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Sno Ho

ETHAN DAY

Sn Ho
by Ethan Day

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Published by

MLR Press, LLC

3052 Gaines Waterport Rd.

Albion, NY 14411

Visit ManLoveRomance Press, LLC on the Internet:

www.mlrpess.com

Cover Art by Deana C. Jamroz

Editing by Kris Jacen

Printed in the United States of America.

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First Edition 2009

Chapter One

My eyes fluttered open, and the overcast daylight filtering in from the huge picture window slowly came into focus. I was looking out over a panorama of snowy mountains dotted with sprouts of green from the evergreens that poked through the white blanket. The small mountain town of Summit City, Colorado, stretched out along the floor of the valley below. The light drizzle of snow was softly floating from sky to ground. I heard rustling coming from behind me and I sat up, realizing I didn't know where I was.

I lifted my hand to my forehead as the dull, achy-throbbing began—my hangover waking up with me. How much had I had to drink last night? Not that it took much, but damn. I rubbed my temple and cringed as the swimming in my head began to settle. One more thing I blame Phillip for. I looked down, realizing I was naked, and was startled again by the rustling to my side. Slowly turning my head toward the source of the disruption, my eyes widened taking in the wide, expansive muscular back.

I quietly began to scoot toward the edge of the bed and winced from the twinge of pain coming from my backside. What the hell had he fucked me with? Christ on a cracker...my ass felt like it had been reamed, but good. I shook my head and continued to crawl over to the side of the massive bed. Probably another bartender, I thought as I finally made it to the edge. This happened every god damn time I drank. Why couldn't I just leave a nice tip like a normal

person? Honestly, Boone, do you really have to offer up your ass? Are you seriously *that* cheap? I reached back and rubbed my ass somewhat thankful I had no memory of last night considering it felt like this dude had seriously fucked the hell out of me.

"Please let him have worn a condom," I mumbled as I threw my feet over the side of the bed. I cringed as I looked down to see my foot had landed on used rubber. I made some sort of *ick* noise as I lifted my foot, which now had the condom stuck to it.

"That is so not sexy." I tentatively reached out, touching as little of the condom as humanly possible. I began pulling it off and closed my eyes feeling the skin from the bottom of my foot peel away from the latex which I then tossed back onto the floor as a 'that's-gross' chill swept over my naked body. I looked around, disgusted and feeling 'all class' as I took the edge of the sheet to wipe the sticky off the bottom of my foot.

I stood up too quickly feeling the bed move from behind me. My head was spinning a bit as I turned and looked down at the ass abuser that lay before me. He was massive, whoever he was. I imagined him being like Gaston from *Beauty and the Beast*. He was now on his back and his hairless expanse of a chest was spread out before me. He practically requires his own zip code, I thought as my gaze followed the sinewy trail of muscle down his abs. He was hot at least. I rubbed my head desperately needing coffee and aspirin while scolding myself for being the type of asshole that cared whether or not he was hot. I scanned the room

trying to get my bearings. I spied my jeans on the floor which somehow made me feel less panicky.

I poked around the room and discovered that the bedroom was up in a loft which overlooked the living area below. I got slightly dizzy and nauseous as I peered over the railing. Knotty pine beams stretched out overhead and I caught a whiff of the fire below, that was now probably just embers. I felt a sudden chill and began to look around for the rest of my clothes. I spied a shoe and my briefs on the floor by the bureau.

I caught a glimpse of myself in a mirror as I crossed the room and my mouth fell open. The back of my head looked as if someone had taken a comb and teased the shit out it. Spotting the huge-ass hickey on the curve between my neck and shoulder, I scowled and turned back to the bed. I was half tempted to chuck my shoe at him. Dirty bastard...all but branded my ass. My eyes widened as I quickly spun around, using the mirror, relieved to see there wasn't a hickey on my ass.

I made a quick scan inspecting the rest of my body to make sure nothing else was...different. I gathered up all my things and crept naked down the stairs, clutching everything in my arms. A flash of the previous night popped into my head and I stopped, leaning against the railing for a moment for balance as I vaguely remembered clinging to Mr. Muscles while we made out, him carrying me up the stairs. I shook my head, feeling my cock stir a bit, almost able to remember what it felt like to have the guy's tongue in my mouth. I let out a disapproving sigh, and continued down the stairs.

I stumbled into the living room, spotting my keys and cell phone on the coffee table next to two glasses each of which had a tiny amount of red wine left in them. The room was decorated in what I assumed to be mountain-gay, bachelor-chic with its brown leather furniture, a solid looking wooden rocking chair and dark mission style accent tables. It did actually feel lived in and homey, which was nice after Phillip's sterile, everything-in-its-place condo.

The fireplace was massive, large stacked stones stretching up from the floor all the way up the two-story wall and disappearing into the ceiling. The five foot long mantle consisted of a long, thick rough cut chunk of wood which was shiny from the multiple layers of varnish. I spied a small plasma through a cracked door in one the built-ins, on either side of the fireplace.

I smacked my lips, feeling the fuzz of drink and sex from the night before. God only knows what depraved acts I allowed myself to partake in with the beast. I felt another achy-twinge in my ass as I meandered into the kitchen. I felt the texture and temperature change under my bare feet, going from the wood floors to the stone tile in the open kitchen and dining area. A picture window twice the size of the one upstairs in the bedroom provided another breathtaking view of the mountains which surrounded the valley below. I had to blink a few times in order to tear my eyes away, imagining I could become easily mesmerized by the sight, losing entire days—getting lost in the scale of it all. That was saying a lot, considering Albuquerque came with its own amazing views, thinking back to the warm, rusty-red

glow of the Sandia Mountains baking in the late afternoon sun.

As my gaze ran over the gourmet looking kitchen with the smoky caramel stained cabinets and stone countertops which appeared to have tiny fossils imbedded in them, I paused at the professional grade looking stainless steel appliances. Maybe I'd fucked a chef and not a bartender after all? That would be some type of progress. If given a dollar for every bartender I'd woken up with over the past thirteen years of my life, I'd be a rich man. The confusing thing was, I remembered the bartender from last night, unlike the man I'd found myself in bed with. Life really was a twisted bitch sometimes. I was jerked out of my inner thoughts hearing a noise come from upstairs.

I noticed a hallway off the back of the kitchen and headed that direction. I found a bathroom and took the longest piss of my life. It was one for the ages that piss, the kind that gave you chills and goose bumps all over your body from the relief of the release. I flushed the toilet before pulling on my briefs and jeans, then finally looking back over my hair as I yanked on my socks and boots. I turned on the faucet and did my best to dampen my scruffy, shoulder length, light brown hair back into some sort of submission. It was tangled all to hell, another reminder of what a good-time guy I was when I drank. *They didn't call me Low-Tolerance Tommy for nothing.*

I usually don't have alcohol unless my friends are around to try and keep me from doing things like this. Unfortunately I was up here in Colorado all by myself, thanks to Phillip. Happy one year anniversary, you cock sucking piece of man-

shit. This was what I deserved for dating a surgeon. You think they're all heroic, saving lives—making the big sacrifice. What I realized now was what a controlling, god-complex, piece of scum he was. Why do I never see it until it's over?

I ran my finger tips over the hickey on my neck and let out a long sigh. Thinking back over the past year there had been plenty of signs. Phillip never asked about me or my day. It was as if he never gave a shit who *I* was, only caring that I looked good on his arm and in his bed. That should've been the biggest clue. The fact that I'm a writer, made him seem perfect. He worked long hours which left me with tons of time to work. The sex was incredible. The vain, god-complex worked for the son of a bitch, and his confidence in his abilities in the sack were well warranted. If nothing else *good* could be said about Phillip, he did have a can-do cock.

I laughed at my reflection in the mirror thinking I'd actually convinced myself that Phillip had invited me up here, to the place we'd met a year ago yesterday, because he was going to ask me to move in with him.

"What a dumbass you are, Boone." I said to myself, still worried in the back of mind why it was I hadn't cried. Had I been broken-hearted so many times in the past that I'd now become desensitized to the pain of it? "Am I broken?"

I shrugged and picked up my t-shirt, flipping it inside out. Nope—Phillip sent me up here because he wanted to dump me, and the really sad part was that he didn't have enough respect for me to do it face to face. He'd called instead, letting me know the cabin was paid up for another week and to stay as long as I liked. That he'd already dropped the few

things I'd been allowed to leave at his house back off at mine and that my spare key was in the mail.

My response to what he'd said? "Thanks."

I slipped on my shirt and went back out into the living room, trying to avoid the views from the large picture window. I snatched up my phone and dialed information; getting the number to call a cab. I scurried about when they asked where to pick me up, eventually snagging the address from the magazines piled up on the coffee table. I flipped through the stack as I hung up my cell. A *Sports Illustrated*, how butch, I thought. Funny that was on top...trying too hard, perhaps? That slightly critical thought brought a smile to my face. There was also an *Advocate*, an *Entertainment Weekly*, some skiing catalogues and a *TV Guide*. I read the name, which for some reason sounded familiar. Wade Walker.

I stood up and went back into Wade's kitchen, rifling through the cabinets until I found a bottle of Advil. I poured out five and popped them in my mouth. I went to the sink and bent over, sucking in the water directly from the stream coming out of the faucet. My eyes drifted toward that wonderful view. Whoever the big-dicked-mother-fucker Wade was, he was certainly lucky to have that view.

I wondered for a split second about the man sleeping upstairs. He was, if nothing else, strikingly handsome, sort of a more beefed version of Christopher Reeves with his wavy black hair and cheekbones to die for. I briefly considered the possibility of dating Superman and then rolled my eyes. I'd had enough drama in the past twenty four hours as it was.

"You just can't seem to help yourself can you?" I mumbled. I loved men who were nothing like...me. My worst nightmare would be to wind up marrying myself. I honestly couldn't think of anything less exciting. I needed to be challenged, forced to look at things from other perspectives. I'm a writer damn it. I crave what I do not understand. And while I guess that always made for a very exciting love life, it had also been my very own, little slice of hell at times.

Hearing a honk, I turned and dashed into the living room, snatching up my things off the table. I yanked my coat off the rack by the door. I slipped it on, sucking in my breath as I opened the door, greeted not so gently by the cold. I tried to quietly close the door until I thought I caught some movement out of the corner of my eye coming from the stairs. I slammed the door and ran like mad for the cab. I was certainly in no mood, or condition, to face my trick. I climbed into the cab and shut the door, asking the driver to take me back to the lodge. Back to the cabin Phillip had rented for us to spend our anniversary in. No more tricks for this kid, I thought, refusing to look back at the house as the cab pulled away.

* * * *

As I slowly made my way down the walkway, struggling with the damn skis and poles, I cursed under my breath. This was stupid and I knew it. I'd never had the slightest interest in learning how to snow ski, but Phillip had insisted I learn. He'd set up these lessons and bought me all the gear and clothes, teaching me how to put it all on before I left. The sick

part was he knew he was going to break up with me while he was doing it. I'd now come to the conclusion this was all part of my severance package, the trip, the gifts, the ski lessons. Phillip's way of buying off his guilt I assumed, if he did indeed actually possess the humility for such an emotion.

I stopped, adjusting the skis in my arms. The army green pants I wore looked like normal old cargo pants, and I did like the matching parka with the faux fur trimmed hood. The warm snuggly layers of oatmeal colored shirts and sweaters, the ski boots, it had all cost him like nine or ten thousand dollars. It was nuts, a ludicrous amount of money, but if nothing else, at least I looked the part. I planned on selling it all on eBay when I got back home. Maybe I could use the money to buy myself a second vacation on a beach somewhere?

I looked up as a couple passed by me coming from the opposite direction. They barely noticed my presence as they giggled and stared at one another all googley-eyed, his dimpled smile and rosy cheeks, her long perky blonde curls bouncing. It was disgusting! I resisted the urge to call back at them, informing the ill-fated lovers it would never last, that their happiness was fleeting. The harbinger of love-death would soon be upon them! It made me smile to think it, even though I didn't say it.

I lifted my skis, tucked them under my arm and began walking toward the main lodge. The massive five story building, with its new European-style architecture, seemed well matched to the natural environment. Despite being newer construction, the lodge seemed to fit in perfectly with

the sleepy little Victorian mountain town that was Summit City. It had sixty or seventy rooms in the main lodge along with the smaller single occupancy chalets that dotted the grounds for those people, like Phillip, who enjoyed their privacy. Whoever designed the place had done a great job of taking advantage of all the views. There were two towers on the main lodge on opposite corners, one provided views of the valley and town below, the other of the mountain. I rounded the side of the lodge to find other guests and attendants, all busying about going to and from, while twisting the knife in my gut by laughing and having a grand old time.

"The tram should be back around any minute," a young man called out to me from the entrance area.

I nodded and smiled, contemplating whether or not I should just walk up the road to the ski lift area. It wasn't that far, and despite still feeling a smidge funky from my hangover when I'd left the cabin, the cool air and exercise appeared to be doing the trick. As I started to step off the curb the small tram rounded the corner. Already late for my lesson as it was, I decided to hop on and ride up after all.

As the glorified tractor/trolley bounced up the slight incline of the road, I let out a sigh. I knew exactly why I wasn't all that upset about Phillip breaking things off, but I refused to admit it to myself. It seemed wrong to let the prick off the hook for the shitty way he dumped me. But I had indeed, come to realize that I hadn't actually been in love with the *man* so much as the idea of him. What a waste of a year, I thought as the tram came to a stop at the ski lift area.

I hopped out, back into the snow and slid my skis and poles out, fighting with them as I tried to gain control with my uncoordinated limbs. This was a bad idea, and I knew it, but I'd spent all morning and my entire lunch trying to piece together what the hell had happened the night before. I'd driven myself crazy attempting to suss it out. So, despite having no interest in skiing, here I was. I needed a distraction from the gnawing nit-pickiness that was my over active brain. Skiing was one of those sports that looked easy, therefore I knew it was going to be ridiculously difficult to learn.

I finally started crunching my way through the snow and headed up to the ski shack to figure out where the hell I was supposed to be. I felt the scowl take over my face as my brain forced me back over the events I *could* remember from the night before. I hated losing time, so to speak, despite thinking it might be my subconscious way of removing any and all proof of my inner-slutiness. Apparently I had no issues being a man-whore so long as I couldn't remember it.

I remembered the cab ride from the lodge down into the town. It hadn't been my intention to drink, I just felt like being around people. After Phillip called and dropped the axe on our relationship, that intimate, luxurious cabin, which up 'til then had felt romantic and dreamy, suddenly made me feel desolate and very much alone. I knew trying to write in my stunned capacity was pointless, so down the mountain I went in search of the comfort that only the closeness of strangers could provide.

The heat in the taxi hadn't seemed to be working, so by the time I made it into the small pub called Staggs, I felt like

a little gay-cicle. It was warm and cozy inside, the rolling and crackling fire, amber hazy lighting, and the chatter and laughter of the other patrons was pretty much the shot in the arm I'd needed. I sat down at the dark wood bar which was a square sitting in the middle of the room with tables spreading out like satellites as if orbiting around it. I immediately felt as though I'd been given a hug...it put a huge smile on my face as one of the two guys behind the bar came to greet me.

"Nice to see a smiling face," he said, wiping the top of the bar in front of me. "You look a little frozen."

I felt my smile fade wishing he hadn't drawn attention to it. *Hello...supposed to be in mourning, dude!* "Bitterly cold." I got out, going through that odd state that was somewhere between freezing and warmth. When your cheeks began to feel hot but your teeth were still slightly chattering.

"How 'bout something hot," the cutie asked as I did a double take noticing the other guy behind the bar was an identical twin. "I'm Chip." He extended a hand across the bar. "My brother, Dean," he added with a backward nod as if he felt I might actually need that type of clarification.

I laughed a little, shaking my head and raising an eyebrow. "Boone." I took his hand and shook, taking note of the way his thumb lightly grazed the back of my hand. He winked and smiled devilishly before letting go, resting his hands on the edge of the bar.

I immediately inventoried his dimpled-cuteness as I smiled back. He had short hair, spiked up a bit into a point on top. Obviously the trendier of the two, he was in one of those form fitting t-shirts that looked as if it had an elaborate giant tattoo

imprinted on it. His thermal underwear sticking out of the short sleeves, it fit snugly enough to show off his tight little body. He was a little on the short side...compact, wearing low-rise jeans which showcased a nice bubble butt. Chip's twin was wearing un-tucked flannel and jeans...either very straight or very lazy. Not in the door five minutes and already being hit on. *Not bad Boone, not bad at all.*

"An Irish coffee will warm you right up."

I hadn't realized Ireland grew coffee beans, but the combo of heat and caffeine sounded heavenly. "Sounds great, I'll give it a try." Take that, Juan Valdez, I thought, chuckling a bit figuring I was about to have the worst cup of coffee ever.

As Chip went off to get my coffee I thought about the state of my affairs. All in all my life was pretty cushy. I'd written seven novels...well started seven novels I should say. For some reason I couldn't ever seem to finish them, but I kept plugging away at it, beginning a new one each time I'd get stuck on the last one. Someday I knew I'd finish them. I just needed—something.

I'd had an uncle who'd been an architect, my Mom's brother. They were best friends, he was older than she, always looked out for her. I think Mom actually loved him more than she did my Dad. Uncle Barry had been killed in a car wreck my freshman year at University. He'd left me his estate, which consisted of a small 1300 square foot remodeled Pueblo style bungalow that he'd restored himself, and a BMW which I still drive to this day. It, of course, now appeared to be more rust than metal, teetering on the brink of falling to pieces from the next strong breeze. There had

also been enough money to pay off said home and car, with plenty left over to afford college. Mom always thought Uncle Barry did it for her, but deep down, I knew he did it realizing he and I were each another type of *family*. His boyfriend had died with him in the crash. It was all very sad, although as sick as it sounded, I was a little glad he hadn't been alone in those final moments. Somehow that made it seem less horrible?

I held a part time job working in medical records for the local hospital, which paid enough to cover my base living expenses and allowed me the luxury of writing books I couldn't finish, while not having to worry about living on the streets. Worse than anything, was the knowledge I now had to go back home and see Phillip on a regular basis at work. I thought it was like fate or something, considering we met each other on vacation in Colorado, despite both living in the same city *and* working in the same hospital. My Dad had always told me not to shit where I eat. I was now seriously wishing I'd listened.

I felt a heat pass over my body and sort of wiggled on my bar stool. It was strange, unlike anything I'd ever experienced before. I was beginning to suspect something paranormal had just occurred when I looked around the room. That was the first time I saw him, the man who would be cast in the role of ass-abusing-trick before the evening had ended...aka Wade the man-wall. He was sitting across the bar in a booth next to the fire place. He was staring at me with a look that was unmistakable. Eyes full of wanton-lusty goodness. I noticed that it was difficult to swallow as I forced my gaze away from

his. I exhaled, feeling my nipples constrict and my cock already reacting. I felt naked, unable to move as if I'd been pinned down to the stool, and if nothing else, my body was lovin' it.

I jumped a little as Chip sat the coffee mug down in front of me. It had what looked like whipped cream floating on the top. I looked up and smiled weakly, still attempting to catch my breath.

