

# Rowena Sudbury If



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**I f**

Rowena Sudbury

# ***IF***

## ***Rowena Sudbury***

*THE music blared, rattled the walls of the small gym. With each clash of the cymbal, either a foot or a fist was raised in punch or kick. The humidity inside the room raised until the windows ran with condensation.*

*Sweat trickled down his brow, stung into his eyes, yet he did not stop. Angry images played inside his brain, voices raised, faces twisted into snarls. Each image increased his frenzy. When the music came to a stop, he stood and panted, muscles twitched with the strain.*

*A cry of near anguish tore from his lips, and he turned, punched buttons on the boombox angrily until the CD started again. This time, he punched the standing bag, and when his arms wore out, he switched to kicks.*

*Mason Jackson did not own him.*

MASON Jackson and Sam O'Brien were roommates. They fell in together during college, and soon discovered they both had an intense interest in the martial arts. Sam's desire and interest was ten times greater than Mason's was, but both spent many hours in the dojo honing their craft. Eventually they had each been chosen for the elite touring team and they criss-crossed the country attending meets, and showcasing their dojo in exhibitions. Most of the time they traveled together, but sometimes there were occasions when they didn't.

They always came back home to Atlanta though, and always fell back into easy companionship. They never spoke of commitments, or forever. In their rough and tumble world

pleasures were hard fought, softness was something to be despised.

January had the city in a cold grip, and the men found themselves at home with time on their hands. Although they both decided that a night in would be just the ticket, Mason insisted that Sam be the one to go out and rent a movie.

Sam stepped into the room, pulled the door shut tightly behind him against the unusual flurry of snow. "Man, it's fuckin' COLD out there, since when does it snow in Atlanta?" He took off his coat and shook it.

Mason chuckled, and took a long pull on his beer. "'Bout once every five years," he said, his voice slightly slurred.

Sam eyed him and spread the coat out over the back of a chair, picked up the bag from the video store and approached the couch. "How many beers you had already Mase?" he asked softly as he laid the bag in Mason's lap.

"Not enough," Mason said acidly. He reached into the bag and pulled out the movie. "*Pricilla, Queen of the Desert*?" He snorted and looked up at Sam. "Ya fag."

Unable to hide the hurt look on his face, Sam snatched the movie out of Mason's hand and walked toward the TV. "Look who's talking," he said softly.

"Aw Christ son," Mason said and he got unsteadily to his feet. "I'm just teasin' ya." With a wicked sneer, he shuffled into the kitchen.

Sam busied himself with the DVD player, hoping they weren't going to have that argument again. Soon he heard the telltale sounds of popcorn popping in the microwave and he smiled. Drunk as he appeared to be, Mason had not forgotten that their plans were to spend the evening at home snuggling, eating popcorn, and watching a movie.

Mason returned with the bowl of popcorn and two bottles of beer. He flopped heavily on to the couch and propped his feet up. "Get the lead out O'Brien," he badgered.

"Shut up old man," Sam bantered back and he turned with a smile. He came back, sank down on the couch next to

Mason and pulled him close, then reached for one of the beers.

"Get yer own," Mason teased as he settled against Sam.

"Ah," Sam said, taking the beer anyway, "Wasn't it me that went out, braved the weather and brought back the movie?" He picked up the remote and pushed a button.

"I suppose," Mason said grudgingly. He pulled his feet up on the couch next to him, and leaned against Sam's body, one hand resting on his abdomen. "But you gotta get the next round."

"Baby," Sam said, nuzzling against Mason's spiky hair, "I think this is the only round. You've had enough for both of us already."

"Don't fucking start that shit again," Mason said angrily. "I'm a grown man, I'll drink what I want, *when* I want, and I don't need no young whippersnapper telling me otherwise."

He started to pull away, but Sam clamped an arm around him tightly. "C'mon Mase," he said soothingly. "Let's don't argue, let's just have a nice, quiet evening here alone." He reached over and traced a finger down Mason's nose, and across his lips. "You and me."

