

ELLORA'S CAVE PRESENTS



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Harvest Heat

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HARVEST HEAT

Carol Lynne

Dedication

To Janet Davies. Thank you for all your help.

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Akubra: Akubra Hats Pty, Ltd.

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Chapter One

"Don't start. I still have four months left in Australia before I come home." James Patrick nodded to a passerby as he strolled through the Mandarra Horticultural Show. His father continued to prattle in his ear about his lack of responsibility. James spotted a crowd gathered around a combine. "Look, me joining your firm was your idea, not mine. I just want a little time to myself. There's still a lot of Australia that I haven't experienced and I'll be home as soon as I do. Bye, Dad."

James ended the call and stuck the phone into his pocket. He still didn't understand his dad's apparent need to have a son in the law firm. Big deal, he was now a lawyer and could become as money-grubbing as his dad. That wasn't the life he'd envisioned for himself. James stopped and ran his fingers through his hair. *Hell*. He'd known since his second year of law school it wasn't what he wanted. Maybe he was just being lazy? His dad spent long hours, seven days a week, at work. Surely there was a firm out there where the job didn't completely take over his life?

Settling his backpack over his shoulder, James decided to enjoy himself while he could. There was plenty of time to make up his mind about the future. Now he had a farm show to enjoy. He followed the crowd and, like the rest of the people, worshiped at the foot of the shiny green combine. He realized his jaw was hanging open and snapped it shut. The older man next to him elbowed him in the ribs.

"Beaut, ain't she?"

"She certainly is," James said, glancing over at the short, balding farmer. "You from around here?"

The man nodded, never taking his eyes off the piece of farm equipment. "All my life. I can tell by your accent, though, you're a Yank."

"Yes, sir. I'm from Kansas. Been down here wandering your beautiful country for the last two months." Deciding he didn't have much to lose, James continued. "I was hoping to find a bit of work. Do you know of anyone around here hiring cheap farm labor?" James asked with a smile.

Shaking his head, the man finally looked at James. "You don't look much like a cockie."

James didn't know what to say to that. It must have shown on his face because the man started chuckling. "Oz speak for farmer, kid."

"Oh. Okay. Yeah, I know I don't look like a cockie, but I grew up spending summers on a farm. I've always loved the work." It's what he'd wanted to do since he was a boy. Nothing on earth felt as good as planting tiny seeds into rich soil and then watching them grow. At one time, James thought he'd actually get a chance at life as a farmer, but his dad quickly put an end to that dream.

"Only one around here that would be able to do any hiring would be Lochie McBride. He always needs help, but he's too stubborn to hire any. You could give it a go though."

Lochie. What an interesting name. James thanked the older man with a handshake. He had a job to get.

* * * * *

Looking up at the sky, Lochlan took off his Akubra hat and wiped his brow with the ever-present rag from his pocket. He looked down at the blue heeler dog at his feet. "Going to be another scorcher today, mate."

The heeler jumped into the back of the ute as Lochlan climbed in. It took a couple of tries to get the modified, four-door truck to start. He headed toward the far paddock in hopes that he could start harvesting in the next couple of days. Without help he'd be working sunup to sundown as it was. Lochlan cursed as he thought of one more

harvest alone. He should be used to it by now. He'd been on his own for going on ten years. Thinking about his dad had him cursing again.

"Dammit." Stop feeling bloody sorry for yourself. As he drove along the graveled road, he looked from side to side. As far as his eyes could see, tall sunflowers raised their heads toward the punishing sun. *I've a damn good crop this year. It's no one's fault but my own I can't find anyone I want to work with.*

He'd heard from everyone around him that he'd become a selfish bastard, and he was starting to believe it. How had he let himself get to this point? He was lonely. *So what?* A lot of people in the world were lonely. Didn't mean he had to take his mood out on everyone around him.

As he drove, the suffocating air inside the vehicle prompted him to shrug out of his shirt, leaving him in only a navy singlet. He wiped his face and chest with the shirt in his hand before throwing it to the back. Lochie reached over his shoulder to rub Blue's head. "You like me, don't you, Blue?" The loyal dog licked his ear in reply.

Around the bend he spotted a man standing in the middle of the road. "What the..." Lochie slowed down and stopped several yards from the stranger. The large pack at the man's feet told him the guy was a tourist. "Looking for work, I'd reckon," he said under his breath as he turned off the engine. The stranger looked toward him and smiled. Lochie's breath hitched in his chest. "Bloody hell."

He'd never seen a more gorgeous specimen than the one who stood in front of his battered ute. The guy was young, with black hair just long enough to curl in shiny ringlets around his face. He had the face of a god. Long black lashes with piercing blue eyes. When Lochie's gaze roamed down the man's body, he had to put a hand to his own filling shaft. He'd always preferred a lean, sinewy body to those more buffed, like his own. He was brought out of his lustful haze when the guy waved and spoke.

"Hi. I'm sorry I was standing in the middle of the road. Didn't figure a whole lot of traffic came through here." The stranger walked toward the driver's door. He put his

hand through the open window toward Lochie. "Name's James Pattrick. Someone told me I might be able to find a bit of work at the farm down the road."

This close, the guy was even more breathtaking. Lochie inhaled and reached for the stranger's hand. "G'day. Lochlan McBride. If you've come looking for work, I'd be the one to talk to." Lochie was glad he was sitting. The bulge in his moleskin jeans was unmistakable. He motioned toward the field of sunflowers. "You ever harvested before?" He hesitantly released James' hand.

James rested his arms on the open window sill and looked over his shoulder at the crop. "Not sunflowers. I've spent a lot of time on my granddad's farm in western Kansas, though. I've helped with other crops. The last time Granddad planted sunflowers I was in college and couldn't get away for the summer. He planted them more for soil conditioning, though."

James smiled and Lochie noticed the twin dimples in his cheeks. Heaven help him but this man was a wet dream. Lochie wasn't sure if he should scare the kid off for his own good or take hold and keep him forever. "How long do you plan on staying in Oz?"

There, those dimples flashed again. "I promised my dad I'd be home in four months. He says it's time I grew up and got a respectable job." James shrugged his shoulders. Lochie couldn't help but notice the clearly defined muscles under his tight t-shirt. "Dad has his heart set on me joining his law practice."

Narrowing his gaze, Lochie looked James in the eyes. "You a lawyer? Don't really have a use for them out here." *Too bad.*

Chuckling, James shook his head. "Don't really have much use for them myself, which is why I'm not back in Kansas City right now." James looked back over his shoulder at the field of sunflowers. "The happiest times of my life were spent on my granddad's farm. Just knowing at the end of the day I'd actually accomplished something." James spread his hands out in front of Lochie. "Just working with my

hands and knowing that I didn't hurt anyone in the process. That's the kind of life I'd like to live."

Looking at the tanned long-fingered hands in front of him, Lochie almost moaned. The smooth skin would soon be blistered if he hired him. But Lochie knew just what the kid was saying. He'd been trained as an engineer before he quit his job in Sydney to take over the family property after his father's death. "You know how to drive a combine?" He looked from James' hands to his face. He was pleased to see another smile.

"Yes, sir."

"Pay's not much. Room and board. A little left over to go into town on Saturday night. Off Sundays."

James started bouncing. "Sounds good, sir."

"Name's Lochlan, but you can call me boss or Lochie." He reached over and opened the passenger door. "Get your pack and we'll give it a burl."

James looked at him kind of funny and bounced over to get his backpack. Once the pack was tossed into the back of the ute, he climbed onto the passenger seat. James bit his lip and looked at Lochie. "What's a burl?"

Lochie laughed for the first time in what felt like ages. He reached over and ruffled James' soft black curls. "It means we'll try it, kid."

Smiling, James nodded. "Not a kid though. I'll be twenty-seven on my next birthday." He looked through his lashes at Lochie. "You?"

"Forty-one. So you're still a kid to me." He softened the remark with a grin. As he drove toward home, Lochie wondered if he'd made a mistake. It was like Adam and Eve inviting the serpent home for dinner.

Chapter Two

Washing his bloodied hands in the bathroom sink a week later, James looked at himself in the mirror. The previous seven days had been the best and worst of his life. Riding in the field all day gave him such a sense of accomplishment, but it was the alone time spent in the combine that gave him woe, just too much damn time to think. He'd spent the day fixing the paddock fence next to the equipment shed, while Lochie took a load of seed to town. It shouldn't have been a big deal, it was only about a dozen posts that needed fixing, but James wasn't able to work with the gloves Lochie had given him, so he'd taken them off. Now his hands looked like hamburger. Despite the pain in his hands, James still stayed hard most of the day.

Hell, every time he caught the slightest glimpse of Lochie he went hard. He'd begun to spend most evenings shut up in his room for fear that the other man would pick up on his condition. James tried to tell himself over and over that Lochie was a man just like any other, but the lower half of his anatomy refused to listen to reason. All it saw was light brown hair with golden highlights and big brown eyes. Of course the body to die for didn't help either.

Lochie was built like a man should be built—with a wide, heavily muscled chest tapering down to long, well-muscled thighs. The day before, when they'd stopped for lunch, James almost swallowed his tongue when Lochie had removed his tank top that the Aussies called a singlet. He'd wiped the sweat from his chest and under his arms before spreading the shirt out in the sun to dry. Without thought, James had moaned as he had gazed at the corrugated muscles rippling down Lochie's stomach. He'd tried to recover and act like he was enjoying his sandwich, but he didn't think the other man was fooled. He'd simply winked and grinned.

Thinking about Lochie's chest had James hard again. It didn't seem to matter how often he stroked himself to completion in the combine and in his room, his erection was like a permanent fixture at the thought or sight of the other man.

Getting the first-aid kit from under the sink, James was just preparing to finish tending to his hands when there was a knock on the door.

"Everything okay, James?" Lochie's deep gravelly voice vibrated James' chest.

"Fine, boss. Just tending to my hands. I'll be out in a sec." James was trying to unscrew the cap from the bottle of antiseptic when the bathroom door opened and Lochie stuck his head in.

"You need help?" He noticed the condition of James' hands and swore. "Dammit, kid. I told you to wear gloves when you were fixing the fence." He came into the small bathroom and James felt like all the air had been sucked from the room.

"I'm fine. It's my own damn fault. Just couldn't work with the gloves on. They were too big for my hands." He looked at the bigger man through his lashes. James inhaled sharply as Lochie poured a liberal dose of antiseptic on his bloody palm and prayed his boss wouldn't notice the erection in the front of his jeans.

Lochie took one of James' hands and held it up and whistled. "You did a number on them, all right." He motioned toward the toilet. "Have a seat."

Complying with his request, James sat on the toilet, but leaned forward with his forearms resting on his knees. When he got settled, he looked up. Lochie was staring at him and James was afraid he'd seen the evidence of his lust.

James started to say something when Lochie blinked and shook his head. He sat down on the side of the tub and put the first-aid box at his feet. Pulling a towel off the towel bar, he laid it over his knees. "Give me your hands."

James held out his hands and Lochie placed them palms up on his knees. He took a tin of salve out of the kit and popped the top. "This smells bloody awful, but it should do the trick." He carefully applied the salve to the sore areas. The open blisters he left alone. "You did clean these properly, didn't you, kid?"

Nodding, James rolled his eyes. "Not a kid." If Lochie only knew the kinds of thoughts James had been having this past week, he'd realize that.

Placing a sterile gauze pad over each palm, Lochie began to wrap them. He kept his eyes on James' hands. "I know you're not a kid, but James is too much name for you."

Smiling, James shrugged. "When I was a boy, my granddad used to call me Jamey."

Lochie gripped his hands a little tighter and looked into James' eyes. "Jamey. I like that. Suits you." He finished up Jamey's hands, but neither of them made a move to stand. Looking at Jamey, Lochie suddenly remembered why he'd given him a wide berth lately. The blue of the younger man's eyes always seemed to pull him in, and just like that, Lochie found himself leaning forward. He was a mere two inches from Jamey's perfectly shaped lips when he realized what he was about to do. Lochie sat up straight and retrieved the first-aid kit off the floor.

He put the plastic box back under the sink and headed for the door. Opening it, he peered back at Jamey over his shoulder. "Knock off for the rest of the day and take care of those hands. I'll be back in time for tea." He shut the door behind him. He needed to get out of there. His cock was so hard he thought it might break through his damn zipper.

Walking out onto the verandah, Lochie ran his hand over his erection. He could have sworn he saw the same ache he was experiencing in Jamey's jeans earlier. It was too much to hope that he'd finally found someone like him out in the middle of the bush. "Christ, it's been too bloody long," he mumbled to himself as he walked down the steps toward his ute. He whistled for Blue as he climbed behind the wheel. Blue jumped in the back and Lochie drove toward the fields.

He didn't really know what he was going to do in the paddock, but he needed to get away from the house, away from temptation. It had been over ten years since Lochie had held a man in his arms. *Bloody hell, who wouldn't be stroppy after a ten-year abstinence?*

Although he'd never been in love, Lochie used to play the field pretty heavily when he lived in Sydney.

Thinking of playing the field made him think about Jamey. The gentle way the younger man handled Blue was testament to the kind of lover he'd be. Pretty wasn't a word he'd use to describe most men, but Jamey was downright pretty. Lochie's favorite fantasy was imagining Jamey's thighs wrapped around him as he carried him around the house. That was another thing he'd never thought of. Most men would be insulted if a lover asked to baby them, but Lochie had a strong feeling Jamey would not only allow it, but welcome it.

He arrived at the paddock and decided to spend the afternoon checking out the combine and making sure everything was well greased. He gingerly climbed up the ladder to the cab of the large machine. When he opened the door, he could have sworn he smelled cum. Looking around the interior, he smelled it again. Knowing that he'd never come in the combine himself, he had a good idea who he was smelling. Lochie searched around and found a rag tucked under the seat. He brought the cloth to his nose and inhaled.

"Oh fuck," he groaned as he immediately unzipped his moleskins and pulled out his throbbing erection. Holding the rag to his face, Lochie sat back in the combine's comfortable seat and wrapped his fingers tightly around his cock. He closed his eyes and inhaled as he stroked, pulling the foreskin back and forth over the head of his cock. Imagining Jamey's hand wrapped around his shaft, picturing his dimples, his eyes, it didn't take long for Lochie to come. A geyser of seed shot from the tip of his cock as he thought about and smelled Jamey. "Fuck yeah." He thrust into his hand as stream after stream of thick white cum shot from his shaft.

Removing the rag from his face, Lochie cleaned himself up. He couldn't wait for Jamey to smell the combined scents on the old piece of material when he got into the cab next. Lochie stroked his cock for a few more moments, noticing that it never went completely soft. He tried to figure out what to do about Jamey. He'd seen the sexy Yank

watch him a time or two over the past week. And he definitely saw the large erection straining against Jamey's soft faded jeans earlier in the bathroom. Maybe Jamey was feeling the same way Lochie was? But what if he was wrong? Hell. Jamey seemed to have flourished since he'd been on the farm. Could he really take the chance of driving him away?

Deciding it was time to find out, he zipped himself back into his jeans and stuffed the well-used rag back under the seat. He whistled for Blue and headed for home, stopping off at the shed to lock up. If things went according to plan, Lochie didn't think he'd be going out of the house again that evening. He looked at his watch and noticed it was only four. He'd only been gone an hour, but he couldn't stall any longer.

Walking up the steps to the verandah, Lochie took a deep breath. "I sure hope you know what you're doing," he said to himself. He opened the screen door and walked into the much-cooler house. Looking around the lounge room, Lochie didn't see any sign of Jamey. The low hum of the ceiling fans were the only sounds that greeted him.

Lochie walked through the living room to the kitchen. Empty. He turned and headed down the hall. He was just about to knock on Jamey's door, when he heard the unmistakable sound of a man in the throes of ecstasy. Lochie's cock went immediately hard when he distinctly heard Jamey cry out his name. Gripping the doorjamb, Lochie closed his eyes and let the sounds wash over him. He wanted to burst into the room, but figured Jamey might be a little uncomfortable knowing he'd been heard. He decided to take his time and romance Jamey over tea.

Rubbing the cum into his chest, Jamey heard a sound coming from the kitchen. He bolted upright and looked over at the clock. *What's Lochie doing back so early?* Hoping like hell Lochie hadn't heard him call out his name, Jamey reached for the towel he kept beside his bed. He cleaned himself as much as he could and slid his jeans back on *sans* underwear. The heat was so intense, adding another layer just didn't make sense. Pulling a clean red T-shirt out of the dresser, Jamey made his way toward the kitchen.

He stood in the doorway and watched as Lochie bent over to get a can of beer out of the fridge. Jamey almost groaned at the sight of the white heavy-duty work pants, which Lochie called moleskins, stretched across that perfect ass. He cleared his throat and Lochie turned around and smiled.

"Tinny?" He held up the can of beer.

"Sure." Jamey smiled to himself as Lochie bent and retrieved another can of beer from the lower shelf. Taking the beer, Jamey opened it and took a big gulp. "Why are you back so early?"

Pulling out a kitchen chair, Lochie took off his Akubra hat and set it on the table. "Easier to harvest with two. Thought I might as well knock off myself for the rest of the day." Lochie took a drink of his beer. "Feel like steak for tea?"

Jamey smiled as he picked up his can. "I'll never get used to hearing you call supper tea. But yeah, steak sounds good." Jamey looked down at his hands. "I'll try to cut up some tomatoes and onions and squash to grill with it. You are gonna grill the steaks, aren't you?"

"Sure. It's too bloody hot to heat up the house." Lochie finished his beer. "As a matter of fact, I'm going to grab a quick shower and change into something cooler while you prepare the veggies. If you find it's too painful, no worries. I can take care of them when I'm finished." He stood and pulled his shirt over his head, leaving Jamey to stare in awe at his heavily muscled chest. Lochie left the kitchen with Jamey's mouth still hanging open.

As soon as Lochie left the kitchen, Jamey reached for his cock. "Damn. Damn. Damn." Jamey wanted to bury his fingers in the light dusting of hair between Lochie's nipples. He wanted to follow the happy trail down the chiseled six-pack to what he'd been dreaming about for the past week. Jamey slipped his hand under his shirt and plucked at his own nipples. His chest was soft and smooth. He wondered what Lochie would say if he knew Jamey'd not only had his chest waxed two weeks ago in Sydney, but his groin as well. He'd always liked the way it felt to be hair-free, but one look at

Lochie's chest and he was beginning to rethink his position. Of course he'd never had as much hair on his chest as Lochie. Jamey could tell that the older man must at least trim his chest hair. In this Australian heat, a man didn't need fur to keep him warm. Lochie's chest hair was nice and short, but definitely all there.

He heard the shower turn on and decided he'd better get the veggies cut up before Lochie came back and caught him sitting at the table with one hand under his shirt and the other rubbing his hard cock through his jeans. Jamey found the onions and tomatoes. He wrapped a dishcloth around the handle of the knife and carefully cut the vegetables into quarters, thankful it wasn't anything smaller than that.

When Lochie made his way back into the kitchen, he was dressed in only a pair of thin, ratty shorts with his feet and chest bare. He opened the fridge and grabbed two more tinnys and the package of steaks. Looking out the screen door, he spotted Jamey sitting in a chair under the shade of the verandah.

Pushing open the door with his elbow, Lochie set the steaks down on the small table beside the barbie. He noticed Jamey had already started it and had the vegetables on. He walked toward Jamey and smiled. "Brought you another tinny." He handed the lager to Jamey and turned back toward the barbie. "Let me get the meat started and I'll join you."

Five minutes later, he sat in the chair next to Jamey. "You have any shorts you'd like to put on? It's much cooler."