"You don't *really* want that," Chip stated in a slightly pleading tone.

"Huh?" I was hoping he wasn't referring to what I assumed he was.

"It's just so...stereotypical." He smiled with an orneriness that was adorable. "The big, hunky, muscled, uber-hetero acting gay man? Really...you're *that* guy?"

I felt my face burn slightly as I laughed. "And what would you suggest as an alternative?" I took a sip of my Irish coffee and nearly choked as I swallowed feeling the burn of the coffee mixed with the burn of the alcohol. "Good Christ, my hell!" Chip placed his elbows on the bar and folded his arms as my eyes began to water.

"Good?" he asked with a wink as I realized it wasn't the coffee beans that made it Irish...it was the whisky.

"That's some strong coffee." I took a deep breath and looked down at the cup. "Fuck me."

"If that was an offer then the answer is yes." Chip gave me a half smile and looked into my eyes dreamily.

I smiled and took another sip, thinking Chip was downright adorable and feeling the alcohol and heat begin to make my

brain all tingly. "So you're offering yourself up as a willing sacrifice to keep me from making the biggest mistake of my life by bedding down the muscle-that-hustles over there?"

"I just think you need to really consider the alternatives." Chip said, licking his full lips. "You could go with the glittery-chrome, all-American muscle car." He motioned with his head toward his now perceived competition. "Or you could try something different...the unexpected choice if you will, by selecting the compact, yet much more fun and sporty convertible."

All these automobile references were really making me wish I could afford a new car. "Fun and sporty is looking pretty damn good at the moment." I took another sip, acclimating to the burn and watching Chip's smile stretch widely, showing off his boyish grin.

He stood up straight and shot me a wink. "That long hair of yours is hot as hell."

With that he moved on to the person a few seats down and took their drink order. That was where my memory began to get fuzzy. I vaguely remembered more flirting with Chip, and I'm pretty sure the all-American muscle car did at some point wind up on the bar stool next to me. I think I remembered him laughing, a deep laugh, and maybe a few barbs back and forth between him and Chip?

* * * *

I entered the ski shack, which was actually a very nice winter sporting-complex where you could rent snow-mobiles, skis, snow boards, basically where you could fill any and all of

your snow-related merchandising needs. I stumbled up to the desk and waited patiently in line behind two other people, finally getting some face time with the hot little red head that seemed to be in control of Winter World. She smiled at me in what felt like a forced attempt at 'customer friendly' and I was momentarily caught up in her skin. It was the creamiest powdered porcelain I'd ever seen, slightly brushed with a soft pink hue over the cheeks.

"Name please," she said, in a voice that was one octave away from seeming cartoony.

"Boone Daniels." I smiled my own version of faux-happy back at her.

"Really?"

I felt my eyes roll, though I hadn't intended on doing it. Let's just say I knew where she was going, and it wasn't the first time this record had been played in my thirty three years on this earth.

"Sorry." She smiled, cheeks reddening up having obviously taken note of my irritation. "Guess you've probably heard plenty of Daniel Boone cracks, huh?"

I smiled to let her know I had indeed. Having glanced down to see that her name was Candy, I also felt she really had no room to cast any stones with names on them.

"Let's see." She clicked on her keyboard, and grinned. "Oh, well you're a bit late, but let me page your instructor." She quickly snatched up a phone and punched in some numbers before placing it back down on its cradle. "You have the absolute best instructor."

"Of course I do," I mumbled, though apparently not low enough as Candy seemed to overhear me due to the changed expression on her face. Phillip would in no way scrimp when it came to my severance package. I'd have the best his money could buy.

"He doesn't really appreciate people being late, so when he mentions it, please ignore him. He's all gruff and no bite—I promise."

Great. I should just leave now. All I needed was some prick crawling up my already sore ass all afternoon as I tried in vain to stay upright. I eyed the skis thinking how frickin' tired of lugging the stupid things around I was. I tried to adjust the skis and pole thingies in my arms.

"Is this him?" I heard from a gruff voice behind me.

"He's your two o'clock," Candy said.

"You're late."

I began rolling my eyes as I spun around, mouth falling open as I saw Super Wade standing before me with what was at first a grimace, that changed to a slight smile as he adjusted his body, standing up straight. He resembled some type of skiing superhero in his bright red ski pants and parka. He was looking me up and down in what was unmistakably an 'I know what you look like naked' way. I immediately spun back around to face Candy, feeling my skin burn and the muscles in my ass twitch.

"Son of a..."

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Chapter Two

"...bitch."

"Excuse me?" Candy asked as I shut my eyes wishing I could crawl out of here never to be seen or heard from again.

I listened to the low, rumble of a laugh coming from behind me. I suddenly got the distinct impression his eyes were on my ass so I spun around to face him. I shook my head at him as his gaze made its way back up to my face. My chest began to tighten and I felt distinctly dirty, as if he'd just bent me over the desk and fucked me right in front of Cotton Candy.

"Uh...er...ugh." I said, noticing too late my tongue wasn't working. I felt a panic and turned to leave, getting my feet caught up in the skis, eyes bugging out of my head as I fell to the floor with a loud thud. I let out a whimper, not from the pain shooting through my shoulder so much as the humiliation of having completely lost control over my faculties. It was like Wade sent out some type of man-EMP pulse which short circuited my wiring.

He squatted next to me as a deep throaty laugh barreled out of him. I certainly couldn't seem to find the humor in the situation, and the view of his crotch from his spread legs was most distracting, even when covered in multiple layers.

"You alright there, sport?"

I took a deep breath, desperately hoping everything would work properly when I went to speak again. "Fine." *Eureka!!!* Okay, so it was only *one* word, but at least I'd moved beyond

the undecipherable squeaky noises that had sounded eerily like a dolphin on crack only moments before.

Wade stood back up, towering over me as he bent over and began to reach out to grab me. I let out a little laugh hearing a voice in the back of my head screaming, *Run, its Godzilla!!* I felt his over-sized paws grab the edges of my parka as he lifted me up, before setting me back onto my feet. It wasn't lost on me that Wade hadn't seemed to require much assistance on my part.

I cleared my throat as he straightened out my parka, not breaking the line of sight between us. I felt myself getting hard as he once again made me feel as though he was seconds away from yanking down my pants and...

"I guess we should get to it." Wade said, reaching down to pick up my skis.

Yes please, my evil side thought, before being whacked over the head with a sledge hammer by my inner angel.

I pulled my jacket closed, fearful the bulge in my pants was noticeable and too self conscious to draw attention to it by looking down. I wasn't positive, but I could have sworn I heard another low laugh come from Wade who was right behind me. All I could think about was finding the nearest exit and making a run for it. As if he could sense that, I felt his hand suddenly on the small of my back, guiding me through the glass doors.

We were now back out in the snow and heading toward the training area. There was another instructor working with a class of five other newbies.

I looked to my side and smiled when I found him looking me up and down again. I wanted to tell him to cut that shit out, but something told me it would be more dangerous to let him know he had any effect on me what so ever.

"Where are the rest of your students?" I asked as he bent down to help me into the skis he'd placed on the ground at either side of my feet.

"You're it," he stated, guiding my foot into the ski. I heard a click then he moved onto the second foot. "You paid a whole lot of extra money for private lessons."

I placed a hand on his thick, firm, totally lickable shoulder for balance, hearing the second click while adding one more thing to the list of reasons I despised Phillip. I was stuck here with all of this man's attention focused on me, which in an alternate universe I'd probably be thrilled about. But in this one—the one where he looked at me like he knew me, and my body, inside and out, while I could barely remember kissing him—it made me feel off kilter. There was no balance of power. He had it all and I wanted mine back, damn it.

I smiled slightly as he stood back up and faced me. He got this sort of big-brotherly type look to his face as he handed me the poles. I suddenly had flashes of grabbing his pole, and I took in a quick breath of air as he began talking about balance. *Seriously...he was actually going to try teaching me how to ski at a time like this?* Could he be anymore rude? Like I can concentrate on anything as dangerous as skiing?

Wade was going on and on about flexing ankles, and how I do it every day, and all I could think about was the way his massive body had to be flexing underneath all the layers of

clothing. I felt a heat come over me, remembering the way it felt having the weight of his body pressing into mine; that amazing sense of pressure, like he might crush the life out of me and the fact that I hadn't seemed to care.

"You're not listening to a word I'm saying." Wade scolded, placing a hand on his hip and snapping me out of the sex haze I was drowning in.

My cock was hard as a rock and I felt my face burn. "I can't do this." I dropped the poles and bent down trying to fiddle with the skis in an attempt to get my foot out.

"What's wrong?" Wade bent down and helped me get my foot out. He was right in my face and he had what was at first a look of irritation, then as if realizing, a pleased smirk soon followed.

I'd always thought those sexy movies like *9 1/2 Weeks* and *Body Heat* were a load of cheesy bunk. It seemed ludicrous to me that anyone would actually lose their senses, as if trapped in some sex induced coma. That loss of control and the power to simply walk away, gone—taken away from you.

"Well that's not gonna be me mister!" I yelled as I pointed at Wade.

"What the hell are you talking about?" Wade asked, getting my second foot free.

We both stood up and I was freaking because I hadn't meant to scream that out loud. I started to march off back toward the ski shack. I felt completely humiliated and the sense I had to flee was almost as intoxicating as Wade.

"Is this because I fucked you last night?"

I came to a stop, my back turned to him, and I felt all the muscles in my shoulders tense. I plastered a smile on my face as I turned to face him. "No!" *Okay, calm down Tammy Tragic. Let's use our inside voice despite being outdoors.* A huge, smart-ass, 'I now see how bad you want me' grin spread over his face. The sight of which made me livid. "Wipe that nasty grin off your face," I snapped.

He laughed and took several steps closer, causing me to take one step back. It unnerved me to have to look up at him. At just over six feet I wasn't used to having to do that, but Wade was a good six to eight inches taller than I was.

"Kinda feisty, aren't you?" He sighed and winked at me. "I do like feisty."

He laughed again. I suppose I wasn't hiding my irritation with him very well. The way he looked me over made me feel like some toy he was suddenly ready to play with.

"I guess you'd know, wouldn't you?"

He took another step closer. "I wouldn't exactly say no to a second go around."

"Well that's big of you." Not exactly the kind of reaction that did much for *my* ego. "Glad to know I rocked your world. I'm sorry it was such an awful experience."

"Oh now, no need to apologize." Wade placed a hand on my shoulder, making me feel as though I was pinned to the ground. "It wasn't the best sex I've ever had, but I wouldn't call it awful."

"Unbelievable!" Could this *be* any more humiliating? I shrugged his hand off my shoulder. "I can't understand why you bothered wasting your time."

"You couldn't seem to keep your hands off my dick for starters," Wade said with a snarky grin. "And even though you were pretty drunk and it was, at times, a bit like fucking a wet noodle—I was most impressed by your eagerness."

And there we are...it could indeed *actually* be more humiliating. "Let me fall to the ground and give my thanks now."

"If you think it's necessary?"

"You're a complete ass!"

"It's not like I wasn't into it." He reached over and poked me with a gloved finger in the chest. "Sometimes merely getting off is enough."

I slapped his hand away from me. "Thank God I was there to provide a nice warm hole for you." I began to storm off, angrier than I could ever remember being in my entire life. He was the most insipid, revolting excuse of a human being I'd ever met.

"Don't forget tight," Wade called out.

I cringed, stopping as if frozen to that spot. No. He. Didn't! I spun around to face him. "Excuse me?"

"Nice *tight*, warm hole for me."

It was obvious he was beyond amused by the whole situation as he tried not to burst out into laughter. I slowly turned, walking away, realizing that despite wanting to strangle the life out of him, without something like Roofies to knock him on his ass first, I'd have no chance at success.

"We haven't finished your lesson!" he called out, laughing harder as I flipped him off before disappearing around the corner of the ski shack.

"I think I've learned enough for one day."

The tram rounded the corner, and I tapped my foot and crossed my arms, waiting impatiently for it to come to a stop. As I climbed up and took a seat I was so angry I literally couldn't see straight. The tram pulled away, and started the slow turn before finally heading back down the hill toward the lodge. My vision was blurred and I felt the moisture running down my sides. I was sweating up a storm, my body felt on fire. I glanced down and released the tension from my fingers which were clenched into fists.

No one had ever quite had this effect on me before. I felt...damaged. *He broke me!* Hell to the yeah! That stupid man-pig and his club-cock must have jarred something loose last night! "I hate that man!"

I sank into my seat a bit as the driver and two other passengers turned to gawk at me, startled by my outburst. I saw the roof of the lodge above the tree tops and couldn't wait to get back to my room so I could get out of these clothes. I was roasting to the point that as I jumped out of the tram I seriously considered stripping down to my briefs and rolling around in the snow.

I was marching along like a little soldier on a mission listening to the crunch of the snow under my feet. My arms started to shake a bit, a reaction to getting so angry, I assumed. I felt my fists beginning to clench again and shook my hands to loosen them up. Rounding the corner of the building, I noticed the same couple I'd passed earlier heading back toward lodge. They were still all cute and cuddly. This time as I passed them I screamed, "Harbinger of love-death!"

They each looked at me like I was a crazy person as I laughed a little maniacally. I scoffed at their ignorance and spun about, continuing on a bee line path to my cabin.

* * * *

I'd already begun removing my parka before entering the small cozy cabin which was a nice blend of five star luxury and rustic charm. The plush area rugs, overstuffed furniture and tiny gourmet kitchenette mixed remarkably well with the rough lumber beams and walls, the small stone fireplace, and knotty pine plank floors.

I flung my parka across the room as I paced back and forth across the small living room. I heard a thump as it knocked the small basket of muffins off the side table and into the wall.

"Stupid muffins!" I screamed as one rolled across the floor stopping somewhere under the coffee table. I yanked the sweater and t-shirt from under the waist band of my pants and twisted and writhed my body as I pulled them off, shaking my wrist until they fell to the floor.

I stood there for a few moments, taking in deep breaths, the cool air of the room tickling my bare moist skin. It felt incredible and I finally began to calm down a bit. I walked to the sofa and plopped down on the arm so I could bend over and unbuckle the ski boots. I yanked one off and dropped it, which made a loud thump as it hit the floor.

I stopped for a moment and took another deep breath. The hair around my face was moist and sticking to my skin. I reached up and ran my fingers through my hair, sucking

another deep gulp of air into my lungs. I exhaled slowly and reached down removing the second boot, this time setting it onto the floor. I had never in all my life been so blatantly insulted. I wasn't sure if it was the embarrassment of running into the man with whom I'd had the sex-I-don't-remember, or the fact that he'd called me a lousy lay that had me so pissed, but I was livid.

Never, had *anyone* ever called me a bad lover. It just hadn't happened! I was a damn good lay!! Usually guys were asking for a third and fourth helping of Boone.

"Christ!" I stood up and turned hearing a knock at the door. "Now I'm sitting here alone and talking about myself in the third person." *Stupid freak.*

I headed to the door, cursing when I stepped my socked foot into a cold puddle of melted snow on the floor. I was shaking my leg like a dog, as I grabbed the handle and yanked the door open. A slow smile spread over Wade's face as he looked me up and down while I stood there on one foot, mouth slightly agape. The bitter cold air hit my skin and I felt my nipples go rock hard.

"You forgot these," he said, eyes plastered to my pecs as he stood on the porch holding up the skis.

I have a face, dude, I thought.

I suddenly reached out with both hands and snatched up wads of his parka in my fists. His eyes bugged out as I yanked him into my cabin with some type of new found gorilla strength. The skis and poles made an awful racket as they caught on the door jam, snapping loose from Wade's hand and scattering across the floor of the small covered porch.

I shoved Wade into the room, releasing him from my grip, which caused him to stumble back several feet in what seemed like an attempt to prevent himself from falling backward. I kicked the door shut with my foot and the walls vibrated from the force. He was looking at me like he was unsure if I was going to kiss him or kill him. I wasn't sure either as I stomped across the room, slamming my body into his. Our mouths locked together like two magnets. I felt his hands on my hips as I shoved my tongue into his mouth. My hands were yanking at his bright red parka and Wade took over, sliding it off his shoulders and shimmying out of it as my hands fell to the buckle on his pants. I was furiously pulling up on his shirts as Wade slid his hands up my sides and across my back.

I pulled my mouth away and he tried to force his back onto mine, but I pushed him, backing him up to the corner of the sofa. I shoved his shirts up exposing his torso, and pulled him into me, covering his nipple with my mouth.

Wade let out a long moan as he placed his hand on the back of my head, pressing my face into his chest. I dug my teeth into the hard nipple, pulling on it.

"Fuck!" Wade said, grabbing me by the hair and pulling my head back.

He let go and I took a few steps back. We were looking one another over while each trying to catch our breath. I moved in again as he pulled off his own t-shirt and the top half of his thermal underwear, tossing them to the floor. Our mouths met again, this time my tongue was now vying for control as Wade fought back with his. He turned us around,

shoving me back into the sofa while we kissed. I felt and heard the sofa scrape across the floor as Wade's hands went to my ass. His long, thick fingers were digging into me through my pants while I ground my erection into his.

I let out a deep groan as his hands and fingers massaged into me. I shoved him away and smiled when he let out a very disappointed grumble.

"Take off your pants," I said as I pushed past him and went back into the bedroom. "I'll make you think wet noodle." I listened to the rustling of clothes and a grunt from Wade in the other room as I opened the drawer to the bedside table, pulling out lube and a condom. I slammed it shut and made my way back into the cozy living room. Wade was buck-naked and standing there smiling from ear to ear as I started to unbuckle and unzip my pants.

My eyes widened a bit getting an eyeful of what had to be at least a thick nine inches. I tried not to grin hearing that tiny voice in the back of my head scream, *Run, it's Godzilla!!*

"Let's get something straight."

"But I'm gay," Wade said, licking his lips as I was now close enough for his hands to make contact with my skin.

"Shut up!" I shoved his hand off, and he looked down at me as if I was a petulant child he'd decided to indulge momentarily. I slammed the condom and lube down onto the table behind the sofa. "The fact that I'm about to fuck you senseless means nothing. I'm not going to become your little snow ho or anything."

Wade bit his lip trying not to smile.

"If you laugh, so help me, you're out of here."

Wade held his hands up as I reached over and grabbed the head of his cock. His eyelids fluttered a bit as I squeezed, twisting the head and smearing the pre-cum that was now leaking out. "By no means does this mean I *like* you."

Wade let out a low moan. "I'm good with that."

"I'm serious. I think you're like the biggest asshole I've ever met!"

"Are you going to talk like this the whole time?"

"Fucker," I said, shaking my head at him while running my hand down his long shaft causing his knees to buckle a bit.

Wade fell to his knees in front of me and ran his tongue over my abs before kissing my belly button. He reached up, wrapping his fingers around the waistband of my pants and briefs. He roughly yanked them down around my ankles with one swift pull, catching my erection in his mouth without losing a beat. Within seconds he had me at the back of his throat, and his fingers were pressing into my ass.

