



STORMY GLENN

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SILVER PUBLISHING
Published by Silver Publishing
Publisher of Erotic Romance

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Cover Artist: Reese Dante
Editor: Nicole Hicks

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PUBLISHER

SILVER PUBLISHING

<http://www.silverpublishing.info>

DEDICATION

To G.A. Hauser

Thanks for letting me use you as my erotic author

CHAPTER 1

"Can I help you with that?"

Nicky jumped, dropping the box of books he held in his hands. It crashed to the ground, books spilling all over. Nicky's hand fluttered at his neck as he looked into the deepest, darkest chocolate-brown eyes he'd ever seen.

"I'm sorry," the man said. "I didn't mean to scare you."

"No, that's okay. You just startled me." Nicky tried to give the man a smile but his heart raced a million miles a minute. He wasn't sure if it came from the man's sudden appearance or by the fact that the man was simply drop dead gorgeous.

Nicky squatted down and began piling books back into the box. He glanced over when the man did the same. He had a generous mouth, an aquiline nose. His handsome face kindled with a sort of passionate beauty. He was simply gorgeous.

"*Calling Dr. Love?*" the man mused as he looked at a book held in his hand. He reached for a few more books. "*Teacher's Pet, Unnecessary Roughness, A Man's Best Friend,*" he said as he read the title on each book. "You seem to have a lot of books by G.A. Hauser. Is he any

good?"

Nicky blanched, grabbing the books quickly out of the man's hand and shoving them into the box. "Yes," he whispered. "*She* is very good."

"She?" The man chuckled. "A woman writes these books?"

Nicky snickered at the surprised look on the man's face until he noticed him looking down at the covers, the very hot covers with sexy men displayed on them. Nicky felt his face flush. He grabbed the rest of books and piled them into the box.

"Yes, a woman writes these books." Nicky grabbed the box and stood to his feet. The man also stood, making Nicky realize he was several inches taller but not so tall that Nicky couldn't see his face easily.

"Thank you for your help," Nicky said as he scooted around the man. "If you'll excuse me, I have a lot more boxes to bring in."

"I'd be happy to help."

"No, thank you."

"Nonsense," the man said as he lifted a box into his arms and started following Nicky into his apartment. "What are neighbors for?"

Nicky had a few ideas but none of them would

come to see the light of day. His present situation didn't allow him to get involved with anyone, no matter how much he'd like to. Besides, Nicky doubted the man was truly interested in him.

"My name is Seth," the man said, "Seth Leighton."

"Nicky."

"You'll like it here, Nicky" Seth said. "This is a good neighborhood, quiet. The people here are very friendly." The man chuckled. "Well, except for maybe Mrs. Ferguson. She lives down in 2B. You might want to stay away from her. She can get a mite riled on occasion."

Nicky nodded as if he understood a thing the man said. It wasn't like he would be getting involved with anyone, let alone Mrs. Ferguson in 2B. Nicky didn't have plans to get to know any of his neighbors, not even the sexy one standing before him. It just wasn't safe.

"You don't say much do you?" Seth asked. He shook his head a little. "I never met a woman that didn't talk your ear off."

Nicky flushed as he looked down at the faded denim shorts and simple white v-neck cotton shirt he wore. The pink nail polish on his toenails shined brightly on his flip flops. They matched the nail polish on his long acrylic fingernails.

Nicky knew the carefully applied makeup on his face and the sandy blond hair that fell in curly waves down his back only added to his disguise. He looked just like a woman. And didn't that suck?

CHAPTER 2

"I guess I'm not like most women," Nicky said.

Seth was surprised by that statement almost as much as he was by his unusual attraction to the woman. He'd never been interested in women but there was just something about this one that intrigued him.

"I'm not sure that's a bad thing." Seth chuckled.

"Come on, why don't you let me be neighborly and help you bring in the rest of these boxes?"

Seth wanted to pull the words back as soon as they left his mouth. He had no business getting involved with a woman, especially one he didn't even know. There could never be anything romantic between them. Seth was gay.

"Oh, I don't—"

"Please?" *Crap!* There he went again. Seth just couldn't seem to keep his mouth shut. He should just welcome her to the neighborhood and be on his way.

"I suppose it would be okay," Nicky finally said. She looked hesitant, cautious, but there was a spark of curiosity in Nicky's hazel eyes too. Seth knew he'd have to put a stop to that right away. He was just hated to break the connection between them at the moment.

Maybe he'd just help Nicky bring her stuff in and

then leave. It wouldn't hurt to be friendly. They could wave to each other in passing, maybe see each other at one of the main social gatherings thrown by the building's community association. That didn't mean he had to get involved with the woman.

Seth followed Nicky back out to the moving van. He couldn't keep his eyes off the soft curve of her ass. Seth bet if he grabbed her ass, it would fit perfectly into his hands. It was glorious, curved just right and showcased to perfection in her tight denim shorts.

He groaned and smacked himself in the head. What in the hell was he thinking? He couldn't be having fantasies about what Nicky's ass would look like naked. She was a woman, and, as such, totally off limits.

He grabbed a box and quickly carried it inside to Nicky's apartment. He needed to get the hell out of there before he made a pass at the woman and confused himself even more. He was attracted to a woman. His mother would be thrilled.

It didn't take Seth and Nicky more than twenty minutes to get the rest of her boxes inside. Seth set the last one down on the floor and glanced around the small one bedroom apartment. His was a two bedroom but it wasn't much bigger. Luckily, he lived alone and was able to use

the second bedroom for an office.

"Well," he said as he started backing himself toward the door, "welcome to the neighborhood, Nicky. If you need anything, I'm down the hallway in 4C. I work from home most of the time so I'm usually around. Just knock on the door."

Nicky's smile was bright, vibrant, and seared Seth down to his soul.

"Thank you for all of your help, Seth." The soft lyrical sound of his name in Nicky's voice was Seth's undoing. He swallowed past the lump in his throat and wished away the hard-on he knew could be seen in his jeans. Nicky was breathtaking.

"Anytime," Seth replied. He took another step toward the door. He raked Nicky's body with his eyes, confused at the sudden racing of his heart. He turned and nearly sprinted down the hallway to his apartment.

His hands shook as he pushed his key into the lock. He fumbled with it for several moments before he actually got the door open and rushed inside, slamming the door loudly behind him. Seth leaned back against the door and took a deep breath. It didn't help.

He unbuckled his jeans, unzipped them, and pushed them down his thighs until his hard cock bounced free. He

ached so much he couldn't keep a moan of need from breaking free of his mouth when he wrapped his hand around himself and started pumping.

He was out of his mind, he had to be. The faster he stroked, the more vivid the picture of Nicky's tight little ass became until he could see the woman bent over in front of him, the nicely curved globes of her ass cheeks too tempting to ignore.

With a loud roar, Seth came. Ropes of pearly white seed spurted out of his cock, covering his hand and the floor around him. In his mind, he shot all over Nicky's ass. He slumped back against the door and slowly slid down until he sat on the floor.

Seth cradled his head in his hand. What in the hell was happening to him? He'd just jerked off to a fantasy of a woman. He was gay. He'd always been gay, ever since he knew what gay or straight was. He'd never been attracted to a woman. Why this one?

Seth scooted back up the door. He grimaced as he remembered his hand was covered in cum as was the floor. He grabbed a washcloth from the kitchen and cleaned up the floor then headed to the shower.

He needed to do something to get his mind off the tempting ass of the woman down the hallway. He needed to

reaffirm to himself that he was a gay man and he knew just the man to help him with that.

The moment Seth stepped out of the shower he wrapped a towel around his waist and made his way to the phone. He knew the number by heart, dialed it, and waited for Ricky to pick up on the other end.

"This is me," Ricky said. "Is this you?"

"Ricky, you're such a smartass." Seth chuckled, feeling more at ease by the moment. "Do you always answer your phone that way?"

"Only for you, love."

Seth rolled his eyes. Ricky was a fruit and not because he was gay. He was just downright nuttier than a bed bug. But, he was also a good friend and former lover. It was just too bad they couldn't get along in a relationship. The sex was phenomenal.

But more than twenty-four hours spent in Ricky's company and Seth was itching to strangle the man. For a few hours in the evening however, Ricky could show him a good time.

"You hooked up at the moment, Ricky?"

"You know I'm saving myself for you, love."

"Ricky!"

Ricky chuckled. "Naw, I'm free, man."

"What happened to that banker you were seeing?" Seth asked.

"Married, the asshole."

"Married never stopped you before, Ricky," Seth snickered. It didn't. Rick wasn't too choosy about his bed partners.

"Yeah, but he was married to another guy," Ricky said as if the banker had done something horrific. "I don't much care if married people want to fool around a bit. Even they need to get laid, but fooling around on another guy? That's just wrong."

"Ah hell, Ricky, I didn't know you had scruples."

"Fuck you, man, even I have standards."

Seth chuckled. "Yeah, okay, I get you. Do you still want to go out tonight?"

"Fringe?" Ricky asked, naming one of the gay clubs they liked visiting.

"That's the plan."

"Ooh, I'll get my dancing shoes."

"I'll meet you there at nine, okay?"

"I'll be waiting."

Seth shook his head as he hung up the phone and headed for his dresser. Ricky really was a great guy. Seth liked him a lot. It was just too bad they couldn't spend more

than a few hours in each other's company.

They'd tried, twice. Both times they fought so much it nearly came to blows. They ended up deciding that they made better friends and occasional hookups than anything serious. It was too rough on their friendship.

Seth pulled a simple t-shirt and a pair of tight jeans out of his dresser. He tossed them on the bed and went into the bathroom to get ready. Brush his teeth, a comb through his hair, a little cologne, and he was just about ready to go.

He got dressed, grabbed his cell phone and wallet, shoving them in his pocket. Grabbing his keys, Seth went out the door, locking it behind him. As he passed Nicky's door he slowed, hearing soft music coming from inside.

Seth almost knocked on the door but curled his hand into a fist and made himself walk on by. He really had no business being interested in Nicky. He needed to get down to the bar and meet up with Ricky, get his head screwed back on straight.

And maybe just plain get screwed.

CHAPTER 3

Nicky held his breath as footsteps paused outside his door. He peeked through the keyhole, his breath coming out in a rush when he spotted Seth standing on the other side of the door. A moment later, Seth walked away.

Nicky hurried to the window and watched Seth walk out of the building. The man paused next to a small two door car and glanced back at the building. Nicky jumped out of the way, pressing his back against the wall.

He waited several moments then peered out the window again. Seth and his car were both gone. Nicky pressed his hand against the window, wishing he was anyone but who he was. He hated his life.

Nicky turned away from the window when his cell phone rang. He quickly crossed the room and picked it up off the kitchen counter, looking at the caller ID before he flipped it open and put it to his ear. "Hello, Detective Storm."

"Nicky, how many times do I have to tell you, call me Elliot."

Nicky smiled even though he knew the detective couldn't see it. "Hello, Elliot."

"That's better," Elliot said. "Now, did you get

settled okay?"

"Yes, I got everything moved in and the rental truck returned just as directed." Nicky glanced around the room at all boxes stacked everywhere. "I'm up to my ass in boxes but it shouldn't take me too long to get moved in."

"It won't be forever, Nicky, you know that. The trial will be here soon enough and then you can move back home."

"If they don't find me first."

"These guys are looking for Nicholas Rylander, a gay man with short dark brown hair who lives in Boston. They are not looking for Nicky Ryland, a woman with long light brown hair who lives across the country. Just remember to stay in character and you'll be fine."

Nicky frowned and glanced down at the two small bumps hidden under his shirt. "Easy for you to say. You don't have boobs."

"Neither do you, Nicky." Elliot sighed. "Look, I'm sorry you have to go through this. I know it's tough but until the trial, this is the best option for you. We've already had one close call. I don't want you to go through another one."

"Yeah, so much for witness protection," Nicky snorted. "I thought those marshals were supposed to be the

best at hiding someone."

"I don't know what to tell you, Nicky," Elliot replied. "They are supposed to be the best. I don't know how Morales' guys found you. It wasn't supposed to happen. We're just lucky you were able to get away. If they had caught you..."

"I'd be just as dead as Juan." Nicky swallowed past the lump in his throat. He knew how close he had come to dying, just like his best friend, Juan. If his body wasn't so small and he hadn't been able to squeeze out the bathroom window Morales and his goons would have caught and killed him, just like they killed Juan.

"I swear we're working as fast as we can to build a case against Morales. We'll get this guy, Nicky, and then you can come back home."

Nicky felt bad. Detective Elliot Storm did everything he could to protect Nicky. It had been Nicky's idea to go undercover as a woman and move. Elliot was against it but Nicky had been adamant. He wasn't going to let the marshals protect him again, not when they almost failed once.

"It's not so bad," Nicky said. "I even met someone."

"You met someone?" Elliot said. "Who? Where?"

"My neighbor," Nicky replied. "He helped me move

in some boxes. He seems like a nice guy."

"Nicky, you can't trust anyone," Elliot said. "Give me his name. I'll look him up and see if he has any connection to Boston."

Nicky rolled his eyes. "His name is Seth Leighton. He lives just down the hallway from me in 4C and I doubt he has any connection to Morales. He was already living here. He even warned me to avoid Mrs. Ferguson in 2B. He basically said she's a crotchety old bitch."

Elliot chuckled. "Okay, but I'm still going to look into this guy. We can't be too careful, Nicky. Your life is on the line here."

"I hear you."

"Remember to check in with me regularly and only call me on this number, okay? No one but me knows where you are. I want to keep it that way."

"Yes, Detective Storm," Nicky said. "I'll be a good boy and not play with any strangers."

Elliot chuckled. "Girl, Nicky, you'll be a good girl."

Nicky frowned and glanced back down at the two small bumps in his shirt. "Yeah, right." Nicky hung up the phone and headed for his shower. It was the one place he could go and feel like a man again.

He pulled his shirt over his head then pushed the

shorts off his legs. Beneath that was the specially made underwear he wore. There was a custom plastic cup that fit into a hidden pocket in the front. It kept his *maleness* hidden from anyone that might be looking. It was uncomfortable as hell.

But it wasn't nearly as uncomfortable as the bra he wore with the false breasts sewn into it. Marla, the drag queen who helped turn Nicky into a woman, suggested he have smaller breasts. He was a B cup, whatever that was, just enough to point him out as a woman but not enough to draw attention. Apparently, straight men liked women with big breasts.

He hated pretending to be a woman. However, he hated being dead even more. If pretending to be a woman was what he needed to do to stay alive, then call him woman and hear him roar.

Nicky pulled the bra off and tossed it across the room before walking into the bathroom. The shower was his one solace, the one place that could truly be a man. Too bad he had to do it all by himself. It would have been nice to have a little company.

Maybe even one really hot and sexy neighbor?

CHAPTER 4

Nicky kept an eye out for Seth over the next couple of weeks while he settled into his apartment and his new life. He'd see him occasionally, coming in from somewhere, and hurry to take out his garbage or something so he'd meet up with Seth in the hallway.

Seth was always friendly but not overly so. He'd say hi, ask how Nicky was doing, and then quickly go into his apartment. He never stuck around to chat. After a while, Nicky got the message and stopped stalking the man.

That didn't keep him from watching Seth through his window. The man was just too gorgeous to ignore. Besides, Nicky could always fantasize, and he did a lot of that while in the shower, alone.

Nicky heard a loud bang outside his apartment door. His heart raced as he set his book down, another *man love* romance by G.A. Hauser. It seemed to be the one way he could escape and pretend there were happy endings for gay men somewhere. He certainly wasn't finding one.

He got up and walked over to his door, peering through the peephole. He frowned, opening the door just enough to look out, the chain still in place. Seth and another man were stumbling down the hallway toward his

apartment. Seth was clearly drunk.

Nicky closed the door and took the chain off, opening it back up. "Seth, are you okay?"

"Nicky!" Seth exclaimed, stumbling over to him to wrap an arm around Nicky's shoulders. "Ricky, this is the beautiful Nicky, the woman I was telling you about."

Nicky tried to smile. "Hello."

"So, you're Nicky," Ricky said. "I've been wanting to meet you. Seth has talked about nothing but you for the last two weeks."

"I... uh..."

Nicky felt lips press against the side of his forehead. "Nicky is beautiful," Seth's said, his voice slurring horribly. "Isn't she beautiful, Ricky?"

"Yes," Ricky replied. "Nicky is very beautiful."

There was a look in Ricky's eyes, a glint that told Nicky that the man saw right through his disguise. Nicky wondered if Ricky was going to *out* him or let him keep his secret. Nicky tried to turn the attention away from himself and back to Seth.

"Is he always like this?" Nicky asked as he tried to keep Seth from falling on his face.

"Not until he met you."

"Me?"

"Oh honey, you have Seth tied up in all sorts of knots. He doesn't know if he's coming or going but I'm pretty sure he'd like to be *coming*." The way Ricky said the last word made Nicky's face heat up.

"Maybe we should get him inside where he can sit down?"

Ricky rolled his eyes and walked over to prop Seth up on the other side from Nicky. Together, they got Seth inside of his apartment, walking him into the bedroom and letting him lay down on the bed.

Nicky pulled his shoes off and dropped them on the floor while Ricky loosened his shirt and took off his belt. Nicky waited until Ricky moved away then walked over to stroke his fingers down Seth's cheek. Even plowed out of his mind, Seth still looked gorgeous.

Nicky started to turn away when a hand suddenly grabbed him around the wrist. He looked down to see deep chocolate-brown eyes gazing up at him. "Nicky. Pretty, pretty, Nicky," Seth whispered. "I never wanted a woman like I want you."

Before Nicky could reply, Seth's eyes closed and his hand slipped away, falling down to his chest. Nicky looked down at him a moment longer then turned and walked out of the room. There would be nothing gained from staying.

He found Ricky standing by the kitchen counter, a drink in his hand. He looked amused and curious. "He was telling the truth, you know. He's never wanted a woman like he wants you. But then, he doesn't know you're not a woman, now does he?"

Nicky clenched his fists as he tried to retain control. "I don't know what you're talking about."

Ricky snorted. "Oh bitch, please, I can see right through your little disguise. I'm just surprised that Seth didn't. I always thought he was more perceptive than that and I've known Seth for a lot of years."

"I need to go," Nicky said.

"Are you going to tell him?"

Nicky turned and looked at Ricky. "Are you?"

Ricky gazed at him for several long tense moments then shook his head. "No, I won't tell him but you should."

"I can't."

"Do you have any idea how confused he is right now? Seth has been gay his entire life and now suddenly he finds himself attracted to a woman. Only you're not a woman. Don't you think he would feel better if he knew?"

Nicky shook his head. "It wouldn't matter if he knew the truth."

"It might," Ricky said. "Right now he's so confused

he doesn't know which way is up. For the first time since I've known him he's questioning his sexuality, what he wants, who he is. Knowing that he's attracted to you and that you're really a man might make a big difference to him."

"I—"

"You're a man?"

Nicky's eyes widened as he looked over to see Seth standing in the bedroom doorway. He felt his face pale at the dark look on the man's face, the tight lips and clenched fists. Seth was pissed.

"I wanted to tell you but I—"

"You fucking asshole," Seth growled as he stalked across the room.

Nicky started backing up, fear racing through him. He knew nothing of Seth Leighton beyond what Elliot had been able to dig up. He had no record of being violent but Nicky couldn't tell that by the angry look on his face.