"Naw. The only shorts I brought aren't really appropriate for company." A slight blush broke out on Jamey's cheeks as he took a drink of lager.

"Don't really consider you company. They can't be any worse than these are." Lochie motioned to his faded blue threadbare shorts. He caught Jamey eyeing his evident erection. "They're my favorites, as you can see. Go on in and change while I turn the steaks." Lochie stood and walked toward the barbie, hoping Jamey would put

on his indecent shorts. He was rewarded a minute later by the sound of the screen door slapping shut.

By the time Jamey came back out to the verandah, Lochie was putting the steaks and vegetables on a platter. He almost dropped everything at his first look of Jamey in the shortest holiest pair of shorts he'd ever seen. Jamey had a white tank on, but it still left a lot of skin on display. And Lochie could almost swear he could see the tip of Jamey's cock peeking out the top of his shorts. A flash of silver caught his eye. *Damn.*

Carrying the platter toward the door, Lochie smiled. "Catch the door for me, mate?" Jamey smiled back, flashing his dimples. Lochie swallowed and walked back into the kitchen. He set the platter down in the center of the table, as Jamey got out the plates.

"I'll just have another lager with my tucker. Care for one?" He looked over his shoulder at Jamey as he bent over to the bottom shelf of the fridge. Lochie could see the lust on Jamey's face as he watched Lochie bend over. *Got him.*

"That'd be great." Jamey took a seat at the kitchen table and pulled his shirt over the waistband of his shorts. *No, please don't cover yourself.*

The long kitchen table didn't afford much intimacy the way Jamey had it set, so Lochie picked his plate up and sat next to Jamey. He couldn't help but notice the wet spot forming on the singlet where Jamey's cock poked over the top of his shorts. Lochie smiled. "No sense trying to carry on a conversation from across the table."

Still not saying much, Jamey cleared his throat and slipped a hand under the table. By the way he began squirming in his chair, Lochie had a pretty good idea what was going on. He loaded both their plates with meat and veggies as Jamey watched every move he made.

Picking up a piece of squash, Lochie ate it with his fingers. "Mmm." He picked up another piece and held it to Jamey's perfect lips. "Try it." He looked into Jamey's eyes as the younger man opened his mouth for the tasty offering. When his mouth closed and his tongue brushed over Lochie's fingers, he couldn't contain his moan. "Damn."

Sliding his fingers out of Jamey's mouth, he leaned toward him. It was now or never. When his lips were a hairsbreadth away, he spoke. "I want you." He closed his lips over Jamey's. Jamey moaned and parted his lips, letting Lochie inside. As Lochie took the kiss deeper, he knew he needed to feel Jamey in his arms. Lochie broke the kiss and looked into Jamey's eyes as he scooted his chair back from the scarred wooden table. "Come here, babe." He knew it was a stupid nickname, but damn, he wanted to baby the hell out of the younger man. He'd carry him around in his pocket if he could.

Licking his lips, Jamey walked around the corner of the table and straddled Lochie's lap, fitting his erection against Lochie's stomach. He wrapped his arms around Lochie's neck and leaned their foreheads together. "I'm not going to get fired for this, am I?" He flashed his dimpled smile.

Placing his palms on Jamey's sweet ass, Lochie fit him closer. "Not fired, no. Fucked? Most definitely."

He licked his way up Jamey's neck and across his face. "Been a long time for me." He took Jamey's mouth in another deep, tongue-thrusting kiss while kneading the twin globes in his hands. "Need to feel your skin, babe." His pinkies brushed the bare skin of Jamey's ass below the shorts. Lochie moved one hand around to the front and slipped his fingers under the hem. He was rewarded with the smooth skin of Jamey's balls. "These are damn sexy shorts, but I need more."

Standing, Jamey looked into Lochie's eyes as he unzipped his shorts and raised an eyebrow. "You might be shocked. I'm not as conservative as I appear." When he opened the flap of the worn denim and his totally nude pierced cock sprang free, Lochie moaned and licked his lips.

"Holy fuck," Lochie said, reaching for the long, thick cock. For a small man, Jamey had a nice-sized package. "I've never seen anything more beautiful in my life." He leaned closer and swiped the head of Jamey's weeping cock with his mouth. The feel of the Prince Albert felt cold against his tongue. The smooth silver hoop and knobbed end ran across his tongue as Jamey trembled beneath his hands.

Lochie played with the piercing, while looking into Jamey's eyes. He delved his tongue into the slit, wanting more. More of everything. Jamey was Lochie's wet dream. And right now he was all Lochie's. Never did he hope to have a lover in his home. Sex was dark alleys and hotel rooms, not the comfortable atmosphere of the farm he'd grown up in. He quickly wondered what his father would think. Shaking the image of his dad rolling over in his grave, he returned his attention to Jamey.

Easing the thick cock farther into his mouth, he ran his fingers up and down the crease of Jamey's ass. *Oh yeah.* He wanted in this ass badly, but wanted to prolong their experience. The first time was always the best. It was the reason he had never really dated anyone longer than a couple of weeks in the past.

Relaxing his throat, Lochie took Jamey all the way in. He felt Jamey's balls hit his chin and knew they were going to be a perfect fit for each other. Lochie swallowed a few times, squeezing Jamey's cock with his throat muscles. Jamey began to vibrate. "Gonna come."

Lochie pulled back enough to take a much-needed breath and nodded his head. Jamey held on to his shoulders as he threw back his head and shot down Lochie's throat. The warm, thick fluid threatened to topple him over the edge. He held on by thinking about his sunflowers. He wanted to be inside this tight ass when he came. He wasn't as young as he used to be and knew his recovery time would be much longer than Jamey's. He just hoped their age difference didn't prove to be a stumbling block for the two of them.

When Jamey was licked clean, Lochie stood and wrapped his arms around him. Leaning forward, he shared Jamey's own essence with him in a deep tongue-sucking kiss. He rubbed his still-clothed erection against Jamey's bare skin. "Come to my bed."

Jamey nodded enthusiastically. "I'll come anywhere you want me to, boss."

The title had changed to a term of endearment the way Jamey said it. Lochie let the word wash over him. He was definitely a top, so the endearment fit him well. "Don't you forget it, babe."

With a quick stop by Jamey's room for a handful of condoms, Lochie led Jamey to the master bedroom. He watched Jamey's eyes as they roamed the interior. Following his lover's perusal, Lochie looked at his room through fresh eyes. The room was simple in design and furnishing. A simple iron headboard and footboard on the wide king-size bed. He wondered why it appeared to garner such attention from the man beside him.

Lochie pulled back the handmade quilt and top sheet. He stood in front of Jamey and pulled the tank over his head. Bending over, Lochie grazed his teeth over one of the dark brown nipples. "Why don't you have these pierced?" He continued to flick the nub with his tongue.

"Shows through dress shirts," Jamey said as he arched his back into his touch. "Dad would have a fit if he knew what I liked." Jamey reached for the snap and zipper of Lochie's shorts. Lochie let him proceed on his course, working his way up Jamey's chest to his earlobe. He sucked and bit the tender skin, groaning when Jamey pushed his shorts down.

When Lochie's cock sprang free, it slapped him on the stomach, leaving wet kisses on both of them. Jamey stepped back and gazed down at Lochie's erection. Looking back into his eyes, he smiled. "This is gonna be fun." Jamey ran his hand up and down the long, thick length.

When he started to fall to his knees, Lochie held him up and shook his head. "Been too long, babe. I won't last if you do that, and I aim to come in this pretty ass of yours."

"Just let me look. I've never seen an uncut cock so big before."

At Lochie's reluctant nod, Jamey sank to his knees. He wrapped his hand around the big shaft and slid the foreskin over the tip and then back down again. Jamey looked like a boy with a new toy. He pulled the foreskin back down and uncovered the shiny ruddy-colored head. Lochie groaned when Jamey took the crown into his mouth.

Lochie could see by the look on Jamey's face that he was about to envelop his cock in that pretty mouth of his even further. He reached down and pulled Jamey up. He

brushed the black curls out of Jamey's face and stroked his palm down his cheek. "Get in bed."

Jamey smiled and kissed his chin before crawling to the middle of the bed. Tossing a condom at Lochie, he asked, "How do you want me?" He lay spread-eagled on the crisp white sheets and reached down and stroked his already hard cock.

Lochie shook his head, "If you can get it up again that fast, I'm in a world of trouble." He crawled over the top of Jamey. "And to answer your question. I'll want you in every position imaginable, but for now I just want to hold you for a few more minutes." He covered Jamey's body with his own and sealed their lips together. Pushing in, Lochie closed his eyes and savored the taste of his lover.

When Jamey started moving under him, Lochie broke the kiss and looked into his eyes. "A little impatient, are we?"

At Jamey's embarrassed blush, Lochie reached for the well-used tube of lube in the drawer of the bedside table. He pulled the lube out and couldn't help but notice the questioning look in the other man's eyes. He shrugged as he squirted some of the slick stuff onto his fingers. "Been using this a lot with you in the house."

Reaching down, he moved to Jamey's side as Jamey parted his legs and drew them up to his chest. Lochie was presented with perfection. Rimming his lubed fingers around Jamey's tight pucker, Lochie leaned in and kissed him again. "You're the first for me in over ten years. I've never had a man outside of Sydney. I tried to keep that side of me in the city."

Jamey wiggled and thrust into Lochie's hand as he entered the tight hole with his index finger. "No wonder you've been so withdrawn." Jamey gasped as he entered him with another finger.

"You feel good," Lochie said as he moved his fingers inside Jamey's hole. He found his gland and brushed over the top.

"Oh God. More." Jamey began riding his hand as he thrust in a third finger.

Lochie looked deeply into his eyes. "Ready for me? Going to bury myself so deep. Going to stretch your pretty hole so wide." He removed his fingers as Jamey moaned. Quickly putting on the lubed condom, Lochie climbed between Jamey's spread legs. He positioned his cock at Jamey's entrance as his lover hooked his forearms under his knees and brought them to his chest.

Pushing the crown of his thick cock into Jamey's body wasn't as easy as he'd hoped. Lochie rubbed Jamey's stomach. "Let me in. Let me love you."

Jamey relaxed his body enough to allow Lochie inside. He tried to go slowly, not wanting to damage this newfound relationship, but his overly sensitive shaft wanted more. Sweat broke out on his forehead with the forced restraint as he slowly pushed his way inside.

"So big," Jamey cried, thrashing his head from side to side on the pillow.

Changing his angle just a bit, Lochie ran his cock over Jamey's prostate gland. Jamey's cock erupted in spurt after spurt of cum. Lochie felt like his shaft was clamped in a vise until, spent, Jamey collapsed back onto the pillow. The relaxed, sated body under him made Lochie's entry easier and soon he was balls-deep inside his lover. He leaned over and kissed Jamey. "I'm all the way in. Tell me when I can move."

Jamey opened his eyes and looked at him. "Move it, boss."

Smiling, Lochie pulled out slightly and eased himself back inside. Once he determined that Jamey was indeed ready for him, he began to pick up his pace. With each stroke he slammed in a little harder and pulled out a little farther. The warmth of Jamey's body surrounding his cock felt like heaven. "Not going to last."

He reached between them and started stroking Jamey's half-hard cock. "Damn." He couldn't believe the shaft in his hand. Jamey was like the Energizer Bunny or something. The more he stroked, the harder Jamey became. Oh, the joys of youth. With his balls slapping Jamey's ass on every thrust, sweat poured down Lochie's face and chest. "Come for me one more time." He squeezed Jamey's cock a little tighter as he came deep in his lover's ass. Jamey reciprocated by coming in Lochie's fist. "Yes. Yes.

Fuck yes,” Lochie panted. His stomach muscles tightened to the point of pain as he emptied himself inside Jamey.

Collapsing to the side, Lochie pulled Jamey into his arms as he came down from an orgasm the likes of which he’d never known. He reached over to the table and took a tissue out of the box and disposed of the condom. Pulling Jamey back into his arms, he kissed the top of his lover’s head. “Thank you.” Lochie smoothed the sweaty hair out of Jamey’s face. “It’s never felt like that for me.”

Their meal forgotten, Jamey snuggled into Lochie’s chest. “I’ve never met anyone like you.” Jamey glanced up at Lochie. “Can I sleep with you tonight?”

Lochie opened his mouth to agree to a night with Jamey. What came out surprised the hell out of him. “You can sleep in my bed forever.” Where had that come from? He’d never said something like that to a lover. He squeezed Jamey a little tighter. Had he gone loco after only one fuck with Jamey?

Chapter Three

Settling into a nice rhythm, Lochie and Jamey made great strides in both their personal lives and the harvest. A month later, they had all but the south fields finished. Lochie looked over the still-unharvested paddock. The sunflowers looked happy to him, or maybe it was because he found happiness in almost everything around him lately.

Never having been in love, Lochie didn't know for sure that's what he was feeling, but whatever it was, it felt damn good. He often wondered if his feelings for Jamey had something to do with his years of loneliness. The answer came back the same every time. Jamey made him feel different than any man he'd ever known. He was kind to a fault, but quick to defend himself when the need arose. Jamey was funny and sweet, and so damn sexy. Most of all, Jamey really seemed to love the land as much as Lochie did. He felt better than he ever had in his life and he knew the reason was driving down the graveled road on the combine. He waved as Jamey pulled the big piece of machinery to a stop and turned off the engine.

Climbing down, Jamey smiled and walked toward him. "What's up? Thought we were going to start on this section today."

Lochie opened his arms, and Jamey walked right into them. Never had a man felt so right in his arms. It felt like they were already becoming one person instead of two. Kissing the smaller man, he rubbed his hardening cock against Jamey's. He pulled out of the kiss and smiled. *Damn, I feel happy.* "Thought maybe we'd bunk off for the day. It's the last section and I'd like one more day to appreciate its beauty before we harvest." He turned Jamey in his arms so Jamey faced the field of sunflowers and rested his head against his lover's black curls.

Jamey rubbed his ass against the front of Lochie's moleskins. "Let's bring a picnic out and watch the sunset later." Lochie unzipped Jamey's jeans as his lover continued. "Don't let me forget my camera this time. I want a picture of you naked in a field of sunflowers at sunset."

Running his hand up the smooth length of Jamey's naked cock, Lochie grumbled. "Don't want anyone around here to develop those pictures and you know it."

Jamey reached behind his back and tried to unzip Lochie's old pair of moleskins. Lochie couldn't help but to chuckle as Jamey struggled for several moments. Taking pity on his man, he unzipped them himself.

"Thanks," Jamey groaned as Lochie began to pull on his lover's piercing with one hand, while pushing down the soft denim with the other.

Removing Jamey's hand from his cock, Lochie herded him over to the ute. He dug around in his pocket until he came back with a small tube of lube and a condom. He held it so Jamey could see it just before he bent him over the vehicle. "Want in you." Lochie pushed his moleskins down farther as Jamey toed off his boots and pushed his jeans down and off.

Slicking his fingers, Lochie smiled as his ever-eager partner spread his legs and presented himself. After sliding on the condom, Lochie introduced two lubed fingers to Jamey's hole. He latched his mouth on to the side of Jamey's neck and sucked.

Jamey groaned, "I want you," as Lochie quickly introduced a third finger.

Thrusting his cock against Jamey's hip, Lochie licked up the side of Jamey's face. He loved the taste of his lover's skin after a hard day of work. "Ready?"

"Uh-huh." Jamey turned his head and kissed Lochie. "Do it."

Pulling his fingers out, Lochie quickly replaced them with his cock. He loved the way Jamey's body swallowed his shaft. After their initial bout of lovemaking, it had become easier for Jamey to accept his larger size.

Jamey braced his hands on the hot metal of the ute. "That's too hot. Take your shirt off and use that," Lochie instructed.

Jamey quickly stripped off his tank and used it as a buffer for his hands as he pushed back into Lochie's thrusts. "Fuck me."

Lochie loved it when his sweet Jamey talked dirty to him. He began pounding into him so hard that Jamey's feet actually left the ground a time or two. He knew his grip on Jamey's hips would leave bruises, but neither of them seemed to care. Jamey threw his head back as he began shooting his cum on the side of the ute. "Fuck that ass," he screamed as Lochie finished thrusting to bury himself deep within his man.

Looking out over the field, Lochie yelled Jamey's name to the bright afternoon sun as he came. When he started to collapse against Jamey, his lover elbowed him in the ribs. "Truck's too hot to lie on."

When his flaccid cock slipped free of Jamey's body, Lochie spun him around and kissed him. They licked and nuzzled and nipped each other all over for the next ten minutes. Finally, he pulled back and looked into Jamey's eyes. "You going with me to get the picnic basket?"

Jamey shook his head as he retrieved his jeans and dug a rag out of his back pocket to clean himself and Lochie. "I'll get the combine moved into position for morning. Just bring back my camera. I'm taking pictures whether I ever get to develop them or not." He stuck his tongue out at Lochie like a five-year-old.

Leaning in, Lochie kissed him again. "I've got better uses for that tongue, babe." He swatted Jamey's bare ass before bending over to hike up his moleskins. With one more kiss he released Jamey. "I won't be too long. You sure you'll be okay?"

Jamey shook his jeans and pulled them on. He dug his cell phone out of his pants pocket. "I'll call if I need anything. You making me fried chicken?" He winked at Lochie. It had become a long-standing joke between them. Lochie refused to make fried chicken as he liked his grilled.

"Smartarse," Lochie said as he climbed behind the wheel of the ute. "I'll be back, you just be ready to eat." He winked, "And I'm talking about more than the grilled chook. That's Aussie for chicken, by the way."

After Lochie left, Jamey climbed up into the cab of the combine. Driving the big piece of equipment to the far edge of the section, Jamey noticed a slight squeal. When he parked and turned off the engine, he decided to do a little maintenance check. He had nothing else to do while he waited for Lochie to return and he knew it would have to be done in the morning if he didn't do it now, anyway.

Jamey climbed down and began checking belts on the combine. He saw where one was a little loose and climbed back up to get some tools out of the cab. Digging around in the old messy toolbox, something pricked the side of his hand. "Ow." He gathered the tools he needed and shook off his sore hand. After tightening the belt, he wandered around the field of sunflowers.

He was still a little in awe of this place. Jamey was definitely in awe of Lochie. He thought he was in love with him, but didn't know how it would work. The thought of staying in Australia filled his heart, but he was expected to return to Kansas in a little over three months. It wasn't like Lochie had proclaimed undying love though. Maybe their relationship would fizzle by the time he was expected back to the States or maybe not. What if he could really build a home here in this rugged land, with a man by the name of Lochlan McBride? Wishing he had the courage to tell his father he was staying, Jamey walked toward the small creek that branched off the Namoi River.

He knew most of the irrigation for the fields came from the river itself, but this section's water came from the creek. His hand was starting to sting and Jamey hoped his tetanus shot was up to date. He wasn't sure what had poked him, but many of the tools in the box were pretty rusty. Also over the years a good number of dried leaves and tiny sticks had found their way into the cab and hence the toolbox. Maybe it had just been a stick that poked him. After about twenty minutes, he neared the small creek.

Looking closely for snakes or other dangerous inhabitants, Jamey approached the shallow water cautiously. He kept his eyes open as he rinsed his sore hand in the nearly dry creek. He was wondering whether the dirty-looking water was doing more harm than good when his cell phone vibrated in his pocket. Pulling his hand out of the water, Jamey retrieved his phone and started walking back toward the combine. He checked the ID and saw the one number he didn't want to see. He flipped his phone open. "Hi, Dad."

After a several-second delay, his dad's voice sounded in his ear. "Well, it's about time I got you on the phone. I've been trying for three days with absolutely no luck. Where the hell are you that you don't get reception?"

