

When Trey dreamed of one day playing professional hockey, he always imagined it would be for one of the top ranking NHL teams. He never fathomed he'd end up on a last place, farm team and struggling to live from one paycheck to the next. Instead of limousines, endorsement deals and accolades, he's stuck with a rundown rink, jeering ex-fans and a crappy second-hand truck that only runs fifty percent of the time. Then his life goes from sucky to sucky-er when he's blackmailed into coaching a group of kids from the local rink. Trey's never been good with dealing with other people, let alone their mini-versions, so he's certain it's all going to end in one huge disaster.

As a member of the Battle Creek police force, Wade is proud of his town. Sure their local hockey team may be in last place, but with the new goalie, things seem to be looking up. When he finds out his nephew is being coached by that very same goalie, Wade can't wait for a face-to-face encounter. He's not prepared to find himself instantly attracted to Trey. Especially when it becomes apparent that Trey is hiding something from his past.

Trey wants to get closer to Wade, but knows to do so could spell disaster for not only him, but the rest of his family. Will Trey be able to give into his desires or will the past continue to hold him down? The unauthorized reproduction or distribution of this copyrighted work is illegal. Criminal copyright infringement, including infringement without monetary gain, is investigated by the FBI and is punishable by up to 5 years in federal prison and a fine of \$250,000.

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Between the Pipes

By

Stephani Hecht

Dedication

To all my readers who insisted that Trey's story be told. This one is for you.

Chapter One

Since he'd been a certified rink rat from birth, Trey long ago grew accustomed to the hard biting scent of the manufactured ice. In fact, he loved the smell since it was the one place where he truly felt comfortable in his own skin, the sole place where he felt safe and free from the harsh judgment of others. Once he hit the ice, it didn't matter what he was in the real world, or where he came from. It was just him against the other guys—hockey player against hockey player—and rarely did he come out on bottom.

However that did not mean he wanted his face nearly pressed cheek-to-ice to it, which is where his sorry ass currently was. True, his goalie mask made it so there wasn't direct contact with the cold stuff, but it was still close enough to be a tad bit uncomfortable.

"Let me the fuck up," he snarled with as much vengeance as a goalie pinned down by twin idiots could muster.

His older brother, Chad, who had planted

himself on Trey's upper back, gave his helmet a brain-jostling pat. "Nah, I'm pretty comfortable here so I'll think I'll stay for a while."

Trey shook away the birdies and gave another snarl, although, thanks to his current position, the noise was mostly swallowed by the ice. "I said I was sorry for the cup check. What more do you want?"

"Somehow an *oops, my bad* doesn't cover jamming a goalie stick between somebody's legs," drawled Devon, who was camped out on Trey's legs.

"I only did it once."

That earned him another helmet slap.

"Okay, maybe twice."

Slap!

"Three times?"

Slap! Slap!

"Okay, I did it to most of the team," Trey conceded. "Does that mean you have to give me brain damage?"

"Too late. That incident already occurred when we found you eating those paint chips." Chad gave a sad sigh

"Cut him some slack. A lot of kids do that," Devon interjected.

"Who said anything about him being a kid? I saw him doing it last week."

"Ha, ha, ha," Trey deadpanned. "Will you let

me up now?"

"No, those cute blue eyes and blond hair aren't going to get you out of this. The guys at *Peacocks* may be a sucker for your I'm-so-innocent boy charm, but not me," Devon growled.

"How would you even know how my charm worked on them since the last time we went there, you spent most of your time making out with Saul?" Trey made a mock gagging noise, even though he truly was happy that his brother found somebody to love.

"Yet, Niki says I'm the sex obsessed one," Chad interjected, speaking of his wife.

Out of nowhere, another blow coldcocked him in the helmet. Trey looked up blearily to see the team captain, Kip, standing over him.

"If it wasn't for the fact that you have such a great save record, I'd beat you myself. I have the best protection money can buy, yet my nuts are going to be bruised for weeks."

"Let's face it. Even if my stats sucked, you'd still be stuck with me. Rich hasn't been fully awake since he hit puberty and discovered Internet porn," Trey snorted.

As one, they all glanced down at the other end of the ice to the team's backup goalie. While he stood in the net as half the team fired off slap shots, Rich only managed to stop one out of three. Even then it looked as if the ones he did save were by pure luck.

"Why hasn't the team traded that jerk away?" Trey asked, not bothering to hide his disgust.

Chad snorted. "Ah, let's refresh your memory of our situation. Our team hasn't made the playoffs in over a decade. We're in the minor leagues and our rink is unfit for even livestock to reside in."

"Not true, I happen to think a cow would be perfectly happy here," Trey interjected.

After giving him another slap, Chad continued. "Let's not forget the fact that the only way to get our coach's attention is to be very, very bad boys. So unless Rich starts a fire or releases a sex tape, he's good to go."

Despite still being under over four hundred pounds of twins, Trey grinned. "I tried to make a sex tape once, but it didn't work out so well."

"Really?" Kip asked, one blond brow kicking up in interest.

Trey's grin grew wider while his brothers groaned. Sometimes it was almost too easy to get their captain to walk into Trey's verbal traps. When would he ever learn?

"Well, you see the night started out innocently enough...well as innocent as two guys decked out in all leather can be," Trey started, to added groans of dismay from the twins. "I found this perfect daddy type at *Peacocks*." He paused long

enough to glance up at Kip. "Have you ever been there?"

A tick developed in the captain's jaw as what may have been fear briefly flashed in his blue eyes. "The gay bar scene is more your thing than mine."

Going by the covert glances Kip kept shooting, Sergei, one of their younger teammates, Trey was tempted to call the man out on that one. In the end, he let it be. It'd never been Trey's style to out others so he wasn't going to start now. Especially somebody he respected so much.

"You should really go sometime. If for nothing else than to see the picture of the bar owner's father."

"What's so special about him?"

"Other than the fact that he's in full drag, nothing." Trey beamed as he blinked innocently.

"You're off track again," Chad informed him.

Not surprising since Trey often zigzagged off topic whenever telling a story. So he took a deep breath and continued, "So, any-hoo, me and Sir Assless Chaps decided to go to a nearby hotel. He even agreed to let me record the whole thing. Not so I could upload it the net or anything, just so I could have jack off material. I do have my standards after all."

"You do?" Devon asked incredulously.

If he hadn't been wearing his blocker and

catcher, Trey would have flipped his brother off for that comment. It never fails. You indulge in a glory hole or four and they want to slap the slut label on you. In the end, Trey just ignored the comment and went on with his story. "So, we go back to the room, start getting into it and then I try to set up the camera. The only thing is I don't know how to work the damn thing."

"You couldn't operate a simple video recorder?"

"In my defense, it was a new one and I may have forgotten to read the instructions," Trey defended.

Chad finally slid down enough so Trey could have more movement. He went up on his elbows so he could look at his audience while he continued with his outlandish but true, tale.

"How did your, er...." Kip seemed to struggle with the correct term for a moment. "Uh...leather daddy take that?"

Trey gave a sad shake of his head, or at least he hoped it looked sad. With his big, bulky goalie mask, he couldn't be sure the sentiment carried through. "He wasn't too pleased with me. As I was leaning over to look at it more closely, he spanked my ass."

"He what?" Chad demanded, outraged.

"I know! Not that I have a problem with others getting into that kind of stuff, but paddling has

never been my thing," Trey said, deliberately misreading the reason behind Chad's shock.

"No, not when you have the glory holes at the dive bar back in Detroit to fill in your kinky needs," Devon snipped.

Trey nodded his agreement while he shot a sly look at Kip. Going by the blush coloring the forward's cheeks, Trey would be willing to bet his goalie pads that he wasn't the only one who liked glory holes. He idly wondered if Devon had the same suspicions about their captain. Just as quickly, Trey dismissed that question. For a gay guy, Devon had piss poor gaydar. So much so that he'd been the only American citizen who'd been shocked when Ricky came out.

If only Kip were more Trey's type, he may have been tempted to push a few buttons to see how much it would take to get into Kip's closet. Trey sighed, too bad he liked his guys taller, older and with dark hair because that would have made for some interesting road trips.

He pushed those thoughts aside and got back to his story. "So, I finally managed to get the camera rolling only to discover that I forgot the lube."

A snarky thrill went through Trey when he heard Chad mutter a curse, while the flush on Kip's cheeks deepened. Knowing he'd made at least two members of his audience squirm, Trey went in for the kill. "While I do like things rough,

not even I'm willing to do a dry fuck and spit just doesn't do it for me."

Ha! That would show Chad for going on and on about his and Niki's sex life. Just that morning on the ride over, Trey had to listen to a whole, drawn out explanation on his sister-in-law's ovulation cycle.

"Mr. Leather didn't have any on him?" Devon asked, a hint of laughter in his tone.

"No, his pants were assless, hence no back pockets. So he couldn't carry anything on him. I got dressed and told him I had to run to the store to grab the supplies. I was only away ten minutes tops, but when I got back, he was gone."

"Gone?" Chad asked.

"Gone!" Trey repeated in his best can-youbelieve-it tone. "And after all the trouble I went to in setting up the whole scene. Can you believe it?"

"No, as a matter of fact, I can't. If this story came from anybody other than you, I'd be tempted to call bullshit," Kip said.

Trey didn't know if that were a compliment or a cut down. So he decided to take it on a positive note. "Thanks, Kip. I do lead an interesting life."

"That's one way to put it."

"The whole situation did teach me one thing though," Trey added.

"I'm almost afraid to ask what that was."

"That it's not as easy as it looks to make a sex

tape. So instead of looking down at Kim, Pam and Paris, we should be impressed."

Kip lifted his gaze up to Chad. "Paint chips you said?"

"Yup."

Kip nodded. "Yeah, I can see that."

Trey let out an exasperated sound. "Damn it, Chad. Tell me that you did not share that lame joke with the rest of the team?"

"Are you kidding? It's so funny I sent it into Readers' Digest."

Kip gave Trey's helmet a *love tap* before warning, "You give one more cup check today and I'll feed you to the Zamboni."

He then skated off, leaving Trey alone with the body-crushing twins. Trey shifted around a bit and, when they didn't get the point, asked, "So are you guys going to get off me any time soon?"

"After that bullshit story? You're lucky I don't start pounding you in the head again," Chad replied before he did just that, his hand connecting with Trey's helmet so hard the *slap* resounded through the empty arena.

Trey's head was still ringing even after practice ended, so the last thing he wanted was any more annoyances. Try telling that to Amy though, because damn if that reporter wasn't waiting for him. She attacked the minute he stepped out of the locker room.

"It's about damn time. I was about ready to come in there after you," she said by way of greeting.

That, Trey didn't doubt. From her severely cut, black hair to her pant-suit-only wardrobe, she was the go-for-the-guts, take-no-prisoners type. So he could see her barging into a room full of half-naked men, so long as it got her to her goal.

"Why? What did you want?" Trey asked wearily.

She tsked, her bright red lips pursing together in disapproval. "Can't one friend look up another friend without there being ulterior motives? Or does this go back to you hating all reporters?"

"I don't hate Saul and I like you just fine." In truth, Trey all but idolized Amy since she'd put her neck on the line to keep his family secrets firmly buried where they belonged. That still didn't mean he didn't have his suspicions about her current visit.

"I need you to do something for me," she admitted.

Trey shifted his goalie pads to his other shoulder. Not for the first time, he yearned for his all-too brief NHL days, where he didn't have to lug his own equipment around. Sure, he could have left his junk in the Hawk's locker room, but since the lock didn't work on the door, there were

no guarantees he'd find it where he left it come next practice.

He sighed heavily. "How many times do I have to tell you I can't be your beard? The whole hockey world already knows I'm gay, so I'd blow your cover."

She whacked him on the side. "Can you turn off the smartass for one minute?"

"I thought you loved that side of me?"

"True, it sure beats the moody, depressed Trey that first moved here, but I need you to try to be serious for a second."

"Buzzkill."

"You can call me whatever you want, just so long as you agree to help Andy out."

"What's an Andy and why does he need my help?" Trey set down his pads and bag since he had a feeling the conversation would be dragging on for a while.

"He's my nephew and he needs somebody to coach him."

"He's a goalie?"

"Well, duh." She gave him the are-you-stupid blink. "If he was a forward, do you think I would come to you?"

"Sure, coaches come to goalies for tips on how to score all the time." Trey shrugged.

"Are you serious?"

"Yeah, you told me I had to be - remember?"

"Has anyone ever told you that trying to have a conversation with you is like trying to catch a room full of errant bunny rabbits?" she huffed.

"All the time," Trey deadpanned.

"Andy's a goalie. Or at least that's what his equipment and aspiration declare him as."

"So is that your way of trying to say he's not that good?"

"You want me to be honest?"

"I find that's the best way to get accurate information," he drawled, wondering how long it was going to be before she slugged him again.

"Okay, let's just say that his team would be better off putting one of those orange traffic cones in net."

"Ouch. Not cool, Auntie."

"Sorry, but it's true. He spends half the time flat on his face and the rest of the time flinching whenever the puck comes near him."

"Sounds to me like the kid doesn't want to play that position. Are his parents forcing him to do it?"

That Trey would have been able to relate to. Since the day they'd been born, their now deceased father had decided that Trey and his brothers would all someday play professional hockey. As a result, he was often brutal and harsh as he pushed his boys to succeed. Trey had only been lucky in the fact that he'd actually liked the

sport.

Of course Dad must have done something right since three out of his four sons actually did manage to go pro. If you could call playing for a bottom feeder team in a rundown arena professional.

Amy shook her head. "No, my sister would never pressure Andy like that. The kid claims that he actually wants to play. Stranger yet, he has a near obsessive fan worship thing going for you."

Now that did shock Trey. "Really?"

"Yes, he and my older brother, Wade, are both huge Trey fans."

Despite himself, Trey got a little thrill from finding out that he had actual followers—something he hadn't had since he started fucking up so bad the NHL booted him. "Why didn't you tell me this before?"

She gave a long sigh as she rolled her eyes. "Because I knew it would give you a big head. Now will you help Andy or not?"

Trey grew serious. "I don't know. Kids and I don't make for a very good mix."

"Why, are they afraid of you or something?"

"No, worse." He swallowed nervously. "I'm afraid of them."

She put a hand on her hip and gave him a glare that screamed she wasn't buying it. "This coming from the guy who took on not one but two of the Cougar's meanest defense men."

