

# SOLD

A HAMMER NOVEL



# SEAN MICHAEL

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Sold: A Hammer Novel

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**Sold**  
**By Sean Michael**

**Prologue**

Adam whistled as he potted in the garden, tending the herbs planted around the edge. The day was beautiful -- warm, sunny -- and he was glorying in his beautiful yard. He spent all of his free time out here, weeding and adjusting, testing the soil. Making it beautiful.

His house was tiny -- literally a one-room cabin with a kitchenette and a closet, the bath area blocked by a screen. His grandmother had left it to him, and he loved how he could bicycle anywhere he needed to, how he could see the sky through the skylight over his bed, how the paint was bright blue. Best of all, though, was the yard.

He waved to his neighbors and their new baby as they passed by. So sweet, those two.

"How're you doing, Adam?"

"Great, guys. Have a great day."

He nodded and grinned. Then his eyes widened as he saw Marcus and Oliver heading down the street. There must be work for him.

Marcus grinned and waved, Oliver much more circumspect beside him.

"Good afternoon, Sirs." He stood, smiled. "I wasn't expecting you. Would you like some lemonade?"

He had some in the fridge, maybe. If not, he had frozen concentrate.

"Lemonade sounds good." Marcus shook his hand and nodded toward the back of his tiny house "How is your garden?"

"Growing, growing. I'll pull some mint for the glasses." He led them to the little mosaic table, the little wire chairs.

"Thank you, Adam." Oliver and Marcus sat.

He slipped inside and poured two mostly-full glasses of lemonade and grabbed a glass of water for himself. It was rare -- very rare -- for the Doms to come to him.

"Thank you."

They made pleasantries as they drank their lemonade, but he could feel the other conversation sitting here, waiting. The real reason they were here. He waited patiently. They would tell him, when they decided to. He had been doing this job too long to misstep.

When they'd drunk their lemonade, Marcus looked to Oliver, who nodded.

"We have a job for you." Marcus smiled, took his checkbook out of his pocket.

"Of course. What are the parameters?" He had performed many times for them, had even been on stage with Marcus. They were exceptional men.

"There is a man who has applied for membership. He's from out of town. His references are genuine, but you know how particular we are."

"I do." In fact, Adam refused eight out of ten Doms in the trial phase. "How did he discover us?"

"Someone who used to live here and now lives in New York. They were both members at a club there."

"Oh. Is it a couple?" He was confused, a bit.

Oliver chuckled and patted his hand. "What Marcus is trying to say is that Matthias was a member of a club in New York, the same club that Andy Bello became a member of when he moved out east. When Andy heard that Matthias was moving here, he told Matthias about the club."

"Oh. Oh!" He chuckled, blushed. "Sorry, Sirs. How is Master Andy? Is he happy out there?"

"He is. Apparently he's wooing someone. His word." Oliver chuckled, looking pleased.

"Lucky someone." Andy had been a sweet, calm man. Someone was going to have a beautiful, pampered life.

"Indeed."

"So, Matthias is the job. He seems like a good man, but we want to make sure he's also a good Dom."

"Yes, Sir." He nodded, the gentle rebuke noted, accepted. "When do you need me to start?"

"This evening at the club." Marcus wrote out the check, three zeros before the decimal. "This is your down payment. Take as long as you need, Adam. Matthias' home will be open to you, as of course, will the club."

"Of course. Is seven good?"

"Come early and have dinner with Jack and me."

"Yes, Sir." He nodded, smiled. Jack made him absolutely insane.

"Do you need anything from us?" Marcus asked.

"Is there anything I should prepare for?"

"The usual -- clean inside and out."

"Yes, Sir."

"Thank you, Adam. It is an invaluable service you provide."

"It's my pleasure." And the easiest job on earth. "I'll send you a report in the morning."

"We look forward to it."

Marcus and Oliver each shook hands with him, and then they headed back the way they'd come.

Adam chuckled, shook his head. Doms were so funny, and each one needed a different touch, a different type of care. Luckily, that was his specialty. He was the

sub who cared for all the Doms, and he loved it. Almost as much as he loved his garden.

## Chapter One

Matt arrived at the Hammer Club at six p.m. sharp. He'd been invited to join one of the founding members for dinner, and he wasn't about to miss out on a chance to sample the best food on the West Coast, according to Andy. He also wasn't going to be late -- he knew that he was being vetted for membership and would be nothing if not punctual.

He gave his name at the door, pleased when he was on the list and shown in, where a pretty twink gave him a half bow and a "This way, please, Sir," before leading him through the maze of tables.

The club was very nice -- intimate and classy, the decor masculine and deep without being dark. He appreciated the class, the lack of gaudiness or tackiness. It was gorgeous.

He was taken to a table where an older gentleman sat with a lovely little blond at his side. Sitting across from the older man was a deeply tanned, dark-eyed man dressed in white.

"This is Master Oliver, Sir."

"Thank you." He gave the twink a warm smile and held his hand out to Oliver. "It's nice to see you again." He didn't say 'sir' but it was tempting; the man exuded an aura of quiet dominance, like a master's master.

"It's a pleasure to have you back in town, Matt. Please, have a seat. This is my boy, Jack, and this is our dear Adam."

Jack bounced and waved, and the tanned man, Adam, offered him a smile and a nod.

"Hi, there. Nice to meet you both." He sat, feeling a little like he was on trial. It was a good thing he'd always done well with tests.

"We haven't ordered yet, but I took the chance and ordered a bottle of red for us." Oliver was always so incredibly polite.

