



Lust Bites
GAY BEST FRIEND
Kim Dare

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Gay Best Friend

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

G-A-Y

GAY BEST FRIEND

Kim Dare

Dedication

To all those subs who know submission isn't a weakness —
and who aren't afraid to make sure everyone else know it too!

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Coke: THE COCA-COLA COMPANY CORPORATION

Chapter One

“So what do you do, wash each other’s hair, paint each other’s nails and stuff?”

Carlton Griffiths considered the question very carefully from all possible angles. It still didn’t make the damndest bit of sense. He glanced briefly across the table at his new co-worker, just in case that might inspire some blinding flash of understanding. It didn’t. Carlton turned his attention back to the match playing on the big screen behind the other man’s shoulder. “What are you on about now?”

“Owens—he’s your ‘gay best friend’, isn’t he? Isn’t that the kind of thing you do together?” Gary chipped in, from his right.

“Bryce?” Carlton frowned as he tossed back the dregs of his pint. “He’s fine. Just leave him be.”

“Sticking up for your boyfriend?”

Carlton leaned to the side in a vain attempt to see the screen past Matthew’s head. He’d never realised the man had such an annoyingly huge skull.

“Well, if you’re not giving each other pretty little make-overs, what are you getting up to with each other?” Simon piped up from the seat next to Matthew.

Carlton put his glass back on the table and tore his eyes away from the screen. He looked at each of his new colleagues in turn. In hindsight, the fact that they’d all seemed far more interested in him than the screen ever since Bryce went up to the bar, should have probably given him a clue much sooner.

Part of him had already been aware that none of them had been thrilled when they found out Bryce was gay. Apparently, none of them had grown a brain since then.

“Fine,” he finally said, with a dramatic little sigh. “You’ve uncovered the truth at last—we’re actually madly in love with each other. Every time we can snatch a moment alone, we’re having wild sex in tons of interesting and varied positions. Now, for the love of all things gay, straight and undecided, will you please shut up so I can watch the damn match!”

Matthew spluttered as he tried to swallow and hyperventilate at the same time. "You what!"

Carlton sighed, for real now. "Sarcasm means nothing to you, does it?"

"Screw sarcasm! Straight guys don't bloody well say things like that."

Another look around the table confirmed that they were all staring at him with the same horrified expression.

"It's called being comfortable with your sexuality," he informed them.

While they continued to gawp at him, those same expressions still frozen onto their faces, Carlton did his best to ignore them all. It wasn't easy when Matthew was still sitting between him and the screen. The players kept kicking the ball into one side of his head. Most times it passed through and appeared on the other side as if there was nothing between his ears to stop it, but when it was intercepted somewhere behind his skull Carlton lost any real chance of following play.

"Sounds gay to me," Gary muttered, somewhere off to Carlton's right.

The ref blew the whistle for half time. Carlton slumped back in his seat. "Should have gone back to Bryce's place to watch the game like he said..." Bryce was going to be so bloody smug when he got back to the table with the next round and realised he barely knew the damn score.

"So you could be...comfortable with your sexuality together?" Simon asked.

Carlton rolled his eyes heavenward. This was why it was important to stay at least one drink ahead of the guys he worked with. They were bloody annoying when they were drunker than him. He looked forlornly at his empty pint glass.

"You need to pick a team," Gary announced, as if he'd just come to that conclusion, as if it wasn't bloody obvious that Carlton knew which team he was on already.

"I'm straight. Bryce's gay. We've be friends since before either of us were old enough to know what either word means."

He was straight. Bryce was gay. Carlton repeated the same thought over inside his head, just for good measure. Those were the facts of the matter, and that was the way they were going to stay, even if he did sometimes find himself wondering what would happen if—

"You ever kissed him?"

Carlton spun around to face Gary. "What?"

"Bryce—have you ever kissed him?" Matthew asked, in that slow careful tone of voice generally reserved for people who didn't speak the same language.

It seemed to be a randomly drunken question rather than a new found ability to pick confusing thoughts out of his head.

"Why the hell would I want to do that?" Carlton asked, doing his damndest to sound as if he'd never even thought about the possibility himself.

"If you're so comfortable with him then..."

Simon put his empty glass down on the table between them. "Sounds to me like you're just as uncomfortable around the only gay guy in the room as the rest of us—you just haven't got the balls to admit it."

"I'm not uncomfortable around him and—"

"Scared people will think you're gay?" Matthew cut in.

"I really don't care which way the world thinks I swing—"

"So, kiss him." Every man around the table fell silent with the words.

Carlton looked at one of them, then another, all the way around until he was back where he started. He saw the look that passed from one to the other. His uneasiness faded away, annoyance rushed to fill the gap. He saw the notes sticking out of Simon's shirt pocket and it morphed into anger.

It was far from the first time he'd seen him holding the money while the other two made some stupid bet. The only question now, was if it was Matthew or Gary who had money on him kissing Bryce, and which one had bet the other couldn't goad him into it.

He wondered if they'd been so quick to gamble if any of them knew how often he'd imaged his lips covering Bryce's, how often he'd wondered what it would feel to have a body as strong as his own rubbing against his as he buried his fingers in his friends short blond hair, or to push the other man against the wall and...

Carlton shoved the thoughts out of his head, as fast as ever. Bryce having to put up with the honestly homophobic bigots was bad enough, but right then the men around the table seemed even more pathetic. They didn't even have some bastardised belief system to hide behind. It was just a game to them. Just a silly little bet.

Looking up, Carlton saw Bryce making his way back to the table, a pint of beer in each hand. As he wove his way through the crowd, Carlton got to his feet, not entirely sure what he was going to do, only knowing he had to do something.

Bryce shouldn't have to come back to the table and put up with that sort of stupidity. And Carlton was just as sure he shouldn't have to put up with stupid, confusing thoughts rushing through his own head either.

With most of his attention focused on any elbows and feet that might cause him to spill the drinks, Bryce didn't seem to notice Carlton closing the gap between them.

One moment, Carlton realised there was a very simple way of solving both their problems. A second later, he met his friend in the middle of the crowd. Reaching out, he caught one of Bryce's arms in each of his hands.

"Careful—!"

The word disappeared as Carlton covered Bryce's lips with his own. A brief little touch of mouths, that lasted just long enough that there couldn't be any doubts that he had indeed kissed his gay best friend, and he pulled back.

There could be no excuse for taking anything more than that from his friend, but Carlton still needed every scrap of his self control to make himself lift his head and break the kiss.

For a second, Bryce remained frozen in place, a strange expression in the sharp blue eyes. Carlton tried to take the pints from him, sure the other guys would think it hilarious if he'd managed to shock his friend into dropping them.

Bryce moved the glasses, out of his reach. "You've had enough."

Not sure what to say to the other man right then, Carlton followed him silently back to the table. The other three men were all slack jawed. Carlton reached across and took the notes out of Simon's shirt pocket.

Four twenty pound notes. He held two of them to Bryce and shoved the other two into his own pocket, trusting his friend to fill in the blanks surrounding the situation on his own.

"Hey...!" Matthew tried to snatch them and failed.

Bryce had never been slow on the uptake, and he didn't let Carlton down then.

"Eighty just to watch two guys kiss," Bryce mused, as he calmly pocketed his share of the notes. "You know, there are websites you can go to—most of them will probably let you

watch that much for free. Come to that, there are men in a different part of town who would be very happy to rock your world for the same fee, if you ever get the courage to come out of the closet properly."

"We didn't...we're not...we..." Matthew spluttered.

"You're not gay, you just like to watch a little guy-on-guy action now and again," Bryce filled in, his tone dropping all its usual harsh sarcasm to become all helpfulness.

"No!"

"Don't worry about it," Bryce soothed. "You just dabble in gay porn for variety, right? I understand."

Carlton did his best to hold back his laughter, desperate not to miss seeing every detail of the other men's complete and absolute panic in the face of Bryce on a roll.

"I'm not gay!"

Bryce's lips twitched. "I believe you."

"I'm not gay!" Matthew repeated.

"Neither am I," Gary added.

"No one's arguing with you," Bryce pointed out.

Carlton couldn't keep back a chuckle.

"It's not funny," Simon said as he turned to him.

"Bloody hysterical if you ask me."

"You're the one who kissed him!"

"Comfortable, remember?"

Simon and Gary did reasonable impersonations of carp. Matthew squirmed as if someone put itching powder in his boxers. Bryce calmly took a swig of his drink. It was like watching a ring master choreographing a circus full of clowns.

They tried to play at Bryce's level of sarcasm and twisty little word games for a full twenty minutes before finally giving up and retreated to the pool tables on the far side of the building.