"That was different. Kids are so messy and chatty and they always stare at you with those big eyes of theirs." He gave a shudder that wasn't entirely faked.

This time she did slug him. "Get over it! I happen to know that the Hawks have a short break in games so I expect to see you at Andy's next practice."

"Fine, but only because I own you big time," he shot back, his gut already clenching at the prospect of being around so many snotty noses. "What rink does he skate out of?"

"This one."

"Ha! There's proof right there your sister doesn't love him. The kid is probably sucking in lethal amounts of asbestos every second he's in here."

"Just make sure you're there. The practice starts at five." She thumped her finger in his chest. "And don't be late."

He rubbed the spot, scowling at her. "Like I would dare piss you off. I'd rather take on the whole Cougar team."

Chapter Two

s Wade walked to the front door of *Bran Flake Arena*, he had to repress the ball of excitement bouncing around in his chest. He tried to remind himself that he was a full-grown man of twenty-eight and a police officer, so he sure as hell shouldn't be getting all starry-eyed and jacked up just because he had a slight chance of meeting his favorite hockey player.

Shit, if the guys at the station could see him now, he'd never live it down. While they could take having a gay officer on the force, he had a feeling that if they all knew he had a serious case of fan fever, he wouldn't hear the end of it.

Try telling that to his pounding heart because with each step he took closer to the rink, the quicker his pulse raced.

He spotted Andy first. His nine-year old nephew was lying on his stomach, his body twisted at an odd angel as he struggled to do up his own goalie pads. Wade felt a bit of sympathy for the kid. Most goalies his age usually had a parent around to help out with stuff like that. Since Wade's sister worked two jobs and Andy's father was only around when it suited him, the kid usually had to dress himself.

Wade rushed forward to help, but some strange man reached Andrew first. With a red helmet and trim body that was covered in a perfectly fitting black workout suit, the newcomer didn't look like any of Andrew's regular coaches.

The glare from the eye shield on the helmet made it impossible for Wade to make out the man's features. He did seem to know what he was doing because he did up the straps on Andy's pads with a quick efficiency that showed he'd completed that task numerous times before.

"Thanks for helping him out," Wade said as he approached.

"Hey, Uncle Wade," Andy exclaimed as he broke out into a gapped-tooth smile.

The stranger glanced up at the same time and Wade nearly forgot to breathe as he caught himself in the blue-eyed gaze of the one and only Trey Canton. While Wade hoped to meet the goalie, he never dreamed it would have happened so quickly.

Full sensual lips kicked up into a crooked smile as Trey replied, "No problem. These things can be really tricky. Don't worry though, in a couple more years, Andy will be a pro at them."

"I didn't recognize you in a regular player's helmet," Wade replied stupidly.

That sweet grin grew wider, showing off a hint of cock-jerking dimples. "Yeah, *USA Hockey* rules stipulate that all coaches have to wear helmets while on the ice. Since I didn't want to yell around my goalie cage, I borrowed my brother's gear."

"Which one?" Wade asked, still unable to tear himself away from those eyes.

"Huh?" Trey cocked his head to the side in the most endearing way.

"Which brother."

"Oh! Devon. I try not to touch Chad's stuff since his wife gets picky about it getting too dirty." Trey laughed, the sound running over Wade's body in the most pleasant way. "Like anyone can actually keep hockey equipment clean. The stuff always ends up reeking no matter what you do to it."

Wade found himself smiling in turn as he nodded. He'd been around the rink enough to know the stench that could come from the equipment. Although at that moment, hockey gear was the last thing on his mind. All he could think of was how all the pictures in the local sports paper hadn't done Trey justice.

Just a hint of blond hair poked out from under the helmet, while the workout suite did nothing to hide how muscular Trey's body was. Not the overly buffed kind of muscles one got from spending too much time at the gym, but rather ones that were attained from being in perfect shape—no doubt due to the many hours the guy put in on the ice.

Before, Wade had just seen Trey as a great hockey player and a terrific asset to the Hawks. While he admired and was in awe of the man's performance on the ice, Wade had never really looked at him in a romantic light. Now as he gazed down at the younger man, Wade had to admit he wouldn't mind getting to know the man instead of just the goalie.

"You played a great game the other night," Wade said. The compliment wasn't false either. Trey had made some saves that had left the crowd breathless.

"Yeah, until I gave up that soft goal during the second period." Trey shrugged.

"But that was the only one you let in and they must have had at least fifty shots on net," Wade pointed out, surprised that Trey focused on his single error instead of just taking the compliment.

"It was a good thing Devon scored those three goals."

Wade repressed the urge to frown at the way Trey yet again deflected a compliment. Before he could comment on it, Trey took control of the conversation.

"So, Uncle Wade is a cop," Trey observed as his gaze flicked over Wade's dark blue uniform.

"I just got off duty," Wade explained.

A smirk passed over Trey's face, as if he wanted to say something more about that, but he held it in. Giving Andy's leg as pat, he said, "Okay, buddy, let's hit the ice."

Andy wobbled to his feet, his movements painfully slow. Wade noticed how Trey didn't rush forward to help until it looked as if Andy was going to fall. Even then, he only held on long enough for the kid to regain his balance. Wade felt a rush of anger that he'd let a child struggle like that. Then he realized Trey was doing it so Andy could get a feel for the equipment and learn how to function with it on.

Once Andy was standing, Trey gave him an encouraging smile. "Good job. Once you learn how to do that on the ice, there'll be no stopping you."

Andy beamed with pride as he waddled his way to the door leading to the ice. Trey followed behind him, showing so much patience that Wade felt his respect for the man shoot up. It must have taken a lot of control not to snap at the snail's pace Andy moved at. Once they finally hit the ice, Trey shut the door and directed Andy to one side of the ice.

Wade took a seat in the butt-numbing metal bleachers and watched Trey work with his nephew. Instead of just throwing Andy in net and taking shots at him, Trey took the youth through a series of skating drills.

While Andy appeared to be trying his best, he didn't seem to be making much headway. Instead of feeling dismayed over his nephew's lack of improvement, a thrill of excitement went through Wade. From the looks of it, they'd be needing Trey's coaching skills for a long time.

A pang of guilt hit Wade. He knew that he shouldn't be using his nephew as a lure to trap hot guys, but hey, if it worked, then Wade wasn't too proud to take the help. After all, hadn't Andy's mother, Mary, and their sister, Amy, been nagging at him to find a guy and settle down? Before now, he'd been too wrapped up in his job to think about cruising for guys. If he were to show an actual interest in Trey, they'd probably be happy.

Wade groaned as he ran a hand over his dark hair. Who was he kidding? Even if they didn't approve, he still planned on pursuing Trey. One look at those sweet blue eyes had guaranteed that much. Wade just needed to figure out how to make his next move. Somehow he didn't think a rink full of kids was the time or the place to ask someone out.

Once he got Trey alone and in a different

environment, however, Wade wouldn't give up until he had the other man in his bed.

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While he tried to keep focused as he took Andy through a series of skating drills, Trey's attention kept wandering to the hunk of man meat sitting up in the stands. It was almost as if the gods had taken Trey's list of what would make a perfect man and individually checked them off as they created Wade. Brown hair that wasn't too short, but still long enough to grab on to when playing? Check! Warm, sexy as hell, bedroom, brown eyes? Check! Tight body, without one ounce of flab on it? Check! Chiseled abs and a great personality? Check and check! A cop? Chec...what? Oh, now that one won't do at all. Run away as fast as you can.

Trey let out a sigh of regret. If not for that one last thing. A small thing really, when you stepped back to look at it. But if you took in Trey's past and all the hurt that could happen if the family secret were discovered, that one small thing became a great, big, pain-in-the ass issue.

"This is hard," Andy complained, his tiny voice cutting into Trey's regrets.

Trey blinked a few times to clear his mind of his own problems so he could focus on Andy's instead. Hot cop issue aside, Trey had been pleasantly surprised to discover he actually liked his new coaching gig. It wasn't just because of all the awe and adoration the kid heaped on him either, although that had been kind of nice. No, it was mostly because it felt good to share some of the knowledge that'd been literally beat into his head.

The defiant part of him took a sense of pride in knowing that, unlike his father, Trey could pass along that knowledge with kind words and gentle encouragement. It was much better than the scorn, abuse and curse words Dad had used to teach Trey and his brothers. He was so caught up in teaching Andy that Trey almost didn't notice when another miniature goalie tottered over their way. Trey paused to look at the newbie.

The kid grinned back. "Coach said to come down here with you."

"Okay," Trey replied, thinking that teaching two couldn't be that much more difficult than one.

Soon he had three and then four of the ankle bitters at his end of the rink—all of them looking up at him in rapt adoration, much like baby chicks would stare at their mother.

"Amy so owes me for this one," Trey muttered under his breath before he began coaching his four new mini-Treys.

* * * *

Wade grinned as he watched the growing group of students assembling in front of Trey. The goalie seemed to take it all in stride as he carefully took them through a series of intricate drills. While he never once shot a puck at the kids, Wade had no doubt the lesson was valuable. He'd often heard that the goalie had to be the best skater on the team.

He thought back to the games he'd watched this season and to the smooth, effortless way Trey moved on the ice. Now that Wade knew there was a hard body and cute face to go along with all that skill, Wade planned on never missing another game.

All too soon the practice ended and Trey was herding his students off the ice. Wade met them at the door leading to the ice.

"You're great with them," he complimented, trying to think of a way to ask the guy out.

He bit back a curse as all the little goalies made no move to leave. If anything, they seemed extremely interested in the conversation. Damn, how was he supposed to make the moves on someone when he had an underage audience?

"They're great students," Trey answered before he gave Andy's helmet an affectionate tap. "So, I'll see you next practice then?"

Andy nodded as much as his oversized goalie

mask would allow. "Are you really going to get me tickets to the next game?"

"Sure thing, I'll even take you back to the locker room so you can meet the other players," Trey promised.

Andy's eyes grew so wide they nearly swallowed his face. "That would be cool."

Before Wade could even think of a suave way to ask Trey out, the man was leading his small troop away. Just as they reached the door to the locker rooms, Trey turned and flashed the sweetest smile.

"Maybe I'll see you at the next practice, too?"

Heart thudding in his chest, Wade nodded dumbly. "Yeah, sure."

The corners of Trey's lips twitched as if holding in a laugh before he ducked through the door.

Wade stood there for a long time, feeling a bit awkward and idiotic. It'd been a long time since anyone had garnered that kind of reaction from him. The fact that it was some twenty-three-year old kid with a somewhat shy, yet snarky attitude stunned him. When he'd first arrived, he'd been excited at the prospect of meeting one of his favorite hockey players, instead, he found himself lusting after the guy. Not exactly how Wade had planned his day.

When Andy came out in his street clothes twenty minutes later, Wade forced himself not to glance around or linger in the hopes of running into Trey again. He just took Andy's bag and led his nephew to the car.

On the way home, Andy talked non-stop about his new hero.

Wade tried to keep up with the excited stream of chatter, but in the end, just gave up and nodded from time to time. That seemed to placate the kid because he never stopped talking until they reached Mary's house.

Once they arrived, Andy jumped from the car and raced inside, no doubt eager to share all his news. Wade gathered up his nephew's equipment before following at a more sedate pace. When he saw Amy sitting at the kitchen table, he blinked in surprise.

"What are you doing here?" he asked, setting the bag and pads down.

She blinked innocently at him. "What? Can't I visit my sister and nephew?"

"In the middle of a work week? I didn't think you took a break long enough to eat until the weekends," he quipped in response.

She rolled her coffee mug between her palms and gave him a look so speculative, Wade felt like a mouse being stalked by a cat in a pantsuit.

"So how was Andy's new coach?"

"Very patient," Wade replied warily. Whenever Amy got that look in her eyes, it meant she was up to something.

"Did you talk to him at all?"

All of a sudden, her devious, diabolical, maniacal, evil plan became so obvious he wondered why he hadn't seen it all along. "You're trying to set us up? Aren't you?"

"Now why would I do that? You specifically told me to butt out of your personal life so many times that I would be foolish to be sneaky like that." She did that whole I-am-so-not-guilty blinking thing.

He had to resist the childish urge to roll his eyes. "Please, you're the queen of sneaky."

"He's single," she sang out, still all innocent.

"I didn't ask you if he was or not," he replied in the same tone.

"He hangs out at *Peacocks*."

Wade paused, surprised. "You mean that bar in the middle of bumfuck nowhere?"

"That would be the one. He usually goes on nights when they don't have a game the next day."

That meant the chances were good that Trey would be there that very evening. Since Wade knew the Hawks's schedule by heart, he was aware they had a small break in games.

He hesitated. Did he really want to drive all the way to *Peacocks* on the off chance Trey may happen to show up? Was it even worth it? One

Between the Pipes

thought about how sweet the man's smile was answered that question for Wade. Hell, yeah.

Chapter Three

Ot'd been a while since Wade had been to Peacocks so he almost forgot how much of a dump the place looked from the outside. Luckily for him, the bar happened to be a classic case of not being able to judge a book by its cover.

As soon as he opened the cracked, warped wood door of the equally worn-down building, he found the interior had the perfect bar-slash-club feel to it. A huge dance floor took up the center of the bar, the lights pulsating over the glossy, tiles perfectly. Several dark, leather booths and couches lined one side of the bar, most of them already occupied despite the early hour. A huge bar took up the other side—the black light reflecting the multi-colored spotlights that flashed over the entire area.

He scanned the sea of bodies, searching for Trey. It didn't take him long to find the man. Trey stood nearly dead center in the middle of the dance floor. He wore only a pair of tight black jeans and a look of pure bliss as his thin body swayed sensuously to some old Madonna song. Even from a distance, Wade could make out several droplets of sweat trailing down Trey's muscular, tan chest. More sweat clung to his honey blond hair, making it stick up on end in places. While on anyone else it may have looked foolish, with Trey, it gave him a whole debauched look that caused Wade's cock to begin to swell to life.

At one point, Trey must have worn a shirt because a dark red tee was haphazardly tucked into the back of the waistband of his too-tight-tobe-legal pants. The shirt trailed down a bit, the ends bouncing whenever he rocked his hips.

Trey opened his eyes and by the glazed, unfocused look of them, at first Wade wondered if he were on something. It only took a few moments of watching to dash that thought away. Trey may be high alright, but it only came from the feel of the music while he danced.