"Sounds good. I've been told the food here is actually the best in town."

"It's fab." Oliver's boy bounced, grinned. "And today is my favorite, fettuccini alfredo!"

He chuckled. Oliver's boy was so obviously happy and loved, and that was all the recommendation for this club that Matt needed.

"What's your favorite, Adam?" he asked the other man.

"I prefer the curry, Sir."

"Adam's a vegetarian. He's a body-is-a-temple type of man." Jack leaned over, squeezing Adam's hand. "We don't hold that against him, do we, Master?"

"Indeed we don't."

Matt smiled at Adam. "I'm rather fond of vegetables myself. I admit that well-prepared vegetables are the highlight of the meal for me. Especially if they're local." He was into sustainable foods, so he knew what it was like to have to do a little more for food.

"There is a lovely local food movement here. I'd be happy to make some introductions for you, when you're settled."

"Thank you, Adam, that'd be wonderful." Their waiter came with their wine, and Matt let Oliver take the lead in tasting it. He had to admit, he didn't know a whole lot about wine.

Adam refused a glass, staying with water, but Matt found the flavor was sweet, strong, almost berry-like.

The waiter then took their orders, Oliver and Jack having the fettuccine, Adam the curry, and Matt choosing the shrimp stir-fry.



Their orders in, Matt turned his attention back to his dining companions. "So tell me more about the club."

Oliver smiled. "We've been in operation for fifteen years. We have an active membership of thirty-five committed couples and fifty to sixty single memberships, and a staff of twenty-seven."

"Very impressive. I see there's a stage; do you have regular shows?"

"We do. Every Friday, and most Saturday evenings. On Wednesdays, it is Dom night. The only subs allowed are servers and then professional submissives like our Adam, here, to offer himself for demonstrations."

"That sounds like it could be a lot of fun."

"Adam's a little like magic." Jack beamed at the man. Adam's response was a gentle chuckle.

"Magic, eh?" He raised an eyebrow in inquiry.

"Jack flatters me. It's a blessing to be able to do what you're good at for a living."

"It is." Wow, a professional sub.

He'd never actually met one before. Oh, there'd been boys hired at his club back home, but no one did it well enough to make a living at it.

"Adam has lovely control, and he's here to assist us and you, to make sure we're a match."

"So you're the one I have to impress, hmm?" He took a closer look at Adam.

The man offered him another smile. "No, Sir. My goal is to find out if you'll be happy here."

"Oh. That's..." He was actually touched by the club's concern. "I look forward to our time together."

"As do I."

Oliver nodded. "Membership is a huge financial and emotional commitment. We want our members to belong, to feel safe."

"It's a lovely environment. I can't imagine anyone not wanting to belong." Of course, there were assholes who thought the lifestyle was an excuse to beat on their partners. They'd probably dislike this environment.

"Certain people have chosen not to apply for membership. We do have rules for our couples that have been questioned -- most specifically Dom night -- and there is a system in place to prevent abuse." Oliver sounded very serious.

"I like the sound of safeguards."

Subs were meant to be cherished and cared for, given what they needed and wanted, made to fly, not be abused.

"We also have a submissives' council. A place for us, you know?"

"What a wonderful idea. I don't know why more clubs haven't adopted one." He was more and more impressed with the Hammer. It was clearly a place built on love, on making things safe for everyone involved.

Of course when their food came, he was sure that it was also a place where only the very best would be accepted. The shrimp was perfectly cooked, the vegetables crisp and bright.

"What do you think?" Jack asked, bouncing where he sat.

"It was delicious." He smiled at Adam. "A promising start."

Adam nodded to him, his food barely touched. "It has been. Master Oliver says that I'm at your disposal, Sir, should you be interested."

"I'd like that, when you've had your fill."

He nodded to Adam's plate. He knew some subs didn't like eating before a scene, but he wouldn't have Adam going without just because he didn't want to make Matt wait.

"I'm full."

Oliver's eyebrow arched, but the man didn't argue.

"If you're sure..." He stood and held out his hand.

"I'm sure there are private rooms where we can get to know each other better?"

"Of course, Sir. I took the liberty of reserving us room six." The man stood, slender and graceful.

Matt let his eyes run over the lovely body, letting Adam feel the weight of his stare, of his admiration.

Long fingers slipped into his, the touch surprisingly rough and callused. "If you'll follow me."

He wrapped his fingers around Adam's, letting the man lead him.

They paused at the bar, Adam stopping a large, sharp-eyed man. "Sir, this is Xavier. He is the club manager. Mr. Xavier, this is Master Matthias."

Matt reached across and shook the man's hand. "Nice place you have here."

"Thank you. I hope to see more of you." A crash and a spate of cursing came from the kitchen. "If you'll excuse me."

Matt chuckled. "Kitchen sounds busy."

"The cook is quite temperamental and very talented. Please, I'll show you to our room and we can discuss your preferences."

"Our preferences."

Adam gave him a quick, curious look, but didn't question him. "Please, Sir. Our room."

The door was opened, a luxurious room offered to him.

"This will do nicely." He closed the door behind him and drew Adam over to the couch.

The room was quiet, no sound from the club leaking in. Adam sat, eyes on his.

He looked into the blue eyes, soaking in the ambience, the peace and quiet there. "What do you like?" he finally asked, breaking the silence.

"My only limits are permanent marks."

"Good to know, but it wasn't what I asked."

The dark eyes were confused for a moment. "My preferences depend upon the man I am working with."

