prices you're charging for a day out on the ocean?"

Brad shrugged again in that 'I can't be bothered with details' way he had. "That's your problem."

"Is there anything else you need?" Bobby asked, ready for the conversation to be over.

Brad walked around the 1970 Grand Banks trawler. "Nope. Just checking up on my investment, making sure you're doing the required upkeep on her."

"Fuck you," he seethed.

Bobby had spent eight years, and every penny he had, restoring the fifty-foot trawler back to its original glory, only to have Brad swoop in and buy it from the bank when he missed a couple of payments. He knew the only reason his brother had done it was to piss

him off. Bobby was left with no choice but to work for Brad in order to care for the boat he'd come to love. *The Gypsy* meant everything to him, and Brad knew it.

"What about your quarters? Are you keeping them clean like I instructed?" Brad asked.

Two seconds away from pushing him into the Pacific Ocean, Bobby climbed down to the main deck and across the gang plank. He heard Brad yelling after him, but he didn't dare turn around.

Bobby stormed his way towards the parking lot and hopped into his rusted 1983 Jeep. He turned off Capistrano Road onto Highway One and headed north. Dammit. He knew Brad would try to get him to move the boat closer to San Francisco, but the bay wasn't where he wanted to be. He liked the open waters of the Pacific, and he sure as hell liked the people of Pillar Point better than the snobs he'd run into in San Francisco.

He had no idea where he was going, until he arrived at Baker Construction. Pulling to a stop, he waved at Bill, the guard on duty, who opened the heavy steel gate to let him pass. He was lucky Kent had room at the back of the lot for him to store his boat. He wove in and out of the various pieces of construction equipment and supplies, until he reached *My Second Chance*.

A 1966 Pacemaker 53' Flush Deck yacht, *My Second Chance* was no where near ocean-worthy. Bobby still had several years, and more than a few thousand dollars, before that particular dream would become a reality.

He parked beside the make-shift scaffolding he and his buddies had erected to hold the old girl upright, and climbed the ladder. Once aboard, Bobby went below deck and looked around. He hadn't done nearly enough work to the old yacht in the two years he'd had her. Of course he knew the reason. He'd had his heart broken when he'd lost *The Gypsy*.

Thinking the emptiness could be replaced, he'd saved his money and purchased *My Second Chance*. As he looked around the salon he realised it hadn't happened. Hell, maybe he should just sell it?

Living and working almost an hour away from where the boat was stored didn't give him enough time to work on it. Bobby picked up his sanding block and began to work on a small section of the woodwork.

Two hours later, he set the block down and picked up a piece of cheesecloth, running it over the smooth mahogany. He felt better than he had in a week. Getting to his feet, he sat in the cracked leather chair and surveyed what he'd managed to accomplish. He knew restoring

the interior of the yacht wouldn't get her into the water any faster, but then he didn't have the money to put her into the ocean anyway.

As he studied the small cabin, he took inventory of everything yet to be done. It was liveable the way it was, but liveable had never been good enough before. What was the point of restoring, if you didn't do it right.

His cell phone rang, bringing him out of his thoughts. Bobby reached into his shorts' pocket and looked at the display.

"Hey," he answered.

"Hey, buddy. Eric wanted me to call and make sure everything was still set for Dr. Peters' cruise?" Zac asked.

"Far as I know. Of course, I might not have a job in the morning."

"Shit. Brad?"

"Yeah. Same old, same old."

"He's such an asshole."

Bobby agreed wholeheartedly. "Unfortunately, unless I wanna find another job and place to live, I'm kinda stuck dealing with his bullshit."

Bobby's gaze took in the yacht's interior once again. He knew if it came down to it, living aboard *My Second Chance* was an option, but the thought of completely abandoning *The Gypsy* made him ill.

"Eric's working late at the hospital. You feel like grabbing a bite?"

"I don't know. I'm at Kent's working on the boat, and I've got about an inch of sawdust in my hair."

"Cool. I'll grab some burgers and join you. I haven't been out there since Eric and I met."

Bobby chuckled. "Yeah, well, don't expect to see a lot of changes. I've been too busy lately to get up here very often."

"Don't worry. I won't bust your balls too bad. See ya in about an hour."

Bobby hung up and tossed the phone onto one of the built-in shelves. If he worked his ass off for the next hour, maybe he wouldn't be quite so embarrassed to have Zac see the minimal progress he'd made.

Pulling into his circular drive, Dr. Jules Peters was ecstatic to see the cardboard box on his front steps. Finally.

With his 1967 Jaguar idling, he jumped out and snagged the box from the steps before pulling around to the garage. He pushed the remote to the bay closest to the house and drove inside.

Tearing open the plane brown box, he lifted out the prize he'd searched almost eight months for. Giving the shiny chrome and glass headlight a kiss, he carried it over to the black 1956 Jaguar XK140 he'd been restoring for the past seven years.

Jules shrugged out of his dress shirt and began adding the final piece to the jigsaw puzzle that had occupied much of his spare time.

Once the headlight was in and working, he stepped back and studied the classic car. "Breathtaking," he whispered.

His stomach growled, reminding him he'd missed lunch and now dinner. Jules glanced at the clock on the wall. *Damn*. It was nearly nine. He'd have to throw together an egg sandwich and eat while he dictated the day's files he'd brought home with him.

Picking up his shirt and briefcase, he unlocked the door leading into the kitchen. Stepping inside his house, Jules was once again reminded how lonely his personal life was. Over six thousand square feet of living space, and no one but him to fill it, could easily make a guy lonely.

Tossing the briefcase onto the kitchen table, he set about making a quick bite to eat. As he scrambled the eggs for his sandwich, he kept thinking about the shiny black car in his garage. He still couldn't believe the Jag was finished after all the years he'd put into it. When he'd first found the vintage masterpiece, it had been anything but. He'd purchased it for a song, and was grateful he had another project to keep his mind occupied.

Now it was complete, he'd have to look for something else. Too much time to think generally dropped his spirits like a lead weight on the end of a fishing line.

He thought about the afternoon cruise he was supposed to indulge in the next day. It wasn't that he was ungrateful that Eric and Zac had been kind enough to give him the gift, his heart just wasn't in it. How much fun could riding around in a boat be, especially when he had no one to share it with?

As usual, his thoughts slipped to Morgan. His partner had been killed a little over fifteen years earlier. Jules had tried on several occasions to get back into the dating game, but no matter how much he tried, he compared everyone to his first and only love.

He took the eggs off the stove and popped a couple of pieces of bread into the toaster. No sense dwelling on the past, it only made the nights longer.

* * * *

Jules was on his way home from taking his newly completed pride and joy for a test drive, when his cell phone rang. He didn't even need to look at the caller ID to know who it was. No one ever really called but the hospital, especially on one of his rare days off.

"Dr. Peters," he answered.

"Hi, Dr. Peters. This is Bobby Quinn, captain of *The Gypsy*? I hope I'm not bothering you."

The smooth, but seemingly troubled voice in his ear, sent prickles along the back of Jules' neck. "I'm sorry, can you hold on a moment?"

"Sure."

Jules pulled into his drive and parked in front of the house. "Okay, sorry about that."

"No problem. The reason I'm calling is to let you know I'll need to reschedule your cruise this afternoon. The boat's owner wants *The Gypsy* relocated to the bay area, so a cruise won't be much fun until I can get her settled in."

Jules started to answer, but Bobby cut him off with an afterthought. "Unless of course, you feel like an evening cruise around the bay? I should have her ready to go by seven at the latest."

Jules quickly went through his schedule for the next day. He needed to be at the hospital by six a.m., but he doubted an evening cruise would keep him out late. Besides, he'd spent all morning psyching himself up for the considerate gift Eric and Zac had given him. Jules figured he might as well get it over with. He knew it wouldn't be any easier if they rescheduled.

"An evening cruise sounds fine if you don't mind. Where shall I meet you?"

Bobby gave him the name of the new marina. "I'm not sure yet where *The Gypsy* will be anchored, so I'll meet you out front of the clubhouse."

"Sounds fine. I'll see you at seven."

Jules hung up and pulled the Jaguar into the garage. His gaze wandered to the covered car in the first bay. How long had it been since he'd even uncovered Morgan's car? Hell, he knew he hadn't even driven it on the streets for more than eight years. Jules tried to make it a habit to at least start it three or four times a year, but that was it. After all the work he'd put into restoring it after the wreck, he couldn't bring himself to drive it, or sell it. No, selling the 1978 Firebird was out of the question.

Opening the trunk of the Jaguar, he removed the custom made soft cover and put his newest baby to sleep. With his cruise being postponed for several hours, he had time to search the internet for his newest time killer.

Grabbing a beer from the fridge, Jules entered his cavernous office and powered up his computer. His PC, like everything in his house, was top of the line, though he seldom used it.

Skimming through the classifieds, he spotted what he was looking for. Pulling up a picture of a 1952 Jaguar XK120 Roadster, Jules whistled. He enlarged the photo to study the repairs needed. The red leather interior was completely trashed. Jules guessed the owner had stored the vintage beauty in a barn or other shed-like structure. Rust on the side panels had eaten large holes in the body of the car, but that didn't bother him. At least the front grill and headlights seemed to be intact. Jules knew from experience those were the kinds of items that were hard to track down.

The price was a little steep, but he thought he could get the owner down a couple thousand. He compared the money he'd spend on the project to buying a new car. Most men in his financial position bought at least one new car every year. The last vehicle he'd purchased had been the Jag he'd just finished, and that was some eight years or so ago.

Before he could talk himself out of it, he shot an email off to the owner for more information. He continued to surf the ads as he drank two more bottles of beer.

At five-thirty, he shut down the computer and hopped into the shower. He hadn't done anything to get the least bit dirty, but he hoped a nice cool shower would wake him up a bit.

Drying off, he considered backing out of the whole thing. If he'd thought an afternoon cruise would be depressing, he suddenly realised going out on the water in the evening would be even worse. *Shit.*

On his way to the marina that Brad had handpicked, Bobby called Zac.

"Hello," Zac answered.

"Hey. Thought I'd call and give Eric a heads-up that I won't be at Pillar Point if he wants to drop off that picnic basket he'd talked about."

"Why, did you head out early?" Zac asked.

"No. I did a lot of soul searching after you left last night."

"Uh oh."

"Yeah, well, I decided to play it Brad's way. At least until I can get my own boat up and running. I realised I wasn't going to be able to do that while living and working so far away."

"So what're you telling me?"

"That I agreed to move *The Gypsy* to the bay area. I'm gonna take my stuff to *My Second Chance* and live there. I think it'll give me a lot more time to work on her."

Zac didn't say anything. Bobby swapped the phone to his other ear. Finally, Zac cleared his throat. "What'll you do when you finish *My Second Chance*?"

"Tell Brad to shove the job up his ass." It was a dream of Bobby's to put his fuckwad of a brother in his place.

"And you'll just walk away from *The Gypsy*?" Zac asked.

Bobby glanced around him. "It's killing me to be on her every day and know she's not mine. I think a clean break is what I need to move on."

"Sorry, man. That sucks."

"Yeah, but I think I'm making the right decision."

Bobby didn't want to tell Zac about the ultimatum Brad had laid down earlier that morning. Shape up or ship out had been Brad's answer to their argument the previous day. Bobby needed the money he'd earn from Brad if he was going to finish his own boat, so he didn't have much choice, but the whole situation left him feeling a bit...adrift.

"I'm getting ready to head under the bridge, so I'll have to talk to you later," Bobby informed his best friend.

"What should I tell Eric to do about the picnic basket?"

"Don't worry. I'll take care of it," he assured Zac.

"Thanks. Call if you need anything."

He slipped the phone into his pocket and thought about the evening cruise. Although both Zac and Eric spoke highly of Jules Peters, Bobby withheld judgement. He wasn't easily impressed, even less so with wealthy people. He tried to figure out what he could afford to feed the good doctor that would be suitable.

Most cruises on *The Gypsy* were catered affairs, but then for the price Brad charged per hour for the trawler's rental, he wouldn't expect anything less. Bobby's favourite groups to take out were the family reunions, or college buddies getting together for the weekend. At least those people knew how to drink normal beer and eat regular food. But those groups were usually booked by him, and he hadn't been motivated lately to drum up business for Brad.

By the time he reached the marina, his mood was so soured he almost felt sorry for Jules Peters, and he still had to come up with something to feed the man. He'd grab a bottle of mid-priced champagne, the drink of the wealthy, but no way could he afford anything like caviar or smoked salmon. Hell, he'd be lucky to afford a good can of tuna fish.

He spotted Brad standing in front of one of the slips with his hands in his suit pockets. *Fuck. Could my day get any worse?*

Chapter Two

Bobby watched as a shiny black Jaguar pulled into the parking lot. He whistled, thinking of the money it would cost to even maintain such a vehicle. A man dressed in khaki slacks and a sports shirt climbed out of the car and began walking his way.

He had to admit his cock did a little thump against the front of his jeans. Rich or poor, the man was hot as hell. It was easy to imagine the guy strolling into the club to meet his fellow yacht buddies. Bobby bet the guy had one of those wives who'd been stretched and pulled until she could no longer close her eyes.

Chuckling to himself, he was surprised when the fine piece of upper crust walked up to him.

"Captain Quinn?"

Captain? No one ever called him that. "Uh, yeah, I'm Bobby Quinn."

"Nice to meet you, I'm Jules Peters."

Bobby's cock lengthened further. This was Dr. Peters? It didn't help the situation any knowing the man was gay. *Damn, Zac.* Was his friend trying to play matchmaker?

"I hope I'm not too late. I had trouble with the car on the way over."

Bobby realised Jules had his hand extended. "Oh, sorry, no you're fine."

He gestured towards the Jaguar. "Beautiful car."

Jules stuck his hands in his pockets, his gaze moving back towards his car. "Yeah. I thought I was finished working on it, but it kept dying on me on the drive over."

Bobby glanced at Jules' hands. No way had those clean hands ever done any engine work. He assumed Jules must be referring to his mechanic. Deciding to change the subject, he pointed behind him. "You ready?"

"Sure," Jules said, adjusting his mirrored sunglasses.

Bobby led the way to *The Gypsy*, allowing Jules to climb the gangplank first. Customer service was part of his job. It had absolutely nothing to do with wanting a peek at the man's ass. *Yeah, you keep telling yourself that.*

"Wow, great trawler," Jules admired, looking around the deck.

Bobby was impressed. Most people didn't know a trawler from a pontoon. "Thanks. I restored her myself."

"Oh, so it's your boat?" Jules asked.

"No," Bobby clipped, going below to get the wine. He didn't know why he let the question bother him so much. He'd been asked the same question on almost every charter he'd taken out.

"Make yourself comfortable. I'll just be a moment," he called up to Jules.

After arranging some miscellaneous fruits and cheeses on a tray, he opened the bottle of wine he'd decided on, the fact that the wine had been on sale had nothing to do with it. *Yeah right.*

Carrying the tray up the steep staircase, Bobby set it on a table. He didn't immediately see Jules and turned in a circle until he spotted him. With his hands still in his pockets, the man stood gazing out at the sunset, the bay breeze riffling his short silver hair.

Bobby suddenly wished he had a camera in his hand. The way the setting sun bathed Jules in colour was breathtaking. "I hope wine is okay? Eric didn't tell me what you liked to drink."

Jules jumped a little and turned towards Bobby. "That's fine. I usually drink beer, but I've been known to enjoy a good glass of wine from time to time."

Bobby poured a glass and held it out. Jules seemed to hesitate before reaching for his drink. Was it Bobby's imagination or did Jules take extra care not to touch him?

Jules lifted the glass to his mouth just as the cell phone attached to his waistband began to ring. Jules seemed startled by the intrusion and almost spilled his wine.

What the hell had the guy so jumpy? Bobby wondered.

"Sorry, I have to take this." Jules set the glass down and unclipped the phone.

"Dr. Peters," Jules answered, walking away from Bobby.

Bobby couldn't hear much of the conversation, but from what he did make out, he was glad he hadn't started the boat.

Jules shut the phone and returned it to its case. "Sorry. There's been a massive pileup on the 280. The hospital needs all the help they can get."

Jules shrugged. "The life of a doctor."

"I understand."

Jules glanced down at the big tray of food. "I'm sorry to put you to so much trouble for nothing."

Bobby waved Dr. Peters' concerns away and dug out a business card from his wallet. "Call me when you wanna reschedule."

Jules wiped his hand on his pants before taking the small piece of paper from Bobby. "I appreciate that. Will you still get paid if I leave? I mean, I don't know if I'm supposed to give you a tip or what."

Dr. Peters ran his hand over the back of his neck. "I'm making an ass out of myself, aren't I? It's been awhile since I did anything but work on cars. I'm afraid my social skills leave a lot to be desired."

Bobby could see the man struggling, so he decided to give him a break. Yeah, it sucked that he wouldn't get paid, but there were worse things in life. "Don't worry about it. Really. Just give me a shout when you get a free minute to take a cruise."

After several moments, Jules nodded. "Okay, well, I'd better get going. I just hope my car gets me across town."

Bobby knew in his gut he was going to regret it, but he couldn't help but to offer. "I could give you a lift. As you can see, I don't have much else to keep me busy."

He thought Jules was about to take him up on his offer, but then Bobby made the biggest mistake of the day. He dropped his hand and without thinking brushed the front of his jeans. Jules gaze automatically followed the movement, his eyes going wide at the erection still pressing against Bobby's fly. *Fuck.*

"That's okay. I'll keep my fingers crossed that it makes it back to the house and just switch cars. I'd hate to leave it overnight in a parking lot anyway."

Bobby wanted to crawl under the table beside him. "Okay, thought I'd offer. If you find yourself stalled somewhere, you've got my number."

He waved as Jules left. Zac was going to kill him. Bobby wondered if Jules would tell Eric what a perv Zac's friend was. Flopping down into a chair, he plucked a grape from the tray and popped it into his mouth.