"I'm outside of Mandarra. I told you that last time I talked to you." Jamey walked toward the road this time, deciding not to push his luck with the sunflowers again. "Reception out here is pretty spotty at best. You're lucky you got through." Jamey winced at the white lie. His father had specifically bought him a top-of-the-line satellite phone so he'd never be out of calling range. No way could he tell his dad he hadn't felt like talking to him lately. His time with Lochie was too special to ruin it with the bad mood that usually followed his dad's calls.

"Why would you still be in Mandarra? I thought you went there to see that silly farm show."

"I did see the show, but I decided to take a job on a farm out here for a while. Although they call them properties here. I'm enjoying myself. Lochie, the man I'm working for, is a sunflower farmer, which they call cockies, by the way." He paused, waiting for his dad to say something. "Remember when Granddad used to plant fields of sunflowers?"

"Don't remind me. With all the beautiful cities in Australia, why are you wasting your time farming?"

Blowing out a tired breath, Jamey stopped walking. His dad had always thought farming was for people who were too stupid to make it in corporate America. Hell, his

dad had even been ashamed of his own father for working tirelessly on the farm he'd grown up on. "Because I like it, Dad. I've told you that for years. It's what I'd do for a living if I could."

"Well, thank the Lord it's not an option. Farming is hard work that will drive a man into the grave faster than anything. You've seen the proof of that with your own grandfather. That's why I insisted you go to college and become a lawyer. You'll be able to make a fine living with my practice. It'll be time to settle down before long and start a family. That takes stability and money."

Holding the phone away from his ear, Jamey wanted to scream. He closed his eyes and counted to ten. "Dad, you know I'm not going to get married and have a family. We've been over this time and time again since I was twenty. I'm gay. You'll have to accept that." God, please just accept it. He was so tired of trying to convince his father he knew his own mind and sexuality. It had been an ongoing fight for several years, and Jamey doubted his dad would ever truly believe he had a gay son.

Jamey started walking toward the road again. His stomach was starting to hurt and the farther he walked from the creek, the more static developed over the connection. "Listen, Dad. I'll call you sometime this week. I think I'm about to lose my battery."

He didn't bother waiting for his dad to say goodbye. Jamey snapped the phone shut and put his arm across his stomach as a severe pain hit him. He took deep breaths until the pain faded and flipped the phone back open. He hoped he had enough juice for one more call. Waiting for Lochie to pick up, Jamey was seized by another sharp pain to his abdomen.

"McBride."

"Hey, boss. I think I'm going to need a rain check on the picnic. I'm not feeling so good. Think maybe I'm getting the flu or something. Could I get you to come out and pick me up? I'm almost to the road and I'll start walking your way." Jamey groaned as another pain sent him to his knees. "Hurry. All I want to do is lie down, but I don't think this is such a good spot for that."

"I'm on my way right now. Get to the road and I'll be there soon." Jamey heard the screen door bang in the background. He was ten feet from the road when the battery went dead.

Shoving the phone into his pocket, Jamey stumbled to the road and started walking toward Lochie. Man, he hadn't been sick like this in years.

Ten minutes later, Lochie drove up to a bent-over Jamey. He stopped the ute and was about to get out when Jamey opened the door and got in. "Just get me home," Jamey said and closed his eyes.

Turning around, Lochie headed for the house. He reached across and put the back of his hand to Jamey's forehead. "You look real crook. Do you feel like you're going to chuck?"

Jamey didn't even open his eyes. "Not really. Just hurts. Get me to a bed."

"What hurts?" Lochie asked, running his hand down the side of Jamey's face.

"Everything. Especially my stomach," Jamey groaned, holding his gut.

Lochie hoped it was just the flu like Jamey thought. But usually there were warning signs of the flu. Lochie hadn't noticed Jamey feeling headachy or sniffly that morning. He pulled up next to the verandah and jumped out. He went around to Jamey's side of the ute and opened the door. Jamey was doubled over again, holding his arms against his midsection.

Without giving it a moment's thought, Lochie scooped Jamey up into his arms. "I've got you," he tried to soothe. He walked up the stairs and down the hall to the bedroom. Gently setting Jamey down on the bed, Lochie started taking Jamey's boots off and then his pants. He noticed Jamey's socks were wet from sweat.

Lochie pulled the socks off and tossed them to the side. "Did you get overheated?" It just didn't make sense to Lochie. Jamey didn't seem to be running much of a fever, if

any. But where was all the sweat coming from? Jamey grunted as he tried to unbutton his long-sleeve shirt.

Looking up from his kneeling position at Jamey's feet, Lochie caught sight of Jamey's red hand. He stood and quickly unbuttoned the sleeves on Jamey's shirt. Pushing the sleeve up, Lochie gasped. "Bloody hell, what happened?" Lochie couldn't tell how far the red swollen skin extended up Jamey's arm, so he took over unbuttoning Jamey's shirt.

"Jamey? What happened to your hand?" Jamey was in so much pain he wasn't able to answer him. Lochie tore the shirt off Jamey and lifted his arm for a closer inspection. The red swollen area was up past his elbow and a rash was spreading across Jamey's chest. He leaned over and shook Jamey by the shoulders. "Jamey! You have to tell me what happened. Did something bite you?"

Gasping for breath, Jamey shook his head. "Digging in the toolbox." He took another ragged breath. "Something stuck me."

Lochie looked at Jamey's hand again. "Come on, babe." Lochie lifted Jamey back into his arms. "We'll have to get you to a doctor. I think you're having a reaction to a bite. My guess is it's a red-back spider—they've been everywhere this year, but the hospital will know for sure." Lochie carried Jamey into the kitchen and took an icepack out of the freezer. "Hold this over the bite if you can." He grabbed a blanket and pillow and carried Jamey out to the ute. When Blue tried to jump in, Lochie yelled, "Get the bloody hell out, Blue. You can't come with me this time." The heeler jumped out of the vehicle and hung his head.

Taking the pillow and blanket off Jamey's lap where he'd stowed them, Lochie threw them in the back. With the seats removed, the crew cab had a nice open area. He gently laid Jamey down and covered him up, making sure his head was resting on the pillow. "Hold on," he said, pressing a quick kiss to Jamey's forehead.

When Jamey was secured, Lochie jumped behind the wheel and took off in a cloud of dust. He knew that red-back bites were painful, but normally not fatal. Unless, as he suspected was the case with Jamey, he was having an allergic reaction.

* * * * *

Driving home late that night, Lochie looked over at a sleeping Jamey. He'd been right about it being a red-back bite. Lochie was grateful the antivenin was given so quickly. His hands gripped the wheel even tighter as he thought about what would have happened if Jamey hadn't gotten through to him on the cell phone.

Glancing over at Jamey again, Lochie sighed. "I'm in love," he whispered to himself. He'd come to the conclusion on his mad dash to the hospital earlier in the day. Never in his forty-one years had he been so afraid. His chest still felt tight from the tension. Lochie reached over and ran a hand down Jamey's thigh. He didn't know how in the world it was going to work between them, but Lochie was going to do everything in his power to convince Jamey to stay with him.

Jamey didn't stir until Lochie lifted him out of the ute. "We're home?" Jamey asked, blinking.

A tightness spread across Lochie's chest. "Yes, babe, we're home." He carried Jamey into the house. "You hungry?"

"Mmm-hmm. Never got my picnic." He flashed a sleepy grin at Lochie and nuzzled into his neck.

Squeezing Jamey a little tighter to his chest, Lochie nuzzled back. "Guess we'll just have to remedy that then. Does your arm feel up to a little picnic in the living room?"

Jamey kissed his throat. "How about a picnic in bed?"

Shaking his head, Lochie sat on the sofa with Jamey still in his arms. "Sorry, but the doc said you need to take it easy for a couple of days. A picnic in bed would be a little too tempting for both of us, I think." Lochie ran his hand up and down Jamey's side. He

loved this. Jamey was so appreciative of everything Lochie did for him that taking care of his lover made him feel ten feet tall.

Jamey started to unbutton Lochie's work-shirt, kissing the exposed skin as he opened it. "Thank you." He continued down Lochie's chest and over to one dark nipple. Before Lochie could protest, Jamey had latched on to the pebbled nub.

Leaning his head back against the sofa, Lochie stroked Jamey's curls. "Feels good, but someone's waking up, and I promised the doc you'd be kept calm for a couple days." Lochie sighed. "Come back up here and just let me hold you for a few minutes before I get us something to eat."

Positioning his head back on Lochie's shoulder, Jamey continued to rub his hands up and down Lochie's exposed chest. "I love you, boss." Jamey tilted his head to look into Lochie's moist eyes. "I've never told another man that. But I do."

Swallowing around the newly formed lump in his throat, Lochie leaned down and covered Jamey's lips with his. He pushed inside Jamey's mouth and made love to him with his tongue. Ending the kiss, he pulled back and looked at Jamey. "I love you too."

Tears pooled in Lochie's eyes. He pulled Jamey closer and rested his rough cheek against his love's. "I'd given up hope of ever falling in love. Life's hard enough in the bush without having to face each day alone." The tears slipped over his cheeks. "I don't think I can ever let you go, Jamey. You belong here with me."

Jamey nodded his head in agreement. "I tried to tell my dad earlier that I wanted to stay, but he wouldn't listen and then my stomach started cramping—"

Lochie cut him off with another soul-stirring kiss. "We'll work it out." He held Jamey for a while longer, neither of them speaking. Finally, he kissed Jamey on the forehead. "You rest while I fix a couple of sandwiches." He stood and deposited Jamey back on the sofa. "Don't move."

He went back out to the truck and came back with the blanket and pillow he'd put there for Jamey. Slipping the pillow under Jamey's head, Lochie kissed him as he spread the blanket over his sexy lithe body.

Chapter Four

Several days later, the warm, wet glide of a tongue on his cock roused Lochie from sleep. He smiled and buried his fingers in Jamey's black curls. "Someone's energetic this morning." Jamey hummed a reply as he took his shaft into his mouth. The more Jamey pumped his cock, the more awake Lochie became. He spread his legs to give the other man more room and thrust up into his mouth. "Good. Suck it."

Getting to his knees between his spread thighs, Jamey raked his hand over Lochie's chest. The feel of Jamey's work-roughened hands against his nipples fired Lochie up even more. He pumped faster into Jamey's mouth and reached down with one hand to massage his own sac, while the other continued to hold Jamey's head still. As he thrust in and out of Jamey's wet heat, Jamey pinched his nipple.

"Gonna come. Get ready." With a slight squeeze to his balls, Lochie pumped his seed down Jamey's willing throat.

Lochie let go of the grip he had on Jamey's head as the other man licked him clean. "Come up here." He pulled Jamey up into a kiss. He licked the inside of Jamey's mouth, tasting his own flavor inside. Moaning, Lochie rolled them over so Jamey was under him and licked his way down Jamey's throat to his dark brown nipples. Knowing how sensitive Jamey's nubs were, he latched on and sucked up a bruise.

Thrusting his still-hard cock against Lochie's chest, Jamey moaned. "God, I love it when you do that."

Smiling up at him, Lochie scraped his teeth across the already sore nipple. "I'd like to see hoops in these pretty things." He scraped the nipples again as Jamey thrust up. "Would you do that for me? Take a trip to the city some weekend and get them pierced?" The thought of tiny hoops with a slender silver chain attached to them was a wet dream for him.

Jamey ran his hands through Lochie's hair before tracing the tiny lines around Lochie's eyes. "I think I'd do anything for you," Jamey whispered.

Lochie smiled and nodded his head. "Just what I like to hear." He continued nipping and licking down Jamey's chest until he reached his lover's cock. He tugged the thick silver hoop with his tongue and teeth. Jamey's grip on his hair became tighter and Lochie knew he was about to come. Swallowing the long, thick shaft, he pressed his thumb against Jamey's puckered hole and was rewarded with a grunt as Jamey came.

The warm jets of thick cum sliding down Lochie's throat tasted like heaven. He loved Jamey's taste and it felt right in his mouth, comforting. Lochie cleaned him up, making sure to get every last drop. He paid special attention to the Prince Albert piercing, much to Jamey's approval.

By the time he was finished with the piercing, Jamey was already starting to get hard again. Lochie shook his head and chuckled as he crawled back up and over Jamey. "Damn, you recover quickly." He nuzzled Jamey's neck as he moved to his side.

Propping his head on one hand, he drew circles around Jamey's bruised nipple. "I need your help today. The weather's becoming unpredictable and if I lose the seed still in the section, I'll barely break even for the year. It's bad enough I've had to share with half the birds in the bush. I don't want to lose it to the weather too."

Jamey put his hand to Lochie's cheek. "I'd love to help you. I've been begging for three days to get out of this house and do just that. What's got you so worried suddenly?" Jamey ran his knuckles over Lochie's heavy morning beard.

Shrugging, Lochie didn't want to worry Jamey. If his new love found out that life in the bush was getting riskier every year, he may decide to go back to Kansas after all. "It's just a bad time for cockies right now. Properties are folding more and more every day with this drought. I've been lucky so far. The flowers don't need as much water as other crops and I've got the means to irrigate occasionally." He looked into Jamey's eyes. "That could all change in the blink of an eye. I've just been worried lately, I guess."

Leaning in, Jamey kissed him, soft and sweet. "We'll get it done."

Holding Jamey tighter against his chest, Lochie nodded. "Love you."

* * * * *

Driving the harvest truck alongside the combine that afternoon, Jamey had plenty of time to think. Lochie refused to let him in the cab of the combine, even though he'd taken the toolbox out. He said he wouldn't be taking any more chances with Jamey's safety. He smiled and looked around the cab of the old farm truck he was driving. "Just as likely to have spiders in here," he chuckled to himself.

As he drove, Jamey's mind turned toward the future. It felt so right here. He wondered what it would be like to stay in Australia with Lochie forever. How would his dad deal with his only son refusing to join the prestigious law practice he'd built from scratch? Jamey knew that getting around the visa laws might be tough as well. Shaking his head, Jamey couldn't believe he was plotting a future of forever based on a month-long love affair. Although he'd already taken the first step for the future and had an HIV test performed.

But it was love. Jamey knew that without a doubt. He'd do anything for Lochie and he knew Lochie would do anything for him. So how did someone go about telling their father they were throwing away all their years of education to become an Australian sunflower cockie?

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After a nice cool shower that evening, Jamey walked into the kitchen to find Lochie on the phone. He couldn't wait to share the news of his clean bill of health with him. No more condoms. Thank god Lochie had already gotten his results. Tonight he'd feel his man naked inside him for the first time.

Wearing only a towel, Jamey walked over and pulled a can of beer out of the fridge. While he was bent over, a hand brushed across his towel-covered ass. He smiled and grabbed another tinny for Lochie. He stood and turned around to find the bigger man

in a chair directly behind him with his large uncut cock in his hand. Lochie continued his phone conversation, but aimed a wink Jamey's way.

Feeling like a tease, Jamey winked back and shed his towel. He acted like it was a normal occurrence as he pulled a jar of spaghetti sauce out of the cupboard. Jamey caught Lochie's eye and smiled as he pulled out a pasta pot and smaller pan from the cabinet.

Filling the big pot with water, Jamey couldn't resist rubbing his hard cock against the smooth wood cabinet. He heard a moan and then a cough coming from Lochie. Chuckling, Jamey set the full pot on the stove and walked toward his man. He stood just out of arm's reach as Lochie tried desperately to get off the phone. He pretty much hung up on whoever he was talking to when Jamey reached down and started stroking his cock with one hand as he played with the piercing with the other.

Ending the call, Lochie narrowed his eyes at Jamey and pushed his moleskins down past his knees as he kicked off his boots. "Having tea naked, are we?" He pulled his pants off and spread his thighs. "Come over here."

Jamey held up a finger. "Just let me get the sauce on the stove first." He walked back to the counter and opened the jar of sauce. Grinning to himself, Jamey gave his hips a little wiggle.

"Tease. If you want any of this, I'd get my sweet tail over here." Jamie turned just in time to see Lochie stroke his shaft, stretching the foreskin up and over the crown of his weeping cock.

Sauntering over, Jamey held out a finger loaded with the thick sauce. Lochie reached out and seized Jamey's hand, drawing the sauce-laden finger toward his mouth. Twirling his tongue around, Lochie licked the finger clean as Jamey closed his eyes and tried to keep his balance. Damn, Lochie always knew how to push his buttons. Jamey knew he'd never have a more accomplished lover than the one sitting in front of him.

"Mmm," Lochie said, drawing Jamey onto his lap. "Nothing better than spag bol and a hot man at teatime." Lochie wrapped his hands around Jamey's ass and drew him even closer. "Kiss me."

With his fingers buried in Lochie's hair, Jamey thrust his tongue inside his lover's parted mouth. Like every time they were together, the kiss ignited their passion. Jamey reached down and wrapped his hand around both cocks as Lochie's fingers inched their way toward the crevice of Jamey's ass. Breaking the kiss, he looked into Lochie's face as he continued to stroke their cocks. "Gonna tell me who was on the phone?" He moaned as Lochie pressed his index finger against his tight pucker.

Entering Jamey's hole, Lochie nipped him on the shoulder. "That was my old mate, Jacko. The B and S ball is coming up next week. Just wanted to know what time I'd be there. I usually drop in for a squiz." Lochie licked up the side of Jamey's neck as he inserted another finger. Jamey's rhythm picked up as he tried to figure out what Lochie had just said.

"What's a B and S ball? And what are you squizzing?" Arching his back, Jamey rocked between his hand and Lochie's as he tugged harder on their cocks. Lochie's third finger pushed Jamey over the edge as he came with a shout of Lochie's name. Lochie's own grunt signaled his climax a split second later.

Collapsing against his lover's chest, Jamey licked Lochie's nipple. "So good." He snuggled his head to the crook of Lochie's neck. Warm and sated, Jamey felt like he could fall asleep and forget dinner.

Lochie rubbed one hand up and down Jamey's back while the other continued a soft massage of his butt. Jamey poked Lochie in the side. "You didn't answer my question."

Exhaling audibly, Lochie held him closer and kissed the top of Jamey's head. "B and S. Bachelor and Spinster ball. It's a piss-up root-fest we have every year. I'm expected to be there."

Tensing, Jamey pulled back and sat up on Lochie's lap. He looked Lochie in the eye. "What exactly are you supposed to do at this dance? A piss-up root-fest sounds like something illegal."

When Lochie took too long to answer, Jamey tried to push himself off Lochie's lap. He had a feeling he wasn't going to like Lochie's answer and being in his arms wouldn't help matters. Lochie closed his eyes and pulled Jamey in tighter. His superior strength was evident in the bands of steel that wrapped around Jamey's waist. "No one around here knows I'm gay. I go to the dance every year and dance with women that come in from the city usually. We dance, I kiss them a little so everyone can see and then I usually leave with her at the end of the night. Most years I make some excuse to the sheila and we part ways shortly after."

"And what about the ones you don't make an excuse to?" Jamey couldn't breathe. His heart felt like it had stopped in his chest at the look on Lochie's face. It told him everything he needed to know. Jamey pushed against Lochie's chest until he was finally released.

Bending over to pick up his towel, Jamey started walking back to the bedroom when a hand clamped on to his arm and spun him back around. Lochie looked eaten up with shame.

"This place is my home. I'd lose the few friends I have if they found out, so I do what I have to do. I'd like you to come with me this year, but it will have to be as a mate and not my lover."

Seeing Lochie's jaw tense, Jamey knew he wouldn't change his mind on going. Would he be able to handle watching his lover kiss someone else? Hell, female or not, Jamey thought his lover's lips were exclusively his. Needing to decide what he was going to do about Lochie's decision was Jamey's job. One thing he knew for sure. He needed to get away from Lochie before he said things he'd regret. The green-eyed monster was beginning to take over and he hadn't even seen Lochie with someone else.