"Jesus," I moaned, spreading my legs as far as they'd go with my pants still around my ankles. I was not a small guy, but next to Wade's massive body, I felt tiny. His fingertip was trying to force its way in. My hand went to his shoulders for balance as I bent over slightly for him. It stung, his dry digit pressing into me. I dug my fingers into his shoulder to let him know it hurt. He pressed a bit further as his tongue worked over my cock. I let out a loud moan as I began thrusting into his mouth, feeling the pressure take me over as I unloaded into his mouth. My arms were shaking from the intensity. He pushed his finger inside me a bit more, causing me to cry out a bit.

Wade pulled away from my dick. I looked down at his face covered in tiny beads of sweat. He helped me out of my pants the rest of the way, before standing back up and pulling me into him. Wade kissed me—shoving his tongue in deep before switching gears by gently pulling at my bottom lip with his teeth. My head was still dizzy from the orgasm, and the assault he was making on my mouth was already revving me back up. His body was nothing shy of amazing. I loved running my hands up and down his abs and over his thick hard chest. He was built solid, as if he'd been carved right out of the mountainside itself.

Another moan escaped from between my lips, and I lost my legs when he sank his teeth into my neck. It was pretty much the most sensitive part of my body. Feeling him suck and bite into me had me ready to shoot another load.

I shoved him back over the arm of the sofa and he fell backwards, legs dangling over the arm. I looked down over him as I grabbed the condom and lube off the table. Wade scooted his body across the sofa a bit more as I crawled on top of him. His hand went straight to my dick, stroking as I squirted lube into my hand, dropping the bottle on the floor. I used my teeth to pull open the condom wrapper, spitting it out once I had what I needed from it. I smiled down at him, loving the reaction on his face as I squeezed the head of his dick. I rolled on the condom and lubed him up.

"Damn it, Boone," he moaned as I positioned myself over him and sat, holding my breath momentarily as his cock pressed into me. He wadded up a couch cushion in one hand and grabbed a hold of the edge of the coffee table with the

other as I slowly took him all the way in. Despite the discomfort, my ass still feeling a bit sore from the night before, I enjoyed the sensation of him invading me.

Wade's hand relinquished the coffee table and moved to my hip as I began to work my body up and down. His other hand had relocated to my stomach, his finger tips pressing into my abs, and I smiled a little as he began thrusting slightly, becoming lost in the pleasure, yet still conscience of not wanting to hurt me. My hard-on was now fully erect, bouncing freely in the air as if trying to get someone's attention.

I leaned back as far as I could and began to seriously gyrate, using my legs and arms to work my way up and down his long shaft. His head was rolling around as he arched his back.

"Son of a..." Wade trailed off, his entire body tensing.

His large hands latched onto my hips, fingers digging into my skin. I knew he was getting close and could feel my own orgasm beginning to build. Wade started to become more vocal, loud moaning and whimpering as he thrust himself into me, matching my rhythm. Wade grabbed my cock and began slowly twisting the head. His loud groaning quickly sent me over the edge. He slammed into me as I shot over his stomach. The sounds of my orgasm, which came gurgling up out of my chest, seemed to do the same for Wade, and he thrust three more times, holding me down onto him as he squirmed violently underneath me.

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Chapter Three

"Christ that was..." Wade fell to the floor next to me, rolling onto his back while trying to catch his breath.

I was in a similar state, on my back covered in both of our cum. We were both sweating, and I felt a chill as the cool air began to mix with my sweat-soaked body. Goose pimples ran amuck as I leaned up on my elbows and looked over my chest and stomach. "Yeah...it was. I can't even imagine how much cum you blew the first time. You could've drowned me with this shit."

Wade let out a deep laugh. "Remind me to sexually insult you every day."

I lay back down, and smacked him in the side as I spied a muffin on the floor just out of reach. I was instantly starving and reached out for it, my middle finger grazing it.

"Please tell me you aren't seriously going to eat that?" Wade asked. "It's been on the floor!"

I was just about to curse him and his buckets of sperm which I was trying to keep from running off of me and onto the floor as my finger caught the edge of the muffin top, rolling it close enough for me to snatch it. "Five second rule, dude!" I tossed one of my legs over his and nudged him with it to keep quiet.

Wade stretched his arm out, allowing me to prop my head up on it as I tore off a chunk of the muffin.

Wade shook his head at me. "That's been there longer than five seconds."

I smiled and laughed a little as I popped it into my mouth. "Five seconds to me, I just noticed it." I tore off another chunk and held it up to see if he wanted some.

"No thanks," he pushed my arm away. "I don't do white flour."

"Oh Jesus, please tell me you aren't one of those food Nazis!"

"That shit *will* kill you."

I fake cried, letting my body go into full faux racking sobs. "Why God...*why*?"

"You already hate me, so what's the difference?"

I let out a gasp. "After all the dirty, dirty things I just let you do to me?" I raised my voice up to sound all girly. "My daddy warned me about boys like you!" I tore off another chunk of muffin and stared down at my chest. I shrugged and dabbed the muffin in the cum and popped it in my mouth.

"I can't *believe* you just did that!"

"Yeah," I snarled up my lip, "didn't quite think that one through all the way."

He laughed and I felt his hand land on the leg that I'd tossed over his. "That's the best you got?"

"What?" I shrugged. "I was craving sweet and salty and it was right there in front of me. Like everything that had happened today had led up to this moment when I discovered that cum and banana muffin were an irresistible combo."

"Man, you talk fast." He squeezed my thigh and laughed, his hand inching a bit toward my crotch. "That mouth of yours should be considered a moving violation."

"Me?" I asked innocently, swallowing another morsel. I smiled realizing I wasn't stressed out or angry or feeling all weird and icky about Wade any longer. "That's 'cause I say twice as much as the average individual." It was as if the double header of fucking had rid me of my angst. "Gotta get it all out there in the time allotted." I decided it was the fact I couldn't remember the sex that had had me all weirded out.

"You're a little scary," Wade said, his chest still heaving up and down as he tried to get his wind back.

"Coming from the man who's afraid of white flour and likes to fake ski?"

"Excuse me?" He said, lifting his head off the floor. "Fake what?"

"Skiing." I popped in the last bit of muffin. "First of all it's a stupid sport, and secondly you're not even doing it the right way."

Wade rolled onto his side and looked at me like I'd just turned into an alien. "Well, thank God you're here to set us all straight on this matter. Please, enlighten me."

"As for the right way, well that would be on water...as God intended." I felt a slight stiffness in my chest as he looked into my eyes. "And...can you really explain stupidity?"
Shit...the ick is coming back!

"Skiing on water is for pussies!" He poked me in the side, causing me to giggle. He seemed to take note that I was indeed ticklish as he arched his eyebrows at me. Then he stood up and walked across the floor to his clothes. "I can't believe you'd even think that water skiing required even one tenth of the skill that *real* skiing does."

"Fine," I said, propping myself up with my elbows. "But my way has us half naked, baking in the hot sun and all oiled up—smelling of cocoa buttery goodness." I watched, slightly confused by the fact I was a little sad to see him pull on his underwear. "With your way, we're wearing more layers than an onion, and dealing with bitter-ass cold temperatures that cause unwanted shrinkage."

"I don't really have to worry about shrinkage." Wade stood staring at me, holding his pants in one hand as he grabbed his crotch with the other. "I'm not completely sure," he started as he shoved a long leg into his pants, "but I think you might actually run risk of being stoned to death uttering such blasphemy in this neck of the woods."

I frowned and shrugged as he zipped up and bent over to grab his shirts. I began to feel odd lying naked on the floor...completely covered in cold semen. "I'm sorry...did I *not* mention the cocoa buttery goodness?"

"I guess that means you won't be continuing with your lessons."

"Eh," I shrugged. "They are paid for."

He laughed, then stared at me blankly. I swallowed, again finding it difficult to breathe. I could tell he was trying to work something out in his head, I could practically see the wheels turning, but I had no clue what it could be.

"Have dinner with me?"

"Um," I felt my face flush as he pulled on his shirts. "How about you get me a towel or something?" I pointed to my chest.

He smiled and looked full of wickedness, much like he'd been before, when I showed up for my first ski lesson. "Have dinner with me, and I'll get you a towel."

I laughed with a snort. "Like you'd *really* leave me like this."

He shot me a no-bull shit, I-most-certainly-can-and-will look.

"Oh come on! I totally got you a paper towel after I shot all over you earlier!" I really didn't want to try making it to the shower while attempting to not leave a trail of cum in my wake, and with the amount of it on me, which while already getting a little crispy looking around the edges, I most certainly would.

"Dinner buys you a nice warm fluffy damp towel."

"You fucking prick!"

"Ah, ah!" Wade shook his finger at me. "Insults not included."

I was *instantly* irritated and Wade seemed to thoroughly enjoy witnessing the transformation as that evil smile returned. He finished putting on his boots and stood up, heading for his parka.

"Last chance, Sparky."

"Fine!" I hated that smirk on his face. The fact that he'd won and he knew it, was going to eat at me all afternoon.

I opened my mouth to tell him off and he held up a hand and called back as he went round the corner into the bath. "If you can't say anything nice..."

I rolled my eyes, listening to the shower turn on. I lay there, tapping my fingers on the hardwoods making a mental

note to never again allow myself to be the cum repository. Wade entered the room again, towel in hand. He smiled down at me, seeming to enjoy towering over me. I wanted to kick him in the nuts and make a grab for the towel.

Wade glanced over me, his eyes getting all squinty as if he could sense what I was thinking. "You're not a very nice boy." He laughed down at me as I impatiently held out my hand.

Hi pot, I thought. "There will be no sex included with this dinner." I looked at him seriously. "I doubt my ass could handle it again, anyway." Take that, I thought. You might be able to twist my arm into dinner but this boy's closing up the barn doors.

He grinned like he didn't believe a damn thing I'd just said and dropped the towel onto me. It was warm and damp, and it felt good covering my bare skin.

Wade turned and headed for the door. "I guess you can fuck me, then," Wade called back as he opened the door.

"You wish, you little shit!"

I felt my jaws clench as he let out a deep rolling laugh, closing the door before I could tell him what I'd really like to shove up his ass. I noticed the steam coming out of the bathroom door from the shower he'd left running for me, as I wiped myself off. I rolled up the towel when I was done and stood up to head for the shower. *Stupid ass man-wall!*

As I rounded the corner into the bath I wondered, "What the hell am I going to wear?"

* * * *

I rode quietly in the back seat of the cab Wade had sent to pick me up at the lodge, looking out the window over Summit City. The tiny little mountain town looked like something Norman Rockwell dreamt up. Its pristine Victorian brick, stone, and clapboard sided structures were filled with boutiques, pubs, coffee houses and restaurants. There were no Walmarts or Costcos. TarGay? No way! Everything in Summit City was locally-owned and operated.

The entire town could've been mistaken for 1940's America, creeping out of the mist ala *Brigadoon*, if it weren't for all the SUVs and pickup trucks. The business center of town was surrounded on all sides by residential neighborhoods...streets all perfectly lined with rows and rows of little snow covered Victorian houses.

The newer condos that had been allowed were relegated to the farthest outskirts along with the lodge, not necessarily unloved but certainly the bastard step children of that little thing called commercialism. I could practically hear the lyrics to, *Ya Got Trouble* from *The Music Man* playing on loop in my head as I imagined the town deciding whether or not to allow the existence of the dirty lodge, opening themselves up to outsiders such as myself.

I wondered if the sleepy little hamlet came complete with the array of odd small-town characters one liked to imagine living in places like this—if one indeed could even imagine places like this still existed in this day in age. Despite my instinct to mock and poke fun at it, I did deep down secretly love it, though I'd never admit such things publicly.

It wasn't as though Albuquerque was some huge pulsating metropolis. Despite the half million residents, I did like to think it was the perfect balance between big city and small town. The people were friendly, you still knew your neighbors, but there was plenty of arts and entertainment...things to do aside from sitting on your front porch and watch the time creak by. Even still, I imagined it would be a bit of a culture shock going from one to the other.

I'd been doing really well with the writing that first week that I was here alone—waiting for Phillip. I laughed, remembering how sweet I thought it was when he insisted I take an extra week and come up early so I could concentrate on my writing. For the first time he seemed to notice how important *anything* had been to me. I thought he wanted to support my dreams—he really just wanted to get me out of town so he could move all my shit back to my place and avoid having to deal with me as if I were a human being.

It was quiet up here, and without any of the distractions of home and family, I did seem to be able to concentrate better. I'd even started back work on one of my many deserted novels. Then I got dumped, and now I've been bamboozled by an asshole with an ego that could rival the surrounding mountains in size and scale.

An extremely smoking-hot asshole, I thought as the cab pulled up to the curb in front of the restaurant where I was meeting Wade. His wavy black Superhero hair was blowing gently in the breeze, and I felt as if my heart had fallen out of my chest and now lay flopping about on the floorboard of the

car. This won't do, I thought, as he opened the door for me. I handed the driver some money as a tip.

I had no business spending time with him, I admitted to myself as I got out of the car. I felt a rush of heat shoot through my body as he placed a hand on my shoulder to direct me toward the entrance of the restaurant. His smile was practically cutting into my gut. A black parka wrapped around him, covering the bulk of his junk, his jeaned legs jutting out and stretching down to the clunky black boots. I instantly cursed the long coat, wondering how his ass would look wrapped in snug denim. It was lightly snowing again and I felt a flake hit my cheek. I imagined it sizzling, before instantly evaporating upon its landing.

I knew on some level Wade was affecting me in some new unexplained way, and I also knew with every fiber of my being, that I was playing with the fire of my feelings. I seriously needed to look into getting some therapy, I thought, realizing I was also secretly enjoying every second of it. It was new and different, and if nothing else, I was a boy who was totally addicted to new and different.

I entered the restaurant as Wade held the door open for me, greeted by a warm rush of air. My tummy growled a bit catching a whiff of the deliciousness that hung in the air. As Wade came in from behind me, sliding his coat off, I caught the sight of the deliciousness that was his ass wrapped in denim.

"So not disappointed," I said under my breath.

"It's a nice place," Wade agreed, mistaking my compliment as a tiny wisp of a girl with straight blonde hair took our

coats. I caught her looking from Wade to myself, then shaking her head slightly as she disappeared around the corner.

There it is, I thought, the seedy underbelly of small-mountain-town America...gay haters. She's probably lighting a candle and praying for our souls already. I looked down noticing Wade's hand giving my arm a squeeze. I smiled up at him and followed as he crossed the bar, passing the round stone fireplace that was sitting smack in the middle of the dining room.

Wade was smiling and waving as the other diners all looked up and smiled, returning his warm greetings. He introduced me to a few people. It was very odd, he seemed to know everyone, and vice versa. More small town creepiness, I thought. I guessed that here, the whole town was considered a neighbor as I went about surveying the entire dining room. People were actually having conversations with the diners who were sitting at the surrounding tables.

Wade had on a thick rumply-looking putty colored sweater, which stretched the tiniest bit across his chest. I wondered where he shopped—was there some Mega-man Mart I'd never heard of? It had to be a pain in the ass for him to find clothes that fit.

"You look very good," Wade said as we sat down across from one another. A sexy smile came across his face and his hand brushed my arm, before settling back onto his side of the table.

I'd practically had a nervous breakdown trying to figure out what to wear. I settled on my lowest of low rise jeans and

a red plaid cowboy shirt with pearly white snap buttons. It was several years old, but hadn't been worn that much. I'd purchased it before my trip to the gay rodeo with a bunch of friends many moons ago. Many a horse had been saved that weekend as many a cowboy had been ridden. I'd thrown on my hiking boots deciding it was the best I could do at looking like I hadn't given it a second thought. I knew the cowboy shirt fit me just right, accentuating my long lithe upper body.

"Where's your dad, Sarah?" Wade asked as the gay-hating blond girl, who'd probably doused our coats with holy water, came sauntering up to the table.

"In the back." Sarah sat a menu in front of me, but not in front of Wade. "I'll tell him you're here."

I forced a smile back at her, assuming Wade probably ate here every night and therefore didn't need a menu. She put an arm around Wade's shoulder and he in turn tossed one around her waist.

"Where *do* you find them, cuz?" Sarah asked in a somewhat peevy voice. "He's the hottest one yet."

I felt my face flush, realizing that while she did indeed disapprove of my homo-ness, it was out of envy, not hate. I could see Wade puff up a bit as I wondered exactly how many other 'ones' had been sitting right where I was in the past.

Wade seemed to sense the change in my demeanor. "She's kidding...there haven't been *that* many."

He was about as convincing as that whole OJ Simpson 'if it doesn't fit you must acquit, B.S.'. Wade started laughing as I allowed the expression on my face to let him know I wasn't buying it. I held out my hand to Sarah and introduced myself.

I had no clue *who* these other men had been, but I suddenly felt a strong urge to hunt them all down.

"Just like me to wind up with the town hooker," I said, rolling my eyes as I opened the menu.

"And the first one I think I may actually like," Sarah said, pulling away from Wade. "He just called you a hooker."

"Thanks for re-cap," Wade said, as Sarah turned and walked away, laughing.

I was smiling behind the menu and peeked over the top at Wade. "She doesn't seem to think much of you either."

"She's my cousin, she likes me just fine—she's just not used to people talking to me like that." Wade's gaze was intently examining my eyes.

For the love of God, he's just a ski instructor. I supposed this was the benefit of being a big fish in a small pond. "What are you—the leader of the mountain Mafia? I'll try my best to muster up the right amount of reverence."

"That's okay, baby." Wade settled back into his chair. "I wouldn't want you to strain anything."

He laughed as I shot him a nasty look. "Considering the afternoon we had, I'd say it was a little late to start worrying about that now."

His eyebrows arched seeming to love the direction the conversation was now headed. "You know, I have been meaning to ask where you learned that lean back and impale yourself move?"

I grinned at him for a moment before getting control over my faculties. I peeked back down at the menu. "Please, that 'ole move...coach taught us that back in high school."

"Wade." A man said while walking up to the table. "How are you, son?"

"Good, Mayor Nelson." Wade stood up and shook the man's hand.

The mayor was a little round, kind of short with a shiny bald head, but had a little something about him. A charisma—you could tell that despite not being the best looking guy around, that one way or another he'd managed to get his way ninety percent of the time throughout his life. He was dapperly dressed in khakis and a navy blazer with a peachy colored shirt, no tie. He certainly moved with a confidence, and his wife who had stopped to chat at another table had that sort of small-town conservative, yet classy glamour. She looked like first lady material in an almost matching ensemble with a long khaki skirt, white blouse and peachy sweater draped over her shoulders.

"How's everything going up at the lodge?"

"Just fine, sir." Wade said as the men let go of one another's hand, causing the Mayor to thrust his way.

"And who is your friend here?"

"Boone Daniels, this is our illustrious town Mayor, Gordon Nelson."

I took his hand and Gordon shook mine with vigor. "Glad to meet you, son. Glad. To. Meet you. And please call me Gordy...everyone does."

"Thank you for the...warm welcome, Gordy." I sat back down at the table as he let go of my hand.

"Yes, well...very nice, then," Gordy added as his wife took him by the arm. "My wife, Cecilia."

