



BLAST
FROM THE
PAST

STEPHANI HECHT

Laid off from his dream job and broke, Bailey Hall goes back home with his tail between his legs and a severely bruised ego. It doesn't help matters that the only work he can find is at his older sister's day care. Now, instead of spending the day teaching high school students Shakespeare and Keats, he's wiping snotty noses and tripping on building blocks. Then one rainy afternoon, his humiliation reaches a whole new low when David Walker comes in to pick up his baby nephew. Not only was David the most popular guy in high school, but Bailey harbored a secret crush on the guy. Bailey is both horrified and excited to see that, nine years later, David is just as hot as ever. He's also very successful and wealthy, neither of which Bailey is.

David spent the past years fulfilling his dream of becoming a successful lawyer and he finally has almost everything he's ever wanted within his grasp. Then he goes into the daycare center and spots the one thing his libido has never been able to resist—Bailey. All through his senior year of high school, David lusted after the shy, dark-haired, freshman scholar. He'd been too afraid to act on his feelings at the time. Not only was Bailey too young for a relationship, but the teen had also been struggling with his sexuality. Although it was the hardest thing he'd ever done, David forced himself not to act on his feelings and kept his hands off Bailey. Now that they are both adults and he has Bailey in his sights again, David vows to finally give into his desires. But will Bailey welcome his attraction or will David have to live with nothing but his regrets to keep him company at night?

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Blast From the Past

By

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Dedication

To Jo.

Chapter One

While Whitney Houston may believe that *children are our future*, it seemed obvious that she'd never worked at a daycare.

Bailey felt quit certain that if she worked one day...no, one hour in a cramped room full of five-year olds, suffering from a raging case of cabin fever, she would pen an anthem that declared, *we are all doomed because these brats are our future*.

To be fair, not all the kids were monsters. Take Billy Edson, for example. He appeared to be perfectly content to sit in the corner of the large playroom and find something to occupy his mind. The fact that the activity he'd chosen to pass the time consisted of his nose, his finger and—ew!—his mouth, didn't matter to Bailey. Although he did make a note to include an extra graham cracker at the kid's next snack time, since he obviously needed something more to fill him up.

Truth be told, ninety-five percent of the kids under his charge were pretty wonderful. It was the other five percent that had Bailey reflecting on

how much his life and career had taken a dive in the past few weeks.

“Mr. Hall, Thomas kicked me!” a whining voice cut through Bailey’s thoughts.

He glanced over at the source and wasn’t surprised to see Kevin Smith. The boy always seemed to manage to be in the middle of every fight or problem that occurred in his room. This particular day had been even worse since the heavy rain had kept them inside all morning and afternoon. Bailey had learned that little kids were like dogs in that they needed to go out for fun at least once a day.

“Where did he get you this time?” Bailey asked as he eyed the overweight kid. For some reason the child’s mother had highlighted his brown hair even though Kevin had yet to enter kindergarten. *God, already a metrosexual and he’s not even six. They start so young these days.*

“In my stomach and then he told me to move my fat ass out of the way,” Kevin replied, not even hesitating or tripping over the swear word.

Bailey let out a long-suffering sigh as he exchanged exasperated looks with Megan. During the past couple weeks of his working at *Wee Love Children* daycare, Megan had quickly become a buddy. The fact Megan had just turned six the past Tuesday and had an unhealthy obsession with *PlayDoh* didn’t even factor in. She happened

to be smarter than most adults Bailey knew, plus she wasn't above tattling on her fellow roommates. He'd learned the first day into this gig that it helped to have an inside informant.

"Thomas!" Bailey called as he rubbed his aching temples. Now he understood why some people turned to drink.

"Yes, Mr. Hall," Thomas turned from the TV set and blinked wide eyes at him innocently.

Yeah, right kid, like I'm going to buy that whole I'm-a-good-boy act. I saw what you did to the boy's bathroom this morning.

Thomas was an Eddie Haskell in the making. With those baby blues and brown mop of hair working for him more times than not, he'd obviously already learned that a heavy dose of charm would get him out of all kinds of punishment. Unfortunately, for Tommy, life had jaded Bailey enough to make him immune those kinds of tactics.

"Did you kick Kevin?" Boy, if he only had a nickel for every time he had to ask that question a week. Then he could afford to take a day off instead of being stuck in the Farmington Hills, Michigan version of *Lord of the Flies*.

Thomas nodded, as unrepentant about his violence as Kevin had been about his cussing. "Yes, I did, but Kevin stood in front of me so I couldn't watch the movie and when I asked him to

move, he just danced around and made farting noises with his mouth.”

Okay, maybe if I was the violent type, I'd have been tempted to give Kevin a good, swift kick, too. Bailey let out another sigh. “Thomas, how many times have I told you to come to me if you have a problem instead of taking matters into your own hands?”

Thomas screwed his face up in a confused look that actually seemed genuine. “But, Mr. Hall, I didn't use my hands, I used my feets.”

Feets? Bailey bit his bottom lip just in time to hold back a bark of laughter. God help him, maybe he wasn't so jaded after all because he could easily fall under Thomas's charms, too, bathroom vandalism or not. “Thomas, what did I say would happen the next time you hit or kicked someone?”

Thomas's eyes grew so huge he looked nearly like an anime character. “Not, the office!”

For some strange reason every kid in the center dreaded going to the office. The mere threat of being sent there sent kids into such a state of panic, Bailey was tempted to check around to see if his sister, the center's director, had a set of stocks and a stretching rack hidden somewhere.

“Yes, not only for kicking, but also for swearing.” Again not a first-time offense for Thomas. He had a teenage brother who thought it was just hilarious to teach Thomas dirty words. As

a result, the kid had dropped some bombs that had made even Bailey blush. "Can you hold down the fort?" Bailey asked, Cindy, his sixteen-year old room assistant.

She barely looked up from the picture she was coloring to give him a half-hearted nod. He tried not to roll his eyes. Some days he wondered if Cindy had ever left her elementary days behind. Last week he caught her playing with Barbies.

Bailey exchanged covert glances with Megan so she would know he truly had left her in charge. She gave him a thumb's up before returning to her *PlayDoh*. Then he held out his hand for Thomas. The boy reluctantly took it so Bailey could escort him to the office.

He didn't realize how late it was until they got to the office and saw the usual six-in-the-evening-rush of parents coming in to pick up their kids. A man in a suit stood at the counter, arguing with, Mary, the office receptionist. Since Mary lived to piss people off, that didn't shock Bailey so he just led Thomas to a chair and motioned for him to take a seat.

Only then did Bailey glance up again at the angry man at the desk. When he finally realized who it was, it took everything he had in him not to let out an over dramatic gasp of shock.

There in all his glory stood David-fucking-Walker and he'd never looked better. Bailey felt a

cold sweat break out over his body as he clenched his hands into tight fists. Back in high school, David had been Bailey's first and only teenage crush. Like all adolescent loves, it had consumed nearly every one of Bailey's fifteen-year-old thoughts and he'd lived for those brief moments when their paths would cross. A fact made more embarrassing because David, who had been a few years older, had never seemed to notice that Bailey was sharing the same air space.

David had been a stereotypical jock who played baseball and football. Even then, he'd had the sexiest body, all muscles without one hint of fat. Most nights, Bailey had dreamed about those dark, blue eyes looking at him with interest. How it would feel to finally be able to run his hands through David's dark hair.

An unwanted, the memory of the first time he'd ever met David came back to Bailey in one humiliating rush.

Bailey clutched his lunch tray tight as he gazed out over the cafeteria. A nervous flutter went through his gut as he searched the immense room for a spot to sit. It didn't matter though, each table his gaze landed on appeared more hostile than the last. One seemed dominated by overly large guys with varsity jackets. He quickly dismissed that one. The closest he ever came to playing sports

was when he sat in the stands and cheered on his brother, Brock.

The next table over held a group of girls, all of whom seemed to have identical snide, judgmental expressions on their faces. They only wore high-end clothing from their designer tops down to the hundred-dollar shoes. His older sister, Melissa, sat with them. She styled her blonde hair in that twisty thing all girls seemed to be wearing. As soon as she spared Bailey a glance, he knew he wouldn't be welcomed there either. Her blue eyes had a clear stay-away message stamped in them.

Not surprised, since she'd never been chummy, even at home. He let out a sigh as he continued to scan the sea of bodies for one friendly face. He spotted the back of Brock's head at another table of jocks, but Bailey didn't want to go there either. The only one who hated him more than Melissa was Brock. His brother just couldn't relate to a younger brother who would rather spend the afternoon at the library instead of the hockey rink.

Panic made a cold sweat break out over Bailey's skin as he worried that he'd never find a friendly face. He didn't even see any of his handful of friends from junior high. Dear God, what if the whole year was like this? He didn't think he'd be able to stand it.

Just as he was about to ditch his tray and go hide out by his locker, a familiar voice called,

“Bailey, over here!”

Bailey’s heart leaped for joy when he spotted, Quinn, one of his book club friends. With a sigh of relief, Bailey rushed over to join him. Quinn seemed just as happy to see him. An overweight, awkward kid, with a mop of brown curls, Quinn had trouble making friends. Sad really, since Bailey hadn’t even met someone so kind and giving.

“I can’t believe we got the same lunch period,” Quinn gushed out, in that over excited way of his. “I was beginning to think I would be eating every lunch alone.”

“Yeah, it’s great.”

“We can use this time to talk about the club, too. It’s going to be so awesome this year!”

Quinn started to babble on about books, classic movies and then his favorite band, *Three Dog Night*. Bailey just smiled and nodded a lot since he didn’t know that much about classic movies or older bands. He mostly listened to *The Red Hot Chili Peppers*. Since Quinn seemed so happy, Bailey didn’t have the heart to say that aloud though.

As Quinn kept gabbing, Bailey let his mind wander. Once his friend got on a kick, he usually kept at it for a while. Bailey looked out the corner of his eye at the other end of the table. A group of what looked like senior boys sat in a tight group. There were six of them and they seemed like an

odd mish-mash of the usual cliques.

One of them, a small thin blond wore a band jacket. Another, who was a bit taller, with dark brown hair, had on a track and field t-shirt. A jock with dark-hair wore a varsity jacket that seemed to be standard for his clique. Bailey recognized one of the others from the drama club and another from Brock's hockey team. Heck, they even had a guy who was decked out in all black and had his dark hair in spikes, like a lot of the other vampire-wannabes.

Almost on its own accord, Bailey's gaze flitted back to the dark-haired jock. While he usually dismissed all from that clique as meathead jerks, something about this guy seemed different. A strange fluttering went through his stomach as he took in the jock's deep blue eyes and how his hair flopped just perfectly over his forehead.