Wade remained rooted with bone-crushing arousal as he watched Trey close his eyes again and then slowly trail his hands up his chest to his neck before threading them in the sweaty, blond strands of his hair. A soft smile played on his full lips, almost as if he were in a happy place that he alone could achieve.

On their own accord, Wade's feet began to

move forward. The entire way over, his gaze remained fixed on Trey and the ball-tingling show he was putting on. With each thrust of the man's hips or sway of his chest, Wade grew harder—so much so that the press of the zipper from his jeans nearly became painful and his pants were nowhere near as tight as Trey's.

Once he reached Trey, Wade stood there and waited for the man to notice him. It only took Trey a few beats. His lids fluttered opened to reveal those soft, beguiling blue eyes as the smile on his face grew a fraction wider. Wade's heart pounded as his gut clenched in anticipation and he wondered what Trey's reaction would be. Would he be happy to see him? Or would he just consider Wade another one of many admirers? He didn't need to glance around the bar to know that he wasn't the only guy watching Trey.

"Dance with me," Trey ordered in a raspy voice.

Like Wade would even think of refusing that command. He brought his hands up to Trey's hips and began to move with him. Trey licked his lips before he brought his arms up to rest on Wade's shoulders.

What they did together could only be called dancing in the loosest of terms. With the way Trey's body slid against Wade, it was more a simulation of sex. It even gained a few moans of

pleasure from him when Trey ground against his cock. Even above the swell of music, the triumphant grin on Trey's face said he heard the noises.

"How did you know I was going to be here tonight?" Trey asked before he tilted his head back, exposing an expanse of throat that was just too tempting to resist.

Wade leaned forward to lick away a bead of sweat clinging to the exposed flesh before answering, "What makes you think I came here looking for you? It could just be a coincidence."

Trey's lips twisted in a disbelieving expression. "Because I've been here a ton of times and I've never once ran into you. Trust me, I'd remember someone as hot as you."

A smile came across Wade's lips at the unexpected compliment. "Amy may have told me you like to hang out here."

Then Trey did the most unexpected thing of all, he cupped the back of Wade's head and brought him down for a kiss. The instant their lips touched, the last bit of Wade's restraint shredded as he become consumed with toe-curling desire. The hard curve of Trey's lips combined with the velvet glide of his tongue proved to be the perfect combination. As Wade thrust his own tongue out, he detected just a hint of booze.

"Fuck me," Trey pleaded once they broke apart.

Wade studied the man's face closely, looking for any sign of drunkenness. "How much have you had to drink?"

"Just a couple, I swear." An impish grin came into Trey's eyes. "Perhaps I should have a nice, friendly, police officer drive me home though. I do want to be safe after all."

After looking at Trey for a few minutes, Wade had to concede the guy seemed in control of all his facilities. "I guess I should help you out with that then?"

Trey laughed before he stood on tiptoe so he could murmur in Wade's ear, "Now, are you going to fuck me or not?"

Wade glanced around. "What? Here?"

"No, preferably in your bed. Or if you don't want to take me there, at least the backseat of your car."

While the thought of a backseat quickie did hold a kinky appeal, Wade wanted to take his time to really enjoy and explore Trey. Moving his hands from Trey's hips, Wade grabbed his hand and tugged. "My place. Now."

Trey gave a low growl. "Oh, I love it when a man gets assertive with me."

Wade led him to the door, only pausing long enough for them to claim their coats and so Trey could slip his shirt back on. While Wade would miss looking at his goalie's naked chest, he didn't want the guy to get sick from being exposed to the harsh Michigan weather.

Once they got into the car, Trey didn't waste any time. He stretched out and practically crawled into Wade's lap. Before Wade could even utter a word, Trey had his tongue down his throat.

Not that Wade minded...much. Trey tasted so good, and even with the awkward position of their bodies, it still felt good to be pressed against the younger man. However, the last thing either of them need professionally was to be caught scrumping in a parking lot.

"We were going to do this in a bed, remember?" Wade said gently as he put a hand in the center of Trey's chest.

Trey let out a frustrated sound. His cheeks were flushed with passion and his lips slightly swollen from the little bit of kissing they'd already done. Wade could only imagine how the man would look post-sex. He suddenly cursed the fact that *Peacocks* was so far from Battle Creek. He had a feeling the drive home would be the longest half hour in his life.

"Buckle up," he ordered.

Trey let out another groan before he fumbled with the seatbelt. Once he had it on, Wade put his own on and started the car. He'd only been on the road for a couple of minutes before Trey was on him again. Somehow he defied all laws of seatbelt-

stretch-ocity and he was nearly in Wade's lap again. With a low hum of pleasure, Trey began to rain kisses down the side of Wade's neck.

"Easy there, I have to be able to drive," Wade warned as he reached out and ran a hand through Trey's hair.

"I just want to play a bit," Trey mumbled against his skin.

"Yeah, well we're never going to get to the good stuff if I run into a ditch."

Trey tilted his head up and gave Wade a look that was so hot, so decadent and so naughty that he almost lost all his resolve and pulled over so they could play things out in the backseat.

"So what do you suggest we do to pass the time then?" Trey asked, his voice heavy with flirtatious intent.

"How about you tell me a little bit about yourself?" Wade suggested.

Trey blinked a few times as he pulled back, acting a bit shocked by the question. "You pretty much already know everything there is to know about me."

"No, I know the Trey that all the other public gets to see. Tell me something that I couldn't find out from the papers."

"Why would you care about stuff like that?" Trey narrowed his eyes suspiciously as he sat back. "Did Amy say something about me?"

"No, just that you're really sweet," Wade answered, perplexed by Trey's sudden change of demeanor. If he didn't know better, he would say the guy was acting as if he were hiding something.

"Funny, Amy usually tells me I'm a smart-mouthed, pain in the ass."

"She may have mentioned that, too," Wade conceded before pushing on. "What's it like playing professional hockey?"

"Do you mean the NHL or this rinky-dink farm team I'm on now?" Trey cocked his head to the side, the expression on his face revealing nothing.

"I guess there's probably a big difference," Wade agreed, wondering if he'd inadvertently pissed Trey off.

Trey finally gave him an expression and it was a you-don't-get-out-much-do-you one. "Besides the perks like a reliable equipment manager, coach, backup goalie and decent team bus, not much is different at all."

"Has anyone told you sarcasm is really cute on you?"

"Not lately."

"Well, it is.

"Great, I'll make sure to add it to my list of assets if I ever apply for a mortgage." Trey paused. "Why do you want to know so much about me anyway? When they take me home, most guys prefer my mouth to do other things

besides talking."

In all truth, Wade could think of several things he'd love for Trey to be doing with those full lips of his. But this just wasn't another casual hook up—at least not on his end. If he had his way, this would be only the first of many nights they spent together.

Not that he had any aspirations of love or anything. They'd just met and Wade had never believed in the love-at-first-sight myth. He did know that he was intrigued by Trey and wanted to get to know the other man better.

Much to Wade's frustration, the rest of the drive went about the same. Every time he posed a personal question, Trey would dodge away from it, using either a smartass answer or flirting to his advantage. By the time they'd pulled up to Wade's small, ranch home, he felt ready to call the whole thing off.

Trey undid his seatbelt and turned to Wade. "I thought we'd never get here. If I don't get to feel your cock inside me soon, I'm going to burst."

Fuck, Wade would have to have been made of stone not to respond. He unclipped his own belt and met Trey halfway, their lips coming together with a hot passion that made him unable to think of anything save for giving into Trey's wishes.

This time it was Trey who broke off the kiss. His eyes bright with passion, he jerked his head to the door. "I seem to recall you saying something about showing me the bedroom?"

They got out, Wade leading the way. Once inside, they paused only long enough to kick off their shoes before Wade grabbed Trey by the hand and led him down the short, carpeted hallway to the master bedroom. When Wade noticed all the dirty clothes lying all over the place, a heat came over his face.

"Sorry about the mess. I didn't think I'd be having company tonight," he explained.

Trey let go of his hand and began stripping, acting so casual about the whole thing that Wade wondered how many times he'd done the routine before.

"This isn't that bad. You should see my place. The other day I got home and found a bum sleeping in my bed."

Wade paused from his enjoyment of the show to blink in surprise. "Are you serious?"

"Maybe," Trey shrugged impishly, leaving Wade wondering.

Then Trey slid off his underwear and all thoughts of bed-invading homeless men fled Wade's mind as he got his first glimpse of Trey's naked, muscular body. Tan, lean and without one ounce of fat, it had to be the best thing Wade had ever seen. He licked his lips, his mouth watering as he contemplated where to start.

"This is the part where you get naked, too," Trey pointed out. Not waiting, Trey took the initiative, his fingers going to the hem of Wade's shirt. "Here, let me help you out with that."

If Wade had thought Trey was fast before, he was a quick change artist when it came to taking *other* people's clothes off. The best part of it was what Trey would do in between removing different items of clothing. A brief kiss here, a lick of the nipple there, a smooth slide of skin-against-skin. By the time he was fully nude, Wade's cock was so hard it hurt and his breaths were coming in short pants.

"Get on the bed," Trey ordered and he gave Wade's chest a gentle push.

Once Wade was on his back, Trey climbed on top, facing away from him. Wade missed the direct eye contact until he felt long, slender fingers wrap around his cock.

Trey paused long enough to glance over his shoulder, "Wow, I hope you have plenty of lube because you're frigging huge."

"Uh...thanks," Wade stammered, wondering, not for the first time that evening, what'd happened to the somewhat shy guy he'd met earlier at the rink.

Then Trey began to suck him off and Wade couldn't find it in him to care anymore. In fact, all that mattered at the moment was the wonderful

sensation of Trey's hot mouth and sweet lips. The rest of the Hawks team could have skated through and Wade wouldn't have given a damn, so long as Trey kept up what he was doing.

Trey's ass was tilted up so invitingly and only inches from Wade's face. The temptation was so great that not even a saint would have been able to resist so Wade didn't even try. He lifted his head and licked a slow, lazy path up one cheek. The muscle trembled under his tongue as Trey gave a muffled groan.

Encouraged, Wade did it again, this time giving the warm flesh a little slap. Trey wiggled his butt in reaction before he sucked Wade in so hard he briefly saw stars.

"You like that?" Trey whispered.

"Fuck, yeah," Wade replied thickly.

Trey tossed a triumphant look over his shoulder before he got back to work. Deciding that two could play the slutty-tease game, Wade parted Trey cheeks and began to rim his tight opening. Trey let out a gasp that came out somewhat garbled because of his full mouth as he thrust back.

Wade continued to lick and tease Trey's hole, his tongue thrusting in and out of the tight opening. Meanwhile, Trey continued to suck him off, although to be fair, the younger man did pause from time-to-time to gasp and let out pleas

for more.

"I can't wait to fuck you," Wade declared before he thrust one finger into the spit-slicked opening.

"Hurry, I don't know how much longer I can last," Trey moaned as he rocked back against Wade's hand.

Wade added another finger, scissoring them so they stretched Trey. Just as he was about to add a third, Trey sat up on his knees and then, in one fluid, sinuous move, turned around so they were facing each other. His eyes were dark with passion, sweat once more dotted his face and his lips were swollen from sucking Wade's cock.

"Where's your lube and condoms?" Trey demanded, his voice heavy with passion.

"In the top drawer," Wade nodded to the nightstand. Never had he been more glad that he always made sure to have supplies on hand.

As Trey stretched over to grab them, Wade appreciated the way the man's muscles shifted under his washboard abs. He ran a hand over them. "This has to the best six-pack ever."

Trey found the supplies and sat back up. "It's all the goaltending drills they make me do."

"I'll have to send a letter of appreciation to all your coaches."

A wicked grin came over Trey's mouth. "Make sure to thank them for my amazing flexibility, too."

Wade nearly swallowed his tongue when Trey ripped open the condom, then stretched behind to slip it on Wade's erection. The move made it so Trey's body arched just slightly, but the sight was so erotic that Wade knew it would forever be burned into his brain.

Then Trey did it again, this time so he could slick a good amount of lube on Wade's dick. After giving Wade one more naughty grin, Trey lifted his hips. Grabbing Wade's cock with one hand, Trey lined it up to the opening of his ass. As Trey slowly impaled himself, they both groaned in unison.

Trey's eyes fluttered closed as a look of utter bliss and peace slid over his face, softening his features and making him look younger. "I knew you would feel perfect."

Wade silently echoed the sentiment as the muscles of Trey's hole gripped him like a tight fist. Trey began to move slowly, his hands running down his chest. It occurred to Wade that he'd been letting the brat control things for far too long.

"Enough teasing," Wade growled as he grabbed Trey's hips.

He began to thrust up fast and deep, finally giving Trey the good, hard drilling he'd been begging for ever since he started dancing back at *Peacocks*. Trey's eyes shot open in shock, then a

satisfied sigh slipped from his body. If Wade didn't know better, he would have sworn it was from relief. As if Trey had just been waiting for him to take over.

When Trey reached for his cock, Wade batted his hand away. "No, you don't come until I want you to."

"Oh, God," Trey whimpered, but he didn't look put off by the order, if anything, his face grew more flushed with passion.

Wade pounded into him, holding Trey's hips so hard there were sure to be bruised fingerprints left behind. Some primal part of Wade took pleasure in knowing that at least for the next few days every time Trey looked down at his flesh he would see that reminder of their night together.

Sweat built up over their bodies as the sounds of flesh hitting flesh and groaning filled the dark room. Soon the sweet noise of Trey's soft whimpers mixed in and Wade knew he had to have pity on the man. Reaching out, he began to pump Trey's cock in time with the thrusts.

"Now. Come for me," he ordered, somehow knowing that Trey would obey.

Sure enough, no sooner had the words left Wade's mouth than Trey threw back his head and shot off, thin ropes of semen splattering Wade's chest. Only after the last tremor passed over Trey's body did Wade allow himself to find his own release. Giving one last upward thrust, he groaned out Trey's name as he filled the condom.

As the last wave of pleasure rode over him, Wade hummed with satisfaction as he ran his palms down Trey's ass. Trey gave a satisfied sigh before he collapsed on Wade's chest, the sweat making them instantly stick together.

"Don't you want to get up and wash off the cum?" Wade teased.

Trey made a soft huffing noise. "Let it dry and get all gross, I'm too tired to care."

"You say that now, but in the morning, I'm sure you'll feel differently."