She smiled sweetly. "It's lovely to meet you." She tugged on Gordy's arm. "Let's leave the boys to their dinner, dear."

"Excuse us then," Gordy said as he and his wife turned away. They seemed to be whispering something as they smiled at one another and I felt a little uneasy.

Wade took his seat, only to stand back up as another man descended upon us. The new guy was older, a full head of grey hair and a well-lined, but kind, face. He set two glasses and a bottle of red wine on the table. He was in very good shape for his age, seeming quite fit—which led me to believe it was the uncle. I nodded as they embraced, patting each other firmly on the back. The uncle was dressed a bit casually in jeans and a button up yellow shirt that was tucked in. He had on a small white apron, and had a white towel tucked into the string that tied it to his waist.

They separated and I stood again, beginning to feel like a gay-in-a-box, constantly popping up and down. Wade's uncle took my hand in his and patted it warmly, making what I assumed was an extra effort to make me feel welcome.

"Very nice to meet you, Boone."

I was shocked he already knew my name. Obviously Wade had been talking about me, which was kinda weird.

"Thank you, sir, you too."

"Well go on then, sit down and relax you two." Wade's Uncle patted us both on the shoulder. "The rib-eyes are looking especially good this evening."

"I'll have that, then," Wade nodded as he scooted his chair closer to the table.

"Done." Uncle said, rubbing his hands together as he turned his attention toward me.

I realized I didn't know his actual name, but it felt weird to ask now. I handed the menu back as he poured us each some wine with his free hand.

"I'll have the same, I guess...medium rare."

"A man who knows the *right* way to eat his meat," Uncle said, looking back at Wade disapprovingly as I did my best to not laugh my ass off at the wording of that last sentence.

"This one likes it well-done...wasteful."

I was dying to make a crack about the way Wade liked to eat his meat. "That is *very* wrong."

"I suppose you like all the light oil brushed veggies and health food nonsense that Wade does?"

"Oh hell no," I said. "I'll take a baked potato and feel free to load that puppy up with bacon, cheese, sour cream, the works. I'll also take the Caesar salad, and the sauteed mushrooms and please feel free to use all the real butter you want. Go crazy!"

Uncle nodded approvingly and Wade shook his head at me. "This one knows how to live." With that, uncle disappeared back into the bar area and out of sight.

"Please tell me his name," I said, placing my arm across the table.

"Shit, I'm sorry," Wade took a sip of his wine and looked me over. "It's Pete."

"Uncle Pete!" I smiled at Wade. "I like it."

Wade smiled back at me making my heart feel as though it had stopped momentarily. I picked up my glass of wine and

took a long drink, momentarily at a loss of what to do or say under the scrutiny of his dissecting bright blue eyes.

"Please stop that," I finally said.

Wade grinned and finally looked down at the table for a moment. "Your insides are rotting out from all that butter you love so much."

I laughed, thankful for his disapproval as it was much less intense than that whole staring-holes-into-my-soul bit, he'd had going.

"But I'm pretty on the outside—and that's what really matters." I smiled as he shook his head at me. "Hey buddy—don't take that preachy tone with me. In case you've forgotten, I'm the one who knows how to eat my meat."

Wade smiled again and winked at me. "That you do, sport."

* * * *

I'd excused myself from the table to go to the bathroom, and also because it couldn't hurt to get a little break from the lusty onslaught coming across the table at me from Wade. We hadn't even gotten to the entrees and I could feel my resolve slipping. I needed a moment to breathe and regain a tiny little sense of my sanity. As I weaved my way through the intimate dining room, I couldn't help but get the sense that all eyes were on me. It made me wonder if everyone was going to start interrogating Wade the instant I was out of earshot.

Wade's uncle smiled at me from behind the bar as I passed by. I waved and as I turned to face forward, coming up on the far wall where Wade said I'd find a hallway that led back

to the bathrooms. That's when I saw it. How I'd missed it as I came in I wasn't sure as I froze in my tracks. It was a huge display—tons of framed photos and newspaper articles, a few magazine covers, including *Sports Illustrated* and the *Advocate*. And in the center, framed and mounted with its very own spot light gleaming down upon it, was unmistakably three Olympic Medals...one gold, one silver, and one bronze, all staring at me and taunting as if to say, *Get it, stupid?*

I seemed aware that I was stumbling forward, getting closer, though I couldn't quite feel my legs moving me. There he was, much younger and skinnier, but definitely Wade, standing atop the medal platform, smiling, arms stretched out, holding flowers in one, the emotion in his face saying it all. That he was proud and humbled. My gaze drifted to the cover of the *Advocate*. I actually remembered seeing it when it had come out back in the mid-nineties. Wade had been the next big Olympian to do it since Louganis had come out back in the late eighties. I was around nineteen or twenty at the time and while I hadn't really ever followed sports, I did distinctly remember that the fact that Wade, in combination with Ellen, had come out to the world, helped give me the courage to tell my parents.

I closed my eyes, feeling my head begin to spin as all the noise of the restaurant seemed to drain away. I turned around and opened them to find Uncle Pete standing a few feet back. He was looking at me cautiously, as if trying to approach a deer in the woods without spooking it. I was startled by the sound of his voice as he said my name. Within an instant, sound came flooding back into my ears and I

noticed Wade round the corner, his smile fading a bit as he looked into my eyes. My stomach sank and I began to imagine myself the butt of some joke that the entire town was probably in on. I felt as though everyone in that restaurant had been secretly laughing at me behind my back. I was the stupid dolt who didn't know who Wade Walker was.

I turned and went straight to the door of the restaurant, and walked out into the freezing night air. I was marching as if I had some place to be, seeming to not notice the snow, now coming down a little thicker. I couldn't believe I'd told an Olympic gold medalist his skiing was the fake skiing. I was completely mortified as I stormed down the sidewalk. I heard my name coming from behind me. I kept going, folding my arms as I began to feel my teeth start to chatter a bit.

Wade's hand landed on my shoulder as he spun me around to face him. "Are you crazy...you'll freeze to death." Wade thrust my parka at me.

I was livid, staring at him as I rolled my eyes, yet being too cold to be overly proud. As I began to put on the coat I stopped, realizing it was Wade's name on the damn label that was stitched into the lining. "I'm even wearing your clothing line!"

Wade smiled down at me. "And you look damn good in them."

I blew out a huff of air as I pulled on the jacket, my shoulders now feeling a bit damp from the snow. "I'm such an idiot! You've been laughing your ass off at me this whole time."

"Well yeah, but not because you didn't know me, I loved the fact that you didn't know who I was," Wade placed his hands on my shoulder. "Come on back inside with me, its freezing cold out here."

"I can't go back in there. I made a complete ass out of myself. You made a complete ass out of me. Christ...the whole damn restaurant was laughing at me behind my back."

"Don't be ridiculous," Wade said, talking to me as if I were hysterical.

"You should've told me," I placed a hand over my face, pressing my cold nose into the palm of my hand. "I want to go home...or back to the lodge. I'll call myself a cab."

"Please don't do that." Wade bit his lip as he looked at me. "I'm sorry I didn't tell you, but...shit." He dug his keys out of his pocket and wrapped an arm around me, leading me a little farther down the street to a yellow Toyota FJ Cruiser. He unlocked the passenger side and held the door open for me. I scowled at him but climbed in. He shut the door and my teeth began to chatter again as he rounded the front and climbed in next to me. He turned the car on and looked over at me. "I'm going to run back in and let them know I'm taking you back to the lodge. Please don't take off and leave me here while I'm gone."

I tried not to, but I smiled at that last comment, as I was pretty sure it would've been something I'd considered the moment he left the vehicle. "Fine."

He grinned and I looked away. Wade turned the heat on high and got back out, jogging toward the restaurant.

I felt water run down my cheek, realizing my hair was probably soaking wet. "He's just lucky I'm too terrified of driving in the snow, otherwise I would leave his ass." I knew he was trouble, I thought, still feeling the sting of being lied to. Technically, I guess he hadn't actually lied. It's not like he denied being a big-gay Olympic ski dude. "Because that's like the second or third question I usually ask a guy."

I reached out and adjusted the closest vent so it was hitting my face. The air was beginning to warm and it felt good. I ran a hand through my damp hair in an attempt to shake out some of the water. It occurred to me suddenly, that's what he'd been trying to decide about me earlier today right before he asked me to dinner—whether or not I knew who he was. I didn't get the big deal, really. Why the hell would he care about something as stupid as that? Yes he was a bit of a national hero, of sorts, but it wasn't like he'd created the cure for cancer.

Wade came running back around the front of the car carrying two paper bags. The cool air blew back into the SUV as he climbed in, reaching back behind me and setting the brown bags onto the back seat. I could smell the food and knew it was our dinner. I felt instantly foolish, remembering the way I'd run out of the restaurant.

"Thank you." Wade let out a sigh as he put the car in drive and pulled out onto the street.

"For what?" I asked, confused and feeling bizarrely angsty at the thought of going back to the lodge alone.

"For not driving off without me."

I laughed a little, part nerves, part amusement. "This is so stupid, I'm sorry I behaved so...jeez, one would think I've never been deceived by a man before."

"Maybe you like me more than you did those other rotten, evil bastards who totally ruined your life."

"Don't do that."

"Do what?"

"Don't try to be cute at a time like this. I behaved like some overly melodramatic teen from an eighties sitcom..."

Wade started singing the theme song for *The Facts of Life*, "You take the good, you take the bad..."

"Oh sure...please continue to mock me. By morning, the entire town will know what a freak I am. I'll be known as that asshole from Albuquerque who called the beloved son of Summit City a hooker." I placed my forehead into my hand.

"You're from Albuquerque?"

"I didn't tell you that?"

"No," Wade said, with a half smile.

"This is what happens when you screw first and ask questions later. You wake up one day to discover that fifty years have gone by as you sit alongside the deathbed of your lover, realizing you know nothing about the son of a bitch."

"Our first date and you're already imagining me dead?" Wade teased.

"I may actually be forced to leave town immediately." I looked out the windshield as Wade's truck climbed the slow, incline of the road that led back up to the lodge. "It may already be too late...they're probably forming into a frothing mob in the town square as we speak...torches and pitchforks

in hand, the tension slowly building until one lone asshole in the crowd screams out, 'Get him!!!' thus whipping everyone into a frenzied mob with nothing but murder and mayhem on..."

"Do you always go on like this?"

I turned around to look out the rear window of the SUV. "I swear I can already see the glow from their torches behind us." I turned and smiled at Wade as the truck came to a stop in front of the lodge and I shrugged. "I'm never dull."

"I'm sorry—had someone accused you as being such?" Wade put the car in park and turned to face me. "Can I come in with you?"

"I don't..."

"We could still have dinner." Wade nodded toward the backseat where the wonderful smell of steak and mushrooms was wafting from.

I opened my mouth to speak and Wade cut me off. "It's not like you found out I was a serial killer."

I didn't want to go back to my little cabin alone, and at the same time, despite realizing it may very well be hazardous to my heart, I admitted to myself that I also didn't want to go back without Wade. I leaned over, struck by a sudden desire to kiss him. As his mouth opened for mine, I felt it again. That awful, horrible pressure—the sick feeling in the pit of my stomach, along with the hard on that was now beginning to grow in my pants. Our tongues slowly met and caressed one another. I savored the taste of Wade's mouth as my head continued to wage a war with my body.

I pulled away slowly, our eyes met and I could see from the expression on his face that he knew it was a lost cause. Round one of this battle had gone to my head.

Wade looked my face over, seeming genuinely confused after that kiss. "I feel like I may never fully understand the way your brain works."

I smiled and wondered if that was something that was truly important to him. I knew one thing for certain, I liked him a little too much for my own comfort levels, and I had no clue as to whether or not he was feeling the same. I turned away from him and opened the door. As I started to get out, I felt his hand grab my arm to stop me. I turned and Wade let go of me, reaching behind my seat and grabbing a bag.

Wade held the bag out for me. "I don't want you to go hungry."

I took the bag and let out a sigh before climbing out of the SUV. I started to shut the door and Wade asked, "Are you still coming for your lesson tomorrow?"

I smiled at the obvious eagerness behind the way he asked the question, and gave him a wink as I nodded. He opened his mouth to speak and I slammed the door to his car shut stifling any chance either of us might say something stupid and ruin it. I slowly spun around and began the long walk to my cabin, letting the bag of food swing back in forth as it dangled from my hand. As I listened to his SUV pull away I said in a sing-song tone, "I think he likes me."

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Chapter Four

I was standing there in my skis as Wade tried to demonstrate different techniques for turning. He'd already spent a good twenty minutes on stopping, growing frustrated as I continued to interrupt him with personal questions. I assumed he thought learning how to turn might interest me more which was why he changed topics. I hadn't learned a damn thing about skiing because all I could think about was Wade—big, strong, naked Wade. Which was why I kept trying to occupy my mind by asking him personal questions—since the skiing lesson wasn't keeping my mind away from all the slutty things I was desperate to do to him.

I turned to the class who had started their lessons yesterday around the same time I showed up for my first lesson, which hadn't gone anywhere. I was a little envious, since they were already doing stuff, like actual skiing. I tried convincing myself that they were probably advanced students, but wasn't able to quite make the appropriate leap of faith needed to fully commit to the lie.

The snow had finally stopped earlier that morning, and the sun had peeked out a bit, straining to get through the clouds. That was the moment I felt my heart actually stop as this ray of sunlight broke through and landed onto Wade, making it seem as though he was glowing. He was so awesome he actually got his very own spotlight from the heavens above. I turned my head again, seeing the real skiers riding up in the fun-looking bucket seats of the ski lift, and chastised myself

for never taking the time to ride the Sandia Peak Tramway back home.

"Will you at least pretend to pay attention?" Wade growled at me.

He was so sexy when he was angry with me. "Be honest, you've *seriously* never been in love before?"

"I take back every nice thing I've ever said about you." Wade took a deep breath and closed his eyes for a moment before plastering on a fake and very unconvincing, patient smile.

"Awww, you've said nice things about me?"

"I'm sure I must have." Wade shook his head. "Certainly that first night, when I picked your ass up from Staggs...I'm sure I was laying it on pretty thick."

"I don't know," I dropped one the poles in the snow and bent down slightly to try scratching my knee with my gloved hand. "I'm awfully slutty."

Wade looked up into the sky. "Thank you for that at least." He smiled and shook his head for what had to be the hundredth time since I showed up for my lesson. "Now are you going to actually listen to me, thereby opening yourself up to actually learning something?"

"Opening myself up!" I looked at him wide eyed. "What kind of a boy do you take me for?"

Wade tossed his arms in the air, causing me to laugh at his obvious frustration. "You're hopeless!!" he yelled, loudly enough to echo around the mountains. He walked up to me and knelt down to help me out of my skis.

I could hear some laughing and snickering coming from behind me where the other class was being taught. "I am?!?" I asked, gushing excitedly as if I'd just been crowned Prom Queen.

"Oh lord, here we go," Wade grumbled as he helped me out of my second ski.

I turned to the other group of students behind me. "Oh my, thank you all, I've...well, I've just always dreamed of being hopeless! I simply don't know what to say..."

"We should be so lucky," Wade mumbled.

"I guess first and foremost I'd like to thank God," I continued on, without missing a beat.

Wade stood up and looked down at me like he was ready to shove me down the mountain side.

"Secondly my parents," I went on, "without their constant encouragement, telling me I could indeed be truly hopeless someday if I worked hard and wanted it badly enough."

"Is there anything I *can* say that you won't turn around and make into one of your little bits?"

I gasped and held up my hands as if he'd actually struck me. "You don't like my bits?"

Wade rolled his eyes and placed his hand on my shoulders. "You're the most exhausting man I've ever met."

"Without my bits how will I ever get that little vein in your temple to start throbbing? It's like one of those pop-up timers on a turkey, letting me know when you're most susceptible."

"Susceptible to what?" Wade asked, letting his hands slide off my shoulders.

"My all knowing power of suggestiony mind-control...duh."

Wade laughed and bent down to scoop up my skis and poles. "You're completely off your rocker."

As he stood back up I got up in his face, only inches away. "Look into my eyes."

"Stop that!" Wade laughed and bobbed his head around trying to get away, taking a step back.

I pointed at his eyes with two crooked fingers. "You want to end our ski lesson early."

"You got that right."

"See! It works!" I looked at him intently again, pointing my two fingers back at him. "You also have a deep desire to massage my sore feet."

"Do I get to massage everything else?" Wade grinned.

"You cannot bargain with the power!" I looked into his eyes, thrusting my crooked fingers at him and throwing in my creepy Gollum voice. "You must do everything I say."

Wade took a few more steps back. "Cut that out, you look evil."

"You will be my willing servant."

"You're creeping me out," Wade said, turning to head toward the ski shack.

I crept toward him as he looked back at me with a concerned expression. I thrust my fingers at him again and Wade started to run away from me. "Come back!" I tried to yell in my Gollum voice, causing me to cough as I chased after him.

* * * *

I was riding in the back of the cab down toward the town from the lodge. Wade once again offered to take me to dinner, and I agreed, as long as we didn't have to go back to his uncle's place. I wasn't quite ready to face that humiliation just yet. In the back of my mind I knew how silly this whole thing was. I didn't even live here, and I was behaving as if this was actually going to lead somewhere. *The dude is just a glorified vacation trick, for the love of god.*

"Wade's a really great guy," the cab driver, who'd never said more than two words to me before suddenly tossed back over the seat at me.

"Uh...I, um...sure." I had no response for this. Me and my big mouth were at a loss.

"Everyone just loves that boy." The cabby added.

"He's pretty darn great." I smiled back.

"I think we'd all like to see him settled down and happy."

What in the name of hell was this? Did this happen to all of Wade's 'guys'?

"I only mentioned it because we all think you're different."

"It's good to know I have...everyone's stamp of approval," I said, half joking.

"Well I wouldn't go that far," he warned as the cab pulled up to the curb. Wade was once again standing there looking like a big chunk of heaven. "But you certainly have people rooting for you."

I pulled out my wallet and took out a twenty.

"This one was on me." The man said.

"Consider it a tip, then?" I asked holding it over the seat for him.

He took the money and smiled, putting up a finger to his lips as if to say—keep this little conversation on the DL.

Wade opened the door and I got out of the cab, feeling like I'd just stepped into Bizarro-World, an alternate universe where I was now fully aware that this sleepy little mountain town did indeed have all eyes on me. Every glance, warm smile, and hello now seemed to be tinged with a hidden agenda. Wasn't this the way horror movies usually started—the village of the damned or some such?

"You look amazing," Wade said with a big smile.

"This ole thing?" I asked in my faux girly voice as he led the way into the diner, whose tiny bell rung as the door swung open.

I immediately plastered on a smile as I could have sworn the room got a little quieter when we walked in. My gaze darted from table to table as I tried to remember who the diners had been at his uncle's place the night before since I now feared they would all be the same ones. The town's unofficial judging committee, on site to decide if I was up to snuff for the All-American hero, beloved by all.

"Booth okay?" Wade asked as he slipped off his coat and hung it on one of the many hooks by the front door.