Terror slid down Bailey's spine as he realized he was actually checking out the senior. He forced himself to look away before he got caught. The familiar pain of guilt and fear sliced through him, making him tremble just a bit. Shit, what would his dad say if he knew his youngest son crushed on guys instead of girls? Bailey didn't even want to think about how that conversation would go down. He could just picture the look of disappointment on his parent's faces.

"Who are you staring at?" Quinn's accusation

cut through Bailey's troubled thoughts.

Bailey forgot to breathe for a second as he worried that he may have somehow given himself away to Quinn. "Nobody, I was just seeing who was sitting at the table with us."

Quinn glanced down himself before he gave a slight nod. "My cousin told me about that group."

"What did she say?" Bailey couldn't resist asking.

"That they're all a little too close if you know what I mean." Quinn's face twisted up in disgust.

Yeah, Bailey knew exactly what Quinn meant. He also knew that look, too. He dreaded and hated it because he knew it would be the same one he'd face if his secret ever came out into the open.

"You see the jock?" Quinn asked.

Bailey's heart pounded. All he had been doing is seeing the jock. Had Quinn noticed? "It's kind of hard to miss any jock since they all tend to dress the same."

"His name is David and he was dating a girl from the cheerleading squad for years before he suddenly dumped her," Quinn supplied. "My cousin said it was so he could be with some guy from another school. Can you imagine that? Giving up someone as pretty as Kimmy Parker? She has the biggest tits in school."

Bailey shook his head like it was a huge mystery to him, too. At the same time, he

wondered how it would feel to actually be free to go out with a boy, like David supposedly had done.

Bailey flicked a glance back at David. Who was he kidding? What he really wanted to know was how it would be to date David, period. At that moment, David glanced up and his gaze locked in on Bailey. Like the dork he was, Bailey froze. He couldn't breathe, let alone look away. He felt for sure he would melt into a puddle of embarrassment and then David smiled at him.

A warm feeling went through Bailey and before he knew it, he'd grinned in return. With that simple exchange, Bailey had been lost. Even though he and David didn't exchange but a handful of words over the course of the year, Bailey developed an infatuation with the older boy. One that had lasted even after David had graduated and went away to college.

Now as he faced his teenage crush for the first time in nine years, he realized the passing time had only served to make David even more handsome and out of Bailey's league. A soft sound of distress burst from Bailey's lips. Who was he kidding? David wasn't just good looking, he was frigging sex on a stick. He now styled his dark hair in a more conservative manner, the ends just reaching the collar of this light blue, button up,

dress shirt. It made his eyes stand out even sharper than Bailey had remembered. Those said eyes also happened to be framed by thick, black lashes. On anyone else, they may have seemed girly, but with David it just made him look damn sexy. Even with though he wore a dark blue suit, Bailey could still tell that at least David's upper half was as muscular as ever. What Bailey would have given to see the rest of the man's body, but the damn counter blocked his view. Had David kept his super trim body? Were his legs still all muscles from working out so much? It was almost killing him to not have those questions answered. Bailey knew one thing for sure though, David didn't have on a pair of worn jeans and a dorky t-shirt like him.

Fuck! Of all the people in the world, why in the hell did he have to be here now when I'm at my lowest?

"What more do you want from me?" David asked, still in the heat of his argument with Mary. "My sister called to tell you I would be picking up Brian, I'm on the release list and I gave you my ID."

Bailey felt torn. Part of him wanted to slink behind the tall filing cabinet and hide while the other half wanted to move a little closer so he could get a better look at David. In the end, Bailey decided to stay put and just hope that battle-axe Mary would find her friendly bone for once in her

life and give in to David's demands.

Just his luck, Mary pressed her lips in a thin, stubborn line as she shook her head so hard, her gray hair almost slipped free of its bun. "I'm sorry, but you look nothing like the picture in that ID."

If Thomas hadn't been watching, Bailey would have been tempted to roll his eyes in exasperation. Knowing Mary, the ID was perfectly fine. She loved to abuse the smidgen bit of power she got from running the front office. No wonder the kids feared coming there.

"Please, my sister is stuck in traffic and won't be able to make it here in time to pick up Brian. Would it help if we called her and she verified it was me over the phone?" David asked as he ran a hand through his carefully groomed hair. The move left behind the sexiest cowlicks.

Mary again shook her head. "No, I need her to be here in person to verify you."

David threw his hands up. "If she could do that, then she'd be able to pick up her own kid. That's the only reason I'm here to begin with is because she can't be."

Even though the last thing he wanted was to draw attention to himself, Bailey knew he had to help out if only for the sake of Brian. He would feel like a first-class jerk if some kid got stuck in the daycare until late because he'd been a chicken shit. "I can verify who he is," he volunteered past

a suddenly dry mouth.

David glanced up with that expression people get when they see someone they know they've met before, but can't quite remember where. Just when Bailey couldn't have felt any smaller and insignificant, too. He nervously tugged at his *Wee Care* t-shirt as he explained, "We went to the same high school."

"Oh," David said, his brows still drawn together in confusion.

Bailey felt a heat come over his cheeks. "You probably don't remember me since I was a few years younger than you. We were in the drama production together during your senior year."

"Of course I know who you are." David gave a half-hearted attempt at a smile that didn't fool Bailey for one second.

Sure you remember me, buddy. Not that Bailey was surprised the popular jock would notice a shy, thin nerd like himself. Shit, while they may have been in the same drama production, since Bailey had worked props and David had been the lead, they still hardly talked.

David snapped his fingers, then pointed at him. "Bailey Hall, right?"

A surge of pleasure went through Bailey until he realized his nametag had been on the entire conversation and David, no doubt, had simply read the name off that. Not willing to call the guy

out on it though, Bailey instead turned to Mary. "His name is David Walker and I've known him for years."

Mary made the disapproving *hmphing* sound that she'd perfected down to a fine art form. "How do I know that you're not in cahoots with him?"

Bailey didn't know what annoyed him more, that she actually thought he'd put one of the kids in harm or the fact that she'd used the word *cahoots* in a normal conversation. The last time he'd heard it tossed around had been during an old black and white movie on the AMC channel that Quinn had forced him to watch. Since he didn't dare tell her off for fear of losing his pissy job, he just deadpanned, "Because I've never made it a habit to take my work home with me."

Thomas, who'd been watching the whole conversation in rapt silence, snickered as he swung his chubby legs back and forth. Then David let out a laugh that he quickly muffled behind a cough. Mary screwed up her face like she'd just found something foul on the bottom of her sensible pumps.

"Fine, I'll let him take Brian, but only if you agree to initial the sign-out sheet. I won't be responsible if this guy turns out to be a predator or something," Mary huffed.

"I watched *Predator* with my brother. It had lots of guts in it," Thomas chimed in not-so-helpfully.

"I'm not a predator in real life or a horror movie," David protested.

"Yeah, you don't look like the monster at all," Thomas agreed as he continued to swing his legs. He probably thought all his *cooperation* would get him out of trouble.

"See?" Bailey couldn't help but goad Mary. "Perfectly harmless."

Mary pulled an even worse face that made her look every one of her sixty-plus years. "Fine, you can help him while I deal with Thomas."

Even though he no longer felt sure he wanted to subject Thomas to her attitude, Bailey knew he had no choice. His sister had made it perfectly clear that she considered it a huge burden giving him a job in the first place. He already knew he'd pushed his luck as it was with going against Mary for the sake of David. Anymore and he'd be once again unemployed.

He let out a soft sigh. Since when had a minimum wage job of what amounted to glorified babysitting become his only career choice? He glanced down at his bright blue t-shirt that had equally bright yellow stick figures drawn on it before he looked back up at David's suit and tie. Again came the painful reminder that David was still way out of his league. Cheeks burning once more, he ducked his head as moved to the counter. "Just sign Brian out and I'll take you back

to his room.”

“Thanks.” David scrawled his signature on the sheet and pushed it back at Bailey who added his initials.

Once they were out of earshot range of the office David said, “Is she always like that?”

“You mean Mary?”

David nodded.

Bailey laughed and added, “Yeah, she is. I think she’s watched one too many episodes of *Dateline*.”

David let out a warm chuckle that did funny things to Bailey’s insides. Now that they were essentially alone, all of Bailey’s insecurities were coming back in full force. He wished, not for the first time, that he possessed just an ounce of confidence or coolness. Bailey’s mind raced as he tried to think of something smooth or funny to say. Nothing came to him though, not that he could have spoken around the lump in his throat. For all his ineptness, he may as well have been back in high school, sitting at that same lunch table as he ogled David from afar.

When they finally did reach the door to the nursery all he managed was a grunted, “Here you go.”

David gave an easy smile, not showing a bit of the panic Bailey suffered from, damn him. “Thanks again.”

Bailey tried for a smile of his own, but knew all

he probably managed was a tight grimace that no doubt made him look constipated or something. Which might be funny in another circumstance, but wouldn't earn him any cool points in his current situation.

David paused on his way into the room and gave Bailey an up and down assessing look. Unwanted desire slammed into him as he found himself mesmerized by that blue-eyed gaze. Bailey sucked in a soft breath as his cock came to life. Shit, this wasn't the right circumstance for this either. David would probably think Bailey was some kind of perv or something. Fear coursed through his body as his heart pounded almost painfully. Frantic, he wondered if his t-shirt was long enough to cover his groin area. He tried to bring up images of dramatic prairie dogs, surprised kittens and when that didn't work, Quinn in a speedo—all in an attempt to get little Bailey to cool it.

Please don't let him notice. Please don't let him notice. Please don't let him notice.

In the end David just gave another sensual grin before saying, "It was nice seeing you again, Bailey."

Bailey hadn't realized he was still holding his breath until David walked through the door. He let it out with a loud *whoosh* as he rested his forehead against the wall. Under the nearly

overwhelming smells of bleach, milk and Lysol was the citrusy, warm scent of David.

He sent his cock a silent *down boy* as he tried to get himself together. There was no sense in falling for David again. After wasting his entire high school life, pining for the guy, the last thing Bailey wanted was to stroll down that road again.

Besides, there was no way in hell that someone as hot as David would ever be interested in a loser like him. Hell, Bailey couldn't even hold a job, let alone hold another guy's attention long enough to get even a first date.

Chapter Two

By the time David dropped off his nephew and managed to get away from his sister, it was nearly seven. As he pulled out of the drive, he said a silent prayer of thanks that his house was only a ten-minute drive away. After a busy and stressful day at work, all he wanted was a strong drink and a hot bath.

Once he pulled onto the main street, his mind started to wander. It didn't surprise him that the first thing he thought of was Bailey. Damn, that boy had grown up and then some.