Mollified, Mason sank back down against Sam's chest and reached for a handful of popcorn. They watched the movie in silence for a while, until at last Sam began to ease his hand down over Mason's body. He trailed down Mason's back, traced lightly over his ass, then tucked his hand under the edge of his shirt and began to move it up the broad expanse of Mason's back.

"Mmm," Mason said, his voice a sultry whisper, "You trying to seduce me?"

"Maybe," Sam whispered. He slipped his hand around to the front of Mason's body, and with little effort had Mason's shirt up over the top of his head. He flickered his fingers across Mason's chest, teased against his nipples, felt them pebble into hard nubs.

"Doin' a damn fine job of it." Mason's voice had a breathless quality, and he flipped over on to his back, laid his head in Sam's lap and gazed up into his eyes. "But then, you were always good at distracting me."

Sam watched his hand as it trailed down Mason's chest, over his belly, and down to cup his expanding erection through his pants. "You can watch the movie," Sam said silkily, "I'm not trying to distract you from it." With a feather light touch, he moved his hand over Mason's crotch, then down between his legs, nudged them apart slightly.

"Shit," Mason moaned. He splayed his legs wide. "I can't keep track of the movie with you doing that."

"Sure you can," Sam murmured. He raised his hand up and he began to tease it along the edge of Mason's pants, then deftly opened the front, giving him more room. "See, I'm watching the movie still," he said as he encircled Mason's cock. With long, languid motions, he stroked Mason to a full erection, smeared the droplets of pre-cum into his shaft.

"Mmm," Mason said as he rocked his hips up toward Sam's hand. "Reminds me of that time in Philly." He licked his lips, and gazed up at Sam through his lashes. "Didn't really want to see that movie either."

"Which?" Sam said, he reached down and squeezed Mason's sack gently.

"Friggin' Lion King," Mason said on a moan. "Fuck that feels good Sam."

Sam's hand stilled, and he looked down at Mason. "The Lion King? When did we watch the Lion King?"

Mason stirred restlessly, pushed up against Sam's hand, "In Philly," he whined, "Christ, I told you that already."

"Mason," Sam said, and he withdrew his hand. "I didn't stay with you in Philly. Remember?" He sat back, "That's when you were so certain that Mendez was going to peg you and me as lovers. I came home early from that trip, you stayed back."

"What're you talkin' about?" Mason said, twisting to look up at Sam, his eyes unfocused. "It was raining like a son-of-a-bitch, and we decided to stay in the room instead of heading out to the club with the guys. The only movie we could get in the room was the fucking Lion King."

With an angry snarl, Sam pushed himself up off the

couch, walked to the window and stared out, his back toward Mason. Mason struggled upright and stared at him.

"The fuck is wrong with you?" he spat out at last. "We ordered hoagies and a six pack from room service. You pretended to be Simba and I pretended to be Nala and we...holy shit." He fell silent.

Sam turned and gazed at him with narrowed eyes. "What?"

Mason ran a hand through his hair and mumbled, "You're right, it wasn't you."

A muscle clenched in Sam's jaw as he stared down at Mason. At last he said in a deadly quiet voice, "Who was it then? A hooker? A rat?"

Mason looked up; the color drained from his face, and he said in a whisper, "Mark."

"What?" Sam exploded. He stood in shocked silence for a moment then stalked back across the room and sank to his knees in front of Mason. "Mark? After you told me to get out because you didn't want the boss thinking you were gay, you took Mark to your room?"

"Listen son," Mason said, he reached out a shaky hand toward Sam.

"I'm not your fucking son," Sam said, smacking the hand away. His face flushed and then drained of color and he stood towering over Mason. "I can stand a lot Mason, your drinking, your fear of being discovered for what you really are, but," he gasped and turned away quickly, "Not that, not infidelity."

"Listen O'Brien," Mason said, standing and fastening his pants, "You ain't so lily white yourself you know. Mark told me about you and him...back at the in the day..."

"Fuck," Sam said, whirling and shoving Mason down against the couch. He collapsed atop of him; his face shoved close to Mason's. "That was between Mark and I."

"Well, now it's between the three of us."