Could he handle it? He shook off Lochie's hold. "I'm going for a walk. Fix your own spaghetti." He turned and went into the bedroom to dress.

* * * * *

After Jamey dressed and stormed out of the house, Lochie sat at the kitchen table with his head in his hands. *Dammit*. He didn't want to do this. Couldn't Jamey tell how much he loved him? But he'd worked too hard for too many years to keep his secret just that. He couldn't chuck it all for something so new. He hated the B and S. Every year it took another small piece of his soul to go and pretend he was like the rest of his widespread mates. He only bedded the women he knew would talk. Ending things the next morning, knowing they would spread the word he was a rake.

Pushing himself up from the table, Lochie went to the stove and turned the burner on. He hoped Jamey would work it out on his own because Lochie didn't know how to explain himself any more than he already had. The thought of losing Jamey over a damn ball had his eyes burning. He spotted a piece of paper on the counter and picked it up. He shook his head and crumpled the clean-bill-of-health paper of Jamey's in his hand. Now he knew why Jamey had teased him earlier. He should be wrapped in his lover's arms right now. Not fixing spag bol for one.

Walking out to the verandah, Lochie looked around the yard for Jamey. He wiped the tears from his eyes and hoped he hadn't just lost the first person he'd ever loved. Not seeing him, Lochie went back in the house to finish the spaghetti. Hopefully Jamey would work it out and come back in time for dinner.

* * * * *

Picking the seeds out of a sunflower head, Jamey played "he loves me, he loves me not". He'd cried all he could and realized he was left with a decision. He could either go back into the house and accept this side of Lochie or he could go in and pack his bags. He'd walked the couple miles while angry and hadn't really noticed how far he'd

traveled until he came upon what was left of the last field. Sitting in the middle of the road, Jamey watched the sunset over the field of drooping flower heads.

He still couldn't understand how Lochie could play this game every year. But this time it was different. This year he had a willing someone already in his bed. Why would keeping up appearances matter enough that he'd risk a promising relationship? That's what Jamey had been trying to figure out for the last couple of hours and he was no closer to the answer than when he'd left.

Sifting the loose seeds through his fingers, Jamey happened to notice the soil mixed in the seeds. He closed his fist and held on to the reason Lochie was willing to pretend year after year he was someone different from what he truly was. The answer came to Jamey in that moment. Lochie loved the land more than anything or anyone else in his life. All that was left was for Jamey to determine whether he could live with being second place in Lochie's life.

Chapter Five

The drive in to the ball was tense to say the least. Lochie touched Jamey's thigh often, trying his best to reassure his love that it was just one night out of the year. He'd promised Jamey that he wouldn't sleep with anyone else and that seemed to calm him enough to accept Lochie's invitation to accompany him.

Every time Lochie touched Jamey, he felt the muscles under his hand tense. When they were almost to the hall, Lochie slowed the ute and stopped at the side of the road. He turned to Jamey and cupped his cheek. "I love you." He leaned in for a kiss, sealing his lips over Jamey's perfectly sculpted mouth. Sliding his hand to the back of Jamey's neck, Lochie moaned as he pushed his probing tongue inside.

That seemed to loosen Jamey a little as he wrapped his arms around Lochie's neck and reciprocated. Feeling his dress khakis starting to tent, Lochie broke the kiss and rested his forehead against Jamey's. "You know I love you, yeah?"

Biting his kiss-swollen lips, Jamey closed his eyes and nodded. "Tell me what to do in there. How do I act like you're not the center of my universe?"

When Jamey opened his eyes, Lochie saw tears swimming in their blue depths. He hated this, hated seeing that hurt in his lover's eyes. Maybe after this year's ball he could come clean with his mates about Jamey. Lochie dried the spilling tears with his work-roughened thumbs. "It's up to you. You can sit at the table and drink, begging off dances, or you can follow my lead."

Exhaling, Lochie felt his own eyes starting to burn. "I'm sorry. I-I just have to do this. At least for one more year. I'll figure out a way to tell my mates." Wiping Jamey's tears one more time, Lochie kissed his nose. "I don't want to hurt you, but I don't know if I'm strong enough yet to chuck away all that I've worked for."

Nodding, Jamey pulled back. "Okay. Let's get this over with." Jamey smoothed his dark blue low-rise jeans over his thighs as he sat up straight in his seat.

Lochie groaned as he caught the sight of the hard ridge running down Jamey's leg. Unable to resist, Lochie ran his hand over Jamey's hardened cock. "It must not be too upsetting for you if you can still get this hard."

Jamey smiled and batted his hand away from his cock. "It was that damn kiss combined with the fact that I've never seen you dressed up. You look too sexy to be released in a roomful of horny women." Jamey tried to smile, but Lochie could see the pain and worry still written on his face.

"Believe me, babe. With that face and those jeans, no one's going to be paying old Lochie a bit of attention." Lochie felt the words in his gut. *What am I doing?* He knew the truth of the words as soon as they left his mouth. He hadn't given much consideration that the night might be just as hard on him as Jamey. How would he react to seeing someone else touching his Jamey?

Shaking his head, Lochie sat up and put the ute in gear. His voice had dropped a register as he ground out between clenched teeth, "Let's get this over with."

* * * * *

Walking into the dimly lit hall, Jamey felt as though all eyes turned to them. He looked around at the strange faces as people called out a greeting to Lochie. His handsome lover waved and called back to a few of them. He turned toward Jamey and pointed to a tableful of men.

"Go on over and say hi to my mates. I'll get a couple of beers and be over in a minute." Without giving Jamey a chance to protest, Lochie wound his way through the crowd toward the bar.

Looking over at the table, Jamey took a deep breath. "And the acting begins," he mumbled as he made his way toward the table of four men, each of them dressed like

Lochie in khakis and a sports shirt. Must be the bush uniform of the night. Jamey looked down at his tight jeans and button-up blue shirt. He already felt out of place.

The men were smiling and waving him over as Jamey approached their table. Jamey wasn't prepared for the devastatingly handsome group he approached. "Hi. I'm Jamey. Lochie's...worker." Jamey almost choked on the word. He nodded at the men and sat down at the end of the table against the wall. It would be better if he could just crawl under the table, but Jamey imagined that wouldn't sit well with Lochie.

"Nice to finally meet you, mate," the guy in the red shirt said. "Name's Trev." Trev pointed to the rest of the men as he said their names. "That's Chooka, Jacko and Red. Glad to see the two of you here checking out the talent. Lochie only gets a leg over once a year. The rest of the time he suffers, I guess."

All the men at the table started laughing as Lochie walked up to the table holding two cans of beer. "Hey. What's so funny?"

Jacko wiped the tears from his eyes and winked at Lochie. "We were just telling your mate here how you only get a leg over once a year." Jacko picked up his beer and took another guzzle. He crushed the can and stood. "Getting another tinny. Anyone else?" When several hands went up, Jacko shook his head and walked toward the bar.

Jamey tried to maintain the fake smile he had plastered on his face. Lochie must've sensed his dilemma, because he took the chair next to him just as he was nudged by Red.

"That bird's giving you the look, Lochie."

Lochie looked over Red's shoulder. Jamey quickly tried to figure out which woman they were talking about. There was a woman of about forty who was indeed taking a gander his man's way. The woman's face was pinched and heavily painted. "That bird's as ugly as a box of blowflies," Lochie chuckled as he lifted his beer to his mouth. His eyes flashed sideways toward Jamey.

Jamey tried to maintain the smile, but his face was beginning to hurt. He decided to keep his beer in front of his mouth. Finishing his drink quickly, he looked at Lochie and stood. "I'm getting another. Do you want one?"

Eyes big as saucers, Lochie looked down toward his can. "I just gave that to you. You done already?"

"Yep. You want another one, or what?" Jamey knew he was sounding pissy, but he couldn't help it. He just hoped getting drunk would help. He was usually the life of the party once he slid over the edge from sober to tipsy.

"No. I don't think we both need to get drunk this evening." Lochie narrowed his eyes just a bit as he looked at Jamey.

Shrugging his shoulders, Jamey left the table in search of the bar. He wove his way through the crowd, nodding as he went. Reaching the bar, Jamey leaned his forearms on the scarred wood and waited for the bartender.

He felt a hand on his back and looked over his shoulder. A pretty woman smiled at him. "I've never seen you around here before. Care to dance?"

Getting the bartender's attention, Jamey ordered two more beers for himself and turned back toward the woman. "Give me a while and then ask again. I'm sitting over in the corner with those rowdy guys." He pointed toward Lochie's table.

Her eyes lit up. "I didn't know Lochie was here. He must have come in while I was in the bathroom." She licked her plump red lips. "I'll be over." She ran her eyes down the length of Jamey's body and slipped back through the crowd.

Paying for his beers, Jamey headed back toward the noisy table. As he sat down and raised a beer to his lips, Lochie leaned over to whisper in his ear.

"You're going to cop it when we get home."

Jamey didn't know what Lochie meant, but by the heated look he was getting, he could tell it wasn't good. "What's that?" He had to know. He couldn't sit here all night not knowing what was in store for him when they got home.

Lowering his voice, Lochie reached under the table and squeezed Jamey's knee. "Expect a punishment. You're purposely trying to tie one on."

Who did Lochie think he was, his father? Grinding his teeth together, Jamey looked him in the eye and grunted. "Only way I hope to get through the night, *boss*." Lochie must have noticed the way the endearment had turned back into a title because he squeezed once more and drained his beer.

Pushing himself back from the table, Lochie stood and walked into the crowd. Jamey knew he was acting like a jealous boyfriend, but that's exactly what he was. He couldn't help it if Lochie was still in the closet. He'd been out for years, and with a father like his, it hadn't been easy. Jamey finished his second can of beer and started on the third as Lochie's mates got louder and drunker.

He drank about half of his third beer before getting up to use the restroom. The other four men were out dancing and he didn't see Lochie, so he walked in the direction he figured the restrooms to be. Just as he spotted the short hallway, Jamey got a glimpse of Lochie deep in conversation, pressed close to a leggy brunette. Jamey felt like he was going to throw up. He hurried to the bathroom and chose a stall instead of the urinal. He didn't bother pulling his jeans down before sitting on the stool, his need to pee forgotten after seeing the man he loved flirting with someone else. He held his stomach, sure he would be sick.

Jamey didn't know how long he was in there. People came and went while he silently cried, hating himself for being so weak. He dried his eyes and blew his nose just as the door to the restroom opened once again.

"Jamey? You in here?" Lochie's deep gravelly voice echoed through the almost empty room. A hand smacked against the stall door. "Jamey?"

The door in front of him rattled as he tried to get his breathing under control. "Just a minute," Jamey answered in a soft whisper.

Standing, he straightened his jeans and re-tucked his shirt. Jamey closed his eyes and took a deep breath before stepping out of the stall. Lochie was leaning against the wall with his arms crossed. "You need something?"

"You crook?" Lochie's voice was low and in control, but the bunched muscles of his biceps told Jamey he was pissed.

Licking his lips, Jamey shook his head and started washing his hands. "No. Just needed a break. You can go back to your brunette if that's all that was worrying you." Jamey refused to look at Lochie as he rinsed his hands in the cold water. He shook them off and turned to get a towel out of the dispenser, but Lochie's body was blocking it.

"You shouldn't have come, Jamey. I should've known this was wrong."

The words were like another punch to the gut. Jamey suddenly felt like he was on autopilot. He didn't think Lochie could ever hurt him any worse than he just had. Jamey looked into Lochie's eyes and gave a short nod. "Fine. Go back to your mates and your sheilas, and I'll be fine. You don't have to worry about me, boss. I'm a man. I can take care of myself for the evening."

Lochie started to reach out to Jamey, but he took a step back and held up his hands. "Don't. You came here tonight to save your blessed reputation among your mates. Don't ruin it now by showing you care." Jamey pushed past him and left the restroom.

He walked straight to the bar and ordered a double whiskey. As he sat at the end of the bar, he gazed into the mirror in front of him. He watched as Lochie came out of the restroom and headed straight for the brunette. He didn't say a word to her, just pulled her toward the dance floor.

Finishing his shot in two gulps, Jamey asked for another. The bartender shook his head a little, but filled Jamey's glass anyway. Trying not to look into the mirror again, Jamey gazed into the brown liquid of his glass. He wondered what Lochie would do if their positions were reversed. The more he drank, the more he thought Lochie deserved a taste of what he was going through. When a hand landed on his shoulder, Jamey was

presented with the perfect opportunity to find out. The pretty blonde smiled and Jamey nodded.

Saying nothing, he led her by the hand to the back edge of the crowded dance floor. He pulled the woman into his arms and tried like hell not to look over at Lochie and his brunette. The blonde in his arms looked toward Lochie and then back to him.

"I'm Cara, by the way. I wondered why Lochie never called me after our night together. Now I know." She looked from Lochie to Jamey. She studied his closed face for a few seconds. "You're in love with him, aren't you?"

Jamey closed his eyes and nodded slowly. "Yeah." He opened them and looked at Cara. "Is it that obvious?"

Smiling, she shook her head and sighed. "Only to someone who's been in the same boat. I've known Lochie and his mates for almost twenty years. I used to drool every time he came back to town to see his dad. He was the older man of my fantasies."

The song ended and the two of them swayed together until the next one began. "I've always thought myself in love with him, though until last year's ball, he never really gave me the time of day. After that one night I thought I'd die of a broken heart when he never called again." Cara stopped to wipe a lone tear running down her cheek. "I thought there was something wrong with the way I'd made love to him, but now I know there wasn't. Several have suspected Lochie was gay, but no one's had the nerve to confront him about it."

Jamey saw another tear escape Cara's sad brown eyes. He reached up and brushed the tear away with his knuckles. "He doesn't want anyone to know. But he doesn't realize it's killing me." He chanced a glance over Lochie's way. He was laughing at something the brunette was saying and dancing way too close for Jamey's piece of mind.

A mischievous smile broke out across Cara's face. "Well then, let's just show him what he's asking for. Give it a burl?"

With a genuine smile on his face, Jamey nodded. "Can't hurt. He already told me he's sorry for bringing me. Let's make him even sorrier." He pulled Cara closer and fitted his body against hers. "You'll have to tell me if I'm doing this right. I've never danced with a woman who wasn't related to me." He gave her a boyish grin and winked.

Ruffling her fingers through Jamey's hair, she purred. "You're doing just fine. Lean down and whisper in my ear like we're discussing something totally inappropriate."

Jamey did as she told him and buried his face against hers as his lips barely skimmed her ear. "What do I say?"

Cara continued to lace her fingers through his hair. "Tell me about yourself. I can tell you're a Yank. Just talk about whatever. It only has to look like we're whispering sweet nothings."

Feeling bold, Jamey started whispering his life's story to Cara as he moved his hands down to rest on her lower back.

After another two songs, Jamey felt a hand land on his back. "You ready to go?"

Jamey looked up from Cara's neck and looked over his shoulder at a red-faced Lochie. He shrugged. "Depends on where you're going, I guess. If you're asking me to come home with you and the brunette, the answer's no." He started to turn back to Cara when his shoulder was squeezed like a steel vise.

"Let's go. Just you and me." Lochie looked at Cara. "Sorry, Cara, but we've got an early morning of it."

Pulling away from Jamey, Cara smiled at Lochie and whispered in his ear. "You don't fool me, Lochlan McBride." She kissed his cheek and turned to Jamey. "It was nice to meet you."

Jamey winked and kissed her cheek. "Same here. Take care." He was grabbed by the upper arm and dragged toward the door. Jamey could tell Lochie was pissed, but at that point the whiskey and the heartache made him not care.

As soon as they were outside, Lochie released Jamey's arm and took his hand as they made their way to the truck at the edge of the parking lot. If he noticed that Jamey didn't hold his hand back, he didn't mention it.

At the front of the truck, Lochie released his hand. "Get in."

Lochie turned and got into the driver's side and slammed his door. Jamey still stood in front of the vehicle. He didn't know what was about to happen and it scared the shit out of him. Was this it? Had he pushed Lochie over the edge and was he being taken home to pack his bags? Jamey didn't know, but his feet refused to move toward the truck. He felt his chest tighten as Lochie started the vehicle. He loved Lochie so much, but he couldn't do this again.

Finally deciding that either way he had to be true to himself, Jamey got in the truck. Lochie pulled out of the parking lot with a spray of gravel in his wake. Not a word was said on the seventy-minute drive home. Several times Jamey thought Lochie was about to say something, but he'd shake his head and grip the steering wheel even tighter. It was the longest seventy minutes of Jamey's life.

When Lochie pulled up to the house, he opened his door and walked inside without looking back. Jamey couldn't take the tension anymore as tears slid down his face. Tears turned to whimpers and whimpers turned to racking sobs as he thought of a life without the only man he'd ever loved.

Vaguely aware of his door opening, Jamey was soon lifted off the seat and cradled in Lochie's strong arms to be carried up the steps and into the house. He buried his face against Lochie's chest and soaked up the warmth of the man. He knew he was coming off as a sissy, but he'd never felt anything as painful as this before.

Sitting on the edge of the bed, Lochie rocked Jamey in his arms. He didn't know what to do, how to apologize for his stupid behavior and hurtful words. All he really knew was the way he felt when he spotted Jamey wrapped around Cara. To know that's how Jamey must have felt earlier in the evening shamed him to the bone. What

kind of man was he that he could hurt the most important person in his life like that? And for what? So the blokes he saw a couple times a year thought better of him?

The long drive home had been murder. He wanted to apologize to Jamey. He wanted to pull the ute to the side of the road and take Jamey into his arms and promise never to hurt him again. But every time he thought he had the words right in his head, he'd look over at Jamey and see the pain written all over his face.

Lochie deserved to suffer for what he'd done. The sheila meant nothing to him, just like all those before her. It was part of the game he'd spent years perfecting. One night a year he sold his soul and betrayed his heart to keep his secret. How he could ever have thought this year could be the same, he didn't know. Things were different now. He was different. He was in love for the first time in his life and he'd risked it all for social standing in the community.

Kissing the top of Jamey's head, Lochie reached over and pulled several tissues out of the box. He wiped Jamey's face as he began to bare his soul. "I'm so sorry, babe. I shouldn't have gone. I was wrong to think this year would be just like all the others. Please don't leave me." Lochie felt the wetness on his cheeks and realized he was also crying.

Jamey took the tissues out of Lochie's hand and blew his nose, and looked up into his eyes. "I can't do that anymore. Please don't make me ever do it again. I know you think those people are your friends, but if they really are, they wouldn't want you to pretend to be someone you're not." Jamey blew his nose again. "I've never been hurt so much in my life as when you told me you wished you hadn't brought me." Jamey shook his head. "Never again, boss."

Cupping Jamey's cheek, Lochie gave him a short sweet kiss. "No. Never again. I didn't understand until I saw you wrapped around Cara. I mean, you knew that I loved you and why I was doing what I thought I had to do. I couldn't understand why you were having such a problem with it. When I saw you with Cara, I knew. It didn't matter

what my heart knew to be true, my head was seeing something different. I'm ashamed, Jamey." He kissed his lover again. "Can you ever forgive me?"

"Promise me. Promise me that you'll never again hide our relationship. I'm not talking about walking around town with our arms around each other. But I won't be treated like just another employee around your mates again. Either love me enough to risk disappointing your friends or I'll just go back to Kansas. I won't go back into the closet, not even for you." Jamey stood and bent over and kissed Lochie's cheek. "I'm going to take a shower while you think about it."