Wade rolled Trey off him, then went to the bathroom. He got rid of the condom and washed his chest off. Grabbing a clean washcloth, he wet it down and took it back into the bedroom.

Once he reached the bed, he found Trey already asleep. He lay on his stomach, one hand tucked under his cheek. With his face relaxed in slumber, he looked so innocent that Wade almost forgot that the guy had just used him as his own personal amusement park.

Smiling to himself, Wade abandoned the washcloth and got back into bed. He climbed under the covers and pulled Trey to him. Trey didn't wake up, instead he just snuggled into Wade's chest. As Wade held him close, he couldn't help but think of how nice it felt.

Chapter Four

Trey bit his bottom lip in indecision as he glanced down at Wade, who still slept in the very much-used bed.

Great, just when Trey thought he'd had control of his impulses, he had to go and have those two drinks at *Peacocks* last night. They hadn't been enough to make him drunk, but it'd had made him horny as hell. Horny enough that when he'd seen Wade standing inches from him, Trey hadn't been able to resist.

Damn it, when would he ever learn? Trey groaned. God, what was it with him and alcohol? Give him even one drink and he became an instant slut. So much so that he'd taken the first decent guy he'd met in months and rode him like a cheap, trick pony.

Trey's cheeks flamed as he thought about some of the things he'd done and said the previous night. How was he going to face Wade ever again? Or Amy for that matter? It's not like he could tell his friend, Sorry, I basically mauled your brother to death. You know how booze makes me a horn dog though.

Part of Trey just wanted to slunk out of the house before Wade woke up. In fact, his empty gut clenched at the thought of having to talk to the handsome man. But Trey knew he couldn't do that. Wade wasn't just another one of his normal bar hookups. So the least Trey owed him was a goodbye and thanks for the fun. Taking a deep breath, he reached out and shook Wade on the shoulder.

He instantly came awake, his lids fluttering open to reveal his brown eyes. He smiled before glancing at the nightstand clock. "Hey, what are you doing up so early?"

"We have an AM practice today and I need to get the gear from my truck," Trey explained, playing nervously with the hem of his t-shirt. While it'd seemed like the perfect thing to wear out the night before, it now became painfully obvious how cheap and easy it made him look.

Who are you kidding? You are cheap and easy. Why do you think you've never had a serious relationship in your life? When guys want a real boyfriend, they look for someone like Devon or Saul. They sure as hell don't want you.

"Right, and your car is back at *Peacocks*," Wade said as he sat up, the blankets pooling in his lap. "Just give me a second and I'll give you a ride."

"Oh, there's no need. My brother is already on his way," Trey interjected. The last thing he needed was for Wade to feel obligated to do him any favors. "I just wanted to say goodbye before I took off on you."

"Are you sure? It wouldn't be a bother."

Trey ducked his head as he felt that damn blush grow. Why in the hell did it have to feel so good that Wade made that offer? It's not like he was making any real grand gesture or anything. He'd probably do the same for any other trick. The man was a cop after all so it no doubt came natural for him to want to take care of others.

"Thanks, but Devon should be here any minute."

Wade got out of bed, seemingly oblivious to his nudity.

Trey peered up from under his lashes, desire pooling in his body as he recalled how good it'd felt to have all those hard muscles under him.

"Wait right here," Wade ordered before he went into the bathroom.

Trey remained rooted in place as he heard water running and other morning ritual sounds. He began to feel awkward and wanted to retreat to the comfort of the front foray, but he found he couldn't bring himself to disobey Wade's command. So instead he waited, all the while still worrying his bottom lip.

Finally the door opened and Wade came out. He'd thrown on a pair of sweats, but his chest and feet were still bare. He padded over to Trey. Tucking his knuckles under Trey's chin, Wade forced him to look up.

"You keep biting your lip like that and you're going to make it chapped," Wade admonished.

"Sorry," Trey whispered.

"What happened to the flirty brat I brought home last night?"

Trey averted his gaze as shame flooded his body. "Sorry about that. Alcohol tends to loosen me up a little too much."

"You told me you weren't drunk."

"I wasn't," Trey assured, not wanting Wade to think he was a lair as well as a slut. "I only had a couple drinks and they were the girly, fruity kinds that don't have that much booze in them. Unfortunately that's all it takes for me to be...well, you know."

Wade didn't reply at first and Trey kept his gaze directed away, not wanting to see the disgust on the other man's face. Wade still had his fingers under Trey's chin and he used them to give another gentle nudge.

"Trey, look at me," Wade whispered.

Even though Trey wanted to disobey, he found it impossible *not* to do whatever Wade commanded. He forced himself to slide his eyes in

Wade's direction. When he found himself locked in the man's concerned, dark-eyed gaze, a tightness built in Trey's chest.

"Do you regret what happened between us last night? I want you to be truthful with me," Wade said as he fanned his thumb over Trey's jaw.

"I don't regret what we did, I just regret the way I acted," Trey replied honestly.

"Don't be ashamed. You didn't do anything wrong."

"How can you even say that? I basically threw myself at you and then did acrobats on your body."

Wade gave him a smile so tender that it made Trey's toes curl. "And I enjoyed every moment of it. In fact, I can't wait to do it again."

"You don't have to say that just to save my feelings. I know how encounters like last night always end and I don't expect anything from you. I promise to keep coaching Andy and to be Amy's friend, so you don't have to worry about that."

"And what if I expect something from you?" Wade demanded as he continued to run his thumb over Trey's skin.

"Huh?" Trey didn't even try to hide his confusion.

"What if I want to see you again? And I don't mean just for sex. What if I want to get to know you better?"

"Why would you wish to do that?" Trey shook his head. All the guys in his past either wanted a fast hookup or to be with him because he was a hockey star. Since Trey's career was at rock bottom and they'd already fucked, he couldn't see what further use Wade would have for him.

"I'll pick you up at six," Wade said, further perplexing Trey.

"If you want, I can just drive myself here," Trey floundered, deciding that Wade just wanted another round of sex.

"No, I'll pick you up at your place. Wear something nice because I plan to take you someplace special for dinner."

"Why?"

Wade gifted him with a soft smile. "You really don't have any idea how special you are, do you?" Trey shrugged. "I'm just a hockey player."

"You're so much more than that. I'm only amazed that nobody else has noticed before now."

How Trey wanted to believe that. To be safe in the knowledge that he could actually be worthy of someone's attention. Past experience had taught him two things—one, that the only thing he was good at was stopping pucks and the other, that he was nothing more than a pretty face. He knew it would be just a matter of time before Wade figured that out, too.

"If you actually think I'm a catch, then you

really need to get out more," Trey said lightly, hoping to tease himself out of the uncomfortable situation.

Unfortunately, that tactic didn't seem to work with Wade. He leaned in to give Trey a soft kiss. "Whoever made you think so little of yourself should be shot."

Trey's heart jerked in fear as Wade came way too close to the truth for Trey's liking. Luck was finally with him, however, because the sound of a car horn broke through the tense silence. "That's Devon, I have to get going." Trey tried to pull away.

Wade grabbed onto his shoulders. "You're not leaving until you promise to go out with me tonight."

"Now you're being ridiculous. We just fucked, that's all."

"It was more than that and you know it," Wade persisted.

Trey made a big show of rolling his eyes. Since teasing and arguing hadn't gotten the point across, maybe some good old fashioned disdain would do the trick. "Please, next you'll be declaring your love or something. Sorry, but you're not the first guy who's become addicted to my tight ass."

"Don't demean yourself like that," Wade snapped.

"Why not?" Trey replied, his voice raising in

panic and anger. "Don't believe for a minute that I think I'm anything more than a piece of ass to you."

Wade gave him a slight shake. "Look, I'm not saying that it's love. We've just met. But I will say that you mean a lot more to me than just some one-night fuck. You can try to deny it all you want, but I know it meant more to you, too. Look me in the eye and tell me differently."

As Trey found himself locked into Wade's gaze, he realized there was no way he could lie to the man. "What I think doesn't matter," Trey finally conceded.

"I happen to disagree. I think everything about you is very important."

The horn beeped again and Trey realized he only had moments before Devon grew impatient enough to come to the door. Since his brother was probably already pissed at being awakened extra early, Trey didn't want to add in having to watch his brother facing off against a stubborn cop on top of it.

"Fine, I'll go tonight," Trey relented.

"Good, I knew you'd see things my way," Wade replied with a smug smile.

Trey shot him a dirty look. "Just give me a second to write down my phone number and address."

"Don't worry, I can get them from Amy. You

better get out to your brother."

Wade finally released Trey, but not before giving him a hot, carnal kiss that left them both slightly breathless. Trey dashed from the room, pausing once to shoot a look of confusion back at Wade.

As he shut he front door behind him, Trey still couldn't shake the surprise that he'd agreed to go out on an actual date with someone. That had to be first for him. He couldn't remember another time where he'd gone anywhere with another man besides the backseat of a car, a bed or a hotel.

Devon scowled as Trey approached the truck. His brother's boyfriend, Saul, sat in the passenger seat and he didn't look much happier. Trey gave them a halfhearted wave before he slid into the backseat.

"Thanks for coming to get me," Trey mumbled as he buckled up.

Saul squinted at the house. "Isn't this Amy's brother's place?"

Trey slunked down in the seat. Saul would have to pick up on that. "Kind of."

Devon glared into the review mirror. "As in the cop?"

Saul shrugged. "Yeah, she only has one brother."

"You went home with a cop?" Devon demanded, his voice sharp with anger.

As always, whenever one of his brothers became upset with him, Trey's stomach curdled. "We first met at the rink yesterday and when we ran into each other at the bar again—"

Devon cut him off. "You decided to go home with him for a fuck-fest?"

"That's not how it happened." Trey paused, then amended, "Or rather, that's not how I *meant* for it to go down."

"Let me guess, you were drinking last night."

Devon's spot-on assumption made Trey cringe. "Just a couple."

"That's all it takes for you to get frisky. You would have thought you would have remembered that from the last time you got drunk," Devon replied darkly.

Trey ducked his head as more shame flooded him. They all knew that last time had ended with Trey throwing himself at Saul. That'd been before Trey had all but blabbed about what really happened the night his father had died. If it hadn't been for Saul and Kip dragging Trey out of the bar, things could have been a disaster.

"I didn't get drunk this time, just a little buzzed," Trey defended in a small voice.

"Obviously you were out of it enough to think it was a good idea to go home with a fricking cop," Devon shot back.

And you're fucking a reporter. Trey wanted to

reply, but he didn't. Because in the end, he realized it was all his fault they were on this pit of a team and fighting to make a living. It'd been Trey who'd been careless enough to let the truth about his homosexuality get out. He was the one who pissed their dad off so much that he thought he had to teach Trey a lesson. It'd been because of him that Mom had to risk so much to protect her youngest son. And after it was all over, while Trey huddled under the table, all bruised and bloody, it'd been Devon and Chad who cleaned up him and the mess he caused.

In short, he owed his brothers everything.

"Do you ever use that pretty, blond head for thinking?" Devon continued.

"Sometimes," Trey whispered, fiddling with the zipper of his coat.

"Just because we can trust Saul and Amy to keep our secret, doesn't mean we can let our guard down around the rest of the world."

"What's the big deal? Mom's dead now, so it's not like they can arrest her for Dad's murder anymore."

As soon as he saw the fury in Devon's face, Trey realized he should have just kept his yap shut. While Devon got ticked at him often, he rarely got angry like he was at that moment.

"Yeah, but they could still go after Chad and I for covering it up and telling the police it was a

suicide or maybe that doesn't concern you anymore."

"Of course it does. You know I would never want to see you guys get into trouble because of me."

"You sure could have fooled me."

"Devon! Enough!" Saul yelled, surprising Trey when he rose to his defense.

For a moment, Devon looked as if he were going to transfer some of his anger to his boyfriend, then Saul gave a slight shake of his head. "He's had enough."

God, at that moment Trey would have given anything to become invisible. Or better yet, to go someplace where nobody knew who he was. Where they didn't mock him for fucking up a golden career. Or where they didn't mutter slurs under their breaths in one moment and in the next try to be his friend. Something Wade said the night before came back to Trey No, I know the Trey that all the other public gets to see. Tell me something that I couldn't find out from the papers. Trey never wished more that he could be that that non-public self.

For a brief time, he'd felt normal, too. When he'd been with Wade, for the first time ever it was as if it didn't matter that he was a professional hockey player, or just another cute face. Wade had actually acted as if he wanted Trey just for being himself.

It'd felt damn good, too.

Nobody spoke the rest of the drive there—Saul and Devon sitting in tense silence, Trey resting his head against the cool glass of the backseat window. When they finally reached *Peacocks*, Trey wanted to cheer with relief. At least he'd be able to get a few minutes free of Devon's anger. Trey knew the respite would only be temporary, since once practice started, he'd be facing a double dose of it. There would be no way that Devon wouldn't share with his twin all the details of their baby brother's latest fuck up.

Trey muttered a thanks before slipping from the back seat. He slowly walked to his own beatup, nearly-at-death's-door truck.

Devon yelled, "Wait a second."

Devon hopped from his vehicle and trotted over to Trey. A heavy sigh jerked from Trey's chest as he waited for yet another lecture. When Devon reached out and grabbed him in a tight embrace instead, Trey nearly fainted in shock.

"I'm sorry for being such an ass," Devon apologized.

Wow, while Devon usually did the whole mybad thing whenever he lashed out at Trey, it usually took him at least an hour or so to calm down. Trey decided it must be Saul's influence. The reporter had a way of soothing Devon's edges.

"You were right. I should be more careful. I promise not to see Wade again," Trey conceded.

"I just worry so much about you. I think I lose more sleep over you than I do Brock."

"Ouch," Trey said with a wince. To know that his issues took precedence over a drug addict had to be an all-time low.

"Don't take that the wrong way."

"What other way is there to take that you just said I'm more of a loser than our family's version of Lindsey and Charlie rolled into one?"

"It's just sometimes it concerns me that the reason you hook up with all these random guys is that you're looking for love in the wrong places."

What?

Trey broke away so Devon could fully appreciate the look of disbelief that was no doubt stamped on his face. "What the fuck was that?"

Devon gave a slight shake of his head. "I'm sorry if that upset you, but it's true."

"True or not, it doesn't give you the right to start talking like you're a *Lifetime* movie or chick flick come to life. *Love in the wrong places.*" Trey gave a snort of derision. "Seriously, who spouts off that kind of crap?"