"You lied to me," Seth said. He sounded so angry, but Nicky could hear hurt underlying his rage. "This entire time you lied to me. You knew I was attracted to you and you continued to lie to me."

"No, Seth, you don't—"

"Get out!" Seth growled menacingly as he pointed

to the door. "Get the fuck out of my house. I never want to see you again. Don't stop me in the hallway. Don't call my name. Don't think about me. I don't even want you to acknowledge that I'm alive. I want nothing to do with you."

Nicky quickly looked over at Ricky, hoping he might help but he just shook his head. "You're on your own, honey," Ricky said. "You got yourself into this mess. You get yourself out of it."

Nicky's shoulders slumped. He looked at Seth again, hoping he might be able to get through the man's anger but the thunderous look on his face told Nicky that it was a lost cause. Seth was too angry to forgive him.

Nicky walked to the door and opened it. He paused for a moment, turning his head until he could see Seth's feet. "I'm sorry," he whispered. Nicky jumped when he heard a loud crash against the door as he closed it behind him.

He turned and stared at it for several minutes before walking back to his apartment. He closed his apartment door quietly behind him and sank to the floor, burying his head in his hands.

Nicky squeezed his eyes closed to keep the tears in them from slipping free. This sucked on so many levels. He liked Seth, really liked him. The few times that they talked

were great. Nicky could easily see himself getting involved with the man, if Seth didn't hate him as he obviously did now.

Nicky jerked when his cell phone went off. He quickly pulled it out of his pocket and looked at it, surprised to see Elliot's number on the caller ID. The detective never called unless it was something important.

"Hello, Elliot," Nicky said, hoping his voice sounded somewhat normal. "What's up?"

"Nicky, I don't want to freak you out but I think Morales knows where you are."

"What?" Nicky jumped to his feet and began pacing around his living room. "But how? We didn't tell anyone where I was going. I didn't even tell my mother."

"I know, Nicky, and I'm not positive. It's just a feeling."

Nicky pushed his trembling hand through his hair. "Fuck, Elliot, don't scare me like that."

"Look, Nicky, I just want you to take extra precautions. Keep your doors and windows locked at all times. Don't let anyone in that you don't know. Don't go anywhere unless you have to. Be aware of your surroundings."

Nicky laughed. It sounded bitter even to his ears.

"Guess that means I won't be getting drunk tonight."

"Nicky, are you okay?" Elliot asked. "You sound a little funny."

"No, I'm not okay... but I will be."

"Want to talk about it?"

"Seth found out I'm not a woman," he said quietly.

"I take it that it didn't go well?"

Nicky laughed again. "No, not unless you call him telling me he never wants to see me again going well."

"Oh, Nicky, I'm sorry," Elliot said. "You really liked this guy."

"Yeah, I did." Nicky rubbed his face then dropped his hand. "But I guess it doesn't matter now."

"Maybe when this is all over you can explain it to him," Elliot said.

"I don't think it would make a difference, Elliot. You didn't see how angry he was, how hurt." Nicky shook his head. "No, he doesn't want anything to do with me and I can't say that I blame him. I lied to him."

"You had to, Nicky, you know that."

"Fuck! Maybe it would have just been easier to let Morales catch me."

"Damn it, Nicky, you know that's not true. If Morales gets his hands on you he's going to kill you. There

is no other option. You saw him kill Juan in cold blood. You're the only witness to the crime. He has to kill you before you can testify."

"Yeah, I know but this is all just so hard."

"I know, Nicky, believe me. But Morales needs to be put away before he kills someone else and as long as he's on the loose, you're never going to be safe. We need to put him away."

"I guess you're right."

"You know I am, Nicky."

"I just hate being alone," Nicky said, his voice breaking. He knew he sounded needy but he was. "I miss all of my friends. I miss my family. You're the only person I talk to. Hell, the other day I was grateful that Mrs. Ferguson stopped to talk at me, and she was chewing me out."

"Do you want me to come out for a few days?"

"No, Morales would probably just follow you out and then we'd both be up shit creek."

Elliot chuckled. Nicky gripped the phone harder. He wanted to beg Elliot to come out so he could see a friendly face, someone he knew, but he also knew that would be the worst idea he had. It was better this way, no matter how lonely he was.

"I'll be okay, Elliot, I'm just going to go to bed and see if I can start this day over again."

"You do that," Elliot said. "And remember that you're not alone, Nicky. There are people out there that care about you."

Nicky said goodbye. He closed his phone and looked around his apartment and wondered where those people were because they weren't here with him. He was completely alone.

CHAPTER 5

"Can I help you?" Seth asked as he opened his door to a tall dark haired man he'd never seen before.

"Seth Leighton?" the man asked as he flashed a police badge. "I'm Detective Elliot Storm. I'd like to speak to you if I may?"

Seth frowned as he stepped back and allowed the man into his apartment. "Am I in some sort of trouble?"

"No, not exactly," Elliot said as he turned to face Seth. "I need to talk to you about your neighbor, Nicholas Rylander."

"I'm sorry, I don't know any Nicholas Rylander."

"Yes, you do, only you know him as Nicky Ryland."

"Like I said," Seth could feel his face cloud as he crossed his arms over his chest, "I don't know the man."

"Look, Nicky doesn't know I'm here," Elliot said. "He'd be pissed if he did, but I felt I had to come."

"I don't know why," Seth replied. "I have nothing to say and even if I did, I certainly wouldn't want to discuss someone I barely know."

"Nicky's in hiding."

"What?" Seth unfolded his arms, suddenly

interested in what the detective had to say.

"Nicky witnessed a friend get murdered in cold blood. The man who killed his friend is now after Nicky, and the only way to keep him safe was for him to travel halfway across the country and pretend to be a woman."

"He saw someone get murdered? Isn't there some sort of witness protection or something he should be in?"

"We tried that. The killer found him. If Nicky hadn't thought to sneak out the bathroom window and escape, he'd be dead. As it was, we lost two of our best agents. Nicky is now the only witness to both murders. He can put this guy away for the rest of his life."

"Fuck!" Seth stumbled over to a chair and sat down. He looked up when Elliot sat down across from him.

"That's why—"

"That's why Nicky is pretending to be a woman," Elliot said. "That's also why he didn't say anything to you. He told me he met you and I was doing a background check on you before he said anything."

"How much danger is he in?" Seth asked. What he was hearing was almost too hard to believe. Things like this only happened in the movies.

"Let's put it this way, I'm the only person that knows Nicky is here. He left his job, his home, his friends

and family, his entire life to move across the country and live as a woman. How much danger do you think he'd have to be in to do that?"

Seth felt totally confused. "Aren't you afraid I could be working for this guy or turn Nicky in to him?"

"I wouldn't be here if I thought that. I had you completely checked out before I even caught the plane out here."

"Why are you telling me all of this?"

"Nicky is out here all alone. He can't even call home to talk to his mother or any of his friends. I'm the only person he talks to. And then you came along. He's talked of nothing *but* you since the day he met you."

"Me?"

Elliot nodded. "He was devastated when you found out he was a man and not a woman."

Seth felt his anger start to crawl back in. "Because he got found out? Don't worry, detective, you can fly back to where ever you came from with a clear conscious. I won't rat Nicky out."

"That's not why I'm here, Seth."

"Then why in the fuck are you here?"

"Because Nicky is all alone out here and you're the first person he's taken a liking to. I know you told him you

never wanted to see him again and he's respecting that. He's staying away, just as you asked. But—"

"What do you want from me?"

"I want you to go talk to him."

"Why? If what you're saying is true as soon as you catch this guy Nicky's just going to head home. What possible reason could I have for getting involved with a man that's just going to leave me in a few weeks?"

"Who said he was leaving?" Elliot asked.

Seth blinked. "What?"

"I never said he was leaving, Seth, you did. I'm not saying that isn't a possibility but you have to give him a reason to stay. Besides, living out here on the west coast is a whole lot safer for Nicky than moving back to Boston."

Seth frowned. He didn't like the way the detective phrased that. "I thought if he testified against this Morales guy that he'd be safe. Won't the guy be behind bars?"

"Yes, and hopefully he'll go away for many years. That doesn't mean Nicky's life back in Boston is a safe one, even with Morales out of the picture."

"What aren't you telling me?"

"Has Nicky ever told you what he did for a living?"

"No, I guess we never really talked that much."

"Nicky will kill me if he ever finds out I told you

but I guess my butt is in the sling enough for just being here. I might as well tell you the rest of it." Elliot looked hesitant to Seth but he wasn't about to interrupt the man. Curiosity ate away at him. "Nicky and Juan were exotic dancers in a gay club owned by Morales."

Seth's mouth dropped open in shock. Visions of Nicky dancing for him and him alone suddenly filled his head. He could just picture that perfect little body dancing to some music. It made his cock harden and ache.

"When Morales tried to convince them to do a little side business for some of his clients, Nicky said no. Juan said yes. One night Juan didn't show up for work. Nicky went to talk to Morales about it. That's when he saw Morales kill Juan."

"Morales wanted them to sell themselves, didn't he?" Seth asked. His hands tightened into fists as he imagined Nicky selling his body for money. His hard on started to die away.

"Not exactly," Elliot replied. "Morales wanted them to let *him* sell them. I also believe he planned to get them hooked on drugs to keep them pliable. We found large amounts of heroin in Juan's system after he was killed."

"Fuck, this man is a monster!"

"Which is why we need Nicky's help to put him

away," Elliot said. "I also hope you can understand why Nicky was posing as a woman. It was the only way we could think of to keep him safe."

Seth twisted his hands together on the table, staring down at them. "Yeah, I understand. I still don't know what to think of all of this or why you've told me."

"I told you because Nicky is a good guy who's been given a really raw deal. He deserves a little happiness."

"And you think I'm the answer for that?"

Elliot shrugged. "I can't say. That's between you and Nicky. I just want him to have the chance. If telling you what is really going on in his life, and why he didn't say anything to you, gives him that chance then I'm all for it."

"Christ! You're a fucking fairy godmother!" Seth burst out laughing.

"Yeah, well, you'll have to forgive me." Elliot chuckled. "I left my magic wand back in Boston."

"Look," Seth said as he glanced around the room, anywhere but at the detective, "I don't mean to be rude or anything but I think I need to go talk with Nicky."

"Hey, no problem," Elliot said. He held his hands up and stood to his feet. "Just point me in the direction of the nearest gay bar and I'll get out of your hair."

"You?" Seth sputtered. "You want to go to a gay

bar?"

"How else am I going to get laid?" Elliot smirked.

"I don't do women either."

"If you're gay then why haven't you made a play for Nicky?" he asked. "He's the hottest damn thing I've ever seen."

"Nicky is cute, I'll give you that, but he just isn't my type."

Seth whistled. "He sure as hell is mine."

"I tend to like my men with a little more, well, everything. Nicky is cute but he looks too much like a china doll for my tastes. I like knowing that the person in my arms is a guy without having to look."

Seth chuckled. "Let me make a phone call. I think I have just the person to escort you around and show you a good time."

Elliot shoved his thumbs into the pockets of his jeans and balanced on the heels of his feet. "Do tell, please."

"His name is Ricky," Seth replied. "We're old friends."

"Lovers?"

"Once upon a time. The sex wasn't a problem, great in fact." Seth shrugged. "I just can't spend more than

twenty-four hours with the guy without wanting to strangle him. He's crazier than a bedbug."

"I doubt I'll be here in twenty-four hours."

Seth grinned. "Exactly."

"He sounds perfect."

CHAPTER 6

Nicky looked through the peephole, frowning in confusion when he couldn't see anything except a picture of two men together on the front cover of a book. He checked to see that the chain was in place and slowly cracked the door open.

The moment he did, he saw Seth standing there, a stack of books in his hands. He held one up. "I was curious about what would be so intriguing about G.A. Hauser's books that you would have so many of them. So, I ordered some online." He put the book on the stack and smiled at Nicky. "And then I curled up and read them. I have to say I was surprised, Nicky. The dialogue was humorous and intriguing. The plotlines kept me turning each page, and the sex scenes had me jerking off on a few different occasions."

Nicky felt his face flame. He dropped his eyes, not sure why Seth was even talking to him let alone sharing such intimate details with him.

"But, you want to know what I liked best, Nicky?"

Nicky couldn't have prevented his eyes from rising to meet Seth's if the place was on fire. Curiosity filled him only to be overridden by arousal so hot and strong that it

took his breath away.

"I liked the love between the characters, the way that by the end of the book they had worked out their problems and had a happy ending." Seth smiled at Nicky again. "I like happy endings, Nicky. Don't you?"

Nicky's eyebrows drew together in a frown. This was the weirdest conversation he could ever remember having. But at least Seth was talking to him. That was something. "Yes, I like happy endings."

"Then why don't you open the door and we can work on our own happy ending?"

Images of Seth shouting at him, of the man saying he never wanted to see him again, flashed through Nicky's mind and suddenly he knew that Seth was just fucking with him. Hurt so powerful that it nearly brought Nicky to his knees swept through him.

"Go away, Seth," Nicky snapped as he slammed the door closed and leaned his forehead against it. He took a deep breath then closed his mouth when a sob threatened to escape. He knew what he did to Seth was wrong but he never imagined Seth would be so cruel to him in return.

"Please, Nicky?" Seth said quietly through the door. "Let me come in so we can talk."

Nicky slid the chain off the door almost against his

will. He didn't want to hear Seth yelling at him anymore but the guy probably had the right to get it off his chest, especially now that he was sober.

He took several steps away from the door, then wrapped his arms around his waist. He watched the door slowly open and Seth step inside, closing and locking the door behind him. Seth still had a stack of books in his hands. He walked over and set them down on the table then looked over at Nicky.

He looked nervous to Nicky, his hands shoved into the pockets of his jeans as he glanced around the apartment. "All moved in, I see."

Nicky nodded. "It didn't take long. I didn't have anything else to do."

Seth nodded. "Is that your real hair?"

Nicky grabbed the long locks of curly hair and pulled it through his fingers. "Most of it," Nicky replied. "I had some extensions put in to make it longer."

"It looks nice."

Nicky blinked. He didn't know what to say to that. The words *thank you* just didn't seem appropriate considering the situation.

"Can I see what you look like without your disguise?"

"I—"

"Please, Nicky?"

"It might take a little while."

"I'll wait."

Nicky watched Seth for another moment then turned and walked into his bedroom. He didn't know why he was agreeing to this. He didn't know what difference it would make. But just once he wanted to be a man around Seth.

It didn't take Nicky long to take the specially made bra and underwear off and replace them with a simple cotton shirt and a pair of jeans. The makeup took a little longer, especially the nail polish. He couldn't remove the acrylic nails because he'd need to paint them up again when Seth left but he could remove the nail polish.

Finally, he was done. He looked at himself in the mirror and wondered if Seth would like him now that he looked like a man. Well, except for the long hair. That Nicky could do nothing about.

With a deep breath for courage, Nicky walked out of his bedroom and back into the main room. His heart seized for a moment when he couldn't immediately spot Seth, thinking he might have left. Then he saw him standing by the window. His back was toward Nicky.

"I want to tell you how sorry I am for the way I reacted, Nicky," he said without turning around. "I was upset that you lied to me but I understand why you did it. I just hope you can give me the chance to prove I'm not a complete asshole."

"What changed your mind?"

"I had a visit from your fairy godmother." Seth chuckled and turned around. He sucked in a quick breath. "Fuck me, you're even sexier than I thought you'd be."

Nicky didn't know which statement to address first, his fairy godmother or the sexy part. The sexy part won out when Nicky got a look at the bulge growing steadily in Seth's pants. He could only hope it was meant for him.

"You think I'm sexy?" Nicky whispered. It seemed like forever since someone had looked at him the way Seth looked at him. It made Nicky tingle right down to his toes.

Nicky couldn't move under the intensity of Seth's gaze. He held his breath as the man moved slowly toward him until Seth stopped so close to him that their chests nearly touched. Seth stroked the side of Nicky's face with the back of his hand.

"I think you're breathtaking, Nicky." Seth leaned closer, his lips a mere breath away from Nicky's. "I'm going to kiss you now."

Nicky's eyes dropped down to Seth's plush lips and he watched them get closer until they touched his. He felt Seth's tongue move out to trace over his lips. Nicky groaned and leaned closer to Seth, wanting to feel the man's body pressed against his.

The kiss was filled with more passion than Nicky had ever felt, hunger and heat filling the space between them then enveloping them together. Nicky's hands clenched in Seth's t-shirt. He felt Seth's hands on his back, roaming, caressing.

"I want to see you, Nicky, touch you," Seth murmured against Nicky's lips. "I want you naked in my arms."

Nicky was all for that. He leaned back and whipped his shirt over his head, tossing it across the room, then reached for the buttons of his jeans. Seth's hands grabbed his. Nicky looked up in confusion.

"Let me."

Nicky grinned and let his hands fall away. He could see Seth's hands tremble as the man unbuttoned his jeans and lowered the zipper. Seth parted the material then slowly pushed the jeans down Nicky's legs. Nicky kicked them away and stood before Seth naked.

He would have worried and been nervous if Seth

hadn't at that moment growled low in his chest and grabbed Nicky and picked him up in his arms. The next thing Nicky he knew he was upside down looking at a jean encased ass and Seth was walking through the apartment.

Nicky laughed as he was tossed through the air and landed on his bed. Seth immediately followed him down, settling between Nicky's legs. Before Nicky could even catch his breath, Seth's hands were all over him, touching and caressing as he wanted to.

Each touch, each small caress, burned against Nicky's skin. But Nicky needed more. He needed to feel Seth's skin against his. He pulled at Seth's shirt. "Off!"

Seth sat up and pulled his shirt over his head. He dropped it on the floor then quickly kicked his shoes off and pushed his jeans down his legs. Nicky chuckled when he noticed that Seth didn't wear any underwear.

"I like a man that goes commando," he said as he reached for Seth. "Easier access."

Seth climbed right back between Nicky's legs. "You have lube? Condoms?"

Nicky pointed to the nightstand next to the bed. "I bought both the day after I met you."

Seth started to reach for them then paused to stare down at Nicky. "Really? You bought lube and condoms

after meeting me?"

Nicky shrugged, feeling his face heat up. "I didn't have any and I hoped that... well..."

Seth grinned. "You hoped you'd get to see me again?"

"Yeah."

Seth rolled over onto his back and spread his arms and legs wide. "Well, here I am. What do you plan to do with me?"

Nicky rolled over and gazed at Seth's incredible body. He could think of about three million things he wanted to do to Seth, and that was just tonight. He'd save the others for next time.

"G.A. Hauser wrote this great story called *Calling Dr. Love*. Did you read that one?"

"Yes." Seth sounded confused.

"Do you remember the scene at the very beginning of the book when they were caught in the dark and they brailed each other?"

"Yes."

Nicky grinned. "You want to get the lights or should I?"

"Fuck, you're going to kill me," Seth hissed.

Nicky climbed over to kneel between Seth's legs.

He rested his hands on the man's thighs and licked his lips as he looked down at the hard cock rising before him.

"Killing you is not exactly what I had in mind."

"What did you have in mind then?"

Nicky leaned forward until his mouth was directly over Seth's cock. He glanced up to find Seth watching him intently. "Let me show you." Holding his eyes, Nicky lowered his mouth over the head of Seth's cock.