"I don't understand."

The long fingers touched him. "I'm hired to fulfill your fantasy, your pleasure, to discover your needs. Mine are inconsequential."

That touch sent a lovely shiver through him. "My needs and yours are intertwined." He couldn't imagine not taking his sub's needs and wants into consideration, not even someone he'd only be with for an evening.

"What are your needs? What do you seek in a submissive?" The touch continued over his wrists.

"A partner."

"That will make someone so happy. Are you interested in sex? Control? Pain?"

"Sex, control. Pain is a part of that but not the main draw."

"Tell me about your ultimate scene?" Those touches were almost magical.

He swallowed, a soft moan leaving him. "Ultimate?" He closed his eyes, let that touch take him away.

"You're laid out on a St. Andrew's cross. You're not tied there, though. You're kept in place by will alone. My will and your own. I lay stripes down -- on your back, ass, and thighs first, then on your chest, your hips. You're erect and needy cries come from you. God, you're beautiful like this. You come on my command. You beg for me to take you."

He let his eyes open, meet Adam's.

Those dark eyes were warm, deep, and he could fall into them. "You have a lovely imagination, Sir."

"Thank you. You're very inspiring."

"Tell me about your experiences before. Did you have a sub you worked with on the east coast?"

"No, I mostly played with single men, experimented. I was -- am -- looking for someone special." He didn't just want someone to play with -- he wanted that partner.

"Do you want a lifestyle sub?"

"I do. But I don't want a slave. I want a partner who is submissive. You know?"

"What's the difference?" Those touches were maddening.

He captured Adam's hands in his, curling their fingers together. "I want a man who knows his own mind, who will have an opinion on what movie we're going to watch, who will make important life decisions with me."

"You'll make someone so happy." Adam submitted immediately, fingers relaxing in his.

"That's the hope, anyway. So tell me what your favorite type of scene is?"

"When I'm working, I enjoy the scenes that end with pleasure, with contact."

"And when you're not working?" Was Adam a for-hire sub only?

"I." Adam chuckled, then smiled at him. "That is something for my true master to discover, should he ever find me."

"You're single, too, then." Of course the man was. Matt couldn't imagine allowing his sub to work with other masters like Adam did. He knew it needed to be done, but he knew that when he found his partner for life, he would not be willing to share.

"I am. I have never found a man who truly understood how what I do is an integral part of me."

So formal. Matt couldn't help but be curious about what Adam was like when the man was laughing, relaxed.

"I assume there are tools here for me to use? That you'll be judging my ability with them as well as my control over you?"

"Yes, Sir. Would you like to see?"

"I would." Because if he spent too much more time talking with Adam, he was going to want more than just an audition for the club with the man. Perhaps he already did. There was just something about...

Adam stood and opened a hidden cabinet. Whips. Cuffs. Gags. Dildos. The choices were spectacular. The highest quality as well, he imagined. He went to the cabinet and looked through what was there, deciding on a plug and a small paddle.

Adam didn't push him, didn't question, but he could feel the man's presence. He wanted to know what excited Adam, what made Adam beg, burn, need. Not some random stranger, but Adam.

Matt took a breath and nodded. "This is all I need." Anything else had the potential to become too personal. Hell, the plug and paddle probably did, too.

"Yes, Sir. Where would you like me?"

"Right where you are." He put aside the toys and reached for Adam's buttons.

"Yes, Sir." Adam was lean, tanned, and unmarked. No piercings, no ink, no scars, just lovely skin.

He undressed the man slowly, examining every inch. "You're lovely."

Adam seemed to be designed to be pleasing, close to any Dom's fantasy. There was a tiny, trimmed line of public hair -- enough to ignore, should you want your sub shaved, but present enough to let you know it was

there. Adam' wasn't tiny like a twink, but very lean, willowy. It was, honestly, almost disconcerting.

Matt found himself leaning in, then stopped. This wasn't a date; this was only an audition for the club. He cleared his throat and let himself touch the tanned skin. The tight muscles rippled. Adam's skin was so warm.

"You're lovely." It bore repeating.

"Thank you, Sir. I try to be."

"You are." He nodded toward the couch. "Lean over that, please. Legs spread."

Adam bent gracefully, the long spine, the tight ass exposed to him. He groaned and reached out to touch the lovely skin. Smooth, warm, like silk. He wanted to mark it. He was going to mark it. Not the real way he wanted to, not on this paid-for trial. He'd only bruise it a little tonight.

He smacked Adam's ass experimentally. Adam's flesh was resilient, colored a sweet pink.

"Very nice." He smacked the other ass cheek this time, enjoying the feeling of Adam's flesh under his fingers.

"Thank you, Sir."

He continued to warm Adam's ass with his hand instead of the paddle; he was enjoying the contact, the feeling of Adam's flesh against his palm, his fingers. Adam never moved, but never tensed, either. He wondered what it would be like to be this man's Master, to be able to truly push. He wrapped one ass cheek with his hand, massaged it. The flesh was heating with his blows, just beginning to truly redden.

"You color so beautifully."

"Thank you, Sir." So polite, so controlled.

"I'm going to fill you and then work you over with the paddle." What would it be like to pull emotion from the man? Stunning, he'd bet. Amazing.

"Yes, Sir. As you will."

There were discreetly placed tubes of lube all over the place and he grabbed one, slicking up his fingers. The tiny, tight hole was right there, waiting for him. He used the fingers of his non-lubed hand to hold open the sweet cheeks, and teased Adam's hole with his slick fingers, rubbing up and down along it. The skin was soft, giving, shaved clean.