"I should have know not to trust a weasel like Mark with a confidence like that, but I don't see how this compares. Mark



and I were way before I moved in with you, so how does teenage groping compare with you fucking him while you and me are together?" Sam's face was red with fury.

"We ain't exclusive," Mason said, "I don't know what you're talking about."

With a cry of rage Sam stood, stalked across the room and took up his coat.

"Where you goin'?" Mason said as he stood. "Get your ass back over here."

"I'm going out," Sam said over his shoulder. "Away from you."

"Shit," Mason said as the door slammed behind Sam. He sank down on the couch again, stared absently at the TV until he finally unearthed the remote and shut it off.

"O'BRIEN!"

Several loud voices greeted him as he stepped into Chuck's apartment. There appeared to be a party in full swing. A bit uncertain, he stood just inside the door.

"Listen, I didn't know you had the guys over," he said in an undertone to Chuck. "I'll just..." his voice trailed off.

"What's the matter with you?" Chuck said, looking at closely at Sam. "Those tears in your eyes?"

"It's fucking cold outside," Sam said, bristling. "Wind is blowing like a mother-fucker."

Chuck arched a brow, but wisely didn't push him. "Stay. It's just a few guys. You're more than welcome. I called earlier, but Mason said you two had plans."

"Not anymore we don't," Sam said as he shed his coat.

"You want to talk about it?" Chuck asked in a soft voice. He reached for Sam's coat.

"Nah," Sam said, attempting a smile. "Maybe later."

Chuck smiled. "Ok, you know I got your back."

"That's why I came over here," Sam said, and he smacked him lightly on the shoulder. "Always count on you in a pinch."

"You know it," Chuck replied.

"Sam, over here, you can settle it for us," called a voice from inside the apartment. The two friends exchanged a long look, and then Sam walked in and joined the others.

It was, as Chuck had said, an intimate gathering. Less than ten people all told. As the evening wore on, and more beers were imbibed, inhibitions lowered. Before long Sam was feeling no pain, but still angry with himself, and with Mason, he held himself aloof.

Eventually, he half walked, half staggered across the room and sank down on the couch. The party swirled around him, and he stared out the window moodily.

"Penny for your thoughts?"

Sam tore his gaze away from the swirling snow and focused on the diminutive figure standing next to him.

"Hey Shan," he said softly, he scooted over and made room for him on the couch.

"You look worried about something," Shan said softly. He sat on the couch, pulled his legs up under him. His cheek bulged out with a piece of candy.

Sam sighed, twirled the empty beer bottle around in his hands. "Nah, not worried. Irritated perhaps."

"Anything you want to talk about?" Shan's eyes were large and round, his expression open, his lips slightly parted.

Feeling his pulse quicken slightly, Sam shook his head. "Talking about it will just make me more irritated."

Shan nodded, and settled back against the couch. "Yeah, know how that goes myself." He heaved a great sigh. "Been a little irritated too today."

"It's the weather," Sam said. "Giving us cabin fever."

Shan's laugh was a tinkling sound against the backdrop of the party. "It's only been snowing since about four o'clock Sam," he said. "It'll all be melted by morning, hardly enough to give anyone cabin fever."

"Shh," Sam said, his head bobbing a little, "It's a good excuse."

"You're drunk," Shan said with a giggle.

"Know what?" Sam said, winking, "You are too."

Shan giggled again, and nodded vigorously. "I am." He bit down on the candy.

Sam grinned, and turned slightly to face Shan. "Seriously though," he said. "This fucking snow is unusual, makes people do and say crazy things."

Shan sighed and nodded. "I kind of like it though. We don't get it that often back home either, but I always used to look forward to snow days. Making snow angels, trying to scrape together enough to make a snowman."

Sam nodded. "Yeah, back home I don't think it ever snowed. We used to make sand angels on the beach."

"You weren't that far away from me growing up, were you?" Shan asked, and he propped his chin in his hand. "I was up in Savannah, you were in...where was it?"

"Hilton Head," Sam said. His eyes took on a faraway look. "But I hated it there. Paradise on earth, that's what people called it." He turned to catch Shan's eye; "Growing up in a resort city ain't no piece of cake."