Carlton tried to catch his breath. His ribs hurt from trying not to laugh. It was almost enough to take his mind off the scroll of panicked thoughts that he was just about keeping at bay.

Bryce raised an eyebrow at him.

"I'll admit my taste in friends might have dipped since I started the new job," Carlton allowed.

"Your taste in friends has been steadily declining since you were three years old," Bryce told him.

"They had a bet on if I'm comfortable enough with you being gay to kiss you. I figured the easiest way to shut them up was just to get it over with," Carlton said.

"And they say romance is dead..."

Carlton hesitated, wondering if he'd made things incredibly worse for the other man rather than just a little bit better. He obviously hadn't succeeded in making his new friends any more comfortable around Bryce than they had been before. He hadn't succeeded in sating his own curiosity either.

Bryce took another swig of his drink. "You always did struggle with logic after the fourth pint."

"The choice came down to would I rather them think I was gay or homophobic. I made my choice." Carlton took a deep draft of his beer, feeling suddenly more than a little hot under the collar.

Bryce smiled slightly.

Carlton turned his attention away from him and stared at the match for a little while before glancing back to his friend. "You're not freaked, right?"

"Yeah, completely."

Carlton hesitated. "You are?"

"I find it very distressing when I've no idea which players I should be swearing at—it's very disconcerting when you don't know who to curse."

Carlton relaxed back in his seat as he realised all his friend's attention was on the big screen. It only took Bryce two or three minutes to work out who deserved horrible, but morbidly fascinating things done to them. He was bloody inventive when pissed off with someone's inability to tackle or pass accurately. Carlton couldn't help but feel sorry for any man who became his boyfriend—Bryce probably gave him hell whenever he screwed up.

It was probably worth putting up with the temper for the kissing though...

Carlton froze with his glass half way up to his lips.

A hand waving in his face a second later made him throw himself back against the cushioned back of the chair.

Bryce was looking at him as if he'd suddenly grown several extra heads and a dozen or so extra arms for good measure. "You spaced out."

Carlton nodded. Then he shook his head. He held his head still for a little while and tried to work out which was the right gesture. In the end he gave up. "Just had a strange thought, that's all." The moment the words left his mouth, he wished he could claw them back. But all he could do was pray that Bryce wouldn't ask what he'd been thinking about.

Bryce counted up the empties on the table in front of him. "If it involves a sign post, it's not half as funny as you think it'll be."

"What?"

"Trust me, as someone who holds his drink a lot better than you do—you always get strange ideas about hilarious things to do with sign posts when you're sloshed. They're never actually that funny."

Carlton smiled. "No sign posts, promise."

"Good."

Nothing had changed. It took a few minutes for that fact to sink properly into Carlton's mind. Everything was fine. He was still him. Bryce was still Bryce. Nothing had changed. Shifting around, he relaxed back against the corner curve of the seat.

When he looked back to his friend a few minutes later, Bryce was staring across at him, a slightly strange expression in his eyes. Before Carlton could place the look, Bryce got to his feet. "I should probably get going."

Carlton nodded as he swirled the remainder of his drink in the bottom of his glass.

"You need to share a cab?"

Carlton shook his head. "I'm going to hang around here for a little while."

Bryce nodded. He lifted a hand in farewell as he pulled his jacket on.

"Back here for the Scotland, England game tomorrow?" Carlton checked.

"Yeah, but you talk all the way through it again and I'm disowning you 'til the end of the season. Okay?"

Carlton watched him weave his way out of the pub. The crowds were thinning out a bit now that the match was over. Pulling himself out of his seat, he paced around the room a little, lurking around the darts board and the pool table for a while.

He absentmindedly ran his eyes over the other men in the pub, just in case. Not one flicker of attraction. Not even a hint of curiosity – not even towards the guys he was pretty sure a gay man should think were hot as hell.

He closed his eyes for a second. Bryce's face popped up on the inside of his eyelids and flicked switches no other man seemed to realise even existed. Carlton sighed. That was just bloody stupid.

Restless, not quite sure what to do with himself, found himself wandering out into the street and in the general direction of the taxi rank, only to change his mind and stop off for another pint in the next pub he passed.

Back out in the street a few minutes later, he turned a corner. Another pub sign called. About to step inside, he hesitated.

The name above the door was familiar from somewhere, but he was pretty sure he hadn't been in there before. As he stared up at the swinging sign, two guys came out, arm in arm. As one of them reached a car parked a little way down the road, they kissed good night. One of them got in the car. The other turned and retraced his steps to the pub. As he caught sight of Carlton, he stopped short. "Problem?"

Carlton shook his head.

The guy still seemed to be waiting for him to say something. "I'm not homophobic," he offered.

The guy looked him up and down as if debating whether or not he was going to be trouble. "That's good," he said eventually.

"I kissed Bryce," Carlton added, just to make everything completely clear.

The guy nodded.

"I'm not gay. I mean, it was kind of a bet. Not my bet. I mean, it was their bet and..."

The guy kept nodding and smiling. Carlton was pretty sure he would have also backed away very slowly if that wouldn't have taken him in the opposite direction to the security of the pub.

Carlton chuckled. "Bryce would laugh his arse off if he was here."

"That's...good?" the guy hazarded again.

"Bryce isn't good, he's bloody fantastic."

Carlton and his new friend both turned to see a new guy leaning in the doorway.

"Bryce Owens, right?" The guy paused to light a cigarette.

"You know Bryce?" Carlton asked.

"Yeah. Kind of psychotic, but still a bloody brilliant sub if you've got the balls to take him on."

"Sub?" Carlton repeated blankly.

The guy nodded and took a deep drag from the cigarette. "Yeah, in his own way."

"He..." Carlton's mind shut down. He wasn't entirely sure that was because he was sloshed up to his ear holes. He looked from one guy to the other. They were both watching him as if expecting him to do something strange and interesting at any moment. "He likes...being tied up and stuff?"

The smoker shrugged. "Tied up, screwed, whipped."

"So if a guy just grabbed him and kissed him without asking him, that would be his kind of thing?" Carlton asked.

The guy next to him shrugged, disclaiming all knowledge. "Don't know him that well." He waved a hand towards the spot where his lover's car had been parked. "We don't play with other guys."

Carlton turned back to the man in the doorway.

"Never seen him negotiate, but I know he likes to play rough," he said. "Probably the type to get off on skipping all the polite bull."

Carlton nodded, and tried to catch hold of the thoughts that swirled around and around inside him. "If someone did something that really pissed him off, he's not the kind of person who would just let them get away with it, is he?" He was pretty sure he already knew the answer. When the other guys both shook their heads, there didn't seem to be any doubts left surrounding the matter.

Carlton frowned at the world in general for a little while.

When he snapped out of it, both the other men were smiling, apparently more than a little amused by him.

"They serve beer in there?" he asked, nodding towards the pub.

"Yeah." The smoker smiled as he said it. There was something strange about the smile, but Carlton couldn't really work out what it was.

Pushing that aside, Carlton walked into the pub, the other two men quickly following along behind him.

"Friend of Bryce's," they informed the bartender as they found seats along the bar.

"You know Bryce too?" Carlton asked. He always introduced his new friends to Bryce. It didn't seem at all fair the Bryce hadn't done the same in return. He held out a hand to the bartender. "Carlton."

They shook hands. The other guys shook hands with him and introduced themselves too.

He was repeating the names silently over inside his head in the vague hope that they would stick in spite of the beer when one of them nudged him in the ribs. "Shows starting."

"There's a show?"

The guy nodded towards the other side of the room.

A near naked man walked onto a little stage area. He failed to flick the switches that Bryce operated inside him, but Carlton still watched, rather fascinated, as another man joined him. He was bigger than the first, stronger. It only took him about three minutes to have the original occupant of the stage tied to some strange sort of frame that apparently lived there for that express purpose. The first snap of the whip startled Carlton so badly, he damn near tipped his beer.

The lash fell on the smaller man's skin once more.

Carlton looked away, then helplessly back again. He squirmed a little in his seat as an uneasy feeling grew inside him. The guy really was a lot smaller than the one wielding the whip. And he was tied up. The look in his eyes when he glanced up at the other man was gentle, almost worshipful.

If someone was going to play those sorts of games, it shouldn't be someone like that. It should be someone like Bryce.

Carlton nodded to himself as the picture before him altered in his mind's eye. His friend wouldn't just stand there and take it unless he really liked it. He'd have cursed the roof down and raised hell if he wasn't getting off on the game.

And if he liked it, it couldn't be that wrong for another man to think it looked like it would be a hell of a lot to join in, if it was Bryce playing opposite him...

The men left the stage. Other men replaced them. Other games played out. Carlton watched them all, thoroughly captivated with putting the image of Bryce and himself in their places. He was still staring, mesmerised, when the lights pointing at the stage went out.