Maybe he'd pack everything up and start moving his stuff over to his boat. *Shit.* He remembered he didn't even have a mattress. Although his berth was one of the few things he'd finished, he'd never bothered with bedding.

Bobby drummed his fingers on the table as he sipped the glass of wine. He could sit here, get sauced and buy a mattress in the morning, or he could put the food away and run to the store.

Studying the pristine marina with all its big sailboats and yachts, Bobby suddenly wanted out. This was Brad's world, not his.

Decision made, he corked the bottle of wine and put the fruit into small plastic bags. Spending another night on *The Gypsy* was no longer an option and Bobby knew it.

* * * *

By the time Jules made it to his car, he was breathing heavy. It wasn't the exertion of crossing the parking lot, it was the attraction he felt for Bobby. Not since Morgan had he been so physically turned on by someone.

Damn. If only he was fifteen years younger. Men like Bobby enjoyed playing, but rarely did he find one who was seriously looking for a boyfriend. It took several tries and several prayers to get the Jag started, but eventually the engine came to life. He knew what the problem was and it was actually an easy fix, but he didn't have the time or the tools at the moment.

Jules made a mental note to buy small toolboxes for each of his cars. He had one in the Jaguar he normally drove, but hadn't thought he'd need one in the show piece he was currently driving.

Pulling out of the parking lot, Jules thoughts drifted back to Bobby. He knew the guy was either attracted to him or perpetually horny. No way could the hard shaft trapped behind those jeans mean anything else. *God, but he's so young.*

Three blocks from the marina, the Jag started to sputter. Jules managed to get the car to the right hand side of the road before it died. Turning off the engine, he rested his head on the back of the seat. *What now?*

Calling a cab wasn't a problem, but no way could he leave a hundred-thousand dollar car on the side of the road. Unclipping his cell phone from his waistband, Jules called the hospital to tell them he'd be late.

He was just about to call for a tow-truck when an old Jeep pulled up behind him.

"Trouble?"

Jules closed his eyes and took a deep breath. When he opened them, Bobby's hands were resting on the driver's door. "Yeah. I was just about to call for a tow."

"Ooh, I wouldn't even trust my Jeep to a tow driver around here. Can I make another suggestion?"

"I'm all ears," Jules replied, trying his best not to look at the gorgeous man beside him.

"Let me call my friends. We can push your car into one of these parking lots and see if we can't get her running."

Jules nodded. "I'd appreciate that. I'm pretty sure it's the sparkplugs. If I had the time, it wouldn't be a problem to swap them out, but every minute I'm here, I know someone in the ER isn't getting my care."

Bobby pulled out his cell phone and started calling his friends, while Jules contacted the hospital once more. He was informed that several of the injured had been rerouted to another hospital. Jules was still needed, but the situation wasn't as dire as they'd first feared.

Jules breathed easier as he waited for Bobby to finish his calls.

"Okay, we're all set. Eric was called in as well and will swing by here and pick you up on his way."

"Thanks."

Bobby waved his hand like it was no big deal. "We'll get your car running again, don't worry."

Jules couldn't believe Bobby was being so nice about the situation. Although he was able to admit to himself he didn't let people in, it felt odd for a near-stranger to so readily offer help.

Kent was the first of Bobby's friends to arrive. After introductions were made, Kent helped Bobby push the car into the nearest parking lot with Jules behind the wheel. Once the Jaguar was off the street, Jules felt much better.

"I can't tell you how much I appreciate this," Jules said, shaking Kent's hand.

"No big deal. I was just sittin' home watching the game anyway."

A new BMW pulled into the lot and a well-dressed business man joined them.

Kent threw up his hands. "What the hell, Angelo. How're you supposed to help us wearing a suit?"

"Excuse me, Mr. Construction Guy, I was just finishing up a business dinner when Bobby called. Would you rather I'd gone all the way home to change?"

Kent rolled his eyes. "I doubt you have anything in your closet that you'd willingly get dirty anyway."

The guy turned away from Kent's sarcasm and extended his hand. "Hi, I'm Angelo Pillato, a friend of Bobby's."

"Nice to meet you. I'm Jules Peters."

"Pay no attention to Kent. He enjoys giving me a hard time." Angelo shrugged. "I've learned to brush off his comments over the years."

Angelo grinned and leaned forward. "He's a lousy poker player, by the way."

"That's bullshit and you know it," Kent blustered.

Another man arrived right before Zac and Eric pulled up. Jules was introduced to Trey. He shook the small man's hand. "Nice to meet you."

"Where's Marco?" Kent asked.

Bobby shook his head. "Out, I guess. His phone went directly to voicemail."

"Figures," Kent grumbled.

"You ready, Dr. Peters?" Eric asked, getting into the driver's seat.

Jules turned towards the men studying the Jag's engine. "Do you know how to change the plugs? If you need tools..."

"No, we got it. Just go and save the world, and we'll deal with your car," Bobby answered with a smile.

Jules nodded his gratitude and climbed into the passenger seat of Eric's small car. "I appreciate this."

Eric grinned and drove towards the hospital. "So, did this screw up your cruise?"

"Yeah. We hadn't even made it out of the marina before I got the call."

"Ouch. That sucks."

"You like boating?" Jules asked.

Eric shrugged. "I don't know, never done it, but it sounds fun."

Jules saw an opportunity and grabbed it. "Well maybe when I call to reschedule, you and Zac can come along."

Yeah, strength in numbers. If he had someone besides Bobby to focus on, maybe he wouldn't make such a fool of himself.

"Really? Yeah, I'd like that. Although I'm not sure when the three of us will be off work at the same time."

Jules let the subject drop.

They drove for another ten minutes before Eric asked, "What did you think of Bobby?"

"Umm, he seems like a nice guy, but then, all your friends seem nice." He hoped that worked. No way did he want Eric to pick up on the attraction he felt for the muscular dark-haired man.

"Yeah, they're great, but Bobby's the best. Did you know he restored *The Gypsy* all by himself?"

"He mentioned it."

"It took him years. Then his brother bought it out from under him once it was almost finished. According to Zac, it broke Bobby's heart."

"I would imagine it would. How did his brother manage to buy it?"

"Bobby was working for Kent at his construction company in order to earn enough to finish the boat. Bobby was hurt on the job, nothing serious, but he was laid up long enough that he missed several payments. The bank was about to repossess, when Brad, that's Bobby's brother, stepped in and bought the loan."

Jules couldn't imagine how much that had to have hurt. "But he finished the boat anyway?"

"Yeah. *The Gypsy* was Bobby's obsession, I guess. He told Zac he'd put too much of his heart and soul into her to walk away. That's the reason he takes the shit he does from his brother. Brad lets Bobby live and captain *The Gypsy*, in exchange for ninety percent of the money and Bobby kissing his ass."

After the conversation, Jules had an entirely different opinion of Bobby. Yeah, the guy was young, but it sounded like he was loyal to a fault, even if it was to a boat. Maybe he needed to go over his calendar when he got home and try and reschedule.

Jules mentally shook himself. Just because the guy was loyal to a boat didn't mean he was ready for a relationship. Jules had occasionally played around after Morgan's death, but it always left him feeling worse than being alone.

He quickly dropped the idea of looking at his calendar. Jules knew he was better off at home by himself, working on his cars. They gave him a sense of peace and accomplishment that sex never did.

As soon as Eric turned into the parking lot, Jules' mind pushed everything to the side as he mentally prepared for the night ahead.

* * * *

Bobby tossed the empty beer bottle into the recycling bin as Zac hung up the phone.

"Eric's on his way home with Jules."

Bobby glanced at the clock on the wall. It was one-thirty a.m. How the hell was he going to get up for work in the morning?

"You told Eric that we brought Jules' car back here?"

"Yeah. Jules understood. Since we couldn't get hold of him to find out his address, we didn't have much choice."

Bobby had been chosen to drive the Jaguar to Zac's place, and his body still thrummed with the excitement. Never in his life did he think he'd be allowed to drive a car like that. The problem was that he had no ride to get back home. Goddammit, he should've argued with Zac when his friend convinced him to drive doc's car back to his place. "You think you or Eric can get me back to the marina?"

"Sure, although I imagine Jules would be more than happy to give you a lift after you fixed his car."

Bobby shook his head. "Naw, I don't know the guy well enough to ask him to do that."

Zac chuckled. "I don't think it's much out of his way. He lives up north in Forest Hill."

Bobby whistled. That was a pretty swanky neighbourhood in the Twin Peaks area. Either Jules made more money than he'd thought, or the man came from money. Bobby realised the assessment wasn't fair. After all, his dad had a ton of money, but that didn't mean he gave Bobby any, not that he would ever ask.

They finished their beer and watched television until the door opened with a tired looking Eric walking over to plop onto Zac's lap.

"I'm beat," Eric groaned, snuggling against Zac's chest.

Bobby's gaze fixed on an equally tired looking Jules. He stood and dug the keys out of his pocket. "You were right. We changed two of the plugs and she started right up."

He could tell Jules was out of it when he didn't even reach for the keys. "Guess I'd better get going then," Jules said around a yawn.

"Are you sure you're okay to drive?" Bobby asked.

"No, but I'll do fine once the wind hits me."

Bobby didn't like the sound of that. "Why don't you let me drive you as far as the marina? We'll see how awake you are by then."

"I could call a cab," Jules mumbled.

"Nonsense, I need to get home anyway, no reason I can't drive you that far. If nothing else, you can call a cab from the marina."

Jules didn't protest further. He simply nodded and turned to head out the door. Bobby glanced at Zac. "I'll see ya Saturday night. Thanks for the help."

"No problem." Zac cleared his throat, pointing towards the empty doorway. "Don't let him do anything foolish."

"Don't worry, I won't."

By the time Bobby got down the steps, Jules was sound asleep in the passenger seat. He smiled at Jules' slightly parted lips and soft snores before starting up the engine. Jules shifted in his seat when Bobby pulled out of the drive.

The doctor's blue eyes opened as he ran a hand over his bristled jaw. "Sorry."

Without thinking, Bobby reached over and put a comforting hand on Jules' thigh. "Don't worry about it. Go back to sleep."

Jules' hand covered Bobby's as he drifted back off. Driving down the highway, Bobby enjoyed the feel of the muscled leg under his palm. It may have started as nothing more than a friendly gesture, but it had soon perked Bobby's cock up.

He was in serious discomfort by the time they reached the marina. Bobby pulled into a parking spot and gave the thigh under him a squeeze. "Jules?"

When Jules didn't move, Bobby tried again, this time giving the man a gentle shake. "Jules? Can you wake up?"

Jules mumbled something Bobby didn't understand, and moved Bobby's hand closer to his crotch. Fuck. Bobby removed his hand and climbed out of the car. He paced beside the vintage automobile for several moments while trying to keep his lust in check.

Okay, it's pretty obvious the man can't drive home, but he already said he didn't want his car in a parking lot all night. Hell, Bobby didn't blame him a bit. The way he saw it, he only had one choice. He needed to drive Jules home.

Getting back into the car, Bobby shook Jules again. "I need an address. Can you tell me where you live?"

Jules opened his eyes and rattled off an address before closing his eyes again.

"Time to get you to bed." Bobby realised what he'd said and felt his cock knocking against his fly once more. Bobby gave his erection a thump and headed towards Jules' house.

He could always call a cab to take him back to the marina. He knew Zac wouldn't mind doing it, but he was positive his best friend was already in bed. Having grown up in the area, Bobby had no problem finding Jules' house.

Pulling into the circular drive, Bobby was impressed. The stone house looked like no others in the neighbourhood. "Jules?"

Jules eyes fluttered open. "Yeah?"

"Where should I park your car?"

Jules rubbed his eyes and sat up in the seat. "Huh?"

"Your car? Do you want me to just park it, put it in the garage, or what?"

Jules seemed surprised he sat in his own driveway. "You didn't need to drive me home."

"Uh, yeah, I kinda did. You wouldn't wake up when we got to the marina."

Jules covered his face with his hands. "Shit, I'm sorry."

"That's okay. Just tell me where I should park your car." Bobby was starting to get frustrated, it was past two in the morning and he had an eight a.m. charter.

Jules reached under the seat and pulled out a garage door opener. "Continue around to the side of the house. It'll be the last bay on the left."

Bobby put the car into gear and drove around the corner of the house. Sitting back a little from the front of the house was a four-car garage. Jules pushed the button on the opener and Bobby settled the 1956 Jaguar into its parking spot.

As he climbed out of the car, a yawn escaped him.

"Would you like to crash in one of the spare rooms? I can run you back to the marina after you catch a few hours of sleep?" Jules asked.

Although he knew he'd probably regret it, Bobby yawned again and nodded. "Thanks. I'd appreciate that."

Chapter Three

A knock on the door woke Bobby. He blinked his eyes several times and tried to focus on the clock, six. Wanting nothing more than to roll over and go back to sleep, the second knock had him sitting up. "I'm awake."

"I'll be downstairs with a cup of coffee waiting for you. Feel free to shower, towels are under the sink," Jules called through the door.

Bobby scratched the stubble on his face and neck. His normal five o'clock shadow was quickly turning into a beard. If he were at Zac's or one of his other friends, he would've asked to borrow a razor, but he didn't know Jules well enough.

Kicking off the covers he shuffled his way into the bathroom. From what he'd seen hours earlier, the house was massive. He couldn't help but compare it to Brad's house.

Although there was definitely a mutual attraction between him and Jules, Bobby doubted he could let it go anywhere. Money made him nervous, and Jules seemed to have more than his share.

After a quick shower, Bobby pulled on his dirty clothes and made his bed. He assumed Jules would want to wash the sheets, but it would be rude to leave a mess. Out in the hall, Bobby followed his nose down the stairs to the kitchen.

Jules sat at the table with a stack of folders in front of him, a small pair of reading glasses perched on the end of his nose. He glanced up when Bobby entered. "Sleep well?"

Bobby chuckled and headed for the coffee pot. "Like the dead. Of course another couple hours wouldn't have hurt."

"I know what you mean." Jules took a sip of coffee and gestured to the chair across from him. "I'm sorry I don't have much in the way of breakfast foods. I usually just grab some fruit on my way out the door."

"No problem." Bobby blew on the hot beverage before taking a drink.

"Will you have time to run me to the marina, or should I call a cab?" Bobby asked, taking the offered chair.

"I wouldn't hear of it. After everything you've done, the least I can do is drop you off."

Jules took off his glasses and set them on the table. "I really do appreciate you helping me out, both with the car and the drive home. If you ever need anything, don't hesitate to ask."

"It was no trouble, really." Bobby tapped his foot as he finished his coffee. He hated to hurry Jules along, but with an early charter, he still needed to get back and ready the boat.

Jules grinned. "Is that your foot?"

Bobby sheepishly tucked his feet under his chair. "Sorry, nervous habit."

Jules stood and took his empty cup to the sink and rinsed it out. "Let me gather these files, and I'll be ready."

Bobby finished his coffee while watching Jules out of the corner of his eye. Damn, the man was sexy. Every movement seemed to have grace and purpose. Bobby bet the good doctor was amazing in bed.

Damn. In no time, his fantasies had his cock hard as a rock. He reached under the table and kneaded the bulge in his jeans. The more he tried to adjust himself, the harder he became.

A soft sound from Jules got his attention. Bobby glanced up to see Jules staring straight at him with heavy-lidded eyes. *Shit*. It was obvious the man knew what he was doing with his hand under the table.

When Bobby met Jules' blue stare, the doctor quickly turned away. "Well, then, I'm ready when you are," Jules announced.

Bobby knew he had two choices. He could either act on the rod in his pants or ignore it and hope Jules didn't question him about it. The uneasy way Jules fluttered around the kitchen told Bobby it would be best to ignore it.

He stood and rinsed his cup in the sink. "Ready."

Without turning to look at Bobby, Jules picked up his briefcase and headed towards the garage. Bobby couldn't help himself. He stared at the fine ass in front of him until he stepped into the garage.

"We'll take this one," Jules said, getting in the newer Jaguar.

Bobby shook his head as he squeezed his broad muscled frame into the small interior. *Must be nice to have your choice of cars to drive*. Bobby stretched the seatbelt across his chest and searched for the buckle.

Jules' hands suddenly joined his. "Here it is," Jules whispered, clicking the buckle into place.

Raising his head, Jules mouth was a mere inch from Bobby's. God, how much could one man take? The two of them held the position for several long moments before Jules closed the gap.

Soft lips brushed across Bobby's, eliciting a moan from somewhere deep in his chest. Bobby opened up, and ran his tongue over Jules' bottom lip. Within seconds, Jules' hand crept to the back of Bobby's neck as they plundered each other's mouths.

Bobby reached down and released his seat belt as he leaned into Jules' lithe body. Finished with the buckle, Bobby's hand wandered to the erection pressing against Jules' suit pants.

Jules broke the kiss, gasping for air as Bobby began to unzip the doctor's fly. Jules tilted his head back as Bobby's teeth scraped the sensitive flesh of his neck.

With one misplaced elbow, the horn honked, making both men jump. Jules' eyes rounded as the haze of lust lifted. He sat back in his seat and quickly reached down to fasten his slacks. "I'm sorry. Ummm...I can't."

Bobby took a deep breath and settled back into the passenger seat. "Yeah, you're right, it's not a good idea."

"It's just that, well, my life is really hectic, and I don't have time to...oh hell." Jules opened the garage door and started the car.

Bobby kept his attention on the passenger window, afraid to see the remorse in Jules' expression. It was bad enough to hear it in the man's voice, he didn't think he could handle seeing it in those gorgeous blue eyes.

The ride to the marina was uncomfortable to say the least. When Jules pulled to a stop, Bobby practically jumped out of the car. "Thanks for the ride."

"No, thank you for everything you've done."