"I am trying to be serious," Devon seethed. "I just wish that for once you could be, too."

Trey gave a bitter laugh. "You really don't get it

do you?"

"Get what?"

"All this—" Trey waved toward the bar to indicate what he spoke of— "has nothing to do with seriousness or finding that someone special in my life. I hook-up with all those guys because it feels good to fuck. It's nothing more and it never will be."

All the anger drained from Devon's face along with most of his color. "So this is all you want from life?"

"Why not? If I have nothing then I can't screw it up, now can I?"

"So instead you just want to satisfy yourself with a string of one-night stands?"

"Did you honestly expect differently from me? That I would find the one of my dreams like you and Chad? That I'd move into some neat house and have the ideal life?" Trey ducked his head so Devon wouldn't see the tears lingering in his eyes. "Any hope of that stuff happening for me died the same night Dad did and it's never coming back. No matter how much you and Chad try to clean it up, make it better and protect me from it, that pain is still there and it can't be fixed."

Chapter Five

pater on that day, Trey held back a groan of pain as he walked up the steps to his apartment. Like the rest of the building, the stairwell smelled of urine and centuries of cooked food. Wrinkling his nose at the stench, his toe caught a tear in the threadbare, industrial green carpet. He only saved himself by bracing a hand on the dingy wall. His stomach rolled as his fingers encountered some sticky substance. Gross! He didn't even want to hazard a guess to what it may be.

Crap, this really hadn't been his day. First the awkward encounter with Wade, then his fight with Devon, followed by one of the hardest practices in his life. Not only had his mind not been in it, but both Devon and Chad had pounded him with pucks. Trey realized they were doing it so he'd get his head out of his ass, but the numerous bruises covering his body made it hard for him to feel grateful. His goalie equipment only

covered so much of his body and his brothers were pros at finding the chinks in his armor so to speak.

Plus, practice had run long so he less than an half an hour until Wade was supposed to be there for their date. A date in which Trey wasn't sure he should go on. While it would be great to go out to dinner with someone for once, Trey didn't want to lead Wade on by letting him think there could actually be something between them. Trey hadn't been shooting smoke from his ass earlier when he told Wade he wasn't capable of having a real relationship. Trey realized that he had the emotional capacity of a kitten playing with a ball of yarn. Plus there was that whole Wade-being-acop issue, too. While Saul and Amy had been able to overlook what Chad and Devon did to protect the family, Trey knew Wade would feel duty bound to report them.

Still, it's not like Devon and Chad did anything that bad. A little hopeful voice argued in his head. All they did was clean up some blood and wipe Mom's fingerprints off the gun. It was Mom who did all the actual lying and it's not like they can hold her accountable anymore. The cancer already took care of that.

Then he thought about all his brothers had to lose if Trey were wrong and he realized that he couldn't risk their happiness just so he could have a boyfriend. No, it would be better for all of them if Trey just walked away from the situation. When Wade came to pick him up, Trey would just say he had a headache or something. With the amount of pucks he took to the helmet, it wouldn't exactly be a lie. He didn't relish having to do it at the last minute, but Trey didn't have Wade's number and there was no way he could ask Amy for it.

He rounded the corner to his floor and let out a loud curse when he saw his Goldie-Locks-wannabe bum lying in a heap by the door. Just flipping what he needed, yet another thing to go wrong with his day. The last time the man had decided to crash at his place, it'd taken Trey nearly an hour to get the man to leave.

Trey went up to the pile of man, dirty clothes and grime and used the toe of his shoe to give the man a gentle nudge in the ribs. "Come on, Lenny, you need to get up so I can go inside. And before you even ask, I'm not spooning you tonight or any other night for that matter."

The body groaned, then turned around to reveal his oldest brother, Brock. Or at least Trey thought it was him. While some of the features looked slightly familiar, just as many were off. Normally Brock had the same golden hair as Trey, now it looked as if it hadn't been washed in months. It hung around his sallow face, the blond coloring so dark from grease and dirt that it had a brownish appearance to it. Brock's blue eyes were

nearly unrecognizable because they were so bloodshot and puffy. At one time, Brock stood as tall as Devon and was more muscular than Chad. Now he seemed painfully thin and small, as if he'd sunk into himself. Numerous pits and sores covered his face and most of his teeth were missing.

"Oh, my God," Trey whispered, his hand going to his mouth in shock.

Brock sprang to his feet and wrapped Trey into a tight hug. As Trey forced himself to return it, he repressed a gag at the foul stench wafting up from his brother. If Trey had to put a word to the smell, it would have to be sick. Almost as if an infection or something had settled into Brock's bloodstream and was oozing through his pores.

"How's my favorite little brother?" Brock asked, his voice overly happy.

"When did you get here?" Trey asked, wondering how long Brock had been using his doorstep as a bed.

"A few hours ago. I would have called, but I don't have your number."

With good reason, too. After one too many drunk dials, Trey had switched his number and refused to give the new one to Brock. Unfortunately, Trey hadn't had the money to switch addresses so easily.

"I didn't think you'd remember my address,"

Trey admitted.

"I saved one of the envelopes when you mailed me some cash." Brock reached down and grabbed a battered backpack.

Damn, if Devon or Chad found out about this, it would really hit the fan. While they'd also sent Brock cash from time-to-time, they'd never done it to the extent that Trey had. What's more, they often accused Trey of enabling Brock.

Trey wanted to kick himself for not thinking ahead to use a post office box or something. "So what brings you here today? If you need some money, I have a little inside. I won't have more until next payday though."

"Can't your big brother just stop by to pay you a visit?"

Ah...no, not if their name was Brock. Trey felt his heart drop as he eyed up Brock and then his backpack.

"What do they want you for?" Trey demanded, his throat going dry.

The smile faded from Brock's face. "I don't know what you're talking about."

Anger burned through Trey's chest. Did Brock really think he was that dumb?

"The cops. Why are they looking for you?" Trey asked, his words hard and brittle even to his own ears.

"Now why would you think I'm on the run?"

"What other reason would you come here for? If you needed money, you could have easily sent me an email." More than once Brock managed to wander into a public library long enough use their computer.

Brock's face pulled into a woe-is-me frown and Trey nearly groaned in response. That expression always proceeded a long string of excuse after excuse as Brock explained away his behavior. By the end of his spiel, he'd have pointed out twenty different reasons why his last fuck-up was everyone's fault but his own.

"It's that fucking Robbie Venson. He gets me into trouble every time," Brock started, not disappointing.

"Hmmm..." Trey nodded. "I thought he was doing twenty in Jackson for armed robbery."

"No, that was his brother, Tommy. Don't you ever listen to anything I tell you?" Brock admonished, then nodded to the closed door. "Can we not talk about this out here? I don't want to broadcast all my problems to your neighbors."

"No, you just pass out in a drug-induced coma in front of them" Trey sighed as he pulled out his keys.

Trey worked the flimsy lock on his door and opened it, gesturing Brock inside.

As he stepped inside, Brock let out a low whistle. "Wow, this place sucks."

"Thanks," Trey replied tightly, passing a glance over his shoebox-sized apartment.

"I guess the Hawks don't pay as much as the NHL did." Brock shook his head. "I still can't believe you fucked that gig up so bad. If my knee hadn't given out and I made the big time, you can sure as hell bet I would have held on to it. I wouldn't have let my game drop out from under me like you, Chad and Devon did."

"Yeah, we sure did blow that one." Trey angrily tossed his keys on the counter, the metal making a loud *skwishing* sound. It was either that or give into his urge to throw them at his jerk of a brother.

Of course, Brock wasn't finished. "I mean, come on. Even a stoner like me knew that you could only get into so many fights, cause so many scandals and play that crappy before they gave you the boot."

Brock flicked a finger over Trey's sagging sofa before continuing. "The saddest part is you didn't even have the smarts to hold onto that signing bonus they gave you."

"You didn't seem to mind when I was funneling some of that cash your way," Trey defended. The worst part of it was, he knew most of that money had gone up Brock's nose or into his veins.

"But you spent most of it on Mom's medical bills and that was the biggest waste of all."

A tight band of fury and hurt wound its way around Trey's chest. "Why would you even say that?"

"Because she ended up dying anyway. All those fancy treatments and medicines didn't make the cancer go away. It would have been better if you'd just let her die right away. At least then you would have been able to afford a better place than this."

"I'm doing okay," Trey defended even as the sounds of police sirens rushing by declared just how crappy his neighborhood was.

The smirk on Brock's face said he didn't believe it for one moment. "But not nearly as well as he wanted you to do."

Trey actually took a step back that comment hurt so bad. "I did better than you."

As soon as the words left his pie hole, Trey wanted them back. Moving way too fast for someone half wasted to death, Brock rushed forward. He grabbed Trey by the front of the shirt and slammed him against a wall. All the air wooshed from his lungs as pain shot up his spine.

Had it been another guy on the ice, had it been Devon, had it been Chad, Trey would have fought back. No, he would have cleaned their clocks without so much as a flinch. But it wasn't any of them, it was Brock and, out of everybody in the world, Brock reminded Trey of their Dad the

most. So when Brock invaded his personal space, Trey found himself ripped back to that night five years ago.

He felt the same fear, pain and humiliation course through his body. A cold sweat covered him from head to toe and he began to tremble like the wimp his father so often accused him of being.

"You know all this is your fault," Brock seethed, his face inches from Trey's face. "If you hadn't of gotten careless, your ex-boyfriend would have never blabbed to the papers that you were gay. Then Devon wouldn't have come out either. We both know the only reason he did that was too deflect some of the heat you were facing his way."

"I'm sorry," Trey whispered, his gaze locked on Brock's free hand which had formed into a fist.

"Dad's death and all the crap that came after it lies on you, buddy. Once the NHL found out that you and Devon were gay, they were just looking for a reason to get rid of you. If you'd just managed to keep your dick in your pants, then you all would still be making great money."

Which would mean I could be sending you a lot more cash for your dope habit. Trey didn't dare make that accusation aloud, however, not if he wanted to keep his perfect smile. As a rule, most goaltenders had all their teeth, thanks to the heavy face cages they wore, and Trey wasn't going to buck the trend by losing some choppers to Brock's

fists.

"I'm sorry," Trey repeated, this time a bit louder. For a brief, heart-pounding moment, Trey didn't think he got through, then Brock let out a ragged sob before he pushed away.

"I'm sorry, T, I'm just messed up in the head right now."

T–Brock hadn't used that nickname since Trey had been ten. The fact he reverted to it showed how much his apology was genuine. Trey reached out and put a hesitant hand on his brother's shoulder.

"I know you didn't mean it. You may want to watch it though. If you'd tried the same thing with the one of the twins, they would have fought back," Trey soothed.

Brock gave a bitter chuckle. "You always have to try to play peacemaker. That's one of the reasons Dad beat you the most. Because you had a soft spot that he could never begin to understand."

"You say that like it's a bad thing."

"Normally it's not. But sometimes you let people walk all over you."

"Maybe," Trey conceded as he thought back to his fight with Devon and how easily he'd agreed to never see Wade again.

Trey took a deep breath, then asked, "Are you going to tell me what kind of trouble you're in? It

has to be pretty bad for you to run all the way to Battle Creek to hide out from it."

Brock went over to the couch and flopped down on it. "The cops are trying to pin an armed robbery charge on me."

Shock and a bit of disappointment hit Trey both at once. He forced himself to keep his expression neutral as he pressed, "Did you do it?"

Trey had his answer when that damn poor-me look flashed over Brock's face again. "I was with fucking Robbie and he just up and pulled a gun out."

"Yeah, because I know all my buddies walk with loaded weapons. It's all the fashion this season," Trey deadpanned.

Brock ignored him. "Before I could stop Robbie, he holds the gun to the gas station attendant's head and demands all the money in the register."

"Did you try just telling him to put the fucking gun down or you'd call 911?" Trey cocked a brow.

"So the cops could come and try to blame me for it?" Brock made a big show of rolling his eyes. "Which they ended up doing anyway. I tell you, the Burton cops all have it in for me."

"Maybe it's because you have a nasty habit of stealing their patrol cars and crashing them."

Brock held up one finger. "I did that once...okay, maybe it was twice. But because of that, they changed their policy and procedures as

far as vehicle security goes. Since then, they haven't lost another car. So they should be thanking me if anything."

Trey pinched the bridge of his nose as he let out a sigh. "You're right. They should give you the key to the city. Or at the very least, one of those badge shaped stickers that say *Future Deputy* on them. What are they thinking?"

And speaking of cops, damn if there wasn't a knock on the door. As if fate were having some kind of sadistic, fucked-up *har*, *har*, *har*! at Trey's expense.

"Damn, what time is it?" He looked frantically around for a clock, only to realize the one on the stove had quit working and the only other one he had was in the bedroom. Slipping his cell from his pocket, he cursed again when he noted it was six.

"Well, at least he's punctual," Trey muttered.

"Who?"

"My date." Trey put his phone back in his jeans and ran a hand through his hair.

Brock's face brightened. "Well, let him in so you can introduce us."

"That would be a very, very, very bad idea."

"Why, are you ashamed of me?"

Every day of my life. Since Trey would rather cut out his tongue than gift Brock with that nugget of truth, instead he said, "No, he's a cop."

"As in the fuzz."

"The po-po."

"The man."

"The five-O."

"Gumshoe." Brock smirked. "The Heat, The Good Guys, Bobbies, Donut Patrol."

Trey threw his hands up. "Okay, I don't think I can top that. But I have to figure out a way to get rid of him before he figures out I'm harboring a fugitive."

Brock shrugged. "Just go out with him. Have some fun."

"And what am I supposed to do with you?"

"I'll just take a shower and crash for the rest of the night. I'm starting to come down from this high so I'll be out for a while."

There was another knock. Trey bit his bottom lip in indecision. "But what if you need me or something?"

"I've made it this far without you. I can manage."

"I don't know," Trey hedged, his gaze going from the door to Brock.

Brock pointed at his own chest. "Big brother." He thumped the same finger into Trey's arm. "Little brother."

"And your point is?"

"It's my job to look out after you, not the other way around. As your older and wiser sibling, I'm ordering you to go out and have a great time."

God it was so tempting. While Trey did love Brock, the last thing he wanted was to have to sit around all night and listen to his drama. Plus, it would be so nice to pretend to be normal for once, to actually get to know another guy instead of just fucking his brains out and then walking away before the cum stains had even dried on the sheets.

"You sure you don't mind?"