Chapter Six

Turning off the water, Jamey stepped out of the shower and dried off. He wrapped the towel around his hips and gathered his dirty clothes. Walking into the bedroom, he was surprised to find it empty. Jamey tossed his clothes into the hamper and walked out to the kitchen. When he still came up empty, the hairs on the back of his neck began to prickle as he walked toward the front verandah.

Looking out the screen door, Jamey was devastated to find Lochie's truck gone. He reached up and ran his fingers through his wet curls. So that was it then. He'd pushed too far and Lochie had left.

Feeling weak and alone, Jamey went down the hall to the bedroom. He opened the drawers and pulled out his clothes. Carrying the stack of jeans and t-shirts to his old room, Jamey dumped them on the bed and went back for his socks and underwear.

Pulling the big backpack out of the closet, Jamey sat on the floor and started rolling his clothes as he stuffed them into the pack. With each shirt a memory flashed, a specific time or day with Lochie that he'd worn it. He completed the rest of the packing on autopilot.

When he was finished with everything but the clothes he'd need for the morning, Jamey laid his head on the pack and gave in to his heartache.

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Sitting in his ute in front of the house, Lochie couldn't believe he'd done what he'd done. He gripped the steering wheel and rested his hands on his white knuckles. "Please don't let me be sorry."

With a slight shake of his head, Lochie opened the door. "Time to face the music," he whispered as he entered the house. He walked toward the bedroom, but was

surprised to see the light in the back bedroom was on. He bypassed his room and peered into the guestroom.

Curled around an old battered backpack was the man he loved. Lochie felt his heart seize as he realized the pack was full. Was Jamey giving up? The thought made his footsteps falter as he neared the man he'd risked everything for. No. He wouldn't let Jamey go.

With new resolve, Lochie stepped closer and bent over to pick Jamey up from the hard floor. Still asleep, Jamey snuggled against Lochie's chest like he'd been curled around the backpack. Naked and vulnerable, Jamey seemed to want to crawl inside Lochie's skin. Well, that was just fine with him. Jamey was his and by god he'd soon bloody well know it.

Carrying him to their bed, Lochie placed Jamey on his side and quickly undressed. Crawling in beside his man, Lochie reached down and pulled the covers up. He wrapped his arms around Jamey and pulled him closer. "Wake up. I need to talk to you." He kissed and nuzzled Jamey's face and neck.

"Mmm." Jamey wasn't even awake and yet he reacted to Lochie's touch. Lochie ran his hand down and across Jamey's chest, paying particular attention to the two dark brown nipples.

"I love you, Jamey." Lochie tried to swallow back the lump of emotion that word evoked in his heart. "Damn, I love you. You can't leave me. I won't let you go." His words must've finally gotten through to Jamey because he stirred and sleepily opened his eyes.

Jamey's whole body tensed as he looked from Lochie's face to the window. "It's still dark. What happened to the brunette you've been lusting after all night? The one you left me here for?"

"The only brunette I've been lusting after is you." Lochie cupped Jamey's cheek. "I didn't leave you for her. I left to set a few things straight with my mates while they were all in one place."

Closing the distance between them, Lochie explored Jamey's mouth with his tongue in a soft slow kiss. "I had to tell them I was in love with you."

Shaking his head slightly, Jamey pushed back enough to look into Lochie's eyes. "You told them? I-I thought you'd left me. You really told your friends about me? About us? What did they say?"

Chuckling, Lochie kissed him. "Slow down. One question at a time." Smoothing Jamey's wayward curls, Lochie looked into his eyes. "Yes, of course I told them. Given my other option, how could you even think I'd do anything but tell them? I've known those blokes since I was a kid, but they're not worth losing you over. I love you, Jamey. I'll always love you. So it doesn't matter what my mates think of us."

Jamey didn't give him a chance to say any more as he devoured his mouth, tongue tickling the inside of Lochie's cheek. Moaning, Jamey climbed on top of him without breaking their kiss. Jamey ran his hands over his chest, then bent over and took one pebbled nub into his mouth and sucked. Hard. By the time Jamey released Lochie's nipple, he looked down and smiled. "I've marked you."

Lochie ran his palm down the side of Jamey's face. "You certainly have." He didn't think he'd ever seen a more beautiful man than his Jamey. The love written all over Jamey's face made him ashamed of himself. How could he ever have risked this? Lochie reached down and settled his hand at the base of Jamey's cock. Feeling a slight fuzz developing around the base of Jamey's usually bare skin, he smiled.

"About time for us to go into Sydney. I like you all nice and smooth. Maybe we can get away right after harvest for a weekend." Wrapping his fingers around Jamey's long, thick cock, he began a slow stroke. Using his thumb to flick the silver hoop, he pressed against the slit. Jamey thrust into his hand. "Maybe we could see about getting those sweet nipples of yours decorated."

Lochie maintained his rhythm on Jamey's cock as he pulled him down into a kiss. The scrape of their bristly chins sounded loud in his ear as the kiss went deeper. Pulling

back just enough to speak against Jamey's lips, Lochie tugged harder on Jamey's length. "I love you."

Jamey nodded and pushed into Lochie's hand. "Love you, boss." Stretched out on top of Lochie, Jamey kissed him. This time the kiss was slow and very thorough. Breaking the kiss, Jamey looked down at Lochie as he started to grind against him. "You sure about this? It isn't a holiday fling for me anymore. I'm playing for keeps."

Pushing up into Jamey, Lochie grinned. "You think I'd come out to my mates if I wasn't in this for the long haul?"

Grabbing on to Lochie's shoulders, Jamey moved himself back and forth against Lochie's hard length. "I'll need to call Dad. Good thing I'm on another continent. I have a feeling the conversation won't go smoothly." Jamey didn't say anything more as Lochie brought Jamey's head down and kissed him.

The kiss soon became desperate as both men reached for fulfillment. Grunting his release, Lochie called out Jamey's name as heat blossomed between them. Jamey swore as he followed soon after. With his head in the crook of Lochie's neck, the two fell into a deep sleep.

* * * * *

Sunshine filtered through the curtains when Jamey woke the next morning. He could tell by the amount of light the day was truly underway. Realizing he was still safely tucked around Lochie, Jamey smiled. Had his lover forgotten to set the alarm or did he rate a late start to their day? Jamey carefully tried to untangle himself from Lochie's grip. He desperately needed to use the restroom, but when he moved, he noticed the skin of his stomach didn't want to cooperate.

He couldn't help himself. Jamey started to chuckle as he slowly peeled himself from his lover. Lochie groaned and opened one sleepy eye. Jamey shrugged his shoulders and kissed Lochie's nose. "Sorry. Seems we forgot to clean up last night. I'm kinda

stuck to you.” He looked down at the flaky white cum dried onto Lochie’s skin. “I’ll just go get a shower. I’ll bring back something to clean you up.”

Lochie’s arms banded around him and pulled him back against his massive chest. “Snuggle first. We can take a shower together later. Besides, I like the smell of you on me.”

Jamey leaned over to kiss him and stopped. “How do you feel about morning breath?” He grinned and winked as Lochie pulled him closer.

“Don’t care about your breath, babe. Just need your mouth.” Lochie closed his lips over Jamey’s and thrust his tongue inside.

There were definite advantages to two men waking together. The ever-present morning wood was one of them. Jamey reached down and ran his palm up the length of Lochie’s cock and gently stretched and played with the foreskin.

Thrusting into his hand, Lochie moaned. “Not going to last if you keep that up. Kind of wanted to be inside you this morning.”

“Mmm. I’ll get the lube.” Jamey scrambled off Lochie and reached for the bottle. Slicking his own fingers, Jamey turned his back on Lochie and presented himself on his knees. He reached back and began to prepare himself, much to the chagrin of Lochie.

“Damn, that’s a beautiful sight.” Lochie reached for the lube and slicked up his own fingers. Soon his fingers joined Jamey’s. “Two hands are better than one.”

Jamey had never experienced anything so erotic as the feel of his fingers mingling with Lochie’s as they stretched his puckered hole. He knew that too much wouldn’t be a good thing, however. “Fuck me. Now before I come with just our fingers inside me.”

With a quick nod, Lochie pulled his fingers out and reached for the lube again, as Jamey braced himself with his hands on the bed. He applied a small amount to his shaft and knelt behind Jamey. “Ready?”

"Yessss," Jamey hissed as he pushed back onto Lochie's erection. Lochie slipped easily inside and wrapped his hands around Jamey's hips. He gave them both a minute to calm down and began a slow in-and-out rhythm.

Once Lochie found his rhythm, Jamey matched it perfectly, thrusting back onto him. His back bowed as the sweet slow glide became a pounding. Falling to his shoulders, Jamey reached down and wrapped his fingers around his cock. "Soon."

"Not too soon. You're my first bare fuck. Let me enjoy it for a few more moments." As Lochie picked up the pace even more, Jamey felt his lover's sac hitting his ass on every thrust. This position gave Lochie the deepest penetration and Jamey intended to take full advantage of it. With his other hand, Jamey reached back underneath and between his legs to run his hand across Lochie's balls.

"Fuck." Lochie thrust once more and filled Jamey with his heat. Jamey pumped two more times and unloaded onto the white bed sheets. Jamey withdrew his hands as they both collapsed onto the bed.

Eventually Lochie rolled to Jamey's side and pulled him into his arms. "Now we're really sticky." He kissed Jamey's smooth lips. Rubbing Jamey's back for several minutes, Lochie cleared his throat. "I'm sorry about last night. I can't believe how stupid I was."

Jamey put his fingers over Lochie's mouth. "Shh. We'll work it all out."

"We'd better, because I don't ever want to make love with a condom again. There's just no comparison."

Jamey pulled back to look into Lochie's eyes. "Is that the only reason you'll keep me around?"

"Hell no. But I have to admit it's an added bonus," Lochie chuckled.

Chapter Seven

With harvest finished, Lochie and Jamey's days were spent doing maintenance on the buildings and machinery. Always getting ready for the next planting, Lochie refused to slow down.

Jamey was in the kitchen putting together some sandwiches for lunch when the phone rang. He set down the bread and reached for the phone. "Hello?"

There was a pause on the line, finally someone spoke. "Is Lochie around?"

"He's out in the equipment shed, but he should be in for lunch in the next ten minutes or so. Can I have him give you a call then?" Jamey paced back and forth across the kitchen floor.

"It's Red. Have him call me."

As the phone went dead, Jamey pulled it away from his ear and looked at it. He couldn't believe Red had just hung up in his ear without so much as a goodbye. Setting down the phone, Jamey went back to making lunch.

He was still stewing over the rude way Red spoke to him when Lochie's arms wrapped around his waist. Jamey leaned back against the strong chest and sighed. "You had a phone call from Red."

Lochie kissed Jamey's neck and moved his hands to rub across Jamey's nipples. "What did he want?"

Leaning his head to the side to give Lochie more room to explore his neck, Jamey shrugged. "How the hell should I know?" Jamey sighed. "I know he's your friend and all, but that's one rude bastard."

Lochie's lips stopped their teasing. He turned Jamey's face to look into his eyes. "What did he say to you, babe?"

“Nothing, really. That’s part of the problem. When I answered, he didn’t say hello or anything like it. He just asked for you and when I told him you were busy he said, ‘It’s Red. Have him call me.’ And then the bastard hung up in my ear.” Jamey turned into Lochie’s embrace, and buried his head in his lover’s neck. “I know it’s something I’m going to have to get used to. I’m just not accustomed to people not liking me, I guess.”

Kissing the top of Jamey’s head, Lochie ran his hands up and down his back. “I’ll call him and get it straightened out. He won’t be calling here again if he can’t act like a bloody decent human being.”

Looking up into Lochie’s eyes, Jamey gave him a half smile. “I’m sorry to cause you problems.”

Bending over, Lochie kissed him. “You’ve saved my soul. The rest of my mates I’ll do without if I need to. You’re the most important person in my world, and I thank God every day for it.”

Feeling like he wanted to tear up again, Jamey pulled out of Lochie’s embrace. “Lunch is ready. Go ahead and have a seat.” He turned back to the counter and picked up the platter of roast beef sandwiches. He pulled a bag of chips out of the cabinet and put it on the table. “Do you want some lemonade?”

Lochie gave a short nod of his head in reply. Jamey could tell he was upset and watching him like a hawk. He just wasn’t sure if Red was the only one he was upset with. Jamey decided to let Lochie handle his own friends and spend his energy keeping Lochie happy. The little niggle of guilt still played in the back of his mind. He still hadn’t called his dad to let him know he’d be staying in Oz.

They ate in companionable silence. Jamey noticed Lochie staring at him from time to time. Finally he couldn’t take it anymore. He pushed his chair back and stood beside him. “Can I have a quick cuddle before we go back to work?”

Pushing his chair back from the table, Lochie smiled and patted his lap. “You can have anything you need, babe.”

Jamey straddled Lochie's lap and rested his arms around his neck. "I love you." He leaned in and kissed him.

"You feeling any better?" Lochie ran his hands over Jamey's ass, slipping a finger inside his jeans to caress his crack.

Jamey didn't, but it wasn't Lochie's fault, so he shrugged it off with a nod of his head. "What do you want me to do this afternoon?" He smiled and kissed Lochie's chin.

"Why don't you knock off for the rest of the day? Maybe take the four-wheeler out for a bit of a wander. I've got to call Red and have a talk with him. It might be better if you're not around to hear the yelling." He finished his sentence with a big grin. "He'll know your place in my life by the time I'm finished." Lochie pressed one of his large fingers at the entrance of Jamey's hole. "Let's make an early night of it. How does a DVD and popcorn sound?"

Squeezing his butt cheeks together, Jamey trapped Lochie's finger. "What kind of DVD? Because I've seen that action one about twenty times since I've been here." He released his hold on Lochie's finger and kissed him as Lochie continued to tease his hole.

"Ahh, I've got something you might like. I'll surprise you. Be back before tea, though. I plan on making it a long night." He punctuated his sentence by adding a second finger into Jamey's hole.

When Jamey started to ride his hand, Lochie shook his head and withdrew his fingers. "Save it for tonight. I'm just giving you something to think about while you're out getting the cook's tour of the bush."

With a mock pouty face, Jamey stood and fastened his jeans. "Tease." He gave Lochie one more quick kiss and grabbed his borrowed Akubra hat off the peg by the door. "See you in a couple of hours." He winked and walked out the door.

Lochie sat in front of the phone for what felt like thirty minutes before he had the nerve to pick it up. He was still bloody pissed at his mate for treating Jamey like he did, but he didn't want to have this conversation today. The night he'd told his mates about Jamey and his true place in his home and heart, they'd acted a little shocked, but fine. Red was the only one who hadn't really said anything to him afterward.

With a deep breath, Lochie picked up the phone. It rang seven times before it was finally picked up.

"Red."

"It's me. What's going on with you? Jamey told me you called. I'm still a bit dirty about the way I found him after your call."

"What? What did that little poofter say?" Red's voice was one of disbelief and anger.

"First of all, don't you ever call him that again. You hear me? There's absolutely nothing feminine about Jamey. He's all man and he's mine. If you don't like it, I guess the past thirty-odd years doesn't mean much to you."

"It just threw me off when he answered the phone like it was his house or something. Don't spit the dummy on me, mate. I called to see if you were still coming to the barbecue next weekend."

Lochie ran a hand through his shaggy hair. "Jamey lives here and he's allowed to answer the phone. As for the barbecue, whether I'm there or not depends on whether Jamey's invited *and* whether you can be civil to him."

"If he wants to come, bring him. I'll expect you around the same time as usual."

"I'll have to talk it over with Jamey, but I'll call if I'm not coming. Talk to you later." Lochie hung up the phone and rested his head in his hands. The conversation had gone better than he'd expected, but there was still something bothering him about his longtime friend. He pushed himself away from the table and took some chicken out of the fridge. An idea came to him and he smiled to himself as he dug his mum's cookbook out of the cabinet.

* * * * *

Several hours later, Jamey pulled the four-wheeler into the equipment shed. He climbed off the bike and tried to brush himself off, not an easy task after riding over the dry dusty plains of the bush. He walked toward the house and spotted Lochie sitting on the front verandah with a beer. "Mmm. That looks good." Jamey climbed the steps and bent to give Lochie a quick kiss. "Mind if I get one and join you?"

Chuckling, Lochie shook his head. "Jamey? Is that you? I can hardly tell through all the dirt. Why don't you go get a shower and I'll get another tinny out of the fridge for you. Dinner's in thirty minutes."

Jamey nodded his head and disappeared into the house. Lochie waited long enough for Jamey to get into the bathroom and then ran into the house. He'd heard Jamey pull up on the four-wheeler and wanted him to think dinner was no big deal, but it really put a crunch in his timetable. He turned the chicken over once more and checked the potatoes boiling in the pot.

Smiling to himself when he heard the shower turn on, Lochie consulted the cookbook once again. He didn't know how people cooked like this all the time. No wonder Yanks had heart problems. Shaking his head, Lochie grabbed another couple of lagers and headed back out to the verandah when he heard the shower shut off.

Several minutes later, Jamey came out onto the verandah with his black ringlets still dripping water onto his bare chest. He had on Lochie's favorite shorts again too. "Damn, you look good." He ran his hand up Jamey's thigh and snaked a couple fingers under the hem of the shorts to brush against his sac. "I'd love to have you sit with me, but I've got to go check on dinner. Why don't you sit down and have a tinny. I'll call when it's ready." Lochie stood and gave Jamey a quick but scorching kiss.

"Love you."

Jamey smiled and ran his hand across the front of Lochie's battered jean shorts. "Love you too."

Twenty minutes later, Lochie was finally ready. He dried his hands and went to get Jamey. Opening the screen door, Lochie's heart melted at the sight before him. Blue was curled around Jamey's feet and they were both sound asleep, with his lover still holding the lager.

Kneeling beside Jamey's chair, Lochie kissed his neck. "Wake up. Tea's on the table." Lochie nibbled and licked his way up to his earlobe. Taking the softly tanned lobe into his mouth, he suckled tenderly.

When this didn't arouse Jamey out of his slumber, he tried a different tactic. Running his work-roughened hand down Jamey's bare chest, he made his way to the bottom hem of Jamey's indecently short shorts. Lochie stroked his fingers over the soft wrinkled skin barely hidden inside.

That finally got a groan and a thrust out of Jamey. Lochie smiled to himself and did it again. "Wake up, lover. I didn't slave over tonight's tucker for you to let it get cold."

Jamey opened his eyes and smiled. "Hey." He leaned over and kissed Lochie. "What's for supper?"

Lochie stood and pulled Jamey out of the chair, disrupting Blue's nap. "It's a surprise. You'll have to get your lazy bones inside to find out." He wrapped an arm around Jamey and led him into the house.

Jamey stopped in the kitchen doorway. His jaw dropped as he looked at the tableful of his favorite foods. His head snapped from the table to Lochie. "Fried chicken? You seriously made me fried chicken?"

Shrugging, Lochie ran his finger along Jamey's jaw. "Wanted to make it up to you for the way my mate treated you earlier. Come on, let's eat before my mashed potatoes and gravy get cold."

* * * * *

Sitting on the couch after dinner, Jamey rubbed his stomach and leaned against Lochie's side. "I can't tell you how good that tasted. Not as good as Grandma's chicken, but much better than my mom's used to be."

Playing with Jamey's curls, Lochie kissed his cheek. "You never talk about your mother. Is she still alive?"