He turned to the bartender.

"Closing time."

Carlton didn't bother to argue. He slipped down off his barstool, only slightly more unsteady on his feet than he had been when he walked into the pub, for all the pint glasses standing empty on the bar in front of his stool.

Something had changed while he sat there though. His cock was straining against the fly of his jeans for one thing.

As he swayed slightly on his way to the door leading out into the street, he made a rather tipsy effort to push his thoughts into some sensible order. It wasn't easy.

He was him and Bryce was Bryce. And Bryce liked the kind of games the men played in that club. And Bryce didn't think that was something two men needed to talk about – they could skip all the small talk bull. There was a certain beautiful logic to the whole thing.

Finally reaching the taxi rank, he gave the appropriate address to the driver and slumped back in his seat. As they drove, he reached up and touched his mouth. Bryce's lips had felt good under his. His muscles had felt good under his hands too. His biceps tensing under Carlton's palms when he'd caught hold of him. He hadn't been able to move his hands without spilling the drinks. He hadn't been able to step back in the crowd.

Bryce had been trapped there, unable to escape the kiss. And Carlton didn't have to feel guilty about kind of liking all those facts because Bryce apparently liked them too. He certainly hadn't complained about it in the pub, and Bryce was never slow to let the world know when he was pissed off.

The taxi pulled up outside Bryce's block of flats. Carlton got out and paid the driver.

He flew up the stairs two at a time, only to be left cooling his heels when Bryce took forever answering the door. Carlton smiled as he heard muttered curses approaching the door from the other side of the woodwork.

Bryce pulled open the door.

“What the —?”

Carlton didn't let him finish the sentence. No polite little touch of lips this time. Bryce opened his mouth beneath his. Carlton took eager advantage of the invitation. He slid his tongue past the other man's lips as he pushed him back against the wall, just inside his front door. The other man's teeth scraped against his bottom lip, a muffled sound vibrated against his tongue. A second later Carlton's back hit the opposite wall of the narrow hallway.

“What did —?” Carlton reached up and rubbed the back of his head where it smacked against the paint work.

Bryce slammed the front door and swung back around to him.

“You'd better have a bloody good explanation.”

Carlton tried to straighten up and step away from the wall. A few seconds of trying to stand up unsupported and he reconsidered the objective. He leant back against the wall. Bringing his hand back in front of him, he looked at his fingers half expecting them to be covered with blood.

There was no blood, but when he looked up, there was a bloody furious Bryce right in front of him.

“I didn't think you'd mind.”

Bryce stared at him as if he'd lost the plot. Carlton wasn't entirely sure his friend was wrong. Dropping his gaze, Carlton tried to make his brain work.

His eyes roved over a bare chest, that descended into perfect abs, that disappeared into a pair of well worn track bottoms, a pretty little trail of fair hairs leading the way.

“Want me to do a twirl, or can you see everything okay from there?”

Carlton looked up and met his friend's eyes. He'd actually quite like the opportunity to check out the other man's arse. It didn't seem to be the right time to mention that fact.

Bryce's eyes were as sharp as ever, but the spiky blond hair was mussed up. “You were sleeping. I woke you up.”

“No shit, Sherlock.”

“Yeah, sorry about that. I thought...” Carlton rubbed at the back of his head again. Bryce hadn't been messing about when he pushed him away. “They said you were into this.”

Bryce just glared across the room.

"They said you liked to play rough," Carlton rephrased. "There was this pub with a stage and..."

"So you decided to turn up on my doorstep and try out for pillock of the year?"

"I didn't think you mind –"

"You didn't think I..." The other man shook his head, looking Carlton up and down as if the only decision he had left to make was whether he should be thrown out with the recycling or with the regular rubbish. "Show some respect."

"They didn't say anything about respect."

"Then I will. Yes, I'm gay. Yes, I like kink. No, I have no intention of getting screwed by some drunken tosser who thinks I have nothing better to do than work through his bi-curious with him at three o'clock in the goddamn morning. *Show some respect.*"

"I just thought..."

"Yeah, well, I've known a few guys who thought liking to play hard means liking to be some bastard's doormat. Want to know what they said after they discovered that there's a difference between a submissive and a professional victim?"

"Ouch, I should think," Charlton muttered. He checked the back of his head again, the river of blood he was pretty sure should be flowing down his back still wasn't there.

Bryce made a disgusted little sound in the back of his throat. "Any time you want to grow a pair, feel free."

Carlton was pretty sure that was bad advice. Neither his friend's anger, nor his own probable concussion had convinced his cock to soften in the slightest. There was no room in his jeans for anything more than he already had in there.

"Give me your wallet."

Carlton obediently handed it over.

"You've got enough for cab fare home."

He was left standing in the doorway while the other man pulled on a pair of battered trainers, then marched unceremoniously down the stairs out of the flats to stand on the kerb until his friend managed to hail a passing taxi.

Bryce put him in the cab. The last Carlton saw or heard of him before the taxi pulled away, he was marching back into his building, still muttering about bi-curious pillocks.

Leaning back in the seat, Carlton stared up at the roof of the cab. Lifting a hand, he caught his bottom lip between his thumb and forefinger, just where Bryce had nipped at him.

All in all, he was pretty sure that could have gone a lot worse...

Chapter Two

"How pissed off are you?"

Bryce looked at his watch. "You're only ten minutes late. I stopped getting pissed off with you until you've actually made us miss kick off."

As his friend stepped back and let him into his flat, Carlton let out a breath he hadn't realised he'd been holding. For the first time that he could remember, he wasn't quite sure what to do with himself inside the other man's home.

Bryce was half way through a mug of coffee. Any other day, Carlton knew he'd have poured himself a cup and made himself as thoroughly at home as he would if he'd gone to visit his brother.

Except, now that he was sober, the way he felt about the other man didn't feel the least bit fraternal, and Carlton found himself sitting nervously on the edge of the sofa rather than kicking his feet up the way he usually would.

As fantastic a friend as he was, Carlton was more than a little aware that Bryce had the potential to be a complete bastard when you caught him in the wrong mood, and he sure as hell wasn't the kind of guy to make things easy for a friend who suddenly found himself out of his depth.

No, Carlton couldn't help but smile a fraction at the idea of him babying someone through anything. Bryce was very much the 'learn how to swim fast or get back into the shallow end where you belong' kind of guy.

Carlton cleared his throat. "I should probably ah...explain..."

Bryce drained the last of his coffee. As he walked across the room, Carlton suddenly found himself the sole focus of his friend's attention.

"Yes, let's have a nice long talk about our feelings and discuss exactly what all this means for our relationship," Bryce suggested, folding his arms and resting them against the back of the sofa as he stared down at him.

Carlton's brain froze up.

Bryce's lips twisted into a wicked little smile. "I'm gay, Car, not a girl. And, more to the point, the match is starting in twenty minutes." He picked up his wallet, shoved it in his pocket and snatched up his jacket.

Carlton remembered how to breathe properly. He nodded his agreement and followed his friend out of the flat.

"You plan on catching up any time soon?" Bryce demanded half way down the street.

Carlton stopped altogether. "What?"

"You're walking half a pace behind me—it's bloody annoying. Catch the hell up."

Carlton stepped forward to stand next to him. Bryce nodded his approval and set off again, at the exact same pace as before. Just once, his attention flicked towards Carlton, very briefly, almost as if he was keeping an eye on someone he suddenly considered to be in need of a minder.

Carlton found himself walking with his head damn near permanently turned to the side, as he tried to catch him at it again.

"Lamp post."

"What?"

Carlton turned back to face front just in time to stop with his nose an inch away from the post. Clearing his throat, he took a step to the side and skirted the obstacle. Bryce didn't say anything as they walked the rest of the way to the pub.

Bryce was Bryce. He might technically play for a different team, but he was the one man Carlton could always be sure of being on his side—and the one man he could count on to slap him back down to size if he was making a pillock of himself, too.

Inside the warm comfort of the pub, Carlton hesitated again looking around the room as if there might be something that would tell him what the hell he was supposed to do now. When he looked to Bryce, the other man was watching him with something between amusement and another emotion Carlton couldn't quite place.

"There are, broadly speaking, three types of submissives," his friend informed him without any warning. "Two of them get off on fetching and carrying for any idiot who labels himself a dom."

"You're the third type?" Carlton guessed.

"You know, you're actually reasonably bright when you're sober."

"Two beers?" Carlton suggested.

Bryce shook his head. "I'll have a Coke."

Carlton waited for the punch line. When Bryce looked up and met his eyes, there was no humour in them. "I don't drink if I'm intending to play later."