"Perfect." I smiled at him removing my own coat and doing the same. I followed Wade to a booth and reminded myself that 'crazy' probably wouldn't be a quality they appreciated much in these parts and to please keep that in mind before allowing myself a repeat performance of the night before.

I slid into the seat across from him and he placed a hand over mine on the table and squeezed, tossing me a wink.

"You're doing fine, in case you didn't know."

"Excuse me?" *Did he know what was going on?*

"From the little bit I've been able to get out of my sister, you're way ahead in the polls." Wade pulled his hand away and pushed the silverware to the side as he adjusted himself in the seat.

"You knew about this?" I whispered, still fake-smiling as I glanced around the room trying to see if I could catch anyone watching.

"Yeah, I'm sorry," Wade took a deep breath. "I figured it would freak you out, so I decided not to say anything. They all mean well. It was Curley wasn't it?"

"What's a curley?"

"The cab driver." Wade shook his head, disapprovingly. "He's the biggest gossip—much worse than the Quad."

"The Quad?" I asked, only to have Wade sit up and smile as our waitress came up to the table.

"How are you Theresa?" Wade asked.

"I'm good Wade." She sat a bottle of water on the table, it was one of those fancy European kinds in the glass bottle.

"Who's your friend?"

Oh, this little girl's good—acting all innocent, like she doesn't already know. She looked adorable in her little blue old-time diner skirt with white polka dots and white button up shirt, like a younger version of Candy from the ski shack, same red hair, only long and bone straight as opposed to Candy's curls.

"This is Boone, Theresa."

"Well it's very nice to meet *you*." She untwisted the bottle and poured some for each of us in the little water glasses that were already on the table, along with the silverware, coffee cup and saucer, and paper place mats that had the history of the diner inscribed upon it.

"Thank you, Theresa." I smiled too widely and spoke too loudly, as if I thought the rest of the room needed me to in order to keep up with what was going on.

"So, do you all know what you want, or should I come back?"

I snatched up a menu from between the napkin holder and the condiments and began looking over the menu. "Go ahead," I said to Wade, "it'll only take me a sec."

"I'll have..."

"The usual, I know," she said with a grin as she looked over my shoulder a bit.

My gaze froze when I saw the Wade Walker free-range chicken breast sandwich with Dijon mustard, fresh tomato and lettuce on a multi-grain bun. "Wow." I looked up at Wade accusingly.

"What?" he asked, like he couldn't imagine what I might possibly be referring to.

I rolled my eyes and looked back down at the menu. "I'll have a cheeseburger with cheddar and provolone and some chili cheese fries—hmmm—oh, definitely a cherry coke. Yummsters."

I looked up with a smile to see Wade staring at me blankly and Theresa looking down, mouth open. She made a little

squeaking noise and finally, proceeded to scribble down my order. She let out a slightly downer sigh and turned to leave.

"That was a very judgie sigh," I accused looking back at Wade.

"You're really going to eat all that junk?" Wade took a sip of his water and let me know by the expression on his face, he strongly disapproved.

"Oh my God," I whispered, holding my hand up to block my face afraid someone might be able to read lips. "She totally just wrote me off as a possible match for you because of what I ordered?"

Wade shrugged in a 'them's the breaks, kid' kinda way...as if he too, had just written me off.

I laughed a little, possibly from shock as I dropped my hand. "You're a pig," I said.

Wade gasped, mocking the way I did it. "You'd better be careful, all eyes are watching."

I sat back in the seat, realizing he was loving this. He thought he had me over a barrel, as if I'd have to be super nice to him from here on out in order to land him. "You're not that great of a catch," I said loudly enough to be over heard. "And I eat like a real man—not some prissy, granola crunching health food Nazi."

Wade busted out laughing as I sat there, fuming. I folded my arms, wishing he wasn't able to get under my skin the way he could and wondering what the hell was wrong with me. I was allowing myself to fall into this trap where I, too, was beginning to look at the two of us as if it could actually go anywhere other than to the end of the week—when I'd be

leaving Kookytowne, Colorado and heading back to the real world where people minded their own damn business.

"What's the Quad?" I asked, chastising myself for continuing to give a shit despite all the common sense that had just filtered through my brain.

Wade crossed his arms and leaned over the table. "Don't turn and look, but the next chance you get, check out the table of four broads sitting over in the far corner next to the window."

Theresa came back by the table and set down my cherry coke, once again giving me that 'nice to know ya, buddy' sad look. Wade seemed to take pleasure from the scowl that formed over my face as I watched her leave.

"Damn it all, but you're sexy as hell," Wade said, still leaning across the table. He was smiling at me in that teasing way he used when he toyed with me.

I was very conscious that he was in my air space, and I suddenly felt myself wanting and willing to be his toy. I turned and nonchalantly surveyed the room, spotting the table of women he referred to. One of them smiled at me, so I smiled back, and waited as long as I could without seeming obvious before turning my attention back to Wade. He was still staring at me in that nasty-boy way.

I felt my chest swell once again. It was now becoming a familiar feeling. I got it when we flirted, when he came, when he left, when he was chastising me about food or for not paying attention. It was very annoying.

"Sit back in your seat, and stop looking at me like that."

Wade sat back and asked, innocently, "Like what?"

"Like you're imagining me naked and bent over something."

"That, I'm afraid, isn't something I can seem to control."

"The Quad?" I asked, in attempt to squelch this conversation before getting too flustered by thoughts of Wade sex.

"They were my mother's best friends in high school." Wade said. "The one in the blue dress is my aunt. They sort of all raised me and my sister. Take my word on this—do not allow yourself to get cornered by them alone. If I'm with you I can protect you, but alone," Wade sighed in a way that led me to believe it'd be dire, "they'll interrogate you within an inch of your life."

I smiled a thank you for the warning, deciding it must be warranted for him to bring it up. "What about your parents?"

"Mom passed giving birth to my sister, and my dad passed from cancer."

"I'm sorry," I said, feeling bad for asking.

"Hey, it's fine, it was a long time ago. I guess to a certain extent my sister and I were pretty much raised by the whole town. Summit City takes care of their own. I owe these people...everything."

I let out a sigh, suppressing the urge to reach across the table and kiss him. Instead I grabbed a menu and pointed to the 'Wade Walker Free-Range Chicken Sandwich'. "I'd say you're pretty well liked."

Wade smirked at me and before long Theresa had dropped off our dinner. She seemed to reassess her opinion of my unsuitability as the dinner wore on, since Wade and I

continued to stay seated at the same table. By the time I finished off the last of my chili cheese fries, she was downright giddy again. I assumed Wade must have dumped guys before who didn't eat healthy like he did? It was all very confusing, and while Wade did continue to berate me for the 'crap' I was shoving into my 'temple', he seemed to also enjoy the act of berating me. While I would never give up cheeseburgers for any man, I did secretly enjoy being chastised for eating them. It made me feel like he gave a shit in some weird and twisty way.

Wade told me all about the Quad: his aunt Deloris, whom everyone called Del; Sandy, who was the more shy and sweet one out of the bunch; Maggie who despite having been married four times still believed the right one was out there; and the queen bee herself, Rita—the Rizzo of the pink ladies so to speak, and the high school drama teacher. She was the wild one, or at least had been. She was the only one to move away, going to Hollywood first, and then giving Broadway a try before eventually making her way back to Summit City. Del was the common sense girl, and Wade said his mom had always been just that—a warm motherly type of girl with a penchant for practical jokes and love of laughing.

Despite Wade being 'okay' talking about her passing, I could sense what felt to me like a genuine sadness that he missed out on getting to know her as an adult. He said the Quad always told him he was like her, while his sister was very much her daddy's girl.

I asked him if everyone was always okay with the fact he was gay. It was odd to me that the entire town seemed to be

involved, at least in their own minds, with Wade's love life. He said he'd been busted making out with another boy by Rita back when he was in high school. The other boy had been visiting from France, training with Wade and his coach. Within days the entire town knew, and needless to say, while it did take some time, eventually everyone seemed to come around to it. It was another thing he gave the Quad credit for; somehow assuming they would in no way allow their friend's kid to suffer any humiliation.

This Quad, did sound all powerful and I was now somewhat scared by their power and influence. It was one thing to have to deal with one mother in law, but four? I shook my head, for once again allowing myself to go there. I looked out the window and caught a glimpse of Curley driving by in the taxi. I couldn't tell if there was anyone else in the car with him.

"Oh my God!" I said, suddenly remembering what Wade had said about him before—the town gossip.

"What?" Wade asked as I placed my hands over what had to be my bright red face.

"Curley picked me up from your house after that...um...first night."

"So wh...oh." A huge grin spread over his face, like he was patting himself on the back for being such a stud.

"Surely that's not the type of thing he'd..." I stopped, unable to make the words come out.

"Oh, he most certainly would indeed," Wade said with a chuckle as I felt myself die another little death of humiliation.

"You can be sure the whole town knows we spent the night together."

I couldn't believe he was so blase about it. I was mortified realizing the entire town knew what a party whore I was. All I wanted at this precise moment was to go crawl in a hole somewhere and die. *The newly crowned Cum Queen of Summit City—Momma would be so proud.*

* * * *

Wade drove us back to the lodge after I'd decided to just-say-no to his idea of grabbing a cocktail at Staggs after dinner. I was finally beginning to calm down a bit, but I certainly didn't feel like being watched anymore. I was amazed that actually being alone with this man next to me, despite the icky chest squish, felt soothing somehow—maybe even familiar in some weird way.

"How do you stay so skinny putting away so much crap?" Wade asked, rounding a street corner with his SUV.

"Just lucky I guess." So much for the warm and fuzzy, touchy-feely moment I was having in my head.

"So you actually eat that way all the time? It wasn't like, something you did just to irritate me?"

"Your ego is truly amazing."

"Stop!" Wade said as if I'd tossed a lovely compliment his way while he reached over and shoved me in a boyish way.

"Man your insides must be a mess."

How romantic. "Seriously? You're seriously going to start a conversation about my guts now?"

Wade rumbled out one his stock-in-trade low laughs. "I guess I never thought about getting the skinny on your eating habits."

"How the hell would you..." I turned slowly as he slowed the car down a bit; obviously realizing he said more than he should have. "No way?"

"Cool, I like that, let's leave it there, you're right on the money, no way."

"I can't believe you would...they would! I could sue or something!!"

"Baby, it's no big deal," Wade soothed, "and I didn't, but the Quad did...possibly put out a few feelers to the staff at the lodge."

"Unbelievable!"

"All good things, baby—all *real* good things."

"This is insane—it's like Mayberry meets *Moonlighting*!"

"Apparently you treat all the employees really well, they all like you. That was a definite bonus, and the fact that you just got dumped really pulled at the ladies heart strings. I think that's what pushed you so far ahead in the Gallup polls."

"How in the name of holy gay hell does anyone know I just got dumped? Are my phone lines tapped?"

"No!" Wade said, as if it was the first *truly* ridiculous thing I'd said all evening. "Even I knew that. The guy who paid for everything, including your skiing lessons, let it slip to the overnight concierge that he was sending you up here to dump you."

I felt the car beginning to close in on me as I looked out over the road in front of me. I could spy the roof of the lodge

poking out of the trees up ahead. "So the entire lodge—hell possibly even the whole town knew I was getting dumped before I even did?"

"Well I seriously doubt the whole town knew until after you slept with me." Wade pulled the SUV to a stop in front of the lodge.

"Well ain't I just the luckiest little boy in the world!"

"You're upset." He nodded, biting his lower lip.

"You think!" I was nearing hysterics, so I took a few deep breathes. "I can't believe you...that's why you came onto me in the bar, you knew I was fragile...easy pickings...the deer that strayed too far from the herd?"

"That's crazy! I had no clue who you were till after you...I mean we...you know...in your cabin...after your first lesson..."

"We fucked, Wade. If you can't use the word in a sentence, you shouldn't be allowed to do it."

"Damn it, Boone," Wade said, reaching over and placing his hand on my knee. "It wasn't cheap to me, so I didn't want to use a word that would make it sound that way."

I looked down at his hand, then up into his eyes.

"I swear I didn't know anything about you when I picked you up that first night other than how fucking hot I thought you were."

"You swear?"

"I swear it."

"Nothing other than my hotness made you come onto me?"

Wade smiled. "I promise. Had I known you were that guy, I still wouldn't have thought anything other than what a stupid fucking idiot your ex had to be for letting someone who looked the way you look go."

I smiled at Wade despite it still stinging that Phillip actually told the hotel staff he was dumping me. "That was a very nice thing to say." I had flashes of calling up to the front desk the day before Phillip was supposed to arrive, ordering an entire dinner to be delivered to our cabin—all his favorites, lobster, champagne, shrimp cocktail. *They knew before I did, probably laughing their asses off.* The worst part was in all the drama I'd forgotten to call and cancel the meal after Phillip broke it off. I'd wanted to die when I opened the door and there it all was.

"I think you're really...great, Boone."

I laughed, wondering if he was checking himself like I was, or if he really did think I was just—great.

"Can I stay with you, tonight?" Wade asked.

I chewed my lip, wanting to say yes, especially feeling as low as I did at the moment thanks to Phillip. "I wouldn't dream of asking you, Wade." I opened the car door and stepped out into the snow. I turned to close the door and he had the most pathetic and truly disappointed look on his face. "I mean, it's like you said—you can't *believe* all the *disgusting* things I've put into my body this evening." His mouth fell open and I smiled at him innocently. "I certainly couldn't ask you fuck me knowing how repulsed you must still be—right?"

He started to speak and I slammed the door shut, gave him a wink and spun around to head for my cabin. A few

seconds later I heard, "Asshole!" and I started to laugh as I looked back over my shoulder to see him shaking his head at me with the passenger side window rolled down.

"See you tomorrow!" I waved and turned away.

"We'll see!" Wade threatened, in what I assumed was some last minute attempt at defiance.

"I finally think I'm getting some of my power back," I said, smiling as I rounded the corner of the lodge, disappearing from his view.

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Chapter Five

I opened my eyes and made a whiney noise as the banging continued. I finally sat up in bed and pushed the sleep mask up onto my forehead. I turned my head and listened, hazy eyed and irritated, not hearing anything now and wondering if I'd been dreaming it. As I began to lay back down I heard it again.

"Jeez-sus...damn wallz're comin' down." I managed to slur out as I tossed off the covers and got out of bed. I stumbled out of the bedroom as the banging continued, coming from the front door. "Hole-on azzole!"

I tried rubbing the sleep out of my eyes with the palms of my hands. I looked around, blinking several times as I stumbled, and then catching my balance as I made my way to the door. I ripped it open to find Wade standing there in what looked to be the pre-dawn light as the sun hadn't quite made its usual morning appearance yet.

"Good morning, sunshine." He pushed past me, carrying a shopping bag and what looked like two cups of coffee.

"What hell is this?" I asked, slamming the door.

"My baby's not a morning glory, I see." Wade set the cups down on the counter of the tiny island and walked into the kitchenette, which considering his size made him seem that much more gargantuan.

"Time is it?" was all I could get out.

"About a quarter till six," Wade said, all chirpy and perky as he tossed the bag on the couch and made his way back over toward me.

I held out my hands in what was unmistakably an 'I wanna choke the life out of you' fashion. He smiled, taking my hands in his and pulled me into him, somewhat forcefully before covering my mouth with his. He wrapped his thick arms around me, pinning my hands behind my back. He tasted all minty and fresh, and lord knows I had to have tasted all rotten, full of hate and frustration.

The coolness of his snow suit against my skin made me very aware that I stood there in nothing but my briefs. The way his tongue was working over my mouth was quickly beginning to wake up Boone junior. Wade finally pulled away, loosening the vice grip he had on my body.

"You taste mighty fine in the morning."

"Why do you hate me so?" I took several steps back and Wade let go of my hands, but let his gaze mentally lick the rest of me, pausing for several moments over my package which was a smidge larger than it had been moments before.

"I don't hate you, Boone," Wade said in a cartoony fashion, like he was talking to a toddler. It made me want to pick up the closest thing I could find, and bludgeon him upside the head with it. "On the contrary—I missed you so much that I simply couldn't allow another second to pass by before seeing you again."

"Why don't you hate me so?" I asked, reaching up and rubbing my eyes again, feeling weakened and confused in my sleepy-time state.

"I guess one *could* say, that had I perhaps been with you when I woke up this morning, missing you terribly—well I suppose I wouldn't have had to rush over here to see you quite so early."

I scowled at him, trying to straighten myself up. "You win, you dirty *evil* butt-munch. I'll never *not* let you stay over again. Now let's go back to bed."

I turned to make my way back to the bedroom and felt his hand grab me by the waist band of my briefs, pulling me from my backside into the living room. "No, sir, too late for that, I'm already wide awake and rarin' to go."

"Wade, please...me tired," I now whined like a two year old as I stomped my foot. "Come to bed with me, and I'll get nice and wide for you, I swear it."

He didn't respond to my offer, just continued to pull me by my undies. He finally let go of me then promptly slapped my ass with the palm of his hand, using enough force to cause my eyes to open nice and wide. I turned around ready to cuss him out, and he stood there dangling the coffee cups in front of me.

I quickly changed my tune and reached out for one and said, "Coffee."

"Well now—it's not exactly coffee."

I felt my heart sink, and placed a hand over my chest where it used be. "You're the meanest man in the whole wide world," I accused wishing him dead. "No coffee?"

"It's better," Wade grinned.

"Cappuccino—double espresso?" I licked my lips as my mouth began to water.

"It's a Chai latte!" He held it out to me as I physically recoiled from it.

"Why do you hate me so?" I asked, very near tears, feeling like I was being tortured.

"Just try it, it has caffeine. And I told them to put extra sugar in it."

I looked back at him, distrustful and skeptical. "Real sugar?"

He let out a laugh and nodded as he held it out for me. I took it from him and drank a little.

"See that's good, huh—and much better for you than coffee?"

I took another sip and he smiled proudly. I smiled back, walked over to the phone and called up to the front desk asking for a pot of coffee. I set down the phone and glanced over at him. "Sadist," I said looking down at the bag on the couch. "What's that?"

"Ah!" Wade set down his cup and snatched up the bag, then tossed it over to me.

I took a step out of the way, letting it fall to the floor with a light thud. "No catch before coffee." I bent over to pick it up. I looked inside to see a few more ski suits and miscellaneous shirts and sweaters. "Well, sure—because my skiing lessons are going so well."

"They might if you applied yourself and paid the least bit of attention to me." Wade scolded. "I just thought you might like a few different choices, that's all."

I let out a sigh, but by no means offered up a thank you before heading to the bathroom to get in the shower.

Showing up at this ungodly hour was bad enough, but without coffee? That was abuse, pure and simple!

"Let me know if you need help reaching any of those problem areas," Wade called out.

I mumbled curses under my breath as I allowed my gaze one longing glance back at the bed I was so in love with. I let out a whimper as I thought about the textured layers of fluffy blankets, the gazillion thread count soft cottony sheets and the mattress that seemed to almost hug my body. "You just answer the damn door for the coffee." I rounded the corner into the bathroom and thought, *I lost my power again.*

* * * *

We're gonna die, we're gonna die! I peeked open one eye as I clung to Wade, my arms wrapped around his waist squeezing tightly. The wind was whipping by as the loud engine of the snowmobile revved up and down. I felt a little mist of blowback from the snow that was tossed into the air as we cut a slice through it.