David adjusted the groin on his pants as a visual of the gorgeous man came through picture perfect. A moan of appreciation slipped past David's lips as his thoughts reflected how those big, brown doe eyes had seemed so warm and sensual at the same time. But then again everything about Bailey was sensual, from his full lips, to way his short, brown hair was mussed just enough to give off bedroom fantasies. Shit, even the guy's soft features were sexy from the slope of

his nose to the high arched cheekbones.

A smile came over his lips as he recalled how his life had never been the same since he'd seen Bailey that first time.

"God, I hate the first day of school," Drake moaned, as he cast a dark-eyed glance over the chaotic cafeteria.

David glanced over at his friend. Dressed in his track and field shirt and baggy blue jeans, one would never guess that Drake came from one of the wealthiest families in Farmington Hills. But then, Drake had never been a snob. Not only did he never put out the whole better-than-you attitude, but he usually was the first one to say a kind word. So, if he was bitching, he must be upset about something. "You okay?" David asked.

"Of course he's okay," Paxton cut in. "We're seniors now so this year is going to rock!"

David cut a jaded glare at Paxton. As usual, Paxton wore a cocky grin to match his equally cocky personality. With shoulder length blond hair and light blue eyes, he had his own all-female fan club in the stands at every one of his hockey games. Too bad Paxton was too busy checking out the guys on the opposite team to notice their devotion.

"I'm fine. My dad just keeps bugging me about majoring in business when I go to college next

year and it's starting to get to me," Drake replied morosely.

"So," Paxton shrugged. "I thought you were excited about taking over the family restaurant."

"I guess I am. I kinda wish he would have asked me, though. Everyone just assumes it will happen."

David leaned closer. "If you had your choice of anything, what would you do?"

"Sadly enough, I would pick running the restaurant. I know it sounds stupid, but I grew up around that place and I love it."

"You just don't like feeling you were pushed into it," David surmised.

"Yeah, plus I know I'm going to have to take math and accounting classes and I suck at numbers," Drake groaned.

"I can attest to that," Marc grunted in agreement. Even though he looked like the classic bad boy with his black hair, clothes and fingernails, he was actually the brain of the group and he served as the unofficial tutor. More than once, he'd helped David pass a class.

David knew people often wondered how a group of guys who were completely different ended up being so close. The simple fact was they had gravitated toward one another slowly over the past couple of years because, for all their differences, they had one thing in common. They

were gay teenagers coming to terms with who they were through the very judgmental years of high school.

As far as he knew, none of others had come out to their families or larger circles of friends. They kept everything so close to their chest it was a miracle that they'd even found each other. But they had and David would never trade their support and understanding for anything. He knew that there were some whispers about them. Especially when he dumped Kimmy last year, but so far they'd managed to avoid too much confrontation.

Not that David cared anymore if everyone knew his sexual orientation. Over the summer he'd come out to his parents and they'd been very understanding. It's just that he knew some of the others in his group wouldn't be so lucky. Take Marc for example. His mother was a mean drunk who was known all over town for being a huge bigot. David feared what could happen to his friend if his mom were to find out her son was gay.

"Have you tried talking to your dad?" Sammy asked Drake. The quietest and smallest one of the group, Sammy was the newest addition. He'd transferred to their school the previous year and had pretty much kept to himself until Marc had brought him into their fold. Many times David

had wondered if Marc had an attraction to the short blond, but as far as he knew, the pair had only remained friends.

“What would he say, that he really wants to be in the family business, but he doesn’t want to have to go away to college for it?” Hayden cut in with his usual cutthroat bluntness. He shook his head before pointing a finger at Drake. “Sorry, buddy, if Michael Corleone had to go to Italy to take over his family business, the least you can do is go to college for yours.”

David shook his head. “This is real life, not the *Godfather*. Besides, Michael didn’t go to Italy so he could head the mafia, he did it because he killed a couple guys and had to hide out from the police.”

Hayden scrunched up his face as he toyed with the spikes of his short brown hair. “I guess you do have a point there.”

“And you’re in the drama club, Hayden?” Marc drawled as he rolled his eyes. “No wonder the last two productions were so bad.”

“Not this year,” Hayden argued. “I’m getting more people to join so we won’t suck so much. David promised he’d do it.”

When they all gave him questioning looks, David shrugged. “I was in a good mood when he asked me.” He didn’t feel comfortable admitting that he actually looked forward to performing on stage, not even to them. The previous year he’d

taken a performing arts class and every since he'd been addicted. There was something about being up on stage and having others hanging on his every word that David found exciting. Not even the high he got from playing football could compare. So, when Hayden asked him to join the drama club, he didn't have to do much begging before David agreed. He knew since he'd just started, he'd probably just get some bit role in the winter play, but it didn't matter, just so long as he got to be a part of the show.

Paxton shook his head as he made slight tscking noises at David. "I can't believe you went over to the dark side, dude. Next you'll be mixing up movie references and wanting to go Hollywood like this one."

He hooked a thumb at Hayden who responded with a rude gesture. They all laughed before settling into the usual bullshit banter. The lunch period had just about finished when Sammy leaned forward and whispered in David's ear, "Don't look now, but I think you have an admirer."

Sammy nodded his head toward the end of the long table to show what he was talking about and like a puppet, David looked in the direction he'd indicated. A pleasant thrill went through him when he saw a small, dark-haired freshmen staring at him. The kid may have been trying to be

sneaky about it, but there was no mistaking the interest stamped in his brown-eyed gaze as it traveled over David.

"He's a cute little puppy," Sammy ventured as they both watched the freshmen reach up to nervously play with his hair. He had an equally young friend across the table from him, but the kid didn't seem to be paying his lunch mate any attention.

"He's way too young for me," David replied with a small bit of regret. While he'd never openly perused someone from his own school, for someone as cute as the puppy he might have been willing to break that rule. .

"I guess four years is a lot," Sammy conceded. "Not only that, but I think he's Brock Hall's kid brother."

They both shared disgusted looks and David felt a twinge of sympathy for the kid. Brock was one of the biggest assholes on his football team. More than once, David had to hold himself back from punching out the guy for making snide, hateful statements. "Do you know his name?" David asked.

Sammy tilted his head to the side in a thoughtful manner. "I think it's Bailey. Our families have gone out boating together a few times, but that was years ago. Even back then, he didn't talk much. He just kept to himself the entire

time, reading books. Would it make you feel better if I told you I think he's fifteen even though he's a freshman? As I recall he got held back in kindergarden because he had really bad asthma then and missed a lot of school."

Bailey looked back over and this time David didn't even bother hiding that he was staring back. As soon as he saw Bailey's eyes widen in shock, David knew he had the guy's attention. Bailey's cheeks flushed in response. It was the cutest thing David had ever seen and he couldn't hold in his smile.

For a brief second, he thought that Bailey would get up from the table and bolt. He sure seemed skittish enough for something like that. Instead, Bailey grinned in return. As dorky as it sounded, the smile seemed to light up the entire room. It was so sweet...so innocent, that David found himself holding his breath, afraid if he moved, the moment would be broken.

Then just as suddenly as it had begun, the smile ended and Bailey turned away. David continued to watch, silently willing Bailey to look over again. To his immense disappointment, he never glanced at David again.

When the bell rang, David was forced to admit defeat. With a soft curse, he crushed his pop can and stood up. It was just as well anyhow. He'd meant what he said earlier. While Bailey may be

the hottest thing he'd ever seen, the kid was just too young for David, be it by three or four years. It was as simple as that.

David's cell started ringing, bringing him back to the present. With a growl of frustration, he snatched it up. "What?"

"Aren't you a grouchy pants tonight?"

David cringed as he recognized the voice of his mother. "Sorry, tough day at work."

"Is the Hadley case still bothering you?"

"Yeah, but hopefully it will be over soon. What did you need, Ma?"

"Well, you sound so tired. I hate to be a bother," she hedged.

"You're never a bother to me. You know that," even as he spoke those words, he had a sneaky suspicion he'd come to regret them.

"Okay, then I need you to do me a favor."

David held in the groan as he thought once again about that hot shower and how it was now delayed even more. He had no choice though, it's not like he could say no to his mother. "Sure, what can I do for you?"

"Your cousin, Aden, is having his birthday next week and I need to buy him a gift card from *Speedway*."

He shook his head, certain he'd misheard her. "Did you just say *Speedway* as in the gas station?"

“Yes, that’s it,” she replied easily, as if it were quite normal to give very wealthy relatives gift cards for gas.

“Why would you want to give him that?”

“Well, since he insists on driving that *Hummel* I thought I should do my part and help out. It must cost him a fortune to fill that thing up.”

“It’s a *Hummer* and since he lives in a million-dollar house, I’m sure he can afford the expense,” David drawled, already knowing it was a lost cause. Whenever his mother got something in her head, nothing could sway her.

“I hear he’s about to lose that house,” his mother said in her best can-you-believe-it voice. “I knew when he bought that thing he was getting in way over his head. But do any of your cousins ever listen to me? Now, he’s probably going to have declare bankruptcy. Don’t be surprised if he comes to you for legal advice.”

“Unless he decides to rob a bank to make the mortgage payments I won’t be much help. I’m a criminal lawyer,” he reminded her. He didn’t add that it would be a cold day in hell before he helped Aden. Even as kids, David had never been able to stand the pompous ass.

“Make sure you stop by the *Speedway* on the corner of Telegraph,” his mother ordered.

For the second time in the conversation, David felt struck stupid. “Why so specific?”

"They have such pretty colored cards at that one. Make sure you go straight there, too. No stops in between."

David pulled the phone from his ear so he could give it a confused look as he wondered what had gotten into her. "Have you been drinking vodka again or sniffing your scrapbook glue?" His mother's bubbly laughter was his only answer. David shook his head. Maybe it had been a good thing that she'd been too busy to pick up Brian when his sister, Becca, had called for help. "Fine, I'll be a good boy and drive straight to the oddly specific *Speedway*. How much should I get?"

"How much of what?"

David gripped the phone tighter as he held back an aggravated curse. He took several deep breaths and reminded himself that he truly did love his mother...most of the time. "The gift card, what dollar amount?"

"Oh, that! I guess fifty should do it."

"Fine, you want me to pick you up anything else while I'm at the gas station? Maybe an air freshener in the shape of a pine tree or something?"

"No, I think the gift card should be enough. Now hurry up and get there, it's almost seven."

Before David could question her on that oddball statement, she hung up. He still sat there, phone to ear, listening to dead air for several

seconds as he worried over his mother's particular behavior. Not that his mom didn't have a reputation for being eccentric. She was always doing weird and embarrassing things. Like dressing up as Lady Gaga last Halloween, for one example. David still got shivers as he recalled how she'd spent the entire night wobbling on thick platform heels.