Nicky could hear Seth panting. He watched his eyes widen then close tightly for a brief moment. Just as quickly they flashed back open, as if Seth couldn't stand to look away from what Nicky was doing to him.

"Damn, Nicky," Seth groaned. "Your mouth is fucking perfect."

Nicky grinned around the hard shaft in his mouth before tightening his lips and sliding down to the base. The short, curly hairs on Seth's groin tickled his nose. Nicky inhaled deeply. A strong musky masculine scent filled his senses. Nicky groaned, overwhelmed.

He did feel a little ridiculous sniffing the crotch of another man but he couldn't help it. Seth smelled really fucking good; Nicky could sniff him for hours. Seth tasted even better. He felt pretty sure he would develop a deep obsession with having Seth's dick in his mouth. With the

way Seth groaned and squirmed on the bed, Nicky didn't think he'd have a problem with it.

He swallowed, feeling the head of Seth's cock brush the back of his throat. He wanted to give Seth the best time of his life, prove to him that he was all man even if he did dress like a woman. He was determined to drive Seth out of his mind.

The flames of passion burned in both of them. Nicky could feel his cock throbbing just as Seth's pulsed in his mouth. Nicky renewed his vigor. He sucked harder until his cheeks hollowed out. He licked until his tongue felt numb. He caressed silky naked skin until he didn't know where he began and Seth ended.

"Nicky, fuck, Nicky, need—"

Nicky knew exactly what Seth needed. He sat up and knelt between Seth's legs once more. Grabbing the lube, he liberally coated his fingers then reached around to press them inside his ass.

Having Seth's dick in his mouth told him exactly how much he needed to stretch himself out. Seth wasn't massive, but he was big enough. Nicky would need to be plenty stretched if he didn't want to be hurt.

"Fuck! Are you—" Seth leaned up on his elbows to watch. He couldn't see exactly what Nicky was doing but

Nicky knew he was imagining it. Seth's cock started jerking with each movement of Nicky's fingers almost as if it anticipated being there instead.

Finally, Nicky rolled a condom down Seth's cock and added more lube. He crawled up Seth's body until he straddled the man. He legs pressed against Seth's sides, his hands rested on his chest.

"Ready for me, handsome?"

Seth just blinked. His chocolate-brown eyes were dazed, his jaw clenched. Nicky could see small beads of sweat dripping down his temples. Nicky exalted at the male strength, the beauty of the man before him.

He watched Seth's face as he slowly lowered himself down onto his hard cock, impaling himself inch by inch until his ass rested against the short curly hairs he'd inhaled moments before.

"Fuck me! Your ass is even better than your mouth," Seth growled. Nicky arched his back as Seth grabbed his hips and pumped up into him. The feeling was glorious. Seth's cock seemed to fill every inch of him, rubbing over his sweet spot with every thrust.

Nicky planted his hands on Seth's chest, abandoning himself to the whirl of sensation searing through his body. It was all he could do to hang on as Seth's hands gripped

his hips tightly and he drove his body up into Nicky.

A deep feeling of peace and contentment entered Nicky. Seth was claiming him mind, body, and soul. Nicky savored the feeling of satisfaction that fact gave him. This wasn't just about sex. It was a raw act of possession.

A deep moan slipped through Nicky's lips as his whole being flooded with desire and he was hurled beyond the point of return. His body shuddered as ecstasy arced through his body, igniting his release until he shot pearly white seed all over Seth's chest.

He dimly heard a loud roar and felt Seth's hands tighten on his hips. Seth's body arched into his, the man's cock driving so far into his ass Nicky wasn't sure he'd ever come out. Nicky leaned over and rested his head on Seth's chest as the man's cock pulsed inside of him with his release. He could feel each spurt, each jerk of Seth's body beneath him.

Seth quivered. He panted heavily. His hands caressed Nicky's back. His lips pressed little kisses over Nicky's head and the side of his face. "God, you're fucking perfect, Nicky," Seth whispered.

Nicky chuckled and pushed himself up to look into Seth's eyes. "Maybe next time we can try out a scene from *The Boy Next Door*?"

Seth laughed. "Damn, do you have all of G.A.'s books?"

Nicky smirked. "If I don't have them in print I have them on my laptop. Did you read the one with the vampire and the—"

"Whoa, whoa," Seth said as he held up his hand to stop him. Nicky arched his eyebrow at Seth. "I haven't read them all yet. Don't spoil it for me. I'd prefer to read them first without knowing what happens."

Nicky pouted, sticking his lower lip out. "Does that mean I can't try some of the sex scenes out on you?"

Seth opened his mouth for a moment then snapped it shut. He frowned and opened his mouth again. "Do I look stupid? Consider me your guinea pig."

"I'd rather consider you my lover." Nicky held his breath as he waited for Seth's reply. It was almost instantaneous. Seth's facial features softened, matching the twinkle in his chocolate-brown eyes and the smile on his lips.

"I'd like that."

CHAPTER 7

Seth was fascinated as he watched Nicky paint another layer of pink on his fingernails. He seemed almost too good at it for a man who had pretended to be a woman for only a couple of months.

"Is pink the only color you have?"

Nicky glanced over his shoulder at Seth and shook his head. "No, I have other colors. Why? Don't you like pink?"

Seth blinked. "Uh, I've never really thought about it before. It was just never an issue."

"You might want to think about it then." Nicky chuckled and reached for a black lidded box sitting on the bed next to him. He handed it to Seth. "These are all the colors I have. If there's one in there you like more, just say so. It's easy enough to change nail colors."

Seth couldn't believe he was actually going through a box of nail polish looking for a color he might like. Of course, the fire engine red was nice. He held it out to Nicky. "How about this one?"

Nicky took the bottle and tilted it back to read the small label on the bottom of the bottle. "Salsa Red," he said, "hmmm, not bad. I think I might have an outfit or two

to go with this."

Seth leaned back against the headboard and folded his hands behind his head as he watched Nicky clean the pink polish off his nails and begin applying the red. "Nicky, do you have any idea how fucking weird this is for me?"

Nicky snorted. "Try living it. You at least still get to be a man, while I can't leave my bedroom unless I'm dressed as a girl. And you should see some of the looks I get when I walk down the street. Marla swore to me that a B-cup would make me less noticeable. She lied."

"It's not the tits, babe, it's the ass." Seth chuckled at the astonished look on Nicky's face. "Oh, come on, you have to know your ass is perfection. It doesn't matter what sex you are, everyone is going to notice."

"I'm a guy!"

"Okay, then you're a guy with a great ass."

Seth laughed as he caught the pillow Nicky threw at him. "Sorry, babe, but it's the truth. You could be wearing a gunny sack and people are still going to notice that great ass of yours. If you were hoping to get away from it by being a girl, you failed. It's what drove me crazy before I even knew who you were."

"Yeah?"

Seth smirked when he saw Nicky's face flush. "The

day I met you I saw that perfect little ass. It was the first thing I noticed about you. Hell, I ran home after that and jerked off the minute my door was closed. I didn't even make into my bedroom."

Seth loved the grin that crossed Nicky's lips.

"Yeah?"

"Yeah." Seth grinned back at Nicky, watching his face flush as he dipped his head and went back to painting his nails Salsa Red. "So, what kind of outfits do you have that match red? Anything you can wear out in public?"

Nicky's head snapped up. "You want to go out in public with me?"

Seth shrugged his shoulders. "Sure, why wouldn't I?"

"Seth, I'm dressed as a girl."

"So? It just means people won't look at me funny when I hold your hand or kiss you," Seth explained. "We'll go window shopping, out to dinner. We'll just be a guy and a girl out on a date."

Nicky's eyebrows furrowed as he seemed to be thinking the idea over, then a mischievous smile lit up his face. "Do you think we could pull it off?"

"You fooled me into thinking you were a girl for nearly two weeks," Seth said. "I'm pretty sure you could

fool most people as long as they don't look too closely."

Nicky's face fell a little. "I told you I was sorry about that."

Seth scooted forward to wrap his arms around Nicky's waist, pulling the man back against him. He nuzzled the side of Nicky's neck. "I know, babe, and I understand. I told you that. I wasn't trying to bring it up again. I just wanted to point out that most people will see you as a woman if you dress and behave as a woman."

"But you'll know I'm a man, right?"

"I have no doubt that you're a man, Nicky," Seth chuckled. "My man."

Nicky's head fell back against Seth's shoulder. Seth growled at the silky expanse of skin exposed on Nicky's neck. Seth loved the soft curves and rounded angles on Nicky's body. Every glorious inch made Seth's cock harder than a rock.

"Do you think we know each other well enough for you to say that, Seth?" Nicky whispered. Seth could hear the uncertainty in Nicky's voice, the hesitation. "It's only been a couple of weeks."

"Probably not, but I'm going to say it anyway," Seth murmured against Nicky's neck. "I don't care how long we've known each other, Nicky. I know how I feel when

I'm with you and I know how I feel when I'm without you."

Seth grabbed Nicky's chin and tilted his face so he could look into his eyes. "I'm happy when I'm with you. Without you is like death. I might not feel that way if I'd never met you but I did and I do. So, deal with it."

"You're crazy." Nicky laughed.

"But I'm right and you know it."

"It just seems all so unreal," Nicky said. "What if we spend more time together and figure out we really don't like each other? Great sex can't sustain us forever. Eventually we need to face real life."

"Nicky, great sex is..." Seth snickered, "well, great, but I'd still want to be with you even if we didn't have sex. There's more to you than just your ability to suck a golf ball through a hundred feet of garden hose or your great ass, although it is a great ass. You're kind and giving, funny. You're also damn smart. And I just generally like being around you."

"And you know that after we've spent only a few nights together?"

"Time is relative, Nicky, a few nights or a few years. There's no difference. I know how I feel." He wiggled his eyebrows. "Besides, you have great taste in reading material."

"Oh I see." Nicky laughed. "You're just after me for my books."

Seth flipped Nicky over onto his stomach and leaned down to sink his teeth into the man's pert little ass. "Are you kidding?" he growled. "I'm after you for this ass."

Nicky swatted him away. "You can have my ass later. You promised me window shopping and dinner, remember?"

Seth groaned in protest as he rolled off of Nicky and flopped down beside him. "Fine," he said in a put upon voice. "Go put on your prettiest dress and I'll take you out."

Nicky smacked his arm then crawled off the bed. Seth grabbed his arm and gave Nicky a look of mock astonishment. "What? Was it something I said?"

Nicky wagged a finger at him. The other hand was planted on Nicky's hip as his indignation showed through. "One of these days, Mr. Leighton, you're going to forget I'm a man and then I'll have to show you that I'm just as good at giving as I am at receiving."

Seth chuckled. He didn't see that as a threat. He actually looked forward to Nicky taking his ass. "Promise?"

"Grrr," Nicky growled as he tossed his hands up in the air and walked into the bathroom.

Seth laughed and rolled to sit up. He hated upsetting

Nicky but he loved watching him have a fit. The man was just too damn sexy for his own good, or was that Seth's own good? It didn't matter really, both aroused him.

He was pretty certain he'd been hard since the moment he spotted Nicky picking up a box on the day he moved in. Since the night several days ago when Seth pulled his head out of his ass and begged Nicky's forgiveness, they'd barely been apart.

Of course, during that time, Nicky tried to dress as a man as much as possible. This would be Seth's big test, going out in public with Nicky dressed as a woman. Nicky worried that Seth would forget he only masqueraded as a woman. Seth worried that he wouldn't be able to forget that Nicky was a man.

"Nicky," Seth called out as he pulled his jeans on, "is there somewhere special you'd like to eat or do you just want to find what we find?"

Nicky stuck his head out the bathroom door. Seth could see that he'd already started applying his makeup. "I'd actually just like to find what we find. Maybe we can walk down by the town square and along the river?"

"Cool," Seth replied. "There's a lot of little market stands down that way. We can do a little shopping and check everything out, listen to some music, and maybe

have dinner in the square? Sound like a plan?"

"Works for me," Nicky said as he went back into the bathroom.

"Then remember to wear something you can walk in. Jeans would be fine, right? You can still look like a girl if you were jeans, can't you?"

"You tell me." Nicky walked out of the bathroom and over to his dresser. He pulled out a pair of faded denim jeans. Seth could feel the hairs on the back of his neck start to stand up as he watched Nicky shimmy into them.

Nicky zipped and buttoned his jeans before he pulled a red ribbed tank top on over his head and the fake bra he wore. He added a simple button down lightweight denim shirt over his tank top. He finished the ensemble with leather sandals that showed off his red painted toenails and small gold hoop earrings in his ears.

He raised his hands out to his side and turned in a circle. "Well, how do I look?"

"Fucking hot!" Seth growled.

Nicky rolled his eyes. "Seth!" His hands landed on his hips as he glared across the room at Seth. "Do I look enough like a girl to pass?"

"You look beautiful, just like a woman should. I'm just excited by the fact that I really know what's under all

that makeup and false accessories." Seth walked over to stand in front of Nicky. He stroked his hands through Nicky's long wavy hair. "I can't wait to get home and peel you out of all of this."

Nicky chuckled. "You say the nicest things."

The grin that crossed Seth's face seemed to startle Nicky. His breathing hitched, his eyes widened. Seth frowned, concern racing through him. "Nicky, did I say something wrong?"

"Wha—" Nicky's eyes darted up to his. 'Oh, no, I was just thinking about how weird this is going to be. Back home there were certain areas of town where you might get away with the occasional hand holding or a quick kiss but certainly nothing like what happens between a man and a woman." Nicky shrugged. "If I can really pull off pretending to be a woman, no one will look at us cross eyed if we hold hands and kiss. We can do almost anything we want and no one will harass us because they will think we're a man and a woman instead of two men."

"Do you want to stay home?"

"No." Nicky chuckled a little. "It will just be different, I guess."

"Nicky, it's not right. You and I both know that. We should be able to do whatever we want whether a guy and a

girl or two guys or even two girls. It's just the way it is. Maybe with time that will change but for right now..."

"I know. I just—" Nicky shook his head, a sad little frown making his lips turn down.

"If it makes you feel any better, I'd hold hands with you no matter where we were or how we looked." Seth stroked his hand down the side of Nicky's face. "And I don't care what anyone says about it."

Nicky's lips turned up. "Yeah, it does. Thank you."

"Then, are you ready to go?"

"Probably not, but let's do it anyway. I've been cooped up in this apartment so long I'm starting to go crazy. Pretty soon I'm going to start relating to Mrs. Ferguson."

"Oh, well, we can't have that." Seth laughed. "The old bat is a witch." Seth took Nicky's hand and started walking toward the front door.

"Actually, I think she's just lonely and believe me, I understand that."

"Seriously? The woman has never said a kind word to me since the day I moved in."

"Have you said a nice word to her?"

Seth paused at the front door and stared down at Nicky. Every encounter he ever had with the old woman

who lived downstairs flashed through his mind. Seth winced a little as he realized he probably hadn't been that neighborly.

"Uh huh, that's what I thought," Nicky said as he locked the door and walked on ahead of Seth down the hallway. "Try being nice and see where that gets you. Some people are crabby because they are lonely and feel like the world has left them behind."

Seth felt like the world's biggest heel. He'd tried once to be nice to Mrs. Ferguson when he first moved in and been chewed out. That had firmed up his opinion of the woman in his mind and he never tried again. The chasm between them was probably his fault.

Maybe he hadn't looked beyond her natural reaction with strangers to what the older woman might be going through in her own life. He generally tried to stay away from people with sour dispositions. They were depressing. But maybe Mrs. Ferguson had a reason.

"Maybe we could get her some flowers or something while we're out?" Seth wasn't above trying to win someone over with bribery. He wasn't stupid.

"Nothing cut," Nicky said. "Have you seen Mrs. Ferguson's balcony? She has like a million potted plants out there. She wouldn't like cut flowers. A potted plant,

however—"

Seth chuckled, shaking his head. "You amaze me, Nicky. I never even looked at Mrs. Ferguson's balcony let alone noticed that she preferred potted plants. How do you do it?"

"Observation, my dear Watson, observation."

CHAPTER 8

Nicky was having the time of his life. It had been ages since he'd been out on a real date and he never went on one like this one. Seth wanted to romance him. He could see it in the way Seth held his hand and kept all of his attention centered on him.

He got nervous the moment Seth grabbed him around the waist and started waltzing him around the cobblestone square. He worried that someone might say something about two men dancing together in public, especially when Seth dipped him backward then swung him up into a deep passionate kiss.

Nicky felt his face flush when he looked around after the kiss but no one said a word except for the applause they received at the end of the dance. After that, Nicky felt a little more comfortable. They might be able to pull this charade off after all.

They found a stand that served Greek Gyros and bought lunch, finding a cement bench near the fountain to sit on and eat. Nicky grinned at Seth as he finished his food. He felt light, carefree. He couldn't remember enjoying himself more.

"I have something for you," Seth said as he rolled

his wrapper into a ball and stood up to toss it in the garbage. He walked back over to stand in front of Nicky, his hand digging into his pocket.

Nicky's breath caught in his throat. He set his food down and reached for the small gold chain Seth held out to him. He held it in the palm of his hands as he gazed down at it. The necklace was delicate without being too feminine. It could be worn by either a man or a woman.

"Seth," Nicky said as he looked up at the man.

"Why—"

Seth's face was flushed, his hands shoved into his pockets. "I wanted to get you something. That seemed appropriate." He kicked at the ground a little with his foot, looking sheepish. "Besides, it was either that or a ring and I don't think you're ready for that yet."

"Seth—"

Seth suddenly squatted down in front of Nicky, his hands reaching out to hold his. "Look, I've always known things before other people did. I know that sounds funny but it's the only way I can explain it to you. I know myself, Nicky. I don't take long to make decisions and when I do, I stick to them."

Seth took the necklace and unclasped it, holding it out between them. Nicky swallowed hard, the look of

adoration in Seth's eyes making his heart pound wildly in his chest. No one had ever looked at him like that before, as if he was their entire world. He didn't know how that made him feel, excited, elated, or scared out of his mind.

"I told you that I know how I feel about you. I don't need years to make up my mind about you. I knew how I felt our first night together. My feelings for you aren't going to change, Nicky." Seth indicated the necklace in his hand. "I know I'm asking a lot of you but I'd like you to consider wearing this necklace as my promise to you. I'll always be here for you, no matter what. I just want to be with you."

"It hasn't even been a month, Seth."

Nicky's first instinct was to accept the necklace. He wanted more than anything to be with Seth but he didn't know if he could trust what he felt. Everything was just happening way too fast.

"I know, and I want to give you the time to get used to the idea. I'm just asking you to give me a chance, to give us a chance."

"Seth, you do know I was a dancer, right? And I don't mean a ballet dancer or anything." Nicky asked. "I danced on a stage and men put money into my g-string."

"Yeah, I know and I'm hoping someday that you'll

dance for me. I'd like to see that. It's got to be hot."

Nicky frowned. He didn't understand Seth at all. "I let men feel me up for money, Seth. Don't you get that? I worked in a sleazy bar where touching was not only allowed, it was encouraged. Why do you think Morales wanted to hook me out? I was very popular."

"I understand that, Nicky. Elliot explained it all to me when he turned up at my door and told me what an idiot I was being."