Carlton's mouth went dry. He nodded, sure that anything he said would make it completely clear his brain had just enacted a dramatic descent to somewhere below his belt. He fetched the drinks. Bryce didn't say a word when he put two bottles of Coke down on the table in front of them.

When a couple of other guys joined them on the bench seat, Carlton automatically shuffled up to make room for them. That put him shoulder to shoulder with Bryce with not an inch of air between them. When he tried to retreat, he found the newcomers had expanded to fill the void. There was nowhere for him to go.

Through the whole match, he was aware of every move his friend made. He was half hard through most of it too, his jacket folded over his lap. He'd always been fascinated by the other man's obsession with cursing the players, but he'd never let himself watch the way his lips moved while he framed the insults.

He'd never let himself imagine what those lips would feel like against his—a sober kiss that lasted long enough for him to find out what it was like to taste the only man he'd ever wanted to kiss.

For the first time he let himself wonder what it would be like if the lips that encircled his cock were the kind that were all about sarcastic little jibes rather than lip gloss. Thoughts that he'd tried to push away damn near every time he wrapped his hand around his cock, suddenly filled his mind and it was impossible to pretend they didn't exist anymore.

Every time the other man's lips caressed the tip of his Coke bottle, Carlton barely managed to hold back a moan. It was as if his brain had realised it suddenly had free rein to indulge in all the fantasies he'd been trying to repress for years, and it wasn't willing to waste another second.

Even when the match ended and the crowd thinned out enough to let him put some space between him and his friend, he was conscious of every single move the other man made, every single breath he took.

Finally, the last of the other guys they'd been watching the match with wandered off. They were left alone at their table in the far corner of the lounge.

Bryce might have been able to keep ignoring the figurative pink elephant in the room, but Carlton couldn't.

"I kissed you," he said. "Twice."

"Yeah, I noticed."

Carlton stared down into his drink for a little while. "I think, maybe I'm not as straight as I always said I was." It seemed a far more polite thing to say than *I don't like men in general, but I'd kind of like to tie you up and screw you anyway.*

Bryce's lips twitched and Carlton knew a really sarcastic thought was going through his mind, but his friend didn't say anything. The other man took a sip of his Coke as if washing the words away before they could escape. "There's no rule saying a man can't change his mind."

It was as close to sympathetic as any response he'd ever heard the other man give to anything anyone had ever said to him. It kind of threw him off his stride. It wasn't what he expected from Bryce. "And if I've...changed my mind?" Carlton asked, eventually.

Bryce looked down into his drink for a moment. "Then I think it's time we went back to my place." He tossed back the last of the drink and picked up his jacket.

The trip back to Bryce's place passed by in a blur of panic for Carlton.

"Second thoughts?" Bryce asked, as he closed the door to his flat behind them. Carlton stared at the spot on the wall where he'd pinned his friend against the paint work, at where his lips had covered the other man's for the second time, at his point of no return.

"You said there were three types of submissive."

"Want to know about them?"

"Just about the one you are," Carlton corrected.

Bryce stepped around him, he leaned against the patch of wall he'd been shoved back against the night before. "Did you get off on watching the guys on stage do exactly as they were told?" he asked.

"They were nothing like you."

Bryce shrugged. "I can be obedient on occasions."

"But that's not what does it for you."

"If I submit to a guy, I'm telling him that from that point on, he gets to make the decisions—I give him the right to call the shots. If he wants me somewhere, he can put me there. If he wants me on my knees, that's fine, too. If he wants to screw me," Bryce shrugged as if none of it was a big deal. "His choice. Tie me up. His choice. There's no need for him to ask my permission."

"What rights doesn't he have?" Carlton asked, his eyes already trailing up and down the other man's body as he imagined what he could do with it if he was given free rein.

"No permanent marks. No other guys unless I know them. No bareback." For a few seconds, Bryce fell silent, as if that was his usual place to finish his list. "No drunken idiots." A new point on the list, as if he'd only realised he would have a problem with that very recently.

Carlton stepped forward. The moment he moved, Bryce pushed himself away from the wall to stand upright before him.

If he wanted him to be somewhere, he had the right to put him there, and right then, Carlton wanted his friend back against the wall in the exact place where he'd been the previous night so badly, he could barely breathe past his sheer need to have him there.

He nudged Bryce's shoulders with his palms, letting him know what he wanted, where he wanted him. Bryce rocked slightly on his heels, but he sure as hell didn't move. Tilting his head to one side, he stared up at Carlton.

Is that really the best you can do?

His friend didn't say it out loud. He didn't need to. Carlton had known the other man for so long, he'd learned how to read the sarcasm out of his head years ago.

Carlton stepped forward until their bodies touched. Their lips just were an inch away from a kiss. Carlton took another step, straight into the patch of floor Bryce already occupied. His friend tilted his chin back a fraction, obviously not the least impressed. He was only an inch shorter than Carlton, there wasn't much to choose between them in build.

It was hard to know which way it would go if they really lashed out at each other, but as Carlton pressed against the other man, there was no return pressure. Bryce wasn't pushing back. He wasn't resisting, just refusing to volunteer any ground. Whatever Carlton wanted, he'd have to take.

Still cautious, feeling his way forward into uncharted territory, Carlton pushed him back against the wall as politely as he knew how. His friend toppled, a slight smile twisting his lips as his back met the wall, a light Carlton had never seen before starting to shine in his eyes.

Dropping his gaze to look down between their bodies, Carlton kicked against the inside edges of Bryce's shoes and the submissive let him spread his feet further apart.

Carlton dragged his attention back up the other man's body an inch at a time. Denim clad legs led the way up to the other man's fly. He was just as hard as him, straining against the dark material.

One of Bryce's hands was spread out against the paintwork, where he'd braced himself as he toppled backwards. Without even thinking about it, Carlton wrapped his hand around his friend's wrist. He pinned Bryce's hand higher against the wall. A moment later, he had his other hand restrained on the other side of his head. Carlton leant back a fraction to study the picture he'd created.

God, but Bryce was beautiful like that. And it was the look in his eyes that really did it.

Most of the men on stage in the club hadn't looked like that. The look in Bryce's eyes was half challenge, half acceptance, as if he was perfectly willing to give Carlton free rein—providing he bloody well proved he deserved it first.

Leaning in, Carlton brushed their mouths together. Bryce didn't pull away, but he didn't lean into the kiss either. And when Carlton lapped at his lips, asking for admittance, the other man didn't even seem to notice.

Carlton tightened his grip around his friend's wrists, pressing him more firmly against the wall. A sharp little nip to the submissive's bottom lip finally caught his attention. Carlton felt Bryce's mouth curl into a small smile as he parted his lips and let him in.

It took almost more strength than Carlton knew he had, not to jump on the offer like a parched man finally offered the tiniest sip of water. Somehow, he held himself back and caught the other man's lip between his teeth again, pulling at the sensitive skin.

Bryce tilted his head back. His hands pulling at Carlton's hold on him. Carlton nipped again before he finally allowed himself to taste the other man's mouth properly—because he'd decided the time was right for him to do that, not Bryce.

Even pinned against the wall, his friend still knew how to steal control of a kiss, his tongue thrust into Carlton's mouth, strong and demanding, taking possession of him—as if he somehow knew he'd owned some little part of Carlton's mind for years.

Letting go of one of his wrists, Carlton buried his fingers in the other man's hair as best he could. The thick blond strands were short. It was hard to get a grip on him, even harder to take control of the kiss back from him.

When Bryce finally hesitated, when his side of the kiss turned into something that was more about following than leading, success rushed through Carlton—not so much because Bryce had given in, as much as because he knew his friend would only ever give up control to someone he thought deserved it.

"Do you know how many times I've imagined you like this?" Carlton asked, his voice hoarse as he whispered the words against his lips.

"And what did you imagine doing with me?" Bryce asked, his voice equally rough.

"Screwing you," Carlton whispered. "In the showers after rugby."

"Go on."

"You'd be all on your own—naked. Wouldn't hear me come in. Wouldn't know I was there until I was right behind you, pushing you against the wall."

"Like this?" Bryce asked.

Carlton shook his head as he looked down between their bodies. As glorious as Bryce was, that wasn't the position he'd imagined him in. Spinning his friend around, he propelled him towards the wall again.

Bryce's hands landed against the paintwork as Carlton leaned against him, holding him in place with his whole body, glorying in the feel of the other man's strength pushing back against him.

It was closer to his fantasy, but it wasn't the same and that wasn't good enough. Reaching around the submissive's body, Carlton undid his friend's belt, desperate to have him as naked as he was in his fantasy. Bryce rubbed back against him, giving him room to get his hands in between them. He fumbled at the other man's clothes, unable to rip them away the way he wanted to.