His prick jerked in his trousers and he ignored it. It was a good thing he hadn't undressed; he wasn't sure he'd be able to resist if he had. Groaning, he pushed the tip of one finger in. Tight and already slick, readied. Fuck.

"Did you... is this usual?" He sank his finger all the way in, glorying at the tight heat.

"Clean and readied, inside and out."

"Sweet." He pushed another finger in, enjoying opening Adam up.

He wondered how much Adam could take, whether the man was a size queen. It made him push in another finger. God, he'd love to take Adam with his hand. He'd never done it; he'd never wanted to share that kind of intensity with anyone. And here he was, thinking about it with a man he'd only just met.

He wasn't sure if it was the mystery or the immediate connection, but whatever it was, it was amazing.

"This is a nice plug, but not as nice as some of the ones in my personal collection." He slid his fingers out of Adam and slicked up the silicone cock.

"No? Do you have a nice collection?" Was Adam's voice a touch breathless?

"I do. I have some stunning ones. This one is... serviceable. It's not a complaint," he added quickly. "It's not personal, though."

"No. No, it is... anonymous."



"Maybe next time." Because he wanted there to be a next time. He wanted to get together with this man without it being about the club, about auditioning and someone paying for Adam's time.

"I am yours until you don't need my services, Sir."

"I don't want you bought and paid for, Adam."

For the first time, Adam tensed. "Am I not pleasing?"

"You are. Very. That's the thing. I want to follow this to its natural conclusion. I want to get to know you and kiss you. I want you to be here with me because you want to get to know me, too."

Adam took a soft breath. "I. Thank you, Sir."

"Would it count against me if we ended the scene here? I'd like to talk to you off the clock, so to speak."

Adam stood, looked at him, eyes worried. "Sir? Have I displeased you? Should I ask Master Oliver to find you another submissive?"

"No, no. Not at all." He reached out and touched Adam's arm. "You've pleased me very much. I just want to get to know you, to... to date you. And I don't think you'll do that as long as Oliver is paying you to test me."

"No. No, I wouldn't. I." Adam chuckled. "I have this carefully learned script that I use to turn men down, and I've forgotten it."

"Do so many men want to take you out?" He found himself bristling a bit at the idea. He didn't want to be just another Dom.

Adam pinked, head ducking. "I'm sorry, Sir. I didn't mean to suggest that."

"And I didn't mean to embarrass you. I was just feeling... like just another cog in the wheel, and I don't want to be just another anything in your eyes."

"Do you mind if I dress, Sir? If the scene is over."

"Of course not. I'm sorry, I wasn't thinking."

There was no indication from Adam whether Matt had a chance with the man or not. A part of him worried that he'd just blown his chance to join the Hammer Club, but he knew he couldn't continue the scene lying about the direction he wanted to go in with Adam.

Adam dressed quickly, tied his hair back, then picked up a phone. "Would you like a cup of coffee, Sir? A glass of wine?"

"A glass of water would be good. And maybe a dessert we can share?"

"Yes, Sir. Can I please have two waters and a dessert sampler sent in? Thank you." Adam went to the sink and warmed a towel under the hot water, offering it to him for his slick fingers. "Shall we sit on the sofa?"

"I'd like that very much." He cleaned his fingers, eyes on Adam.

Adam took him to the sofa, eased him down. He held his hand out for Adam, wanting the man to sit close. Adam sat, eyes down, breath slow and steady.

"Is this all right? That we get to know each other like this?"

"Yes, Sir. I... I'm afraid that I've misstepped with you, and I want to assure you that it wasn't my intention."

"Misstepped how?"

"I offended you, made you feel you were not my sole focus. In this moment, you are."

"No, no, not at all." He took Adam's hands in his. "I want to kiss you."

"Why?" The look was curious, but not affronted.

"Because I'm very attracted to you." He leaned in closer, wondering if Adam was interested in kissing him as well.

"I... This is not very professional of me."

"I don't want you to be professional with me. I want you to be personal. I want you off the clock and here

with me now because it's your choice. If it isn't, I guess I'll just go." He didn't want to, but he didn't want to make Adam uncomfortable; if there was any question that Adam felt like he had to stay because his time had been paid for...

"I never misread people so badly..."

"I'm sorry?" He wasn't sure what Adam meant.

"This is the third time you've asked to go. I'm doing this terribly."

"No, I don't want to go. I want this to be personal between you and me. I want to have the freedom to kiss you and touch you and truly top you if that's where this goes." He chuckled. "I'm usually not this unclear or hesitant, but I won't make this real if you feel an obligation. Only if it's your choice."

"I. This has never happened to me."

"No one has ever wanted *you* before?" Much as Matt liked that he was the only one, he could hardly believe it.

"No one has asked who made me consider saying yes."

"Does that mean you're considering saying yes to me?"

"Possibly."

"But it does mean that I can try without fear of you feeling beholden?"

Adam nodded. "I'll return my fee to Master Oliver and have another submissive service you."

"I don't want another submissive. Just you." He reached out and slid his fingers along Adam's cheek.

Adam pinked, looking suddenly vulnerable, shy.

It was delightful, and Matt felt all his protective instincts come out. "I do want to kiss you, Adam. Very badly." He let his finger slide along Adam's lower lip.

Adam's lips parted, and he saw the man shiver.