"Someone is trying to kill me." If selling himself for money didn't dissuade Seth from wanting him then maybe that would. "If he catches me, or you, we're both dead. I still have to go back to Boston and testify against this man."

"And I'll be right next to you, holding your hand when you go."

Nicky blinked. He hadn't expected that. Seth sounded serious. "Seth, if they don't catch this guy I might have to live the rest of my life as a woman."

Seth smiled and brushed the hair back from Nicky's face. "Then I'll ask you to be my wife instead of my husband."

Nicky's mouth dropped open. Saying he was shocked didn't quite describe how stunned he felt at the

moment. He knew Seth liked him. He just didn't have any idea how much. Nicky couldn't exactly say the same.

Nicky knew he had feelings for Seth. He just didn't know if he loved the guy. He needed more time to examine his feelings and get to know Seth before he could make that decision. It wasn't that easy for him. He'd made a lot of mistakes in his life. He didn't want to make one with Seth.

"Seth, I—" Nicky swallowed again, his throat feeling thick. "I need to think about this. I can't make snap decisions like you."

Seth's eyes saddened but he nodded and stood to his feet. "I understand," he said as he started to shove the necklace back into his pocket.

Nicky's heart ached. He grabbed Seth's hand to stop him, pulling the necklace out of his hand. "I'd like to wear the necklace if you'll allow me to. I didn't say I didn't want to be with you just that I needed more time to understand what's happening between us."

Seth's smile was still tinged with a hint of sadness but there was nothing Nicky could do about it. He couldn't force his feelings for Seth anymore than he could deny that he had them. He just wasn't sure exactly what *they* were.

Nicky held the necklace out to Seth in one hand and grabbed his long hair in the other, pulling it out of the way.

"Put it on me?" he asked tentatively.

He could feel Seth's hands tremble against his skin as he fastened the necklace around his neck. Nicky stroked his fingers over the delicate gold chain as he let his hair fall back into place down his back and turned to face Seth.

"How does it look?"

"Almost as beautiful as you," Seth murmured.

Nicky shivered when Seth's fingers brushed against his collarbone. The man's touch was like fire against his skin, making his flesh tingle and his breathing increase.

Nicky stepped closer to Seth, pressing his body up against his. "Don't give up on me, Seth," he pleaded.

"Please."

Nicky almost sighed as Seth's arms wrapped around him. He laid his forehead against Seth's chest and tried not to give into the overwhelming feelings that raced through him. He wanted this with Seth so much but he was afraid to trust in it. No one fell in love this fast, no one. Life just didn't happen that way, did it?

"Never, baby," Seth whispered against the top of his head. "You can have all the time you need as long as you don't shut me out. I need you like I need air."

Nicky chuckled and tilted his head back so he could look up into Seth's eyes. "I kind of like that."

Seth grinned. "Yeah?"

"Yeah."

"Then do you think we could seal the deal with a kiss?"

Nicky's eyes widened and darted around the little fountain square they stood in before coming back to meet Seth's. "Here?"

"Yes, here."

Before Nicky could protest further he felt Seth's lips press against his. Nicky's toes curled, lust for the man holding him instantly shooting through his body. He clutched at Seth's shirt as he tried to get closer, nipping at Seth's lips.

Nicky suddenly wished that they were back at his apartment where they could be together without pretending he was a woman. He wanted to feel Seth's skin rub against his. He wanted to feel Seth's body press him into the mattress. He just wanted.

"Seth," Nicky moaned against Seth's lips, "can we—"

"Seth?"

Nicky's heart plummeted as he turned to find a young woman standing next to them.

"I thought that was you," the woman said. "Aren't

you going to introduce me to your lady friend?"

Nicky's head whipped back to look at Seth but the man seemed to only have eyes for the woman standing next to them. Nicky started to pull away from Seth, suddenly feeling very nervous and out of place.

Seth's strong arms kept him pinned to the bigger man's side. "Susan, this is Nicky," Seth said, "my girlfriend."

Nicky could feel the blood drain from his face as he gaped at Seth. Had he just been introduced as Seth's girlfriend?

"Girlfriend?" the woman asked. "Since when do you date girls?"

"Since I met Nicky," Seth replied.

"Does Mom know?"

Seth took a deep breath and let it out slowly. Nicky could feel the tension in his body and knew something was up but he couldn't figure out what.

"No, Mom doesn't know and I'd prefer that you didn't say anything, Susan. Nicky and I just started seeing each other and I'd rather introduce her myself."

Nicky frowned at the grin that crossed Susan's face. It made him nervous.

"You really expect me to keep this from Mom?"

Susan asked.

"Susan—"

Susan just laughed. "You've got to be kidding. The minute I tell Mom you're dating a girl she'll get off my back and stop telling me my biological clock is ticking away. You can be on her radar for a while, see how you like it."

"Damn it, Susan, this is none of Mom's business, or yours."

Susan rolled her eyes. "Says you, big brother."

It suddenly dawned on Nicky that they faced Seth's sister. He didn't know why he didn't pick up on that before now. She looked like a smaller, more feminine version of Seth, right down to the deep chocolate-brown eyes.

"I'm so pleased to finally meet you," Nicky said as he plastered a sweet smile on his face. "Seth told me he wanted to introduce me to his family. We've just been waiting for the right time. It's kind of hard to share things with others when it's all so new, you know?"

Susan's smile stuttered as she glanced over at Nicky. "Oh? Just how long have you been dating?"

"Not long really, just a few days. We met a couple of weeks ago when I moved into Seth's building and he offered to help with my boxes." Nicky smiled again and patted Seth's chest with his manicured and painted nails.

"Seth's such a sweetheart."

"Don't lay it on too thick, babe." Seth chuckled but Nicky could still feel the tension in the arm wrapped around his waist. "Susan is my sister. She'll never believe you."

"Nonsense, I'm sure Susan knows how wonderful you are."

"You have been dating for only a few days haven't you?" Susan laughed. "So, when are you going to take your little girlfriend to meet Mom and Dad?"

CHAPTER 9

"I still think this is a really bad idea, Nicky," Seth said as he pulled his car up in front of his parents' house and turned off the engine.

"Are you ashamed of introducing me to your parents?" Nicky asked. "Is it because I'm dressed as a girl?"

"I'm not ashamed of you at all but, Nicky, you need to understand, I've always known I was gay. I've never brought a girl home. My Mother will drill you to death while planning our wedding."

"I've been interrogated before, Seth, and I think the US Marshal's Service is a little scarier than your Mother."

"You'd be wrong," Seth snorted. "My Mom is a suburban housewife. When she found out I was gay, she joined every rainbow pride parade and activist group in the area. When Susan decided to try out for cheerleading, Mom became the assistant coach just so she could help."

"Sounds like she loves you both a lot."

"She does, but Mom goes a tad bit overboard." Seth waved his hand toward the picturesque house with a perfectly manicured yard, complete with flowers lining the walkway. "I'd bet good money that right now she's inside cooking up a storm and setting out the good china so she

can make a good impression on my date."

"Bring home dates often do you?" Nicky smiled but he was actually curious, and a bit jealous. He didn't like the idea of Seth being with anyone else. Nicky reached up and ran his fingers over the thin gold necklace encircling his throat as he waited for Seth to reply. Somehow, it gave him a measure of calm.

"Actually, no, I've never brought anyone home, male or female, which is why this has me so worried. Mom is going to go out of her mind, especially when I bring a girl home after so many years of being gay."

"Do you want to tell them the truth?"

"No!"

Nicky held up his hands in surrender at Seth's words. "Just asking."

"I'm sorry, Nicky." Seth shook his head. "I know I sound like an ass but I won't do anything that might endanger you. Until Morales is caught, the fewer people who know the truth the better."

"Are you sure it's not because I'm dressed as a girl?"

"I'm sure." Seth reached over and grabbed Nicky's hand, bringing it to his lips for a quick kiss. "I don't care if you're a man, woman, or a turtle. I like you just the way you are and I would proudly introduce you to the world as

mine if I could."

"Well, you can certainly introduce Nicky Ryland to anyone you want."

"And I will but it's not the same thing and you know it, Nicky. Despite the makeup and nails, the hair extensions and girly clothes, you are a man, my man, and I want to introduce you that way. But until Morales is caught, I've switched sides."

Seth watched Nicky's mouth drop open more and more with each word he spoke. He thought he detected a sparkle of moisture in Nicky's eyes before the man quickly glanced away and swallowed.

"Okay, I guess I can live with that," Nicky murmured.

Seth frowned as he climbed from the car and walked around to Nicky's side, opening his door. He didn't understand this hang up Nicky seemed to have with dressing as a girl. Maybe it was because he didn't have to? He got to dress as a man. Still, Seth cared for Nicky no matter what the man wore.

It was interesting for him to date someone that dressed as a female, since he'd never once been out with a woman. Seth had noticed the difference when they went out yesterday. No one looked at them if he held Nicky's hand

or kissed him. No one shouted names at them or looked disgusted. He was just a guy out with his girl.

Seth knew his behavior had changed when he discovered no one looked at them twice. He'd held Nicky's hand more often, cradled him closer, and danced around with him as music filled courtyard. Maybe that was why Nicky seemed so reluctant to commit? Seth acted different than he would if he'd been out on a date with a man.

Seth decided that the first time they got to go out together as two men, he would ensure that his behavior wasn't any different than if Nicky was dressed as a woman. He would prove to Nicky that he accepted him, male or female.

Tonight, however...

"My lady," Seth said as he held his hand out to Nicky.

"You so suck." Nicky shot daggers at him as he took the hand Seth held out and climbed from the car.

"Maybe later tonight when we get home we can revisit that statement, love." Nicky rolled his eyes then smoothed down the silky fabric of his dress. Seth grinned. "You look beautiful."

"I look like a girl, Seth."

"Isn't that the point?"

Seth's eyebrows shot up in surprise at the little growl that came from his sweet Nicky's mouth. He wanted to laugh at the disgruntled look on Nicky's face but he was pretty sure he'd receive a knee someplace he didn't want it.

Instead, Seth used the tight grip Nicky had on his hand to pull the other man into his arms, then quickly lowered his lips to cover Nicky's before the man could protest. Seth groaned when Nicky's body melted against his. Nicky might be a man, but he had soft curves and hard spots in all the right places.

"This is no way to introduce me to your parents," Nicky hissed a moment later as he pulled away and rested his forehead against Seth's chin. "It's going to be real hard to pass as a girl with a raging hard on sticking out of my dress. Your mom is sure to notice."

Seth chuckled then kissed the top of Nicky's head. "I'll walk in front of you, if you think that would help."

"Your tight ass walking in front of me? That probably wouldn't help the situation at all." Seth could see a sparkle of amusement in Nicky's eyes when he tilted his head back. "It just might make it worse, in fact."

"I sure as shit can't walk behind you. We'd never even make inside the house."

"Well, we can't stay out here." Nicky snorted. "I can

see someone looking through the front curtain as it is."

Seth whipped around just in time to see the living room curtain fall back into place. He rolled his eyes, knowing his mother stood on the other side of that curtain. Her curiosity must be driving her out of her mind.

"Sorry about that, babe."

"I'm not." Nicky chuckled. "It's actually kind of cute. I expect her to start flipping the porch light on and off any minute now."

"She would too."

"So, I guess our only choice is to walk in side by side then, huh?"

Seth grinned and grabbed Nicky's arm, wrapping it around his. "Shall we, my dear?"

"You know I'm going to pay you back for this, right?" Nicky asked as he fell into step beside Seth and walked up the cobblestone walkway to the front door.

"I'm counting on it."

CHAPTER 10

Nicky's breath fluttered in his chest. He knew meeting them was important to Seth and hoped to make a good impression. He just didn't know how he would accomplish that when he had to lie to them right from the beginning. It didn't bode well for the future, yet another reason Nicky felt so hesitant about committing to Seth.

Seth was quickly turning into everything Nicky ever dreamed of. The man was smart, caring, and drop dead gorgeous. He also seemed to want to stick around for the long haul. He was supportive unlike anyone Nicky had ever met.

Nicky was just terrified that Seth's support wouldn't last when push came to shove. How could he ask Seth to put himself in danger? Even being with him now while playing dress-up put Seth in danger. If Morales caught wind of where Nicky was, the danger to Seth would increase to a level he didn't know if he had a right to expect Seth to agree to.

Nicky would be destroyed if Seth got injured, or worse, because of him. Despite what he told Seth, Nicky truly did care for the man. He could easily imagine spending the rest of his life side by side with him. He knew

he'd be happy every day they were together.

"We can do this another time if you would prefer, Nicky."

It wasn't until Seth spoke that Nicky realized he had a death grip on the man's hand. He smiled nervously and loosened his hand. "No, this is okay. I guess if we're going to be in a relationship I'll need to meet your parents at some point, right?"

Seth looked stunned for a moment then a beautiful smile slowly spread over his face. Nicky hadn't meant to say they were a couple but after watching the joy fill Seth's face, he was helpless to pull his words back.

"Do you mean that, Nicky?"

Nicky drew in a deep breath and let it out slowly as he tried to find the right words to give Seth what he wanted but retain control of his emotions, emotions that were screaming at him to take a chance while he had it. His head was screaming at him to run back down the walkway.

"I mean that I want to be with you but you need to understand I am still scared. I don't know exactly what this is that is happening between us. I just know I've never felt this way about someone before and I don't want anything bad to happen to you."

"Nicky, being with me doesn't mean something bad

is going to happen to me."

"You don't know that," Nicky insisted. "If Morales catches you—"

"If, Nicky, if."

Nicky rolled his eyes and opened his mouth to respond when Seth knocked on the door and it was immediately opened. Nicky plastered a smile on his face that he didn't really feel and turned to greet Seth's parents.

"Seth, son, it's good to see you."

"Dad," Seth said.

"And who is this lovely lady?"

Nicky arched an eyebrow and turned to send a meaningful glare in Seth's direction. *Lovely lady, indeed.* He was so going to make Seth pay. Not because he was being introduced as Seth's girlfriend but because he detected amusement in his chocolate-brown eyes.

"This is Nicky."

* * * *

Nicky smothered his laugh as Seth's mother directed his lover to carry the dishes into the kitchen and load the dishwasher. Seth looked like she was forcing bamboo shoots under his fingernails. He looked tortured.

"We can go right here to the patio while Seth loads the dishwasher, hmm?"

Oh hell, here it comes, Nicky thought as he climbed to his feet and followed Mr. and Mrs. Leighton out to their patio. Mrs. Leighton sat in a white cushioned chair and gestured for Nicky to sit across from her on a white cushioned lounge. Mr. Leighton started a small fire in the stone fire pit sitting between them.

"This is very nice out here, Mrs. Leighton."

"Please, call me Pamela. Calling me Mrs. Leighton makes me feel like my mother-in-law." She waved a hand at Nicky as she laughed. "God love the woman but I am not nearly old enough."

Nicky grinned. "Pamela it is."

"Richard cut back on work last year but we both decided that we need an oasis to get away from everything until he could fully retire." Pamela waved her arms around the large backyard and patio. "Our oasis."

Nicky glanced around him and understood exactly what Pamela was talking about. While the backyard had a fence around it, it was surrounded by tall, leafy trees and colorful flowers. The stone patio went from the house to the edge of an in-ground pool made to look like a rock pond instead of a modern one.

The flames from the fire pit lit up the patio area and gave it a soft glow that wasn't too bright but just enough to make the area feel homey and comfortable. Nicky could imagine spending hours on the patio curled up in Seth's arms just listening to the night pass by.

"It's very nice. I can see exactly why you love it so much."

"I love it but Richard promised that once he retires we can move to somewhere warmer. The winters just seem to get colder and colder each year."

Nicky smiled and nodded because he really didn't have anything to say to that. He was from Boston. Their winters could be brutal. He had no idea how winters were out here in the west.

"So, you're dating my Seth."

Nicky's eyes widened as he turned his gaze away from the backyard and back to Seth's mother. He knew the questions would come eventually. He just had to figure out how much to tell the woman without giving away his secret.

"Yes, Seth helped me move into my apartment a few weeks ago and, well..." Nicky smiled and flicked his hand in the air. "You know how it goes."

"Actually, I have to admit that I am a little

surprised. Seth doesn't usually bring the people he dates home to meet us. I guess you must be pretty special."

"I certainly hope so. I think Seth is very special."

"I'm sure you can imagine our surprise when Seth called and said he wanted to bring a girl home to meet us."

"Yes, I'm sure." Nicky tried to keep the smile on his face but knew it didn't reach his eyes when Pamela frowned at him. "I know all about Seth. He told me everything."

"Did he?"

"Mother, stop interrogating Nicky."

Nicky was never so glad to hear someone's voice. He looked up and watched Seth walk out of the house and over to the lounge to sit down. Nicky immediately leaned into Seth when the man wrapped an arm around his shoulders.

"I was just asking how well she knew you, son."

"Nicky knows all about me."

"So she said."

Nicky couldn't figure out if Pamela liked him or not. He could understand her confusion about Seth bringing him home but he didn't think that was a reason not to like him. And she wasn't exactly hostile but more like disapproving.

"Does she know you're—"

"Nicky knows I'm gay, Mother."

"Were gay, Seth, were." Pamela frowned, her forehead wrinkling. "If you're dating a girl then you can't exactly say you are gay anymore, now can you?"

Nicky felt Seth tense next to him. He reached down and squeezed Seth's hand, hoping to give the man some support. He knew this conversation was hard on his lover. Seth was essentially lying to his parents on Nicky's behalf, and Seth didn't seem like a man who handled lying very well.

Nicky opened his mouth to tell Seth to go ahead and tell his parents the truth when Seth began to speak.

"I love Nicky and that's all you need to know. Whether Nicky is a guy or a girl or the man on the moon shouldn't matter. The dynamics of our sex life shouldn't matter either. Not you or anybody else has a right to stick their noses into our bedroom. All you need to know is that Nicky cares about me and makes me happy."

"I just worry... Seth, you've been gay all your life. How can you be sure this is what you want?" Pamela's hand waved toward Nicky as she spoke. "I have nothing against your girlfriend. I'm just concerned that you're making a hasty decision."

"Believe me, there is nothing hasty in my feelings

for Nicky."

"Seth, I'm your mother. I know you. Once you make up your mind about something a crowbar won't get it out. I just need to know that you're making the right decision. Don't give up who you are because of a pretty face."

Nicky gaped. Seth's mother was actually arguing for her son to be gay. He'd heard a lot of stories about parents trying to talk their children out of being gay. He'd never heard of a parent trying to talk her son into being gay. He didn't quite know what to say or how to react.

He did know that the whole conversation was upsetting to Seth. Nicky could feel Seth's thigh muscles bunch under his hand. He leaned over to whisper in Seth's ear. "It's okay, Seth, tell her the truth if you need to. I don't want to come between you and your mother. She obviously loves you very much and she's just concerned."

Seth's head moved back an inch or so as he turned to look at Nicky. "I can't put you in danger, Nicky," Seth whispered.

"Do you trust your parents?"

"Of course." Seth frowned.

"Then tell them the truth. We don't have to tell them everything but they might feel a little better if they knew you hadn't switched sides."

"It shouldn't matter!" Seth snapped. "I love you and that's all that should be important."