He pulled away, spinning Bryce around again.

"Naked," he ordered. "I want you naked."

Bryce leant back against the wall, belt and fly both half undone and raised an eyebrow at him. Carlton was left under no illusions. The clothes were staying there until he removed them himself.

"Do you trust me enough to let me tie you up?" he asked.

"Yes." As simple as that.

"Then you have a choice," Carlton said, his voice far less steady than his friend's.

"Lucky me," Bryce murmured.

Stepping forward, Carlton brushed his thumb across the little mark his teeth had left on Bryce's lower lip.

"Your mouth or your arse." Adrenaline rushed through Carlton, deepening his voice as he realised this was really happening. "If you do as you're told, I'll screw you properly, and I'll let you come. Play hard to get and I'll just tie your hands behind your back and put you on your knees. Either way's fine with me."

Bryce held his eyes. He didn't even blink. Carlton stepped forward until his leg slid against the crotch of his friend's straining jeans.

"Make your choice, Bryce. How badly do you want to come?"

All his friend did was smile.

It was impossible to see the twisting lips as anything other than a challenge. "I gave you a choice," Carlton reminded him as he pulled the other man's belt out of the loops on his jeans. A moment later, Bryce was against the wall, his head turned to one side and his cheek resting on the paintwork as Carlton tugged his wrists back behind him.

He wrapped the length of leather tight around his submissive's skin before he turned him around and pushed him back against the wall once more. Bryce dropped his head back against the paintwork, his eyes fell closed. Pleasure flashed across his face.

"You like that." Carlton heard the awe in his own voice as he said it.

"Hell, yes."

Looking down the other man's body, Carlton's gaze fell on his friend's half-fastened fly.

A firm tug had the zipper all the way down. Bryce opened his eyes, he dropped his gaze to watch what Carlton was doing, but he didn't seem the least bit worried by his

helplessness as Carlton caught the fabric at each side of his jeans and pulled them down, catching the boxers on the way past to leave the other man completely bare.

His friend's cock sprung free of the fabric, curving back towards his stomach, hard and eager and thoroughly perfect.

Carlton reached out and wrapped his hand around the other man's shaft without even thinking about it. His eyes feasted on the sight as he held his soon to be lover in the palm of his hand, in every meaning of the word.

"I offered you the chance to come," he reminded his friend again. He wasn't being a selfish bastard. He was keeping his word. Part of him still found it hard to believe that made everything okay, but Bryce just nodded as if it all made sense to him.

Carlton stroked his friend's cock very slowly, tightening his grip until he coaxed a pleasure filled groan out of him. Pre-cum smeared over his palm, slicking the shaft and, for the first time, it wasn't his own cock he was stroking, it wasn't his pre-cum that coated the cock in his hand.

Stilling his hand, he rubbed his thumb back and forth across the head. Bryce stared down at Carlton's hand and his own cock, apparently just as fascinated as Carlton was.

"Do you like that?"

"Begging isn't my thing. You want to do something, do it. Fishing for compliments just makes you sound clueless."

Carlton took his hand away. He didn't miss the way Bryce's Adam's apple bobbed as the empty air replaced his palm. Still, not one word of complaint. Bryce just blinked very slowly. When he opened his eyes, the calm Carlton had seen in him before had deepened.

"You don't have to beg," Carlton whispered in his ear. He smiled as the idea of gagging the other man flashed across his mind, of having him completely silent and at his mercy as he teased him to the edge again, slowly working out exactly what would make the other man beg for his orgasm, if he ever gave him the chance to speak again.

He was pretty sure that would go a whole lot better if he wasn't so focused on his own cock that he couldn't enjoy doing any of the many and varied things he'd like to do with Bryce's shaft. The moment that thought registered in Carlton's head, his hand moved to his friend's shoulder and pressed down.

Bryce lifted his gaze and looked him in the eye. Carlton increased the pressure on his shoulder. Bryce stayed exactly where he was for several long seconds, before finally lowering himself to his knees.

There was no hesitation, no transition. One minute Bryce wasn't willing to kneel, the next, he was. Reaching down, Carlton undid the top button on his own fly.

His friend's attention dropped to his crotch. Carlton watched Bryce study every little detail as he slowly freed his cock. His shaft was so sensitive, even his own hand felt magnificent against it. He wrapped his fingers around the length and stroked himself, good long strokes from the root right up until his hand covered the glans.

Bryce watched it all, as if committing it to memory, as Carlton jacked himself off, just inches from his face. Minutes passed, and the submissive remained perfectly still. Then, finally, a tiny movement. Bryce's tongue snuck out to moisten his lips.

Carlton's hand stopped its stroking. Bryce looked up. As they held each other gaze, Bryce let his lips drop open, just the tiniest fraction of an inch. It was probably as close to encouragement as Carlton knew he'd ever get. From a man like Bryce, he was pretty sure it was very close to the begging his friend had refused to indulge in just a few minutes earlier.

He offered the tip of his cock to the other man's lips. Bryce hesitated then, as if wondering how much of a concession he was willing to make. He didn't lean forward, but he reached out with his tongue and lapped the pre-cum from the glans.

Carlton stared down at him, more mesmerised than he had ever been in his life. Bryce leant forward a fraction, as he circled the head with his tongue. The movement was probably nothing more than Bryce adjusting his weight so it rested more comfortably on a different part of his knees. Carlton still couldn't allow it.

He slid his fingers through the submissive's hair, and took as firm a hold on him as the short strands allowed. Bryce glanced up at him, but his tongue didn't stop working on the tip of his cock.

Carlton swallowed several times, trying to convince himself he was capable of not coming from something as simple as a couple of licks. Even licks from Bryce. He had more control over himself than that.

Right then, he had control over Bryce as well, and he knew the other man would never let him live it down if he spoilt it all by coming like a damn teenager. But, even as he fought

to hold onto his waning self control, he couldn't help but lean forward and let the tip of his cock slip between his friend's lips. Bryce took it easily, cocooning the head in wet heat as he suckled greedily around him.

Keeping one of his hands settled snugly in the back of the submissive's hair, Carlton released his grip on his shaft and moved his other hand to the wall behind Bryce's kneeling form. Even as he reached out and steadied himself against the paintwork, his cock slipped deeper into his friend's mouth.

Bryce tilted his head back, welcoming him further between his lips as his tongue laved the underside of his shaft, tracing the vein with his tongue.

Carlton pulled back, watching mesmerised as his cock came gradually back into view, slick and glistening, before disappearing as he rocked his hips, pushing himself back into the other man's wet, willing, mouth.

As he fell into a steady rhythm, he tightened his grip on Bryce's hair. Any girl he'd ever been with would have slapped his fingers away.

Carlton stared down at the man at his feet. Everyone he'd ever known would have thought he was a bastard for using their mouth that way, and making no apology for it. But his friend was thriving on it. It took every ounce of Carlton's self control to hold back a whimper at the fact.

"Imagined you like this so many times," Carlton confessed. And he'd called himself a pillock for wanting him that way every single time. A gay man wanting to play rough with his best friend was one thing. A straight man who wanted to pin his friend down and do whatever he wanted with him was something else. But, right then, it was hard to believe it was wrong, not when it felt so bloody good. "Perfect." He couldn't keep the word back.

There was no possibility of a sarcastic response. Bryce made a vague sound in the back of his throat. It might have been a signal that he'd heard, it could just as easily have been a muffled curse and a sarcastic reminder to stop babbling like a little old lady gossiping over her coffee and get on with it.

Carlton thrust into the other man's eager mouth again and again. Unable to control anything about the situation, Bryce still offered everything he could to the shaft that invaded his mouth.

His tongue worked ferociously against the head as Carlton thrust forward, he sucked hard as Carlton pulled away, as if desperate to keep his cock buried deep inside him. The look of easy relaxation Carlton had seen in his friend's expression earlier in the night deepened with every moment that passed, as if Bryce had focused in on that one task and, if only for a little while, that let him forget about the rest of the world.

He looked up at Carlton. It was that expression in his friend's eyes that finally tipped him over the edge. He helplessly pushed himself deep into the other man's mouth, as he came hard and fast and without any chance of warning the submissive.

Bryce swallowed rapidly around him, taking everything he could give him, never breaking eye contact, never missing a drop. Leaning over him, Carlton bowed his head. His hand on the wall became the only thing keeping him upright as pleasure raced through his body, stealing the strength from his muscles.

He gasped for breath as he closed his eyes and tried to think. It took a lifetime filled with heady bliss before he finally managed to convince his brain that whole thoughts were a good thing.

When he opened his eyes and looked down, Bryce was staring up at him. Patience wasn't one of his friend's strong points. Anyone who met him knew that. Yet, he was waiting very tolerantly right then, with Carlton's cock still buried between his lips.