"So sensual." He slipped his finger into Adam's mouth. The soft suction made his eyes cross, made him shiver. "Oh, God, you're something special."

A discreet knock came on the door.

Matt jerked, his fingers sliding away from Adam's mouth. "I guess that's our dessert."

"Yes. I'm sorry. Let me get it." Adam hurried to the door, adjusting himself. There was a quick, whispered conversation at the door, then Adam wheeled the cart in. "Ta da!"

He chuckled. "You can serve us." He found himself watching every move Adam made, utterly fascinated.

"Yes, Sir." Adam smiled at him, tentatively. "Shall I call you Sir?"

A delighted shiver went through him. "Yes, that works nicely."

"Yes, Sir. How do you take your coffee?"

"Three milks, no sugar."

"Very white." Adam nodded and carefully prepared his drink. "You have chocolate tarts, a strawberry shortcake, and some pecan cookies, Sir."

"One of each, please. And help yourself as well."

"Maybe one, yes. Thank you."

The desserts were carefully plated, offered. He took the plate from Adam, still more interested in the man than the food. Adam took one of the strawberry desserts, cutting one of the berries in small pieces.

"May I have a piece?"

"Of course, Sir." One piece was carefully speared up, offered to him.

He held Adam's eyes as he slowly chewed. Sweet and tart, bright. Lovely. Like the man in front of him.

Adam's eyes were on his lips.

"It's delicious." Adam was delicious.

Adam offered him another bite.

He chewed this bite just as slowly, then licked his lips. Adam was vibrating, he imagined, moaning. He leaned in, almost all the way.

"Do... do you want another bite, Sir?"

"Of you."

Adam chuckled softly. "I'm not on the clock, Sir. No biting."

"You don't like biting? Not even a little nibble?" His lips were almost touching Adam's.

"I..." Adam's eyes had little flecks of dark green.

"Shh." He pressed his lips to Adam's.

Adam's lips parted, a soft moan passing between them. He pulled Adam's breath into himself, then pressed his lips harder against Adam's. The chemistry between them was powerful, wild, intense, and it made Matt ache. He moved his lips against Adam's, slid his tongue in between them. Adam's tongue touched his, the contact fleeting, soft. He moaned at that, at the heat and sensations.

Matt loved the way Adam shivered for him, so surprisingly vulnerable. He slid his hand around Adam's head, cupping the lovely skull.

"I don't kiss." Adam's lips moved against his.

"I'm not a client."

"No. No, I'll give my fee back. Take another one."

He wasn't sure he wanted Adam taking on any more clients, but he didn't have the right to say so. Yet. So he took Adam's lips again, insisting that Adam open to him. When those lips parted for him this time, he pushed his tongue in, searching for Adam's flavor. Hot, sweet, fresh -- Adam was addictive.

Groaning loudly, he tilted Adam's head back and deepened the kiss. He let one hand slide down Adam's body, tracing the rib cage, the lean abs. Adam's skin was warm and smooth. It felt amazing beneath his fingertips,

even as the gauzy material of Adam's clothing caught on his fingers.

He pressed his hand closer, palm against Adam's heart. He could feel the tiny nipple, hard against his touch. He rubbed his hand back and forth, feeling that little bit of flesh harden further. Adam moaned softly, for him.

"Yes." He deepened the kiss even further.

So responsive. So heated. He pushed Adam back against the couch, pressing their chests together. This was so much nicer than the formal, controlled professional. He hummed happily, fingers working to open Adam's shirt again.

Adam swallowed for him, sucked in air. He pushed the shirt from Adam's shoulders and explored with his fingertips. Lean, smooth, unmarked, tan -- beautiful. His fingers went for those little nipples almost with a will of their own. He couldn't believe they weren't pierced, weren't marked.

"You don't have any body-mods?" If Adam were his, the man would be decorated. Every special occasion or moment would be marked, recorded.

"No. No, Sir. I'm a blank canvas so that Doms can imagine me how they want me."

"You have nothing for yourself, then." Matt traced his fingers around Adam's right nipple, around and around.

"I... I don't know how to answer that." That sweet little bit of flesh was so hard.

"No? Don't you have desires for yourself?" He leaned in and licked at that hard little nub of flesh.

"Of course I do. One day I'll not do this professionally." Adam arched the smallest bit.

"Like today." He licked the hard little bit again, then took it into his mouth and started to suck.

"Like... Oh..." Adam's fingers tangled in his hair.

He flicked the tip as he sucked on the surrounding flesh, humming to make everything vibrate. Adam whimpered for him, and that sound was like heaven. He slid one hand slowly down along Adam's belly. Those tight abs rippled, jerked, and rolled under his touch. He kept stroking them, very slowly winding his way down to the package waiting beneath Adam's waistband.

He'd already seen it, but this was brand new, fifty times more sensual and real. This time it mattered.

He let his hand continue its downward motion and wrapped it around the hard lump in Adam's pants. Adam's eyes opened, met his. The look was shocked, happy. He stared right into Adam's eyes, slowly rubbing, wanting to make Adam really need.

"I. Sir. This is..."

"Good. This is very good." This is what he'd been hoping for, maybe not so soon, but what he always wanted -- a connection with someone special.

"Yes. Unexpected."

"I hate being predictable." He winked, squeezed Adam's cock.

Adam's chuckle was husky, flavored with the softest moan.

He pressed their lips together again, licking inside Adam's mouth. His thumb rubbed up and down Adam's cock, measuring the length of it. "You taste good. You feel even better."

"Thank you, Sir."