"Yeah, well anything has to be better than Atlanta," Shan said morosely.

"You don't like it here?" Sam asked.

Shan did not reply verbally, yet his body language communicated that he most certainly did not. Sam looked over his shoulder and noticed that several people were leaving the party. He frowned, and turned to look at Shan again. "Where's Morrison? You two are usually inseparable."

A cloud passed over Shan's face, and he said, "He didn't come. Couldn't be bothered socializing with Neanderthals he said."

Sam threw his head back and laughed. "Neanderthals? That's a good one."

Shan tried to smile, but his cheeks quivered.

"Hey," Sam said, he shifted a little closer. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing," Shan said and he dipped his head.

The angry words he and Mason had shared earlier came back to haunt him now as he gazed upon Shan's obvious pain. Perhaps it was a mixture of fighting with Mason, the snowfall, and too much to drink, but Sam reached out and touched Shan's arm gently. Shan raised his eyes, and Sam noted they were swimming in tears.

"Did you," Sam said softly; "Have a fight?"

"He never," Shan said, then bit his lip between his teeth, "He never wants to do anything."

Sam drew his breath in at the sight of Shan's pain filled eyes. Without stopping to consider the consequences, he reached over and pulled him over to straddle his lap. He reached up and smoothed his hands over his multi-colored hair, noted how soft it was.

"He's a prick then," Sam said softly.

"Sometimes," Shan said, he settled into Sam's lap comfortably. He looked at Sam closely for a moment, then said "What about Mason? How come he's not here?"

Sam grimaced, "He *is* a prick."

"I'm sorry Sam," Shan said softly, and he reached up to touch Sam's face gently. He smiled ruefully, "Well, we're a lovely pair, huh?"

Sam gazed up at Shan through narrowed eyes, then said softly, "Lovely, yes..." He raised his hands and began to slide them up and down Shan's back.

Shan gasped, then leaned forward, "Oh Sam," he murmured.

Part of Sam's alcohol hazed brain screamed at him to stop, but the rest of it, the part that was still hurt from Mason's constant picking urged him on. Gently, he tipped Shan forward, touching their lips together. Shan seemed to melt against him.

"Jesus," Sam murmured, pulling away. "I'm sorry Shan."

"No," Shan's voice was an agonized cry. "Don't be sorry, and," he caught his lip between his teeth, "Don't stop either."

That was all the invitation Sam needed. One quick glance showed him that they were alone in the room. The sounds of the TV and the raised voices of the few that remained at the party floated in from Chuck's bedroom. Without a further thought, Sam reached up, and gently eased Shan's head down, kissed him deeply again.

He tasted of peppermint with a hint of beer. Sam found the taste almost as intoxicating as the spicy aroma of his cologne. His fingers traced up over the thin fabric of Shan's shirt, and he felt him shiver against him.

"So good," he murmured against Shan's bruised lips, "You taste so good."

Shan whimpered, and pressed against Sam's belly, letting Sam feel the beginnings of an erection.

"Touch me Sam," Shan moaned, "Touch my skin."

Stifling a growl, Sam burrowed his fingers beneath Shan's shirt, skimmed over the smooth flesh of his back. He felt the smaller man undulate against him again, felt his fingers tangle through his hair. They became lost in the kiss, each drawing comfort from the other.

Sam continued to caress Shan's back, and let his fingers glide around to the front of his body, brushed them up his chest, flicked them across his nipples. His own erection strained painfully against his jeans, and every time Shan rocked against him, he could feel that the slim blonde was in a similar state.

As the kiss deepened, Shan's whimpers became more insistent, until at last he broke free from Sam's mouth and whispered, "Oh Sam, oh God--" His body stiffened, and then he collapsed against Sam, hips still rocking gently.

"Sweet Christ," Sam whispered, he reached down to cup Shan's ass. Never had he had someone react to him that way, so readily. It was a heady experience. He cradled Shan gently as his breathing returned to normal.

At last, Shan pulled back, his eyes glazed with passion, his cheeks suffused with soft color. "'M sorry," he whispered, "didn't mean to get that carried away."