Without another word, Bobby practically ran to *The Gypsy*. He only had twenty minutes to relieve the ache in his jeans and get ready for his guests. The way his constrained cock throbbed, Bobby figured he had plenty of time.

By the time Bobby arrived for Saturday night poker, he was starving, as usual. He lifted a small grocery sack out of the back of his Jeep and ran up the steps. It had been a brutal couple of days, and he was ready for a bit of fun.

Turning the door handle, Bobby walked into Zac's house as he always had and stopped short. "Oops."

Zac quickly pulled his hand out of the front of Eric's pants. "Don't you know how to knock?"

Bobby shrugged. "Sorry, I forgot you actually had a social life now. It won't happen again."

Grocery sack in hand, Bobby retreated to the kitchen to give the two love birds some privacy. He heard Zac chuckle at something Eric must've said, seconds before Eric's cute face peered around the corner.

"I've got to head in to the hospital. Don't take all his money," Eric informed Bobby.

Bobby paused in opening the cookies to laugh. "Easier said than done. Zac sucks at poker."

"I do not," Zac protested, wrapping his arms around Eric.

Eric rolled his eyes and turned his head to give Zac another kiss. "You kinda do, babe, but I love you anyway."

The remark earned Eric a nipple twist. "Ouch."

"I'll kiss it better later. What time will you be home?" Zac asked.

"Not 'til morning. I'm covering for someone. I'll make sure and wake you when I get in."

"You'd better." Zac gave Eric one last kiss before the smaller man left.

Turning to Bobby, Zac put his hands on his hips. "So why are you here so early?"

Bobby opened the package of chocolate chip cookies and stuffed one into his mouth. "I'm not that early."

Zac seemed to study him for several moments. "Something going on?"

God, where should he start? "No."

Not only had he spent the last two days thinking of Jules and the feel of the man's cock in his hand, but he was due to have lunch at his parents' house the following day. When his mom had phoned, Bobby readily agreed. It wasn't until after he'd told her he'd be there that

she informed him Brad and his family would also be in attendance. Sitting across the table from Brad would be pure torture, as usual.

"Have you talked to Jules since we fixed his car?"

Bobby popped another cookie into his mouth in lieu of answering.

"Bobby? What's going on?"

"Nothing. Man, what's with the twenty questions?" Bobby tossed the sleeve of cookies on the counter and walked towards the living room.

He was saved from further probing when Marco burst into the house, filthy as usual.

"Hey," Marco greeted. He held up a change of clothes and gestured to the bathroom.

"You mind?"

Zac rolled his eyes. "You know the rules."

"Yeah, yeah, clean the bathtub when I'm finished." Marco strode into the bathroom and closed the door.

"Why do you let him do that?" Bobby asked.

"Same reason I let you come over and get crumbs all over my floor. You're family."

"Aahhh." Bobby walked over and gave Zac a kiss on the cheek. "You're so sweet. Of course that doesn't mean I'm going easy on ya. I'll still take your money."

"You wouldn't be my Bobby if you didn't."

Bobby took off his shoes and stretched out on the couch. He heard the shower turn on as he reached for the remote. Marco hadn't been around much in recent months. Besides their semi-monthly poker games, Bobby hadn't even heard from him.

"Kent still have Marco working down south?" he asked.

Zac paused in the act of putting the leaf in the table. "I don't know. I haven't talked to him in awhile."

"Me neither. You think he's got another sugar daddy he's been spending time with?"

Zac finished with the table and walked into the living room. "Your guess is as good as mine. But between you and me, I hope not. Things between him and Kent are tense enough as it is. You know how he gets when Marco is seeing someone."

"Yeah, well the problem is Marco never brings any of them here. Maybe if he didn't sneak around so much, it wouldn't bother Kent to the extent that it does."

"I doubt it. Kent wouldn't be happy regardless."

"He loves Marco," Bobby reminded Zac.

"Of course he does. The problem is he also can't stand him."

"Who can't stand who?" Marco asked, walking out of the bathroom, his hair still dripping water on his bare chest.

"No one," Bobby quickly covered.

Trying to think fast, he came up with a plausible excuse for what Marco had overheard. "We were talking about Brad."

Marco made a face. "Sorry, man, but your brother's a pretentious asshole."

"Don't I know it. And lucky me gets to have lunch with him and his perfect little family at my parents' in less than eighteen hours."

"Ooh, you have my sympathies." Marco wandered back into the bathroom and closed the door.

Zac's eyebrow rose. "Good save."

"Yeah, luckily my life is fucked up enough I can always come up with shit like that." Bobby closed his eyes and clasped his hands together, letting them rest on his chest. He wasn't tired, he just couldn't take Zac's piercing gaze any longer.

"You like him, don't you?" Zac asked after several moments.

"Who?" Bobby asked without opening his eyes.

"You know who I'm talking about."

"His house reminds me of Brad's."

"So?"

Bobby shrugged. "I don't fit into that world."

"Bullshit, you grew up in a house twice the size of Brad's."

"And I was booted out the day I graduated from high school."

Bobby opened his eyes. "In my experience, people with money are only interested in two things. How to earn more of it, and their public image. I don't exactly fit into either category."

"You are so full of shit. You and I both know you have the face and body of a fucking Adonis, it's your mouth that gets you in trouble."

Tired of being held under a microscope, Bobby got up and walked into the kitchen. He pulled a beer out of the sink and brushed off the ice. Being gay in his parents' circle of friends was not acceptable. Growing up, he'd had two choices, learn to suffer through the endless debutant balls, or come out of the closet. His parents had treated his confession as a personal

attack on them. Although they'd somewhat made up over the years, the subject of Bobby's preferences were not allowed in their home.

Trying to get his mind off his parents and Jules, he opened the cupboard and found the big plastic bowls Zac used for poker night. Reaching into the sack of junk food he'd brought, he was surprised when Zac's arms circled his waist.

Zac gave him a hug. "You're one of the finest men I know, Robert Orlando Quinn, and don't you forget it."

For a few brief moments, Bobby relished Zac's comforting embrace. Although nothing sexual had ever happened between the two of them, Bobby loved the big lug. "Why can't I be attracted to a normal guy?"

"I don't know, I kinda think you are."

Bobby craned his neck to look up at Zac. "There's nothing normal about Jules."

"Why, because he has money? Being kind of a reverse snob, aren't you?"

Was he? Yeah, he knew he was, but his experiences with wealthy people hadn't been the best. Which is why it still didn't make sense to him that he held a job catering to the rich sons-of-bitches.

If he had his way, he'd cut the charter rates dramatically and get more families on board. "I need to finish my boat."

"Okay. I'm free most evenings to help. Just tell me when and where."

Bobby spun in Zac's arms to face him. "Really? What about Eric?"

"Eric works a lot, and when he's not, he's usually sleeping. I'm not saying I can be on call every minute, but I think I have enough spare time to help a friend. Besides, summers only, like, a month and a half away. Other than the odd football thing, I've got nothing else to do."

"Something you guys would like to tell me?" Kent asked, stepping into the kitchen.

Zac rolled his eyes and released Bobby. "Yeah. Bobby needs our help to get his boat up and ready."

Kent's forehead furrowed. "Trouble with Brad again?"

"Again? Try always." Bobby shook his head. "I'm just not happy. I think I need to make a break, and getting *My Second Chance* finished would give me another job and place to live."

Kent set the case of beer on the counter. "I'll be more than happy to do what I can, but I've got a feeling the real problem might just follow you."

"I'm not in the mood to be psychoanalysed." Kent was a good guy, but he had way too many opinions on other peoples' problems, especially because the guy needed to take care of his own first.

"Just trying to help," Kent mumbled, opening a beer.

"Since when?" Marco asked, coming into the room.

"Fuck you, De Le Santo," Kent huffed and disappeared into the living room.

Zac put his hands on his hips and regarded Marco. "Be nice, please?"

Marco grinned and blew Zac a kiss. "For you, I'll be a good boy."

The innocent look on Marco's face dispelled Bobby's dour mood. His friends always had a way of making him feel better. He heard the front door open and Trey and Angelo's voices as they greeted Kent.

He clapped his hands and briskly rubbed them together. "So, who's ready to give me their money?"

* * * *

Standing on the porch, Bobby had his thumbs hooked into his jeans pockets when his father opened the door. "Hi, Dad."

His dad seemed to scrutinise Bobby's appearance before stepping back into the foyer. "Afternoon, Robert."

Bobby gave an inward sigh at the loving endearment. He'd gone by Bobby since he was old enough to have a say in the matter, but his uptight father still refused to call him anything other than his given name.

"Where's Mom?"

"Your mother is in the sunroom with the rest of the family."

Bobby quickly wondered if it was too late to escape. He should've declined the dinner and asked his mom to meet him somewhere instead.

His dad led the way to the rest of the group. When Bobby didn't immediately follow, Joseph turned and cleared his throat.

"Yeah, I'm coming." Bobby followed after his dad, the tension already building in his neck and shoulders. He braced himself for the upcoming meeting as if he were headed for battle.

The back right corner of the house was a huge room with glass on two sides, various tropical plants and flowers growing in raised stone beds. Bobby stopped by his mother's chair and placed a dutiful kiss on her upturned cheek. "Hey, Mom."

"Good to see you, Son," his mother said, smiling up at him. "Have you lost weight?"

Bobby rubbed his flat stomach. "Nope, not that I know of. I haven't had a chance to get much sun yet this season, which usually makes a difference."

"Too much time in the sun isn't healthy," his mom reminded him.

"I know." Bobby took one of the available rattan chairs and sat down. His two nephews, ages three and five stood by their mother's side staring.

It was a shame he wasn't closer to the two small boys. He had nothing at all against children, but he still hadn't decided what species to put Alexander and Ralston in. Seriously, who the hell names a child Ralston besides someone as pretentious as Brad?

"Hi, Olivia, boys."

"Did you get the fax I sent?" Brad asked in lieu of a greeting.

"Uh, no, when did you send it?" Bobby asked.

"Late last night. Don't you check your machine? You know, the reason I bought it..."

"I was playing poker with my friends, give me a break. I'll look at it when I get back."

Brad huffed and glanced at his father. "This is the reason we aren't making the money we should."

Bobby felt like he'd been punched in the stomach. "We?" He turned to his dad. "You own part of *The Gypsy*?"

Joseph blustered around for a few seconds before answering. "Yes. We thought it best that you didn't know."

Taking a deep breath, Bobby rose and regarded his mother. "I'll call you later, Mom."

He barely made it to his Jeep before his eyes filled with tears. It was one thing to have his half-brother go behind his back and take his dream, but his own father?

Starting the Jeep, Bobby peeled out of the driveway. One thing was certain, he was finished working and living on *The Gypsy*. His dad and Brad had completely destroyed every good thing about his old boat.

It didn't take long for Bobby to gather his clothes and dishes and load them into the Jeep. He pulled out his phone and called Kent, the only friend he knew with a truck.

"Hello," Kent answered.

"It's Bobby. Are you busy today?"

"Not really, why?"

"I'm moving my stuff out of *The Gypsy* and could use your truck."

"Whoa, that's a pretty big step."

"Yeah, well it's been a long time coming. So, can I borrow your truck?"

"I'll be there as soon as I can."

While waiting for Kent, Bobby fired up his laptop and drafted a formal letter of resignation. It would be just like Brad to try and weasel out of paying him severance. He also used the opportunity to check his savings account balance.

Bobby was busy trying to make out a budget for himself when he heard a familiar voice call his name. He stood and glanced over the side of the boat.

"Permission to come aboard?" Jules called up.

Bobby's gut clenched at the handsome older man. "Sure."

He shut down the laptop before turning to face Jules. "If you've come to reschedule your cruise, I'm sorry I can't help you. I just quit."

Jules shook his head. "Actually, I came to apologise for my actions the last time we saw each other."

"Oh." Bobby stuffed the laptop into its case. "No reason to apologise. We both let things get out of hand."

Jules shoved his hands in his pockets. "Well, I guess that's one way of looking at it. I was thinking more along the lines that I shouldn't have pushed you away like I did."

Bobby nearly dropped the box of books he'd bent to pick up. "What?"

Jules' face had a distinct red hue to it. "I came by to see if you'd be interested in going out to dinner with me?"

Bobby ran a hand through his short dark hair. A large part of him wanted to accept the invitation, but he had other problems on his mind. "Sorry, I can't. As you can see I'm moving."

Jules took in the boxes surrounding Bobby. "Can I help?"

Chapter Four

After getting the boxes unloaded from Kent's truck, Bobby took off to buy a mattress. While he was gone, Jules and Kent attempted to clean as much of the salon as they could. Three trash bags later, Jules collapsed in the cracked leather chair.

"Should we try putting away the dishes?" he asked Kent.

Kent scratched his jaw and shook his head. "I don't see any other choice. If we don't get these boxes outta here, there won't be room to move, let alone try to live."

Kent carried one of the boxes to the small galley. "I hate this."

"What?" Jules asked, setting a box on the tiny stove.

"Seeing Bobby try to live in this shithole. It just ain't right. He worked his ass off on *The Gypsy*. That's where he should be, not here. This boat will never make him happy."

Jules looked around the interior. "You're in construction, right?"

"Yeah."

"Know anyone who could help Bobby make this place the showpiece it used to be?"

"Sure, but Bobby can't pay for it and he won't take favours like that."

Jules put his mind to work, trying like hell to come up with a solution. "He'll need a job, right?"

"Yeah. He's worked for me before. I'm sure I can find something for him to do."

"Maybe you could convince him to barter with you for the things he needs done." Jules hated to stick his nose into Bobby's business, but he didn't know how the man was going to live on a boat with no running water and only an extension cord from one of Kent's outbuildings for power.

Kent nodded. "I'll try to work it into the conversation. One thing you need to learn about Bobby is the man can be stubborn as a mule. If he thinks I'm doing him a favour, he'll never go for it."

Jules filed the information away for later use.

"Can one of you guys help me carry this aboard?" Bobby called out.

Kent grinned and nudged Jules with his elbow. "The damn television almost killed me trying to get it up here. I think the mattress will take all three of us."

Jules nodded, eager to help. So far, Bobby seemed to be treating him with kid gloves, only handing Jules the lighter boxes to carry up. Jules knew he didn't have near the muscle mass Bobby had, but he wasn't a wimp.

* * * *

By the time they wrestled the full-size mattress into the captain's cabin, sweat was running down Bobby's face. He pulled the dripping T-shirt over his head and wiped his face, chest and underarms before tossing it aside.

When he looked up, he caught Jules staring at him. Fuck. The look in the older man's eyes had Bobby's cock hard as stone in seconds. He turned his back to the berth, and began fidgeting with the bed.

"I think I'll go ahead and make this while I'm here. Why don't you guys grab a couple of beers and relax." Bobby dug a set of sheets out of the trash bag he'd brought stuff over in and turned to make the bed.

Jules stood right in front of him, close enough to touch. "I'll help."

Bobby swallowed around the lump in his throat. Need raced through his body as he stared into the blue depths of Jules' eyes. The older man reached out first, running a hand down the centre of Bobby's chest, only to travel back up again.

Why would a man who had everything want him? Bobby tried to figure it out as he allowed the soft caress. "Are you feeling sorry for me?"

Jules took a step closer until their bodies were pressed together. "I'm feeling something, but sorry isn't the right word for it."

Bobby felt the proof of Jules' arousal rub against his own hard cock.

"Hey, you guys want one?" Kent asked, coming in with a couple of beers. "Oh, sorry."

Jules gave Bobby a wistful smile and stepped back. "I'll take one."

Bobby could tell Kent was suddenly uncomfortable with the situation, so decided to save his friend from further embarrassment. "I'm finished with the truck."

"Okay, great. Well then I think I'll take off. Call me later?" Kent asked, sliding towards the door.

"Yeah. As you can imagine, I'm gonna need to find a job in the morning."

"Not a problem. Let me go over my work logs and see what I can come up with."

Bobby stepped forward and placed a hand on Kent's shoulder. His friend may have his faults, but he'd always been there when Bobby had needed him. "Thanks. For everything," he added.

"No need," Kent said and shook Jules' hand. "It was nice to see you again."

"Same here," Jules returned.

Kent left and Bobby stood alone in the small cabin with the sexiest man he'd ever known. "Hungry? I could pay you back for all your help with dinner?"

Damn. Listen to him. Bobby knew he sounded like a scared virgin, but the attraction to Jules was too strong to trust it.

Jules flashed him a knowing grin. "Dinner sounds nice."

* * * *

They ended up downtown at a little hole in the wall Jules favoured. "Nothing fancy, but they have the best food in town."

"Sounds good to me," Bobby answered, sliding into one of the booths.

The place looked more like a beer joint than anything else, but good food was good food. "What do you recommend?"

Jules didn't even open his menu. "Whatever's on special. I've never had anything I didn't like here."

The waitress stepped up to the table. "What can I get you?"

Winking at Bobby, Jules smiled at the waitress. "What's the special?"

"Meatloaf, mashed potatoes and green beans, salad to start."

"That sounds good, and bring me a glass of ice water, please."

"I'll have the same," Bobby agreed with Jules' choice.

The waitress nodded and walked off, leaving the two of them alone. Bobby tapped his fingers idly on the table, his mind and body a jumble of nerves.

Jules' hand covered his and Bobby automatically turned his over to thread their fingers together.

"What's wrong?" Jules asked.

"I don't know. I guess I'm a little nervous," he admitted.

Bobby moved to cup Jules' hand between the two of his. The doctor's hand was so different from his own long fingers, spotless nails. "So soft."

"Is that what's bothering you?"

Surprised at how close the observation hit home, Bobby released Jules' hand.

"What I do for a living has nothing to do with us."

Although he knew it was unfair, thoughts of his father's and brother's betrayal assaulted him once again. "You're wrong."

He stared Jules in the eyes. "Someone like me will never be able to make you happy."

Instead of getting angry, Jules did the unexpected. He stood and slid in next to Bobby. Without saying a word, he wrapped his arm around Bobby's back and kissed him.