"Thank *you*."

"I feel like I should go to Master Oliver, confess that I haven't done my job."

"We could go together -- I'd like to take you for supper, as you hardly ate, or dancing, or for coffee." He wasn't ready to let go of Adam yet.

"I love to dance."

"Then I'll take you dancing."

Adam nodded. "Okay. Let me go speak to Master Oliver."

"I'll come with you. After all, it's my fault."

He got a surprised look. "He'll understand that I couldn't... do my job."

"And that I didn't want you to. I want to make sure he knows it's not your fault, that it isn't because of anything you did."

His fingers were stroked, gently. "Thank you."

He took another kiss and stood. Holding his hand out for Adam, he wondered what Oliver would think of him hijacking the test.

Adam led him out to the club manager, who was with Oliver. "Sirs?"

Oliver looked over. "Adam?"

"I'm sorry, Sirs. I. Master Matt wishes to have another submissive."

Two sets of eyebrows went up.

"No, no." Matt shook his head, glad he'd insisted on coming along. "I only want Adam." The eyebrows shot up higher and Matt chuckled. "I'm interested in Adam personally and didn't want to muddy things with a professional arrangement."

Oliver's head tilted. "Adam, can I speak to you privately, lad?"

"Of course, Sir."

"He hasn't done anything wrong, Oliver. I insisted we end the, ah, test."

"No. No, of course not."

Adam smiled at him. "He wants to assure himself I'm not being coerced, Sir."

Matt smiled back at Adam. "Yes. Exactly."



Oliver led Adam away, and the manager -- Xavier -- offered him a smile. "Would you like anything?"

"You could help me, actually. I want to take him dancing."

"Adam?" Xavier smiled. "He loves to dance."

Matt nodded. "I'm new to town and don't know the best place to take him."

"Take him to Easy's. It's friendly, not skanky, and has decent music."

"Thank you, Xavier, I appreciate it." He glanced over to where Oliver had taken Adam aside.

He hoped Adam wasn't in any sort of trouble -- it was *his* fault things had turned in this direction, not Adam's.

"Don't worry. It happens. It just never happens to Adam."

"I don't know why, he's... incredible. Mind you, I'm glad it hasn't happened before." Where would he be if someone had already snapped the man up?

Xavier shrugged. "Who knows? Adam's the consummate sub, really. A real pro."

"He's fascinating."

"I wouldn't know, sexually speaking. I do know that he's absolutely fabulous at Scrabble. It's creepy."

Matt laughed. "Noted."

Adam came to him, smiled. "Are you ready to go, Sir?"

"I am. Xavier has suggested Easy's."

"That's a lovely club."

"You know how to get there?" He put his hand in the small of Adam's back, led him toward the door.

"It's a few blocks over and a few blocks up. Did you want to walk or drive?"

"We could walk." Then he'd be able to give Adam his whole attention.

"Yes, Sir." Adam offered him another smile, gentle, a bit unnerved, he thought.

He offered his arm to Adam, smiling as Adam took it. "What did Oliver want?"

"Hmm? To make sure I was leaving willingly, that I wasn't being threatened or forced." Adam smiled. "To remind me that I would call and speak to him at midnight to assure him I was safe."

"Good." He was pleased that someone was looking out for Adam.

"Yes. Master Oliver -- all the masters I've worked with -- are conscientious."

"It did seem like that kind of club. It's good to know they follow through."

"Safety is their number one priority. I've never seen a top hurt a sub there."

"Well, I hope I can still join, even though I kind of blew the, ah, testing phase."

"I think you'll do well. It's easy to tell."

"So you think they'll let me join?"

"I would never speak for the masters, Sir."

"Probably wise." He smiled at Adam. "So, what do you like best about dancing?"

"The touching. The..." Adam pinked, words trailing off.

"Oh, don't stop there. Please. Tell me."

"I... There's a freedom to it."

"You can just close your eyes and let yourself go, right?" He grinned and squeezed Adam's hand.

Adam nodded, so serious. "You don't have to be so careful."

That made him stop, at least in his mind. Subs tended to look to their Doms for control, for the safety to let themselves go. Adam's experience in submission was in controlling himself. Would Adam be able to let go in a

scene with his 'real' Dom? It was an interesting thought. Arousing, too.

They came up to Easy's, the music loud enough to hear from the street, but not thumping and making the sidewalk vibrate like some clubs.

"Is this good for you, Sir?"

"It is. It's great." He brought Adam's hand up to his mouth, kissed it.

Adam's smile was warm, eyes surprised.

"Let's go dance."

"Yes, Sir." Adam kissed his cheek, nodded, and they went in.

## Chapter Two

Dancing.

They were dancing.

Adam let his head fall back as he moved to the music. It made it easier to forget that he'd let a man -- a brand new, strange man -- get to him. This never happened to him. Never.

Matt's body was solid and warm, brushing and sliding against his. There was something about Matt -- Adam wasn't sure what it was, even. The man had been lovely, a true gentleman.

The music slowed, the driving beat fading away in favor of something slinky and sensual. Matt's arm went around his back, drawing him close.

Oh. He moaned and went with the sensations, their hips sliding together. Matt's mouth slid along his neck, breath hot. Adam felt his heartbeat speed. Oh...

"God, you're sexy." Matt's hand slid down to his ass, cupped him.

The words made him hum, warmed him. Flattery, but it worked here on the dance floor.