"Isn't it beautiful up here?" Wade yelled, turning the death contraption to the right and zipping up a hill.

"Sure is," I yelled back, feeling the rumble of his laugh vibrate my cheek as I hugged him tighter around the waist. *This looked a whole lot more fun when I was watching other people do it.*

The morning sun was bright and the crisp blue sky was clear aside from the occasional string of fluffy white clouds that rolled by like floats in a parade. We were whipping by not too far from the tree line, and I was able to catch the scent

from the evergreens. I sucked in my breath when the snowmobile lifted up into the air momentarily from running over a bump, our bodies slamming back into the seat as it landed.

"Sorry! We're almost there!"

I smiled, feeling Wade pat my arm as if to soothe me. Then I started to freak. "Both hands on the wheel!"

"There is no wheel!"

"Don't be a smart ass!"

"You want me to do what to your ass?"

"Not killing my ass would be really great!"

Wade laughed as the snowmobile began to slow down, the engine noise lessening as we finally came to a stop. I could feel the tension draining out of my arms as I loosened my grip on Wade's waist. He turned off the engine, and I suddenly couldn't hear anything other than the wind and the sound of Wade and I breathing. The sunlight on the snow was blisteringly bright as I lifted the amber colored goggles up onto my forehead.

"It's so quiet," I whispered as Wade got off the snowmobile.

"Why are you whispering?" he asked with a half grin as I followed suit, feeling my feet sink into the snow.

"I...I don't know." I felt a little silly. I looked back from where we had come and felt a little dirty having disturbed the pristine white blanket. I always thought snow was beautiful until people messed it all up, like a crisp white shirt from the dry cleaners. So pretty and fresh on the hanger until you

actually put it on and tucked it into your jeans, creating all the wrinkles.

I felt Wade take my hand and begin to pull me with him. "Come on, it's just over this ridge."

I smiled, loving the way my feet sank into the snow. "You know, I could actually enjoy this whole snow thing if it weren't so damn cold."

"Unfortunately you can't get one without the other." Wade looked back laughing at me I assumed because of the silly way I was walking, trying to disturb as little as possible by stepping into the same spots he had.

He continued to tug on me as I trudged along behind him, enjoying the vast plains of white cut only by the occasional patch of trees.

I looked up as we made it to the top of the hill and felt my mouth drop. The view seemed to stretch out endlessly as far as the eye could see and everywhere I looked there was something more amazing than the last. "This is a much better view than you get from the lodge."

"Even better than the view from my house."

"It is indeed." I looked on as Wade pointed out the lodge below. He came up behind me and wrapped his arms around my waist, pulling me close to him.

I rested my head back against his chest as I scoped out the panorama that looked like something you'd see on a postcard. The town was below looking all tiny and Wade pointed out where his house was, on the opposite side of the valley. The mountain range beyond stretched out into the mist as if it might go on forever.

Wade squeezed me a little. "Makes you feel small doesn't it?"

I smiled, understanding where his perspective was coming from. "I see that, but no—makes me feel like I could do anything. It's amazing, as if I could open my arms and jump, getting caught up in the wind like a leaf, and just float away."

"This is my favorite spot," Wade said. "I come up here whenever I get the chance. My Dad actually brought me here when I was a kid after Mom died. She'd always teased him about never allowing her to come up here with him. This was really his spot, the place he came when he wanted to be alone. He told me he felt close to Mom here, as if her spirit now resided here—her way of showing him who's boss."

I could see the steam from his breath out of the corner of my eye as I looked out over the sights before me. "It certainly feels magical."

"This was the place my Dad disappeared to and he shared it with me. I wanted to share it with you."

I felt that stupid intense pressure as I turned my head to look up at him. His gloved hand took my chin and he covered my lips with his. I turned around in his arms as our tongues slowly met. Part of me was feeling frantic with a strong desire to run away. The other part—the one that loved the way our bodies fit together, even through all the layers of clothing—felt safe, like I could spend the rest of my days kissing him just the way I was right now, and everything would be okay.

The heat from his breath, the wetness of his mouth over mine had my lips tingling as they slowly began to warm. There was an intent and intensity behind Wade's kisses, like

his mouth was informing me that I belonged right where I was. I could feel us both becoming hard as we pressed into one another. When Wade pulled away he looked the way I felt, like he'd been carried away for a moment.

We were both trying to catch our breath as we looked into one another's eyes. "So...you don't like, think they're like watching or anything, do you?"

Wade smiled, letting out a little laugh.

"Cause that's kinda creepy," I added. "I'm not a make out in front of the parents kinda guy."

"Really?" Wade gave me a soft peck. "I felt fairly sure you'd be into that sorta thing."

"Not with a mother like mine." I let out a sigh. "I can hear her right now. 'Boone, do you have to kiss like such a slut? Good Christ, if your tongue goes any farther down his throat you'll be able to tell what the man had for breakfast. Do it like they did in those old-time movies...classy...not like a sailor on leave.'"

"I'm going on record with a plea that you *never* listen to your mother."

I smiled a big toothy grin. "She's not gonna like you at all, saying blasphemous things like that."

"If it means you continue to kiss me like a sailor on leave—I'm okay with that."

"Now you're not playing fair." I kissed his chin. "Boys my mother doesn't approve of are practically irresistible."

"Well, she'll *hate* me," Wade said seriously. "Loathe me. Despise me to the point she'll spit on the ground I walk on."

I laughed, knowing full well she'd wet herself if I were to bring Wade home to meet her. "Oh my, with talk like that—take me now!"

* * * *

Wade and I burst into his house attached at the mouth as our hands tried groping at one another, despite the padded gloves. I heard the door slam shut and Wade let out a deep moan as the palm of my hand pressed into his erection. He was forcing me back into the house and my breath was taken away when I felt the bare skin of his fingers graze my cheek just before they weaved their way into my hair.

I pulled away from his mouth as we each smiled, panting like dogs in heat. "That's it pal, the gloves are coming off." I yanked my hand free and chucked it across the room.

"Bring it on, Boone," Wade said with a grin as he slid his fingers out of my hair and freed his second hand.

There was something about the way Wade looked at me. It made me want to do the dirtiest, most depraved things. He brought out a side of me I didn't know was there, and I liked it. I'd always loved sex, but with him there were times like right now, when I thought I might go insane if I couldn't have it.

Hands free and parkas on the floor at our feet we went for one another, mouths locked together in a fight for control. My hands went right for his pants, desperately trying to get to his dick. Wade had one hand in my hair and the other on my ass. He was grinding into me which was making it difficult to get into his pants. He licked across my cheek, slowly, and then

sucked on my ear lobe. His hot breath brushing over my ear caused my eyes to roll back into my head as I let out a moan.

Wade whispered my name as I finally got his pants open, my hand wrapped around his large cock. I dropped to my knees and slid his ski pants and briefs down exposing his hard-on to my mouth. I took him in, causing Wade to curse as I began to suck. I had the base of his shaft in one hand, and slid the other up, under his shirt—fingertips gliding over soft skin, searching until I found a nipple. I twisted and pulled as I moved my lips slowly up and down his dick.

Wade's hands moved into my hair and he began to thrust lightly as he pulled me onto him. I heard a loud thump and felt Wade freeze. I continued to suck him off for a moment until I too froze, hearing voices coming from outside the house. I removed my mouth from his cock and looked up at him as he looked down at me.

"Fuck," Wade said, as I shot up off the floor. He yanked his pants up, cursing a bit as the waist band of his briefs caught one of his balls. "You've got to be kidding me with this shit—why now?"

I was trying to un-muss my hair, and smiled as Wade squeezed his dick, the most pathetically sad expression taking over his face. I kissed him quickly as he fiddled with his pants before scooping up the parkas and hanging them next to the door.

I could hear a woman yelling from outside the house as little voices were screaming. "Please don't tell me you have a wife and kids."

"My sister," Wade growled. "Damn her and her crappy timing."

"Don't worry baby." I winked at him. "You can come on my face the instant they're gone."

"Oh Christ, you fucker...don't say things like that right now." We both turned hearing a banging on the front door. "That's not helping my situation."

I smiled, looking down to see the still very evident erection outlined in his pants. I laughed and went back to the door and grabbed his parka, tossing it back to him. "Put that on."

Wade quickly slid it on and snapped the belt around the waist closed as I went to the door. I opened it and had to jump out of the way as four boys came tearing into the house, all yelling at one another, changing the decibel level of the room in an instant.

"I said to shut the hell up," a woman screamed as she entered the house, looking moments away from committing murder.

I looked back to see Wade smiling and screaming back at the boys as they all ran in circles. The boys were all screaming to Uncle Wade, each wanted something different from the other. I stood there holding the door open in shock as Wade's sister stood next to me. She and I turned to look at one another and I forced a smile. She on the other hand seemed unable to return the favor.

"Fucking fertility drugs," she offered with a deep sigh, as if she'd become so used to the question she now skipped a step by answering automatically.

I found myself laughing, as she introduced herself as Jackie. She had long straight black hair that was distractingly shiny. Her make-up was all done up, but looked more natural to her skin tones, on the less flashy side. She was in form fitting jeans, a long black coat which she proceeded to remove, making me realize she wasn't leaving anytime soon. The bone white sweater clung to her remarkably fit body, which had me looking back at the four boys, who all looked identical to the other.

"You look amazing," I blurted out, impressed by her figure after apparently birthing what could be an entire boy band in five to ten years. I shook my head and finally remembered to shut the front door.

"Thank you. I can now see why the Quad is so desperate to get you alone." She smiled, realizing I was in a state of shock as she looked me over carefully. "No wonder Wade's been so happy the past few days."

I felt my face begin to heat up as the lollipop guild came tearing back over, stopping in their tracks as they finally seemed to take note that someone they didn't know was actually in the room. Wade came strolling up behind them.

"Take off your coat and stay a while," Jackie said, shaking her head at her brother.

"Mister?" One of the boys said, yanking on my pant leg.

I smiled and looked down at the wide eyed little angel whose three other clones had surrounded him. "Hi."

"Are you Uncle Wade's new butt boy?"

My mouth fell open as one of the other boys started to snicker. I hadn't spent much time around kids, but I was pretty sure they weren't supposed to say things like butt boy.

"Ignore them," Jackie said, lifting her hand like she might back hand the little deviant.

The boys all looked at their mother and laughed as they took off running through the house screaming 'butt boy' at the top of their lungs.

"How...precious?" I said, realizing that despite being initially shocked she might raise a hand to her children—upon further consideration, deciding a little follow through, now and then, may not be such a bad thing.

"I know, they're little monsters, each and every one of them," Jackie sighed as she made her way into the kitchen.

"It's your fault, you're the one who says things like that for them to overhear in the first place." Wade winked at me as he took off his coat.

The foursome came tearing through the living room, single file, still screaming, butt boy.

"Wade, please," Jackie motioned toward them. "Take them to the game room so they can kill zombies, or whatever it is they've been screaming about all morning."

The boys instantly began to scream 'Kill zombies', over and over as they tore through the kitchen, causing me to begin laughing as Jackie looked as though she was trying to count to ten. "If you little rats don't shut the hell up, I'm gonna take you out to the road and sell you to strangers."

Good luck with that plan, I thought, wondering what fool would pay good money for these little demons.

"Come on you little heathens," Wade yelled as he clapped his hands. "Let's go kill some zombies!"

"Heathens kill zombies," one started to scream as they all tore down the hallway off the kitchen chiming in unison.

Wade walked over and gave Jackie a peck on the cheek, then turned to wink at me before following after the kids.

"Wow!" I said, deciding not to hold back my real feelings.

"I know," Jackie said, tossing an arm through the air. "I'm like the world's worst mother."

I made my way toward the kitchen, wishing I had a Xanax. "Dude, I'd be in a padded cell and weigh like four hundred pounds if I were you. You look amazing and haven't killed anyone...at least...well there weren't like five originally, right?"

She laughed and went to the cabinet and pulled out a couple of wine glasses. "No there weren't...man, you talk fast, and you're funny. I'm going to like you, I think." She snagged the opened bottle of red off the counter and came back to the island. She and I sat down on stools next to each other.

I took the glasses from her and set them on the counter as she yanked out the cork. She poured us each some wine and set the bottle down. It was like ten thirty in the morning but I didn't argue as she nudged a glass across the counter top toward me. "I don't know how you do it."

"They're kinda sweet when they're quiet," she tried, looking as though she wasn't sure she believed it herself.

"So basically when they're asleep?"

"Something like that." We clinked glasses in a toast like fashion, and each took a drink. Jackie was looking me over,

inspecting me I assumed. "I never wanted four kids, though had it happened in stages, I might have been okay—but all at once? I must have been a real bitch in a past life."

"And now we all have to pay?" Wade asked, startling me as he came back into the kitchen and went to the fridge, pulling out four juice boxes. "That hardly seems fair."

"Oh shut up," Jackie said, taking another sip of wine. "You love the little shits." I turned as she placed a hand on my arm. "He loves them—fair warning."

"Yeah well, they actually listen to me." Wade placed the juice on the counter and proceeded to unwrap the straws and poke them into the boxes. "They're just being boys."

"Fucking penises," Jackie said in a flat tone. "Nothing but trouble."

"If I had a nickel..." I said grinning at Wade as he picked up the juice and turned to leave.

"Something tells me you've had more than your fair share of trouble, too," Jackie said with a grin.

"Please wait until I'm out of ear shot before answering that," Wade growled as he rounded the corner and vanished down the hall.

I laughed, feeling my face flush a little. I took a sip of wine and was thankful he seemed to not like the idea I'd been with anyone else, any more than I liked the constant reminders I'd inadvertently been getting from the town folk as to Wade's previous dalliances.

"You like him," Jackie said smiling at me.

I took another drink, realizing I must have been staring off into space all dreamy-like. "Please, he's a complete ass—and I'm leaving in a few days."

"And you really like him."

I made one of those *pfff* noises as I tried to act all cool, though I felt my forehead begin to get a little glisteny. "I could never love a man who'd drag me out of bed before the sun came up and not even have the decency to bring coffee."

"You like my brother," she sang in a taunting little adolescent-like voice causing me to laugh.

"Don't get me wrong, the view was amazing, I don't think I'll ever be able to forget it..."

"What view?"

"From the ridge, your dad's spot." I ran my finger over the rim of the glass. "That's what he dragged me out of bed for. And it was a truly amazing experience—but not bringing coffee?" I looked over and she was staring at me. I began to feel bad, thinking maybe he'd never taken her up there, and I'd inadvertently spilled the beans, and she would now hate her brother for taking a stranger somewhere that was so private and personal.

"I can't believe he took you there," Jackie said, seemingly stunned.

Shit, shit, shit! Me and my big mouth.

"He's never taken anyone up there aside from me," Jackie added, in complete shock.

"He hasn't?" I asked, feeling my stomach drop as I imagined myself becoming the slightest bit more tethered to this place and this man. Why did he take me to that special of

a place? How fucking rude! What the hell is wrong with him? I didn't ask him to share something like that with me. He had no right to force that kind of responsibility onto me.

"Shit, I shouldn't have said anything." Jackie cringed, looking over my face.

I laughed realizing I must have looked like I was ready to make a run for it. I took a drink, and held my glass up twirling my wine around. "No biggie." I knew it was special to him, but I hadn't considered that he hadn't taken other guys there before.

She quickly changed the subject, and I allowed her to pull me back out of the serious thoughts as she began giving a run-down on the town's people. She hit me again with the Quad, giving me the skinny on who had said what, and what a flurry of busy-bodies they all were, and to please ignore them all as they were in her words—completely nuts.

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Chapter Six

The stars were amazingly bright as I looked out over the night sky through the large picture window in Wade's bedroom. I smiled as his stomach raised and lowered my head, which was resting on it, as I lay naked between his legs. My hands were folded and resting above my head on his tummy. His breathing made the stars move up and down slightly as I stared, thinking I'd never seen so many in the sky before. I was now able to only spot the bottom of the nearly full moon out the window from where I was lying.

I could feel Wade's erection softening against my chest. The bed looked as though an army had staged a coup, trudging across the sheets leaving a rumpled, cum-stained mess in its wake. I had no clue what time it was, but we had fucked each other senseless from the time his sister left, which had been sometime after lunch. I was quite confident I had indeed licked Wade up one side and down the other, no stone had been left unturned.

I felt a chill and the goose pimples run up over my back. The room was completely still aside from our breathing, and I found I didn't mind the quiet so much. It was very unlike me, who usually needed to have some type of noise in the background. Was it being with Wade that had changed that, or was I too spent to give a shit? I took in a deep breath and could smell the two of us mixed together with that lumber-wood scent that seemed to permeate Wade's entire house. My usual instinct was to run to the shower after sex, but this

new scent, the combination of the two of us—I loved lying there covered in him, knowing he was covered in me.

I heard a click and my eyes squinted as low light filled the room. "Damn it I'm starving," Wade said, sprawled out on his back, naked, with one arm resting up against the padded headboard. Wade's body looked sleek, glistening in the light provided by the lamp next to his bed.

"To hell with food," I said, feeling his cock twitch against my chest. "Only pussies need food, and we ain't being no pussies."

He let out a groan, and I shut my eyes as he ran his fingers through my hair. "You can't form a coherent sentence—my God, I can't ever remember being this hungry, or thirsty."

"Boone only need sex," I mumbled, feeling my body go more limp as Wade's fingers massaged my scalp.

Wade laughed as he scruffed my hair. "Man, I really love you."

My eyes popped open and Wade's laugh trailed off. I pushed myself up on my elbows, my chest pressing harder against his pelvis. He was looking down at me, and I laughed seeing the cringe on his face—giving away the fact that he hadn't meant to say it, nor did he really mean it that way. I opened my mouth to speak only to be cut off.

"Stop...don't even."

"You *really* love me?"

"No...damn it," Wade started to laugh again. He covered his face which had turned a nice bright red. "I'm delirious, I need food—I don't know what I'm saying."

"That's so cool," I said, grinning from ear to ear. "Cuz *really* is way better than *kinda*."

"I meant it in...like...the way I love a good sandwich."

"I've been *kinda* loved many times," I continued as if I hadn't heard any of his protests after the fact. "But *really* loved—this is a first."

"Shit," Wade said, his body jerking a bit as he continued to laugh out of embarrassment.

"I need the number for U-Haul, quick..."

"Shut up, you little ass."

"Another compliment!" I said, startling him as I spoke excitedly. "I do work hard to keep my ass little—each cheek is exactly a handful."

"You're a handful all right," Wade said, placing his hand over my mouth to prevent me from speaking. He smiled as I winked at him. He pulled his hand away when I licked it.

"Whole lot of trouble."

I let out a little laugh, somehow liking the thought of being his trouble. "The things you say to me—you silver-tongued devil, you." I settled back down and lay my head on his tummy. I smiled listening to his body as it made little creaky noises.

Wade ran his fingers back into my hair. "I'm not very good at this, you know."