Brock gave him a shove toward the door. "Go. I'll be here when you get back."

Oh, yay! It would appear Brock was settling in for a while.

"Just do me a favor," Brock requested as Trey gathered up his keys.

"What?" Trey asked warily.

"Just promise you won't tell Chad or Devon I'm here. I don't need to deal with their holier-thanthou attitude."

Trey readily nodded to that because he didn't feel like listening to another lecture about how they needed to give Brock the whole tough-love treatment. He rushed to the door. Since he'd never bothered to take off his shoes or coat when he first got there, he was all ready to go out.

"Hey," he said as he opened the door just enough for him to slide out his body.

As he shut it behind him, he winced at the raised-brow confused expression on Wade's face.

It was only then Trey remembered he was supposed to *wear something nice*. Looking down, he felt a twinge of dismay as he saw his usual jeans and t-shirt ensemble.

"Sorry, I guess I should have dressed up more," he apologized. Wade gave him a smile so soft and tender it did strange things to Trey's insides.

"You look perfect."

Reaching down, he grabbed Trey's hand and gave it a gentle tug. "Let's go. I have a feeling you're going to love this."

Chapter Six

"Trey asked as he peered out the passenger window of Wade's car.

Wade smiled. That had to have been the tenth time Trey asked that question during the short drive, yet it still had that same adorable, curious lilt to it. Almost as if it were a totally new experience to have somebody treat him to a surprise.

"Do you always get this worked up over getting the special treatment? As a kid, you must have been a handful on your birthday," Wade teased.

Trey shrugged. "Not really, we never got into birthdays in my family."

"Why not?"

"I don't know. With mine, I guess it was probably because it always was at the same time as playoffs so we were too busy."

"Even when you were a kid?" Wade asked. He

couldn't even imagine parents not celebrating their children's birthday. When he was young, his mother used to go all out, even going so far as to have special themes and cakes.

"Yeah, I played hockey since I could walk," Trey replied simply.

"Did you ever participate in any other school activities or anything?"

Trey shot him an are-you-kidding look. "No, that wasn't allowed. Dad didn't want anything to distract from hockey. We played even during the summer."

"Wow, did you ever get tired of it?" Wade thought about all the times as a kid he'd changed his mind as to what sport, instrument or activity he wanted to do. One summer alone, he went from tennis to golf before finally settling on baseball.

"Getting sick of hockey wasn't an option either."

The bitterness in that statement wasn't lost on Wade. "What would have happened if you'd tried to quit?"

"Brock did once. It didn't end to well for him."

Even though Wade already had a heart-sinking suspicion what'd gone down, he still asked, "What happened?"

"Dad made him see the error of his ways." For a second that seemed to be all Trey was going to say, but he let out a breath and continued, "You see, there are some things you need to know about my dad before you judge him. There was a time where he was going to make the pros himself before that fell through. He never really got over it either. Once he started having sons, he decided that if he couldn't go pro, then his boys would."

In other words, like so many other selfish parents, the bastard had decided to live through his children. "So, he pushed you all harder than he should have."

"Some thought so. But you'd be amazed how many other parents looked the other way. My dad owned the rink we skated out of and they didn't dare speak against him for fear their own kids would be blackballed from a travel team or something."

"Whatever happened to Brock?"

Something that may have been fear passed over Trey's face before he ducked his head down. "I'm sure you read about him along with all the other gritty details of our lives in the papers. The press loves to rip us apart."

"All I've read is that he turned to drugs. They never said why," Wade pointed out. He hoped he wasn't pressing for too much, but strangely enough, all the talking seemed to be loosening some of the tension in Trey—almost as if he took some comfort in knowing that Wade didn't judge

him for his past.

"When Brock was eighteen, all of Dad's hard work finally paid off. Brock hadn't even graduated from high school, yet he'd already been drafted for an NHL team. Not just for the reserves either, like most other young players. There was already talk about him being one of the most promising rookies in years. Then during his last game for the Junior team he was playing for, Brock took a bad check and blew out his knee. Just like that, everything was gone."

Even though he'd never met the guy, Wade felt his stomach clench in sympathy for Brock. "How did you father take that?"

"As soon as Brock could walk again, Dad kicked him out the house," Trey replied, his voice trembling a bit.

"What?" Wade shook his head in stunned disbelief.

"He said he didn't want an extra mouth hanging around when he needed to focus on his three future prospects."

Damn, no wonder Brock turned out the way he had. He must have felt like a lame prize horse sent to a glue factory.

As if he could tell what Wade thought, Trey said, "Brock isn't as bad as they make him out to be. I mean, sure he's an addict and stuff, but that's his way of coping with everything. Devon, Chad

and I do it by going on the ice and getting into fights. So if you think about it, we're not any better than he is."

Wade wanted to point out that hockey fights weren't a felony, unlike drug possession. He held his tongue though, since he had a suspicion that Trey had a bit of a blind spot as far as Brock was concerned. Besides, they'd reached their destination.

"What is this?" Trey demanded, his eyes growing wide as he took in the large amount of people milling about, the numerous booths and tents set up in the center of a blocked of street.

"It's the annual winter festival. They have food, ice sculptures and live entertainment," Wade said, realizing he probably sounded like a travel brochure.

"Cool!" Trey exclaimed, the shadow of sadness fleeing his face.

They found a place to park and got out, walking close enough to occasionally bump shoulders, but never going so far as to actually hold hands. Trey seemed to want to see everything at once, his excitement proving to be infectious. He even insisted on stopping to get hot chocolate that they sipped as they watched one of the artists working on a large chunk of ice that was just one of numerous sculptures surrounding them.

Each one was beautiful in its own way. There was the obligatory swan, a cherub, a trout in midjump and even a fairy, her icy arms stretched up to the now dark sky. There were several white lights strung on the tent awnings, the illumination reflecting perfectly off the iced art.

"I can't believe they actually use chain saws on these," Trey spoke loudly because of the growling from the machine the female artist used to whittle down the nearly five-five block of ice.

They continued to watch, even after the artist put down the saw and started to use finer tools for the more intricate carving. A comfortable silence settled over them as Trey reached out and threaded their fingers together.

Wade held his breath, afraid that if he moved, the spell would be broken. After the panic attack that morning, he never dreamed Trey would be showing an open display of affection so readily.

"Thanks for bringing me here," Trey said, never taking his gaze off the sculpture.

"Thanks for coming, I kept expecting you to phone today and call off the date," Wade admitted as he gave Trey's hand a squeeze.

"I was going to, but I didn't have your number," Trey admitted, finally tearing his gaze away from the ice to stare up at Wade.

"I'm glad I forgot to give it to you then."

Trey nervously licked his lips before

swallowing hard a few times. "I'm glad you forgot to do that, too."

Wade slowly lowered his head. When Trey didn't pull back and just continued to stare back, a soft, almost sensual expression passing over his face, Wade closed the last bit of distance and pressed their lips together.

With a sigh, Trey parted his mouth, allowing Wade to slip his tongue inside. Trey tasted of chocolate, spice and a bit of flavor that was unique just to him. In other words—perfection. So much so that Wade couldn't resist going in for a second and then a third sampling.

When they finally pulled away, Trey swayed a bit. He reached out with one hand and held onto Wade's shoulder for support. Wade allowed himself to feel a bit smug about the mixture of surprise and arousal playing in Trey's eyes.

"Are you hungry?" Wade asked.

Trey blinked a few times, as if confused by the change of subject, before he gave nodded absently. "Yeah, I haven't had anything to eat besides a quick lunch at the rink."

"Next time you wake up in my bed, maybe you'll stay around long enough for breakfast. I make a mean omelet," Wade teased.

"That's good because I'm so bad in the kitchen, I could probably manage to burn a bowl of cold cereal." Trey grinned, showing off his dimples.

Wade's chest constricted painfully as he realized that in the span of just over twenty-four hours, Trey had already managed to get under his skin—to the extent that Wade could see himself losing his mind and heart to the younger man.

A younger man who still insisted on holding back. Wade felt for certain there were at least two things Trey wasn't telling him. One, the true reason as to why the bottom fell out from Trey's career and life. The other was more infuriating because it had a dash of jealously with it.

Wade knew without a shadow of doubt that when he'd gone to pick up Trey, the man had been hiding something else. And that something was the fact that there'd been someone else in the apartment.

* * * *

Even though he knew he should feel guilty for breaking his promise to Wade, Trey couldn't help but enjoy himself. Just having the freedom to walk around with another man and not care who was watching felt so cleansing that Trey couldn't get the smile off his face. Add in the fact that Wade was sexy, charming and considerate and that made things so much better.

They grabbed some hotdogs from a booth and sat under a large tent that was serving as an eating area. Several, large heaters had been set up so they managed to stay warm as they enjoyed their food.

"These are so good," Trey moaned as he started on his second helping.

Wade cocked a brow in that indulgent way of his. "They're just hot dogs."

"I know, but they have to be the best thing I've eaten all week."

"Then I really need to take you out more often. You must not have been kidding when you said you couldn't cook."

"Since I live alone, I usually just slap together a sandwich or something."

"So how do you like playing for the Hawks?" Wade asked.

Trey shrugged as he licked a dollop of ketchup of his index finger. "Now that the team is actually winning some games, it's kind of nice."

"As one of your numerous fans, I can tell you we're excited that you guys were traded to our home team."

"Oh, no. You're one of them, aren't you?" Trey paused, suspicion slicing through him.

"One of them?" Wade echoed.

"A diehard fan. I'll bet you're just like Amy and have had season tickets for years."

Wade laughed and held his hands up in surrender. "Guilty. I even own a couple of Hawks jerseys and sweatshirts." "So you still supported them even though until a couple of months ago they went a decade without a single win." Trey made a big show of sadly shaking his head. "Do you realize how pathetic that is?" He made sure to smile, so Wade would realize he was just teasing.

"Yeah, but all that changed when they got you on the roster."

"You mean Chad and Devon. They're the ones who've been scoring all the goals. Well, them and Kip," Trey mollified.

"I seem to recall somebody having a four game shut-out streak." Wade leaned over and playfully tapped Trey on the nose.

"Ah, that was just because my defense kept them off my back. It was no big deal." Trey blushed. Since compliments had been so few while growing up, he still had trouble taking them when they were tossed his way.

"Don't undersell yourself. When you play in net, the way you move is so beautiful it's almost artistic," Wade said with complete seriousness.

Trey still chuckled. "You keep talking that way and they'll peg you to do the sappy athlete bios for the next Olympics."

As soon as Trey said those words, he wanted them back. Here Wade said something really sweet about him and Trey to make a joke about it. He sucked in a breath, worried that he'd blown his first actual date. When the sounds of Wade's chuckles reached his ears, Trey jerked his head up in shock.

"I guess you do have a point there," Wade conceded. "But I can't help it. I've been watching hockey for as long as I can remember and I've never seen someone move on the ice the way you do."

"Funny, most people say goalies waddle," Trey scoffed softly, although Wade's kind words were beginning to chink away at the wall around his heart.

"I mean it. It's as if you feel totally free when you're out there. Almost like the way you were dancing last night."

"I was a little tipsy and made a fool out of myself," Trey felt a flush come to his cheeks once again as he recalled his behavior the previous evening.

"You were a fucking wet dream come true. I still get hard when I think of the way you just threw yourself into the music and let it take over."

"If you're just saying that to get into my pants again, you can save it. In case you didn't get the memo, I'm a pretty sure thing," Trey returned, his own cock beginning to harden at the raspy, aroused edge Wade's voice had taken.

"I'm telling you all this because it's true. Besides, I've already decided that we're not sleeping together tonight."

Trey's heart dropped as profound disappointment collided into him. "Why not?"

Shit! He'd blown it. Somehow during the past couple hours, he must have said or done something to turn Wade off. While Trey realized he should be relieved because he had no business dating a cop that still didn't stop the hurt from clawing at his insides.

"When we sleep together again, I want you to know I'm doing it because I want to be with just Trey. Not Trey, the hockey player or Trey, the cute, tipsy flirt. Until you realize that I can actually like you because of simply who you are and not what you think the world wants you to be we're going to take things slow."

Trey tensed as he waited for the feeling of rejection to hit him. Then he gazed into Wade's eyes and saw the deep caring and longing there and a warm feeling spread through Trey's gut.

Fuck Devon and his advice because there is no way I can give this guy up.

"I think I would really like that."

Trey reached across the table and grabbed Wade's hand. Yeah, there was no doubt about it. Trey could actually grow to care for this man. He couldn't help but wonder if Wade would still be interested if he knew everything about Trey's past.

True to his word, Wade drove Trey home and only went so far as walking him to the door. After a passionate, yet brief kiss, they said goodnight. This time Trey made sure he had the other man's number before they separated—not so he could call up with the intention of breaking any future dates either. Trey had a sneaking suspicion that now that he knew what a wonderful man Wade was, he wouldn't be able to spend enough time with his cop.

As soon as Trey walked inside his apartment and spied Brock's backpack on the counter, reality cruelly slammed back into Trey. He ran a hand through his hair and worried if he were making a huge mistake as far as his oldest brother was concerned.

What Brock was running from was a whole lot bigger than addiction. He was wanted for a serious crime and Trey knew he himself was guilty of going against the law by even taking Brock in. Worse yet, if Chad and Devon were to find out, they'd never let Trey live it down. They already coddled and mothered over him far too much, if they thought he wasn't capable of making smart decisions, things would become unbearable. Already as it was, Devon had been pressing Trey to move in with him and Saul—a situation that made Trey want to grind his molars in frustration. While he really did love Devon and Saul, that

didn't mean he wanted to share a house with them.

The apartment had a still, quiet feel to it that came when the occupants were asleep. He edged his way into the bedroom and found Brock sound asleep in the only bed. His brother was sprawled out over the full mattress, his mouth hanging open. A thin line of spit dribbled from one corner of his lips, the thread vibrating with each snore he let out.

At least Brock had changed into something less stinky. While Trey's gray sweats and Hawks tshirt made for a tight fit on his taller brother, at least they didn't reek like a bathroom from an inner city flophouse.

Trey spotted the offending pile of clothing in one corner of his bedroom. Going over to them, Trey scooped them up and dashed outside long enough to toss them into the dumpster. If Brock woke up and had a problem with his missing duds, then Trey would just go out and buy him some new ones. Better to be out a few bucks than to have the offensive odor in his apartment.