"Who is it that's made you feel inferior?" he whispered in Bobby's ear.

Bobby shook his head. "I don't feel inferior. I don't know where you got that idea. I just know I can't fit into your world. I've tried before and it didn't work."

"My world is a big house and old cars. I have acquaintances, not friends. My parents are gone. So tell me, what won't you fit into?" Jules asked, punctuating each sentence with a kiss to Bobby's neck.

God help him but it felt good. Bobby tilted his head to the side to give Jules more room. The waitress cleared her throat as she set their plates in front of them. Jules nipped Bobby's neck before releasing his hold.

"Thank you," Jules told the waitress.

She gave them an uneasy nod before walking away.

Bobby gazed down at his food. It looked wonderful, so why wasn't he eating? Jules' hand landed on his thigh.

"It's good, eat up."

* * * *

"You wanna come up?" Bobby asked.

As much as Jules wanted to do just that, he shook his head. "I think slow and easy is the way to win this race. I have to work this week, but what're you doing Friday night?"

"Nothin', just working on the boat. You wanna come by?" Bobby asked.

"I'd like that. Can I bring dinner?"

Bobby nodded. "Anything but sushi, that shit's nasty."

Jules chuckled. "I'll remember that."

He leaned over and gave Bobby a goodnight kiss. As he delved his tongue inside, Bobby moaned, threatening to undo all Jules' good intentions. Pulling back he licked his lips. "I need to go."

Bobby started to say something, but snapped his mouth shut and nodded. "Okay, Friday then."

"Can I call you?" Jules asked.

Bobby smiled and withdrew a card from his wallet. "The rest of the stuff on here isn't accurate anymore, but the cell phone's still mine."

Jules took the card and pulled out one of his own. "I'm hit or miss during the day, but if you get a chance, call me."

Bobby took the card and ran the edge over his swollen lips. Jules knew the man wasn't even aware of the power of his actions, but drawing attention to that gorgeous mouth was almost his undoing. He found himself leaning towards those lips once again.

Bobby's hand shot out, stopping him. "If you kiss me again, I'm not gonna let you leave."

Jules laughed. "Fair enough."

He watched Bobby get out of the car and climb the makeshift ladder to the deck of the boat. With a wave, Jules started his car and drove towards the guard's station. Instead of pulling right through when the gate opened, Jules slowed the car to a stop beside the man on duty.

"Just thought I'd introduce myself since you'll be seeing a lot of me in the future."

* * * *

Jules was suturing a leg wound, when Eric came skidding into the curtained off exam room.

"Critical coming in, can I get your help?" Eric asked.

"I'll be there in a second," Jules replied calmly as he tied the last knot.

He stepped back from the young boy and shook his finger. "No more jumping off the roof, you hear me?"

The boy nodded as his mother gathered their things. "The nurse will be in with wound care and follow-up instructions."

"Thank you, Dr. Peters. I can't believe Grant did something so stupid," the boy's mother admonished.

Jules grinned. "All part of growing up."

He removed his latex gloves and tossed them into the hazardous waste bin, before rushing to help Eric.

He found Eric inserting an intubation tube into a patient's throat. Reaching into the box on the wall, Jules extracted another pair of gloves. "What've you got?"

"RTA, crushed chest cavity, collapsed lungs, multiple fractures to right tib and fib and the humerus in both arms," Eric recited as he concentrated on his patient.

Stepping up to the gurney, Jules felt the room begin to spin. He reached out and tried to steady himself, but lost the battle when his world went black.

"Dr. Peters?"

Jules could hear a voice, but couldn't get his damn eyelids to cooperate. "Yeah?"

"Sir, you passed out. Can you open your eyes?"

After a few moments, Jules managed to do as asked. He was lying on a gurney in the ER. "What...what happened?"

"I don't know. You went in to help Dr. Stanton with a patient, took one look at him and fainted. You hit your head on the bottom of the bed."

Jules remembered looking down into a face that eerily resembled Morgan's. The patient could've been his deceased lover's twin. He started to lift his hand towards his face, but Dr. Braverman stilled it. "Dr. Peters, you need stitches."

Jules nodded his consent, the movement sending shards of pain through his skull.

"Would you like me to call someone?" Braverman asked.

"There is no one," Jules mumbled. The thought of Bobby by his side flashed into his head, but Jules pushed it away, the image of Morgan in the seconds before death still fresh in his mind.

As Braverman began to suture his head wound, Jules closed his eyes. He remembered the last words his beloved had spoken to him. "Please help me."

After all the years of putting medicine before his relationship, he couldn't do the one thing Morgan had asked, too many injuries, too little time. He'd watched the man he loved die in front of him, and could do nothing to stop it.

"I love you," he'd whispered.

Morgan's eyes filled with tears as the life drained from his body. Jules had never been able to overcome that look. It wasn't love he saw in Morgan's eyes, it was disappointment.

Yelling in the hallway snapped Jules out of the past.

"Someone had better tell me something. All I know is Dr. Peters has been injured. Now where is he?"

Jules took a deep breath. Bobby's boisterous voice shouldn't be able to bring him so much peace, so why did it? Jules licked his dry lips.

"Would you please bring him in here so he won't wake everyone in the damn hospital?" he asked Braverman.

Chuckling, the young doctor stuck his head out the door. "Dr. Peters is in here."

Jules heard shuffling, seconds before Bobby towered over him.

"What happened?" Bobby asked, his eyes full of concern.

"I'm fine. Just fainted and bumped my head."

Bobby grabbed his chest. "Damn. When I got the call they didn't give me any details. Scared the shit out of me."

"Eric?"

Bobby shook his head. "No. Some lady who said Eric asked her to call."

Jules made a mental note to speak with Eric about meddling in his business. "I'm fine, really."

As Bobby continued to stare down at him, Dr. Braverman finished his suturing and placed a bandage over the wound. "I'd suggest you go home for the rest of the day. Other than that, you know the drill."

Jules nodded. "Thanks."

Braverman left and Jules reached out a hand. "Can you help me up?"

Instead of grabbing Jules' hand, Bobby slid an arm under his back and lifted him into a sitting position. "Come on, I'll drive ya home."

Jules started to argue, but stopped himself. "I'd appreciate it."

"Do I need to get a wheelchair?" Bobby asked.

"No, I should be fine to walk."

Bobby helped Jules down from the bed and hugged him. "I'm glad you're okay."

The whispered words against his ear warmed Jules to his toes. He wrapped his arms around Bobby and returned the embrace. Though his sexual preference wasn't advertised at work, Jules wasn't about to push the man away because of what his colleagues might think.

"If you'll pull your car around, I'll get my briefcase and meet you out front," he said, placing a soft kiss on Bobby's cheek.

Bobby stepped back, his beautiful brown eyes straying to the bandage on Jules' forehead. "Sure you're okay to walk?"

"I'm fine. I see real-life emergencies every day, believe me, this is nothing."

Bobby nodded and disappeared down the hall. Jules headed towards the lounge, almost running into Eric as he turned a corner. "Dr. Stanton."

Eric's eyes went wide. "Please don't be mad at me. I knew you wouldn't be able to drive home, and I hoped things between you and Bobby had progressed enough that I could have him called down here for you."

It said much about the smaller man's character that Jules couldn't stay mad at him. Although he'd planned to give Eric a piece of his mind, he ended up smiling. "Actually, I wanted to thank you."

"Really?"

"Yes, really, but don't let it happen again," Jules added with a shake of his finger.

"Yes, sir, Dr. Peters, sir." Eric finished it off with an exaggerated salute.

"Smart ass," Jules chuckled as he continued to the lounge.

He retrieved his briefcase and signed himself out, promising himself that he'd fill out an accident report in the morning. Bobby must have been waiting for him, because the second Jules stepped out of the hospital, the younger man pulled up in front of him.

Jules climbed up into the old green Jeep and set his briefcase at his feet. The movement caused a moment of dizziness, and Jules blinked several times, trying to right his world.

"You okay?" Bobby asked, hand on Jules' back.

"Yeah, shouldn't have bent over so fast," he answered, putting a hand on Bobby's thigh to reassure him.

Bobby pulled out of the parking lot and turned towards Jules' house. On the way, they drove past one of the more exclusive neighbourhoods.

"That's where I grew up," Bobby mumbled in an off-hand manner.

Jules kept his shock hidden. He'd understood from Eric that Bobby's brother had money, but no one had clued Jules in that the man grew up with it. He wondered what part of Bobby's childhood played in his distrust for people with money?

"Where should I park?" Bobby asked when they pulled into Jules' drive.

"Anywhere's fine."

Bobby parked in front of the house and turned off the engine. "Hold on."

He got out and came around to Jules' side. Reaching out, Bobby helped Jules down from the Jeep. Bobby must've seen the protest forming on Jules' lips. "Indulge me, will ya?"

Jules rolled his eyes and let Bobby lead him. He dug out his keys and unlocked the door. As soon as they were both inside, Jules punched his security code into the alarm system on the wall.

"Where's your bedroom?" Bobby asked.

"Upstairs at the end of the hall." He felt stupid letting Bobby baby him, but after years of living alone, it was too good to turn down.

Entering the master suite, Jules pulled off his bloodied shirt. He watched Bobby's ass as the gorgeous man turned down the sheets. "I don't really think going to bed is necessary."

Bobby reached down and pulled off his own T-shirt. "Yes it is."

Chapter Five

Sitting on the side of the bed, Bobby reached out and pulled Jules forward by the waist of his pants. Without saying a word, Bobby began rubbing his face against Jules' bare chest, snaking his tongue out for an occasional lick.

Jules buried his fingers in Bobby's thick dark hair and tilted his head back. "Yeah, right there," he moaned as Bobby's tongue began flicking and circling his nipples.

While Bobby's mouth was busy torturing him, his hands were going in for the kill, kneading his burgeoning erection through the material that separated them. Jules wanted to strip naked and present his ass to the man, but he knew they needed to relish this first time together.

Teeth scraped against his chest as Bobby unfastened Jules' pants. Once unzipped, the material fell around Jules' ankles. Bobby worked his way down Jules' torso to the bulge straining the front of his boxer-briefs.

Jules' breath hitched as Bobby began to mouth the front of his underwear. Jules tilted Bobby's chin up. "Take them off."

Bobby grinned, flashing those million dollar dimples. "I thought you'd never ask."

The saturated briefs were pulled down and Jules took a step, kicking his pants and underwear aside. Jules put his hands on Bobby's shoulders and gave him a gentle push.

Bobby lay back on the bed, his feet still firmly planted on the floor, as Jules climbed over the top of him. Sitting on Bobby's upper chest, Jules touched the head of his cock to his lover's lips.

With a groan, Bobby licked the pre-cum from Jules' crown before sliding his lips down the shaft.

Once inside Bobby's mouth, Jules couldn't hold back. His hips started a slow shallow thrust as he fucked Bobby's throat. For his part, Bobby was a fantastic cock sucker. Jules couldn't remember a blowjob ever feeling so good. It may have had something to do with going without for so long, but he doubted it.

Bobby's hands slid from Jules' hips down to cup his ass. Spreading the cheeks apart, Bobby's finger began a seductive dance across Jules' hole. *Yes, fuck me.* Damn, had he ever wanted someone like he wanted Bobby at that moment?

Pulling his cock free of Bobby's mouth, Jules looked down into the younger man's eyes. "I need you inside me."

Bobby licked his swollen lips and nodded. "You have stuff?"

Did he? Jules mentally inventoried his bedside drawer and medicine cabinet. He seemed to remember...

"Yes," he shouted in glee and jumped off the bed. Jules opened the cabinet under the sink in his en suite and rummaged around. He'd attended a medical conference the previous year and had received a new brand of condoms in his introductory bag. When he got home he almost threw them out, but tossed them into the cabinet just in case. Damn, he was glad he did.

With the box of three condoms in hand, Jules moved back to the bed, holding the box aloft in triumph. "I knew I had some somewhere."

He handed a gloriously naked Bobby the box and dug his bottle of lube from the bedside drawer. No need to go searching for that. He'd used the slick nightly since first laying eyes on Bobby Quinn.

Bobby started laughing, as he rolled the condom down his thick length.

Jules' mouth dropped open at the vibrant pink and green striped latex. The prominent veins in Bobby's cock, combined with the vertical stripes, made Jules dizzy.

"They're from a convention," he said by way of explanation.

Still laughing, Bobby pinched the reservoir tip to give himself extra room. "Evidently they didn't go over well, because I've never seen anything like them."

Jules smiled and handed the well-used bottle to the laughing man. Crawling to the centre of the king-sized bed, Jules remained on his hands and knees and glanced over his shoulder. Bobby had added a couple of drops of the slick to his cock and was slowly stroking up and down its length.

Jules wasn't the kind of man to be shy in the bedroom, so he wiggled his ass several times. "Come and get it."

Shaking his head, Bobby's chuckles died as his eyes zeroed in on Jules' butt. With another lick of his lips, Bobby took his place behind Jules.

"Mmm," Bobby moaned, taking his first taste of Jules' hole.

Jules' hands fisted the sheet under him. He spread his legs further apart as Bobby's tongue began to probe his sphincter. "Fuck me."

Jules heard the click of the lube cap seconds before a slick finger was introduced. Bobby expertly stretched him, whispering words full of lustful intentions.

"Gonna make you feel so good, you never forget me."

Squeezing his eyes shut, Jules nodded. He already knew he'd never forget Bobby Quinn, the fucking had nothing to do with it. Jules grinned, although it was definitely an added bonus. "I'm ready."

Biting the cheek of Jules' ass, Bobby removed his fingers and replaced them with the head of his brightly coloured cock. With the thick length of his lover's erection slowly filling him, Jules laid his head on the pillow, leaving his ass in the air.

A picture of a man with shoulder-length blond hair came to mind as Bobby's cock was fully seated in his ass.

"Damn, you feel good."

Jules' eyes shot open at the low, rugged voice. *Fuck. Bobby.* Jules groaned as shame overtook him. How in the world could he have forgotten it was Bobby in his bed and not Morgan? Jules wanted to run from the room. He didn't deserve a man like Bobby.

"Am I hurting you?" Bobby asked. "You're tense all of a sudden."

Jules closed his eyes again, trying to get his emotions under control. "Can...will you make love to me face to face?"

Bobby's body stilled behind him. "Something wrong?"

Jules peered over his shoulder. "I just need to see your face."

He vowed to never tell Bobby what had just happened. It wasn't that he wasn't developing feelings for his new lover, but Morgan had been the only one to fuck him. With Morgan, Jules had been strictly a bottom. After his partner's death, the few times he'd hooked up with someone, he'd made it clear up front that he topped only. So what was different? Why was he allowing Bobby a gift he'd only given to one other man?

Bobby pulled out, and Jules rolled over. He hoped Bobby wouldn't notice the shame he still felt at the mistake. He reached up and ran his fingers through Bobby's dark hair. The man was so gorgeous and looked nothing like Morgan. Yes, face to face was much better.

He wrapped his long legs around Bobby's waist, suddenly needing the man as close as possible. Without breaking eye contact, Bobby repositioned his cock to Jules' entrance. The forward thrust of Bobby's hips filled Jules with a totally different sensation. It was no longer a simple fuck, and the realisation scared him.

"Yessss," Bobby hissed, starting a slow rhythm.

Jules pulled Bobby's head down for a kiss. *Forgive me, Morgan.* In the few short days since they'd met, Bobby was quickly becoming the most important person in Jules' life. The carefully arranged photographs on the dresser caught his eye. Morgan's blue eyes stared at him from his graduation photo. Jules looked at each photograph lining the dresser. The fishing trip the two of them had taken, the rowdy frat party pictures, they were all there in living colour. Would he be able to put Morgan to rest after all these years?

"Are you with me?" Bobby growled.

Jules' gaze darted away from the pictures and back to Bobby. "Sorry."

Bobby pulled out of Jules' ass and swung his legs over the side of the bed. Looking around the room, he seemed to settle on the photographs of Jules and Morgan. "Is that your boyfriend that died?"

Jules cleared his throat. "Yes."

Had he ever felt so humiliated? To be so obviously caught looking at pictures of another man while being fucked. He wanted to tell Bobby he didn't need to worry, that he'd just been considering putting the pictures away.

Before he had a chance to explain, Bobby stood and walked over to the dresser. Jules couldn't help but to stare at Bobby's muscled ass as he picked up each individual frame.

Climbing off the bed, Jules wrapped his arms around his lover's waist. "I need to put them away. I'm sorry."

Bobby set the sterling silver frame back in its place. Jules began peppering kisses to Bobby's broad back. *Please forgive me?*

"I won't compete against a dead guy," Bobby mumbled without turning around.

"No, of course not." Jules went around and slithered in between Bobby and the photographs.

"I've never had a reason to put them away." He placed a soft kiss on Bobby's lips. "Until now."

Bobby eventually wrapped his arms around Jules. "Why don't you try and get some rest. I'll run out and get us something to eat."

So much for making love. "I'm sorry."

Bobby shook his head. "You like pizza or burgers better?"

"Either," Jules mumbled.

Bobby nodded and picked his discarded clothes up before retreating to the bathroom. Jules turned and studied the photographs. Most of them were him and Morgan at various frat house functions before Jules had entered med school. *Of course they were, because I didn't make much time for Morgan after those first four years.*

He heard the door open and spun away from the painful memories. Bobby was fully dressed and looking like he wanted to be anywhere but where he was. "You're coming back, right?"

Bobby sighed and stepped up to Jules. "I can't lie and say what happened a few minutes ago didn't hurt, but I'm trying to understand."

"I'll put them away while you're gone," Jules promised.

Bobby shook his head. "It's not the pictures, Jules. Until you can get beyond his death, putting frames in a drawer isn't going to help."

"I know. It's just...Morgan's the only man who's ever made love to me. I guess having you inside me must've triggered something."