Another minute passed before Carlton finally gathered the coordination to step back and let his shaft slip from the other man's mouth.

The submissive remained on his knees as Carlton did up his fly, as if waiting for permission, for approval, acting like he needed those things from him. A frown gathered on Carlton's brow.

The Bryce he knew was strong and angry and...and as his mind cleared Carlton couldn't help but wonder which man was the act and which was the real Bryce. If the strength were the real pretence, if the fact he was kneeling at another man's feet was more about punishment than pleasure for him...

"You ever raise a hand to me in anger, and I'll have you on the floor so fast, you'll definitely know what—and who—hit you."

"What?"

“That’s what you wanted to know, isn’t it?” Bryce wanted to ask. “Deep down, do I think you should punish me for liking guys? Try it. See what happens.”

Chapter Three

Carlton smiled slightly as relief rushed through him as welcome as any other kind of pleasure he'd found in standing over the other man. Perhaps Bryce bound and on his knees wasn't actually that different to the Bryce he watched rugby with, after all.

He half helped, half dragged the submissive to his feet. His friend leant back against the wall, bound arms trapped behind his spine, and rested his head back against the paint work once more.

For a few seconds, Carlton let a little space linger between them, giving himself plenty of room to admire his friend. Bryce was still hard, still exposed, still as perfect as any fantasy he'd ever concocted around him.

"You're the one who plays close to the closet door, I don't have a problem with the fact I'm gay," Bryce reminded him. "And I don't think any asshole with an attitude problem gets to beat the hell out of me for it."

"I'm not closeted," Carlton said, without really thinking first. "I don't like other men. I like you."

Bryce looked down at his own cock. "At the risk of stating the blinding bloody obvious. I'm not a girl."

"If I was gay, I'd like other guys, right?" Carlton shrugged. "I wouldn't mind if I did. But I don't."

Bryce didn't say anything.

Carlton ran a hand through his own hair as he tried to make his thoughts make sense. It sounded like he thought there would be something wrong with it if he was gay. That was the last thing he wanted. "I've never treated you any differently because you're gay," he reminded the other man.

"Bit of free advice?" Bryce suggested.

Carlton nodded for him to continue.

"You want to try that with a straight man, pick someone who has very blunt teeth. He probably won't be impressed."

As easily as that, Bryce closed his eyes and rested his head back against the wall again, freeing Carlton to go back to looking at his friend's cock. He was leaking pre-cum. Working entirely on instinct, Carlton caught it up on his fingertip. He was just about to taste him when Bryce opened his eyes. His confidence faltered. Holding out his finger, he offered it to Bryce's lips instead. His friend calmly opened his mouth, allowing him to feed his fingertip past his lips.

The moment the digit left the other man's mouth, Carlton leant forward and lapped at his lips. Both their tastes mingled together on Bryce's tongue. It was impossible to know where one of them started and the other began.

Carlton leant forward, pressing his body against Bryce's. The other man groaned into the kiss as Carlton's clothes rubbed against his bare cock. Carlton smiled into the kiss.

"Feel good?" he asked.

"You've got a cock, right?" Bryce asked. "You have a reasonable understanding of how one works?"

Carlton grinned. That was probably the best he was going to get if he played nice. "I want to hear you tell me," he said, very softly into his friend's ear.

When he pulled back, Bryce didn't seem at all impressed with the whispered little confession. "The walls are thick enough. Unless we disturbed a particularly inept burglar and he's hiding behind the sofa, no one's going to overhear you."

"Great, that means they won't hear you when you tell me exactly what you're into, either." Suddenly, no one else knowing what his lover was into was far more important than anyone finding out that he'd been pretty sure he wasn't entirely straight for a very long time – at least not where his best friend was concerned.

No one else should know what Bryce was into, not guys in a kinky gay pub, not eavesdroppers, nobody. It shouldn't be anyone else's business what his boyfriend was into.

His boyfriend...No, that wasn't right. Carlton frowned slightly. He could just imagine the look on his friend's face if he said that word out loud. He wasn't the type to like being called anyone's boyfriend.

His submissive...That was more like it. It fitted far better with the man in front of him. Carlton could easily imagine one of those black leather collars that the subs in the pub had

seemed so fond of, encircling the other man's throat. He could see him wearing it and giving any man who had a problem with it hell.

Bryce raised an eyebrow as their eyes met. His submissive...He saw Bryce's expression change as he seemed to notice his master's uncertainty. No more uncertainty – he'd had enough of that to last him a life time, and he was reasonably sure masters weren't ever supposed to be uncertain.

Hooking his fingers into Bryce's belt loops, Carlton tugged the tangle of fabric up his lover's legs just far enough to let him walk. He led him out of the living room and into the bedroom without a word.

A push against his shoulders and the slightly smaller man toppled back onto the mattress. With his hands still behind his back, it wasn't a very neat landing. Bryce looked up at him, but stayed silent.

Carlton grabbed hold of one of his ankles and tugged the trainer and the sock off. The other foot received the same treatment. Bryce made no comment as Carlton turned his attention to his friend's jeans. He pulled them down Bryce's legs, once more catching the boxers on the way past to leave him entirely bare.

He'd already pushed the other man's t-shirt up towards his shoulders when he remembered certain facts. Suddenly Bryce's refusal to raise his arms and cooperate didn't seem so typically bloody minded of the man.

Carlton tried to reach around his friend, but the angle was awkward. The belt seemed to like being wrapped around Bryce's wrists. It didn't want to be removed.

Pulling away from his friend for a moment, he caught hold of Bryce's arm and rolled him over onto his stomach. The submissive lay quietly, face down on the bed as Carlton finally managed to get the leather unwrapped from his wrists.

Rolling him back over, Carlton tugged at his wrist until it was up close to the headboard. When he pulled at the other hand, Bryce shuffled across the sheet and willingly offered up both the wrists through the bed frame.

It was only once his friend was re-bound, helpless on the bed, Carlton managed to take a breath and realise certain, very important facts. The first was that he was sitting astride his friend's stomach, his hands resting over the leather restraint, pinning him to the bed.

The second fact came to him as he re-played the last few minutes over inside his head. Pushing Bryce this way and that, doing whatever the hell he wanted with him – and not one sarcastic comment for his trouble. Bryce liked being pushed around, manhandled like that. Carlton smiled down at his friend, glorying in the freedom the other man was granting him.

“Ready to tell me what you’re into yet?”

“And if I don’t?”

Carlton stared down at him. In his fantasies he knew exactly what would happen. He’d imagined turning the other man over his lap almost as often as he’d day dreamed about him on his knees or bent over his desk. Except it wasn’t a fantasy, and he wasn’t going to hurt his friend until he was bloody well sure Bryce would enjoy every second of it.

“We’ll stay here until you do,” Carlton said.

Bryce stared up at him, mutiny darkening his eyes for the first time since they entered the room. “You’ll get very bored very quickly.”

Carlton smiled. “Yeah, it’s the guy who’s not used to having a naked man tied up and at his mercy who’s going to get bored. Right...”

He swung his leg over his friend and lay down on the bed next to him.

Bryce stared up at the ceiling, to all appearances, pretending that he wasn’t there. That wasn’t going to happen. Carlton reached out and trailed his fingertips up and down the centre of the other man’s rib cage.

Bryce glanced at him, then turned his eyes determinedly back to the ceiling. Carlton grinned, not particularly caring if his friend noticed his expression or not. He’d been right when he said there was no way he was going to get bored. It couldn’t be easy to look hot as hell while pouting like a toddler, but Bryce was managing it somehow.

“Fine,” the submissive spat out, after a few more minutes silence. “How about you use the black cuffs from the toy box – the padded ones, mind, the other ones really chafe. Connect them to the third and seventh bed rails. Then you need to go out of the room, wait a few seconds, then come back in. Then say something dominant? Maybe that I’ve been a very bad boy and need to be punished – just try not to blurt out anything too original, that would really spoil the moment. But you get bonus points if you manage to keep a straight face while spouting lines from a bad porno.”

Carlton just stared at him. Sarcasm he was used to. He wasn't used to the undercurrent beneath it, to the feeling that the other man cared about what was happening between them far more than he'd ever admit, that he was investing more in what they did that night than Carlton had ever realised.

"Still think working to a script is hot?" Bryce demanded.

Carlton held his gaze as he caught up with what Bryce wanted him to understand, even if he still felt way behind on everything else. "Hotter than hurting you? Yes."

"I'm a big boy, I'm not going to freak out if you actually want to grow a pair and top from the damn top for a little while."

He was a big boy. Carlton trailed his fingers up and down the underside of Bryce's cock where it curled back towards his stomach.