Sam reached up and pressed a finger against his lips, "Don't apologize for that kind of passion," he murmured. He bent forward and replaced his finger with his lips, and they shared another sweet kiss.

"O'Brien."

They broke apart guiltily at the sound of Chuck's voice. Shan quickly untucked his shirt to cover the wet spot. They turned to find Chuck staring at them from across the room. He smiled at them ruefully.

"Shan, Greg called. He'll be over in about fifteen minutes to pick you up."

Shan blushed, and slowly eased off Sam's lap. "Thanks," he said shyly.

Chuck shifted his eyes to Sam, arched a brow in question. Sam stood too and touched Shan's arm lightly, evaded Chuck's eyes. With a shrug, Chuck turned and walked back to the bedroom and the rest of the guys.

Shan turned and gazed at Sam for a minute, then stepped forward, pressed himself against the larger man. "Thanks Sam," he said softly. "That was magical."

"Yeah," Sam whispered softly. "Sure was."

They broke apart, and gazed at each other with none of the awkwardness they felt they should be feeling. Shan smiled a sweet smile, then turned and grabbed his coat. Sam sank back down on the couch. After Shan left, he stood, gathered his own coat, and left without even saying goodbye.

THE apartment was cold when he let himself in later. He found the living room empty, several more empty beer bottles littered the table, and Sam grimaced and walked down the hall into the bedroom.

Mason was sprawled across the bed, clad only in boxers. He snored lightly on each intake of breath. Sam stared down at him, then fearing he'd be cold, he yanked on the covers, pulled

them up and over Mason.

"Quit hogging the fucking blankets," Mason said irritably, he came awake slowly. He blinked a few times, squinted through the dim light cast by the small bedside lamp. After a moment he said in a small voice, "M sorry Sam."

Sam sank down on the bed next to him, and gathered him up in his arms. "I'm sorry too Mase." He held Mason close, felt a mixture of emotions bubbling through him.

Mason pulled himself up, settled himself in Sam's lap, burrowed against his warmth. Sam wrapped his arms around him, then pulled the blanket up around them both.

Sniffling, Mason sat up, "The fuck? You wearing perfume?"

In a flash, Sam remembered the heady smell of Shan's cologne, and he grimaced ruefully as Mason flung himself away from him.

"You whore!" Mason shouted and he pushed himself away across the bed. "You fucking whore. Leave my bed and go to another?" Obviously still feeling the effects of drinking, he slipped off the edge of the bed, landed on the floor with a thud.

Sam stood, staring down at him. "You have a lot of nerve," he said evenly. "Your faithlessness is what started this whole thing in the first place."

"What...the pot calling the kettle black? Jesus fucking Christ Sam, it's not like I came directly from another's bed back to yours."

"And that makes it alright?" Sam said, guilt knifing through him. "It doesn't change the fact that you did it, that you're too fucking drunk most of the time to remember it, that you can't even remember—" his voice broke off in anguish.

Mason roused himself, pulled himself up, and grabbed on to the bed. "Get out," he shouted. "Get the fuck out of my house."

Sam reached down and hauled Mason up, pressed his nose right against Mason's. "Yeah, maybe I was wrong to seek solace in the arms of another tonight Mason, I admit that. It was

only a kiss, only an innocent kiss, we didn't 'go to bed' together. I would have told you about it, admitted my error. The difference between you and me is that I would never do it again. You on the other hand, this thing with Mark in Philly, that wasn't the first time was it? Hmm?" He tightened his grip on Mason's arm, the bitterness in his soul spilling out. "It happens every time we're apart doesn't it? You don't give a rat's ass who it's with, as long as they'll buy you a drink, right?"

"Sam," Mason said, trying to pull away. "It's not true, it..."

"You calling me a liar Mason?" Sam said, panting with exertion.

Mason couldn't meet Sam's eyes, and he looked down. Sam sighed and let go, allowed Mason to collapse on to the bed.