The gas station came into view so he threw down his phone and turned in. The sooner he got this scavenger hunt of an errand done, the sooner he could get home and into the tub. The only other car in the lot was a Jeep Wrangler. David pulled into the slot next to it.

Damn, his mother so owed him for this one.

So intent on his quest for the gift card, he barely noticed anyone else in the store as he went up to the large revolving rack. It took him over three turns of the thing to realize the only choices he had were red with a blue stripe or...blue with a red stripe. This is what his mother considered pretty?

Just as he grabbed the card, the clerk's voice drew his attention. "Damn, Bailey if you keep eating those things I'm going to think you have a death wish."

Bailey? David knew a Bailey. Or rather he would like to get to know one. Scanning the small area, he spotted the object of his desire standing in

front of the hot dog machine.

David wanted to let out a loud whoop of excitement. After spending the past hour daydreaming about the guy, he already had a chance to talk to him again. He so owed his mother for this one.

Bailey peered down at the revolving hot dogs. He no longer had on that eyesore of a shirt, instead a plain, white t-shirt covered his slightly muscled chest.

David licked his lips in appreciation. He always had liked his guys thin and sleek and Bailey fit those specifications perfectly.

Bailey didn't seem to notice David, instead he turned to the clerk and gave off the sexiest of smiles. "I know they're not the healthiest of choices, but it's still a hell of a lot better than my cooking. I think I'm the only person in history that can mess up *Easy Mac*."

"Seriously, dude, those dogs have been on there since this morning," the clerk argued. The man had a greasy sort of look and was as wide as he was tall. His smock had several mystery stains splattered on it and he had his black hair combed over on the top and overly long in the back.

David held back a shudder of disgust at the man's choice in hair styles. *And who said mullets were dead?*

Even though he seemed to only be trying to be

helpful, David didn't miss the lewd way his beady eyed gaze seemed to nearly devour Bailey. Almost as if Bailey were just another one of those overcooked hot dogs and the man couldn't wait for a taste. David had seen that look way too many times, usually when he visited a client at prison. It reminded him of the way a shark eyed up a poor seal right before the big kill.

A surge of protectiveness went through David and before he'd even realized it, he'd stepped toward Bailey. "He's right, you know. Those things are terrible for you."

Bailey spun around, his mouth slightly open in surprise. Then that adorable flush came over his cheeks as his gaze locked in on David. Bailey took a step back until his ass was flush with the counter and began to nervously toy with the hem of his shirt. "Hey."

"Wow, after all these years of no contact, we see each other twice in one day. What are the odds?" David asked lightly, hoping to put Bailey at ease. It seemed obvious the guy wasn't that smooth when it came to social interactions. Instead of bothering David, that little trait somehow made Bailey more attractive.

"Yeah, I guess it is pretty amazing."

David leaned in on the pretense of looking at the grill. "You really aren't going to eat those are you?"

Bailey shrugged. "I do almost every night and I haven't been struck by food poisoning yet."

"Only because you've been incredibly lucky. Those things look like they could be used as toxic missiles in times of war."

"They probably could be." Bailey laughed.

That's all it took. One simple laugh and David knew he was a goner all over again. Just watching the way those brown eyes lit up, the curve of those full lips and he became instantly drawn to the younger man. His stomach clenched with excitement and dread. While he'd love nothing more than to get to know Bailey better, some small part of David still worried that the age difference would be too much.

He gave an internal shake of his head. It's not like they were still in high school where a few years made for a huge obstacle. They were full-grown men and that kind of thing didn't matter anymore. David refused to let his past concerns ruin whatever it was he already felt building with Bailey. Besides, if he didn't dare take a chance, he'd be destined to grow old alone, like his Aunt Givvy. The last thing he wanted was to find himself sixty years old, bitter at life and with a house full of cats. Steeling himself for rejection, he blurted, "I can't stand by and watch someone destroy themselves from inside out. Why don't you let me take you out to dinner?"

Bailey's eyes grew slightly wide as his mouth dropped open a bit.

Not exactly the reaction David had hoped for, but at least it wasn't an out-right rejection. When Bailey didn't say anything, David hastened to add, "I mean it's the least I can do to thank you for helping me out sooner. It wouldn't be anything fancy, just pizza at *Guido's*." The silence lagged on for a few seconds, each one adding another blow to David's ego. Just as he was about to mutter a goodbye and retreat, Bailey's timid voice stopped him.

"Sure, that sounds like fun."

David barely restrained himself from doing a happy dance. "Great! Just let me go pay for this gift card and we can go." David rushed to the cashier, afraid that Bailey would change his mind if he had too much time to think about it.

The entire time David paid for the card, the clerk shot him dirty glances. It seemed obvious he thought David was poaching on his territory. Which was ridiculous because from what he could tell, Bailey only considered the guy an acquaintance and nothing more. David ignored the animosity coming his way, too excited at the prospect of spending more time with Bailey to let anything get him down. As soon as the clerk completed the transaction, David turned back to Bailey. "Ready?" God, he hoped he didn't sound

too eager.

Bailey gifted him with another one of those heart-stopping, cock-hardening smiles. “Yeah, I’m starved.”

Once they got out, David wasn’t surprised when Bailey started to head for the Jeep. Somehow the vehicle seemed to fit him.

“Why don’t you just ride with me to the restaurant?” David suggested. He wanted to spend every minute possible with the sexy man.

Bailey looked over and his brows rose at the sight of David’s black Maserati Gran Turismo. “Okay.”

David hoped the entire evening didn’t consist of just *okays* and *yeahs* or it would be awkward. He had to find a way to break through Bailey’s shell. While he’d caught glimpses of the man’s sense of humor and compassion already, David yearned to know the true Bailey without the shield of shyness. He unlocked the doors and they climbed in.

Bailey let out a low whistle as he ran his finger along the dash. “I never thought I’d be sitting in one of these.”

A heat came over David’s face as he wondered if he was coming off as pompous as his cousin with the Hummer. “I know it probably seems a little over the top. I got it for myself as a reward when I won a particularly hard case.”

"Are you a lawyer or something?"

"Would it bother you if I was?" David asked, only half-teasing, all too aware of how many felt about his profession.

"No, actually I think it's kind of interesting. The closest I ever got to a courtroom is old *Law and Order* marathons. What kind of law do you practice?"

"Criminal and before you ask, yes that means I defend bad guys sometimes." David started the car and pulled out of the gas station.

Bailey let out a short laugh. "*Bad guys?* You sound like one of the kids at the daycare during movie day."

David chuckled, loving that Bailey was back to showing his humor. "Sorry, that's just how my mom phrases it."

"I'm a teacher," Bailey said, before he started to toy with the hem of his shirt again. "Or at least, I was until I got laid off a couple weeks ago."

At a loss for something better to say, David went with, "I'm sorry, that sucks."

Bailey shrugged. "Schools all over Michigan have to cut staff because of lack of funding. Since I'd just worked there for a year, I was one of the first to go. I just wish they could have told me sooner, so I could have lined up something for this fall. Now I'm stuck."

"Is that why you're working at the daycare?"

Before that moment David had just assumed Bailey had been helping his sister out since she was the director.

"Yeah, while I still draw a paycheck from the school until August, I wanted to get ahead on my bills in case I have a dry spell. I put my resume out to all the local schools, but unless there's a surprise opening I'm screwed."

"What did you used to teach?"

"Literature." A wistful smile came over Bailey's lips. "I love teaching the classics. Now the closest I get to it is *Captain Underpants*."

"Hey, *Captain Underpants* is awesome. No disrespect in teaching that," David joked, hoping to lift Bailey some. He knew it'd worked when Bailey let out a soft chuckle.

"He does have some great life lessons hidden in his stories," Bailey conceded.

Before he could stop himself, David reached across and gave Bailey's thigh a comforting squeeze. "I'm sure you'll get another teaching job."

Bailey gave another one of his shrugs before he said, "Can I ask you a question?"

"Anything." David's hand still rested on Bailey's thigh, but neither one of them moved to break the contact.

"Did you really remember who I was today at the daycare?" He turned to gaze at David.

"Of course I did. What would make you think otherwise?" He had, too. At first he'd been struck stupid because he'd never dreamed that he'd be lucky enough to cross paths with Bailey, but from the instant he saw those brown eyes, David had known his fortune had finally changed.

"Well, it's not like we exactly hung out in school or anything. You stuck close to your circle of friends and I was younger than all of you. I just assumed a little nerd like me didn't even register for you."

Did he dare tell Bailey the truth? David only hesitated a second before he knew the answer to that. Yes, after all this time he owed it to Bailey. "Bailey, I was very much aware of you in high school." His gut did a nice, neat flip as he made that damning confession. How would Bailey react once he knew that David had harbored a secret crush on him? What's more, was David willing to put himself out for a hurtful rejection like that?

"Sure, you were." Bailey nodded, but the look in his eyes declared he was unconvinced.

"You used to wear a *Red Hot Chili Peppers* shirt to school all the time," he ventured.

"I'm sure a lot of kids from our school wore those."

"The one you had was black and had gray writing and pictures on it. On the back it had a circle that said *Californication* and there was a duck

with a halo in the center of it.”

Bailey sucked in a sharp breath as his eyes grew wide.

David worried if maybe he’d revealed too much, coming off as some sicko stalker. Knowing his luck, Bailey would try to bail from the car at the next red light. All the while screaming, *get this freak away from me*. A huge wave of relief went through him when Bailey grinned.

“My brother got me that shirt when he went to their concert. I liked it so much I still have it.”

“So, now do you believe me?”

The heat of Bailey’s thigh tempted David like nothing else ever had. He yearned to move his hand up higher, all the way to the cock he’d dreamed of so often. David restrained himself. This was Bailey, not some one-night quick fuck. The last thing he wanted to do was rush things.

“I guess. It just shocks me. I didn’t think you noticed me at all.” Bailey slowly licked his lips as he gazed down at David’s hand.

“I did nothing else but notice you my senior year,” David confessed. Now that he had gone this far, he might as well put it all out there.

“Why didn’t you ever approach me? Hell, you didn’t say five words to me the entire year.” Bailey’s tongue darted out to run another path along his bottom lip.

David’s cock jerked in reaction. “You were so

much younger than me and I wasn't even sure you were gay."

"And now?"

David gave Bailey's thigh a squeeze before declaring, "Now, nothing is going to stop me from getting to know you better."

Chapter Three

Bailey's head spun as he silently repeated David's words to himself. The fact that David had just admitted to having an attraction to him seemed like a fantasy come true. Bailey had to restrain the urge to pinch himself to make sure it had truly happened and it just wasn't the opening act to another one of his wet dreams.