Jules reached out and cupped Bobby's cheek. "You're the first person to stir up these long dormant feelings. I'd very much like to see where they lead us."

Bobby turned his head and placed a kiss on Jules' palm. "I'd like that."

* * * *

Pulling into Burger Max, Bobby picked up his phone and punched in Zac's number.

"Hello."

"It's me. Is Eric home yet?"

"No, he's working until seven, why?"

"I need to talk to him about Jules. See if he knows anything about his ex-boyfriend."

"The one who died?" Zac asked.

"Yeah."

"Well I don't know a lot, but I know Dr. Peters and his partner were together a long time. They must've been pretty young though because the guy died two years after Jules became a doctor."

Bobby wasn't sure exactly how old Jules was, but he'd guess early to mid-forties. "That's gotta be close to eighteen, nineteen years ago."

"Probably pretty damn close," Zac agreed.

Had Jules been in mourning all those years? From what he'd said in the bedroom earlier, Bobby's guess was yes. How was he supposed to vanquish a twenty-year old ghost?

"Thanks. I'll talk to you later," he finally said.

"Bobby? Is there anything I can do?"

"No. It's pretty much all on us at this point." He said his goodbyes and shoved the phone back into his pocket.

No sooner had he pulled up to the drive-thru speaker than his phone started ringing. He saw from the display it was Kent. "Hey, can you hang on a sec?"

"Sure."

"Can I help you?"

"Yeah, give me four double cheeseburgers, two large fries, two large onion rings and two chocolate shakes."

"Okay, I'm back," he told Kent as he pulled around to the window and dug out his wallet.

"How's Jules?"

"Okay, I think. He's resting at his place. I just ran out to pick us up something to eat."

"That's good. Listen, I've got a job for you if you want it. Nothing fancy, just site clean-up and errand guy, but it's yours if you're interested."

Bobby squeezed his eyes shut. He hated clean-up detail. He'd done it before and knew exactly how much sweat was involved. He handed a twenty through the window. "Sure, sounds good."

"Good." Kent gave him the location of the construction site. At least it wasn't far from where he had his boat dry-docked. "Be there by seven-thirty."

"Tonight?" Bobby asked, taking his food from the pimply faced kid.

"No, jackass, in the morning."

"Yeah, of course, sorry."

"Don't be late," Kent reminded him. Everyone who worked for Kent knew he was a stickler when it came to showing up on time. The only one who ever dared defy the big boss man was Marco, and Bobby thought it was only to get Kent's attention.

"You gonna be home later?" Kent asked.

Would he? "The jury's still out on that, why?"

"I have some wood flooring left over from a job. Thought I'd see if it's enough to put in your boat. If it is, I was kinda hoping you'd buy it from me. I'll give it to you for a steal."

"Does it have to be tonight?"

"No, no hurry."

He pulled into Jules' drive. "I'll give you a call if I don't see you at the site."

"Okay, see ya."

Bobby grabbed the bags, and walked towards the house. He stood in front of the door for several moments. Was he supposed to go inside without knocking? What if the alarm was on? *Shit*. Bobby gave up and rang the bell.

The door opened and Jules smiled. "You came back."

Bobby didn't miss the red-rimmed eyes in front of him. "Of course I did."

As Jules led him into the kitchen, Bobby couldn't help but wonder who Jules had been crying over. Had he once again mourned his dead lover, or did he truly think Bobby wouldn't return? Could the idea of not seeing him again upset the man to the point of tears?

Jules sat at the kitchen table and Bobby laid the food out in front of him. "Wasn't sure how hungry you'd be, so I got extra just in case."

Jules' eyes popped wide open at the array of fast food. "I should say."

"Mind if I get some ketchup?" Bobby asked.

"Uh, no, not at all. Door of the fridge." Jules opened one of the cheeseburgers and stared at it.

Bobby shook his head and went to the fridge. He found the ketchup immediately, but also spotted a bottle of steak sauce. Taking both back to the table, he wasn't surprised to find Jules still staring at his food. "Eat up."

Jules jumped a little and picked up his burger. Bobby flattened out the paper his burger had come in and poured two big piles of thick dippings on it. He noticed Jules looking at him funny. "What? Steak sauce is better with fries, but you gotta have ketchup for onion rings."

Jules gifted him with a half grin. "I'll have to try it."

Bobby finished the first burger in no time and started on the second. He glanced at Jules. The man had barely eaten a quarter of his. "You don't like 'em?"

It was obvious Jules was trying to think up an excuse, but he finally set his food on the table. "Sorry, guess I'm not hungry."

This was the part of a relationship Bobby sucked at, and he knew it. Did he pull whatever was bothering Jules out of him, or wait for Jules to come to him? What if Jules had decided he didn't want anyone besides Morgan? Although the idea made Bobby sick to his stomach, he needed to know if he was wasting his time.

He ate the second burger and started in on the fries. He'd always been the kind of person to completely finish one food before starting on the next. "So, did you get any rest while I was gone?"

Jules shook his head, still staring down at his partially eaten dinner. "No. I put Morgan's things away. I know you told me it wouldn't help, but I needed to start somewhere."

Jules sighed and rubbed his eyes. "I don't know why I let myself live in such a cocoon for so long."

Standing, Jules took his barely eaten sandwich to the trash. "You know, it's not just about Morgan being everywhere in this house. I doubt that you noticed, but this place is filled with pictures of dead people. This house belonged to my sister, Beth. She inherited it from my Aunt Ida."

Jules turned and stuck his hands in his pockets, gazing out the big window. "Beth died of leukaemia eight years ago. Now there's just me. I guess I had the pictures up more out of loneliness than anything else."

Bobby stood and walked over to Jules. Wrapping his arms around the man he was quickly beginning to truly care about, he hugged him. Not sure of what to say, he remained silent and offered support the best way he knew.

Sure, his own family sucked, but at least he had his friends. Bobby didn't think Jules even had that. What he couldn't figure out was why. Was it by choice, or design?

It was another week and a half before the next poker night, and Bobby didn't want to wait that long. "I was thinking of having a get-together on the boat Saturday. Nothing fancy, just burgers, dogs and beer. The guys are coming over to help me work on the hull. Wanna come?"

Jules reached up and crossed his arms over Bobby's. "I'll have to check my schedule, but yeah, I'd like that."

"Cool, it's a date." Bobby kissed Jules' neck, inhaling the subtle hint of whatever designer cologne his lover wore. "Feel like watching some TV?"

* * * *

Spooned on the sofa in front of Bobby, Jules tried to concentrate on the survival show his lover had turned on.

Bobby's hand rested under Jules' shirt, idly rubbing circles against Jules' skin. Had he ever just sat and watched television with a lover? He knew he and Morgan had never done it. Between studying and his work at the hospital, Jules was lucky to spend any time at all with his partner. A good day for them was several stolen hours in bed.

Jules snuggled even further against Bobby. The more he thought about it, the more he realised his life with Morgan was either about sex or work. Did they even talk much towards the end? He didn't blame either of them anymore. Jules' passion for medicine didn't always jive with Morgan's passion for goofing off, but he liked to think they were relatively happy in their relationship.

"I love this guy," Bobby commented, when the hot little stud on TV began to eat a raw fish.

"Ooh, why do you like this show?" he asked.

Bobby's hand wandered further up Jules' chest. "I don't know. I guess because it's a show about taking what you're given and making the most of it."

Jules pressed his ass against Bobby's crotch. "Are you sure it has nothing to do with the fact he's sex on a stick?"

Bobby chuckled and reached up to pinch Jules' nipple. "Oh, that doesn't hurt, but it's really not the reason I watch."

Jules trapped Bobby's hand where it was, the delicious sensation of his lover's fingers torturing his nipple too good to give up. He felt his cock fill, tenting out the fabric of his navy pyjama pants.

"Oh, you like that, do you?" Bobby teased, nipping Jules' earlobe.

Jules started to roll over, but Bobby stopped him. "Just stay where you are and let me love you."

Stilling, Jules' brow crinkled, making him wince when the stitches pulled against his flesh. "You don't want me to reciprocate?"

Bobby's hand travelled down Jules' stomach to the elastic band of his pyjama bottoms. "This is for you. I just want to lie here and touch every inch of your body."

"What about you?" Jules asked as Bobby's hand slipped down the front of his pants.

Encircling Jules' cock in his hand, Bobby pressed the hard ridge of his erection against Jules' ass. "Don't worry about me. I'm doing just fine."

Jules decided to give himself over to Bobby's brand of loving. The hand on his cock felt divine as he settled into his lover's comforting embrace.

"I noticed you took down all the pictures in this room," Bobby whispered, pressing his thumb to the underside of Jules' cockhead.

Jules nodded. "Like I told you, it wasn't just photographs of Morgan that were making this place more like a mausoleum than a home."

Bobby released Jules' erection and started pushing his pants down. Jules lifted his hip off the sofa and kicked them off. Bobby groaned and positioned Jules' left leg atop his own, opening Jules further.

"I think you should put some of them back. There's nothing wrong with having memories around you. As long as you don't use them to replace the present and the future, there's nothing wrong with it."

Is that what he'd done? Jules nodded to himself. That's exactly what he'd done. "Maybe some of my parents and sister, but I think I'll leave Morgan packed away, at least for now."

Bobby's hands massaged Jules' balls as he licked the side of Jules' neck. "Although I'm trying to take Morgan's place in your bed, I'm not stupid enough to think I'll ever get him out of your heart."

With Bobby's finger brushing against his hole, Jules didn't want to analyse his feelings for Morgan. Instead of answering, he reached back and lifted Bobby's hand to his mouth. Laving the callused digits, he applied as much spit as he could.

"You needing, babe?" Bobby asked, removing his fingers and moving them back to Jules' hole.

Jules nodded. "Please."

Chuckling, Bobby inserted the tip of his middle finger, stopping at the first knuckle. "Is this what you want?"

Jules pushed back, impaling himself. "More."

Slowly fucking Jules with his finger, Bobby moaned. "I don't know about you, but I need a little more."

Bobby wiggled out from behind Jules and flipped him onto his back. Placing one of Jules' legs over the back of the sofa, Bobby smiled. "You're so fucking hot like this, open to my eyes, fingers and tongue."

To prove it, Bobby manoeuvred himself between Jules' spread thighs and inhaled. Bobby spat and warm saliva ran down the crack of Jules' ass. As Bobby nuzzled and licked Jules' balls, his fingers were busy sawing in and out of his hole.

Jules couldn't remember ever feeling so completely stimulated. It was hard to breathe. He gasped as Bobby's mouth sunk down on his cock. "Shit," Jules panted.

He could hear a zipper lower and knew Bobby was shucking his jeans. "Fuck me."

Bobby released Jules' shaft and shook his head. "Nope, I already said this was all about you."

"Yes, and I want you to fuck me," he begged.

Bobby winked. "Plenty of time for that later. Just relax and ride it out."

Ride it out? Hell, Jules' cock was about to explode into a million pieces. The scrape of Bobby's teeth as he sucked Jules' length down his throat, was enough to push him over the edge.

Gripping handfuls of Bobby's hair, Jules yelled out his climax. "Coming!"

He bit his lip as he pumped his seed down Bobby's throat.

Still nursing Jules' cock, Bobby groaned as his body began to buck and vibrate with his own release.

The two of them laid on the sofa like a couple of wet noodles as they both tried to get their breathing under control. Jules recovered first and reached down to tilt Bobby's face up to his. Thank you didn't seem to be the right thing to say, but neither did words of love. Jules bit his lip and grinned. "You're pretty damn good at that."

Bobby chuckled. "You ain't seen nothing yet."

Chapter Six

By the time Jules arrived, the boat reconstruction project appeared to be in full swing. He climbed out of his Jaguar and walked towards Bobby, who was busy fixing a board to the hull of the boat.

He waved to the other men, as he approached his lover. "Sorry I'm late."

Bobby's head turned his way and Jules was blessed with one of those million dollar smiles. "You're here now, that's the important thing."

Although Bobby's hands were busy, he pursed his lips. "Give me a kiss to last until I can get at you for real."

Jules took a step closer and pressed his body against Bobby's, lightly brushing the front of his lover's faded work jeans. Leaning in, he covered Bobby's lips and slipped his tongue inside, tasting beer.

As their kiss continued, both men seemed to forget about the others. Bobby moaned and attacked Jules' mouth like he was starving for it.

A throat cleared, and Jules opened his eyes. He released Bobby's tongue and grinned. "I'm suddenly dying for a beer."

"In the cooler up on deck," Bobby whispered against Jules' lips. "Give me twenty minutes, and I'll come greet you properly."

"Any more proper and the two of you might as well head to bed," Marco laughed.

Jules looked Bobby up and down. The tight jeans and white muscle shirt made him horny as hell. Funny, he'd never really been into the blue-collar-type of guy, but Bobby was positively drool-worthy.

Licking his lips, Jules gazed into Bobby's eyes. "What would you like me to do?"

Leaning in, Bobby whispered in Jules' ear. "I'd really like you to get on your knees and suck my cock, but I don't think these guys would appreciate it much."

Jules scanned the group of handsome men. "Probably not. Pity, because the idea sounds absolutely delicious."

Bobby's eyebrows rose. "This is a side of you I'm quickly coming to enjoy."

"Really? What side?"

"The sex machine side. I thought you'd be a kind and loving partner, but I had no idea you'd be such a hell-cat."

Jules laughed. He'd never been called a hell-cat in his entire life. He may have enjoyed sex in the past, but he'd never felt like fucking at all hours of the day, at least not until he started spending time with Bobby. He wondered if it had to do with him getting older? Was he trying to recapture his youth? No, that couldn't be it. Although he and Morgan had enjoyed an active sex life, it had never been Jules' priority.

"Come find me as soon as you can," Jules said with a wink and climbed the ladder to board the boat.

He could hear Bobby's friends' teasing comments as he went down the stairs to the salon. There, he found Eric and Angelo applying varnish to the already sanded bulkhead. "Looks good."

Eric turned and smiled. "It does, doesn't it? I think Bobby'll be happy when he sees it."

Jules bent over and retrieved a bottle of beer from the cooler. "Where do you need me?"

Eric stopped and glanced around the cabin. "Well, you could start carrying the furniture on deck if you want to. I think Kent talked Bobby into replacing the deck flooring instead of trying to fix it."

Jules took another pull off his beer and set the bottle on one of the built-in shelves. He worked for the next thirty minutes carrying everything he could. The narrow sofa he'd need help with, although looking at it, Jules thought it might be better to junk it. The chairs were in good structural condition, some new upholstery and they'd be good as new, but the sofa was another story.

He thought about the buttery yellow leather couch he had in the den. He never even bothered going into the room. Jules wondered if Bobby would be offended if he offered to give it to him. His lover would have to come up with a way to attach the legs to the floor, but Jules doubted it would be a problem.

A sweaty set of arms wrapped around Jules from behind. "Hey, baby."

Turning his head, Jules kissed his man. "Break time?"

"Mmm hmm," Bobby moaned, rimming Jules' lips with his tongue.

Without another word, Jules took Bobby's hand and led him back to the captain's cabin. Once he had the door shut, he pushed Bobby onto the bed and straddled his lap. Grinding his erection against Bobby's, Jules groaned. "I've been thinking about this for two full days."

He dug into his pocket and handed Bobby a single-use packet of lube and a condom. Jules pulled his tight T-shirt up until it sat just below his armpits and went to work on his jeans.

Standing, he stepped out of his shoes and shucked his jeans and underwear. When he noticed that Bobby hadn't moved, he ran a hand up his torso to rub across his pebbled nipples. "Not interested?"

"Course I'm interested, just enjoying the show." Bobby reached down and unzipped his jeans. "Help me with my boots, will ya?"

With his erection bobbing up and down as he moved, Jules untied Bobby's work boots and pulled them off. "So what'd you do last night?"

Bobby kicked off his jeans and scooted back on the bed. "Well, since my personal sex machine wasn't available, I was left working on the boat."

Jules picked the packet of lube up from the bed and tore it open with his teeth. After squirting the contents into his hand, he straddled Bobby's lap and started stretching himself. Never in his adult life had he wanted someone to fuck him as bad as he did at that moment. His fingers were shaking with impatience as he started with two, and quickly worked up to four.

By the time Bobby's erection was sheathed, Jules was out of patience. He reached behind him and held Bobby's cock by the base as he impaled himself. "Oh, god, yes," he moaned, dropping his head back.

The delicious feel of Bobby's fat length filling him had Jules ready to come in no time. He held on, by sheer will as he rode his lover's shaft.

Although Bobby seemed quiet, his expression signalled his obvious enjoyment. Dropping to Bobby's chest, Jules kissed him. "You have no idea how much I needed this."

Bobby chuckled, thrusting up. "I think I've got a pretty good idea."

Jules continued to ride the thick cock, knowing Bobby really did have no idea. Since the bottom-boy in him had been reawakened, he'd thought of nothing else but Bobby's dick inside of him. He could be right in the middle of something at work, and his asshole would

twitch with the need to be filled. He'd often wondered whether he was going through some kind of midlife crisis.

Reaching between their bodies, Jules wrapped a hand around his cock. He wished he could tell Bobby how much he thought of him during any given day. Sometimes he worried that he'd become obsessed by the man, but then he'd push the negative thoughts away. There was nothing unhealthy about the way he felt about Bobby. Even if he couldn't confess those feelings, they were indeed valid.

Pushing Jules to the side, Bobby rolled over on top of him. "My turn."

Spreading his legs as wide as a forty-three year old man could, Jules happily gave his body over to Bobby's thrusting hips.

"Yes, oh, shit, yes," he continued to mumble.

The first rope of his seed landed high on his chest as his cock erupted. The way Bobby rode his ass, Jules had no doubt he'd feel like the man was still inside of him for days to come.

Bobby's orgasm seemed to take him by surprise. His eyes opened wide and his jaw dropped in a silent scream. He continued to thrust his way through his climax, grinding his pelvis against Jules' ass.