"Seth Daniel Leighton!" Pamela exclaimed, her face suddenly becoming very fierce. "Don't you talk to that poor girl that way. She's done nothing to deserve it and if you truly love her the way you say you do, you should be ashamed of yourself. I taught you better than that."

Nicky blinked. Pamela was defending him? Could things get any weirder than that?

"I apologize for Seth's behavior, Nicky. I know this situation can't be easy for you but he really is a great young man..." Pamela glared at her son, "despite his lack of manners."

"I'm not worried, Pamela." Nicky smiled as he patted Seth's thigh. "This situation is a little unusual for all of us."

"You're being very understanding considering how I lit into you."

Nicky was surprised, and growing more impressed by the woman with each passing moment. He was starting to believe that Pamela truly was interested in Seth's best interests and not just who he brought home to meet the folks.

"Seth means a great deal to me. We're still working

out exactly what that is." Nicky chuckled. "Mostly because I've never met anyone like him in my life, but I know he means well, as do you. I don't take any of it personally."

"That's very generous of you considering everything I've said." Pamela sat back in her seat and sighed. "I must seem like a monster to you."

"No, not at all. You're concerned for Seth and I understand that. I just want you to know that I want only the best for him."

"And if you're not the best thing for him?"

A burst of nervous laughter fell from Nicky's mouth. "I seriously doubt I am the best thing for Seth but I'm going to keep hoping he never figures that out."

CHAPTER 11

Seth curled his body tighter around Nicky's sleeping form. He needed the comfort contact with the man brought him. Tonight hadn't been easy for him. Seth had this feeling of impending doom, like something dreadful was going to happen to Nicky and take him away.

Seth couldn't seem to shake the feeling either. He wanted to wrap his arms around Nicky and never let the man go. He didn't even want Nicky out of his sight. Seth had half a mind to call into work sick for the next decade or so just so he could keep an eye on the man.

"Stop thinking so much," Nicky murmured against Seth's chest. "You're keeping me awake."

"Maybe I was hoping you would be awake?"

Nicky rolled a little until his body was lying on top of Seth's. His legs fell down on either side of Seth's hips, his hands resting on Seth's chest. Nicky's eyes blinked at the low light in the room as he rested his chin on his hands.

"What's wrong, Seth? Why aren't you sleeping?"

"Just thinking, babe."

"About what?"

Seth smoothed back a lock of sandy brown hair from Nicky's cheek. He was still a little bit in awe of

Nicky's beauty and hoped he remained that way for the rest of his life. Nicky was breathtaking, even masquerading as a woman.

"You, what else?"

"Yeah?" Nicky's smile was sensual, sending a shiver of delight through Seth's body. "What about me?"

"Just thinking about how beautiful you are."

"Men aren't beautiful, Seth."

"Says who?" Seth grinned at the disgruntled frown that came over Nicky's face. "I think you're beautiful and you just have to live with that fact because I don't think it's going to change any time soon."

Seth laughed at the overly dramatic eye roll Nicky gave him. He suddenly felt more joyous than he had a moment ago and wanted Nicky closer than he was. Seth grabbed Nicky under his arms and pulled the man up his chest. At the same time, he brought his knees up, spreading Nicky's legs.

His cock started to harden at the small he heard hitch in Nicky's breathing when their groins settled against each other. Nicky's face flushed with arousal.

"Seth," Nicky groaned.

Seth was suddenly hard and aching and needed Nicky like he couldn't remember needing the man since

they had met. He wrapped his hand in a good amount of Nicky's long hair and pulled the man's head down for a passion-filled kiss.

He licked a small line across Nicky's lips until the man groaned and opened his mouth. The touch of Nicky's tongue stroking his own sent a shiver of lust racing through Seth's body, hardening his cock until it was almost painful in its intensity.

Seth held Nicky's lips to his by the hand clenched in the man's long sandy brown hair. With the other one, Seth stroked a line down his back to his ass. Nicky's ass was so rounded and tight, Seth knew he would be fascinated for years to come. Just imagining what the little globes looked like was enough to make Seth breathe heavier.

He moved his hand down between Nicky's ass cheeks to the small puckered hole that quivered at his touch. Gently pressing one finger in, Seth tested Nicky's readiness. He would never do anything to hurt the man quickly becoming the most important person in his life.

Luckily, the ease with which his finger sank into Nicky's tight grip told Seth the man was still stretched from their earlier lovemaking. That didn't mean they wouldn't need lube. Seth kept his lips glued to Nicky's as he reached under the pillow for the lube. He popped the top and

squirted a liberal amount on his fingers before dropping the bottle onto the mattress next to them.

Nicky moaned and bucked against Seth when he pushed first one, then two fingers deep inside of his ass. Seth moved them in and out a few times before adding a third. He felt a groan of his own start building in his throat when Nicky began riding his fingers.

Damn, Nicky was so responsive. Seth knew without a doubt that Nicky had been made to be loved by him, heart, body, and soul. Their bodies moved together like they were two halves of the same whole. Every touch of Nicky's hands on his body sent Seth's passion soaring, every soft moan made his heart beat faster.

Feeling that Nicky was prepared enough, Seth reached between their bodies and grabbed his cock, aiming it toward the opening he knew would send him to the stars. Before he could start to push in, Nicky suddenly sat up, a sensual grin on his face that took Seth's breath away.

Nicky grabbed Seth's hands and placed them on his chest. Seth cocked an eyebrow when Nicky raised his body up until he felt the man slowly sink down on his cock. The intensity of pleasure that raced through Seth's body rocked his world. No one made him as hot and horny as the man above him.

"Fuck, Nicky!" Seth hissed as he bucked up, thrusting his cock into Nicky's tight ass.

"Shhh," Nicky whispered as he leaned down over Seth and nipped at his jaw line. "Let me."

Seth had no idea what Nicky was talking about until the man started moving in slow, sensual movements, his hips going up and down in a rhythm as old as time. Seth grabbed onto his hips, nearly paralyzed by the feelings flowing through him and the sight of the man atop of him.

Seth's breathing shortened with each movement of Nicky's body. His heart beat faster and little beads of sweat trickled down the sides of his face. At least Seth thought they were sweat until Nicky leaned over and kissed his eyelids and he realized that tears clung to his eyelashes.

It was a slow loving. Nicky moved at a pace he dictated no matter how much Seth might have wanted something faster. But with each settling of Nicky's body down onto his, Seth began to see the merits of it. The pleasure built slowly between them until it was a blazing inferno.

And despite Nicky's position leaning over Seth, the man never broke eye contact, as if they were connected in that manner just as much as they were physically. A sensual light passed between them that affected Seth more

than the sexual connection that they had. It shook Seth down to his toes and stole the breath from his throat.

Seth felt his body teetering on the edge of an explosive orgasm but he wanted to take Nicky with him. Somehow he just knew it wouldn't be the same unless he experienced it with his lover. With that thought in mind, Seth reached down and wrapped his hand around Nicky's cock and began slowly stroking the man.

"Come with me, Nicholas."

Seth didn't know if it was his demand, the way their bodies moved so perfectly together, or the use of Nicky's full name but the man's eyes rolled back in his head and a loud moan filled the room as hot liquid shot between them.

Seth cried out as Nicky's inner muscles tightened down on Seth's cock and dragged him into the abyss right alongside Nicky. The world seemed to flash in different sparkly colors as he filled Nicky's tight channel with his release.

Seth wrapped his arms tightly around the man when Nicky collapsed down on top of him. He peppered little kisses along Nicky's temple and felt answering kisses on his neck where Nicky's face was buried.

He felt content, happy. Seth couldn't think of another place he wanted to be in the world than where he

was at that exact moment. He held heaven in his arms and it came in the form of a beautiful man pretending to be a woman.

"Shit!" Seth exclaimed as a sudden realization struck him when he felt a dribble of cum fall on his thigh. "We didn't use a condom."

Nicky chuckled. "I guess you're stuck with me then."

Seth's heart pounded in his chest just as it had moments before but for a very different reason. Was Nicky saying what Seth hoped he was saying? Seth swallowed past the sudden lump in his throat before speaking.

"And the problem with that is what?"

CHAPTER 12

Nicky smiled when he realized he was humming as he moved about his apartment preparing it for the special dinner he had planned. He was happy and he couldn't seem to stop smiling, or humming. Not only was Seth due home from work anytime now but his feelings for the other man had finally been cemented.

He wanted Seth in every way possible. He was tired of being scared and holding back from him. When Seth used his full given name a few nights ago, he'd stolen more than Nicky's breath. Seth had stolen Nicky's heart.

Nicky placed the last of the dishes on the table, then put two long-stemmed candles between them. He messed with the setting for a few minutes, moving the salt and pepper shakers around the candles until they were placed just where he wanted them. Candlelight for ambiance was great but not if he couldn't see the person across from him and gaze lovingly into his eyes.

Even though things had kind of been cemented between them a few nights ago, Nicky wanted to formally tell Seth he wanted to stay even when the mess with Morales was over. He wanted Seth to know what was in his heart and prayed for the day when he could stand next to

the man as another man.

Nicky had a little bounce in his step as he walked into the kitchen to check on the meatloaf he was cooking for their dinner. He glanced at the clock on the wall and knew Seth was due any moment. Little butterflies fluttered in his stomach as the time drew closer.

Nicky was nervous, which just made no sense to him. He knew Seth wanted him, cared for him. He was pretty damn sure the man would be ecstatic when Nicky committed himself to staying and building a life with Seth. Still, he couldn't help wrapping his fingers around the delicate necklace at his throat. It gave him some measure of calm.

At the sound of a key fitting into the front door lock, all calm Nicky felt flew out the window. He'd never committed himself to someone for the long haul. Maybe Seth had changed his mind? Maybe Seth didn't love him enough? Maybe...

"Hey, babe, something smells good."

"Hey, Seth."

Nicky's hand fluttered nervously at his neck. He watched from the kitchen entry as Seth took in the decorated dining table, the soft music playing in the background, and the carefully placed items for later sitting

in the living room area.

"What's all of this?" Seth asked as he glanced over at Nicky.

"Dinner?"

"With candlelight?" Seth looked at bottle of lube sitting on the coffee table next to a blindfold and a tray of whipped cream and chocolate covered strawberries. "And toys?"

Nicky shrugged. He could feel his face flaming but the grin that spread over Seth's face when he looked back made up for any embarrassment Nicky felt. "Call it a surprise celebration dinner."

"A celebration dinner because...?"

Nicky walked over to stand in front of Seth. He was unable to keep the happy grin off of his face when he saw the delight in Seth's chocolate brown eyes. "Does there have to be a reason to celebrate? Can't I just be happy to see you?"

"Of course," Seth said as he wrapped an arm around Nicky and pulled him closer for a kiss. Nicky melted against Seth. He would be eternally convinced that no one on the planet kissed as well as Seth. "But I'd be happy to see you without all the fanfare."

"Me, too." Nicky chuckled as he pushed away from

Seth and took his jacket, carrying it to the closet by the front door. He turned back to grin at Seth's confused frown. "However, I have a special reason for this celebration dinner besides your scintillating company."

"Oh? Do tell."

Nicky nervously pushed his hair back from his face and tried to draw courage from the welcoming smile on Seth's face that spoke of love and acceptance. "I wanted to tell you th—"

Nicky swore silently under his breath when his phone went off. He was geared up to tell Seth everything. He did not need the interruption. However, it was his cell phone and the only person that ever called it was Detective Elliot Storm.

"Hello, Elliot."

"Nicky, you need to get out of your apartment and hide," Elliot said quickly. "I discovered a leak in my department. Morales knows where you are and I think he's heading in your direction."

Nicky's heart thundered as he gripped the phone. "A leak? What are you talking about? What leak?"

"I suspected that Morales received inside information on where you were when he attacked and killed the two US Marshals. I was right. Someone from

inside my own squad was feeding Morales information.

Fucking bastard was taking bribes."

"Oh my god," Nicky whispered. "Did you catch him?"

"He's in custody and being questioned as we speak but Morales has already left the area. I tracked him and a bunch of his goons chartering a plane out of Boston headed in your direction. I have law enforcement officials waiting to meet his plane but I still think you need to lay low until he's in custody, Nicky."

"Yeah, yeah, I can do that. I'm sure I can find a place to hide for a few days." He lifted questioning eyes to Seth, letting out a relieved sigh when Seth nodded his head. "But I'll be taking Seth with me."

"Oh?" Elliot chuckled. "Then I guess things are going pretty good between the two of you, huh?"

"Yeah, you could say that." Nicky couldn't help smiling at Seth even though he was scared out of his mind.

"Well, I'm glad. You deserve a little happiness. And Nicky, if Morales knows where you are then I think it's safe for you to give up your disguise. You can go back to being Nicholas Rylander."

"Re—really? I can be a man again?" Nicky could barely get the words past the lump in his throat. He felt

stunned. While he hadn't been masquerading as a woman for that long, he couldn't imagine a time when he would be able to go back to being a man.

"Yeah, pretty much. I still don't know how much this guy here told Morales but if he knows where you're located then I'd bet my hat that he also knows you've been disguising yourself as a woman. You might even have a better chance at hiding if you go back to being Nicholas."

"Yeah, okay." Nicky could barely keep the excitement out of his voice.

"Just be careful, Nicky. Morales is *not* someone to mess with."

"No shit."

"Nicky, I'm serious. He's off his rocker. Stay clear of him, stay hidden, and contact me in a few days. I don't want to know where you're going or who you will be with. In fact, leave this phone in your apartment and call me from a pay phone or something. Hell, buy one of those damn disposable cell phones if you have to. Just remember to use cash. You do still have that stash of cash I gave you, right?"

"Yes, I still have it," Nicky said, thinking of the roll of money hidden in the top of the medicine cabinet. Elliot had given him several hundred dollars for escape money in case he had to run. Apparently, this was that time.

"Good, use that. Cash is always better. Morales can't track you that way."

"Just how long do I need to hide, Elliot?"

"I wish I could tell you, Nicky, but I don't know. If we can get this guy here to talk then I think we have enough to arrest Morales and keep him in jail this time. Add in the murders of those two US Marshals and your friend, Juan, plus your testimony, and I don't think Morales will see the light of day until your grandchildren are old."

"Do you think the district attorney will really keep him this time? She didn't think there was much of a case last time."

"Well, there must have been something to your story or the US Marshals never would have taken you into protective custody. They don't do that unless they have something good on someone."

Nicky drew in a deep breath. "Okay."

"This case went beyond the local DA anyway when those US Marshals were killed. This is federal now, Nicky."

"And that means what?"

"That means there are a lot more people determined to see Morales hang than before. Unfortunately, it also means that Juan's murder is not their focal point, the death

of the marshals is. But it still means that Morales will do time and that's what we want, any way we can get it."

"I suppose you're right," Nicky said. "But I still want him to pay for what he did to Juan."

"And I'll see that he does, but it can only happen if you keep yourself safe and not let Morales get you. I need you to tell Juan's story, Nicky. You're the only one that can do it."

"Yeah, I understand."

"Alright, now, I want you to go hide somewhere. Don't tell anyone where you're going. Just go. Call me in a few days and we'll go from there."

"Thanks, Elliot."

"Stay safe, kid."

Nicky rolled his eyes as he hung up the phone and slowly set it down on the table. He flexed his fingers because they were sore from gripping the phone so hard then looked over at Seth.

"How do you feel about taking a trip?"

"No meatloaf?"

A nervous laugh burst from Nicky's lips as he shook his head and tried not to let his terror overtake him. "Not tonight but I promise to make you meatloaf the minute this is all over."

"Deal." Seth reached over and turned the oven off then leaned back against the counter. "So, where are we headed, babe?"

Nicky stepped into Seth's waiting arms and cuddled against the man as he considered the question. Morales would pretty much find them anywhere they went. Nicky just knew it. But, maybe...

"How do you feel about Boston?"

CHAPTER 14

Seth tried not to growl when yet another man winked at Nicky. It had only happened about a million times since they left home and caught a flight to Boston. Every time he turned around someone was whistling at Nicky, or trying to make a pass at him... well, her. Nicky was still masquerading as a woman. He felt it was best under the circumstances.

Seth agreed, but he was still having a hard time coming to grips with his *girlfriend* having long white blond hair after Nicky dyed it. Granted, the color did wonderful things for Nicky's facial features, drawing out his hazel eyes and making his cheekbones seem more prominent but Seth just couldn't get used to it.

He also couldn't seem to get used to no one looking at them funny when they sat close together on the plane ride to Boston or held hands all through the airport terminal. They were just a guy and a girl, albeit a beautiful girl, on a trip.

"We can catch a cab outside," Nicky said as she waited for the luggage to come around the luggage rack. They had packed simply, just one bag each. There hadn't been time to pack more. They hadn't even cleared the table

before leaving.

"Where do you want to go, Nicky? Is there a hotel close by where we can stay?"

Nicky glanced around them as if he were afraid someone might overhear him. "I'd really like to go see my mother. I haven't been able to talk to her or see her since I left."

"Then that's where will we go."

"I just don't know if it's safe. I'd die if anything happened to my mother because of something I did."

"What if we got the hunky detective of yours to pick up your mother and meet us somewhere?"

Seth arched an eyebrow as he turned to look at Ricky. When they left home it had seemed like a good idea to bring Ricky along with them. Two men and a woman traveling to Boston looked better than two men or a man and a woman. Seth hoped it would hide them just a little longer.

Now he was wondering if he'd made a mistake. Ricky was in full hornball mode. He checked out every guy they came across. He'd even made a pass at the flight attendant. Seth's one consolation was that everyone on the flight would remember Ricky and not him and Nicky.

Ricky shrugged. "It was just an idea."

"Actually, that's not a bad idea. We can use a pay phone to call Elliot."

"Ricky can use a pay phone to call Elliot," Seth said as he pointed his finger at Nicky. "You're not calling anyone."

"Fine." Nicky rolled his eyes.

Seth knew he was being overprotective but he couldn't seem to stop himself. Nicky's life was in danger and he wasn't going to let anything happen to the man who'd stolen his heart. Nicky was his to protect now.

"Ricky, go call Elliot from a pay phone and ask him to meet us somewhere." Seth turned to Nicky. "Do you have a place in mind, Nicky?"

"Just have him meet us at the coffee shop," Nicky said. "He'll know where that is. We've met there several times."

"Do you think it will be safe there?" That was Seth's most important concern. He wouldn't take Nicky anywhere that he might not be safe. Well, he wouldn't really be safe until Morales was behind bars but they could at least pick and choose where they showed up.

"It's a cop coffee shop." Nicky chuckled. "It should be relatively safe unless we jaywalk or steal their donuts."

Seth chuckled and shook his head. "Okay, fine, then

have Elliot meet us at this coffee shop of his. Once we meet with Elliot, we can make arrangements to have Nicky's mother brought to him. I want to make sure the coast is clear before we do anything."

Ricky nodded and hurried off to make his phone call. Nicky started snickering, which seemed a little strange to Seth considering the situation. "You find something amusing, babe?"

"Ricky didn't even ask me for Elliot's phone number."

"Oh yeah, that." Seth smiled. "I kind of introduced them when Elliot came out to play your fairy godmother. They must have exchanged numbers or something."

"Seriously? You introduced Ricky to Elliot?"

"Why not?" Seth shrugged. "They're both unattached. I thought they might have a good time together. I figured why the hell not?"