Nodding his head, Jamey snuggled in closer to Lochie. He hated thinking about his mother. Although it had been a while, her betrayal still cut him to the bone. "She's alive. Mom pretty much has washed her hands of me, though. She's big into the whole Kansas City social scene. When I came out to her, she said she hoped I'd move away so no one would find out what a deviant she had for a son. Dad was the only one on my side, but he told me to keep my sexual preferences to myself if I wanted a decent position in his firm. I think Dad doesn't care about anything but that law firm and making money. Which is a good thing, because my mom sure knows how to spend it."

Lochie pulled Jamey onto his lap. "Speaking of that, have you called your father yet?"

Jamey had given it a lot of thought while on his wander earlier in the day. He'd gone back and forth with himself on the best way to break the news to his father. Lochie poked his side. Shaking his head, Jamey looked down at his lap. "I think it would be better if I go home and tell him. I need to get my stuff anyway. At least as much as I can bring back." He bit his lip and looked up at Lochie. "I don't wanna go. But I know it's the right thing to do. I need to be a man about it and stand up to him, and I know he's gonna flip his lid." He leaned in and kissed Lochie, repositioning himself to straddle his lover's lap. "Hopefully I won't be gone long. One day away from you is too much, but I imagine I'll be gone at least a week."

Rubbing his erection against Lochie, he grinned. "You won't replace me while I'm gone, will ya?" He held his breath waiting for Lochie's answer. He hated to admit it, but he was truly worried about that very thing.

Lochie unfastened Jamey's shorts and wrapped his hand around the solid shaft.
"You're irreplaceable."

Chapter Eight

As they pulled into Red's property, Lochie squeezed Jamey's thigh. "You sure you're all right with this?"

Looking over at the younger man, Lochie could see the indecision in Jamey's blue eyes. He took a deep breath and let it out slowly. "I can't live here for the rest of my life and not have any other friends but you. Besides, you said the rest of your mates would be here too, didn't you?"

"Yes, they'll all be here, as well as Red's workers and their families. It's a kind of thank you party he throws for his workers after harvest is over. Just stick with me. I'll make sure no one gives you a hard time." He caressed Jamey's thigh a little higher, inching his way toward the growing bulge in his tight low-rise jeans. "You look bloody sexy." He covered Jamey's cock about a quarter mile from the house. "I don't know how I'm going to keep my hands off you during the party. But later you're all mine. Matter of fact, we'd better pitch the tent before we do anything else. Stake out a spot far away from the others."

Groaning, Jamey spread his legs and thrust against Lochie's hand. "If you don't stop that, I'm going to greet your friends with cum all over my jeans." He opened an eye and winked at Lochie.

Lochie slowed the ute enough to lean over and take a quick deep kiss. "Thank you for coming."

Chuckling, Jamey swatted Lochie's hand away from his cock. "Thank me later after I really do come."

"Smart-arse."

"Yep. And you love me for it." Jamey took in the group of people milling around in front of the house.

Parking the ute, Lochie turned off the ignition and looked at Jamey. "You're right. I do love you for it. Now let's go and meet my mates again. Remember to stick with me." He got out, hoping like hell his friends would behave. It would hurt him more than he'd ever admit if they rejected him because of Jamey. He hadn't lied though. He'd give them all up for Jamey. It just wouldn't be easy.

Getting out of the ute, Jamey joined him at the back of the truck. "I'm not a kid, Lochie. I can't have you babysitting me for the rest of my life. I may not look like it, but I think I can hold my own if I need to."

Lochie looked him in the eyes for several seconds and gave him a short nod. He knew Jamey wouldn't stand a chance going up against one of his mates in a fight, but he wouldn't tell his lover that. "All right. Just let me know if someone tries to start trouble."

"Yes, boss." He giggled as Lochie took a swipe at him. He lifted one of the cases of beer out of the back of the truck. Glancing at the porch, he took a deep breath. For all his talk, he was scared to death.

Following Lochie to the crowd of people on the wide verandah, Jamey felt his stomach begin to churn. He immediately spotted Red and began to tense when some of Lochie's other mates verbally welcomed them.

"Glad you both made it," Jacko said, leaving the group of men and walking toward them. He raised his can of beer at both Lochie and Jamey.

Lochie took the case of beer from Jamey and carried it up the steps. Jamey stood there beside Jacko as Lochie set it down by the rest of the beer. Walking back down the steps to him and Jacko, Lochie handed Jamey a bottle. "How'd harvest go for you, mate?" Lochie asked.

"Bugger all rain this year. I'm not sure how much longer I can go on if we don't get some rain." Jacko took a drink of his own beer. "You're lucky your property is on the river."

Lochie nodded his head as he took a swig of beer. "Yeah. As far as water goes, I've been a little luckier than most, but the bloody birds probably got to a quarter of my seed. I was glad I had Jamey around to speed up the harvest. Who knows how much I would have lost if I'd been on my own. But unless we get some rain, the whole country's going to be stuffed."

Jamey felt warmed by Lochie's words. It was nice of his lover to tell his friends what a difference he'd made during harvest. For some reason, he felt it gave him a sense of worth.

Lochie looked over Jamey's shoulder and narrowed his eyes a bit. Jamey knew immediately who was walking toward them. When Lochie put his hand on Jamey's arm, it was confirmed.

Jamey turned around just as Red stepped up to the group of three. "Glad you came." Red said the words, but refused to look at Jamey as he said them.

Glancing over at Jacko, Jamey could see the disapproval on his face. Seems Lochie wasn't the only one disappointed in Red's attitude. Jacko drained his beer and looked back at Jamey. "Want to get another with me, mate?"

Jamey was thankful for the reprieve. "Thanks." He turned back to Lochie and motioned toward his beer. "Care for another?"

Lochie met Jamey's eyes and smiled. "No. I'm good. I think I'll go get the tent set up. Red's going to help me. Aren't you, sunshine?"

Red looked at Lochie for a few seconds before nodding his head. Lochie gave Jamey's shoulder a quick squeeze and walked back over to the truck.

"Come on," Jacko said as he headed up the steps. "We'll let them have it out face-to-face while we sit in the shade." Jacko dug through the ice in the big galvanized bucket and removed another couple of beers and handed one to Jamey. He led him to an old gum tree and sat on one of the chairs. Jacko motioned toward the other. "Have a seat."

Sitting, Jamey finished off his first beer. He set the empty bottle down and opened his fresh one. He always felt clumsy and tongue-tied around gorgeous men and Jacko was definitely the best-looking man Jamey had ever seen. He didn't know what to say to him. He didn't really know any of Lochie's friends. The one time he'd been around them he'd made a fool of himself—the night of the dance. Jamey looked up to see Jacko studying him. "Sorry about the way I acted at the B and S. It wasn't one of my finer evenings." He tried to smile at the good-looking man, but knew he fell short.

"No worries. If things between you and Lochie are what he says they are, you had every right to be mad. I'm glad Lochie told us the truth. Turns out Trev and Chooka had already suspected it for years, but figured Lochie knew what he was doing." Jacko took a drink. "Guess it just took the right someone for him to make the leap." Jacko took another drink and looked away from Jamey. "You seem like a right enough bloke. As long as Lochie's happy, I'm happy."

That earned a smile from Jamey. "Thanks. But I don't want him to lose his friends over me."

"He won't. Red's the only one with a problem, and I imagine that'll be worked out one way or another."

They sat in silence for a few moments, before Jacko asked. "What is it that you love most about Lochie?"

Jamey looked at Jacko. What an odd thing to ask. "Well, everything. I was feeling kinda lost when I walked my way onto his property. Seems like I've spend the last half of my life being what everyone else wanted me to be. Lochie didn't care about what I was or wasn't back in the States. All he cared about was me and how good a cockie I could be."

Stopping long enough to take a swig of beer, he continued. "I knew he made me hot the first time I saw him, but I think I fell in love the day he doctored my hands. He was so gentle, almost shy. I was slightly embarrassed myself because every time he got close to me, I got hard. I know Lochie had to have noticed, but he didn't say a word."

"Will you be able to leave your country and family for him?" Jacko asked.

"Definitely. There's a lot I'll have to deal with back home, but my heart will always be here."

* * * * *

When Jamey spotted Red heading to the barbecue, he sighed in relief. He turned to look at Jacko. "Well, Red seems to be still in one piece. Let's hope Lochie fared as well."

He waited another twenty minutes before announcing, "I'm going to find Lochie." He started to walk away, but stopped and turned back. "Thanks. For everything."

Jacko smiled and lifted his beer. "No worries. Tell Lochie it's his turn to set up the bloody poker tables."

"Will do." Jamey threw his empty bottle in the barrel and went to find Lochie. He passed a row of tents set up on the hard-packed dirt. Smiling, Jamey spotted a tent way off in the distance. Well, Lochie said he wanted a little privacy.

Walking up to the tent, Jamey didn't see his lover. "Lochie?"

"In here."

Jamey pulled the canvas flap back on the front of the tent and ducked in. Lochie was sitting Indian-style on the big sleeping bag with his face buried in his hands. Jamey plopped down beside him and wrapped his arms around Lochie. "What's going on?"

Lochie shook his head slightly. He looked up from his hands and met Jamey's eyes. "Red doesn't hate you because you're gay. It seems he's been in love with me for years. According to him, he's always known I was gay. Red's just been waiting around for me to open up and come out of the proverbial closet and into his bloody bed."

Jamey's jaw that had dropped open suddenly snapped shut. His mind flashed to the two strong men wrapped in an erotic embrace. "What are you telling me? Do you want to be with him?" Although the image was hotter than hell, Jamey felt like he was going to throw up.

That seemed to shake Lochie out of his trancelike state. "No. Hell no." He pulled Jamey into his lap and wrapped his arms around him. "I love *you*. Haven't I told you that enough?" Pressing his mouth to Jamey's, Lochie gave a nibble to Jamey's lower lip. His tongue began stroking the inside of Jamey's mouth. When Lochie pulled away, he rested his forehead on Jamey's. "He kissed me though."

"What? You let him kiss you?" Jamey started to climb off Lochie's lap, but two steel bands kept him in place.

"It surprised me. I didn't return the kiss. I-I pushed him away and told him it was too late for us to ever start something. I told him again how much I loved you and I was sorry to hurt him, but that wouldn't change. He stormed off."

Jamey cupped Lochie's face in his palms. He could see the torment in his lover's eyes. "I'm sorry. Do you think the two of you can get past this?"

He gave Jamey a confused look. "You mean you wouldn't mind if I tried to patch things up with him?"

Smiling, Jamey kissed Lochie's nose. "As long as you only want to patch your friendship up, no, I don't mind a bit. Even though he is a good-looking fella. Just make sure he knows your mouth is off-limits to him." Jamey puffed up his chest and flexed his muscles. "I wouldn't want to have to take him down, ya know."

That earned him a big smile and a chuckle. Red was twice the size of Jamey with muscles on top of muscles. Jamey stopped his flexing and kissed Lochie. "He's got dark brown hair, so why do you all call him Red anyway?"

"His last name's Redmond. Too much name for a boy." Lochie put his hands on Jamey's butt and pulled their groins together. He kissed him long and deep as he ground his hardened cock against the hard ridge in Jamey's jeans. "Enough talking about my mates," he said as he unfastened Jamey's jeans and kissed him again.

Soon they were both covered in sticky white cum. "Damn, you're sexy, babe."

Jamey collapsed against Lochie's chest. He licked his way up Lochie's neck to his ear. Sucking the plump darkly tanned lobe into his mouth, Jamey buried his hands in Lochie's hair. He released the sun-weathered flesh to whisper, "Love you."

"Love you too, babe," Lochie said as he ran his hands down Jamey's back.

They cuddled for another ten minutes without saying a word. Finally Jamey pulled back and looked down at the sticky mess. "Don't suppose you have anything to clean us up?"

Smiling, Lochie reached over for his kit. He pulled out a box of wet towelettes. "Now you know I wouldn't leave my baby all sticky." He pulled several wipes from the little plastic box and began cleaning them both.

Jamey bit his lip as Lochie cleaned his cock. He was still half-hard and the more Lochie cleaned, the harder he became. "Unless you want to spend the rest of the day right here, you'd better stop now."

Giving Jamey's cock one last squeeze with the wipe, he pulled off. "Can't help but want you all the time."

"Good answer," Jamey said as he pulled back enough to stuff his unruly cock back into his jeans. "Hey, Lochie? If Red's gay or at least bi, what about the rest of your friends?"

Helping Jamey to stand, Lochie stood and zipped his jeans. He sighed and shook his head. "I don't really know. I mean Red alluded to Trev and Chooka as having some sort of arrangement, but he didn't give me any details." Lochie put the wipes at the side of the tent and disposed of the cum-soaked ones in a small plastic bag he'd pulled out of his kit.

Jamey waited for him at the door of the tent. "Isn't it kinda strange that there happens to be four gay guys in the area? Besides the fact that you're all friends, what are the odds?"

Lochie took Jamey's hand and led him out of the tent. They started walking back to the barbie hand in hand. "I don't know. Maybe that's why we're all still friends. I have

to tell you, it makes me a little more comfortable around them though. I just wish they'd told me sooner. But in the bush, being gay could get you killed in the wrong crowd."

"Well, I think they need to start having B and B balls instead of only B and S balls." Jamey chuckled as he walked alongside Lochie.

They were almost to the porch when Lochie pulled him into his arms and kissed him once more. "Don't be nervous around my mates. They'll give you a chance if you let them." Lochie pulled away and nodded to the verandah. "Come on."

As Jacko stood watching the two men kiss, he noticed a group off to the side of the barn staring at the couple. Although Jacko was filled with jealousy and need for what Lochie and Jamey had, he had a feeling the other men weren't thinking the same thing.

* * * * *

Later that evening as the sun set over the dry landscape, Jamey stood with his hands in his pockets, enjoying the last light of the day. "Hey, Jamey, you in this hand?" Trev called out from the poker table.

"No. I think I'll walk around a bit, if that's okay with Red." Jamey turned to glance at Red. The two of them had tried their best to get along all afternoon. Jamey could tell there were still hard feelings, but they were both trying for Lochie's sake.

"Sure, kid. My chips could use the break anyway," Red called back to him.

Smiling, Jamey stepped off the porch and walked into the setting sun. He'd surprised Lochie and his friends by cleaning up at the poker table. His granddad had taught him at an early age how to play and Jamey had earned a lot of his spending money in college by getting in on games.

The warmth of the setting sun on his face seemed to pull him along. The nights could get chilly, so Jamey loved this in-between stage of the day. He rounded the side of the equipment shed and slammed into a fist. Out of nowhere, four men knocked Jamey to the ground and began punching and kicking him. *What the fuck?*

By the time a surprised Jamey hit the ground, it was too late to really defend himself. His first thoughts were that Red must be behind it.

One of the bigger guys above him kicked him in the ribs. "Fucking poofter," the man said and spat in Jamey's face.

Another punch connected with his gut as he tried to make sense of what was going on. He knew if he continued to let the men beat him, he'd die in the dirt. His mind raced to Lochie. What would it do to his lover if he never came back from his evening walk?

Knowing Lochie would blame himself, Jamey opened himself up enough to throw a couple of punches and was rewarded by another hard kick to his side. The pain shot through him like a sledgehammer. He tried to protect himself by curling into a ball.

"Look, mates, the sissy boy's crying," one of them laughed. "What's wrong, need your mummy?" Another punch struck Jamey's jaw.

"Get up and fight like a man, queer arse."

Jamey wanted more than anything to do just that, but he knew he was beaten. He couldn't have gone one-on-one with any of them, but together he was definitely no match.

When the men saw he wasn't going to fight back, they started spitting on him. "You're garbage. Go back to the sissy country you came from. We only have room for men who act like men."

Jamey managed to open his eyes. He tried to memorize the faces of the men spitting down at him.

After the men walked off laughing, Jamey closed his eyes and tried to get his breathing under control. He knew some of his ribs were busted, so he couldn't walk back to the house. He couldn't get a deep enough breath to scream for help, so he slowly started to drag himself. All he could think about was getting back to Lochie. "Forgive me, Lochie," he whispered after about fifteen yards. The pain was so bad he slipped into unconsciousness.

* * * * *

Throwing his cards on the table, Lochie looked around. Jamey still wasn't back and there was no sign of him. "I'm going to have a wander and look for Jamey. He should have been back by now." He pushed his chair back and stood.

"Probably counting his money," Chooka laughed.

Lochie smiled as he headed out. He'd seen the direction Jamey had taken, so he followed that path. The sun had completely set over thirty minutes earlier and the night was dark. As Lochie walked across the yard toward the sheds, the hair on the back of his head began to prickle and stand up. Rubbing his neck, Lochie picked up his pace. "Jamey? You out here?"

Catching movement out of the corner of his eye, Lochie turned toward the big equipment shed. There it was again. Movement on the ground. Lochie ran to the shadowy figure. "Jamey!"

Kneeling beside Jamey, Lochie's first instincts were to pick him up and cradle him in his arms. He could see Jamey trying to move his mouth, but heard nothing. Lochie bent down and placed his ear against Jamey's bloodied and swollen lips. "Talk to me, babe."

"Ribs," Jamey whispered.

Lochie sat up and touched Jamey's ribs. He felt around, searching for anything that appeared to be broken. "I'm going to carry you to the house. It's going to hurt, but there doesn't seem to be anything broken, and I can't leave you here."

At Jamey's nod, Lochie gently picked him up. The groan of pain from Jamey tore at Lochie's heart. He walked as quickly as he could without jostling Jamey too much. When he got close enough, he hollered for his mates. "I need help."

Trev was the first to reach him. "Christ. What happened? It looks like he had the shit kicked out of him."

"I don't know, but I'll find out and whoever's responsible will wish they'd never set eyes on Jamey." Lochie continued on to the house. Red was the last to arrive and Lochie narrowed his eyes at his old mate. "You know anything about this?"

"Hell no," Red said as he ushered Lochie up the verandah steps and opened the front door. "We'll put him in the room at the end of the hall." Red squeezed between Lochie and the wall and reached the door first. He opened it and flipped on the light.

Lochie laid Jamey down as soon as Red had the blanket and sheet pulled back. Looking over his shoulder at the rest of his mates in the doorway, Lochie started barking orders. "Get me a washcloth, some water, scissors and some pain reliever." He looked at Red. "You have any elastic bandages or medical tape? I think his ribs are cracked."

Jamey moaned and Lochie forgot about everyone else in the room. He sat on the side of the bed and ran his hand over Jamey's forehead. His nose was definitely broken, both eyes already turning purple and nearly swollen shut. Jamey's lip was split and bleeding down the side of his neck.

Trying to wipe away some of the blood, Lochie crooned words of love to his man. "It's all right. You're safe now." Lochie looked over his shoulder just as Trev ran back into the room with a wet washcloth. He handed it to Lochie and stepped back.

Wiping Jamey's face, Lochie felt like killing someone. He tried not to reflect his rage in his voice. "Chooka, bring the ute around. We need to get Jamey to emergency."

"No, no," Jamey shook his head. "No doctors. You can take care of me."

Lochie leaned down closer to Jamey's bleeding face. "Your nose needs to be set. Your ribs X-rayed. You need a doctor."

"No. My ribs are fine, just wrap them," Jamey whispered.

"I don't think doctors do that anymore, babe."

"Don't care what the doctors do," Jamey pouted.

Handing the rag back over his shoulder, Lochie looked at Trev. "Rinse that out for me and get me those damn scissors and tape."

Trev nodded and left the room, bloody washcloth held tightly in his fist. Lochie couldn't help feeling Red had something to do with this. It was his property and everyone on it had been invited. He knew his old mate hadn't done it himself. Hell, Red had been at the poker table with the rest of them. Maybe Red asked someone else to do his dirty work? Lochie leaned down to talk into Jamey's ear. "Tell me who did this."