Collapsing on top of Jules, Bobby panted, his breath heating the skin of Jules' neck. "You're gonna kill me," Bobby croaked.

Bobby's body tensed and he rose up on his elbows to peer down at Jules. "I'm sorry. That was a shitty thing to say."

Jules hadn't even realised what Bobby had said until the apology. He shook his head. "It took me a long time to understand that I wasn't responsible for Morgan's death. Don't apologise."

* * * *

Bobby rolled to the side and rested his hands on his chest. Why would Jules ever feel responsible for Morgan's death? He realised he didn't know the whole story, something he'd definitely have to remedy in the coming months.

Turning to gaze into Jules' eyes, he smiled. "I haven't had this much sex since I was in high school."

Jules' brows rose to his hairline. "You had sex in high school?"

"Sure, I went to an all male boarding school. That's what you do to pass the time."

Jules whistled. "I didn't have my first sexual experience until I went away to college."

As much as it twisted his gut to think about Jules with another man, he knew this was his chance to delve deeper into the relationship with Morgan. "Morgan?"

Bobby couldn't read the expression on Jules' face. "Uh, yeah. We met during our freshman year."

So, Morgan was Jules' first lover. Bobby wondered if that had anything to do with the hold the dead man still had over Jules. "Have you dated much since..."

"No, not really. I tried going out, meeting guys at bars and stuff. Even hired an escort once, but they always left me feeling...empty."

"And now?" Bobby pushed.

Jules rolled over on his side and stroked Bobby's sweaty chest. "Now, I've found you."

Bobby covered Jules' hand, stilling it against his chest. "I'm not the rebound guy, am I?"

"Rebound guy? Morgan's been dead for sixteen years."

Bobby shook his head. "Doesn't matter how long he's been gone. I'm just worried that this is the first time you've opened yourself to a relationship since his death."

What he didn't say was that he'd been worried things were progressing too fast between them. The more he felt himself fall for Jules, the more scared he became. He knew from talking to Zac and Eric just how new dating was for Jules. Bobby wasn't sure his heart could stand to be broken by the man, and with Jules' apparent zeal for constant sex, it was even more worrisome.

What if he was being used? A rich man's play toy? He didn't think Jules would hurt him on purpose. He felt he knew enough about the guy to determine that, but what if Jules wasn't even aware of Bobby's growing feelings?

His thoughts were interrupted by his chirping cell phone. "Sorry, hang on." Sitting up, he reached for his jeans with one hand as he slid the condom off with the other.

Glancing at the display, he groaned. "What do you want?"

"You to pull your head out of your ass and get back on *The Gypsy*," Brad barked.

"I quit, or couldn't you tell by the lack of my things on the boat?"

"You can't quit. This is a family operation and you're family."

Bobby wrapped the condom in a tissue and tossed it into the trash can. He ran a hand over Jules' hip to calm himself. "You lied to me, Brad. Why the hell would I want to work for two deceitful sons-of-bitches? You and Dad wanted *The Gypsy* bad enough to take her from me, well, she's your problem now. Don't call me again."

Bobby turned off his phone and tossed it back onto his jeans.

"Problem?" Jules asked, pulling Bobby down into his arms.

"Nothing I didn't anticipate." He gave Jules a deep kiss, running his hands over the man's naked, sticky body.

"I need to get back out there before I lose my workforce." He sat up again and swung his legs over the side of the bed and reached for his clothes.

"Want me to run out and get something for everyone to eat?" Jules asked.

"You don't have to do that. We can order pizza or something."

"I don't mind, really. I know a great barbeque place. I'll just pick up some meat and bread, couple of side dishes."

Bobby pulled his boots on and tied them. "I'd appreciate it."

"Oh, really? How much?" Jules said, bending one leg up in a seductive pose.

Bobby bent over and sucked Jules' flaccid cock into his mouth. The longer he sucked, the harder the shaft became. Knowing he didn't have time to finish what he'd started, he released the cock and smiled.

"I'll think of something."

* * * *

As soon as he kissed Jules goodbye the harassment began.

"You're becoming quite the lover boy," Marco chuckled.

"Shut up," Bobby barked.

"What? You suck his tongue in front of us and we can't comment?" Kent teased.

Bobby put his hands on his hips. He wasn't upset with his friends for giving him a hard time. He deserved it after the display he and Jules had put on earlier, but if he didn't at least offer a token protest, they'd know he was falling in love.

Love? Bobby shook the thought away and grabbed a beer out of the cooler. "Give me a break, will ya? It's been ages since I've dated anyone I'd be willing to bring around you Neanderthals."

His friends chuckled again but eventually went back to work on the hull of the boat. Eric walked over and leaned his back against the boat with a broad grin on his face.

"You really like him, don't you?"

Bobby took a drink of his beer and nodded. "We've got a few issues to work out, but yeah."

"I don't know him real well, but I can honestly say I've never seen Dr. Peters happier. I'm not the only one who's noticed either. He's kinda the talk of the ER department lately, especially after you rode in on your white horse after he passed out and bumped his head."

That brought up a subject Bobby had been meaning to ask Eric about. "What made Jules faint that day?"

Eric broke eye contact. "Have you asked him?"

"Yeah, but he never really gave me an answer."

When Eric continued to just stand there, Bobby put a hand on the smaller man's shoulder. "Tell me."

Eric shook his head. "I don't know anything for sure."

"Then tell me what you think?" Bobby prodded.

Eric bit his lower lip as he suddenly seemed to find his shoes fascinating. "I think maybe the guy I was working on reminded him of Morgan. I don't know that for sure though, so don't say anything. All I know is Dr. Peters took one look at the patient and went white, seconds before passing out."

"Maybe he knew the guy," Bobby offered.

Eric shook his head. "He didn't. The patient was from Little Rock, here on business. It was a rental car that he wrecked."

Bobby set down his beer and picked up the electric sander and a mask. "Thanks for telling me."

Eric started to walk off but stopped and turned around. "If it helps, I think he really likes you."

Bobby nodded. "It does."

He watched as Eric retreated back up the ladder, before turning his attention to the hull. Eric's theory made sense, especially after the scene in the bedroom with Morgan's photographs. Had Bobby known Morgan was forefront in Jules' mind that day he never would've initiated sex between them. He may be the jealous type, but he sure as hell wasn't a cold-hearted bastard.

"Sorry, but I need to take off," Trey said, tapping Bobby on the shoulder.

He turned off the sander and lowered his mask. "Why, hot date?"

Trey snorted. "Hardly. I promised I'd chaperone prom."

There was no greater torture in Bobby's opinion. He'd never understand why Zac and Trey chose to spend their days with high school kids. He couldn't stand the smart-assed fuckers. "Have fun with that."

Trey grinned and strode towards his car.

"Where's he going?" Zac asked.

"Said he was chaperoning prom." Bobby gave an exaggerated shudder.

Zac smiled. "So he did sign up after all. Good for him."

"Yeah, if it's such a great gig, why aren't you there?" Bobby questioned.

"Because I don't have a crush on the principal."

That was news to Bobby. Hell, he didn't think he'd ever even known to look twice at a man, let alone have a crush. He knew Trey was gay, you could tell that just by being in his company for more than five minutes, but as far as he knew, his friend never dated.

"Interesting."

* * * *

Jules watched Bobby as he put away the last of the tools. Working in the sun all day had turned his skin a subtle shade of brown. Jules licked his lips as Bobby bent over his toolbox. He couldn't resist any longer. He'd been good for the rest of the evening, trying his best to keep his hands off the gorgeous man in front of him, but now it was just the two of them.

Jules stood and walked over to Bobby. Running both hands over his lover's ass, he groaned. "Are we through for the day?"

Bobby stood and turned around to take Jules into his embrace. "We're done working if that's what you mean."

Jules ran his hands up Bobby's muscled arms to clasp behind his neck. "I'm off tomorrow, but I'm still on call so I need to be close to the hospital. You feel like going home with me? We can wake up and read the Sunday paper in bed."

Bobby ground his groin against Jules. "I can think of a few other things I'd rather do in bed than read."

"Really? You'll have to show me," Jules teased, kissing the base of Bobby's throat.

Bobby moaned and took a step back. "Mind if I grab a change of clothes?"

"Not at all."

Jules waited while Bobby gathered his things. He heard a car pull up outside and went up to investigate. A well-dressed business man got out of an expensive car and sneered at *My Second Chance*. The sinking feeling in Jules' stomach told him exactly who the man was. Without saying a word, Jules went below deck and to the captain's cabin.

"I think maybe your brother's here."

Bobby stopped in the midst of shoving a clean pair of jeans into a small duffle. "Brad?"

Jules shrugged. "I don't know for sure. Does he drive a grey Mercedes sedan?"

"Shit." Bobby tossed the bag on the bed and headed for the deck.

Jules wasn't sure if he should follow Bobby or stay put. He decided to stay far enough out of sight that Brad wouldn't make any derogatory comments. He wasn't sure how Bobby's family felt about his sexual preference or if they even knew. It definitely seemed to Jules that the family wasn't close.

Jules sat on the deck out of site from the two men arguing below.

"What do you want, Brad?"

"I told you earlier on the phone. I need you to pull your head out of your ass and get back to work."

"I don't work for you and Dad anymore, or didn't you get the resignation letter I left on *The Gypsy*?"

"Don't be an ass. You and I both know you can't just walk away from *The Gypsy*. Come on back, and we'll forget this misunderstanding happened."

"Fuck you. You've never treated me with anything more than contempt. I wouldn't work for you and Dad if you paid me double. You're both lying sacks of shit as far as I'm concerned."

Jules felt like an intruder. He got to his feet and started to head back below deck. The problems between Bobby and his family evidently went beyond Brad buying *The Gypsy*. He caught snatches of conversation as he descended the steps.

"We can't find anyone else to captain her," Brad whined.

"That's your problem."

"Do you want us to sell her? Is that it?" Brad asked.

Jules paused on the stairs only to hear Bobby let loose with a string of very colourful curse words.

He heard a car door slam and quickly sat on a five-gallon paint bucket. Bobby's face was beet red. Jules started to say something, but Bobby held up a hand, stopping him.

"Give me a few minutes, will ya?" Bobby asked and disappeared into his cabin.

Jules wasn't sure how long he sat there, before the door finally opened and Bobby came striding out, duffle in hand.

"You ready?" he asked.

Jules nodded and led the way to his car. "You want to ride with me, or follow?" he asked.

Bobby tossed his bag into his Jeep and continued walking until he was nose to nose with Jules. "I'll follow, but first things first."

He wrapped his arms around Jules and kissed him. Jules opened immediately for his lover's questing tongue. The fervour with which Bobby kissed him, told Jules the man was looking for a little reassurance.

"Are you sure you don't want to ride with me? I promise not to hold you hostage, chained to my bed."

Bobby grinned. "Yeah, I'll ride with ya."

Bobby walked over to his Jeep and picked up his bag. After tossing it in the backseat of Jules' car, he leaned over for another kiss. "We can discuss the chains later."

Chapter Seven

After slipping on his boxer-briefs, Bobby started downstairs. His ringing cell phone had him turning back to the bedroom. "Hello?"

"Bobby, it's Mom."

Bobby hadn't spoken to his mother since the day of the blow-up. "Hi, Mom."

"I was wondering if you were free for lunch this afternoon?"

Running a hand through his hair, he thought of the sexy man making breakfast for him. "Sorry, I've already got plans. Maybe sometime this week."

His mom sighed. "What's so important that you can't have a short lunch with your mother?"

Had his mother ever bothered putting him first in her life, the comment might have made Bobby feel bad, but that wasn't the case. "I'm spending the day with a friend."

"A boyfriend?" she inquired.

"Yes, if you must know."

"Oh, don't act like that, young man. You know I've never cared about your sexual orientation."

That's because you never really cared, period. "Whatever."

"Maybe your boyfriend would like to have lunch with us. I'd be willing to allow him to join us."

Sitting on the side of the bed, Bobby fell back. His mom really sounded like she was trying to bridge the gap between them. She'd never offered to meet any of the men he'd dated. "I'll have to talk to Jules and call you back."

"That's fine, dear. Just let me know as soon as you can."

Bobby hung up and noticed he had two messages. When he saw they were from Brad, he deleted them without listening. The last thing he needed was to be cussed out by his prick brother again.

Tossing the phone on the bed, he went downstairs. "Something smells good."

"There you are. I was getting ready to send a search party." Jules, dressed in a thin cotton knee-length robe, took two plates out of the warming drawer and set them on the table.

After taking several bites, Bobby glanced up at Jules. "My mom called. She wants the two of us to meet her for lunch."

He took a sip of coffee as Jules seemed to think it over. "Did she actually say she wanted to meet me?"

Bobby shrugged and swallowed a piece of bacon. "She asked if I'd invite you to join us. I guess that means she wants to meet you."

"What do you suppose she'll think about the age difference?" Jules asked.

"All I have to do is introduce you as Dr. Peters, and she'll be fine with it. My mother has always been about appearances and social status. Funny since she was my father's secretary when he fucked her and got her pregnant with me."

Jules wiped his mouth with a napkin. "Was your father married at the time?"

Bobby nodded. "Yep, to Brad's mother. I guess it was kind of a big deal at the time. Brad's mother came from money. The same money my father used to start his company. I think it's one of the reasons Brad hates me so much."

Jules got up and stood beside Bobby. Knowing what his lover wanted, Bobby scooted his chair back and Jules straddled his lap. Burying his fingers in Bobby's hair, Jules kissed him.

"I'd love to meet your mother, but only if you want me to."

Bobby untied the knot at Jules' waist and parted the robe for his questing hands. "I'm not exactly sure what she might be up to, but I would like her to meet you."

Bobby skimmed his hands down Jules' back to cup the globes of his bare ass. Bringing one of his hands back up to the table, he ran his fingers through the butter dish.

"What're you doing?" Jules asked.

Chuckling, Bobby entered Jules' puckered hole with one buttered digit. "Trying to butter you up."

Jules rolled his eyes and nipped Bobby's lower lip. "That was bad."

Introducing another finger, Bobby bit Jules' back. "Oh, I can be even badder."

"So can I," Jules replied, pulling a condom out of the pocket of his robe.

* * * *

Getting into the passenger seat of the 1956 Jaguar, Bobby pointed to the last garage bay where another car sat covered. "What's that?"

Jules didn't even look as he started the car. "That was my first restoration project."

"Cool. Can I see it?"

Bobby noticed the way Jules' fingers gripped the steering wheel as he pulled out of the garage.

"Perhaps someday," Jules said and left it at that.

It was a beautiful day. The sun was actually shining, something rare for that time of year. They'd decided to swing by Bobby's on the way home from lunch. He wanted to see if the hull was ready for a new coat of paint.

"Are we going to be late?" Jules asked.

"No. Mom's always at least twenty minutes fashionably late for everything anyway."

They parked in front of the upscale café and were seated on the patio. Bobby wanted to order a drink, but decided it would be best to keep his wits. He never knew what frame of mind his mother might be in and he wanted his full faculties to deal with any situation.

Jules reached over and threaded his fingers through Bobby's. "I can't believe I'm nervous."

Bobby chuckled. "I'll protect you."

Leaning over, Bobby gave Jules a chaste kiss on the lips. He spotted his mother's two-toned grey Rolls Royce as it pulled up to the curb. Her driver jumped out and opened the car door. "She's here."

Jules looked over and whistled. "Arriving in style."

"It's the only way she travels."

His mother swept onto the patio in her designer clothes and offered her cheek. Bobby gave his mom the customary greeting and gestured towards Jules. "Katherine Quinn, I'd like to introduce you to Dr. Jules Peters."

Like he knew she would, Bobby's mother's eyes sparkled as she held out her hand. Jules was as smooth as ever and bent to place a kiss on the back of Katherine's hand.

"A pleasure to meet you, Katherine."

Bobby stood and pulled out his mother's chair. Once they were seated, he called the waiter over. "Would you care for something to drink?" he asked his mom.

"Sparkling water with a lime twist."

Bobby rolled his eyes. "Just bring me plain water, no twist."

"I'll have the same," Jules agreed.

Bobby noticed his mother staring at Jules. "So how've you been, mom?"

"Dreadful," she answered.

The waiter came back with our drinks and asked if we were ready to order.

"Give us a few more minutes," his mom instructed.

After the waiter left, she turned to Bobby. "You simply must end this tiff you're having with Bradley and your father."

Bobby choked on sip of water and began coughing. Jules reached over and put his hand on Bobby's thigh. Recovering, he stared at his mother. "Is that why you wanted to meet me for lunch?"

Katherine made a tsking sound. "I care about my family. You being at odds with your brother and father is having serious repercussions on my marriage, and I won't have it."

Bobby couldn't believe what he was hearing. "So you're blaming me?"

"I'm not blaming anyone. Bradley said that he attempted to clear the air with you, but you refused to listen."

Putting his arms on the table, Bobby leaned forward. "Stay out of this, Mom."

Katherine squared her shoulders. "I can't stay out of it. Quinn Industries isn't doing well. The board of directors fired Bradley last month and according to your father, the board is trying to see him fired as well. Your father has had to hire a very expensive attorney in order to try and hold his place as head of the corporation."

Bobby was shocked that Brad had been booted out of the company. He'd always been Quinn Industries' golden boy. "What does any of this have to do with me?"

"As you can imagine, the upkeep and marina fees for *The Gypsy* are quite expensive. Without that damn boat bringing in money, soon your father and brother will be forced to sell it. Is that what you want?"

Yes, *that's exactly what I want*. "Tell you what, mother. Go back to dear old Dad and tell him I'll take *The Gypsy* off his hands for twenty-five thousand dollars and not a penny more."

"Don't be ridiculous. *The Gypsy* is worth at least five times that amount of money."