"You do remember who we're talking about here, right?" Nicky waved toward the long passageway that Ricky ran down. "Ricky is a spaz and Elliot is one of the most straight-laced men I've ever met in my life. I don't think the man even sleeps in the nude."

"Ricky's high-strung but he's harmless. And I think he brings the fun out in Elliot. Besides," Seth said as he

reached down to grab their bags then started down the passageway, "they're both consenting adults. They can do what they want. And according to Ricky, Elliot does sleep in the nude."

"Maybe," Nicky said as he followed Seth, "but it's just weird."

"Not any weirder than us, babe."

It took Seth and Nicky just a few minutes to catch up with Ricky, who was hanging up the phone when they reached him. Seth handed Ricky's bag. "Well, what did Elliot say?"

Ricky grinned. "You want the clean version or the truth?"

Seth arched an eyebrow. "Um..."

"Elliot is thrilled I'm in town. You two..." Ricky shook his head, "not so much."

"You didn't say we were here did you?" Seth asked quickly. "You didn't use our names or anything did you?"

"Not in so many words." Ricky rolled his eyes as he slung his duffle bag over his shoulder. "Give me some credit, Seth. I'm not just a pretty face, you know. I do have some brain cells, and I even use them on occasion."

"So, what exactly did you tell him then?"

"I said I was in town and wanted to know if we

could get together for a little one-on-one time." Ricky wiggled his eyebrows suggestively. "I told them that a friend mentioned some coffee shop and that we should meet there."

"So, how does he know we're here then?"

"I told him I had a present from his fairy."

* * * *

Seth bounced his knee nervously under the table as he watched out the window of the small coffee shop. They had been waiting for Elliot to show up for the last fifteen minutes. So far, there had been no sign of the man and Seth didn't like it.

Considering that they had to drive all of the way from the airport to reach the coffee shop, which was just around the corner from the police station, Elliot should have arrived a long time before they did.

"Seth, knock it off," Nicky whispered. Seth felt Nicky's hand squeeze his thigh. "He'll be here."

"When?" Seth snapped, then immediately wished he hadn't when Nicky's hand lifted from his leg and the man bit his lip as he glanced away. He quickly reached over and grabbed Nicky's hand and brought it back to his thigh. "I'm

sorry, babe. I didn't mean to snap at you. I'm just... something about all of this is making me nervous."

Nicky's hand squeezed Seth's thigh again and a nervous smile was sent in his direction. "I know. I don't like it either. Elliot should have been here by now."

"Ricky," Seth said as he glanced across the small booth to their friend, "why don't you go call Elliot and find out where he is?"

"Sure thing." Ricky climbed out of the booth and made his way to the small entry by the bathrooms where the pay phone was located. Seth watched anxiously as Ricky picked up the phone, inserted some coins, and dialed. Ricky spoke for several moments then hung up the phone. His face looked grim as he made his way back to their booth.

"Well?" Seth asked.

"Elliot left the precinct right after we called," Ricky replied. "No one has seen him since he walked out the door."

Seth turned to look at Nicky when the man inhaled sharply. "What?"

"Morales has him."

"Nicky, you can't know that. Something could have come up. He could have gone to the wrong coffee shop.

Anything. Just because he's not here doesn't mean that Morales has him."

Nicky shook his head. "No, Morales has Elliot. I know it."

"Nicky—"

"You're not listening to me, Seth," Nicky whispered. "I've seen how this guy works. I know what he's capable of. I seriously doubt he even chartered a plane anywhere. It was all just a ruse to get me back to Boston. He knew I'd come here and now he's taken Elliot to draw me out."

"Nicky, there is no way Morales could have known you would come back to Boston," Seth insisted weakly but he wasn't so sure. He had been shocked when Morales discovered that Nicky was living out west as a woman. How could he know what Morales was capable of?

"Isn't there?" Nicky countered. "If Morales can find a US Marshal's safe house, he can figure out I would come back to Boston. He probably has Elliot's phones tapped."

Okay, that made sense. Hell, it made a lot of sense. It would explain a lot of things if Morales had Elliot's phones tapped. Seth just didn't know what to do about it. Going to the police didn't seem like a smart idea considering the mole Elliot had discovered. He didn't know

who else they had on their side.

"Who do you trust, Nicky? Who can we go to?"

Nicky slowly shook his head. "I don't know. If Morales has Elliot then..." A sudden grin covered Nicky's lips as he snapped his fingers. "I know just the people to go to. Come on."

Confused but willing to let Nicky lead the way, Seth scooted out of the booth behind Nicky. He could hear Ricky following after them as they walked out of the coffee shop. He had no idea where they were going but Nicky seemed like a man on a mission.

The ride in the cab was silent. Seth figured each of them were mulling over their thoughts. Seth knew his were chaotic. They were a cross between scared out of his mind and wanting to beat the crap out of Morales for the danger he put Nicky in.

He was also worried about what had happened to Elliot and couldn't seem to stop thinking about it. Add in not knowing where Nicky was taking them and Seth was about to crawl out of his skin.

"Would a blow job help?"

Seth snapped his gaze from looking out the window around to look at Nicky in shock, especially considering the innocent little smirk on his lover's face. "What?"

"You're thinking too hard again," Nicky said as he tapped his finger against Seth's temple. "I can hear the wheels turning from here."

"So, your answer is to offer me a blow job?" Seth didn't realize until the car swerved a bit that Nicky spoke in a whisper and he nearly shouted. The cabbie was watching them intently through the rearview mirror. Seth glared. "Eyes on the road, man."

Nicky chuckled, which didn't help at all. The sweet sound just made Seth's face flush. He didn't know whether to throttle Nicky or take the man up on his offer. Both were strong possibilities.

"Where are we going, babe?"

"I still have a few friends in Boston, one or two that would love to see our friend put away for a very long time." The delicate white blouse covering Nicky's shoulders moved across his skin when he shrugged just enough to make Seth's breath catch in his throat and wish that they were in a place where he could get a blow job from him. "They will help us."

"I hope you're right, babe, because we're in deep shit here and I think it's only going to get worse. Maybe we should have stayed out west?"

"No." Nicky shook his head. "I want this over with

one way or the other. I'm tired of not being able to live my life the way I want and always looking over my shoulder. We need to end this."

"There are only two allowable outcomes, Nicky. For Morales to either be dead or behind bars. Nothing else is acceptable to me." Seth gripped Nicky's chin and brought the man's face up to his. "Nothing, Nicky, do you hear me?"

"I love it when you get all fierce-like."

"Nicky!"

Nicky's eyelashes lowered for a moment and he licked his lips before raising them back up to meet Seth's intense gaze. There was an unusual sparkle in them that made Seth's heart thump faster.

"I love you, too, Seth."

Well, damn!

CHAPTER 15

Nicky nervously bounced from one foot to the other as Seth grabbed their bags and Ricky paid the cab driver then shut the door. He turned to look up at the large neon sign and smothered the anxious laugh that tried to escape his mouth.

He had no idea what kind of reaction he was going to get from Seth and Ricky when he took them inside the club. He knew Seth said he didn't have an issue with Nicky dressing as a woman but how would he feel walking into the club Nicky used to work in? Would Seth lose his temper when former customers caught sight of him? Would his former customers actually recognize him dressed as a woman?

Nicky was ready to toss his cookies. His stomach seemed to be on a rollercoaster ride of epic proportions. Nicky wrapped one arm around his waist and reached for Seth's hand with the other.

"You ready?"

"Where are we, Nicky?"

"Don't ask. Believe me, you don't want to know."

Nicky tugged on Seth's hand and led him around to the side of the building. He carefully peered around the corner

before walking into the alley that led to the side employee entrance.

Nicky knew going back to the scene of the crime, so to speak, probably wasn't his best option but he couldn't think of any other place to go. His mother's house wasn't an option and neither were the authorities. They'd fucked up more than once and Nicky didn't trust any of them except Elliot and he was in as much trouble as Nicky was.

Nicky stopped in front of a non-descript brown door and rapped twice, paused, then knocked again. After a moment, the door opened just a crack and a makeup covered face looked out.

"Nicky?"

"Hey, Junebug," Nicky said quietly, "can you open up?"

The door instantly swung open to reveal a young man dressed in a pink bathrobe and fluffy bunny slippers. "Geez, Nicky, what in the hell are you doing here? You know if the boss catches you that you're a dead man."

"What better place to hide than under his nose?"

Nicky's face flushed when he let out a little yelp as he was suddenly swung around and slammed into the wall. Seth was right there, leaning into him, his face flushed red with anger and confusion.

"This is where you worked? Are you out of your mind bringing us here? Are you trying to get yourself killed?" Each word was snapped out between clenched teeth as Seth glared at Nicky.

"Seth, this is the one place Morales won't be looking for us. Who is stupid enough to go back to the scene of the crime?"

"I wonder!"

"Uh, Nicky?"

Nicky pushed Seth back a step when he heard the tremble in Junebug's voice. Junebug, as his friends called him, was a sweet young man of twenty three who couldn't hurt a fly. He was one of the few men Nicky had met who was actually shorter than him.

"Junebug, this is Seth and Ricky, they're with me."

"O—okay."

"Is Marla around?"

"Yes." Junebug's eyes darted between Nicky, Seth, and Ricky. "She's on stage at the moment but her set is just about done, though."

"We need to go backstage and hide in the locker room," Nicky said. "Can we do that?"

"Oh, Nicky," Junebug said as he glanced over his shoulder, "I'm not sure that's such a good idea. The boss

came in awhile ago and he's not happy. He was yelling and everything."

"Was he with anyone?" Nicky's heart nearly jumped out of his chest when Junebug said Morales was here. He just knew the man hadn't flown out west. That would have been too convenient.

"Just his shadows," Junebug said, referring to the muscle bound goons that did Morales's dirty work.

"Anyone else?" Nicky almost crossed his fingers as he prayed.

Junebug shrugged. "I don't know. I heard him yelling and came backstage. I really didn't want to stick around, you know?"

"Yeah, I understand." Nicky patted Junebug's shoulder gently. He knew the small man had been on the receiving end of one of Morales's tirades more than once. Pretty much anyone who worked for the vicious man had been. "Let's just go to the locker room and wait for Marla. She'll know what to do."

Nicky felt bad for Junebug when he nodded and wrung his hands together before turning to walk away. He grabbed Seth's hand and pulled him along as he followed Junebug into the backroom. It probably wasn't the best place to hide but Nicky figured Morales would never look

for him there.

Besides, there was a small room in the back, more of a closet really, that Morales didn't know about or never went into. It was hidden by a floor to ceiling mirror. Nicky and Marla discovered it by accident one night when they were goofing around in front of the mirror.

They'd kept the information to themselves as much as possible, only sharing it with those they thought they could trust and usually only when someone needed to hide from Morales. It had been used more than once. Nicky just hoped it could be used once more.

There were a few gasps and a couple of girlish giggles as Nicky, Seth, and Ricky walked into what everyone called the locker room. It was basically the backroom where the dancers prepared for their set on stage.

A long counter lined each wall, individual mirrors set a few feet apart. Each dancer had their own spot with their jewelry, makeup, and whatever they used for their dance sets. Nicky remembered vividly spending hours upon hours preparing for his dances.

Despite what people may have thought, a dancer didn't simply pull on a thong and go out onto the stage. There was makeup to be applied, lotion to make their skin look sparkly or wet. Things needed to be tucked away or

shaved or just generally dealt with. A dancer always made a little more money if he had something hard in his thong to bring out to the crowd.

"Nicky, honey, is that you?" one of the dancers said as they rushed up. "Oh, honey, you can't be here. The boss will tear this place apart if he discovers you here, and then you."

"Hey Stell." Nicky accepted the quick hug the man gave him. "We were kind of waiting for Marla."

"She's almost done with her set but we need to get you into the back, honey. The boss is being a real prick right now. He has his shadows coming in here every ten minutes or so." Stell shook his head. "He's more paranoid than usual, honey."

"Nicky, if this is a gay bar, why are we waiting for some girl named Marla?"

Nicky chuckled. "Marla is Martin."

"Oh." Seth frowned. "Is he... er... she dressing like a woman for a reason?"

"Marla lives as a woman." Nicky waved his hand down his body to the skirt and blouse he wore. "Hence, the outfit. When I had to go into hiding, I went to Marla. I knew she could help me hide."

Seth cocked his head to one side, the corners of his

lips lifting up a little. "Good choice."

"I thought so."

"But I still don't understand why we're here, Nicky. Morales is in this same building. That's like asking to be caught."

"I have a plan, love, not to worry."

"Love?"

Nicky smiled over at Stell and Junebug and pulled Seth over to stand closer to him. "This is my Seth."

Junebug giggled. "Nicky has a boyfriend," he sang softly.

Seth chuckled and pulled Nicky closer. "I'm hoping I'm more than a boyfriend but I'll take what I can get right now."

"Okay, this is all really fun and all but can we get out of the middle of this room?" Ricky asked as he stepped closer to the group. "I'm feeling a little exposed at the moment."

Nicky suddenly realized that Ricky was right. Morales or one of his goons could walk into the room at any moment. He glanced around the room to make sure there were no new faces or anyone watching them.

"Are there any new dancers?"

"We've had one since you and Juan left but he's

more afraid of the boss than Junebug is," Stell said. "The boss has taken a special interest in Justin and it's not a healthy one, if you know what I mean."

Nicky nodded sadly. He knew exactly what Stell meant. He and Juan had garnered Morales's interest and Juan ended up paying for it with his life. "How far in is he?"

Stell shrugged. "He's scared to say no but I don't think he's said yes yet. The boss keeps pushing though so I don't know how much longer Justin can hold out. He's already tried to leave once but the boss just brought him back."

"Okay, look, we think the boss has kidnapped a cop, the one that helped me get away. I think he's here somewhere in the building. I also think the boss expects me to show up here in Boston."

"And that would explain oh so much why you've done exactly what he wanted," Stell snapped. "Nicky, you've gone and lost your marbles. He's going to find you."

"Oh, he's going to find me all right."

"What?" Seth shouted then quickly looked around the room to ensure they hadn't been overheard. Junebug rushed to the doorway leading to the stage and looked through the curtain for a moment before walking back.

"Are you out of your mind?" Seth hissed, much quieter this time.

"I'm tired of letting Morales run things. He's taken almost everything from me, from Juan, and from every man in this room. It's time he was stopped. It's time for us to take our freedom back."

"And you have a plan to do this?" Seth sounded incredulous. "Does it involve getting your ass shot off?"

"No, but I still don't think you're going to like it."

"I don't like it now, and I haven't even heard it."

Nicky reached up and patted Seth's cheek. "Don't worry, love. I'm not about to do anything that will keep us from being together."

"Okay, fine, then what do you have in mind?"

Nicky grimaced and turned to look at Stell. "Can I borrow a thong?"

CHAPTR 16

Seth never experienced the level of anger and confusion he felt as he watched Nicky pull on the red thong he borrowed from Stell. On one hand, the sight of Nicky getting all dolled up to go dance aroused the hell out of him. On the other hand, the thought of Nicky placing himself in danger sent Seth's temper soaring through the roof.

He still didn't understand this plan of Nicky's. He didn't see how Nicky putting himself out on the dance floor for Morales to see gave them the edge. The only thing Seth thought would happen was that Nicky would be hurt. Seth was sure of it

"Nicky, there has to be another way."

"Seth, you know there's not," Nicky said, glancing up from tucking *something* away in his thong. "If Morales is occupied with me being out on the stage then you guys have time to search for Elliot."

"He's right," Stell said as he slathered oil on Nicky's back, something Seth was still trying to not growl about. "And if Nicky is on the stage then the boss won't be able to touch him. He'll have to wait until he comes back stage."

"Why do you all keep referring to Morales as the

boss?"

"We don't say his name out loud," Junebug said quietly, shaking his head rapidly. "It's bad mojo."

Seth blinked. "Um, okay."

"A long time ago we started referring to Morales as the boss because, one, he is the boss, and two, he seemed to think it put him above everyone else, like we were calling him sir or some such shit." Nicky snickered. "He had no idea we only referred to him as the boss because he has such a big damn mouth. Believe me, it wasn't a compliment."

"Ah," Seth replied although he wasn't sure he completely understood.

"It kept us from getting in trouble. He'd get pretty upset if we called him the *fucking bastard from hell*."

That made a lot more sense to Seth. But why anyone would stick around and work here if the guy was such a bastard didn't. That part still confused Seth. "Why didn't any of you just walk away? There were other jobs out there, even jobs dancing. Why stick around here if this guy is so bad?"

"We couldn't leave," Nicky said. "Oh, there were a few of us that got to leave but they were usually the ones the boss didn't want here anyway, the ones who didn't make

very much money."

"Yeah," Stell said, "those of us who brought in the crowds had to stay."

"Why?"

"Because Morales made it impossible for us to leave." Nicky sighed deeply and turned to fully face Seth. "You have to understand, being a dancer is all I know. I never even graduated from high school. Many of us haven't. So, it's not like I can go get a job in some fancy restaurant, not unless I'm dancing on the tables. "

"So, why not go back to school?" That seemed like the reasonable thing to do to Seth. Of course, he had a happy upbringing in a decent neighborhood, two parents to care for him until he graduated from high school and went to college. He'd never had to worry about where his next meal was coming from.

"I tried. Stell tried. Hell, even Junebug tried once. Morales would make up flyers with pictures of us dancing in almost nothing and plaster them all over the campus, advertising the club. People started talking and then they started propositioning us. After awhile, it was just easier to quit school and come back to the club."

"He's done that when we tried to get jobs elsewhere too," Stell added in. "I quit working here about six months

ago and got a great job at a bakery. The boss plastered my picture down the entire block. I was fired the next day."

"Has anyone reported him?"

"To who?" Stell snapped. "He has the cops in his pocket. And if he doesn't sic one of his cop friends on us, he sends one of his goons after us. And believe me, that's much worse."

"He has a doctor on call twenty-four hours a day." Junebug snickered, surprising everyone. "He even has a little room in the back by his office just for such occasions."

"That's got to be where he's holding Elliot," Nicky said. "It just makes sense."

"I agree," Seth said. "The question is how do we get Elliot out of there? Even with Nicky keeping Morales occupied out on stage I doubt he would leave the detective alone."

"How do you look in a thong?" Junebug giggled.

"Excuse me?"

"Not you." Junebug waved Seth away and pointed to Ricky, whose jaw dropped open. "Him."

Seth started laughing. "Ricky looks great in a thong, don't you, Ricky?"

"I don't think so," Ricky said. He crossed his arms

over his chest and glared at everyone. "So not going to happen."

"Not even if it means you can go in, rescue Elliot, and be his hero?" Nicky asked. "I'm sure he'd be all sorts of grateful."

Ricky rolled his eyes. "Fine, but I draw the line at rubbing that oily stuff on my body. There are just some places a man has to draw the line and that's mine."

Nicky wiggled his eyebrows suggestively. "You don't know what you're missing."

"I'll take my chances."

* * * *

Seth whistled as Ricky walked out from behind the dressing curtain he'd been behind. He decided not to address the shiny skin the man was sporting. Ricky would just get all upset again. Seth was still astonished that Junebug had convinced Ricky to use the oil.

Hell, he was shocked Junebug had convinced Ricky to wear a thong at all. Although, Seth had to admit Ricky looked damn hot in the skimpy little white piece of fabric. It brought out the tanned color of Ricky's skin.