"You're just not saying that to get me into the sack are you?" he demanded shrewdly. He didn't add that it wouldn't take that much effort because he'd drop to his knees for David without a second's hesitation. No sense in coming off like a slut...at least not yet.

"It's the complete truth. I know it probably makes me sound needy or desperate, but I can't help it," David responded.

His voice was so husky it reminded Bailey of warm Peppermint Schnapps on a cold day. David looked away from the road. His eyes were dark with such a raw passion there was no way it couldn't be genuine. Bailey bit back a moan as

desire pooled through his gut. "You don't sound needy at all. Just sexy as hell."

Even though he felt a heat come over his cheeks at his own blatant behavior, Bailey didn't want to call the words back. After nine years of pining for David, he was finally actually alone with him. More than that, they were alone and both turned on. Bailey hadn't missed the erection tenting David's dark slacks.

Bailey's cock was equally as hard, almost to the point of painful. He stared down at David's hand and wondered what it would be like if he moved it higher. A strange whimpering sound filled the car. Mortified, Bailey realized the noise came from him. He ducked his head. "Sorry."

"Don't be, it's fucking hot," David assured him.

Bailey wondered how the guy managed to keep driving through all this. If it had been him behind the wheel, they'd have crashed long ago. Not only could that be dangerous for everyone around them but it would have been fun to explain to the police. As if reading his mind, David's lips curled up into a grin so wicked, Bailey almost lost it and came.

"You better get yourself under control, because we're here."

Bailey looked up in dismay to see Guido's coming into in view. Damn it for being there so soon. He felt certain that given even five more

minutes, he would have had David's hand exactly where they *both* wanted it. "I don't suppose you could drive around the block a couple more times?" Bailey joked.

"We do that and I have a feeling we'll never get our dinner." David moved his hand to turn off the car.

Bailey immediately missed the touch and had to restrain himself from reaching out and grabbing David's hand to bring it back. His cock seemed to be screaming in protest and he tried to think back to the last time he had a good, hard screw. Shit, it had to be going on over a year and a half now and that had just been with one of his college fuck buddies.

"I guess we should eat," Bailey replied.

Their gazes locked and for one, heart-pounding moment, Bailey thought David was going to kiss him. Bailey even licked his lips in happy anticipation. In the end, however, David just reached over and lightly ran the pad of his thumb over Bailey's cheek. "I'm really glad we ran into each other today."

Bailey smiled. "I am, too."

"Let's go inside. I want to learn everything about you and we have a lot of lost time to make up for."

Bailey felt a bit dizzy with how fast things were moving. If someone had told him, even this

morning, that he'd soon be having an intimate dinner with David Walker, he would have laughed. Now that it actually was happening, it filled Bailey with a nervous anticipation unlike what he'd ever experienced.

They got out and went inside. Bailey vaguely recognized the bubbly, blonde hostess who sat them, but she seemed to be very close to David. She even brushed her hand over his shoulder as she walked away.

"Did she go to our school?" Bailey frowned as he tried to study her without looking like he gawking.

"Yeah, her name was Kimmy Parker." David picked up the menu and started to study it. For what, Bailey couldn't guess. Guido's had been open in their neighborhood for so long, all the locals knew the menu by heart.

"She was a cheerleader, wasn't she?" Bailey suddenly recalled. Even though she'd been one of the most popular girls in school, she'd never once been nasty or petty like so many others could at that age.

"Yeah, she and I go way back. She still hangs out with me, Paxton, Sammy, Drake, Marc and Hayden."

"Oh," Bailey replied, weakly as he wondered just how close David and Kim were.

"It's not what you think. She and I are just

really good friends.”

Bailey smiled with relief. “I see. I can’t believe that you continue to be close with Hayden, Trevor, Paxton and Marc. I can’t remember the last time I talked to my old friends.”

“Yeah, well we first became a group in high school when we realized we were amongst the handful of kids who were gay. Ever since, we’ve been tight.”

And there went that relief. He fiddled with the menu as he told himself he had no right to feel jealous over David. They’d hadn’t even really gone on a date before.

David reached across the table and put his hand over Bailey’s fingers. “I’m just good friends with them, too.”

Humiliated, Bailey realized his thoughts must have been broadcasted by his expression. “Sorry, I’m not very good at this kind of stuff.”

David arched a brow. “What? Having dinner?”

Bailey allowed himself a brief smile. “No, this whole small talk and hanging out.”

“Aren’t you having a good time?”

“Of course I am,” Bailey rushed out. “I’m just worried that I’ll say or do the wrong thing.”

“You’re doing just fine, trust me,” David all but purred as he ran his thumb along Bailey’s knuckles.

Bailey sucked in a breath as arousal cascaded

over his body. With just one simple touch, David had managed to get him hot and ready again.

The waitress came up to take their order, interrupting the moment. After just a small debate, they decided on a veggie medium plus a couple of sodas.

“So, what’s it like working for your sister?” David asked once they were alone.

“It’s okay, I guess. It’s just not what I really want to be doing. Don’t get me wrong, I appreciate her helping me out and everything, especially since we’re not that close,” Bailey said as he tried hard not to pull a face. In truth, working for Melissa had been hell. For some reason, she loved to use the power she had against people and it didn’t matter if one of those who suffered happened to be her own blood.

David nodded, understandingly. “Are you close to anyone in your family?”

Bailey fought for a good answer for that one. He’d never had the best of a relationship with his father. Plus, he and Brock didn’t seem to have anything in common to talk about, so their time together seemed to consist of one awkward silence after another. In the end, he decided to go with the one positive. “My mom’s really supportive of me. She even goes to PFLAG meetings and everything.”

“So does my mom. She’s always trying to

match me up with guys she meets there.”

“Mine, too, “ Bailey laughed. “Just last week, she was telling me how her friend has a son who’s supposed to be some hot shot lawyer.”

His words fell like a brick on the table as he and David exchanged shocked glances.

“You don’t think...” Bailey trailed off, his gut clenched in mortification.

“No, I know. It would be just like my mother to try and set us up,” David replied, a hint of a smile on his handsome face. “I have a question for you. Does your mother know you go to that particular gas station every day after work?”

“Yeah, she’s always on me for eating bad.” Bailey couldn’t remember a time where he’d felt so embarrassed. God, David probably thought Bailey was a bigger loser because not only couldn’t he hold down a job, but his mommy was trying to run his life. Great, he was one step above the jerks who still lived in their parent’s basements and spent all day hanging out at the mall.

“My mom called and asked if I would stop there to pick up a gift card.” David shook his head. “Damn, I should have suspected something when she was so adamant that it be at that particular *Speedway*. She even told me I had to get there before a certain time, too. Plus, she said she couldn’t pick up Brian today and she’s never done that before.”

“Oh God.” Bailey jerked his hand free so he could run it through his hair. “Our moms are in cahoots.”

David’s lips quivered a couple times and then he broke out in laughter so loud that several other customers turned to look at them.

Bailey let his arm drop as he gaped at David. “How can you think this is funny?”

“What, the fact that you’re using Mary words like cahoots, or that we have two mothers who have way too much time on their hands?”

Unexpected mirth bubbled in Bailey’s chest before he gave over and started laughing, too. “I should be angry at her.”

“But you’re not?” David asked, still chuckling.

“It worked, didn’t it? We’re out together, that’s something I’ve wanted to happen for a long time.” Bailey lowered his gaze, knowing his stupid blushing would damn him once again.

“Really?”

“Let’s just say I may have had a mad crush on you back in high school,” Bailey shocked himself by confessing.

“Bailey, look at me,” David commanded. When he obeyed, David continued, “You weren’t the only one with a crush. I meant what I said earlier about me spending my entire senior year wanting you.”

Bailey couldn’t have been more shocked. He

took in several breaths as the ramification of David's declaration hit him. "Why didn't you do anything about it?"

"Because I didn't know if you were ready."

"Ready for what? I already told you I liked you?"

"I realized you were still trying to figure out who you were and I didn't want to interfere in that. Not only that, but I was worried about what would have happened to you after I left for college. It was hard enough for me to be a gay teenage and I had the support of my friends. You wouldn't have had that. The last thing I wanted was for you to face years of being ostracized just because you had been with me."

Angry and a little more than hurt, Bailey sat back in his seat. "I wouldn't have cared. Not if it meant being with you."

"That's easy for you to say now, but back then you were just a shy kid and I knew the mean comments and slurs would have eaten you up inside. I couldn't have lived with myself had you suffered while I hadn't been there to protect you," David said fiercely.

"I didn't want your protection, what I needed..." Bailey trialed off, not certain of what exactly he had desired. He thought back to how confused and lost he'd been when he realized that he didn't have feelings for girls like his brother

and friends did. How alone he'd felt. The bone-numbing fear that everyone would find out how different he was. Would it have been easier if David had been there to smooth the way?

David must have sensed his distress because he got up, moved around the table and slid in the booth next to Bailey. Cupping Bailey's cheek, David said, "I never meant to hurt you, babe. I'm so sorry."

Bailey's heart raced. The heat of David's body pressing against him, the fact that he was being so affectionate in the middle of the crowded restaurant, how he'd just called him *babe*, all of it nearly overwhelmed Bailey. He reached over and placed his hand in the center of David's chest, not to push him away, but to deepen the contact. "It's okay, you're here now."

David lowered his head. A jolt of shock went through Bailey as he realized that David was about to kiss him while they had a restaurant full of witnesses. He knew he should pull back and wait until they had a more private setting. Instead, Bailey tipped his face up and waited.

"Nine years," David growled. "Nine years I've waited for this moment."

Before Bailey could respond, David captured his mouth in a tender kiss. At first Bailey tensed, worried that if he moved David would break off the contact. Then he felt the velvet heat of David's

tongue begging for entrance and Bailey finally allowed himself to believe this moment was actually happening. Melting against David's body, Bailey parted his mouth in blatant permission. David groaned his approval right before he plunged his tongue inside. The instant Bailey tasted the warm, yet sweet taste of David, Bailey forgot everything else. Sliding his hands around David's shoulders, Bailey returned the kiss with an eager hunger.

He felt more than heard the low moan vibrating in David's chest. It made Bailey want to crawl on top of him. To rub and grind until he found out all the noises David made while getting off. In the end, he had to settle for sweeping his tongue inside David's mouth so he could get a really good taste of the man.

All too soon, David pulled back. Even though the kiss had been brief, they both were breathless. David gazed down, the stunned expression on his face mirroring the same emotion Bailey was experiencing.

"Wow," Bailey breathed. His entire body buzzed with excitement. He said a silent prayer of thanks that they were sitting or else he would be doing that whole weak in the knees bit.

"I'm glad you like it because I plan on doing it a whole lot more tonight," David declared softly as he ran the back of his fingers along Bailey's jaw.