"At lying naked in bed with another man?" I asked, looking up at him, resting my chin on his abs. "I most vehemently disagree—you're doing *quite* well."

Wade shook his head as he tucked a strand of hair behind my ear. "Are you ever serious about anything?"

"A fine thing to say," I said with a grin, knowing full well that in my weakened state, my rambling was the only thing keeping me coherent. "After the hours and hours of seriously hot sex we just...boy you really know how to cut a bitch."

Wade laughed, mussing my hair, as if I were an obedient little puppy. "I feel incredibly exhausted. You are an amazing man, Boone. I think you're very special."

"I'd kiss you right now, but your mouth is way up there." I pointed up toward his face, and Wade took my hand in his. My instinct had been to tease him as to what he meant by 'special', but as I felt Wade's lips softly kissing the palm of my hand; I felt my entire body begin to tingle. My chest felt as if it might explode as I looked back up at him. I lifted myself and crawled up next to him, lying back down on my side.

He rolled on his side and looked into my eyes, longingly. "You realize you're lying right on top of the big wet spot?"

"I know, but I can't seem to make myself give a shit."

Wade smiled and leaned over, planting a soft kiss on my lips.

As we separated Wade looked over my face, and I could see the wheels turning away. "Can I ask you something?"

I nodded okay.

"The guy that you were...um..." Wade glanced down at my hand and chewed on his lip.

"The one that dumped me over the phone?"

"Yeah, that's the one. Were you in love with him?"

I smiled as Wade made eye contact again, seeming to be glad to have gotten that question out. "I thought I was, had myself quite convinced." I slid my hand over the short

distance of mattress and wrapped my fingers around his hand. "But, no—I wasn't really in love with him."

Wade grinned and settled onto his back again. He opened his arm as if asking me to snuggle in. I scooted over and tossed my leg over his, resting my cheek on his chest as his arm squeezed me closer. The view of his body from my new perspective was amazing. The softness of his skin contrasted with the hardness of his muscles, like the terrain of some amazing undiscovered land no one could get to but me.

I ran my hand over his stomach watching the way my fingers rose and fell as they passed over the surface of his muscled torso. "What was it like being an Olympic Golden Boy?"

"I've never...indescribable really." Wade let out a sigh, his thumb caressing my arm as he stared up at the beams stretching across the roofline. "It was like a thousand different emotions all coming at me at once in a flood. I felt light and weighted down at the same time. I do distinctly remember laughing and crying simultaneously, and all I kept thinking was three months."

"Three months?"

"I'd lost my dad three months earlier to the day. I was standing on that podium, medal in one hand, flowers in another and despite being so happy...so proud, it all seemed so unfair. If he'd been able to hang on a little longer he'd have been able to witness what all of his hard work—" Wade stopped abruptly, taking a deep breath. "My dad put so much of himself on hold for my dreams."

I slid my arm up to his shoulder and squeezed Wade as I kissed his chest. He laughed a little and ran his hand up my arm and into my hair.

"I'm not sure I'll ever get over that, it devastated me that he missed it."

"Wade, he knows. I'm sure he was able to see you standing there, knowing you were thinking about him as he was watching you."

"I hope you're right." Wade reached over and started to tickle me as I shoved his arm away. "I wouldn't have taken you to be the spiritual type."

"I got spirit...yes I do." I looked up and Wade was rolling his eyes at me. "Sheesh, tough crowd. I'm not a bible thumper, hell I'm not even sure I believe it, but it seems nice. That there are spirits who watch over us? I don't know, I guess at times it helps me not feel so..."

"Alone," Wade said, letting two fingers graze over the divot in the center of my chest.

"I suppose so."

Wade made a little groaning sound. "It's weird, but—the idea that you'd ever feel alone bugs me."

I let out a long sigh and shut my eyes, wishing he'd stop saying all these wonderful little things. What kind of a sick-o does that? It was making me feel things, and I couldn't decide whether I liked that or not. I opened my eyes as Wade lifted my chin, forcing me to look up at him. His gaze ate into me, the intensity taking me over. I couldn't look away, and though I didn't really want to, I was also aware that I needed to.

It was like he could see through to the core of me to my soul or essence—whatever it's called. I'd seen this phenomenon depicted in movies and described in books. They always made it seem incredible and romantic. It was actually *really* creepy. Why the hell would I want anyone looking at my essence? I hadn't even seen the damn thing. What if my essence was sitting out there in full view and was badly lit? What if my essence wasn't very pretty to look at or unworthy of being loved? Maybe that's why Phillip only appreciated my exterior?

"Whatever you've got going on in that very sexy head of yours right now," Wade said, startling me back into the present, "you can cut it out."

"I'll have you know there are absolutely no actual thoughts running through my sexy head." I winked at him. "Just this voice running on a loop telling me I'm hot."

Wade chuckled as he shifted his body so we could more easily look at one another. "Guys who look like you aren't usually funny."

I ran my finger over his Adams apple. "You'd need to laugh too—it took several painful surgeries to get me looking this way."

Wade shook his head at me. "You're such a liar."

"Well it is true that I wasn't always so pleasant to look at." I smiled, feeling his body tense a bit as I ran the stubble of my chin over one of his nipples. "In high school I was a bit too gangly, with long Lurch-like arms and legs. The other kids called me Ba-Boone."

"That was mean," Wade said, though laughing. "You should've thrown your poop at them."

I started to laugh at the mental picture I got of me tossing my shit at Jake Mitchell and Jenny Davenport as they screamed in horror. "That was actually funny, Mr. Medals."

"High praise indeed," Wade said. "Ba-Boone, huh? I can't quite imagine it."

"Oh I have pictures."

"Show and tell?"

"I don't have them on me," I laughed. "And I think we've shared enough for one day, don't you?"

Wade rolled me onto my back and climbed on top of me, pinning me down into the bed. "We're just getting started."

"You're such a girly, share-bear," I said, letting out a long painful sounding moan as I over-actingly bugged out my eyes while gasping for air. "Can't...breathe..."

Wade tickled my sides making me laugh, thereby ruining my whole performance.

"Oh fine—end scene," I said, placing my hands onto his wide shoulders. "So really, what the hell happened to you, radioactive spider...gamma ray exposure?"

Wade looked at me curiously with a half smile.

"I've seen the pictures of you at your uncle's restaurant—back in your gold medal days. When did you turn into The Incredible Bulk?"

Wade rested his forehead against mine. "After I got home from my second Olympics at Lillehammer, I took a bad spill, tore my knee all up. I was never as good as my best after that. I was still a great skier, but nowhere near my

competition level. If I couldn't be the best I didn't want to play anymore."

"Okay, I can understand that." I looked at him, confused, wondering what I was missing as I melodramatically ran my eyes from one shoulder to the next.

"You're going to take it as some kind of personality flaw."

"Nice," I said. "Man, I'm a bitch, aren't I?"

Wade leaned down smiling as he softly brushed his lips over mine. "I went from all that training, day in, day out—up at five every morning and in the gym, then on the slopes for hours doing the same drills over and over."

I frowned, feeling a little sad for him. "You didn't know what to do with yourself."

"Something like that." Wade turned a little red as he kissed my chin. "I went a little nuts, and perhaps focused a bit too much on my body."

"That's so cute, you're one of those need-a-goal guys." I let out a happy humming sigh. "You're a freak, just like the rest of us."

"You could try to sound a little less happy about it."

"Hey, dude." I tried pointing at him despite the fact his face was right in front of mine. "It would ruin my street-cred if people knew I was fucking Captain America. You have a long line of fucked up footsteps to fill."

Wade stopped kissing my cheek and looked down at me. "I'm sorry—but exactly how long of a line are we talking about here?"

"Baby's got back...and he hasn't been afraid to use it."

"I have this sudden, distractingly strong urge to have 'Property of Wade Walker' tattooed on Baby's back."

"That's just plain selfish—nobody puts Baby's back in a corner." I smiled as Wade went back to softly kissing my neck while I ran my mouth. "Baby's back is practically its own relief organization." I was a little surprised that the idea of being Wade's property turned me on a little.

"And you can continue to provide that relief so long as..." Wade's eyes widened as an evil grin spread over his face. "What's this?"

I closed my eyes and laughed as Wade reached down between us and took hold of my now swelling cock.

"I think somebody really likes the idea of having my name tattooed across their ass."

I blew out a *pfff* noise, as if to say he was nuts. My abs tensed as Wade squeezed the head.

"You sure?" Wade asked causing my mouth to open with a soft moan as he twisted the head in the palm of his hand. "You don't want to be my property?"

"No!" I said, squirming as he worked over my shaft. I began to find it difficult to catch my breath. "I'm sure."

Wade forced my legs further apart with his, as his own expanding erection pressed into my ass. "I get the funniest feeling I could have you begging to be my property."

"Fat chance." I shuddered as a chill ran over my body. My voice continued to protest while my body betrayed me by telling Wade an entirely different story.

It wasn't long after, that my voice betrayed me as well, giving Wade what we wanted most by proving himself right.

Sn Ho
by Ethan Day

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Chapter Seven

I listened to the bell jingling as I entered the store, wondering if it was a town law that all stores had to have that same bell on the door. The wood floors creaked underfoot as I passed the middle-aged woman with short curly blonde hair and dark red lipstick. She was standing behind the register chatting it up with a younger Julia Stiles-type with long, dirty-blonde flowing locks. I smiled as they each turned to see me simultaneously. It wasn't lost on me as they each returned my smile that their conversation had halted.

I was beginning to feel like some type of rare endangered species that had wandered out of the forest, feeling eyes on me as I'd passed the storefronts on my way to the drug store. Up until this moment I'd been chastising myself for being overly paranoid.

I surveyed the store, feeling lost while suddenly missing my local Walgreens back home. I knew exactly where to find the condoms there. I cursed myself for telling Wade it would be quicker if we split up. The store felt old-timey and updated at the same time. There was a hint of that musty old building scent mixed with disinfectant in the air. The shelving units which partitioned off the length of the store appeared to be fairly new, but the pharmacy counter, running along the back of the store had a vintage-old-timers feel, with a long white counter that separated the customers from the drugs which were being stored in a separate room—visible through the

partial glass wall. I grabbed up a little red basket and made my way down the first aisle.

I was passing along by the deodorant and shaving supplies, and noticed the toothpaste a little further down. I was hopeful I'd find the Colgate watermelon toothpaste I loved so much. Despite its intention of getting kids to want to brush their teeth, I was totally addicted, now looking down my nose at the standard minty type which is of course what Wade used. Worst case I could force Wade back to the lodge so I could grab mine, but I was hoping I wouldn't have to do that as it made me feel like I was moving in. I knew it was insane, but buying it and taking it back to his place somehow didn't seem to give me that ick in the pit of my stomach.

I took several steps, making my way past the soap and lotion. My eyes widened as I spotted it on the shelf. I felt myself grinning as I plucked it off the shelf and tossed it into my basket—a little too overly excited by toothpaste I began to realize. *Note to self...get a life.* I rounded the end cap display, nodding politely to the lady behind the pharmacy counter. She had long curly black hair which was bunched up in the back, falling over her shoulders and soft cocoa-mocha skin. She was wearing the white doctor's coat, and while at first glance her African-American goddess-ness seemed distinctly out of place in this odd *Twin Peaks*-like mountain town, her demeanor said otherwise.

"Can I help you find anything?" she asked, her voice warm—almost husky and soft.

"Condoms?" I asked, looking for a name tag while beginning to realize that no one bothered to wear one here.

She smiled slightly, though not blatantly as she pointed a long elegant finger, complete with dark red fingernail, toward the opposite side of the store. "Just around the corner on the left hand side."

"Thanks." I smiled and winked to let her know I was secure enough with myself to not be embarrassed by asking for condoms, though I suspected that was why she'd smiled in the first place.

I made my way toward the last aisle, stopping for a moment to peruse an end cap with Sobe juice bottles. I shrugged and placed four bottles of the 'power' fruit punch in the basket, deciding a little extra energy couldn't hurt, considering the things I'd be up to with Wade later this evening.

I finally arrived at the condom area and looked over my choices. I couldn't decide if I should attempt a last-ditch effort at classy by choosing a small box, or play up to the big-ole-whore reputation I surely already had, thanks to the town cabby, by buying bulk. I'd given up on the Amber Alert I'd issued days ago in terms of my virtue, finally accepting the reality that I seemed to have no control over myself when it came to Wade Walker. "Bulk it is then," I mumbled to myself as my gaze drifted toward the larger boxes.

"The one that got away." I heard as I turned to my right, seeing Chip, the bartender with the weird auto-affectation.

"You," I accused, greeting Chip with anything other than enthusiasm. "Those damn Irish coffees of yours have gotten me in a whole mess of trouble."

"So I've heard, stud. The last time Summit City was this abuzz was several years back when Tilly Mason got busted having an illicit affair with Pastor Dan." Chip sauntered up while looking me up and down. "You were supposed to get drunk and come home with *me*."

"So your evil plan just somehow got away from you?"

"Oh sure, blame the bartender." Chip shook his head at me. "One cocktail and within seconds you went from boy next door to leather dungeon whore."

My mouth fell open slightly, and though I desperately wanted to defend myself, I could only imagine the things that must have come out of my mouth at the bar before going home with *and* allowing Wade to put God knows what into it. "I have low liquor tolerance, it's not my fault."

"You might have mentioned that before ordering the Irish coffee."

"Um, you offered it," I decided to remind him, as if it made a damn lick of difference at this point. "And I thought it was just coffee—from Ireland."

Chip smiled while trying not to laugh as he stood there looking at me. Finally, letting out a disappointed sigh, he glanced over toward the shelves. "Stocking up?" Chip nodded toward the rubbers which I'd since forgotten I was standing in front of. "Exactly how long have you been holed up with Saint Walker, anyway?"

"Don't be crude." I felt my face flush and wondered why I was now embarrassed, as I took note of the fact that Chip seemed to be the only person in this town that didn't 'love' Wade.

Chip laughed as he reached over and pulled a bright yellow box of Trojans off a hook. He looked at it and smiled before holding it up to me. "So...sex with Wade... Gold medal worthy?"

I snatched the box out of his hand as he laughed, obviously pleased with himself. I noticed the Julia Stiles-a-like girl standing at the end of the aisle, whispering into a cell phone, while making a lame-ass attempt to act as though she wasn't eavesdropping.

"I'm afraid these just won't do." I placed the yellow box back where it belonged and picked up a box of the Trojan Magnums XL, making sure I tapped my finger over the 'XL' on the box. "Fortunately for me, Wade's a *biiiiig* Magnum man." I smiled sweetly and began making my way up toward the register, leaving Chip standing there, slightly stunned into silence. "Huge, in fact." I tossed back as I passed the little eaves dropper who was staring a hole into a bottle of shampoo sitting on the shelf.

* * * *

I came out of the drugstore feeling the cold air like needles on my cheeks. I looked up at the sky which was clouding up, remembering Wade had mentioned that another snow storm was supposed to be moving into the area by nightfall. I was trying to remember which direction the market was in when I caught a commotion out of the corner of my left eye. I turned to see the Quad walking down the sidewalk, headed in my direction.

I found myself unable to move as I listened to Wade's warning ringing in the back of my mind about not allowing myself to be caught alone by the ladies. Before I realized it, I found myself running across Main Street, a horn honking as a guy in a Blazer slammed on his brakes. I continued running like a freak, who feared some type of alien abduction scenario. These four middle aged women sucking the boy juice out of my brain, turning me into a pod person—a gay-bot! My free will stripped away as they made me a subservient man whore—handed over to Wade for his perverse, yet very hot pleasure.

A gay Stepford, I thought, deciding I should use that idea for my next book. I looked back, making sure I'd left the Quad in the dust as I headed to the market. *Maybe you should try finishing any one of the books you've already started, loser.* I nodded as I looked down as if having been shamed by some invisible inner bitch-voice.

* * * *

I followed Wade into the house, lugging in several canvas bags filled with groceries. I felt chilled to the bone, and ready for Wade to build one of his big roaring fires I could snuggle up to. He'd already promised to make me what he referred to as 'real' hot chocolate, which was something his Mom used to make him when he was little. I set the bags on the counter and froze, noticing my suitcases and the carrying case for my laptop sitting just inside the front door.

"Yeah, I forgot to mention that," I heard Wade say from behind me. "I asked the concierge to have your things packed

and brought over. I figured you were probably missing your own clothes."

I was in fact not missing my own clothes, and I couldn't believe he'd told complete strangers it was okay to go through my things.

"You don't look too happy?"

I turned to face him and my anger melted slightly realizing by the look on his face he'd thought he was doing a nice thing. "Wade, you can't...what if I had a huge double-headed dildo there? Do you really think I'd want a total stranger finding it, let alone having to pack it for me?"

Wade's eyebrows rose slightly and he smiled a little. "Do you have a double...?"

"No!" I screamed, irritated he was more aroused by the fact I might have one, than seeming to grasp the idea that it would have humiliated me.

He shrugged, seeming a little disappointed as he went back to unloading the groceries. I shook my head and took a deep breath to keep myself from lunging across the counter at him. "You should have asked me."

"I'm sorry." Wade stopped and looked me in the eyes. "I just...you're only here for the rest of today and tomorrow. I don't want to waste any of it. I wanted you here."

I felt my anger slipping further away thinking he looked adorable standing there holding the box of Cap'n Crunch I'd forced him to buy. As I made my way around the counter I felt the corners of my mouth curling up. I knew he was probably the most spoiled man in the world, and it drove me nuts that he most certainly always got his way. At the same

time it took a little of the sting out of it, knowing I was the thing he wanted to have his way with.

I took the box of cereal out of his hand and placed it onto the counter. I pressed my body into his. Our hands encircled one another as our mouths connected in what had now become an extremely familiar kiss. It surprised me how familiar it felt considering we'd only met days before. The knee weakening way his tongue teased and tasted. There wasn't a single place I didn't want Wade's tongue to go.

He groaned a little as we separated, swallowing as he licked his full lips. "Too bad about that dildo, huh?"

I laughed as I shoved him away. "My DNA is probably being air-vaced to a lab in Denver as we speak."

"I doubt it," Wade said as he went back to the groceries. "They probably won't decide what to do with that until the town meeting tonight."

"Right, of course," I said, laughing as I went back to emptying the bags.

"Right after the vote deciding what day we're to be married," Wade added as he closed the cabinet door next to the fridge.

"What?!" I felt every muscle in my body tighten before realizing he was joking as he started laughing at me. "That wasn't funny."

"I know." Wade tried on a scowl. "You could *try* to act like the idea didn't completely revolt you."

I smiled, feeling a little evil from the unintended insult as I started to hand him more groceries to put away. I decided it was good for him, to realize that not everyone was willing to

fall at his feet. I caught a glimpse of his package and chastised myself for wanting to fall down to my knees.

* * * *

"Ah, Jesus...fuck me, Christ...yeah...that's...fuck, Boone, yes, please," Wade screamed as he unloaded into the back of my throat.

His hips were still thrusting slightly as his hands held me firmly onto his dick. Every muscle in his stomach was constricted as he made a few more breathy curses and praises for my cock sucking abilities. His hands loosened and I continued to suck and lick as he twitched and writhed, my tongue torturing his swollen, and now very sensitive, head.