"Looking good, Ricky." Seth startled to chuckle

until a hand was suddenly slapped over his mouth. His eyes widened and he turned to find Nicky standing next to him, a glare in his hazel eyes.

"No comments from the peanut gallery."

Seth grinned, even though Nicky's hand still covered his mouth. It felt good to hear Nicky being jealous of him looking at another man, even if nothing would ever happen with that man. He had made his commitment to Nicky and that meant no one would ever hold Seth's heart except Nicky.

Nicky leaned closer and arched an eyebrow. "If you ever expect to see me dance for you then keep your comments to yourself. Hell, don't even have comments. Your eyes are supposed to be on me and only me."

Seth wrapped his arms around Nicky's waist and pulled the man up against him, spreading his legs so that Nicky settled between them. He waited until Nicky moved his hand then leaned in and gave the man a kiss.

"I only have eyes for you, babe, I promise. I was just trying to make Ricky feel better, that's all."

Nicky's eyes narrowed for a moment and Seth wondered if the man believed, him but then Nicky finally smiled. "Just you remember that." Nicky tapped Seth's nose as he spoke and the red color of his nails caught Seth's

attention. He grabbed Nicky's hand and looked down at the manicured acrylic fingernails.

"I think we forgot something, Nicky."

"You'd be surprised." Nicky laughed. "The stranger we look, the more the guys like it. Why do you think Marla is such a hit?"

"Nicky, I've been in a gay strip club before. I've never seen any of the guys on stage wearing makeup, and certainly not nail polish."

"You've never been in this gay club before, believe me. I've seen some things go on here that would curl your hair."

"Yeah, I'm not sure I want to know. Just tell me these..." Seth held Nicky's painted nails up to him, "aren't going to get you in trouble out there."

"Are you kidding?" Stell said as he stepped over and looked down at Nicky's fingernails. "Nicky will probably get more tips than any of us tonight. Those guys out there love this type of stuff. Which reminds me, Nicky, we need to do your eyes."

Eyes? Curiosity eating away at him, Seth followed Stell and Nicky over to one of the individual vanities and watched as eyeliner and just a hint of eye shadow was applied to Nicky's face. Stell even sprinkled a little glitter

on Nicky's face.

"Well?" Nicky asked as he turned toward Seth and struck a pose, one hand on a thrust-out hip, the other resting next to his nipple.

Seth swallowed hard at the sight of the sexy man before him. He wasn't sure he'd ever seen anything so hot. He was doubly sure he didn't want anyone else seeing it. "Tell me again why we're doing this?"

CHAPTER 17

Nicky rubbed his hands on the towel hanging outside the curtains leading to the stage. It was there for dancers to wipe their hands on when they began to sweat. Nicky's were sweating up a storm, which made sense since his stomach was in so much turmoil.

He hadn't been on stage since the night Morales killed Juan. He never thought he'd have to dance again. He had hoped he'd never have to dance again. Nicky kind of thought the change in his life would mean a change in his career.

Funny how things worked out. Here he was once again waiting to go out on stage and dance for a bunch of horny men, and a few women, in a bar owned by the man trying to kill him. Only this time, he was doing it of his own free will.

If that wasn't irony, Nicky didn't know what was.

"Are you going to be okay, babe?"

Nicky glanced over his shoulder when he felt Seth press against his back. "Yeah, I'll be fine."

"You don't have to do this, you know."

"Yes, I do. We need a distraction and I'm the biggest one we have. Morales will lose his mind when he

sees me out on stage."

"That's what I'm afraid of."

"I'll be in a room full of people, Seth. Morales won't make a move until I come off stage, so that's exactly how long you, Ricky, and Junebug have to rescue Elliot. I should be on stage for two songs, no longer."

"I'll be out in the crowd, babe."

"What?" Nicky turned around to stare up at Seth in shock. "No, you can't."

"Nicky," Seth said as he cupped the side of Nicky's face, "I can't let you go out there by yourself, even for Elliot. Ricky and your friends are going to go after Elliot. I'm going to go out the backdoor and come in the front, just like every other horny guy wanting to watch you dance."

Nicky felt his face flush as he imagined Seth watching him dance. "Seth, I'm not sure I can dance with you out there. The things that happen..." Nicky shook his head. "I don't know if I want you to see that."

"Nicky, nothing I see out there can be any worse than the things I've imagined, believe me." Seth's free hand reached down to tug on the elastic waist of Nicky's thong. "Besides, I'll just be a paying customer with lots of dollar bills to stick in your thong. Maybe I can keep all your attention on me."

"You have to promise me that you won't get mad."

"How about I promise not to do anything about it instead because I'm not sure I can promise not to get mad if I see a bunch of horny men touching you. I just won't act on it."

"Or hold it against me. I stopped dancing a long time before you came into my life and that's done and over with. Except for tonight, I won't be dancing anymore. I promise."

"Nicky, babe, it's okay." Nicky doubted Seth's words but he still leaned into the kiss the man pressed against his lips. "The past is the past, babe. And besides, I've never once said I had an issue with my lover being a dancer. You just assumed I did."

"But you just said—"

"I said I wasn't sure if I could prevent myself from getting mad if I saw other men touching you. That has nothing to do with you. While you may have fun doing what you do, this is a job just like any other. I'd get mad if you were a gas attendant or an accountant and someone touched you."

"It's not the same thing, Seth."

"It is the same thing." Seth insisted. "You get up, go to work, and do your job. When you're done, you go home

at night. It's no different than working as a cab driver or a school teacher or even a librarian."

"It is different!" Why couldn't Seth understand that? Nicky couldn't count the number of guys he'd started dating that either dropped him when they discovered he was an exotic dancer or treated him like a piece of meat.

"How?" Seth asked. "Because you take your clothes off? Because men put money in your thong? Because you dance on a stage with men lusting after you?"

"Yes!"

"I don't buy it."

Nicky rolled his eyes. "You will."

A moment later Nicky's stomach started fluttering again when he heard the song start to end for the dancer on stage. He knew he was up next. Nicky patted Seth's chest. "I'm up, Seth. If you want to be out in the crowd, you'd better get there."

"Okay." Seth placed another kiss on Nicky's lips then leaned back. "If you think things are starting to go wrong you get the hell out of there. Understand me?"

Nicky nodded. "The same goes for you."

"Morales doesn't know who I am."

"We hope."

"True, but let's just pretend that he doesn't, okay?"

Nicky nodded.

"Now, go out there and dance for me. I'll be right where you can see me. And remember, babe, I love you."

"I love you, too."

Nicky took a deep breath and released it slowly as he watched Seth walk away. He really had no idea how Seth was going to react once he saw the crowd and Nicky's dancing. He wasn't sure he'd ever want to know.

Suddenly hearing footsteps behind him, Nicky shrank back into the shadows and prayed that it wasn't Morales. That would ruin all of their plans and he'd most likely end up with a bullet in his head. When Marla's blond head came through the curtain, Nicky let out the air he had been holding in his chest and rubbed his hand over his beating heart.

"Nicky?" Marla whispered. She quickly glanced behind her then grabbed the edges of the curtains and pulled them closed before turning back to Nicky. "What in the hell are you doing back here, boy? Don't you know Morales is still looking for you?"

"Yeah, that's why I'm here." Nicky could hear the music tuning up for his set. He pointed back toward the locker room. "Look, Stell can explain everything to you. I have to go out on stage to distract Morales."

"Distract Morales?" Marla shrieked. "Have you lost your mind?"

"Probably."

"Honey, you've got to get out of here."

"I can't. Morales has Detective Stone and we suspect he's holding him in that doctor's room by his office. I'm supposed to go out there and distract Morales while a few of our friends rescue the detective."

"And then?" Marla smirked.

"And then we get the hell out of here."

Marla seemed to stare intently at Nicky for several moments, so long in fact, that Nicky began to get nervous. He pushed his weight from foot to foot and hoped Marla wouldn't blow a gasket. It had been known to happen.

"Fine, I'll help but you'd better promise me to stay clear of Morales. He's a mean son-of-a-bitch."

Nicky chuckled, relieved by Marla's agreement. He walked over to the curtain and cracked it just enough to look through. It took him a moment but he finally spotted Seth standing by the bar ordering a drink. He motioned for Marla to come closer.

"See the guy by the bar in the tight jeans and the white shirt? He's about 6'1" and 185 pounds, short dark brown hair, muscular, dreamy chocolate-brown eyes?"

"Dreamy eyes, huh?" Marla peeked through the curtain. After a moment, she whistled low in her throat.

"Damn, honey, he's fine."

"That's my Seth."

"*Your* Seth?" Marla asked as she turned to look at Nicky, one perfectly trimmed eyebrow arching.

Nicky nodded eagerly, unable to prevent the smile that crossed his lips. "He's out there to keep an eye on me while his friend Ricky, Stell, and Junebug go rescue the detective. He won't let anything happen to me."

"It would seem going out west has been good for you." Marla once again pulled the curtains closed. "Hell, honey, if they have more out there like him, I just might have to come for a visit."

"You're always welcome, you know that. We'd be hap— oh!" Nicky saw the red light flash over the entrance to the stage. "That's me. I'm up."

"Are you sure you want to do this, honey?"

"Not really, but I don't see any other choice. Just do me a favor?"

"Anything."

"If things get bad, make sure nothing happens to Seth. I don't think he truly understands how crazy Morales is. If he thinks I'm going to be hurt, he'll jump in and try to

save me and I don't want anything to happen to him. He's special, Marla."

"I'll do my best, honey." Marla's gentle pat on his shoulder was comforting to Nicky but it still didn't make the rolling in his stomach go away. "Now, go out there and put on the best show you can for your sexy man. You let me worry about everything else."

"Be careful, Marla."

"Always, honey."

Nicky shook his head as Marla walked away. He'd never understand the woman, well, man. Marla chose to live her life as a woman and that was just fine with Nicky. She was the best girlfriend a gay guy could ever have. But even after all of his time masquerading as a woman, Nicky couldn't understand how anyone did it on a regular basis, not even women. It was hard.

"Tonight we have a special surprise," said a deep voice over the intercom. "Back for a special performance tonight only, the one, the only, *N Lust!*"

The slow sensual music that instantly came on was loud but the crowd yelling and shouting was even louder. Nicky waited for a moment then slipped between the curtains, slowly slinking his way onto the stage.

He walked to the beginning of the stage and struck a

pose with his hands clasped in front of him and his head bowed down. He was waiting for the right music note before beginning his dance.

Peeking through his lashes, Nicky could see Seth just on the edge of his vision. He stood back several feet from the stage with a beer in his hand. Nicky could see Seth's anxiousness in the tense muscles of his thighs. He hoped that his lover was ready for what was about to happen.

Then Nicky heard the music note he'd been waiting for. He dropped his hands and started forward, swaying his hips sensually from left to right. The crowd went wild. Nicky saw several of his regular customers rush the stage and tried not to let it affect his dancing.

Nicky grabbed the dancer pole and swung himself around it until he could hook his legs around it then slowly slid down. He blocked out the roaring crowd and concentrated on his movements.

A hip pushed out this way, an arch that way, a leg squat on the floor, all were done with the intent of inciting the crowd. When Nicky dropped down onto his hands and knees to the floor and glanced toward the crowd, his eyes immediately fell on Seth standing at the meat bar.

Nicky cast the crowd a sensuous grin and slowly

crawled across the floor, pushing his ass into the air until he reached the edge of the stage. He ignored the dollar bills being tossed at him and swung his legs around, hooking one behind Seth's head.

Seth's eyes widened. Nicky could see a bit of shock on the man's face as it flushed. Several customers were slapping Seth on the back. Even more were shooting him envious looks when Nicky used his legs to draw Seth closer.

"Do you want me?" Nicky whispered into Seth's ear. He felt a dollar bill slide into his thong. When Nicky leaned back, Seth was breathing heavy. Nicky grinned then arched his body back and did a back flip back onto the stage into a standing position.

Once again, the crowd went wild. They seemed to love it when Nicky used his athletic body to move around the stage and arch and wiggle and do things other dancers only thought of doing. It was one of the reasons Nicky was so popular.

Nicky made sure to make several motions towards other patrons as well as Seth. If Morales was watching, Nicky didn't want the man to think Nicky was paying special attention to any one man. He didn't want Morales to know about Seth.

As the song started to wind down, Nicky made his way back to the dancer pole. He knew he had one more song to do before he could leave the stage and he hoped that his friends were rescuing Elliot. Nicky didn't know what he'd do if they didn't.

Nicky struck another pose as he waited for the next song to begin. A flash of movement out of the corner of his eye caught his attention. Nicky lifted his head just enough to look through the fall of his long hair.

Nicky's heart thundered in his chest when he spotted Morales and two of his goons standing just to the left of the stage. Nicky knew he would never have the chance to leave through the back entrance. Morales would catch him before he even reached the curtains.

The front didn't look too promising either. Nicky could see two more goons taking up places on either side of the front door. Nicky realized that there had been one fatal flaw in his plan to be a distraction while Elliot was rescued.

He'd forgotten to plan an escape route.

CHAPTER 18

Seth nearly swallowed his tongue when Nicky started dancing across the stage. It became even worse when Nicky whispered in his ear. He was so hard he thought his dick might tear through his pants. Nicky was sex in motion when he danced. It was like foreplay.

Seth had been to a lot of strip clubs in his time but he had never been to one like this. Most of the ones he'd been to had a strict no touching policy. Seth could have been thrown out for touching Nicky and tucking a dollar bill in his thong the way he did.

Of course, in most bars, Nicky wouldn't have been able to dance quite the way he was either. While his movements were a sensual delight, it was the interaction he had with the men he danced for that made Nicky so popular and Seth knew it. Nicky made each one of them feel like he was dancing for just them.

Seth was green with jealousy. He was also overjoyed because he knew he was the only one that held the most important part of Nicky, his heart. No one could touch that but him. Still, Seth had to admit, he really didn't like the way the men around him treated Nicky like a piece of meat.

Nicky was more than a dancer as far as Seth was concerned, no matter how well he could dance. Nicky was thoughts and ideas, sympathy and compassion. He was love and caring and everything Seth ever wanted in a man. And he was Seth's man.

That right there was the only thing keeping Seth from jumping up on the stage and demanding that no one look at Nicky or try to touch him. Well, that and maybe the perverse pleasure he got from knowing at the end of the night, Nicky would be sleeping in his arms.

The next song came on and Nicky started dancing again. Seth watched for a moment before he noticed Nicky shooting glances to the left side of the room. He used the motion of throwing a few more dollars onto the stage as a cover as he glanced over.

It didn't take Seth more than a second to narrow in on the thin man in a flashy white suit standing just to the side of the curtained entrance to the stage. The man stood between two really large guys that looked like they ate cars for breakfast. Seth suspected they were Morales's goons.

As he looked around the room, he spotted two more muscle bound men standing by the front door and realized that he and Nicky were going to have a heck of a time getting out of there in one piece.

Seth tried to brainstorm while looking for another escape route. He felt as though his mind had gone blank. He couldn't think of a single damn thing, especially when he saw Nicky practically sitting in another man's lap. Seth barely suppressed his growl before anyone heard it.

He started to move in Nicky's direction when he saw Nicky move toward him, crawling on all fours again. Seth stopped and waited for Nicky to come to him. He didn't want to appear too eager, even if he was. It seemed like forever before Nicky reached him, especially when the man stopped to dance for almost every man between them.

Logically, Seth knew that Nicky was putting on a show but a part of him thought his lover might have been adding a little extra something just to prove a point to him. Nicky had warned him that things were a little different in this club. Seth was only coming to realize now just what exactly Nicky meant.

And, once again, Nicky was right. Seth didn't have an issue with Nicky being an exotic dancer but what the man was doing up on the stage went way beyond what Seth felt was acceptable for anyone to be doing out in public. Nicky was selling himself.

And Seth was growing more and more pissed with every passing second. He now knew why Nicky had

warned him. Seth wouldn't have minded if Nicky wanted to dance for a living, even as an exotic dancer. Despite what Nicky thought, Seth kind of got a thrill out of the idea of his lover being a dancer.

However, he had a huge problem with Nicky practically having sex for strangers. When Nicky said that touching was encouraged at the club, Seth had no idea he'd have to watch customer after sleazy customer paw his lover. And that's what pissed Seth off the most.

He didn't mind Nicky dancing. He didn't even mind Nicky dancing in the skimpy little piece of fabric that barely covered his groin. He minded all of the men who thought they had a right to touch Nicky because he was dancing.

And maybe that was where he and Nicky differed in their ideas of what it meant to be an exotic dancer. It should be about watching a show, albeit a sexy erotic show, but a show none the less. It wasn't about participating in the show. That's not what Nicky wanted. He just wanted to dance.

When Nicky finally reached him, Seth flashed a wad of cash. Nicky grinned and started dancing just for Seth. With each caress he received, each glimpse of the jewels hidden behind Nicky's outfit, Seth either tossed a

dollar onto the stage or tucked one in Nicky's thong.

"The crowd is getting restless, babe," Seth whispered into Nicky's ear when he heard loud shouting behind him.

"So, either come on the stage and dance with me or punch someone," Nicky whispered back as he stretched one leg straight up into the air. Seth almost lost the train of the conversation as he marveled at Nicky's flexibility. "It's the only way we're going to get out of here."

Seth wasn't sure what he wanted to do until some man reached over and grabbed Nicky's arm and started dragging him away. "Hey, man!" Seth exclaimed as he reached for Nicky.

"Stop hogging the bitch!" the man shouted back.

Seth chose punching someone. He doubled up his fist and hit the man square in the middle of his face. Seth had the satisfaction of hearing a sickening crunch when his fist connected and the man cried out. He let go of Nicky and grabbed his nose as blood started to splat everywhere.

"Raid!" someone yelled and then all hell broke loose. Seth swung around to stare in shock at the chaos and watched the room fall apart. Shouts filled the room. Chairs were overturned as people ran for the front door. Glass shattered on the floor.

Seth turned back around to grab Nicky only to see one of Morales's goons stepping up on the stage. Seth jumped up onto the stage and placed himself between Nicky and the large man advancing down on him and Nicky.

He clenched his hands into fists, convinced he wasn't going to come out of the fight with the muscled man without a few broken bones. But he'd make sure he left a few bruises on the other man as well.

"Seth!"

Seth stepped back a pace to get away from the goon and glanced over to see Nicky holding his hand out to him. Flipping the goon his middle finger, Seth ran over to Nicky and grabbed his hand.

"What's your plan now, babe?"

"Getting the hell out of here," Nicky said as he dragged Seth toward the front door.

Seth hoped Nicky was right. In the chaos of the fight and someone shouting raid, they just might have a chance of escaping out the front door. The two goons who had been guarding it looked overrun by customers trying to get out, just like Seth and Nicky.

Nicky and Seth fought their way to the door, dodging flying glass and overturned furniture. Seth had to

pull Nicky into his arms more than once to protect him from people still fighting. But little by little, they reached the door.

Seth suddenly screeched to a halt and pulled Nicky back against his chest when a shadow stepped out in front of them. He felt like everything around them froze when he saw the gun Morales held in his hand, pointed right at Nicky's chest.