Top from the top...Really take control. Really be a dominant. He understood what his friend meant, but he couldn't stop his mind going in a completely different direction to the one his submissive was goading him towards. "Do you?"

"Do I what?" Bryce snapped, exasperation filling his voice.

"Top?"

"Do I get off on playing dominant or do I like dipping my wick in another guy?"

Carlton trailed his fingers up and down the other man's cock a few more times. Bryce bit his lip, but made no complaint about the teasing.

"Both," Carlton finally answered.

"Dominance doesn't do it for me. I can play the part, but I'm generally a complete bastard to the poor sod who nagged me into it even after I warned him about that."

"And the other kind of topping?" Carlton dropped his hand down between the other man's legs and cupped his sacs, massaging them between his palm and fingers.

Bryce closed his eyes for a moment. "Yeah, sometimes."

Carlton gently squeezed the other man's balls, pulling them slightly away from his body. Bryce arched against the mattress, pressing himself into Carlton's palm. Every muscle in his body tensed with the movement. Glorious.

There wasn't a doubt in Carlton's mind that Bryce would look just as magnificent if he was being ridden by another guy. "Lube?"

"Drawer, next to the condoms."

Carlton reached across his friend's body and retrieved both. His clothes rubbed across Bryce's cock, making his friend moan his pleasure at the friction they granted him.

That seemed to conclude the list of useful purposes that could be served by anything Carlton was wearing. Righting himself, Carlton knelt on the bed and pulled his t-shirt over his head to toss it aside. In hindsight, doing up his fly had been one hell of a waste of time. He was already half hard again.

When he looked up, Bryce's face was turned towards him, taking in every single detail.

"Blindfolds exist for a reason. If you've got a problem with me looking at you, do something about it." Bryce didn't even bother to lift his eyes from his studies to meet his gaze as he said it.

Carlton grinned. Bryce continued to stare. For a few seconds, Carlton just knelt there on the bed, watching the other man looking at him. Hands tied above his head, he seemed perfectly at ease. And he was perfect.

"In case you've forgotten, I sucked you off in the hallway."

"What?"

Bryce looked up and met his eyes. "I've seen it already. This is a bloody stupid point to get all shy." He dropped his attention back to where Carlton's hand still lingered on his half fastened fly.

Carlton snapped back into the world. He pushed his jeans down and off, shoes and socks falling away in the process. When he leaned over to push them all off the bed, he glanced back around to his friend, just in time to see the other man checking out his arse.

He didn't rush to turn around, but it wasn't quite in him to make it obvious that he was lingering on purpose either. As he turned back, he picked up the lube. Spreading the slickness on his fingertips, he watched Bryce shift slightly on the mattress, pulling his legs up and setting his feet on the mattress.

Just as he was about to pull them back further, Carlton reached out and wrapped his fingers around the other man's shaft.

"What are you —?"

Bryce hesitated. For the first time Carlton could remember, he actually faltered mid question and didn't seem to be able to pick up his flow again. Carlton covered his shaft in a nice even coating of lube.

His friend made no comment as he slicked his fingers again and reached behind his own back, down between his cheeks. He worked his way up to three fingers as quickly as he could. That wasn't actually anything new, he'd given in to his curiosity about that years ago.

Looking at the other man's cock, he did his best to imagine how his fingers would compare to it if held up next to Bryce's shaft. Right then, he really wished he'd had the balls to buy a dildo too. He took a deep breath and let it out very slowly as he realised he was as ready as he was ever going to be.

"Condom."

Some of the blood that had deserted Carlton's brain in favour of his cock temporarily made its way back above his neck. He managed to tear the foil packet open on the second attempt.

Sheathing someone else's cock in latex was different. It required far more co-ordination. Carlton rolled the sheath down very carefully, taking his time, trying not to regret it as he watched the clear material create a barrier between them.

The moment his fingers rested around the base of the other man's cock, he swung his leg over his prone friend. He slicked the condom with extra lube and lifted himself forward, rising higher on his knees.

Lowering himself down very slowly, he felt the tip of Bryce's cock press against his hole.

Even then, some part of him was uncertain. He looked down at Bryce. The other guy was studying him very seriously, as if he no longer had any idea what the hell was going on, or what the dominant he'd handed himself over to might do next.

No going back. No regrets. No more uncertainty. Even if he wasn't sure he'd ever want another man. Carlton had no doubt he wanted Bryce. And suddenly there were no more decisions left to be made.

He lowered himself down a little. His breath caught in his throat as the head of Bryce's cock slipped inside him. He closed his eyes for a moment. The moment turned into two, then more. He bit down on his bottom lip as the burn faded to a stretch that, at glacially

slow speed, turned into something that might be a bit like pleasure. Resting his hands on the other man's chest, he rocked his hips, determinedly working his way down the other man's shaft.

When Carlton opened his eyes, Bryce was staring up at him. It was only then that he really realised just how closely every single move he made, his every reaction was being studied. And Bryce would remember it all. He had no doubt about that. Bryce would always know, and he'd always know that his gay best friend knew just how much pleasure shone in his eyes when he rode him for the first time.

Carlton took a deep breath and let it out once more as he finally reached the point when there was no further to go, when he'd taken all the other man had to give him. He stilled, resting for a moment as he slowly felt himself adjust and relax around the other man's shaft.

He took a long slow breath. With his hands resting on the other man's chest, he felt Bryce do the same, as if he wasn't the only one working hard to make his mind catch up with where their bodies were.

As he held the submissive's gaze, Carlton began to rock his hips very slightly, clenching around the other man as unfamiliar sensations shot through him and he desperately tried to hold on to every one of them.

Bryce groaned, arching underneath him, pushing his head back into the pillow as he tried to thrust up into him. Pinned down as he was, he could barely squirm let alone do more. His hands tightened into fists within the bindings. In that moment, Carlton looked down at him and he knew everything that happened in his lover's world was all down to him.

He chose what was happening now, he chose what would happen next, his lover was just along for the ride. And Carlton knew he'd never be able to go back to a world where that wasn't the case, where that lover wasn't Bryce. He closed his eyes for a second, but only for a second, Bryce trapped, bound and under his control, was too good a sight to hide from for long. As fear at the possibility that he might never see him that way again suddenly raced through him, it became more important than ever to memorise every moment.

He rocked his hips again, rising himself a little so he could lower himself back down on the other man's shaft. Every sensation shot straight to his cock. Already painfully hard, he ached to reach out and wrap his hand around his cock, to jack himself off.

Bryce gasped. Carlton kept both his hands resting on Bryce's chest as he tried to establish some sort of rhythm. It was harder than he thought. On those rare times he allowed himself to 'accidentally' click on links to gay porn rather than straight, just in case there was a man other than Bryce who rocked his world, just in case he was gay and just slow on the uptake, it had looked so simple. Come to that, it had seemed pretty damn simple when the woman he was with had straddled him too.

But, right then, every sensation threw off his attempts to establish a rhythm. The control just wasn't there. Reaching forward, he moved his hands onto Bryce's shoulders.

"I'm not a girl."

It seemed to Carlton to be a bloody stupid thing for his friend to say. "Noticed that," he managed to gasp out.

Bryce shrugged his shoulders, as if attempting to push Carlton's hands away. "Then stop treating me as if I'm made of glass. I won't break."

Carlton stared down at his friend. No, Bryce wouldn't break. He'd swear, and he'd shout, and if Carlton really pissed him off, he'd probably throw one hell of a punch when he was untied. But Bryce wouldn't break.

He stopped trying to gentle his hold on him.

Success burned in Bryce's eyes. He thrived as Carlton tightened his grip further. He didn't know if his fingers dug in hard enough to leave a mark. He wasn't sure if he wanted them to or not. But he knew in that moment that Bryce wouldn't have a problem with it if he did. Maybe he'd even like it.

The idea of Bryce walking around wearing the marks he'd left under his skin, wearing them and liking them, shot to his cock and somehow, as he stared down at the other man, Carlton found his rhythm. Rocking his hips, he thrust forward into the empty air before sliding down his friend's shaft and letting Bryce's cock fill him again. His angle changed. Fireworks shot through him.

Bryce writhed underneath him, trying to thrust up into him but unable to get any sort of leverage to move the way he obviously wanted to. He was close. Carlton could see it in

him, he could feel the tension in the other man's muscles. Releasing one of Bryce's shoulders, he wrapped his hand around his own cock.

He stroked himself, hard and relentless, aware that Bryce was watching every movement as if it was all part of a personal porn show put on just for him.

"Faster."

Carlton met his friend's eyes. It wasn't a suggestion. It wasn't even an order. It was a statement of fact. If he still wanted to be riding him when he came, he'd better hurry the hell up or Bryce would be finished without him.