Bailey shivered under the touch, briefly closing his eyes. "Just not kissing I hope."

"I told myself I didn't want to rush this."

Disappointed, Bailey frowned. "Oh."

"But now I know there's no way I can resist you. It just feels too good to touch you." As if to prove his point, David caressed Bailey's cheek.

Since he'd already gone this far and made it through without embarrassing himself, Bailey turned his face into David's touch and nipped the palm of his hand. He knew he'd done the right thing, when David's eyes flared with passion. "Damn, babe, you keep this up and we're not going or make it through dinner."

Bailey smiled. "How fast do you think we can eat?"

Chapter Four

Once the pizza came, they separated just enough to eat and make small talk. David couldn't bring himself to take his earlier seat across the table, instead choosing to savor the closeness of Bailey. After yearning for this moment for so long, David was damned if he'd waste another minute.

Bailey didn't seem to mind the smothering as he begged David to tell him about some of his more interesting cases. Since he found it hard to deny Bailey anything, David shared. Usually when he talked about his work, people's eyes would soon glaze over with boredom. Not Bailey, instead he listened with rapt attention and even urged David to tell him more.

When the waitress brought the check, Bailey tried to reach for it, but David quickly snatched it up. "I owe you dinner, remember?"

"You don't have to," Bailey protested.

David gave him a quick kiss. "You can get the next one."

Bailey gave him a crooked grin. "So does this mean we get to go out on a second date?"

"For sure." David stood up. "Let's get out of here." He paid and they left the restaurant. On the way out, Kimmy waved and gave him a covert thumb's up when Bailey's back was turned. A while ago, David had confided to her about his long-term crush. He knew that he'd be getting a phone call from her tomorrow and she'd demand all the details. At times, she seemed more interested in his love life than her own.

As soon as they got into the car and on the road, Bailey twisted in his seat, leaned forward, then started to rain kisses down the side of David's throat. Even though David tilted his head to the side, Bailey had to strain to get to him. For the first time ever, David cursed Michigan's mandatory seatbelt laws. If he had it his way, Bailey would be straddling his lap.

"Would I be rushing you if I asked you to come home with me?" David asked as he forced himself to concentrate on the road. Not an easy thing to do with Bailey's soft lips caressing his neck.

"Like you said, we've waited nine years for this. I think that's long enough." Bailey reached down and grabbed David's cock.

David let out a sharp breath as he gripped the steering wheel tightly. "You keep that up and I'm going to come before we even get there."

"So?" Bailey crooned as he started the most wickedest of massages. "You'll just have to get it back up again, won't you? Unless of course you don't want to fuck me."

"Shit, what happened to that shy kid I used to know?"

"I grew up. Now I'm not afraid of going after what I want."

David wanted to argue that he'd seen glimpses of that old shyness at various times during the night, but the way Bailey's hand continued to work David's cock seemed to say otherwise.

"We do need to go back for my Jeep first though. Even though it's old, I don't want to leave it parked at the gas station all night. Besides, Don gets off at eleven so it might get towed away."

A slight bitter taste went through David's mouth. "Is Don the one with the comb-over mullet?"

Bailey let out a breathy laugh, the hot air cascading over David's skin. "Yeah, that's the one. Don't be too harsh on him though, he's always gone out of his way to be nice to me."

"Of course he has, he wants to fuck you."

Bailey pulled back, a look of confusion marring his face. "No he doesn't."

David let out a long sigh as he realized some things still remained the same with Bailey. "You never did appreciate how sexy you are."

“Me?”

“Yeah, you. Don looked ready to kick my ass when he realized we were going out to dinner together.”

“He’s just cranky. He’s like that with everyone.”

“Everyone, but you. He couldn’t keep his gaze off your ass.”

Bailey let out a sound of disbelief as he shook his head. “I may be many things, but a stud is not one of them.”

David flicked an appreciative look over Bailey’s body. “Bailey, you are the hottest man I know. Nobody even comes close to comparing to you and I should know because I searched everywhere.”

He had, too. All during college and the following years, David always found himself attracted to men with dark hair and brown eyes. The smaller and thinner the better. It suddenly dawned on him that he’d been dating guys who looked like Bailey. Or at least what he’d imagined how Bailey had appeared as he’d grown older.

“I tried to move on,” Bailey confessed between kisses. “It didn’t work out for me either. I think that’s why I’ve never had a serious boyfriend. Just brief hook ups.”

That pleased David way more than it should have. “You never had anyone special? Not even in

college.”

Bailey sat back and tugged on the hem of his shirt in a gesture David knew was subconscious. “No, it just never felt right whenever I was with anyone else.”

That cut David deep. Not only because he’d wasted so much damn time, but he’d left Bailey twisting like that. David wanted to pull off to the side of the road so he could kick himself in the ass for being such a fool. As soon as Bailey had graduated from high school, David should have found the man and confessed his true feelings. Instead, he’d been a dumbass and continued to live in the same protective bubble he’d formed around his heart the first time he’d been forced to give Bailey up.

Not anymore though. Now that he finally had Bailey within his grasp, David would be damned if he’d give him up again. Not until they both knew once and for all if they were meant to be.

* * * *

Back at the gas station, as he slid out of David’s car, Bailey noticed Don peering out the window. He had his face so close to the glass, the tip of his nose pressed up some. When Bailey caught the angry, jealous glare in the cashier’s eyes, he couldn’t help but think back to David’s warning.

As he thought about it, Don had always been a little *too* friendly.

Bailey gave him a feeble wave that Don did not return. Bailey gave an internal shrug. It's not like he and Don were BFF's or anything, just acquaintances. So aside from a casual hello or two, he really hadn't lost much.

He glanced back at the car just in time to catch David shooting him an I-told-you-so-look. Bailey bit the inside of his cheek to keep from cracking up. Not wanting to anger Don even more by laughing, Bailey hurried into his Jeep and started it up.

As he pulled out of the parking lot and started to follow David, Bailey replayed the dinner conversation in his head. He still couldn't believe that David had been attracted to him in high school. Bailey strained to recall any conversation or encounter that could have given him a clue. Maybe David had dropped hints that, as an inexperienced freshmen, Bailey'd missed. It wouldn't be the first time something had gone over his head. Nothing came to mind to him, the only true conversation they'd shared had been less than stellar and a source of embarrassment to Bailey back then.

When Quinn began to badger him about joining the drama club, at first Bailey resisted. Since he'd

never had the guts to talk to even a small group of people, he knew he'd puke if he had to get on stage and perform for a large crowd.

Then Bailey learned the fall production was *Taming of the Shrew* and Bailey just knew he couldn't stay away. While most boys his age followed sports and TV shows, Bailey craved Shakespeare and other classics. Not that he shared that little tidbit with too many people. It was already bad enough that he was teased over being thin, scrawny and weak. No sense in giving them more ammunition to tease him over..

Now that Bailey saw his chance to actually be part of something he loved and not be called out for it, he knew he couldn't resist. So he agreed to be part of the production, but only working backstage and helping with props.

Then, just when he thought things couldn't get any better, he found out that David had landed the role of one of the leads, Petruchio. It quickly became evident that David fit the role perfectly, too. There were many rehearsals that Bailey didn't get much of his own work done because he'd been too caught up in listening to David's smooth voice as he read off his lines.

More than once, Bailey said a silent prayer of thanks the backstage area always stayed dark. Otherwise, the erection he got whenever he watched David would have announced his crush

to the world.

It was during those couple of months of after-school rehearsals that Bailey finally had to face another scary fact about himself. There was no doubt in his mind anymore that he was gay. No matter how much he tried, girls just didn't do a damn thing for him.

David Hall, on the other hand, did plenty for Bailey. To the point to where he'd started to dream about the dark-haired jock almost every night. Come to think of it, David had occupied a lot of Bailey's daytime thoughts, too.

Bailey sat backstage, watching David run through a scene. Since they were getting close to the actual show date, most of the scenery and props were in place. It gave Bailey an even bigger thrill to see the actors moving around the stage now because everything seemed so real. Even though he was supposed to be painting, instead he spent most of the time hiding in the shadows, just savoring the way the words of Shakespeare seemed to roll off David's lips. Shoot, David could ask him to jump off a bridge and Bailey would happily comply, just so long as that same soothing tone was used.

When the rehearsal wound down, Bailey winced guiltily as he realized he failed to get his assigned work done. Damn, not cool. He'd already been chewed out several times by the drama

director for not doing a good job.

He gripped the still dry brush as he chewed on his bottom lip. The anxiety going through him settled into his gut, leaving behind a slightly queasy feeling. He hated it when people got upset or disappointed in him. God knew he got enough exasperated looks and harsh words from his father, the last thing Bailey wanted was to get them here at school as well.

As he watched all the other students pack up and leave, Bailey came to a decision, he'd just stay after and finish his job. Since his dad always worked late on Wednesday, it wouldn't be a big deal if he didn't make it for dinner.

Once the place cleared out, Bailey made his way to a large, woodcut out of a house and started to carefully paint it. The auditorium had taken on a kind of creepy feel to it because of the silence, so Bailey recited some of his favorite parts from the play.

Even though he didn't have a role, he'd memorized nearly everyone's lines. Of course, his favorite monologues were Petruchio's. He'd just finished the one from Act Two, Scene One when the sounds of clapping made him let out a gasp of mortification. Bailey jumped in shock, nearly dropping the wet paintbrush on the stage.

Turning slowly around, Bailey's embarrassment went up about a hundred more

levels when he saw David causally leaning against the wall next to the front row. Of course, he had to look as hot and cool as he always did. With a pair of jeans on, that seemed to be custom made for his muscular legs and trim waist. Despite it being cold outside, he didn't have on his varsity jacket, instead opting for a dark blue sweatshirt that had the school's mascot, a falcon, on the front.

Horrified that he'd been caught practically yelling Shakespeare in a deserted room, Bailey wished for a great big pit to open in the stage so he could jump headfirst into it. He frantically tried to think of how someone like his brother or sister would act if they'd been in this situation. Brock would no doubt have some kind of joke that would ease things over. Bailey scrambled as he fought to come up with something witty. All that came out was a strange, choking sound though because his mouth decided not to work. David didn't seem to notice Bailey's predicament.

The jock just gave off that wonderful smile of his as he stepped closer to the stage. "You sounded good."

Bailey blinked. The last thing he'd expected had been a compliment. "I did?"

"Yeah, I can tell you have a real feel for Shakespeare. That you actually know what you're saying instead of just reciting a bunch of words that don't make sense."