Seth started slowly moving Nicky out of the line of fire, pushing his lover behind him and holding Nicky there as he watched Morales cautiously. "You don't want to do this, man. You have enough trouble to deal with. There's no need to hurt Nicky."

"Oh, believe me, I want to do this," Morales said as he nudged the gun toward Seth, gesturing for him to back into the club. Seth obeyed the man's demand and slowly backed up, keeping Nicky behind him. "He's caused me nothing but problems since the day he got here."

"Then let him go and you never have to see him again. I'll take Nicky back to the west coast and he'll never come back."

"You expect me to believe that?" Morales snorted. "He opened his mouth one too many times and now it's time for me to shut it."

Seth could feel Nicky gripping his shirt as they both backed up a few more steps. Things around them still seemed to be frozen. Seth knew people still raced around them but he couldn't look away from the menacing gun Morales held in his hand.

Seth held a placating hand out in front of him.
"Look, we can work this out."

"There is no working *this* out. Didn't Nicky tell you that when he dragged you into this mess? He betrayed me, and not only did he betray me, but he betrayed me to the cops. He blabbed to the cops!"

"You shot Juan!" Nicky shouted from behind Seth.

"It was business, Nicky love, just business."

"Business?" Nicky exclaimed. "You killed someone."

"He was a whore," Morales shouted.

"Only because you turned him into one."

"Nicky!" Seth hissed quietly. He had to push his arms backward to keep Nicky behind him. The man was trying to lunge forward at Morales. Seth knew that Nicky would attack Morales given half a chance despite the gun the man held. Nicky was that angry. Seth could hear it in his strained voice and feel it in his tense muscles.

"With your beauty and my brains, we could have

been so good together, Nicky love. Why did you have to go and fuck that up?"

Seth blinked in shock. Was Morales really complaining because Nicky wouldn't be with him? Did the guy want more from Nicky than a business arrangement?

"You're nuts!" Nicky snapped.

Seth pushed Nicky back another step when Morales snarled and jerked the gun at them. He understood Nicky's anger but he just knew the man's mouth would get one or both of them shot. Seth didn't see any way out of this mess.

CHAPTER 19

Nicky could feel Seth tensing. He knew he should keep his mouth shut but Morales just made him so angry. Nicky was tired of being scared. He was tired of his friends being scared. Morales had made more than one person's life miserable.

Nicky wasn't about to let Morales add Seth to that number. He stepped around the larger man and pointed his finger at Morales. "You're a bully and a cheat and only out to line your own pockets off the backs of those unlucky enough to work for you. I wouldn't have gone into business with you if you had been the king of England."

Morales sputtered, his face turning red with rage. Nicky suddenly realized he might have gone too far when Morales pointed the gun at him. It seemed like everything from that point on moved in slow motion.

Morales squeezed the trigger. Nicky grabbed Seth as he swung around, stepping over to place his body between his lover and the gun in Morales's hand and pushed with all of his strength. He heard a loud retort as he and Seth fell to the ground, a searing pain shooting through his arm.

A second, louder, bang filled the room a moment

after Nicky landed on top of Seth's body. Nicky waited to feel the pain of another bullet entering his body. When none came, he glanced over his shoulder, his jaw dropping down when he saw Elliot standing across the room, a smoking gun in his hand.

Morales lay on the floor, unmoving, a pool of red spreading out on the mismatched tiles under his body. Nicky just stared, unbelieving that Morales had been taken out. He had been taken out, hadn't he?

Nicky pushed himself away from Seth and scrambled across the floor to where Morales lay. His hands trembled as he reached out to turn the man over. He paused and clenched his fingers, almost afraid to touch the man in case he wasn't really dead.

"Nicky."

Nicky raised his eyes to find Elliot kneeling on the floor across from him. "Elliot."

"Why don't you go sit with Seth? I'll take care of Morales."

Nicky's eyes flickered back down to Morales. "Is he... is he really dead?"

Nicky's breath caught in his throat as he watched Elliot reach over and feel for a pulse on Morales's neck. Elliot felt around for a moment then heaved a loud sigh,

shaking his head. "He's really dead, Nicky."

"It's over?" Nicky whispered.

"It's all over, Nicky."

"But, what..." Nicky had been running or hiding from Morales for so long he didn't know what to do if the man wasn't after him. He'd spent so much time planning what little life he had, planning his escape, planning not to get himself killed.

Nicky didn't know what to do if he was free.

"Come on, babe," said a soft voice from behind Nicky as strong arms wrapped around him, "let's go get you looked at."

"Yeah, okay."

Nicky allowed Seth to help him to his feet but he couldn't seem to stop looking at Morales. He was afraid that the man would sit up and start harassing him again, afraid he wasn't really dead.

When Seth tried to pull him away, Nicky resisted.

"He's really dead?"

"Nicky, babe," Seth said as he cupped Nicky's face and turned him away from Morales. Seth's eyes were filled with tears as he looked down at Nicky. "It's over, Nicky. I swear. Morales is dead. We can go home now."

"Home?" Nicky's brow drew together.

"Home, Nicky, back to the west coast to our home."

Seth grinned as he tapped Nicky's nose with his finger.

"Home, where I am hoping my lover will move in with me."

Nicky blinked. "Move in with you? Like for real?"

"Yes."

"Even if I give up the makeup and dresses and fingernail polish?"

"Well, I'm hoping maybe you'll keep that fire engine red polish around for special occasions but yes, even if you go back to being a man."

"Even now that you've seen me dance?"

Seth chuckled and cast a sensuous glance down Nicky's nearly naked body. "Yep, even then, although we may need to discuss keeping that thong."

Morales was forgotten as Nicky's heart filled with joy. He started to jump into Seth's arms when an agonizing pain shot down his arm. Nicky looked down in shock to see blood dripping down his arm.

"I'm bleeding," Nicky whispered in confusion. Suddenly, the pain in his arm became excruciating. Nicky's vision swam and his stomach started to rebel. When Nicky's head began to whirl, he reached out, grabbing onto Seth. "Oh, I don't feel so good."

Nicky's eyes fluttered closed as he was lifted up into Seth's arms. He leaned his head against Seth's chest and decided to let him take care of everything. Nicky was too tired, too sore, and too overwhelmed to deal with anything.

He just wanted to sleep for a few days then fly home and move in with Seth. Everyone else could take care of this mess. He was done.

CHAPTER 20

Seth crossed his arms over his chest and leaned against the bathroom door frame, watching Nicky brush his hair. The sandy brown locks were much shorter than they had been a month ago. Nicky had the extensions removed as soon as he was up and about. He'd also taken off the acrylic nails and ditched the fake boobs.

Nicky was back to being a man fulltime. There was a small part of Seth that would miss the woman he had fallen in lust with but he was perfectly happy living with the man he'd fallen in love with instead.

"That was Elliot," he said, referring to the phone call he'd just taken.

"Oh?" Nicky asked as he drew the brush through his wet hair. "And what did the good detective have to say?"

"IAB cleared him in the shooting so he's off the hook. They said it was clear defense of him and every other person in the club. Elliot was perfectly within his rights as a police officer to shoot Morales."

"Good, because he was. Morales would have killed us all given half the chance."

"Elliot also said that Morales's goons, the good doctor, and the officer who was selling information have all

been charged with attempted murder, aggravated assault, kidnapping, and hindering prosecution."

Nicky dropped his hand down to the counter as he whistled and turned to stare at Seth. "Wow, that's a lot of charges. Does the DA think she can get them all to stick?"

"It's looking that way. With Marla, Stell, Junebug, and Justin willing to testify, the DA pretty much has a slam-dunk case against these guys. The police officer Elliot caught before Morales kidnapped him is singing very loudly. Apparently, he doesn't want to be put in general population and he's willing to squeal to get protective custody."

"But he's still doing time, right?"

"Oh, there's no doubt about that. He got two US Marshals killed while they were protecting a witness. Once the locals get done with him, he's headed up to federal court to face murder charges. Basically, the feds want to fry his ass."

"I can understand the sentiment."

Seth chuckled until his eyes caught sight of the small pink scar on Nicky's arm. He frowned, remembering the chill that flew through his body when Nicky had passed out in his arms, covered in blood.

Seth still had nightmares about Nicky getting shot.

Despite the fact that Nicky was recovering just fine, Seth imagined he always would have nightmares. There was nothing in the world that scared Seth as much as when he felt Nicky fall down on top of him and heard a gun go off.

"Did Elliot say anything else?"

"Yeah, he's taking a couple of weeks off to come out and visit us and he's bringing Justin with him."

"Justin?"

Seth nodded. "It seems they made friends while they were being held by Morales."

"What about Ricky? I thought they were getting something going?"

"I guess not. Ricky seems to be making a lot of phone calls back to a couple of friends of yours back in Boston." Seth couldn't help but laugh at the astonished look on Nicky's face. Seth shrugged. "Weirder things have happened, babe."

"Yeah, but not many." Nicky snorted then started brushing his hair again. He finally set the brush down on the counter and looked at himself in the mirror. "Do I look very different?"

"You look gorgeous and you know it."

Seth knew after so many weeks of living as a woman, Nicky was wiggling out a little now that he was

back to being a man. Seth didn't think the man was quite used to looking at himself in the mirror with shorter hair and no makeup. Seth still thought Nicky was stunning.

"You're just hoping to get laid."

"Oh, I have every intention of getting laid," Seth said as he walked over to wrap his arms around Nicky and look at their reflection in the bathroom mirror. "But you're right, I am biased. I think you're beautiful whether dressed as a man or a woman. You have to remember, babe, I've had you both ways."

Seth grinned when the corners of Nicky's lips started to turn up and his face flushed with just a bit of pink. He grabbed the edges of the towel wrapped around Nicky's waist and pulled them apart, dropping the towel to the floor.

"Besides," Seth said as he gazed over Nicky's naked body, "Who could ever think this body wasn't anything except perfect?"

Seth was thrilled down to his toes when Nicky's cock began to rise right before his eyes. He felt an answering hardness begin to fill his own cock and pressed harder against Nicky's ass cheeks.

"I never met anyone who could turn me on as fast as you do, man or woman."

"Yeah?" Nicky whispered.

"Yeah." Seth reached between their bodies and pulled the towel away from his own body, dropping it down on top of Nicky's. He pressed his body closer to Nicky, bending his knees until his cock slid between the man's thighs. "See what you do to me, babe?"

Seth watched Nicky's eyelids drop closed about halfway. Nicky's head leaned back against Seth's chest. Drops of water trickled down between them from Nicky's wet hair. Seth kept his eyes locked with Nicky's in the mirror as he stroked his hands around the man's waist then slowly up over his abdomen to his nipples.

Nicky's chest began to rise and fall faster. His mouth dropped open, little pants falling from his lips. Drops of water dripped down from Nicky's freshly washed hair to his chest, giving his skin a sexy little sheen. Seth was pretty sure Nicky never looked so gorgeous.

"Look how gorgeous you are, Nicky," Seth whispered into Nicky's ear as he nuzzled his face against the side of the man's head. He gently tugged on Nicky's brown hued nipples with his fingers as he pushed his hips against the man, driving his cock harder between Nicky's thighs.

"Seth," Nicky groaned as his eyelids slid closed the

rest of the way.

"I want to fuck you, Nicholas," Seth whispered. "I want to feel my cock sink into your tight little ass."

Nicky's eyes popped open to stare at Seth in awe. "Now?"

"I can't think of a better time."

"Your parents are coming for dinner."

Seth grinned. "I don't care, Nicky. They can wait. I can't." Seth reached down and grabbed Nicky's hard cock in a tight grip. Nicky's groan filled the bathroom as Seth started slowly stroking him. "This can't wait."

"Okay, okay, but we need to hurry. I am not fucking in the bathroom with your parents in the living room. You'd better hurry and get that cock in my ass before they get here."

Seth quickly leaned back and reached into the shower for the bottle of lube they kept on the shelf. He popped the top and squirted some onto his fingers then stepped back, patting Nicky on the small of his back.

"Bend over, babe, and spread your legs."

Nicky instantly bent over the counter and spread his legs, standing on his tiptoes so that he could push his ass up into the air. Seth went for the goal and pushed two fingers into Nicky's tight entrance.

He wasn't too worried about hurting Nicky, as they had messed around just an hour ago. Hence, the shower to clean up before his parents arrived. Nicky refused to meet his parents as a man for the very first time smelling of sex. Seth tried to tell Nicky that they wouldn't care but Nicky had been adamant. Seth had given in. It was a small battle.

Getting Nicky to move in with him had also been a small battle. Getting Nicky to realize Seth loved him no matter what he was dressed in or what he did for a living had been a much bigger battle. Seth knew it was one he'd be fighting for a long time to come, or at least until Nicky became comfortable in their relationship.

Showing Nicky how much he loved him was one of the ways Seth planned to win that battle, starting with loving on him whenever he could. There was the added bonus for Seth of being able to make love to the hottest man Seth had ever met.

"Be—better sp—speed it up, Seth."

Seth sank another finger into Nicky's ass. When he could easily move all three around, Seth pulled them free and wiped them on a nearby washcloth. He poured more lube on his fingers then put the bottle on the counter.

Seth was so aroused he had to squeeze the base of his cock to prevent himself from coming too early before

lathering his cock in lube. "Okay, babe, turn around and lay back on the counter."

"Uh uh, I want to watch," Nicky said before biting his lip.

Seth arched an eyebrow.

Okay.

"Up on the counter, babe," Seth said as he smacked the tile top with his hand. He watched with a great deal of interest as Nicky climbed up onto the counter on his knees. "I know you're flexible as hell so spread your legs as far as they will go and stick your butt out."

Seth nearly swallowed his tongue as Nicky did exactly what he said, the man's ass scooting back to push against his aching cock. Nicky's eyes watched their reflections intently like he didn't want to miss anything. Seth wanted to make sure he didn't. He brushed his fingers lightly over Nicky's puckered hole and felt it quiver under his touch.

"Are you ready for me, babe?"

Nicky nodded rapidly.

Seth bent his legs and grabbed his cock, guiding it to Nicky's opening. He slowly straightened, groaning as his cock pushed up into Nicky's tight ass until he felt his balls rub against Nicky's.

"There is nothing like this in the world," Seth hissed as he gripped Nicky's hips with his hands. He flexed his hips, driving his cock deeper into Nicky's ass. While the pleasure that produced was mind boggling, it wasn't enough.

Seth bent his knees and slowly pulled out until just the head of his cock remained inside of Nicky's tight ass. Holding tight to Nicky's waist, Seth drove forward again, ramming himself into Nicky. He saw Nicky's hand land on the mirror in front of them but the man's eyes never strayed from their bodies.

"You want to see more, babe?"

His eyes wide and filled with burning lust, Nicky nodded rapidly. Seth grabbed Nicky by his shoulders and pulled him back until Nicky's back settled against his chest. The difference in their position drove Seth's cock into Nicky's body just a bit more, just enough to drag a deep groan from Seth's mouth.

"Look how gorgeous you are, Nicholas," Seth murmured into Nicky's ear as he wrapped his hands around Nicky's body. "Look how beautiful you look sitting on my cock."

Nicky nodded.

"Touch yourself, babe, let me see you jerk yourself

off while I fuck you."

The moment Nicky grabbed his cock and started stroking himself, Seth groaned. Nicky really was a beautiful sight to watch. Seth grabbed Nicky's hips and started lifting the man on and off his cock as he bent his knees then straightened them, driving his cock into Nicky.

The combined sensations as well as watching Nicky stroke himself and watch them fucking in the mirror quickly had Seth gritting his teeth to keep from coming. It didn't help that Nicky's moans were filling the bathroom almost nonstop. Just the sound of the man in pleasure was enough to send most guys over the edge but Seth needed Nicky to go with him.

"Come for me, Nicky. Watch yourself come." Nicky's face flushed with arousal. Seth knew he was moments away from release and increased his movements, driving himself harder and faster into the man's tight ass. "You have such a perfect little ass, Nicky. This is where I was meant to spend the rest of my life, right here, balls deep in your tight ass."

Nicky's eyes widened even more. His mouth opened and a long wail came out as his body stiffened. spurts of cum shot from Nicky's cock and splattered all over the mirror and countertop.

That was all Seth needed to send him over the edge. Well, that, and the inner muscles in Nicky's ass tightening around his cock so hard he could barely move. Seth was pretty sure his roar shook the walls but he didn't care as he filled Nicky's ass with his release. All he could think about was how good it felt to be holding Nicky in his arms with his cock buried in the man's ass.

He never wanted to leave.

"Seth, we have to get moving. Your parents are going to be here soon."

Seth groaned and lifted his head from Nicky's neck to glare at him in the mirror. "Quiet. I'm basking."

"No, you're stalling because you like me walking around naked. It is so not going to happen while your parents are here, so forget it."

Seth chuckled as he gently pulled free of Nicky's body and helped the man stand on his trembling legs. "It's nice to know I can affect you so much," he said when Nicky grabbed onto him as his legs gave out.

Nicky lifted his head to glare at him. "Zip it or you'll be basking alone for the next week."

"Like you can keep your hands off me that long." Seth snickered as he quickly cleaned up then dropped his towel in the dirty clothes hamper.

"I can— oh, shit, your parents are early," Nicky whispered when the doorbell rang. He looked desperate as he glanced over at Seth. "Well, do something. They're your parents."

"Nicky, babe, calm down. You've already met my parents and they love you."

"I haven't met them as a man, Seth."

Nicky looked so stressed that Seth knew he'd have to do something about it. He grabbed his jeans off the bed and pulled them up his legs as quickly as he could. His shirt came next. "Get dressed as fast as you can," Seth said as he headed out the bedroom door. "I'll stall."

Seth could hear Nicky scrambling behind him as he shut the bedroom door and walked over to let his parents inside. "Mom, Dad, glad you could come."

"Well, it's not often we get an invitation to dinner at our son's house," Pamela said as she glanced around. Seth knew she was giving his apartment the *mother once over*. She did every time she came over. He supposed it was a mom thing.

"Where's Nicky?" Pamela asked when she finally looked back at Seth. "Will she be joining us tonight?"

"In a manner of speaking," Seth replied. "Why don't we go sit down? I have a story I want to tell you and it's a

long one."

"Everything is okay, isn't it, Seth?" his father asked.

"You're not in some sort of trouble, are you?"

"Not anymore."

"Any more?" Pamela asked. "Seth, what is going on? I thought we were coming over to have dinner with you and your girlfriend?"

"Well..."

He turned when he heard the bedroom door open to see Nicky walk out, looking nervous as hell but sexy in his tight jeans and button down shirt. Seth held his hand out to his lover and beckoned him over.

Nicky quickly crossed the room and grabbed his hand. He pulled Nicky closer and wrapped his arm around the man's shaking shoulders then leaned over to place a small kiss on Nicky's head before turning to face his parents.

"Mom, Dad, I want you to meet my girl, Nicky."

The End

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Stormy believes the only thing sexier than a man in cowboy boots is two, or three men in cowboy boots. She also believes in love at first sight, soul mates, true love, and happy endings.

Stormy lives in the great Northwest region of the USA, with her gorgeous husband and soul mate, six very active teenagers, two boxer/collie puppies, two old biddy cats, and three fish.

You can usually find her cuddled in bed with a book in her hand and a puppy in her lap, or on her laptop, creating the next sexy man for one of her stories. Stormy welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website at www.stormyglenn.com.

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