His hand tightened around his shaft as he clenched his hole around the other man's cock. Again. Again. Until he yelled his pleasure as he spilled in long trails over the other man's chest.

Just a moment later, he felt Bryce buck underneath him. He didn't yell out as he came, he went perfectly silent. Not even a whimper, as if he was too busy concentrating on a moment of perfect bliss to bother with any of that bull.

As they both fell still, Carlton stared down at his friend. As the tension left him, Bryce collapsed against the mattress, perfect ecstasy, perfect satisfaction burning in his eyes before they fell closed.

Carlton was the only man who could move right then, he knew that. He still found it next to impossible to scrape up the energy to pull away from his lover. Finally, he managed to move, to fall back onto the mattress next to him. Minutes passed as they both lay there collecting their breath.

With every second, Carlton expected Bryce to tell him to snap out of it and untie him, but his friend lay there in silence until Carlton worked up the energy to free him of his own volition.

Just like someone had flipped a switch inside him, Bryce changed the moment he was freed.

Carlton couldn't pin down what the change was exactly, but he knew the second Bryce came back under his own control. His friend was no longer giving him the right to make any sort of decision for him. If he tried to play the dominant between now and whenever the other man chose to offer him his submission again, the only thing he'd probably get for his trouble was a large dose of sarcasm.

Bryce dispensed with the condom and rolled his shoulders around, stretching out the muscles that had been bound. Carlton watched, quietly horrified as every trace of everything he'd done with the other man disintegrated before his eyes.

Until he chose to offer him his submission again. Carlton swallowed rapidly, as he realised there was no way in hell he could deal with there not being a next time.

"What do we do now?" he asked.

Bryce inspected his freed wrists before shrugging at the slight marks that remained encircling his skin. "It was sex, not a marriage proposal." He paused for a moment, as if thinking about something very carefully. Another shrug, as he seemed to push the thought away. "There's another match next Friday if you want to get a few pints in."

Carlton stared at the back of his friend's head for a few seconds as Bryce turned his attention to the rest of the room.

As he took a deep breath and let it out very slowly, all the half formed thoughts that he'd built around the other man over the years, all the half expected feelings that came with them, started to weave themselves together into something that made some sort of sense. "If I said I actually give a damn about you, you'll make a joke out of it, won't you?"

"Probably."

Carlton took another breath. "If I ask you a question, will you answer it?"

"Probably," Bryce said, his lips twisting into a strangely bitter little smile as he looked over his shoulder.

"Did you ever think I was..." He hesitated as he realised no word was completely right. "Completely straight?"

Bryce hesitated for a moment before turning around looking at him properly as he shrugged. "I've always thought it was none of my business. I still think that."

Carlton's forehead creased into a frown. "What?"

"Like I said back at the pub—a guy has a right to change his mind."

"You're seriously telling me that if I sat here and told you I'm straight, you'd believe me."

Bryce shrugged again, then frowned and folded his arms across his chest as if the sudden emergence of the nervous habit was really pissing him off. "Are you asking if I feel

some deep seated need to go and tell everyone in the whole world that you got off on what we did together? No, not particularly."

"I'm asking what you think I am," Carlton said.

"I think you're bi," Bryce snapped. "And I think you should step up to the plate and pick whatever label you want to live under yourself, rather than expect me to do it for you."

For a few minutes, Carlton stared at his friend, not sure what to say to him. "Every time I thought about a guy, it was you," he said in the end. "Never anyone else. A gay man would like other guys, right?"

Bryce picked up his discarded shirt swiped at the trails of come that still decorated his stomach and chest before tossing it towards a hamper in the corner. "No rule saying a guy can't be gay and a damn fussy sod at the same time. Keep looking. You'll find another guy that rocks your boat sooner or later."

"I've jacked off thinking about you for years." Carlton couldn't quite stop the confession leaving his lips.

"And now you want to know if I ever did the same?" Bryce asked after a second's silence, apparently not the least impressed.

When he realised it wasn't actually a rhetorical question, that his friend had absolutely no intention of throwing him a scrap until he spelt it out for him, Carlton nodded. He wanted to know.

"Yes." One word. No more. No less. No explanations. No excuses.

Carlton breathed a sigh of relief. "Did you know that if I ever...?" He wasn't sure what to say—that he'd jump him the minute he was willing to admit he liked guys...a guy...guys...whatever?

Bryce shrugged. "Either way, I wasn't about to wait around until you decided to get claustrophobic in there. Far more sensible to have some fun with other guys."

The look on the other man's face changed the moment the words hit the air. It sounded almost as if he'd been making do with other guys—as if there was only one guy he'd really wanted to be with.

"You never..."

Bryce studied him carefully. "Never what?"

Carlton stared back at him in return.

Bryce's expression changed again. "Never tried to coax you out of the closet, never tried to convert you?" He looked more pissed off than ever. It was still as good a look on him as it always had been. "You try having some drunken slut crawling all over you, whispering in your ear that you'd be straight if you ever found the right woman—that she could convert you into something you're not, and see what you think of that sort of bull then." Bryce looked him up and down. When he spoke again, his tone of voice was ever so slightly softer. "People are what they are. I figured that if you were gay or bi or whatever the hell you're going to end up being, you'd work that out in your own time without some bastard playing pathetic little conversion games with you."

Carlton stared across the room at his friend. It was damn near the only time he could remember Bryce sounding completely serious about anything. Bryce met his eyes, and he held them as if daring him to disagree, daring him to realise he'd cared too much about him to give him even the slightest nudge in the right direction.

"I guess it's a pretty strange way of...coming out?" Carlton said after a while.

Bryce seemed to consider the matter very carefully for several seconds. "Excessive quantities of alcohol. 'Accidentally' ending up in a gay bar. Making a complete pillock out of yourself by trying it on with someone far more sober than you. I think you actually got most of the traditions down pretty well."

Traditions... he'd come across a few other ones over the last few days too.

"In the pub, some of the men wore collars." There didn't seem to be any point hiding the fact that that's the direction he'd be taking them, if Bryce did decide he was going to be willing to follow his lead for more than an hour at a time. He had a horrible feeling that he'd find it very easy to fall in love with his best friend.

Bryce stayed very still for a few seconds. "If, and that's a big bloody if, I was the kind of guy who'd ever wear another man's collar, do you really think I'd take one off someone who still has one foot in the closet, and whose entire knowledge of leather comes from whatever drunken facts he managed to pick up watching the kind of amateur porn that plays out on the stage in that pub?"

"I think, just because you like to be tied up, that doesn't mean you won't do whatever the hell you want regardless of how stupid the decision might be," Carlton said.

Bryce considered the statement for a moment. His lips twisted into a slight smile. "Even I'm not stupid enough to rush into a collar."

"The idea of belonging to someone doesn't appeal," Carlton pushed, trying not to let his voice betray how important the answer was to him. *Belonging to me...*

Bryce shrugged slightly. "Giving up control's always done it for me. So does knowing I'm giving up the control to the kind of man who knows what to do with it..." he took a deep breath. "He'd have to prove that."

You've got to prove that. Carlton had no doubt his friend would demand that, even if Bryce knew he'd find it just as easy to fall for him in return, even if he was pretty sure he was half way there already. Carlton smiled slightly – maybe *especially* if he knew that.

"Sounds like a plan," Carlton said slowly.

Bryce nodded, just once, as if determined not to give anything away. "Fine."

Carlton smiled. "Fine." Pulling himself up off the bed, he stepped up behind the other man. "And until you realise you do want that collar?" he asked.

Bryce had never been slow on the uptake. "I suppose you've got a lot of catching up on the whole guy-on-guy thing. That should keep...both of us occupied for a while."

Carlton slid his hands around the other man's body and tugged him back to lean against him. Bryce didn't seem inclined to cooperate. Carlton only hesitated for a moment before he caught his arms and pulled him back against him, almost pulling his friend off his feet at the same time.

Bryce didn't turn and look over his shoulder. Carlton only saw the other man's relieved little smile in profile. It was enough.

He grinned as he tumbled them both back towards the bed.

About the Author

26 years old, from Wales, UK, Kim writes about kink, love and happy endings. If a story doesn't have those three things, it's not going to be written - at least not by this writer!

Apart from that, Kim likes to write a little bit of everything. Male/Male, Male/Female, ménage, vampires, werewolves, ghost, time-travel - that sort of variety always keeps life interesting.

A firm believer that there is no "One True Way" for people to kink, Kim also likes to let the characters in each book pick their own ways to dominate and submit to each other. As long as they stay safe, sane and consensual - Kim's happy to let them live their lifestyle 24/7, or just open the toy box on weekends – whatever's right for them.

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