"Now, yes. After I broke my back restoring her. But Brad and Dad bought it from the bank for what I still owed on the loan which was twenty thousand, four hundred and eighty-seven dollars. Hell, I'm giving them thirteen dollars profit."

Bobby noticed Jules' hand pressed against his mouth in an attempt not to laugh. He winked at his lover. At this point, he didn't care if he got *The Gypsy* back or not. He'd probably just turn around and sell her again anyway.

His mother stood and picked her clutch bag up from the table. "You're being an ass, Robert."

"Maybe so, but it's what they deserve. Let 'em try and sell it. It'll take months and in the meantime, they'll keep racking up marina fees and repair costs."

Bobby crossed his arms, and watched his mother walk away. He turned to Jules and shrugged. "Lovely, isn't she?"

"How did you turn out so normal?" Jules asked with a chuckle.

"I was fortunate enough to be sent away to boarding school when I was eight."

Bobby took another drink of his water. In the beginning, he'd hated boarding school. All he wanted was to go home, but his parents wouldn't allow it. They'd told him it was for the best. Unlike most kids at the school, his parents only allowed him one visit a year at Christmas break. During the summers he'd been sent to camp. By the time he was a teenager, Bobby couldn't have cared less about his family and they'd seemed to reciprocate those feelings.

The more he thought about his mother's plea, the angrier he became. "Mind if we get out of here? We can grab something to eat on the way."

Jules stood and tossed some money on the table. "Let's go."

As soon as they were away from the restaurant, Jules pulled into a small Italian place. "I'll run in and get us something to go."

Bobby nodded. Before getting out of the car, Jules pulled him in for a kiss. Bobby returned the gesture with interest, delving his tongue deep into Jules' mouth. "Thanks."

Jules ran his knuckles down the side of Bobby's face. It was probably the tenderest gesture anyone had ever given him. Bobby turned his head and kissed his lover's fingers.

Without saying anything, Jules got out of the car and went inside. As Bobby sat there, he started thinking about both *The Gypsy* and *My Second Chance*. He had indeed loved his first boat. When he'd lost the trawler to Brad, it had almost killed him. He purchased *My*

Second Chance as a way of getting over the pain. But what he was quickly coming to realise was that nothing would heal the hurt dealt him by losing his first love to Brad and his father.

Jules came back and handed a bag full of containers to Bobby before getting in. Peeking into the bag, Bobby grinned. "Hungry?"

Jules shrugged and started the car. "This way we don't have to go out again later."

They drove to the construction yard, and pulled up beside *My Second Chance*. Bobby tried to imagine what the boat would look like when finished. He got out of the low-slung car and ran his hand over the hull.

"Is it ready?" Jules asked from behind him.

"Yeah, but I don't feel like doing it right now." Bobby wasn't positive that he'd ever feel like it.

"Ready to eat?"

Bobby turned back to Jules. "Yeah."

Once in the salon, he made a makeshift table and chairs out of paint buckets and a sheet of wood.

"The woodwork in here turned out nice," Jules commented.

Bobby studied the shiny walls. Before he'd started, years of grime had masked the wood's true beauty, now the mahogany panels were indeed breathtaking. "She's cleaning up pretty nice."

"I'll say."

Once he got the floor laid, it was just a matter of getting the furniture reupholstered. The engine had been one of the first things he'd tackled, so other than a tune-up, it should be good to go.

Bobby ate a bite of spaghetti. Why wasn't he more excited at the prospect of finishing *My Second Chance*? The scene with his mother continued to bother him. Maybe that was the reason his desire to finish the boat had waned.

"Have your parents always been that way?" Jules asked, breaking into Bobby's thoughts.

"What way? Putting money first? Yeah."

Jules' hand landed on his shoulder. "Not all wealthy people are like that, you know. My sister and I had plenty of love growing up."

"You were lucky," Bobby mumbled.

"I know, but I don't think I realised it as much as I do now."

"What were they like?"

Jules swallowed a piece of bread and took a drink of water before answering. "I don't know. Don't get me wrong. I mean, my dad didn't coach my baseball team or anything like that, but they were always at the games. I think maybe my dad grew up in a house like the one you did, because he seemed to make an extra effort to spend time with me and Beth."

Bobby wondered if he'd be a different person had his parents spent time with him. He shook his head. No sense dwelling on a past that couldn't be relived.

"Mind if we go back to your place? My heart's just not in this at the moment."

"I've got a better idea. Why don't we do something fun, like go to the zoo?" Jules asked.

"The zoo?"

"Yeah, come on. It should be open for at least another three hours. That should give us plenty of time to meet your relatives in the monkey cage."

"Har, har." Bobby scratched his head. He didn't want to admit it to Jules, but he'd never been to the zoo. He'd never really seen the appeal of looking at a bunch of animals that you could see on television. Still, he knew Jules was doing his best to cheer him up. "Okay."

"Good, finish your lunch and let's go."

* * * *

Jules handed Bobby his hotdog. "Do you want to sit?"

Bobby shook his head. "We've only got another thirty minutes before the park closes. Let's see if we can find the reptile house."

Jules hid his grin and walked along side of Bobby. His lover had reminded him of a kid since they'd been there. At first Bobby had tried to put on a cool act, but that fell by the wayside as soon as he spotted the seals.

They must've watched those damn little guys for at least thirty minutes before he was finally able to drag Bobby away. To see a grown man take such joy in something as simple as watching an elephant eat a cube of frozen fruit, threw him. Jules began to wonder just how alienated from a normal childhood Bobby had been.

"Wouldn't you rather see the polar bears?" he asked.

Bobby's eyes lit up. "They have polar bears? Isn't it too hot for them?"

Jules grinned. "They have a special habitat for them."

"Cool. Is it on the way to the reptile house?"

Jules stopped and tossed his napkin in a trash can. "What's with you and snakes?"

Bobby shrugged. "I like 'em. When I was a boy I was obsessed with them. I read everything I could get my hands on."

Finally. A sign that Bobby had actually been a boy. "Did you have one?"

"A snake? No way. Headmaster Jorgens would never have allowed it. I did find one at camp though. I kept it in a box under my bed until it escaped." Bobby threw his trash away and took Jules' hand.

Jules threaded their fingers together and squeezed. "If you think this zoo is good, we should take a trip to San Diego some weekend. Have you ever been to Sea World?"

"No. Why? You wanna go with me?"

"Yeah. They've got an awesome sea lion show that I think you'd love. We could do the zoo thing and Sea World in the same weekend."

"Sounds like a plan."

* * * *

"Hey."

Bobby tossed an armload of scrap lumber into the dumpster and turned to find Marco headed his way. "You working this site?"

"Yeah, just got here. Doing some brick work out on the patio." Marco gave Bobby a friendly hug. "How've you been?"

Bobby shrugged. "Work sucks, but everything else is okay. You?"

"Same shit different day," Marco replied.

"You boys gonna talk or are you planning to actually get some work done?" Kent asked, strolling past.

Marco rolled his eyes. "Better get to it. Meet me for lunch?"

"Sure, although I'm brown bagging it."

"Same here. I'll meet you under that shade tree over there around eleven-thirty."

Bobby nodded his agreement and grabbed the wheelbarrow handles. As he went to retrieve another load of scrap, he began wondering what the hell he was doing there. He'd

been educated in some of the finest schools in the country and he was working as a labourer on a construction site.

Maybe I should go back and finish college?

"Bobby," someone yelled.

Bobby glanced over his shoulder. "Yeah?" he asked one of the electricians.

"We're all done on the first floor."

"Okay, I'll be in as soon as I finish with this pile."

He began loading more scrap into the wheelbarrow. College was looking better all the time.

* * * *

It was Thursday evening before Bobby saw Jules again. He had a new appreciation for Zac's patience with Eric's work schedule. He pulled into the garage using the remote door opener that Jules had given him the previous Sunday and shut off the engine.

The door leading to the house opened and Jules appeared with two bottles of his favourite beer. "Thirsty?"

Bobby smiled for the first time all week. "Yeah."

His relationship with Jules was the one thing that kept him going. He got out of the Jeep, duffle in hand and walked towards his lover. Standing toe to toe with Jules, Bobby leaned in for a kiss. "I've missed you."

Jules returned his smile and motioned towards the kitchen. "I stopped on the way home and picked up some dinner. You hungry?"

"Starved." Bobby followed Jules into the house and set his bag at the base of the staircase.

"I hope Chinese is okay." Jules began opening cartons as Bobby joined him at the table.

"Sure."

On the drive from the construction site, Bobby tried to figure out what to do next. Should he complete *My Second Chance* and sell her, or pull his head out of his ass and captain her?

Bobby wanted to confide in his lover. Maybe if they talked about what was bothering him, Jules could give him a different point of view.

"I don't think I wanna finish the boat," he confessed.

With a forkful of beef and broccoli halfway to his mouth, Jules paused. "Why?"

Bobby shrugged and pushed his plate away. "I guess my heart's just not in it."

Jules set his fork down. "What will you do? Continue to work for Kent?"

The idea of spending the rest of his life doing construction held no appeal. "I don't know. Maybe I should go back to school."

"Okay. Anything in particular you're interested in?" Jules asked, finally taking his bite of food.

Boats. Bobby sighed and ran his fingers through his hair. "I don't know. To be honest, I can't imagine doing anything else. Guess I'll need to think about it."

"What about the offer for *The Gypsy* you told your mother about?"

"I doubt they'll take it. Hell, even if they did, I'd probably turn around and put her up for sale."

Bobby watched as Jules continued to eat his dinner. After swallowing the last bite of food, he set his plate aside and regarded Bobby. "What was the favourite part of your job?"

"Huh?"

"When were you the happiest?" Jules prodded.

"Oh, that's easy. Taking families and groups like that out, but you don't make the same kind of money."

Scooting his chair over, Jules pushed Bobby's plate in front of him. "Eat while you listen."

Surprised at the command, Bobby stuck a bite of cashew chicken into his mouth.

"Now," Jules began, "how much money do you need to pay your bills and make you happy?"

Bobby took another bite of food as he thought about the question. He didn't have a figure of course, but he understood where Jules was going. Would it even be possible to book enough charters to hold the cost down? Because he knew that's what it would take. The kind of groups he enjoyed being around couldn't afford the high prices he'd been charging while working for Brad, but if he moved the boat to one of the more out of the way marinas it might be possible.

He leaned against Jules and grinned. "I've been worrying about this all week. How is it that you can put everything into perspective in a matter of fifteen minutes?"

"It's a gift," Jules chuckled.

Cupping Bobby's chin, Jules turned it towards him. "I've fallen in love with a great guy who doesn't seem to know his own worth. You've seen firsthand that money can't buy happiness. Hell, I'm proof of that. Doing what you love is what feeds the soul."

Bobby leaned in for a kiss, slipping his tongue into Jules mouth. "You love me?"

It was the first time Jules had said those words. Bobby had definitely fallen in love with the man in his arms, but he'd been too chicken shit to say anything.

"What's not to love?"

Without a word, Bobby stood and pulled Jules to his feet. He led him up the stairs and to the bedroom. He wanted so much to say the words back to Jules, but he wanted it to be special. It was the first time in his life that he'd professed love and he hoped like hell he could do it.

Once they were both undressed and under the covers, Bobby slid on top of his man and looked him in the eyes. "You're everything I've ever wanted in a partner. I have my bad days and the way my life is going, I'll never be rich, but..."

Jules grabbed the back of Bobby's head and pulled him down for a kiss. As their tongues played, their cocks rubbed against each other. Breaking the kiss, Bobby looked down into the eyes of the man who meant everything to him. "I love you."

There, he'd said it and surprisingly, it wasn't hard at all. Funny how those three words could make a man feel so incredibly bound to another human being.

Jules inhaled and a wide grin spread across his face as he thrust up against Bobby. With a wicked grin, Bobby slid down his lover's body and took Jules' erection into his mouth. He loved the smell and taste of Jules' cock.

Before starting on the head, Bobby worked his tongue up and down the length a few times before nuzzling Jules' balls with his nose and mouth. He lapped at the area long enough that Jules began to squirm.

"Suck me," Jules begged, gripping a handful of Bobby's hair.

With a groan, Bobby licked his way up Jules' shaft to the dripping mushroom head. Taking the first couple of inches into his mouth, Bobby gave the crown a tongue bath, making sure to press against the sensitive underside.

He was rewarded with a constant flow of pre-cum as he began to take more of the fat cock into his mouth. When the head touched the back of his throat he stopped. Deep-

throating a cock was a turn-on for some men, but he preferred to pleasure the first few inches. After all, the aim of a blow-job was giving pleasure to your partner, not seeing how much sausage you could stuff down your throat. He seemed to be doing a fair job at making Jules feel good, because his man was going crazy under him.

The grip on Bobby's hair became almost painful and he knew Jules was close. He scraped the sensitive underside with his bottom teeth and opened wide. Right on cue, Bobby was rewarded with long bursts of the thick cream he loved so much as Jules yelled his name to the ceiling.

Bobby didn't think he'd ever tire of hearing his partner call his name in climax. After licking Jules clean, Bobby crawled up the bed and dug in the drawer for the lube. "My turn."

Chapter Eight

Friday evening, Bobby pulled into the garage, disappointed to see Jules wasn't home yet. Going into the man's house without him there just didn't seem right somehow, so he figured he'd just hang out until his lover arrived.

Getting out of the Jeep, he wandered over to the far bay. He'd been curious about the car under the cover for a while, but had yet to investigate. Bobby lifted the tarpaulin and whistled. The gold 1978 Firebird Trans Am surprised him. It seemed totally out of character for Jules.

He pushed the cover back further and opened the door. Folding himself into the driver's seat, Bobby looked around. Even the interior was in mint condition, though he expected nothing less.

He noticed a fine layer of dust on the dash, and decided to do something about it. Going over to the cabinets beside Jules' work bench, Bobby found a rag and some stuff to make the interior shine.

About halfway through the project, the garage door opened and Jules pulled in.

"Hey, babe," Bobby greeted, climbing out of the Firebird.

"What the fuck do you think you're doing?" Jules screamed, getting out of his Jaguar.

Shocked by the vehemence in Jules' tone, Bobby held up the rag. "I got here early, so I thought I'd help you out and dust."

Jules rushed towards Bobby and pushed him away from the car. "You have no right to touch something that doesn't belong to you!"

Feeling as if he'd been punched in the face, Bobby dropped the rag and the bottle of cleaner. He turned on his heels and climbed into his Jeep. Opening the garage door, he stared at Jules who was busy covering the Firebird once again.

"You're no different than the rest of them," he spat.

He peeled out of Jules' fancy-assed driveway and headed home. Why the hell had he believed Jules was different? As long as he shoved his dick up the man's ass, everything was

fine, but the minute he touched one of his lover's toys, the ceiling came crashing down. Well, fuck him.

The closer he came to his boat, the less he wanted to be anywhere where Jules could find him. Coming to an intersection, he turned right and headed towards the ocean.

The longer he stayed behind the wheel, the more hurt he became. He wasn't sure how long he drove, but the next thing he knew, he was in Santa Cruz. Somehow his heart must've known what it needed at that moment. He stopped on the way to his favourite beach and picked up a twelve-pack of beer. Maybe an evening spent getting shit-faced would take away the pain?

With his head resting on his duffle, Bobby stared out at Monterey Bay as he opened yet another beer.

"Sir, you can't sleep here," a man said, walking towards him.

Bobby tried to sit up, but weaved a bit. "I don't think I can drive."

The man in the park uniform put his hands on his hips and stared down at him. "Well, either find someone to drive you, or I'll have to call someone to pick you up. We frown on public intoxication."

"I'm nursing a broken heart," he tried to excuse himself.

"Well nurse it somewhere else."

Bobby could tell by the look in the guy's eyes he wasn't going to cut him any slack. He dug his cell phone out of his pocket and called Zac.

"Hello?" a sleepy voice answered.

"Hi, Eric, is Zac there?"

Bobby heard Eric fumbling with the phone before Zac came on. "Bobby? Something wrong?"

"Yeah. I need a ride," he slurred.

"Where're you at?"

"The beach at Monterey Bay that I like to come to."

He heard Zac curse in the background. "What the hell are you doing all the way down there?"

"Gettin' drunk, but they won't let me sleep here, and I can't drive."

Bobby heard sheets rustle in the background.

"Where's Jules?" Zac asked.

"Who the fuck cares. Will you come get me or not?"

Zac sighed. "Yeah, but you'll owe me big time."

"Can't get blood from a stone, Zac."

"Just go sit in your Jeep. I'll be there as soon as I can."

Bobby hung up and looked at the guy still standing over him. "My friend's driving down to get me."

The man held out his hand and pulled Bobby to his feet. "Make sure you clean up this mess before you leave."

Bobby nodded and the guy walked towards his SUV. Staring down at the beer bottles littering the sand, Bobby shook his head. *How pathetic am I?*

* * * *

"Wake up," Zac grouched, punching Bobby's shoulder.

He opened his eyes and tried to remember where the hell he was. "What?"

"Get your shit and let's go," Zac ordered, going back to his own Jeep.

Bobby stretched and yawned. He grabbed his sandy duffle bag and followed.

"Did you get your keys?" Zac asked.

"Shit." Bobby turned back around and pulled his keys out of the ignition then locked up. Returning to Zac's Jeep, Bobby got in and threw his stuff in the back. "I appreciate this."

Zac put the Jeep into gear and headed back towards Pacifica. "Mind telling me what the hell you're doing in Santa Cruz?"

Bobby rested his head against the back of the seat. "Needed to get away."

"What happened?" Zac asked around a yawn.

"Got my head handed to me for looking at one of Jules' cars."

"Huh? That doesn't sound like him."

"Well, I noticed there was some dust on the dash and stuff so I was cleaning it while waiting for Jules to come home." Bobby shrugged. "Doesn't matter. Better to know what kind of man he is now than later."

"You love him?"

"Yeah."

"Then now is just as bad as later."