Once he got back inside, Trey went to the bedroom and grabbed an extra pillow and blanket out of the closet. As he walked by the bed again, he paused to pull the covers over Brock's too thin body. Just as Trey was pulling back his hand, Brock's lids fluttered open.

"I didn't think I'd see you again tonight. I figured you'd be fucking that hot looking guy," Brock mumbled sleepily.

"How did you manage to sneak a peek at my date?" Trey asked.

"I glanced out the window after you left. You know he carries himself like a cop."

Wow, Trey had never thought of that, but then again before then, he didn't know cops *carried themselves* a certain way. Of course that could be because the closest Trey had ever got to a bust had been his Saturday night fix of *Cops*.

"That's because he is a cop," Trey said as he stared closely at Brock in confusion and a bit of concern.

"What the fuck! Why didn't you tell me?" Brock demanded as he sat up.

Trey frowned, perplexed even further by his brother's odd behavior. "I did tell you. Don't you remember?"

"No, you didn't. I wouldn't forget something that important," Brock argued, his eyes going crazy wide.

You want to rethink that one, buddy, because I know for a fact I already informed you of Wade's job. Damn, the drugs must have really done some lasting damage to Brock's brain.

"Don't worry, he doesn't know you're here," Trey soothed.

That seemed to take some of the fire from Brock's eyes. "Do Chad and Devon know?"

"No, I promised you I would keep things quiet about you being here and I plan to keep it."

Although Trey was beginning to have serious regrets for making such a rash promise. Brock let out a relieved sounding sigh as he reached out and pulled Trey into an awkward hug.

"You'll see, T, I'm going to make you proud this time," Brock vowed.

"I'm sure you will," Trey replied automatically.

Brock pulled back and pinned him with an intense stare. "I really mean it. I'm going to get completely clean. This time I know it's going to work because I'm not doing it just for me. I want to prove to you that I'm worth the risk you're taking."

Oh, how Trey wanted to believe that. He really, really did, but after seeing Brock slide back into his old habits so many times, Trey couldn't let go of his healthy dose of doubt. He couldn't let it show though. Pasting on a huge fake smile, Trey said, "Of course you will. I have complete faith in you."

Chapter Seven

Wade waited in the hallway leading to the half dozen locker rooms for the south side of the arena. Since it was around six, the place was busy as kids and their parents arrived for practice. Wade himself had just left one of the locker rooms after helping Andy with his goalie gear. While the kid was getting better at getting his equipment on, he still needed help doing up the straps of his bulky, goalie pads.

When Wade had asked where Trey may be, a sly grin passed over Andy's face before he shared that Trey usually got dressed in the ref's locker room. Since there were currently no games, Trey would have the smaller room all to himself. Which was just perfect for what Wade planned.

As soon as the door to the ref's room opened, Wade moved in. Putting a hand on Trey's chest, Wade pushed the goalie back inside. A look of shock and outrage passed over Trey's face before recognition flickered in his blue eyes.

"What are you doing here?" Trey asked, tilting his head up slightly so he could peer up under the half-shield on his player's helmet.

"I wanted to say hello to you before you were surrounded by your mini-fan club," Wade said before he dipped his head down and gave Trey a warm, soft, carnal kiss that left them both breathless.

"That was one hell of a hello," Trey snarked, his smile showing he knew how cringe-worthy his own play on words sounded.

"I missed you the past two nights. I'm beginning to really hate it when the Hawks have away games."

"Did you watch the game on TV? I heard the local cable channel played it live." There was no missing the hopeful look in Trey's eyes.

"As if I would miss a chance to watch my favorite goalie in action." Trey started to mouth a thank you, but Wade cut him off. "Hayward from the Colts is the best net master in your league."

Trey gave him a playful punch on the arm. "Hayward is just a two hundred pound waste of space. I'd challenge him to a shoot-out any day. I'd clean the ice with his sorry ass, too."

Of that Wade had no doubt. All kidding aside, Trey really was ten times better than the Colts goaltender.

Before Wade could say as much, Trey

continued with his tirade. "I'm serious. That guy has a five-hole as big as the city of Detroit's debt."

Wade put his arms around Trey's waist and brought him in for another kiss. The liplock served two purposes. First, it shut Trey up and second, the man's lips were just too tempting to resist. They made out for a few moments and by the time Wade pulled back, Trey had that sappy grin on his face again.

Wade reached out and fingered the hard plastic. "Promise me you'll wear your goalie mask and pads to bed someday."

Trey smirked. "We actually have to sleep together for that to happen."

"Be patient. I promise I'm going to make love to you soon." Wade brushed the back of his knuckles against Trey's jaw. Since it was later in the day, Trey had a hint of stubble and it felt deliciously rough against Wade's skin.

"We've been going out for two weeks though. How much longer are you going to make me wait?" Trey groaned so sweetly that Wade as half-tempted to bend him over the nearby bench and take him right then and there.

"I'll bet that's been the longest dry spell for you in quite a while?" Wade teased, his thumb rubbing against Trey's bottom lip.

"Yes," Trey replied, the words slightly muffled because Wade has slid his thumb into his mouth.

"And it has been that long because since we met, you haven't been with anybody else." It was a statement rather than a question. Even though they hadn't spent every night of those two weeks together, Wade knew Trey hadn't gone elsewhere to burn off the edge. Not that they'd made any promises to each other, but all Wade had to do was look into Trey's eyes to see the devotion there, which was a thrill, considering how Trey had all but tripped on himself to get away from Wade after their one and only sexual encounter. It just went to show how much could change in just fourteen short days.

Trey took Wade's thumb in deeper, sucking so hard his cheeks hollowed out. His head was slightly tilted down so the helmet shielded his eyes, but Wade knew they'd be dark with passion. While they may not have fucked again, they'd done enough kissing and heavy petting for Wade to know how Trey's face looked when he was deep in the moment.

Wade sucked in a breath as he felt the velvet slide of Trey's tongue against the tip of this thumb. Trey hummed low in his throat before he bobbed his head up and down a few times, worshiping Wade's thumb as if it were the most delicious cock he'd ever tasted. The noise from the rest of the rink seemed to fade away as it felt like they were the only ones left in the world. All that

mattered was him, Trey and the connection they had together.

Damn, if Wade got this worked up over having one digit sucked, how would it be when they finally got naked and tangled in the sheets again? Trey let out a soft whimper as he reached out and curled the fingers of one hand around Wade's wrist.

Just as Wade felt the last shred of his self-control start to slip away, a fist pounded on the door and an unfamiliar voice called, "You ready, Trey? The kids are waiting for you."

Trey gave Wade's thumb one last lick before letting the digit slip from between his soft lips. "I guess I better get going before they barge in here and catch me getting ready to go down on you."

The thought of Trey down on his knees, blue eyes peering through the clear face shield, ripped a moan from Wade's throat. "Are you trying to kill me here?" That impish smile Wade loved so much came over Trey's face.

"Maybe I'm trying to get you to lift this no-sex ban sooner. If I keep having to go into my shower to relieve myself, my neighbors are going to start thinking I have a cleaning fetish or something."

"Why don't you come over tonight?" Wade suggested.

Trey made a face. "I would love to, but I have the interview with that magazine early in the morning."

"I thought you hated interviews."

"I normally do, but it's for some gay publication. They want to do an article on gay professional sports figures and they asked me, Devon and Sergei if we'd answer some questions and pose for a few pictures. I wanted to say no at first, but then I thought that maybe it would help some kids to know that they're not alone in the world. I remember how hard and scary it was for me when I first came out and if I can just help ease one teen through that, then it'll be worth having to deal with some nosy reporter."

Wade gave him a soft kiss. "I'm very proud of you. See, I told you that you're more than just a pretty face."

For once, Trey didn't argue. He just gave a shy smile before he turned away and left the locker room. Wade followed him to the rink and gave him a wave before making his way to the stands. By the time he found a seat, Trey was already surrounded by his gaggle of students.

As they went through the various drills, Wade couldn't help but be in awe of how much his nephew had improved. Trey had taken a kid who couldn't even stand on skates and made a halfway decent goalie out of him. Andy even managed to stop most of the pucks that came his way. Where Wade used to flinch when the kid had to deal with

a breakaway, he now found himself getting excited as he watched the youth face off against the shooters during a drill.

He was so caught up in the action on the ice, he didn't notice someone had sat down next to him until a voice said, "He's really good with them."

Wade jerked his head to the side and had to work hard to hide his shock when he recognized it was Devon who had joined him. Wade nodded his agreement. "If Trey were to ever leave the pros, I think he'd have a real good career in coaching."

They were silent for a few minutes, but Wade could sense the hostility from the other man. It was so thick that it was nearly palpable. So when Devon flashed him a dirty look, it didn't come much as a surprise.

"I don't want you and Trey seeing each other," Devon finally said, his voice hard and final, as if he were used to others just nodding and going along with his orders.

Unfortunately for him, Wade wasn't just anybody. "Tough, that's not your decision to make. Last time I checked, Trey was a big boy and could make his own choices," Wade returned, his tone just as stony.

"That's just it, Trey doesn't always know what's best for him."

"And you do?"

"I've gotten him this far, haven't I?"

Trey glanced their way and stopped his on-ice activity to openly stare at them. Even from a distance, Wade could make out the way the goalie's teeth worked his bottom lip. From day one, Wade had pegged that as Trey's biggest tell whenever he was nervous.

"You told Trey not to see me, didn't you?" Wade surmised.

"Yeah, I made it clear to him that morning I picked him up from your house," Devon informed him bluntly.

"Yet, he didn't obey you because we've been together nearly every day since." Wade couldn't help but feel a thrill of pride at Trey's rebellion.

"Like I said, Trey doesn't always know what's good for him," Devon interjected, his eyes flashing with anger.

Wade let out a long-suffering sigh. "Look, I'm not an idiot. I know you guys have some big family secret that you're afraid of getting out."

Terror briefly flirted in Devon's eyes before he blinked it away. "Oh, so the cop has it all figured out?"

"Not really, I just know Trey's hiding something from me. Something so big that you and Chad are terrified of letting him get close to somebody because you're afraid he'll slip up and let it out. I just don't know for certain what it is."

In all honestly, Wade had a pretty good inkling

it had something to do with their father's supposed suicide, but he didn't say that bit aloud. Given what scraps of info Trey had shared about the bastard, he no doubt got what he deserved.

When he realized he'd stunned Devon into silence, Wade continued, "The thing is, I don't care what it is. Unless you're a family of serial killers who live to lure stranded college coeds to your creepy mansion. That's not the case, is it?"

Devon just shook his head.

Wade added, "All I care about is him and his happiness." He pointed to Trey in case Devon had any doubt who he was referring to.

"Just how close have you and my brother been getting?" Devon demanded.

"Close enough for me to realize that I want to spend the rest of my life with him," Wade admitted.

Devon blinked a few times. "What does Trey say about that?"

"I haven't told him yet. I was planning on laying everything out for him tomorrow."

"But you've only known him a couple of weeks."

"I knew the minute I saw him. It just took me this long to realize how much he means to me. I can only hope he returns the feelings." He waved at Trey who halfheartedly returned the gesture, his face still troubled. They were silent for a few more moments before Devon let out a noise that sounded halfway between a grunt and a moan. "Damn it, Trey never could do anything easy. Only he would fall for a cop."

"I told you, he hasn't told me how he felt about us."

"Oh, he's got it bad for you. Otherwise, he never would have gone out with you this many times." Devon paused, before amending, "No, check that. He wouldn't have gone out with you period. He hasn't trusted any guy beyond a quick fuck for more than five years."

"Since his ex outed him to the press," Devon surmised, several pieces suddenly clicking into place.

"Yeah, while he could never be betrayed in that specific way again because that cat was already out of the bag, so to speak, he still couldn't trust anyone again. That is until you came along."

Trey went back to coaching the kids, but he still kept darting worried glances in their direction.

Devon continued, "Trey's also never broken a promise to me, which is exactly what he did to be with you."

"Sorry about that," Wade drawled sarcastically.

"Yeah, it may take me a couple of years, but I guess I'll get over it," Devon shot back just as sarcastically.

"I do have one question for you," Wade said, his gaze locked on Trey.

"Just one?"

"Yeah, who is Trey hiding out in his apartment?"

There was pregnant pause that went on so long, Wade finally tore his gaze away from Trey.

Devon wore a confused look that was too genuine to be faked. "Why do you think he has someone living with him?"

"When I go up to the door, I can hear two voices, plus I've seen the blinds moving when we're walking out to my car."

"You mean like they would be if someone was looking out the window?"

Wade nodded. "Do you have any idea who it may be?"

Devon thought a few moments before he let out a low curse. "Son-of-a-bitch! It has to be Brock."

"Your older brother? I thought he was estranged from the rest of you?"

"We all still send him money from time-to-time, but I have a feeling Trey's been sending him a lot more than me or Chad. He's always had a soft spot as far as Brock is concerned."

"Any reason why Trey hasn't told you that Brock is in town?"

"Because he knows that Chad and I wouldn't approve of him taking in the loser. Not to sound harsh or anything, but Brock would sell our grandmother if it meant getting his daily fix." Devon let out another curse.

"Would Brock ever hurt Trey?" Wade asked, a rush of protectiveness going through him.

In his experience as a cop, he found that there wasn't anything an addict wouldn't do to get their drugs. Just a month ago, he'd responded to a call where a teen had beat his grandmother because the woman wouldn't give him anymore cash.

"Do you mean physically?"

"Yes."

Devon appeared to think that one over carefully before he gave a jerky nod. "It kills me to say this, but Brock always had a bit of our dad in him."

A huge ball of panic slid down Wade's spine before settling heavily into his gut. "I can't let Trey go back there."

"Good luck with that one," Devon snorted. "Trey's never going to listen as far as Brock goes."

"We can't just sit back and do nothing," Wade protested.

No, he'd just have to find a way to make Trey listen to reason. If that didn't work, then Wade would just throw the goalie over his shoulder, take him home and tie him to the bed until he was ready to see what a mistake he was making.

Devon sighed. "Why don't we meet at Trey's in a few hours? That'll give me some time to round up Chad. Maybe if the three of us confront him together, Trey will listen."

"And if not?"

A wicked smile spread over Devon's face. "Well then you, me and Chad will just have to convince Brock that it would be much, much better for his health to leave Battle Creek for good."