Bailey understood what David meant. So many students would just memorize the parts and recite them, but they never really took the time to learn the real meaning behind the complicated phrasing. A heat came over Bailey's face, but this time it came from knowing he'd actually managed to impress David. "It's no big deal. That kind of thing just comes easy to me," Bailey said as he nervously toyed with the paintbrush. Too late, he realized the bristles were still wet and he got paint smeared all over his fingers.

As he looked down at his now dirty hands, Bailey cursed to himself. Dang it, why did he always have to go and do stupid stuff like this? Just once he'd like to experience a situation where he didn't come off looking like a big, fat loser.

He darted a look over, worried that David had witnessed his blunder, only to see that the senior was...oh God, oh God, oh God, coming up the side steps of the stage. Bailey quickly shoved his hands behind his back. Of course, spaz that he was, he completely forgot that stupid brush was still clutched in his fingers. He felt something bump into his shirt and he just knew he now had a nice paint streak on the back of his favorite tee.

Crud, the only way this could get any worse would be for Bailey to puke or something. If David didn't think of him as a nerd before he sure as hell would after this little encounter. Bailey kept

his hands in place in the hopes that maybe, just maybe, David hadn't noticed his flubs and there could be some hope in salvaging this moment.

"Why didn't you try out for one of the speaking roles?" David asked as he approached.

They had never been this close before and Bailey sucked in a breath as an unmistakable jolt of attraction went through him. He fought hard to keep his feelings off his face, not wanting David to know. The last thing the guy probably wanted was some gay, scrawny freshman drooling all over him. Even if the rumors were true and David was into guys more than girls, he could do a hell of a lot better than Bailey.

David cocked a brow as a tiny smile curved his lips.

Bailey realized he'd never answered the question. Licking his lips, he said, "I never liked standing in front of large groups of people."

"That's too bad because you really are talented. Much more than I am."

"No way! Nobody is as good as you," Bailey blurted heatedly. Realizing how telling that little outburst probably was, he cleared his throat and stammered, "What I mean was...well...nobody could do Petruchio as well as you."

"I think you don't give yourself enough credit, Bailey."

Bailey felt his eyes grow wide. Up until that

moment, he hadn't thought David even knew he existed, let alone knew his name. David leaned forward and grabbed Bailey's arm, forcing him to show his hands. Twin emotions battled inside Bailey, horror that David had known all along that Bailey had made a mess and excitement because they were actually touching.

For so many nights, Bailey had laid awake, wondering how it would feel to have David's hands on him. Of what he'd say if he finally caught David's attention. Now that he had both, all Bailey could do was stand there like some slug.

David gazed down, a strange look in his eyes that made Bailey's stomach do a strange flip that could have been due to fear or happiness. At that moment, Bailey couldn't be quite sure. David tilted forward a bit and for one mind-blowing second, Bailey wondered if he was coming in for a kiss.

Then a door slamming ruined whatever was about to happen. Bailey jumped back, guilty, just in time to see his brother walking in.

"Bailey, Mom was worried when you didn't come home on time," Brock called out, but his gaze never left David.

Bailey's heart skidded as he wondered just how much his brother had seen. Oh shit, this was not good. The last thing he wanted was for anyone in his family to know his secrets. He walked back a

couple more steps, desperate to put as much space between him and David as possible. "I was just getting ready to leave."

Brock stopped several feet from the stage and shot David a look that could only be called murderous. "Fine, Bailey, get your stuff and I'll drive you home."

With a jerky nod, Bailey ran off to do as ordered. As he washed off the brush, he couldn't help but wonder if he were mad that Brock had interrupted them or relieved.

Chapter Five

Once he got back to his house, David waited at the front door for Bailey to join him. The entire time, his body nearly shook with excitement and nerves. The fact that his dream of getting to be with Bailey was finally a reality shook David more than anything ever had in his life.

Bailey trotted up the path toward him and David could see some of the same anxiety he felt written on the man's face. For some odd reason, that helped soothe David some. Maybe because it helped him realize that he wasn't the only one blown away at this second chance.

That's what this night was about, too. An opportunity to finally answer all those unanswered questions. Bailey may not have been old or experienced enough before, but now that he'd grown up, nothing stood in their way anymore.

Bailey let out a low whistle as he gazed up at David's two-story home. "Nice place."

David reached out and hooked his fingers in the belt loops of Bailey's jeans. Pulling him close, David declared, "I'm glad you like it since I intend on fucking you in every room."

Bailey gave a crooked smile. "If that's the plan, then it's a good thing we came here instead of my apartment. With the exception of the toilet, the rest of it is just basically one room."

David opened the door, then reached back and grabbed Bailey by the front of his shirt. Hauling him inside, David pinned the smaller man to the wall and asked, "So what room do you want to start with?" Passion flared in Bailey's eyes, further igniting David's own fire.

Bailey seemed to really ponder the question. "Let's see. Not the kitchen since we already ate. Might as well save that for later when we're hungry again. Then we can incorporate food play into the sex. You do have chocolate sauce, don't you, or am I going to be seriously disappointed that one fantasy doesn't get fulfilled tonight?"

David groaned as he ground his erect cock against Bailey's stomach. "You keep this up and our first place is going to be right here in this hall."

Bailey went on like he hadn't heard. "I think we should save the bedroom for last. I plan on giving you one hell of a workout and it will be so much more convenient to already be in bed when we

both collapse from exhaustion. The bathroom we can save for after the kitchen, that way we can wash off the rest of the chocolate.”

When David let out a low growl as he undid the top button of Bailey’s pants, that earned him a soft chuckle.

Holding his hands up in surrender, Bailey said, “Okay, how about we start on the couch. Even though I haven’t seen it yet, I’m going to guess that you’re a big, leather sectional kind of guy.”

David smiled, because that was exactly what he owned. “What are you, a literary teacher or a profiler for the FBI?” Not giving Bailey time to fire a comeback, David practically dragged him to the large, spacious living room.

“Wait,” Bailey cried as they reached the threshold. He kicked off his shoes and pointed down to the plush, white carpet. “I don’t want to get dirt all over it.”

While Bailey took off his shoes, David walked over to the couch. Along the way, he took off his suit jacket and tie, tossing them to the side not caring where they landed. He sat down and crooked his finger at Bailey. “Get that tight ass over here.”

Bailey gazed up from under his lashes a look of pure, raw hunger in his eyes. “I never knew you were so pushy.”

“Does it bother you?”

"Fuck, no. It turns me on." Bailey pulled his t-shirt off, then started to slowly walk toward David.

Whatever response David may have had got lost as he took in the sight of Bailey's naked chest. Smooth and hairless, every dip and ridge seemed to be begging to be licked. The top button of his jeans were still undone, so they were loose enough to hang low on his hips, just revealing the top of his dark blue boxers. "Damn, you're gorgeous," David breathed.

Bailey pulled a face. "Nah, I'm just boring old me."

"Trust me, babe, there is nothing boring about you."

Once Bailey reached the edge of the couch, he hesitated, as if he were unsure as to what to do next. Just as David started to reach out to guide him, Bailey finally seemed to decide the next move for himself. Straddling David's lap, Bailey settled in so they were facing each other.

"Can I kiss you?" Bailey asked as he moved forward so their lips were inches apart.

David couldn't remember a time where he'd been so turned on. His cock had to be hard enough to pound in a whole houseful of nails. He slid his hand around Bailey's waist. "Here's a little tip. You never have to ask permission to kiss me."

Bailey let out a little sound that could have been

called a whimper before he lowered his head the rest of the way. As soon as he felt the heat of Bailey's lips against his mouth, David knew he wasn't going to keep the same cool, collective domination he had with all his previous bed partners. Something about Bailey made David want to throw all his restraint out the window. Instead, he just wanted to get lost in the raw passion and forget everything else for a while.

David thrust his hips up, grinding his cock against Bailey. At the same time, he pushed his tongue in so he could taste and tease. Bailey let out a soft groan and David felt himself slide under just a bit more. Damn, the sounds that Bailey made were simply addictive.

He slid his hands lower, so they were cupping Bailey's ass. By now, Bailey had started to grind back, his hips making slow undulating passes. While David knew they'd both be able to get off if they kept this up, he wanted more. Breaking off the kiss, he lifted his fingers to Bailey's lips. "Suck them."

The way Bailey immediately obeyed, parting his red, kiss-swollen lips, made David moan. Bailey took his time, slowly swirling his tongue around all of David's digits, getting them good and wet.

After a few moments, David pulled his hand free and slid it down until it was resting at the

waistband of Bailey's jeans. He paused, gazing up into Bailey's eyes.

Bailey let out a soft gasp as he nodded. "God yes, fuck me with them."

That was all David needed to hear. Slipping his hand down the back of Bailey's pants, David found the tight, puckered hole. He circled it a few times before he slowly slid in one finger. Bailey's body immediately yielded, the tight warm heat surrounding David's digit. David's cock jerked in reaction, almost as if it were jealous.

"Yes," Bailey hissed as he tilted his head back. He braced his hands on David's shoulders and started to rock back against his hand.

After a few passes, David added another finger. "You feel so good. So hot and tight."

"It's been a while since I've had a lover," Bailey admitted before he let out a loud cry of passion.

"If you want, we can take it slow. Nothing says we have to fuck tonight. We can just play around instead."

Bailey shook his head. "No. I've been wanting this too long and I'm going to be damned if I wait one day longer. I need you, now."

David slid in a third finger and twisted his wrist slightly so he could brush against Bailey's sweet spot. He knew he'd found it when Bailey let out a strangled sob. "Please, fuck me now. I'm about to come and I don't want it to happen until

your cock is pounding inside me.”

“Pounding?” David echoed, not sure he heard that quite right.

A slight flush came over Bailey’s face as he nibbled on his bottom lip. “I like it rough and fast. I know it probably makes me sound like a slut, but I love it when I have a fuck so hard that I feel it in my ass for days after.”

David didn’t know whether to curse or yell out a *whoo hoo!* He’d always liked his sex a little rough, too, but at the same time, he didn’t want to hurt Bailey.

Bailey must have sensed his indecision because he let out a frustrated sounding growl. “Please, I need it.”

David gave him another hard kiss before he pulled his fingers free. Giving Bailey a hard slap on the ass, he ordered, “Finished getting undressed and get on the ground. When I come back, I want to find you on your hands and knees.”

Bailey ducked his head, but not before David caught a glimpse of his smile. “Yes, David.”

Once Bailey moved, David got up and went into his bedroom to grab the tube of lubricant and a strip of condoms. He also shed his own clothing. Naked, he walked back into the living room only to be greeted by the sight of Bailey’s perfect body. He’d gotten on his hands and knees as ordered,

and damn if he didn't look perfect in that position. David walked over and slowly ran his hand down the slope of Bailey's spine. "I love the way you respond to me. Just one touch and you start making the sweetest noises."