Matt moved well, leading him effortlessly. Adam closed his eyes and followed, the music and heat sending him to the moon. He could feel the heat of Matt's cock against him, the hardness of it as they rubbed close together. His own body responded, and that unnerved him. He didn't get off during work.

He reminded himself that he wasn't working.

The music changed again and Matt drew him closer, murmured in his ear. "Are you thirsty? Or hungry?"

"Are you? We can stop."

"Only if you want a break. This evening is for you, Adam."

"I'm fine." He was happy.

"Then more dancing it is." Matt kept him close despite the return of the driving rhythm, their bodies pushing and rubbing together.

His body went tight, cock filling, and he couldn't hide it, his arousal. Matt pulled him even closer, eyes intent on his. He found himself a little unnerved, a little wigged out by his own response.

Breaking eye contact, Matt rubbed their cheeks and then spoke into his ear. "Let go, Adam. You're not on the clock anymore, remember?"

"I." That made him shiver, that Matt had noticed his slip of control. "I'm sorry, Sir."

"Never apologize for reacting to me." Matt kissed his ear. "I like that you get aroused by dancing with me."

That sweet, tiny kiss sent heat, electricity through his body.

Someone bumped into him from behind, pushing him hard against Matt. Their bodies pressed together, knees to shoulder, his cock against Matt's thigh. Matt's groan echoed in his ear, and he could feel the heat of Matt's cock against his belly, hot and hard. He would swear he could feel the beat of the man's heart in it.

The urge to hump Matt's thigh, to rub and rub until he exploded was immediate and strong, and more than a touch unnerving.

One hand returned to his ass, cupping him, rubbing him just a little against Matt's body. He gasped, body bucking, rolling in a few, needy strokes before he backed off.

"Would you like to go?" Matt asked, hand sliding down his arm where the strong fingers wrapped around his.

"I. Where?" He wanted. He wanted to lose himself in Matt's body.

"My place, your place. Wherever you're comfortable." Matt led him off the dance floor, their hands tightly clasped.

"Your place." Then he could go home and figure out what the hell was wrong with him, that this man made him silly.

"You've got it." Matt kept hold of his hand, even when they stumbled out from the overheated club into the fresh night air. "My car's a block over this way."

"Let me call Oliver." He dialed as they walked.

"Is it midnight already?" Matt smiled at him. "Time seems to fly in your company."

"It's not, but... I would like to not be interrupted, Sir."

The phone rang, Oliver answering. "Adam."

"Yes, Sir. I'm checking in."

"You're early. Has your evening ended already?"

"I. No, Sir. No. I. I was going to." Stop it, Adam. "I'm going to be unavailable at midnight, Sir."

"Oh, just the opposite, hmm? You're sure, Adam?"

"Yes, Sir." Just one night couldn't hurt. A night of wild passion, of need.

"Very well, Adam." He thought maybe he could hear a note of pleasure in Oliver's voice. "Enjoy yourself."

"Yes, Sir. I'll call in the morning."

"Have fun, my boy."

"Yes, Sir." He hung up as they arrived at a dark, sleek sedan.

"Everything good?" Matt held the passenger door open for him.

"Yes. Yes." He slid in. "I'll call him in the morning."

"Kay." Matt's hand slid over his shoulder, and then the door closed. A moment later, Matt was seated next to him and they were off.

"Where do you live?"

"On Archer. By the Centennial Park."

"Lovely area. My home is near the campus. Do you like it here, Sir?"

"I do. It's much warmer than back home, and it seems more mellow."

He nodded. "I love it here."

"You do seem very at home here, like you belong."

Adam shrugged. He'd been here his whole life. "What do you do for a living, if that's not too personal?"

"No, I want us to get to know each other better. Nothing's too personal." Matt flashed him a smile. "I own a gallery."

"How wonderful. What type of art?"

"Modern. A number of mediums. My latest find is an artist who works in photography, painting, and sculpture. The pieces are all related and twine together. It's quite something."

"Excellent. You must meet fascinating people." This was more comfortable, making small talk. Learning about a Dominant without exposing himself.

"I do. None more fascinating than the man with me tonight, though."

He blushed, chuckled. "Thank you, Sir."

Matt smiled at him, and then turned back to the road, pulling up into the drive of a lovely-looking house. The yard was neat, sterile but well kept. Completely different from his place.

"It's a bit austere at the moment. A lot of my stuff is still in boxes, and I haven't really furnished yet. I *do* have a bed." Matt gave him a wink.

"Beds are good. It looks very manicured."

Matt chuckled. "Manicured. That doesn't sound like a compliment."

"Oh, no." Damn it. "No, it's lovely. There are absolutely places where manicured lawns are exactly fitting."

"I'm still not sure it's a compliment." He got a wink this time, and Matt drew him inside and down a hall.

The house was sterile, too. Half unpacked. It smelled like Matt, though. The bedroom, however, looked like someone lived there. The walls were a light brown with dark accents, the large, four-poster bed covered in a bright quilt and piled with pillows. There was a dresser and a small desk with a laptop on it, a basket with clothes in one corner.

The room made him smile. This was the place of a real person.

Matt smiled and stroked his cheek. "You like my room."

"I do." It felt genuine.

"Good. I hope you spend a lot of time in here." Matt's mouth closed over his.

He didn't have a chance to remind Matt that he didn't kiss. He'd never been so glad to miss anything. Ever.

Matt's tongue slipped between his lips, snuck into his mouth, and licked all around. It was like they were dancing, rocking together. Matt slowly began to undress him, fingers sliding over his skin as it was revealed. His cock was hard, his skin tingling at Matt's touches.