Chapter Eight

fter practice, Trey fully expected there to be a confrontation with Devon and Wade. Much to his shock, however, they both left before Trey came off the ice. Even more surprising, the two of them seemed to have formed a peace of sorts. At least Trey thought they had. Since they'd been in the stands the entire time, he hadn't been able to hear their conversation. Instead, he had to make the best translation as he could, going by hand gestures and facial expressions.

So he'd fully expected to get off the ice and be facing some huge fight. Instead, they'd both left without so much as a goodbye. Trey didn't know whether to be insulted or relieved.

As he approached his apartment, Trey frowned when he spotted the door slightly ajar. Damn it, looks like he was going to have to give Brock the whole lock-the-door-unless-you-want-to-wake-up-spooning-a-homeless-man speech again.

"Brock, you better watch it or you're going to

get fondled and not in a good way," Trey called as he walked in.

The smile left his face as he got a good gander at the inside of his place. It looked as if a hurricane followed by a tsunami, then a team of graffiti artists had swept through.

All the walls were covered with black and red spray paint. The majority of the writing was just random phrases, most of which didn't make sense and confused him in a chilling way. *Doggy style.* Poetry is in my mind. I have the sun in my brain. Our sins lead us to our paths.

That was just the beginning of the horror. There were also deep gouges in the walls and couches, as if someone had taken a blade to them. Stuffing and shredded wallpaper mixed in with a good half inch of water already pooling into the carpet. Rushing to the bathroom, Trey shut off the source of the flood, the overflowing bathtub. As he looked at the damage in there, his heart sank lower. The toilet and sink laid in a million different pieces, the porcelain reduced to near dust.

The mirror had been punched, the cracks forming a circular spider-weave pattern. Written over it in blood was *Trey, this is all your fault. You killed him.* Tremors broke out over Trey's body as he found himself fixated on those hateful words. He wanted to turn away, but found himself

trapped, much like an animal caught in the crosshairs of a rifle. He stood there, for God knows how long, before Wade found him.

Letting out a cry of relief, Wade rushed forward and put his arms around Trey's chest. "There you are. When I came in and saw the place trashed, I got worried that you were here when it all happened."

Trey wanted to answer him—to reassure Wade he was all right, but the words got stuck in his throat. Then the trembling grew worse, until it got to the point where Trey couldn't breathe. All he could do was sit there, gasping like some freak as he stared at those words, *Trey, this is all your fault.* You killed him.

"Hey, are you with me here, babe?" Wade asked, his voice cracking with concern.

Then things got from bad to ah-hell-no when Trey heard Chad and Devon's voices. It was only a matter of seconds before they were hovering, too. Wade grabbed Trey by the shoulders and led him back into the living room, their shoes making the most annoying squishing sounds as they became even more soaked with water.

"He lied to me," Trey finally managed to rasp.

"Most addicts do," Wade soothed as he spun Trey around and pulled him into a protective embrace.

"He's not just some addict. He's my brother-

or at least that's what I thought," Trey protested softly. "How could I have been so stupid?"

Wade ran a comforting hand through Trey's hair and shooshed him. "You weren't stupid. You just acted out of love."

"I should have known better. I just wanted to believe him this time. When he told me that he was going to get clean for me, I thought that maybe this time he'd actually be able to do it."

Trey curled his fingers into the front of Wade's shirt, using the other man's warmth and soothing words to anchor him. "How did you know I'd need you?"

"Wade and I figured out that you were hiding somebody here. It didn't take me long to surmise it was Brock," Devon cut in.

"What were you thinking? You know what he's like," Chad added.

"He told me this time was different," Trey defended, knowing how naïve he probably sounded. Then he noticed something else that made him let out a loud gasp of outrage. "Fuck! The bastard took my TV!" He glanced around, noting several items were also missing. "And my laptop and Wii."

Pulling away from Wade, he rushed into the kitchen only to find the betrayal was complete. "He took my iPad, too. I'm going to kill him!"

Devon came in after him and put a comforting

hand on his shoulder. "Calm down, Trey."

"That's easy for you to say. You're place hasn't been tagged by bad poetry, flooded and then stripped bare. It looks like one of Charlie Sheen's hotel rooms."

Trey realized that his voice had taken on a hysterical edge, but he was too far gone to pull it back. Brock's betrayal piled on top of the message left in the bathroom, just became too much. Trey let out a jagged sob before pressing his lips together to hold in any other cries.

Devon ran a soothing hand down Trey's back. "It'll be okay. Chad and I will take care of you."

"No," Wade declared from the doorway.

His face set in stone, he came over and took Trey in his arms. "I'm the only one who takes care of him now." When it looked as if Devon would argue, Wade cut him off. "You and Chad have done a great job so far, but now Trey belongs to me."

Shock coursed through Trey's body, followed by a warm feeling as the significance of Wade's words sunk in. Not wanting to dare to believe that it could be true, Trey tilted his head back so he could stare up at Wade. The love and tenderness he saw in Wade's dark eyes took Trey's breath away.

Chad took a step closer. "Are you okay with that, Trey?"

Still looking up at Wade, Trey nodded. "Strangely enough, all of a sudden I've never felt better."

Wade took him home that night. While Devon and Chad easily let that one slide by uncommented on, they still insisted on staying behind to clean up the apartment. Not that it really mattered to Trey since he never planned on going back there again. He knew that if he were to ever step into that bathroom, all those horrible feelings would come crashing down on him.

As they walked inside, Wade asked, "Are you hungry?"

Trey shook his head. "I'm just really tired."

Wade held out a hand. "Come on then, let's go to bed."

Trey allowed himself to be led to the master bedroom. Once they got there, Wade stripped Trey and then himself down to their underwear before pulling Trey into bed. It seemed like the most natural thing to do as Trey snuggled into Wade's side, his cheek resting on the older man's chest. For the longest time, they stayed that way, the only movement was when Wade began to slowly stroke Trey's hair.

"My mom killed my dad," Trey blurted.

Wade's hand only faltered for second. "I figured as much."

Trey jerked in shock. "How did you know? We've always been so careful not to give anything away."

"Yeah, but the few times you have spoken of her, I could tell how fiercely protective you were of her."

Trey nibbled on his bottom lip as he debated how much he should tell. While he trusted Wade implacably, the secret wasn't entirely his alone to share so he decided to go with just part of the story. "It happened the day my dad found out that the story of me being gay was going to hit the papers."

A slight tremor went down Trey's spine as he recalled that horrible feeling he got as his father had looked at him in pure loathing and disgust.

"What did he do to you?" Wade urged gently.

"He picked up a hockey stick. At first he just used it to hit me, but then he did...other stuff—" Trey broke off, shame making it impossible to continue.

Wade made a soft cooing noise as he kissed Trey on top of the head. "That's okay, you don't have to say it aloud."

Trey squeezed his eyes together, surprised when the movement knocked some tears loose. "Does it make you think less of me?"

"Never. Ever. Could I think less of you for something like that. You didn't do anything wrong," Wade declared, punctuating each word with a kiss to Trey's face.

"That must have finally been too much for my mother to take. While she'd seen us beat numerous times, he'd never taken things that far. So she defended me the only way she could." Trey took in a shuddering breath as he remembered all the blood coating the kitchen floor, some of it his father's, but a good deal of it his own.

"That's when Chad and Devon came in and took care of you, just like they always had," Wade stated.

A gasp slipped from Trey as he pulled back some. "I never said that."

Wade gave him a sad smile. "Babe, it's my job to figure stuff like this out, remember?"

Trey nodded, terror making it too hard to speak. Finally he managed to swallow a few times before he croaked, "Are they going to be in trouble?"

"Don't worry. I'm never going to breathe a word of this to anyone."

Relief swelled through Trey, making a few more tears fall. Damn, when had he turned into such a sappy, weepy boy? "Why would you do that for me?"

Wade leaned down and pressed their lips together in a kiss that was so soft, emotional and sexy that it milked a whimper from Trey.

When they broke apart, Wade run his thumb along Trey's cheekbone. "I'm doing it because I love you, Trey."

The air left Trey's lungs as his head buzzed in shock and a bit of fear, too. "You can't mean that."

"But I do. I love you so much that the thought of living even one day apart from you scares the hell out of me," Wade admitted.

Wade? Afraid? Who would have thunk it. That his big, powerful cop who always seemed so self-assured, actually could fear rejection just as much as Trey did. While Trey realized he should probably feel sympathetic, that knowledge gave him a bit of comfort because it let him know that he wasn't the only sap afraid of taking a chance.

"I love you, too," Trey replied, his voice heavy with awe. Trey reached up and stroked the side of Wade's face.

They shared another kiss before Trey said, "I want you inside me and by that I mean I want you to make love to me. I don't want it to be fucking or screwing, I want it to be..."

Wade finished for him. "You want me to take care of you and show you how much I love you."

Trey nodded. "Please." Wade gave him a hot, open-mouthed kiss that left Trey's head spinning.

"Just lie back and let me show you how much I love you," Wade ordered.

He did just that, too. First by trailing a rain of

hot, soft kisses down Trey's neck and then sucking first one nipple and then the other until Trey was fisting the sheets as he arched up to meet Wade's hot mouth. Wade only gave him a wicked smiled before he moved on, his tongue trailing a smooth circle around Trey's navel.

Once he reached the waistband of Trey's boxerbriefs, Wade only lowered them enough so the tip of Trey's cock popped out. Wade didn't take it in his mouth, even though Trey begged. Instead, he pressed several soft kisses to the head, his tongue darting out to lap up a bit of pre-cum.

"Take off your underwear," Wade ordered as he moved back to take his own boxers off.

Trey fumbled to obey, letting out a soft whimper when Wade flipped him over on to his stomach. Then Wade did the whole slow torture routine again, this time starting at the nape of Trey's neck and slowly kissing his way down his spine. By the time Wade reached the crease of Trey's ass, Trey was letting out keening wails as he humped the mattress.

"Please, Wade I need you," Trey begged.

When he heard a condom package being opened, Trey swore it was the most blessed sound ever. Wade used a few slicked fingers to get Trey's hole stretched before he slowly pressed his cock inside.

"God, Wade! Just like that," Trey groaned as

Wade buried himself fully inside.

Wade pulled almost all the way out before he sensually slid forward again, his balls slapping softly against Trey's ass.

"I meant it, I love you, Trey," Wade whispered as he set a gentle, loving rhythm.

"Love you, too," Trey groaned.

While it wasn't the good hard fuck he so often craved, the way Wade touched him as if he were a precious object set Trey's body aflame more than ever. Halfway through, Wade sat back on his heels, pulling Trey with him so they were pressed chest to back.

Trey craned his neck so they could kiss. At the same time, Wade reached around and began to stroke Trey's cock. The spicy taste of Wade's mouth, combined with the sensation of his dick being jerked, sent Trey over the edge. Letting out a muffled cry, he came, hot spunk covering his stomach and chest.

After a few thrusts, Wade stiffened, then moaned Trey's name. Trey could feel Wade's cock pulsating as it filled the condom and he yearned for a time when they could make love without the latex barrier between them. He vowed that as soon as possible, he'd have a talk with Wade about getting tested.

As they both began to breathe normally again, Wade continued to hold and caress Trey. It felt so

good that Trey was inclined to let him.

"Move in with me," Wade finally said.

Trey jerked his head to the side so they could lock gazes. "Are you sure about that?"

"Are you sure you love me?" Wade countered with a grin.

"I've never been more certain of anything in my life," Trey declared.

It was true, too. So long as he could take comfort in Wade's arms, Trey knew he was the luckiest man in the world. He also knew at last he'd found his place in the world and it was by Wade's side.

Giving Wade a smile, Trey decided to do the bravest thing he'd ever done in his life—believe that someone like him could actually find love. "Okay, let's do this then. I'll move in with you."

Epilogue

"Gere's your beer," Saul said as he took the seat next to Wade.

Wade accepted the plastic cup, grimacing as he took a sip of the watered-down beverage. Amy came over and claimed the seat on the other side of them. She had a bag of popcorn nearly as big as she was and for once, she wore a Hawks jersey on instead of her usual pantsuit. On the back was Trey's name and number with the words, *My soon to be brother-in-law* stenciled on it. Obviously the last part was her own addition.

"Aren't you jumping the gun a bit? Gay marriage isn't even legal in Michigan," Wade pointed out.

"Not yet, but it will be soon if I have my say," she declared around a mouthful of popcorn. "Hey, did you hear Andy had a shut out his last game?"

Saul smiled. "Really? He must have been so excited."

"The other team only had six shots on goal,"

Wade felt compelled to point out.

"Yeah, but they were quality shots," Amy countered.

The game started back up. As usual, Wade's gaze remained fixated on the goaltender...check that, make it *his* goaltender.

"So did Trey finally get all his stuff moved in?" Amy asked.

One of the opposing forwards got too close to Trey's crease and the crowd let out a collective *oooh* when Trey took offense and wacked the guy's calves with the edge of his goalie stick.

"Yeah, and the insurance company is going to replace most of the stuff Brock stole."

"So I take it Trey finally pressed charges against the creep then?"

"Yeah, the sad thing was before that, Brock wasn't even in trouble with the law. They hadn't connected him to the gas station robbery."

"And now sticky fingers is wanted for both." Amy gave a short laugh. "I love karma sometimes."

The forward crowded Trey again and once more got whacked for his efforts.

"I don't care what happens to Brock, just so long as he stays away from Trey."

This time the forward got angry. He dropped his stick, turned around and shoved Trey. The crowd roared its outrage. They weren't the only ones to take offense. Chad charged the shover and tackled the player, both them dropping to the ice in a pile of fists and anger.

Another player from the opposing team entered the fray. Trey shouted something Wade couldn't hear before he entered the fight, taking on the newcomer. When a third member from the other team joined in, nobody was surprised to see Devon coming to his brothers's defense. Before you could say cluster-fuck, all six players were going at it while the refs stood by helplessly.

"And the Canton brothers are at it again," the announcer's whooped joy of excitement carried through the arena.

That got the whole crowd going and they were soon chanting, "Cantons! Cantons! Cantons!"

Amy threw her hands up in disgust. "I swear, are they ever going to change?"

Wade shared a secretive grin with Saul.

"Damn, I hope not," he said.

About the Author

Stephani Hecht is a happily married mother of two. Born and raised in Michigan, she loves all things about the state, from the frigid winters to the Detroit Red Wings hockey team. Go Wings! You can usually find her snuggled up to her laptop, creating her next book or gorging on caffeine at her favorite coffee shop.