"I can't hold on much longer," Bailey panted as he arched up into David's touch.

Dropping to his knees behind Bailey, David opened one of the condoms and slid it over his erection. He moaned at his own touch, so turned on he knew it would only take a few seconds before he came. It seemed that Bailey wasn't the only one on edge. Grabbing the lube, David poured a generous amount into his hand and slicked it over his cock.

Guiding the tip of his erection to the opening of Bailey's ass, David thrust in with one hard push. Bailey let out a loud shout and David paused, afraid that he'd gone too fast.

Bailey pushed back and demanded, "Harder. Faster."

David grinned to himself. Who would have guessed that under Bailey's shy, gentle exterior lurked a hellcat? He gave in to Bailey's wishes and started to give him the hard fucking he'd been begging for. "Like that?" he asked as he took a firm hold on to Bailey's hips.

"Yes, it's perfect," Bailey replied, his words punctuated by gasps of pleasure.

It only took a few minutes before he came, his cry so loud it echoed through the house. After a couple more thrusts, David joined him. Closing his eyes, he began to fill the condom as he moaned Bailey's name. Wave after wave of come shot from his cock. It got to the point where David wondered it would ever end before he finally finished. He even saw the stars like some lover in one of those sappy books his sister liked to read. Even after it was over, he still couldn't move for several moments, still caught up in that wonderful tingling feeling that always came after a good fuck.

Since he knew they couldn't stay that way forever, he finally slipped free of Bailey and sat back on his knees. "Tell me you don't have to work in the morning and can stay the night," he begged.

Bailey collapsed to his side before shooting off a saucy grin. "I don't have anything planned for tomorrow so I'm all yours." He frowned as he looked down at the wet spot he'd left behind on the carpet. "Sorry about that. If you tell me where you keep your cleaning supplies I'll take care of it."

"Forget about it. Right now I have other plans for you," David said as he reached for Bailey.

* * * *

The following morning when Bailey woke up, it took him a moment to remember where he was. Then he took in the warm sensation of David's body curled around him, the scent of the lovemaking still lingering on the sheets. The wonderful aches in all the right places and everything came back to Bailey in a rush.

He shifted around so he could look at David. Even after making love, first in the living room, then the kitchen and the shower before finally ending up in the bedroom, Bailey still couldn't believe that it had all actually happened.

David looked so beautiful and at peace as he slept, his lips parted in such a sexy way. Unable to resist, Bailey reached up to trace them. After a few passes of his fingers, David's eyelids cracked open.

Bailey's heart jumped to his throat as he studied David's face carefully for any sign of regret. What he got instead was a look so tender it made him want to go all girly and cry.

"I was afraid that you'd bail on me and I'd wake up alone," David said as he gave Bailey's waist a possessive squeeze.

Bailey shook his head. "I don't think I could ever be strong enough to leave you." As soon as those words slipped passed his lips, Bailey closed his eyes and let out a low curse. He hadn't exactly

meant to reveal that much.

“Bailey, don’t be embarrassed. I feel the same way about you. I always have.”

A small burst of anger went through Bailey. “You keep saying that, but how am I supposed to believe you when back in high school you didn’t seemed to notice me? You never even talked to me.”

“That’s not entirely true. Don’t you remember the one time you got paint all over yourself?”

Bailey groaned. “You would have to remember that. I was so embarrassed.”

“And you looked so cute blushing, too. How could I forget that?” David leaned down and gave him a small peck on the lips.

“You never talked to me after that. You wouldn’t even look at me,” Bailey argued, outraged.

“That’s because someone very wisely pointed out to me that you were too young for a relationship at that time.”

“Who?”

“Your brother.”

Bailey held his breath as those two single words fit him like a blow. “Brock?”

“Do you have any other brothers?” David asked, a wry smile twisting his lips.

“No, it’s just I never imagined him giving a damn about me or my love life.”

“That’s where you’re wrong. He’s very protective of you. He confronted me that day in the auditorium after he caught us talking.”

David watched as Bailey went off to wash up and collect his things. A part of him wanted to give chase. If nothing more than to keep talking. Now that he’d gotten Bailey to finally open up to him, David wanted to know everything about the freshman.

“What in the fuck do you think you’re doing?” Brock demanded in a cutting tone.

“Nothing,” David lied, even as he searched the darkness of the backstage area in hopes of catching a glimpse of Bailey.

Brock grabbed David by the shoulder and forced him to turn around. David studied Brock and noticed, not for the first time, how he seemed so lacking in comparison to Bailey. Where Bailey had a thinner build, he was by far the better looking of the siblings. Brock had the same hair and eye color as his younger brother, but that was where the similarities ended. While Bailey had a smooth, shyness about him, Brock came off as harder, with a bit of gruffness.

“Leave him alone. You’re not right for him,” Brock warned.

A hot rage went through David. “You wouldn’t be saying this if I were Kimmy or some other

chick.”

Brock let out an angry hiss. “I don’t give a damn who Bailey is attracted to. Gay or not, he’s my brother and I will always love him. Nothing can ever change that.”

“Then what’s the big deal if he and I spend some time together?”

“He’s not ready for this, David. He’s too young, too vulnerable. If he and you hook up now, how do you think it’s going to be for him when you go off to college next year?”

David hesitated, some of the anger leaving his body. He’d never considered what it would be like to for Bailey or how some of the other students would react if they saw the two of them getting closer.

Brock’s expression grew softer, almost became earnest as he said, “You have your group of friends to lean on for support. Bailey doesn’t even have that. It’s bad enough that he has to deal with being teased because he’s small and shy. Think of how bad it would be if they knew he was gay, too. He’s not strong enough to stand up to them like you are. At least not yet. All I’m asking is you back off and give him time to grow up and get used to who he is.”

“Brock—” David began.

Brock cut him off, “Please? I’m a senior, too, so I won’t be able to be here to protect him. He’s a

good kid. Smart as shit and talented in so many ways. I just want to give him a chance.”

David closed his eyes and even though it hurt like hell, slowly nodded his head in acceptance. Because deep down he realized Brock had a point...Bailey was simply too young.

Even though it was going to be the hardest thing he'd even done in his life, he'd leave Bailey alone and not approach him again. David knew it would kill him though, to see the young freshman every day and know that they'd never be able to be together.

As David finished his explanation, Bailey found himself blinking back the tears. “Brock really said all that about me?”

David gave a sad smile. “Yeah, he cares about you a lot.”

Bailey shook his head. “I never realized that. Whenever we're together we never have anything to say to each other.”

David got up on one elbow and lightly ran his finger down the center of Bailey's chest. “Maybe you need to give him another chance. ”

“I should be angry at him for interfering in my life.” Bailey frowned.

David leaned down and captured his lips in a deep, heated kiss. Once they'd pulled apart, he said, “Don't be mad at him. He was right, you

weren't ready yet."

Bailey licked his lips as he tried hard to fight his nerves. "And what about now?"

"Well, since our mothers went to all the trouble to get us together finally, I think we better see how far this can take us. I don't know about you, but I don't like to disappoint my mom."

"You do have a point there." Bailey laughed as he threw his arms around David.

As Bailey allowed himself get lost in the sensation of David's kisses, he realized that sometimes the best things in life were worth waiting for.

Epilogue

David nervously shifted in his seat as he craned his head for a better view of the door to the restaurant. “God, when is he ever going to get here?”

“Relax, Bailey should be walking in at any minute. He probably just had to work late,” Drake soothed as he signaled for the waitress to bring another round of drinks. Since Drake owned the place and was her boss, she jumped quickly to do what he requested.

“Yeah, when I talked to him yesterday, he told me he was looking forward to dinner today,” Drake’s partner, Trevor, added. He snuggled back into Drake’s chest as he shot David a reassuring smile.

“I still can’t believe your boyfriend is teaching at Harrison High,” Paxton bitched before he finished off his beer. A partner in David’s law firm, Paxton still had on his suit and tie. Although said tie had been loosened up as soon as he

walked into the restaurant.

"Why? I've heard they are a great school?" Trevor frowned.

"Yeah, but they were our rivals and some people like Paxton don't let go of old grudges easily," Drake explained before he placed a kiss on the top of Trevor's blond head.

"It's not like Bailey could refuse them, not when he needed the job so bad," Sammy pointed out. Even now, he played the peacemaker of their group. Which no doubt also helped out with his job as a social worker.

"I still can't believe it," Paxton gave a mock shudder. "He would have been better off still working for his bitch of a sister."

There was a long pause at the table as they all pretended to contemplate that before David said, "Nah, I think the teaching job wins out, but just by a small margin."

They were all still laughing when Bailey approached the table. "Do I even want to know what's going on?" he asked.

As usual, a warm feeling went through David as he stared at his lover. Even after dating for three months, he still got that same thrill whenever he was in the same room as Bailey. He hoped it never went away.

He glanced over at the others at the table for moral support. Since they all knew the true reason

for this dinner party, he counted on them to help him make this moment as special as possible for Bailey. Not for the first time, David said a silent prayer of thanks for his friends. While they all couldn't be here for this special event, he knew that each and every one of them were cheering him on.

Almost as if reading his mind, Bailey asked, "Where are Marc and Hayden?"

"They both got stuck at work," David explained. They both were employed at the local newspaper and often were sent out on assignments.

"That stinks," Bailey said as he took the seat next to David.

David gave a small nod, his guts too twisted with nerves to speak. Now that Bailey had arrived, doubt had begun to creep back into David's mind. Still, he knew he couldn't back out now, not since everyone had come here just for him.

It wasn't until they'd all eaten their dinners and dessert had been served that David finally gathered his courage. Clearing his throat, he took Bailey's hands in his own and said, "There is something I've been wanting to ask you."

A smile ghosted Bailey's lips before he darted a glance at the others. "What?"

"I don't know about you, but these past three months have been the best of my life," David

began.

"Mine, too," Bailey agreed.

That helped to soothe some of the nerves tap dancing in David's gut. "I was wondering if you would move in with me."

Bailey's eyes grew huge. "Are you serious?"

"Yes, I am. I know we can't legally get married in Michigan, but I want you to be more than just my boyfriend. I love you and I want you to be a part of my life forever." David pulled out a simple silver band from his pocket and held it up. "Please say yes."

Bailey went slack jawed as his gaze locked in on the ring. "Oh my God."

David's stomach plummeted. "Does that mean *no*?"

"Are you crazy?" Bailey's mouth curled up into a huge smile. "I love you, too. Of course I'll move in and be your partner."

The table broke out into a huge round of applause as David slipped the ring on Bailey's fingers. As he pulled the man he loved down for a kiss, David realized that he finally had everything he'd ever dreamed for and so much more.

About the Author

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