"I know Mason, but I choose to ignore it. I'm not a fucking moron, and I'm not blind. I see the looks the other guys give you behind my back. I hear the gossip. I know that you'll fuck anything that moves when I'm not with you, and you've had something to drink." His breath caught in his throat. "I know, but I overlook it because god help me, I care about you."

He turned and paced away. At the door he turned back, anguish evident on his face.

"But I can't take this shit anymore." He drew a shaking breath. "I'll come and get my things tomorrow, when you're in your meeting with Mendez."

"Sam wait," Mason said, he followed in Sam's wake. "Wait son, we can work this out."

"No," Sam said, his voice cracked. "I don't want to work it out."

THE song ended again, and Sam stood with his head bowed. The anger, the hurt still boiled through him, and even though he was quivering with fatigue, he turned and punched the boom-box, letting the music start all over again.

The dojo was a place where he always felt at peace, where



he felt calm. In the locker room he'd had a whispered conversation with Shan. Everything between he and Greg was all right again. Sam had smiled; told Shan he was glad. As enticing as the incident had been, he hadn't been looking to make it anything more than the accidental encounter it had been. A sweet memory, but nothing more.

Mason had kept his distance. The apartment had been empty the next day when Sam went to retrieve his things. He didn't see Mason until the next team meeting, and Mason had maintained an icy silence.

As the music ended this time, Sam walked to the side of the room and grabbed up a towel. He sat down on a stack of tumbling mats and wiped his face and chest. A muscle tensed in his jaw.

His thoughts went in the same endless circle they had since that snowy day. He loved Mason, yet he couldn't take the pain anymore. He wanted to be with him, yet he knew that the same thing would likely happen again. Letting go was the right thing to do; yet change was hard.

Finally, he balled the towel up in his hands, stood and began shoving things into his bag. A rustling sound behind him caught his attention, and he whirled, found Mason standing in the doorway. He was clad in a long black overcoat, his hair neatly brushed, his eyes clear. Their eyes met and locked, and Mason advanced into the room.

"Hey," he said softly.

Sam eyed him, muscles tensing, and finally said, "Hey."

"Look," Mason said softly. "I don't want anything from you, I just wanted to let you know that," he stopped and took a deep breath. "Jesus Sam," he said, running his hand over his shortly cropped hair, "This is a might harder to say than I figured it would be, you standing there all vicious and sweaty from your workout."

Sam sighed, turned and sank down on to the mats, patted the spot next to him.

Mason sat down and looked at Sam for a moment, then

spoke softly. "I know you don't want anything to do with me right now," he said, "But I'm making a clean start. Got an appointment with a shrink." He reached over and took Sam's hand. "I hope that one day we can work out our issues."

Sam gazed at him silently. All the bitter pain inside of him faded when he gazed into Mason's eyes. He took a deep breath and said, "I can't promise you anything."

"I'm not asking for a promise."

Sam turned his hand over, and clasped Mason's hand in his.

"Jesus," Mason whined at last, "Feels like a fucking furnace in here."

Sam turned his head and looked at Mason. He realized Mason would never change completely, and that he would have to decide if that mattered or not. Mason stood, squeezed Sam's hand and then released it.

"Well," he said, smiling a little, "don't want to be late." He turned and walked across the room. At the door he looked back over his shoulder, his expression unguarded for a moment, then he disappeared.

Sam sat alone in the steamy room, turning thoughts over in his mind for a long time. Finally, as if coming to a decision, he picked up his things, and walked out of the room.

The locker room looked deserted. Most of the team worked out first thing in the morning, or mid day, few stayed late into the night, and that was the reason Sam liked it, he enjoyed solitude.

When he rounded the corner and found Mason sitting on the bench in front of his locker with his head bowed, Sam pulled up short.

"Thought you said you didn't want to be late," Sam said softly, "what the hell are you doing here?"

Mason raised his head, met Sam's steady gaze, "I just got done telling you I was going to change Sam," Mason murmured, "and I lied to you. I can't even fucking change for something I want."

Sam cocked his head to the side, "I don't get it."

Mason pushed up from the bench and stepped closer, "I don't have anywhere to go, and that was the lie. I said it because sitting there next to you was killing me."