* * * *

After spraying a second coat of white paint on the hull, Bobby cleaned out the paint gun and put it away. Sitting around playing poker was the last thing he felt like doing, but he knew his friends would give him hell if he didn't show up.

As he passed by the bed, he reached down and picked up his cell. It didn't surprise him to see that he'd received nine messages in the last four hours. Between his family and Jules, he'd resorted to turning the damn thing off.

He cleared the messages without listening to them and grabbed a change of clothes. Hopefully Marco wouldn't mind sharing Zac's bathroom with him. He needed to get *My Second Chance* finished soon, or he'd be forced to get an apartment.

Bobby left the boat without bothering to take his phone. He'd be around everyone he cared to talk to anyway.

When he arrived at Zac's, he was surprised to see Jules' Jag parked in the driveway. He gripped the Jeep's steering wheel, unsure if he wanted to go in. What the hell was Jules doing here? These were his friends, dammit. Jules had no right. The more he thought about it, the madder he became.

He was just about to go up and give Jules a piece of his mind, when the front door opened and his ex-lover stepped out.

"Go home, Jules," Bobby called up.

"Not until you talk to me," Jules answered, making his way down the steps.

"Nothing to talk about. You put me in my place, and I chose not to put up with it."

As Jules neared, Bobby could see the older man's puffy, red eyes. *Good*. He wasn't the only one who felt like shit.

"I need to apologise and to explain a few things to you."

Bobby shook his head. "Not interested."

He knew Jules would keep on if he stayed where he was, so Bobby snatched the duffle out of the back and shouldered past him.

"Using the shower," he said to Zac as he passed through the living room.

Shutting the bathroom door, Bobby dropped the bag and sat on the side of the tub with his head in his hands. It had almost killed him not to reach out and pull Jules into his arms,

but he knew that would be a momentary fix. He simply couldn't live his life with a man who put things above people.

Standing, Bobby undressed and reached in to turn the shower on. He noticed the dirty ring around the tub and couldn't stop a chuckle from erupting. Zac was right. Marco didn't seem to know how to clean up after himself.

As he stepped into the shower, he expected Jules to burst through the door at any moment, but nothing happened. Although he didn't feel like talking to the man, it hurt to know Jules would give up so easily.

After a quick wash-up, Bobby turned off the shower and reached under the sink for the scrub brush. He'd have to remember to give Marco a hard time about his cleaning skills. Once the tub was spotless, he finished dressing and combed his hair.

Opening the door, he was surprised to be met by silence. "Where is everybody?"

He walked through the living room and into the kitchen. Jules sat at the table, hands clenched into a ball. "Where'd everyone go?"

"Outside. They said they weren't letting the two of us out until we talked things out."

"Fuck that," Bobby yelled. He strode to the front door and swung it open. Six men stood on the stairs with their arms crossed. "What the hell's the meaning of this?"

"I'm not going to let you just walk away, Bobby. You owe it to yourself to at least hear what Jules has to say," Zac informed him.

Bobby started to yell at his friends, but snapped his jaws shut. He could tell by the stubborn look on their faces they wouldn't listen anyway. He slammed the door in Zac's face and turned back to the good-looking doctor.

Without saying a word to Jules, he pulled a beer out of the sink.

"The Trans Am was Morgan's," Jules said, his voice so soft Bobby barely heard it.

"What?" Bobby asked, feeling as if a heavy weight had just landed on his chest.

When Jules didn't immediately answer, Bobby went to the table and sat beside him. "Why do you still have Morgan's car?"

Jules began rubbing his watery eyes with the heel of his hand. "He loved that car. Morgan and his dad restored it when he was in school."

Bobby was trying his best to understand why Jules would hold on to the car, but he still didn't get it. "So you couldn't bring yourself to sell it?"

Jules shook his head. "It's worse than that. Morgan was driving that car the night he was killed."

Bobby felt as though all the oxygen had just been sucked from the room. He pictured the other two cars that Jules had painstakingly restored and it suddenly made sense. "You restored it after his funeral, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"Can I ask why?"

Jules shrugged. "Because Morgan was gone, and I had nothing but a twisted hunk of metal to remind me of him. For some reason I thought if I smoothed out the wrinkles and got it running, it would help me get over his death."

"And did it?"

"I guess not since I held onto it for another sixteen years. Until today, that is."

"Today?"

Jules nodded. "I sold it earlier this afternoon."

Bobby swallowed around the lump in his throat. He knew without a doubt that he'd sold the Firebird because of him. What if Jules came to resent him for it?

"Are you sure you were ready to part with it?"

Jules reached out with both hands and threaded his fingers through Bobby's. "I held onto the past for so long, because I had nothing in the present to replace it with. Morgan's gone. I know that. I guess it just made me feel a little less lonely having his things at the house. But I don't need them anymore, because I have something much better than a bunch of pictures and an old car. I have you. Well, hopefully I still have you."

Bobby tugged on Jules' hands, pulling the older man onto his lap. He was still hurt by Jules' actions the previous day, but at least he somewhat understood why he'd reacted the way he did.

"Wanna go home?"

"My place?" Jules asked.

"Yeah." Although that's exactly what he'd meant, Bobby knew he'd probably never come to think of Jules' house as home.

The front door opened and his friends poured into the apartment just as Bobby started kissing his lover. "What the hell? You trap us in here and then don't even give us enough privacy to make up?"

Zac laughed and hit the back of Marco's head. "Marco said you'd already made up."

Marco put his hands on his hips. "Well, Jules is sitting in his lap. Do you think he'd be doing that if they were still fighting?"

"Were you peeking in the window?" Bobby asked, already knowing the answer.

Marco had the decency to turn a nice shade of red. "They told me to."

"Liar," Kent grumbled.

Marco narrowed his eyes at Kent and Bobby knew that was his cue. "Well, on that note, we're outta here. Sorry about poker night, but some things are more important."

* * * *

Bobby cried Jules' name. He didn't know that his ass had ever been ridden as hard as Jules pounded into him. As much as the fucking broached that fine line between pleasure and pain, Bobby knew Jules would never intentionally hurt him. He'd been the one who'd asked Jules to give him everything he had, and boy, was Jules giving it to him.

"Want me to stop?" Jules panted.

"Hell, no." Bobby hitched his hips up further, giving Jules a new angle to plough into. Fuck, his body was on fire with the need to come, but he reached down and wrapped his hands around his sac. Not yet.

"Do you know how sexy you look?" Jules asked.

Yeah, Bobby was sure he looked real fucking sexy with his dark hair plastered to his face with sweat. He was sure he resembled some sort of freak contortionist from a circus sideshow, but goddamn, was it worth it.

"I'm gonna come," Jules warned.

"Yeah, yeah, do it," Bobby begged, biting the inside of his cheek.

Jules' cock plunged in once more and began to jerk as his lover climaxed, filling the condom no doubt.

Bobby released the hold he had on his balls and let his orgasm overtake him. He wasn't even sure how many times his cock shot its seed, but it was enough to leave him light-headed and shaking.

Jules gathered him in his arms and kissed him. "You okay?"

Bobby nodded, still floating on waves of pleasure. "I'm fantastic."

Jules chuckled and kissed him again. "I can't remember, ever feeling something so..."

"Yeah," Bobby agreed.

Jules fell to the side, and Bobby curled his body around his man. "I love you."

Jules grinned sleepily. "I love you, too."

On the drive over from Zac's, Bobby had plenty of time to think about what Jules had told him. He'd had an epiphany and needed to talk it over with his new partner. He swirled his finger around Jules' nipple. "Ya know, I think I bought *My Second Chance* to try and replace the empty place in my soul after losing *The Gypsy*."

"I can see that," Jules said, kissing Bobby's forehead.

"Well, I know it's been sixteen years, but you're not..." *Shit. How do I say this without coming off like an ass?*

Bobby took a deep breath and continued. "It's really me you want, right? I mean, I'm not just a replacement, am I?"

Jules rolled on top of Bobby and sat on his chest. "God no."

Jules leaned down until his face was an inch from Bobby's. "I loved Morgan, but I wasn't even the same man then. Hell, I don't even know if the two of us would still be together if he hadn't died. What I have with you, is me, finally living in the here and now, instead of the past. Does that make sense?"

Bobby nodded. "So what do you think I should do about my boat?"

"I think you should make it the best damn boat you can. You've already told me that *The Gypsy* no longer stirs the same feelings it once did, so walk away from it. Start your life over again with *My Second Chance*, let the boat live up to its name."

"How'd you get so damn smart?" Bobby asked, lifting his head to nip Jules' plump lower lip.

"I could say the school of hard knocks, but it was probably Yale," Jules chuckled.

Chapter Nine

"Hell, I fold." Kent tossed his cards on the table.

Bobby studied Zac. He knew his best friend better than anyone else present and although he'd never told him, Bobby could always tell when Zac was bluffing. Zac's tell wasn't in his face, it was in his feet. When Zac was riding on a shit hand, he tended to curl his feet up under his chair.

Bobby swept the floor in front of Zac with his feet. He picked up three ten-dollar chips and tossed them into the pile. Although he wanted his friend's money, he didn't want to totally screw the guy. "Call and raise you ten."

With the bet back in Zac's court, Bobby waited. Would his friend continue the charade or suck up his loss?

Zac tossed in thirty dollars. "What've you got?" he asked, laying down a pair of eights, Ace high.

Bobby grinned and flashed Zac his cards. "I got a couple of lovely ladies that need new dresses. Thanks for the money."

He scooped the pot towards him and began stacking his chips. "I appreciate it, boys. I should have enough after tonight's game to put the old girl into the water next weekend, and you're all invited."

Zac reached over and slapped Bobby on the back. "Congratulations, man."

"Can we bring a date?" Angelo asked, sipping some kind of crazy-assed drink he'd stirred up.

Marco slapped the table laughing.

Angelo looked completely perturbed. "What's so funny about that?"

"You, having a date's what's funny. When's the last time you went out?"

Bobby kicked Marco under the table. Although Angelo tried to act like Marco's ribbing wasn't bothering him, Bobby could tell by the way Angelo kept looking away that it did.

"Leave him alone, Marco." Bobby regarded Angelo. "Sure you can bring a date."

"When did you say it was?" Trey asked.

"Next Saturday," Bobby answered, shuffling the cards. He could swear Trey was blushing. It was a little hard to tell with Trey's light milk chocolate skin, but he could swear there was a red flush working its way up the man's face.

"I...um...don't think I'll be able to make it. I have a date," Trey confessed.

"So, bring him along. He can chat with Angelo's date," Marco laughed.

Bobby kicked Marco again.

"Ow. Dammit, stop doing that."

"Then keep your smartass comments to yourself."

"No. I don't think so," Trey replied uncomfortably. "It's a blind date."

"He's blind?" Marco asked, quickly putting his feet up on the table and out of Bobby's way.

Bobby reached over and pushed Marco out of his chair. The smaller man started laughing so hard he began to choke. Bobby rolled his eyes and shook his head. "Well, if you change your mind, we'll be at the marina in Pillar Point."

"Okay, thanks," Trey said.

Bobby dealt out the cards. "We'll go with Zac's favourite game, Texas Hold 'em. Although he sucks at it, Jules wants a new hammock on the deck of the new house, and I promised to bring home enough money to buy him one."

Jules had agreed to put his sister's house up for sale a month earlier. They'd figured it would take a while to sell, but lo and behold, it had taken only four days. When Jules asked Bobby where he'd like to start their new life together, Bobby had jumped on the area south of the city.

They ended up finding the perfect place just south of Pacifica. It was on the water and had an awesome deck and that was the only thing either of them cared about. As he played the first hand, he kept glancing at the clock.

"What the hell is going on?" Kent asked.

"Huh?"

"You just totally flashed your cards at me."

"Did not," Bobby refuted.

"Really? So you don't have two sevens and a ten?"

"Fuck." Bobby threw his cards on the table. "Would you guys be pissed if I took off?"

"The Doc home tonight?" Zac asked.

"Yeah. He was supposed to put in his two-week notice."

Zac lowered his cards. "He's quitting?"

Bobby nodded. It had been totally Jules' idea, but Bobby had supported his lover all the way. "He's going to work part-time at the hospital in Daly City. It'll be a lot closer to home and fewer hours of course."

Zac whistled. "I wonder how Eric's gonna take it. You know Jules is, like, his hero."

Bobby grinned. He knew, and so did Jules. "Jules said after Eric gets a few more years in the trenches under his belt, he'd help him get a job anywhere he wanted."

"Seriously? That would be cool."

Bobby handed his chips to Angelo. "Cash me out, Ang. I've got a man to go see."

* * * *

"Now this is my idea of the proper way to christen a yacht," Bobby groaned, reaching for the lube. The party had been a success, but Bobby was glad when it was time for his friends to go home. He'd led his lover down to the captain's cabin with the intention of ravishing him on the open waters. Yeah, he was pirate captain Bobby and Jules was his cabin boy.

"It was a nice party, but what was with Angelo and his date?" Jules asked, spreading his legs.

Bobby slicked his fingers and reached down to run them across Jules' puckered hole. "Why are we talking about Angelo and his boring date?"

"Because lately we can't go an hour without fucking. So, if I want to talk to you it has to be done during."

"Oh, okay, makes sense."

"So? Who was the stiff with Angelo?" Jules asked around a moan.

"I don't remember his name. I think he's a banker of some kind. The thing about Angelo is he thinks he needs some rich, fancy intellectual guy. I'm not sure if that's his doing or his mother's." Angelo's mother was truly a piece of work. To call Ang a momma's boy was an understatement.

Removing his fingers, Bobby positioned himself between Jules' legs. "Enough talking."

He pressed his cock against Jules' stretched hole and slowly sunk in to the hilt. Zing! Just like always, a bolt of sexual electricity travelled up his spine to the back of his neck. It didn't seem to matter how many times he'd made love to Jules, it was exciting every time.

"Do you want it hard and fast, or slow and easy?"

Jules bit his lip. "How about slow and hard, turning into fast and easy?"

Bobby grinned. "Leave it to you to think outside the box."

Pulling out slowly, Bobby thrust back in hard, jarring both bodies. After several plunges, Jules' head came to rest against the wall.

"Hmmm, next time I'll have to tie your feet to the bottom of the bed," Bobby teased, repositioning them lower on the mattress.

Jules leaned up and gave Bobby a deep kiss. "Let me turn over."

Bobby pulled out and waited for his lover to get on his knees with his ass high in the air. Kneeling behind Jules, Bobby plunged back inside. It said a lot about their relationship that this was now one of Jules' favourite positions. No longer did he need to see Bobby's face to know who was making love to him.

As his rhythm began to pick up, his cell phone rang. Bobby ignored it in favour of changing angles slightly. The new position had Jules going wild.

"Oh, yeah, there, oh, shit." Jules groaned, thrusting back on Bobby's cock.

Bobby reached down and wrapped a hand around Jules' erection, pressing his thumb into the oozing slit. His cell phone rang again, as he bit the soft area between Jules' shoulder blades.

"Come on, babe, come on, give it to your captain," Bobby grunted.

Jules yelled his climax loud enough the seagulls on deck took flight in a squawk of irritation.

Bobby continued to piston his hips, burying his cock hard and fast in the man he loved. Jules was the first and last man to ever get his naked cock inside him and Bobby couldn't believe what a difference it made.

Hell, just the thought of filling his lover's ass with his cum tipped Bobby over the edge. He ground his groin against Jules' ass as he let loose a torrent of seed. Jules' cell phone rang as Bobby pushed him to the mattress and lay on top of him.

"Someone wants to talk to you in a big way," Jules mumbled into the pillow.

"Probably just Brad, trying once again to get me to buy *The Gypsy*." Bobby had washed his hands of his family and his old boat, and felt like a new man for doing it.

Jules rose up and rolled Bobby off him. "Unfortunately, I'm a doctor, and can't ignore a ringing phone."

Bobby lay on his back, sucking much needed oxygen into his lungs as Jules reached for his phone.

"Hello?"

"Uh, yeah, hold on." Jules held the phone out to Bobby. "It's Zac. He doesn't sound good."

Bobby's heart thudded against his chest as he took the phone. "Hey, Zac."

"Trey's been hurt. He's at San Francisco General. Eric and I are on the way."

"Trey? What happened?" Bobby felt Jules stiffen beside him and pulled his lover against his chest.

"I don't know. The hospital said he had me down as an emergency contact and that he'd need me when he came out of surgery."

"But they don't know what happened?"

"The police responded to a domestic disturbance at Trey's house. They found him beaten..."

Zac paused and Bobby could tell there was something else.

"And?" he asked.

"There were signs of rape."

Bobby closed his eyes. Trey was one of the gentlest men he knew. What kind of animal took advantage of someone like that? "We'll get there as soon as possible. Don't forget to tell the police he had a blind date."

"Already taken care of. Eric's on the phone with Kent right now. We'll meet you up there."

Bobby hung up and turned to Jules. "We need to get to San Francisco General. Trey's been raped and beaten."

"My God," Jules gasped, springing off the bed.

After a quick clean-up, they were dressed and on the road. Bobby sat in the passenger seat relaying to Jules everything Zac had told him.

"Should we call his family?" Jules asked.

Bobby shook his head. "They haven't spoken to Trey in a while. I think that should be his call."

Jules reached over and took Bobby's hand. "We'll get him through this. We can move him in with us if we need to."

Bobby squeezed his love's hand. "Thanks. I know you didn't plan on all this when we decided to move in together."

Jules shook his head. "Not so. I knew the moment I saw you with your friends that you all were a package deal. Fortunately for me, I happen to adore your friends."

"I'm glad, because they mean everything to me."

"As they should," Jules agreed.

About the Author

An avid reader for years, one day Carol Lynne decided to write her own brand of erotic romance. Carol juggles between being a full-time mother and a full-time writer. These days, you can usually find Carol either cleaning jelly out of the carpet or nestled in her favourite chair writing steamy love scenes.

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