"Don't know them," Jamey croaked. "Four guys with heavy boots. I got a couple of punches in."

Red finally appeared with the tape and scissors. Trev was right behind him with the rinsed-out cloth. Lochie took the items out of Red's hand without looking him in the eye. "I'm going to have to get you out of this shirt, Jamey."

Cutting up the length of Jamey's tight red t-shirt, Lochie was stunned at the massive bruising already forming. "Fuck." Along with the bruises, there were several boot-heel marks. It turned Lochie's stomach to think of four men stomping on Jamey as he sat a couple hundred yards away, laughing and playing poker. He wished they weren't so far away from town.

Once Jamey was free of his shirt, Lochie took the cloth from Trev and cleaned his face again. "Are you sure you want me to set your nose? I might screw it up and leave it looking like mine," he said with a grin.

"I'd be lucky to come out lookin' like you." Jamey gave him a slight smile that warmed Lochie's heart.

He looked over at Jacko who was standing just inside the door. "Hey, mate, come over here and hold Jamey's hand while I try to set his nose." Lochie smoothed the bloodied black curls out of Jamey's face. "Sorry, but it's going to hurt."

Jamey gave Lochie a slight nod. "Just do it."

Lochie waited while Jacko took both Jamey's hands in his. "Scream if you need to, but don't move." Jacko took a deep breath and nodded to Lochie.

Lochie put his fingers on either side of Jamey's nose, and with a quick jerk, set the nose back into place. The sound was enough to make his stomach roll again. Leaning down, Lochie placed a kiss on Jamey's forehead. "Sorry."

Resting his forehead against Jamey's, Lochie closed his eyes as he kissed him tenderly on the mouth. "Love you," Lochie whispered. "I'll get those bloody bastards."

Sitting back up, Lochie reached for the tin of white first-aid tape. "I'm going to have Jacko and Trev help you sit up. It's going to hurt like hell, but we've got to get those ribs strapped up."

"I know. I'm ready." Jamey grunted and groaned as Trev and Jacko helped him into a sitting position. Lochie quickly took Jamey's red t-shirt and wrapped it around his torso against his skin.

"Hold this together, Chooka, while I tape." After Chooka got the t-shirt wrinkle free and stretched tight, Lochie began the process of running the tape around Jamey's torso. Jamey hissed while contorting his facial features in pain. "I'm so sorry," Lochie said over and over as he wrapped.

As soon as he was finished, Jacko and Trev carefully laid him back down. Jamey looked at Lochie. "Not your fault. Love you."

"Yeah. Love you." Reaching over to the bedside table, Lochie picked up the bottle of pain relievers and shook out three tablets. Putting the bottle back onto the table, he picked up the glass of water Chooka had brought. One at a time he placed the pills into Jamey's mouth until all three were swallowed.

After wiping more blood, Lochie kissed every non-bruised surface of his lover's face and neck. "You rest for a while. I'm going to go find whoever did this and kick the shit out of them."

Lochie stood and pulled Jamey's boots and socks off. Looking over at the other guys, he motioned toward the door. "I'll meet you in the living room."

After his mates left, he popped the button on Jamey's jeans and slowly unzipped them. "I'm going to get these off. If it starts hurting too much, just tell me, and I'll cut them off."

Jamey grinned despite the pain. "Can't cut them. They're your favorites."

"Hell, I'll buy you a dozen pairs next time we get to Sydney. But I don't want to hurt you anymore." Lochie pulled the jeans off a couple of inches at a time. He could tell Jamey was in pain when he got the jeans down past his thighs. Jamie was so tense the muscles in his thighs were as hard as rocks. Lochie bent over and kissed each thigh. "Relax. I'm almost done."

Once the jeans were off, Lochie pulled the sheet and quilt over Jamey's nude body. "You need some sleep. I'm going to leave one of my mates here in the living room in case you need anything while I'm gone. Do you have a choice as to who?"

"Jacko," Jamey spoke drowsily.

"All right. I'll be back as soon as I can." He kissed Jamey's swollen lips and then his swelling eyes before leaving the room.

Lochie walked down the hall and straight to Red with murder in his eyes. He wrapped his hands around Red's neck and began cutting off his airflow. "Why?"

Red was trying to push Lochie away, but Lochie was like a mountain unable to be moved. "Not me," Red wheezed.

Jacko, Trev and Chooka intervened and pulled Lochie off. Despite being held by three large men, Lochie backed Red into a corner of the living room. "Who did this, Red? Did you tell them to do it?"

With eyes pooling with moisture, Red shook his head. "I'd never do something like that. But I'll be happy to go look with you, mate."

Despite everything that had happened, Lochie saw the truth in Red's eyes. Maybe he was crazy, but he believed him. Red may not like Jamey, but Lochie knew in his heart that his old friend wasn't capable of ordering the attack.

Shaking off his mates' hold on his arms, Lochie nodded and turned. "Jacko, would you stay here and keep an eye on Jamey? He's asleep now but he might need something before we get back." He stuck his hand out to Jacko. "He asked for you. I think you've made a pretty good impression on my Jamey."

Jacko gripped Lochie's hand a little tighter. "You're damn lucky to have him. No worries. I'll keep an ear out for him."

"Thanks. And you're right. I'm a damn lucky bastard." Lochie released Jacko's hand and walked out the front door. With the rest of the group following closely behind, he made his way toward the camping area.

Trev ran up beside Lochie. "Any idea who you're looking for?"

With his hands balled into fists, Lochie shook his head. "A group of four gutless wonders. Jamey said he managed to land a couple of punches before they overtook him completely." As they neared the circle of tents, Lochie couldn't see anyone up and about.

Stopping, Lochie turned toward Red. "Which mongrels you reckon did it? I'm looking for a group of four men."

Red ran his hands through his thick dark hair. "I just can't imagine it would be anyone out *here*. These tents are full of families and couples. The only single men staying besides you five would be my help. Some of those blokes have worked for me for donkey's years, though. I don't reckon any of them would be responsible for what happened to Jamey."

Lochie spun on his heel and headed toward the bunkhouse at a faster clip. His long legs ate up the distance in a matter of minutes. As he drew closer, he couldn't see any lights on in the workers' housing. Lochie stomped up the steps and into the house. He flipped on the lights and headed down the hall.

"Wait," Red said, putting a hand on Lochie's arm. "Let me go get them up and bring them all out here. No point in going off half-cocked and beating someone who's

innocent. I've got seven men living here. If it was my men who did this, then it'll only be four of them. I'll get to the bottom of it."

Narrowing his eyes at Red, Lochie looked over his shoulder to Trev and Chooka. Trev cleared his throat and leaned against the front door as Chooka started heading toward the back door. "Let Red get them up, mate. No one's getting out of this house until we get to the bottom of it," Trev said.

Lochie ran his hand over his face. "All right. You've got five minutes to get every damn one of them out here, dressed or not."

As the men started filtering into the living room, Lochie eyed each one of them with barely contained fury. When he spotted a red-haired man he'd never seen before, he looked him over closely. Lochie didn't see any marks on his face, but as he moved down his body, he noticed the red bloody knuckles of his right hand.

Launching himself across the room, Lochie pushed the man to the floor. In the next second he was sitting on the big man's chest, slamming his fist into the man's face. When several of Red's men started to come to their friend's aid, Chooka and Trev stood in front of them, barring their way.

"Where'd you get that bruise on your cheek?" Chooka asked another of the men. Without warning, Chooka gave the man a matching bruise, this time to the eye. The man swung back and caught Chooka in the jaw.

All hell broke loose as the perpetrators were quickly singled out by their actions. Red and Trev took care of the last two with several well-placed punches. Chooka pulled Lochie off the barely conscious man on the floor.

"That's enough, mate. You don't want to kill him, which is exactly what you're getting ready to do." Trev helped Chooka drag him off the man. Lochie looked around in bewilderment. He had no doubt Chooka was right. He wouldn't beat the man to death in his crazed state.

Surveying the damage around him, Lochie looked at Red. His old friend wiped the blood from his lip and looked at the four men. "You four were some of the best help I've ever had." He shook his head. "I'll go back to the house and cut you four your last checks. I expect you to be packed and off this station within the hour. Don't ever come back and don't look to me for a reference."

Bruce, the one who had tangled with Trev, wiped the blood off his own lip. "You're going to stick up for that poofter?"

Walking over, Red got right into Bruce's face. "No one had the right to do what you four did to that man. You're all bloody lucky I don't let Lochie loose on each and every one of you, or at the very least, turn you over to the law. Now get the hell out of my sight."

Turning to the other three hired workers in the room, Red put his hands on his hips. "Anyone else have a problem with gay men?" When the other workers shook their heads, Red nodded. "Sorry about this. Your workloads are going to double for the next week or two until I can find some replacements. Until I do, though, I'll split those four's pay with you all. If you're going to be doing their work, you might as well enjoy their pay." The three men seemed to think it sounded like a fair deal and shook Red's hand.

Lochie managed to smile at Red. He could see the betrayal Red felt at his men's actions. Maybe he and Red could continue to be friends after all. He hoped so. Red was a damn good mate to have at your back.

"Let's get Lochie back to the house. I'm sure he needs Jamey as much as Jamey needs him. And I've got four checks to write," Red said.

Chapter Nine

It was ten days before Lochie thought Jamey was well enough to travel the bumpy roads between Red's place and his. Luckily, Jacko had agreed to stop by Lochie's on his way home the day after the barbecue and pick up Blue.

Now pulling into Jacko's farm, Jamey looked around. "Wow. It looks so desolate." He took in the blowing dust and empty yard. The house looked like no one had lived in it for years. The paint was almost nonexistent and the screens on the verandah were ripped in several places.

Looking over at Jamey, Lochie put his hand on Jamey's thigh. "It's a sad story. Jacko's dad worked this property into the ground before he died. Jacko's tried for the last seven years to get it back up to where it once was, but with the drought..." Lochie shook his head. "He told me he thought he'd probably lose it this year to the bank."

Lochie stopped the ute in front of the house. "Shame really. Jacko's a damn good cockie. If anyone could have pulled this farm out of the hole, it would have been him."

Jamey looked around and spotted Blue racing toward them with a smiling Jacko close behind. "I never realized how lucky you were to have the river and the creeks."

"Damn lucky. Most of the homesteads around here are going bankrupt. Jacko and I have tried hauling water from the river to his crops, but it would take us every day all day to get enough water on this dry land of his. I'll be lucky if the creeks are flowing at all by planting. It doesn't look that way though. And the river is way down from where it needs to be to help the other cockies around here." Lochie squeezed Jamey's thigh one more time. "You stay put." Lochie smiled as Jamey stuck his tongue out at him. "Think you're well enough to use that yet?"

"That depends on whether I'm well enough to get out and stretch my legs a bit. We've been driving so long I've got ute butt." Jamey grinned at Lochie and batted his long black lashes. "Please?"

Shaking his head, Lochie opened his door. "You stay right there until I get Blue calmed down. The last thing we need is for him to jump up on you."

Jamey watched as Blue launched himself at Lochie as soon as he was out of the truck. "Blue! Down." Lochie pointed toward the ground and Blue lay down and rolled over.

Smiling, Lochie bent and rubbed Blue's belly. "No more jumping. You wouldn't want to hurt Jamey, would you?"

Jamey opened the truck door, and Lochie held Blue by the scruff of the neck. "Come on around. I'll lift him up so he can get his customary face licking out of the way," Lochie said.

"Hey," Jacko called as he walked up to the truck.

"Hi, Jacko. I've got to get a quick greeting from Blue and then it'll be safe for Lochie to let him down." Jamey walked up to Blue and bent his face toward the dog. As predicted, Lochie struggled to hold on to the excited dog.

"Hey there, boy. Did you miss us?"

When Blue finally calmed down, Lochie set him back on the ground. "Sit." Blue immediately sat on his haunches and looked at Lochie. "Good boy." Lochie turned toward Jacko and embraced him in a hug. "How've you been? I hope Blue didn't give you any trouble."

"Hell no, he didn't give me any bloody trouble." Jacko patted Lochie's back and released him. "Since Diesel died, it's been kind of lonely around here without a dog. Hate to get a new one though, when I don't know yet how long I'll be staying."

Jamey could see the impact of those words on both men. He didn't even think about it, just walked over and gently gave Jacko a hug. "You'll be okay. We'll figure something out."

Jacko hugged him back, mindful of Jamey's still-sore ribs. "No worries." He released Jamey and looked at Lochie. "Want some tucker?"

"Thanks, but no. I need to get Jamey home. Thank you for taking care of Blue, and if you need anything, call me." Lochie put his hand on Jacko's shoulder. "I mean that. Anything."

Jamey watched as Jacko closed his eyes and swallowed. "Thank you," Jacko said softly.

Lochie turned to Jamey. "You ready for the last leg?" Jamey nodded and walked around to the passenger side of the ute as Lochie opened the back door for Blue. The dog jumped in and immediately came up behind him and put his head on Jamey's shoulder.

Lochie said his final goodbyes to Jacko and got in. He turned to Jamey and smiled. "I think you have a friend for life."

"You mean Blue?" Jamey asked.

"Nope, I mean Jacko. He told me if I didn't take care of you he'd kick my arse." Lochie reached over and ran his palm down the side of Jamey's face. "I can't wait to get you back home."

Jamey closed his eyes and leaned into Lochie's touch. "Just follow Jacko's instructions and you should be fine."

* * * * *

By the end of the following week, Jamey was about to go nuts. It didn't seem to matter how much he told Lochie he felt fine, the man refused to make love to him. Now as Jamey looked at the lightly yellowed bruises on his face, he grinned. "Let's see Lochie ignore me now."

He turned from the mirror and went back into the kitchen. Carrying the plate of steaks, Jamey walked out to check the grill. As he arranged the steaks next to the veggies, he heard the front screen door slam shut and Lochie call out. "I'm going to grab a quick shower before dinner."

"Okay. Steaks are on the grill and will be done in a couple of minutes." Jamey smiled to himself as he wiped his hands on his white chef's apron and went back into the kitchen. He pulled the salad out of the fridge and tossed it with some dressing. After fussing with the table setting, Jamey went back out to the verandah and took the steaks and vegetables off the grill.

The relationship between him and Lochie had grown dramatically since their return from Red's. Lochie fussed over him constantly, and although Jamey ate it up, it was time they got back to being partners. He wanted to pull his weight around the farm, to show Lochie he could handle whatever came their way.

By the time Lochie walked into the kitchen, the table was set and Jamey stood behind it. Jamey smiled, "Go ahead and have a seat. Can I get you a beer?"

Lochie looked at him funny and sat down at the table. "Yeah, sounds good."

Jamey nodded and turned around to get it. He opened the fridge and bent over at the waist.

"What the bloody hell."

Wearing nothing but the apron, Jamey smiled as he heard Lochie's chair scrape against the kitchen floor and then fall backward. A second later, warm, calloused hands were rubbing his naked ass. "See something you're interested in?" Jamey gave his butt a little wiggle as he stood and shut the door.

Without a word, Lochie pushed Jamey against the fridge and slid one hand around Jamey's naked hips to his erect cock. He licked and nipped Jamey's neck as he stroked Jamey's cock while moving the butt plug Jamey had inserted earlier in and out. "You little tease. Is this your way of telling me you're horny?" Lochie pressed his thumb against the piercing on the head of Jamey's shaft.

Leaning his head back on Lochie's shoulder, Jamey thrust into his hand. "Been telling you that. Figured this was the only way to get you as horny as I've been."

Grinding his hardened cock against Jamey's side, Lochie bit his neck. "You have no idea how hard it's been. I've been stroking off three times a day."

"Yeah, well, I'm up to it now." Jamey reached around behind him and grabbed Lochie's ass.

"You sure are." Lochie released Jamey's cock and ran his hand down to stroke the soft hairless skin of Jamey's groin. "I know you haven't been to Sydney, so what did you do, shave?"

"Uhh-huh." And he hoped to never do it again. Waxing may sting a bit, but shaving made his balls itch for days. Jamey thrust into Lochie's hand again. "Need you in me."

Spinning Jamey around, Lochie positioned him over the table after shoving the plates aside. He ran his hand up the crack of Jamey's ass and jostled the plug while unfastening his pants with the other hand. Pushing his moleskins down, Lochie withdrew the butt plug and tossed it toward the sink. He positioned his cock at Jamey's entrance. "Sure you're ready for this? It'll kill me if I hurt you."

Ready or not, Jamey needed this as much as Lochie did. Jamey thrust back and impaled himself on Lochie's cock, the lube left over from the plug enough to grease his lover's way.

"Oh fuck. Feels so good."

"You're bloody right it does." Lochie gripped Jamey's hips as he moved his cock in and out of Jamey's hole. "God, yes." Picking up his pace, Lochie held Jamey's hips steady as he pounded into him. "You okay?" Lochie asked between grunts.

"Great. Never better." Jamey smiled at Lochie over his shoulder. Lochie bit Jamey's shoulder blade as Jamey reached down and began stroking his cock to Lochie's rhythm. "Close."

With a few more grunts and moans, Lochie filled Jamey with his heat. Jamey came on a sigh to the ceiling. Jamey collapsed onto the table and Lochie started to follow him down, but stopped and instead reached for a chair. Lochie sat down, pulling Jamey onto his lap. Jamey sat across Lochie's thighs, his arms around Lochie's neck. "Love you."

"I love you too. More and more each day. It seems impossible, but it's true. I never fully comprehended how empty I was until you came to fill me." Smoothing his hands down the front of the white chef's apron, Lochie chuckled. "I never knew an apron could be so damn sexy." He flipped the apron up and ran his hand over the smooth skin of Jamey's groin. "And I do love having this smooth skin back to pet and lick."

Jamey squirmed a bit and looked at Lochie. "Well, this skin is going to be itching in about three days."

Lochie held up his hand and wiggled his fingers. "Luckily you have the perfect scratching post."

Chapter Ten

"Okay. Bye, Dad." Jamey hung up the phone as Lochie walked into the kitchen. "Hey."

Lochie stopped in his tracks and narrowed his eyes. *Dad? Shit.* "I know that voice. What's wrong?"

Jumping off the kitchen counter, Jamey walked right into Lochie's embrace and buried his face in Lochie's neck. "Just talked to my dad."

Running his hands up and down Jamey's back, Lochie kissed the top of his head. "And? Did you tell him Australia was your home now?" Lochie held his breath waiting for Jamey's answer. It had been four months since Jamey came into his life and Lochie knew it was time for Jamey to make a final decision.

"I told him. Or tried to at least."

Jamey sniffled and it was then that Lochie realized his lover was crying. He walked Jamey backward a few steps and sat in a kitchen chair, pulling Jamey into his lap. Lochie lifted the younger man's chin and looked into the watery blue depths. "Talk to me."

"He doesn't understand. He doesn't realize how much I love you or this farm. I tried to tell him. Believe me, I tried." Jamey reached over to the table and pulled a napkin out of the holder. He wiped his eyes and blew his nose. "I have to go back to Kansas City. There's too much he's threatening to take away if I don't. I can make him understand, though. I know I can, if I see him face-to-face. I need to get the rest of my things anyway and have them shipped here."

Was Jamey saying what he thought he was? Lochie's heart jumped and stalled. "Wait. Hang on a sec. Are you telling me if you can't convince your dad that this is

where you belong, you'll stay in the US?" The thought was unimaginable. Was he that easily thrown aside?

"No. I don't want to be anywhere but here with you. I just need to do this right and that means leaving for a little while. A week, maybe two, but then I'll be back." Jamey leaned against Lochie's chest. "I love you. I just hope you love me enough, because if this doesn't go well, you could be the only family I have left."