"Why was it killing you?" Sam asked, maintaining his distance with an effort, keeping his voice even and low.

"Because damn it O'Brien," Mason growled, "I want you back, and I don't deserve you after all the shit I put you through."

"Who made that decision," Sam said quietly, "that you don't deserve me."

"I did," Mason whispered.

Sam reached over and gripped Mason's hand, pulled him close against his sweaty chest. He topped Mason by several inches so he gazed down into his eyes.

"Doesn't bode too well for the future does it, you promising to change and lying to me in the same breath." Sam's voice was silky soft.

"Well then here's your future Sam," Mason said, staring with unblinking eyes, "I love you."

Sam dipped down, covered Mason's mouth and kissed him deeply. He turned slightly and slammed Mason against the locker behind him, pressed against him firmly. While continuing the deep kiss Sam wrenched Mason's overcoat open, yanked it down over his shoulders and off. He pulled back to grit against Mason's mouth, "You don't have any idea how long I've waited to hear you say those words."

Mason reached up, cupped both hands around Sam's face, "Those words have always been there baby, I was just scared shitless to say them."

"You ain't scared of nothing Mase," Sam growled as he lowered down and went to work on Mason's belt buckle.

"Nothin'," Mason's breath hitched, "except telling you the truth."

Sam succeeded in opening the front of Mason's trousers, and he slipped his hand inside, down the waistband of his briefs to wrap a hand around his length. "Promise me something," he

whispered, nibbling on Mason's lips as he tightened his grip on his length. "Promise me that when you go see that shrink, you'll agree to work on telling me the truth. I don't give a rat's ass if you lie to everyone else, but no more lies between us."

"Fuck," Mason gasped, and he sagged against the locker, held up only by Sam's grip on his length.

"Promise it," Sam hissed.

"I swear it Sam," Mason mewled, "I swear I won't lie to you anymore."

Loosening his grip only slightly, but still pressing Mason hard against the locker Sam dipped his head down, nipped lightly on his ear, "Then, tell me again."

"I love you Sam O'Brien," Mason said, and he howled as Sam bit harder on his ear. He reached down and yanked Sam's workout shorts down, gripped the round globes of his ass.

Sam stood back, and keeping one hand locked on Mason's shoulder he rid himself of shorts and jock, then worked on shoving Mason's pants and briefs down and off. He backed up to sit on the bench between the lockers, and pulled Mason down to straddle his lap.

"You know something Mase," he whispered against Mason's cheek as he bent forward and flung his locker open, rooted inside for a bottle of anything remotely like lube, "I've loved you for years." He settled on a bottle of shampoo, and liberally lubed his fingers before reaching down to tease against Mason's hole.

"I know," Mason murmured, "been hearing you tell me that in the middle of the night when you think I'm asleep."

Sam pushed his fingers up inside Mason's passage; twisted, then held them still. "How come you never told me."

His forehead resting against Sam's, Mason reached down and gripped his own cock, a moan simmered under his response, "All goes along with the lying baby, I wasn't...I didn't like myself very much, thought if I made you miserable I wouldn't feel so bad about being miserable myself."

Slipping his fingers free, Sam reached for the bottle again, and quickly slicked his cock. "No more Mase," he growled, "no

more either one of us being miserable." He urged Mason up, then positioned to let him sink back down.

Mason arched back, mouth open in a prolonged wail, "Sam," he moaned.

The sound of their moans coupled with the slap of Mason's ass against Sam's thighs filled the locker room. They balanced precariously on the narrow bench, but both were so lost in the newly made confessions of love that neither noticed.

The release was as hard and brutal as the joining, Mason's feet slipped off the bench as he settled down hard on Sam's lap. Fingers clutched feverishly at Sam's back.

"Take me home," Mason whispered.

Sam wrapped his arms tightly around Mason's body and held him close. Although he knew the future wouldn't be without its bumps in the road, that love that had been there all along might somehow be enough to ease the way. Sam wasn't even sure he could trust Mason's promise to be truthful, and yet he was willing to try. With an effort he shoved Mason off his lap, and helped him stand.

"Let's go home," Sam said.