I smiled as he shoved me off of him, unable to take it any longer. I was amazed by the fact his dick was still rock hard despite the amazing orgasm he just had.

I settled onto the floor next to him, feeling the heat from the crackling fire that was blazing away, radiating into my sweat soaked body. It felt amazing, I loved the heat.

"Fuck me, Boone...that was..."

"I know," I said with a sigh as I tried to act like my jaw wasn't about fall off its hinges due to the size of him.

"I mean...wow!"

I laughed a little as I watched Wade's massive chest heaving up and down, his body stretched out across the carpet, one leg leaning against the stone fireplace hearth. "I'll need that in writing, by the way."

I watched the smile spread across his face though he still hadn't turned to look at me. "Why exactly, would you need it in writing?"

"Um...so I can add it to the customer comments page of my web site, silly." I watched as his hand slowly moved over his stomach.

"Your website?" Wade asked allowing his head to turn toward me, eyebrows raised.

"Yes...it was only last month that I went international." I watched Wade's eyes run down my body to my crotch. I rolled over onto my stomach and smiled as I propped myself up on my elbows lifting my upper body, while pushing my butt up into the air. "My ass now knows no borders."

"Of course, what was I thinking?" Wade rolled onto his side and scooted across the floor toward me. "Mail me a comment card, and I'll be more than happy to do my part."

Wade reached over and let his fingers graze down the center of my back as he leaned forward and kissed me. It took about two point four seconds before I once again found myself trying to take his tongue deeper into my mouth. I was beginning to worry I was addicted to his taste. I wanted it more each time I had it, and I hated that knowing I'd be leaving the day after tomorrow. It would be something I was going to miss.

He pulled away and propped his head up on his hand. Wade looked quite large when he lay on his side, and I felt his foot snake over my leg as he continued to trace a line up and down the center of my back with his fingers.

"You should really think about putting some of your Olympic memorabilia up around your house," I said as I looked around the room whose artwork consisted mainly of black and white framed photographs. "Might be a helpful clue to the next drunken man-ho you pick up at the bar."

"I have some of it up in my office." Wade's hand pressed into the small of my back. "I think it'd be a bit tasteless to have stuff like that plastered all over the house."

"Baby, you earned the right to be tasteless—you won a gold medal for Christ's sake."

"Five actually," Wade corrected, "over two Olympics of course."

"Really?"

"Plus two silver and three bronze."

"Holy shit," I looked at him wide eyed, my skin feeling warm from the track his fingers were making up and down my spine. "I *really* need to Google more."

Wade laughed as he leaned over, kissing my shoulder. "I loved that you didn't have a clue who I was."

"I still don't get the big deal with that." I shrugged and looked over his face.

"I know," Wade smiled, "and I love that about you. I'm just a guy to you. Do you know how long it's been since I was just a guy to someone? Plus you have this annoyingly sexy habit of telling me what you think." Wade winked as he chewed on his lip. "Whether it's what I want to hear, or not."

"Hmm...never knew you got off on verbal abuse until I came along, huh?" I asked, faux-swelling with pride.

"It's not that I get off on it," Wade corrected. "I don't really like it so much as I appreciate it. You actually called me a hooker or a whore, I can't remember which at this point, in front of my cousin."

I looked off as if staring proudly into space. "Gee—I am a catch!"

Wade laughed as he smacked me lightly with the back of his hand. "Don't get me wrong, I love that people respect me, and I've certainly used my modest celebrity to snag a shit ton of ass in my day. But the few times I've tried the relationship thing, it's like—I don't know, people seem to always wind up walking on eggshells around me...afraid of saying the wrong thing and upsetting me. I know I'm difficult..."

"Can I get an, amen!" I said, chuckling as Wade poked me in the side.

"How are you supposed to maintain a relationship when you feel like your boyfriend is blowing smoke up your ass?"

"As opposed to simply blowing your ass," I said.

Wade laughed again, shaking his head at me. "You really are incapable of having a serious conversation aren't you?"

I smiled innocently, giving Wade my very best All-American boy-next-door routine before giving up entirely under his disapproving glare. I rolled my eyes. "I get what you're saying."

"I don't think you do," Wade said, running his fingers through my hair as he locked onto my gaze with his. He leaned in and lightly gave my lips a peck, before moving onto my chin, kissing and licking along my jaw line. I let out a sigh

and felt his hand return to the small of my back. Wade scooted closer, his chest pressing into my shoulder.

I felt the imaginary anvil pushing against my chest as the words *one day* kept repeating over and over in my head. They were two words I both resented and clung to at the same time. I knew that as much as I hated hearing them, those two words were my best friend at the moment—a constant reminder to not allow myself to fall so far that I wouldn't be able to find my way back out once it was over.

Wade's hand was now sliding between my ass cheeks, fingers working their magic as I began to push back, wanting more. He sucked onto my neck, lightly digging his teeth into my skin, causing a sensation overload that had my head spinning as my body began to burn. I let out an almost desperate sounding moan, and my cock was once again hard and begging for release. I reached over, rubbing the palm of my hand over Wade's dick which was already swollen and throbbing as well.

"Christ, do *not* move," Wade ordered, after pulling his lips away from my neck.

I let out a groan as he pulled his fingers away and rolled across the floor. I placed my forehead down onto the floor feeling the fibers from the area rug against my skin. I closed my eyes, listening to the rattling as he ripped open a condom. I suddenly couldn't imagine not having access to the taste of him. I turned to watch as he walked across the floor on his knees. He was working the lube over his erection and I took a deep breath, taken back a bit from the reckless intensity with which I wanted what he was about to give me.

I spread my legs to accommodate him. His hands spread me open and as I felt his cock pressing into me I was desperate to not want it, desperate to not want him. I closed my eyes, concentrating on the sensation as he slowly forced his way inside. Wade was taking me over and I didn't seem to have the will-power to make it stop.

Chapter Eight

Our last day sort of floated by, almost dreamlike. Despite our behavior, which would've given a fly on the wall the impression we'd been together as a couple for much longer than was the reality, I could tell he felt what I did—that our time together was coming to a close. It was hanging over each of us as we laughed while roasting marshmallows over the fire, and while he spooned me as we lay in bed watching the snow quietly fall outside. It was there as we talked, seeming to push us each into telling the other as much as we could squeeze in. As we fucked one another, the careless abandon which had previously been the undercurrent to the sex we shared, had been replaced by a quiet intensity—a need to escape deeper into the other. I wanted to make sure I could remember every inch of him, each line, wrinkle, and crease—down to the very last scar from the surgery he'd obviously had on his bum knee..

Neither one of us had broached the topic of what might happen once tomorrow came, and while I lay there in Wade's arms I glanced over at the clock. It was a little after one a.m. reminding me that tomorrow was already here. It was now a matter of hours not days, I thought, as I shimmied around in

the bed onto my back. I tucked my arm under Wade's which was now lying across my stomach, thick and heavy. As I stared up at ceiling I could feel his stomach pressing into my arm, back and forth as he steadily breathed in and out. I could make out the outline of the massive rough hewn beams as they stretched out above me, seeming to float in the air in this light. They reminded me of the occupant of this house—solid, as if they could last forever.

I thought about the last conversation we had just before Wade fell asleep, in which the topic of my writing had come up. Wade had asked me why I thought I'd never finished any of the stories I'd started. It shocked me into silence for a few moments as I realized I'd never actually asked myself that question before. The stories just seemed to stop somewhere in the middle, and I could no longer see what was going to happen to the characters. I was amazed that I'd never seemed to be too concerned about it, as if I subconsciously must have lied to myself, somehow believing each one of those stories simply wasn't the one I was supposed to tell.

I'd never been the love-with-abandon type of guy before. It scared the shit out of me. I'd always feared that the love wouldn't survive once the feelings of abandon had waned. Was I truly unlucky in love, as I liked to tell myself, or had I in fact been subconsciously and self-destructively choosing the wrong men my whole life in some lame attempt to always keep my heart just out of harm's way? If there was always the safety net of never being truly emotionally involved, then had I perhaps never actually been in love before?

How can I write about love if I keep myself from it? I let out a tiny moan as Wade pulled me closer to him. I smiled at the timing, pretending as if he'd instinctively known I needed a hug, even while asleep. I breathed him in, the scent now something that drove me to distraction. I couldn't think clearly around him and I needed to know the answers to these questions. Was Wade different or just another guy I'd hopped onto, knowing full well in the back of my mind that it could never work?

I rolled back onto my side and wedged my body back into his, getting as close as I possibly could. The heat from his body radiated into mine, and I jiggled as a chill ran over me, his thick arm squeezing me as a little groan escaped his lips. I grinned, feeling my eyes begin to weigh down as I got lost in the rhythm of his breathing. I didn't want him to be another guy that couldn't work. I felt my thoughts slip away in a haze as sleep overtook me.

* * * *

We each stood awkwardly in Wade's living room as I waited for the van from the lodge to pick me up and whisk me away to the airport in Denver. The sun was out again today, the storm having passed through overnight, and I could tell Wade was a little unhappy by the fact it had only accumulated into a few inches. Not enough to close up the roads that exited out of Summit City.

We hadn't said more than a few words since we woke up this morning. Wade kissing the back of my neck was possibly the single best eye-opener of my life thus far. He'd slowly

made love to me one last time, us each on our sides, his arms holding me tightly as he kissed and sucked on my neck. It had been extremely intense and as Wade came, he'd whispered into my ear that he wanted me to, *please stay*. We hadn't said much since as I no longer knew what to tell him. I knew I couldn't stay, and yet I was afraid if I tried to say so I'd cave in. I was terrified that would be a mistake.

Wade had pulled on his jeans and disappeared downstairs while I showered and packed up the few things I'd taken out of my luggage. I'd grabbed the blue flannel shirt he'd been wearing the day before out of his hamper and shoved it into my suitcase. It reeked of him and I couldn't resist it. I'd never done anything like that before, and I loved the urge that accompanied the act of petty theft.

He was propped up by the back of his sofa, arms folded over his bare chest. I was standing across from him holding my parka awkwardly trying to think of the right thing to say as his gaze seared into me. His body language spoke volumes as to his current mood, not that I needed it to know that the man who was used to getting what he wanted was very unhappy at this precise moment.

"I'm afraid if you leave right now, I'll never see you again," Wade grumbled as his finger tapped against his bicep.

I smiled at him and shook my head at such nonsense as I walked over to him. "You don't strike me as the type of guy who'd allow something like that to happen." I tossed my coat over the arm of the couch and wrapped my hands around his neck, leaning in for a kiss. I took note of the fact that while

he did kiss me back, his arms stayed folded and tightly secure to his body.

"Damn it, Boone," Wade whispered as we separated. "I don't want to be something else you never finish."

"Um, ouch!" I said, laughing a little despite the stinging effect his words had on me. "Well, I don't want to be your next goal—that new thing you decide you have to have, or the next hurdle you pursue with all your gold medal might."

Wade smiled and let his arms fall to his sides. "We certainly have that whole 'guilt your boyfriend into getting your own way' thing down." I laughed as he ran his hands up my arms. "Would it help at all if I said I honestly think I've fallen for you?"

"I'm not leaving because I'm afraid we don't like each other enough." I leaned into him, my nose in the nape of his neck as I took a deep breath. "I need to know it's real and tactile. That we haven't just gotten carried away, lost in the fact that we most obviously crave one another. I need to know it runs deeper than what we have on the surface."

"Well, how the hell are we supposed to discover that if you run away, Boone? Hell, I miss you already, and you haven't even left yet."

"Fuck, Wade, please. I don't want you to be another guy I waste a few more years of my life on, discovering after the fact that it was all heat and no substance."

"Jesus!" Wade pushed me back a bit. "Who's the silver tongued devil now?"

"That came out wrong, I'm sorry. I didn't mean it like..."

"I think you know damn well that isn't the case here."

"I think your right, but can you please just give me six months?"

"I can't see you for six months?" He stood there looking stunned, like I'd just slapped him across the face.

"No, I'm saying that, just lets...do the long distance thing for six months. If we both still feel the same way at that point we can talk about trying something...more permanent."

"One month," Wade said, causing me to laugh.

"This isn't a negotiation," I said, kissing his chin.

"Three?"

"Six months," I said, giving him my no B.S. look. "It's not like it's winter 24/7 here and I only work three days a week at the hospital. We can see each other every week if we want. New Mexico isn't that far away."

"When are you going to write if we're wasting all our time traveling?"

I looked over his face, loving him for actually caring about something like that. "I'll squeeze it in somehow."

"I think this is stupid," Wade said in a 'for the record' way.

I started to snuggle back into him. "I like being your stupid."

"Fine," Wade said, taking me by the shoulders and holding me back. "I'll agree to six months if you'll agree to moving here—with me," he added, as if I might try to pull some kind of fast one on him, "at the end of those six months."

I shook my head, trying not to laugh over the fact that he still seemed to be under the pig-headed impression this was a negotiation. I nodded in agreement, knowing that there'd be no power on this earth that could keep me away if I was still

this crazy about him by then. Wade smiled like he was the one who'd just come out on top in this little arrangement. I decided not to ruin it by telling him I had no issue with having him on top.

Within moments our mouths were once again together, and Wade was swallowing my body up in his arms. It wasn't long after, that my hand was down the front of his jeans massaging his hard-on. We were just beginning to get the fires really boiling when the shuttle began honking its horn—announcing its untimely arrival. Wade didn't let go immediately, holding me to him while we continued to make out. He hadn't showered and the stubble from his chin had been deliciously digging into the skin around my mouth. I'd probably have a full-on erection the entire trip home, but I couldn't seem to make myself give a damn.

Wade tried to run off and throw on shoes and a shirt so he could help me out to the van, but I told him I could manage. He helped me on with my coat, fastening the buttons for me as we continued to kiss. When he finally pulled away Wade looked over my face before finally letting out a little sigh.

"What about those?" Wade nudged his head toward my skis which were propped up in the corner.

I smiled at him and shrugged. "Dude, you so totally still owe me some lessons."

Wade let out a deep groan. "You do actually want me to continue to like you, right?"

"As if you have a choice," I said, grinning from ear to ear as I leaned into his neck and inhaled deeply.

The horn went off a second time and Wade gave me that wink as he pulled away. The man sure knew how to work a wink, I thought, feeling my legs turn to jelly as Wade opened the door, allowing me to stumble out into the cold air, bags in tow.

The driver hopped out to help toss the bags into the back. I looked back this time, as I felt the van begin to pull away from Wade's house. He was waving good bye from the front door, and I kept my eyes plastered to him until the shuttle rounded the corner. I turned back around facing forward in the seat. I could feel the stinging behind my eyes begin as the flurry of emotions swept through my body. I felt the tear begin to run down my cheek, and I started to laugh, deliriously happy by the intensity with which I was already missing him. I silently prayed that it would never go away.

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About the author

Ethan Day lives in Missouri. He is currently single but always looking for that special someone that makes his heart skip a beat. He was the youngest of four children and the only boy.

After a few stints in college, he eventually signed up for a Creative Writing course. He took the class because there were no tests. For once his scholastic laziness paid off, and he found an outlet for all the fantasies running amuck in his head. It was love at first write, and he's been doing it off and on ever since.

Visit Ethan on the internet at:

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The Trevor Project operates the only nationwide, around-the-clock crisis and suicide prevention helpline for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth. Every day, The Trevor Project saves lives through its free and confidential helpline, its website and its educational services. If you or a friend are feeling lost or alone call The Trevor Helpline. If you or a friend are feeling lost, alone, confused or in crisis, please call The Trevor Helpline. You'll be able to speak confidentially with a trained counselor 24/7.

The Trevor Helpline: 866-488-7386

On the Web: www.thetrevorproject.org/

the gay men's domestic violence project

Founded in 1994, The Gay Men's Domestic Violence Project is a grassroots, non-profit organization founded by a gay male survivor of domestic violence and developed through the strength, contributions and participation of the community. The Gay Men's Domestic Violence Project supports victims and survivors through education, advocacy and direct services. Understanding that the serious public health issue of domestic violence is not gender specific, we serve men in relationships with men, regardless of how they identify, and stand ready to assist them in navigating through abusive relationships.

GMDVP Helpline: 800.832.1901

On the Web: gmdvp.org/

the gay & lesbian alliance against defamation/glaad en espanol

The Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (glaad) is dedicated to promoting and ensuring fair, accurate and inclusive representation of people and events in the media as a means of eliminating homophobia and discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation.

On the Web: www.glaad.org/

glaad en espanol: www.glaad.org/espanol/bienvenido.php

servicemembers legal defense network

Servicemembers Legal Defense Network is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, legal services, watchdog and policy organization dedicated to ending discrimination against and harassment of military personnel affected by "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (dadt). The sldn provides free, confidential legal services to all those impacted by dadt and related discrimination. Since 1993, its inhouse legal team has responded to more than 9,000 requests for assistance. In Congress, it leads the fight to repeal dadt and replace it with a law that ensures equal treatment for every servicemember, regardless of sexual orientation. In the courts, it works to challenge the constitutionality of dadt.

sldn Call: (202) 328-3244

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Washington DC 20035-5301 e-mail: sldn@sldn.org

On the Web: sldn.org/

the glbt national help center

The glbt National Help Center is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization that is dedicated to meeting the needs of the

gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community and those questioning their sexual orientation and gender identity. It is an outgrowth of the Gay & Lesbian National Hotline, which began in 1996 and now is a primary program of The glbt National Help Center. It offers several different programs including two national hotlines that help members of the glbt community talk about the important issues that they are facing in their lives. It helps end the isolation that many people feel, by providing a safe environment on the phone or via the internet to discuss issues that people can't talk about anywhere else. The glbt National Help Center also helps other organizations build the infrastructure they need to provide strong support to our community at the local level.

National Hotline: 1-888-THE-GLNH (1-888-843-4564)

National Youth Talkline 1-800-246-PRIDE (1-800-246-7743)

On the Web: www.glnh.org/

e-mail: info@glbtnationalhelpcenter.org

* * * *

If you're a GLBT and questioning student heading off to university, should know that there are resources on campus for you. Here's just a sample:

US LOCAL GLBT COLLEGE CAMPUS ORGANIZATIONS

dv-8.com/resources/us/local/campus.html

GLBT Scholarship Resources tinyurl.com/6fx9v6

Syracuse University lgbt.syr.edu/

Texas A&M glbt.tamu.edu/

Tulane University www.oma.tulane.edu/LGBT/Default.htm

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University of Alaska www.uaf.edu/agla/

University of California, Davis lgbtrc.ucdavis.edu/

University of California, San Francisco lgbt.ucsf.edu/

University of Colorado www.colorado.edu/glbtrc/

University of Florida www.dso.ufl.edu/multicultural/lgbt/

University of Hawai'i, Manoa manoa.hawaii.edu/lgbt/

University of Utah www.sa.utah.edu/lgbt/

University of Virginia

www.virginia.edu/deanofstudents/lgbt/

Vanderbilt University www.vanderbilt.edu/lgbtqi/