A rush of warmth swept through him. Closing his eyes, Lochie wrapped Jamey tighter in his arms. "I love you enough for three lifetimes." Lochie lifted Jamey's chin again and kissed his lips with a featherlight touch. "You're mine. Always and forever mine." Lochie kissed him again, this time exerting more pressure on Jamey's lips. Jamey parted for him and Lochie delved inside Jamey's sweet, wet heat.

Breaking the kiss, Lochie kissed Jamey's nose. "Do you want me to go with you?"

"Yes, but no. I want you there, but it won't make things any easier and it's almost planting season. You need to be here to make sure our fields get planted." Jamey smoothed his hands down Lochie's pecs. "Thank you for the offer."

Picking Jamey up in his arms, Lochie started walking toward the bedroom. "If you're going to leave me for a while, I need to make good use of the time left."

* * * * *

A week later, Jamey and Lochie checked into a hotel in Sydney. "I'm glad we did this," Lochie said, putting Jamey's suitcase and his duffel on the hotel bed. "I haven't been to Sydney since I left over ten years ago." Lochie opened the curtains and looked out the window at the view.

Turning to Jamey, he smiled. "You've got me for the next day and a half as your official tour guide. Tell me what you want to see and do."

Jamey walked up behind Lochie and wrapped his arms around him. Resting his head on Lochie's shoulder, Jamey looked at the city. "I've already been to the city as a tourist. I want to enjoy the city as a lover this time. I wanna go out to dinner and then

dancing with the man I love. I know we'll never be able to do that in Mandarra, but nothing's stopping us here. I also want to get my nipples pierced and I need to drop off my visa paperwork."

Turning around, Lochie took Jamey into his arms. "What about a wax?"

Laughing, Jamey nipped Lochie's neck. "I'll wait until I get to Kansas City for that. I'm usually pretty sore for a couple of days afterward and I've got better things to do than to be sore while I'm with you." Jamey ran his fingertip over Lochie's nipple. "What about you? You want a pretty gold or silver hoop?"

"Not really my style. I'll just enjoy yours." Lochie looked over at the clock beside the bed. "Let's get cleaned up and go find you a place to get those pretty nipples decorated before dinner."

* * * * *

"I'll have the fillet well done, please, with a potato and a salad." Jamey closed his menu and handed it to the waiter. He caught Lochie looking at his chest and blushed as he rubbed his foot against Lochie's leg. "See something you like?"

Lochie licked his lips. "I see a lot of somethings I like." Lochie boldly reached across the table and lightly touched one of the silver hoops through Jamey's white button-up shirt. "Damn, those are sexy. Are they sore?"

"Hell, yeah, they're sore," Jamey said, running his foot farther up Lochie's leg. Jamey licked his lips. "We'll have to be careful when I'm pressed against your chest dancing later. But by the time I get back from the States, you'll be able to bite and torture them all you want."

Moaning, Lochie looked around to make sure no one was looking and reached down to rub his rampant cock. "You'd better stop putting images in my head or we'll never make it to the club. Which reminds me. How do you know where all the gay clubs are in Sydney?"

Shrugging his shoulders, Jamey looked down at his half-full glass of wine. "I was in Sydney for almost a month. Wandered all around The Cross, checked out the clubs and decided which ones I liked." *Wishing I had someone like you to share them with.*

Lochie leaned forward on the table. "Are you telling me you might run into someone you slept with while you stayed in the city?"

Jamey looked up at Lochie and smiled. "No chance of that. You're the only Australian man I've slept with." Jamey put his hand on Lochie's forearm. "No need to get jealous. I didn't do anything but dance and talk to people in the clubs. Got my ass pinched a time or two, but that's it." It wasn't that sex hadn't been offered plenty of times, but before he'd met Lochie, his trip wasn't about hooking up.

"You'd better hope to hell no one but me pinches your bum tonight or I might have to just kick someone else's arse." Lochie sat back as the waiter brought their meals. When he left, Lochie winked at Jamey. "Now be good and eat your dinner before I explode in my pants."

Jamey loved Lochie's possessive streak. He'd never had anyone love him enough to get jealous. He knew most men hated lovers like that, but Jamey found himself loving it.

Dinner passed with talk of the farm and what improvements Lochie would like to eventually make. Jamey finished first and wiped his mouth. He leaned back in his chair and rubbed his hard stomach. "I've been wondering. Do you think Jacko would accept money from me?"

Lochie wiped his mouth and pushed his plate back before leaning on the table. "To keep him out of bankruptcy, you mean?" At Jamey's nod, Lochie thought about it for a minute before finally shaking his head. "I think Jacko would refuse your money. It would be like pissing down a dry hole. It may take care of his immediate problem, but that property just isn't viable any longer. We've gone too bloody long without rain."

Was there something going on between Jacko and Jamey he didn't know about? Narrowing his eyes at Jamey, Lochie asked what was on his mind. "Where would you get the money to bail him out anyway? And why Jacko?"

Playing with his spoon on the tablecloth, Jamey shrugged. "That's a big part of why I need to go home. When Granddad passed away, he left me everything. I'm a fairly good catch, it turns out. And I was going to help Jacko because I could and because I like him."

Relieved, Lochie ran his fingers through his hair. "I'll be honest. I'm glad I didn't know about the money before. I mean, I'd love you either way, but at least you know I love you for you. As far as Jacko goes, I like him too. He's always been the best mate a bloke could ask for."

He briefly let his mind wander to life with Jacko when they were younger. They'd been almost as inseparable as two mates could be. Even though Jacko lived miles away, they always seemed to manage to meet up somewhere. It was something he'd thought of a lot since returning from Sydney years earlier. Why when they were young had they managed to find a way, and now that they could actually drive, they saw very little of each other?

"Will you tell me if you find out anything I could do for him?"

"Sure." Lochie put cash on the table for their meal. He stood and held his hand out to Jamey. "Ready to go dancing with me?" Lochie asked, shoving thoughts of Jacko from his mind.

* * * * *

Lochie let Jamey pick the club he wanted to go to. Quite frankly, he was a little worried about going to any of the places he used to frequent when he lived in Sydney. Not that many of them were still in business, but Lochie didn't want to run into anyone he knew in his past life.

Walking into the Golden Peacock, Lochie could feel the music beating in his chest. He glanced around the bar as he led Jamey to a quiet table in the back. This was a night to enjoy Jamey, not be seen by every available man in the place. As soon as they sat down, a twink of a waiter came sashaying over to take their drink order.

"Hey, sweet thing. I haven't seen you in months. Where've you been hiding yourself?"

Lochie felt his jaws tighten as the waiter flirted with Jamie.

Jamey smiled. "Hi, Brio. I've been in the bush finding the love of my life." Jamey turned to Lochie. "Lochie, this is Brio, Brio, I'd like to introduce Lochie."

Lochie's jaw relaxed as a rush of warmth spread over him. Jamey's declaration to the near-stranger felt damn good.

Brio looked Lochie up and down and smiled. "Bloody hell. Maybe I need to move to the bush."

"Naw. No clubs like this in the bush. And you'd be lost without your fancy coffees." Jamey rubbed Lochie's thigh. "Besides, there's only one Lochie and he's all mine."

After Lochie ordered a couple of beers, he stood and pulled Jamey to his feet. "Dance with me." He took Jamey's hand and led him to the small dance floor. Despite the fast music, he pulled Jamey into his arms. "I'm not sure I like the way blokes are looking at you." Lochie gestured toward the bar. "Especially that waiter."

Jamey snuggled closer and kissed Lochie's neck. "He's not my type and he knows it."

Pulling back enough to look into Jamey's eyes, Lochie grinned. "Oh yeah. Just what is your type?"

Moving to the side just enough, Jamey rubbed his erection against Lochie's thigh. "I like a tall, well-muscled, hard-working man from the bush. But not just any man. My

man needs to have light brown hair kissed by the sun with soulful brown eyes." Jamey rubbed against Lochie a little harder. "You know a man like that?"

Lochie moved his thigh in between Jamey's legs and let the younger man ride him as they danced. "I'm just glad you didn't say a man with black hair and jade green eyes." *Shit. Where did that come from?*

Jamey's eyes opened wide. "Well, that certainly sounds like someone we both know. How long have you had this secret crush on Jacko?" Jamey started to pull away a bit, but Lochie wasn't having it.

"A crush isn't the same as a relationship. I'd have to be dead not to notice Jacko's looks. But it's you I love. Besides, I've seen you look him over a time or two."

Blushing, Jamey buried his face in Lochie's chest. "Yeah, well, like you said, a man would have to be dead not to notice Jacko and the package he's trying to hide with those baggy pants he wears."

The picture of a much younger, naked Jacko stepping out of the creek filled his mind. Lochie started laughing. "Oh. Notice that, did you? It used to drive me crazy when we were younger and he always wanted to go skinny-dipping. I bloody nearly drowned a time or two waiting for my erection to go down before I could get out of the water." Lochie licked up the side of Jamey's face. "And you're right. That package he's hiding is a work of art."

Noticing that Jamey was rubbing himself harder on his thigh, Lochie winked down at him. "That getting you hot, babe? Talking about Jacko?"

"Just talking about cocks and nude swimming and picturing it all in my mind is getting me hot. Can't help it. And I'm about to shoot in my jeans."

Lochie was struck mute for a moment, surprised Jamey's words didn't cause his jealous streak to rise up. Lochie stopped dancing and led Jamey back to the table. "Can't bloody well have that now, can we?" He reached into his back pocket and withdrew his ever-present bandana. With a bottle of beer in one hand, Lochie unfastened Jamey's jeans and casually pulled the throbbing erection into his hand. He wrapped the

bandana over the end of Jamey's cock as he started stroking, only stopping long enough to flick the silver hoop in the end of Jamey's cock with his thumb.

Leaning over to whisper in Jamey's ear, Lochie nibbled the lobe. "Come for me."

That's all it took for Jamey's stomach muscles to go tight as he thrust into Lochie's hand, throwing his head back on a groan. The bandana was soon soaked with Jamey's cum. When Jamey was finished, Lochie looked him in the eyes and brought the rag to his own face. He closed his eyes as he inhaled the scent of his lover's seed.

Jamey groaned again as he refastened his jeans. "Ready to get out of here, boss. I'm looking forward to a long night spent in your arms and your bed."

Stuffing the rag in his front trouser pocket, Lochie threw a couple bills on the table. "Come on. Let's go say goodbye properly."

Chapter Eleven

It had been a long week, and with a broken water pump on the ute, it looked like it was going to be even longer. Lochie walked into the kitchen and picked up the phone to call Jacko.

"G'day." Lochie reached over and took a brew out of the fridge.

"G'day, Lochie. How's it going without Jamey around?"

"Bloody hell, don't remind me. My days are long and my nights are longer." Lochie pulled out a chair and sat down.

"Yeah, well, at least he's coming back."

"Hopefully not more than a week to go. Listen, I need a favor. The bloody water pump is out on the ute. Could I get you to take me to town? I'll buy you a slap-up feed at the pub."

"No worries. I'll be 'round in an hour."

Lochie said goodbye to Jacko and hung up. Something didn't sound right with his old mate. He hoped he'd get Jacko to talk to him on the way. Besides, talking to Jacko about his problems helped him forget about his own. The call he'd received from Jamey the previous day was not good. Jamey was having trouble with his father. His mother apparently had washed her hands of him, but his father was still holding out for Jamey to join his practice. Seems he'd been dreaming of adding the "and Son" after his name on the door.

Jamey assured Lochie that one way or another he'd be back in time for the planting. Although Jamey's words helped, Lochie knew he wouldn't be completely convinced until Jamey was back in Australia where he belonged. He ran his hands through his hair. He decided to go ahead and pull the old water pump out of the ute while he waited for Jacko.

Forty-five minutes later, a ute very similar to his own pulled up beside him. Blue came running and practically jumped through Jacko's open window. "Hey, Blue. You miss me?" Jacko rubbed Blue's ears until he calmed down enough for Jacko to push him away from the door. "Ready?"

"Give me five minutes to wash my hands and put on a clean shirt." Lochie ran inside while Jacko waited.

Ten minutes later they were on their way to Mandarra. "Care to tell me what's got you down? Is it the property?"

Jacko looked over at Lochie and back out the windscreen. "Won't have a home come the end of the month."

Lochie could see the emotion in the play of Jacko's jaw muscles as he ground his teeth. Taking a chance, Lochie reached over and put his hand on Jacko's shoulder. "You'll always have a home. It may not be where it's always been, but your home is with the people who care. Come and live with Jamey and me. We've already talked about it."

Blinking several times to dispel the tears, Jacko cleared his throat. "Don't like handouts, but I don't have much choice at this point."

"It's not a handout. I plan on making you work your arse off right beside Jamey and me." Lochie released his shoulder and turned back toward the front. Nothing else was said as Jacko got used to the idea of moving in with him and Jamey.

Into their cups, Lochie and Jacko sang along with the jukebox. They were loud and obnoxious. Jacko finished his lager. "You ready?"

Lochie stood and swayed just a little. Jacko was in much better shape, which was good, because Lochie was in no condition to drive. He managed to get Lochie into the ute and started down the road.

"So you going to live with us?"

Jacko looked over at Lochie and gripped the steering wheel a little tighter. "Don't know if that's a good idea, mate."

"Why the bloody hell not? It's not like we don't have the room or the work. It'd be beaut to have an extra pair of hands at planting and harvest time." Lochie stretched his legs out and locked his hands in his lap. Within minutes he was sound asleep.

Jacko glanced over at the man he'd loved for most of his life. To make matters worse, he was close to falling for Jamey too. He'd have to give Lochie's offer some bloody serious thought. At this point, he didn't see where he had any choice. The bank wanted him out and he had nowhere else to go. He couldn't see himself asking Red, Chooka or Trev. No, Lochie had always been his best mate and if he was going to live and work with any of them, it would be Lochie.

He just wasn't sure how he would handle seeing Lochie and Jamey together and happy while he watched from the outside.

* * * * *

As Lochie was climbing the verandah steps a couple of days later he heard the phone ringing. He ran inside, nearly tearing the screen door off its hinges. Picking up the phone, he crossed his fingers. "McBride."

"Hey, boss."

Lochie smiled and slumped into a chair. "I'm so glad you called. I tried your mobile phone, but couldn't get you to answer."

"I've been in meetings with Dad and Granddad's attorney. What's going on? Did something happen?"

"Yes and no." Lochie rubbed the unexpected moisture in his eyes with his fingers. He'd not slept well since Jamey had left and it had been taking its toll. He normally wasn't an outwardly emotional man, but hearing Jamey's voice had him tearing up like a damn baby. "I miss you. I wanted to talk and tell you how much I love you."

"I love you too. And I'll be back soon. Another couple of days."

It was always another couple of days. When would it be tomorrow, or better yet, today?

"Jacko lost his home. I invited him to live here with us. I hope that's all right." Lochie closed his eyes and tried to picture Jamey. He sounded as tired as he was.

"Of course it's all right. Remember what I said before I left? I was right. After this visit, I'm going to need all the family I can get."

"Your dad didn't come around, did he?" Lochie reached over and grabbed a napkin to dab at his eyes and nose.

"Naw. I'm just finishing up stuff with Granddad's attorney. Trying to get my money transferred to a bank in Sydney, then I'll have some of it transferred to Mandarra. But as soon as the financial stuff is cleared up, I'll be back. I shipped some of my things last week. I'll bring a couple of suitcases with me."

That sounded a little more promising. "Just hurry. I don't like it here anymore without you."

"Love you too. I'll see ya soon."

* * * * *

Jamey sang at the top of his lungs the entire drive from Sydney in his brand-new truck. He hadn't called Lochie because he couldn't wait to see the look on his face when he walked through the door. He should hit it just about right and be back to the house at suppertime, or teatime as he was learning to call it.

Slowing down when he pulled into the farm yard, Jamey hoped Blue wouldn't give him away. He stopped the truck and closed the door just as a barking Blue came around the corner of the house and launched himself into Jamey's open arms. "Hey, boy. You miss me?"

Blue fell to his back and presented Jamey with his stomach. Jamey took a few minutes to give Blue his belly scratches. "Okay, that's enough for now. You go lie

down.” Jamey watched as Blue went up on the verandah and flopped over onto his side in the shade.

Not bothering with his luggage, Jamey had one thing on his mind. He adjusted his persistent hard-on and quietly opened the screen door. He walked into the quiet house and went through to the kitchen, trying like hell to get his eyes adjusted to the much darker interior of the house. A nice ass greeted him as he walked through the kitchen entry. Bent over digging something out of the fridge, the ass in question looked damn good to Jamey. Sneaking up behind him, Jamey ran both hands over the firm twin globes. “Damn, did I miss this.”

“Uh...Jamey? As good as that feels, I think you have the wrong arse.”

Jamey jumped back like he’d been burned. Jacko stood and turned around with a couple of steaks in his hand. “Damn, I’m sorry. I-I thought...” *I thought that was one of the nicest-feeling butts I’d ever had the pleasure to hold.*

“I know what you thought and don’t worry about it. Lochie’s out in the west paddock working on the tractor. I told him I’d come on in and get tea started.”

Embarrassed by not only his inappropriate behavior, but his wayward thoughts, a red-faced Jamey turned around and walked out of the kitchen. It wouldn’t do for Jacko to see his arousal. “I’ll just go find him.”

Jamey jumped into his new truck and headed for the west field. Sure enough, he spotted Lochie scratching his head, looking at the tractor engine. Jamey decided to play it safe and honked the horn. The sight of Lochie’s face when he turned around was worth the long drive from Sydney. The verdict was still out on making an idiot out of himself with Jacko though.

Turning off the engine, Jamey jumped out of the truck and started running toward Lochie. It took only seconds for the two of them to meet in the middle of the field.

Jamey ran straight into Lochie’s arms as their mouths slammed together. There was no finesse to the kiss. Tongues stroked against each other as Lochie devoured Jamey’s mouth. They toppled over into the freshly turned soil as clothes began ripping under

the intense mutual need to be naked. Rubbing their naked bodies together, Jamey started laughing.

“Be careful, boss, or we’ll start a fire.”

Lochie’s answer was a bite to the neck. “Christ, I missed you.” Lochie buried his fingers in Jamey’s curls as his lover ground his cock against him. “Not going to last this time. Need you too much.”

Jamey threw his head back as he thrust up into Lochie. The mutual spray of heat between them signaled their climaxes as Lochie shouted Jamey’s name to the heavens. He collapsed to the side and pulled Jamey tighter into his arms. “How? Where did you come from and why didn’t you call to tell me you were coming?”

Running his palm down the side of Lochie’s face to his neck and down his chest, Jamey looked back to the road. “I decided to surprise you. I bought us a new truck. I figured with me being here permanently we’d need two vehicles.”

Lochie looked at the new truck. “You know it’s not going to stay that clean, don’t you? We don’t get much chance to wash cars out here.”

“Yeah, well, let me enjoy it while I can, will ya?” Jamey laid his head on Lochie’s shoulder. “It feels good to be home.”

Lochie stilled, “This old property didn’t feel like home without you here.”

Jamey leaned up on his elbow and kissed Lochie. “I didn’t call this farm home. I called your arms home. Maybe we’re each other’s home.”

“Amen.”

About the Author

I've been a reading fanatic for years and finally at the age of 40 decided to try my hand at writing. I've always loved romance novels that are just a little bit naughty so naturally my books tend to go just a little further. It's my fantasy world after all.

When I'm not being a mother to a five-year-old and a six-year-old, you can usually find me in my deep leather chair with either a book in my hand or my laptop.

Carol welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her author bio page at www.ellorascave.com.

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