"You work outdoors," murmured Matt, stroking his nipples.

"Sir?" He looked at Matt, surprised.

"You're tanned. You're beautifully defined. I made an assumption."

"I spend my days in my gardens." It was his passion.

"Ah, you see -- I was right." Matt smiled and returned his focus to Adam's nipples. "These are so pretty. Are you very sensitive here?"

"Yes, Sir. The mornings after, sometimes, I can't wear a shirt." The clamps were the worst -- not during, but after.



"Mmm. I'd like to see that, you in the morning, shirtless, these little nibs swollen, knowing they were aching." Groaning, Matt bent and took one into his mouth.

"Oh." He stilled, his instincts, his habit, to center himself, find his calm heart.

Matt's tongue flicked back and forth, his nipple rising to meet the touch. Suddenly, Matt bit at him, the pain sharp and sudden, surprising him. He almost gasped, the sound caught in his throat, his fingers clenching. The bite was followed up by more tongue-flicking and sucking. Adam breathed, chest heaving, toes curling.

Fuck.

"I can feel your heart beating. I know you're enjoying it." Matt looked up at him. "Are you usually this quiet?"

"Yes, Sir." It was how he kept his control.

"I'd love to hear you make noise. I'd love to be the one to drive you to it."

He met Matt's eyes. "This is very different for me." He was a bit off-center.

"This is personal, not business." Matt cupped his face, fingertips stroking. "That doesn't happen very often for you, does it?"

"Never." This never happened.

"Good. I want to be the only one."

Adam couldn't stop staring.

Matt smiled. "Is that really so strange?"

"Which part?"

"That I want to be the only one."

"No. No, actually. Many men have asked for that." He'd just never, ever said yes.

"Then can I hope that the strange part is that you're here in a non-professional capacity."

"Yes, Sir." And the fact that Matt *knew* him, saw him, worried him a little.

"Good." Matt pressed their mouths together, echoing the word with a wicked, mobile tongue.

The kisses made him silly, made him drunk, and he found himself wanting to moan. Matt's fingers slid over his body, digging beneath his waistband. He sucked in, not really needing to. He dressed in loose pants, easy on and off. Matt pulled his pants down, hands sliding on his hips, his thighs. His cock was hard, aching, wet-tipped.

"Mmm, look at you."

His cock bobbed, jerked at the words.

Long fingers slid over his cock, rubbed across the tip. His teeth sank into his bottom lip, his thighs going rock hard.

"I want to hear the sounds you're holding back, Adam."

"Yes. Yes, Sir." That touch came again and he groaned and went up on tiptoe.

"Mmm. That's more like it. Don't hide from me, Adam. I want all of you. All. Of. You."

He didn't know if he could do that. He was fairly sure that didn't matter right now.

Matt's fingers circled his cock, continued to move over it. The touch was light, gentle, almost unbearably so, and he caught himself trying to move into it.

"Do you want more, Adam?"

The simple question was maddening. Should he ask for more? Should he not? So complicated. So much, and he needed.

Matt growled and nipped at his neck. "I want your reactions, Adam, your need. I want *you*."

"I'm sorry. This is out of my realm of experience." Oliver had never sent him to someone who made him feel this confused. Nor had any of his outside clients.

"Have you never made love before?"

"Of course. Of course I have. I'm not a virgin."

"Then I don't understand how what I'm asking for is out of your realm of experience."

"I'm sorry, Sir." He chuckled to hide his embarrassment. "Can I undress you, please?"

"Yes, you may."

"Thank you." He went to his knees and focused on giving Matt pleasure, on using his hands to smooth the clothing away, his mouth to worship the skin he exposed. By the time he had Matt bare, Adam had his control firmly in hand. "You are lovely, Sir."

"Mmm. I'm glad you think so." Matt sounded more than a little breathless.

"May I touch you, Sir?" He leaned into Matt, fingers moving to arouse, excite.

"Yes. Don't think I've forgotten about you, though. Let's lie down. We can do each other."

"Yes, Sir." He moved to the bed, carefully pulled the covers back.

"What will it take to make you lose control, hmm? To make you eager and desperate?"

He didn't know how to respond to that. What to say. So he held out his hand to help Matt in. Matt climbed into bed with him and took control, pushing him into his back and taking his mouth. He groaned. How could Matt do that so quickly?

The man's tongue filled his mouth, explored him thoroughly, and stole his breath. He found himself clinging to Matt's shoulders, holding on. Humming into his mouth, Matt, slid a hand down his side, curled it around his hip. The kiss didn't end, either. Each time he caught his breath, Matt stole it again.

Their hips rocked together, Matt controlling the movements, but it was almost secondary to the kiss. This wasn't a scene, wasn't a job. This was overwhelming and fierce and wild.

They rolled slightly, Matt pushing him into the mattress, humping against him. Through it all, the kisses continued to overwhelm him. He gasped, trying to relax, to center, but... he couldn't. Matt's hips drove the pace, kept their cocks moving together, bumping and sliding and feeling so good. All he could do was shift and move into Matt, move into that heat and strength.

Matt's fingers tangled in his hair, the hot tongue playing with his. A moan pushed into Matt's lips. His moan. A groan was returned to him, Matt's hips snapping against his.

Please. He didn't say it, but he meant it, thought it. Please.

One hand pushed between them, and the big hand wrapped around both their cocks. He looked into Matt's eyes, unsure of what Matt wanted him to do. He saw arousal there, desire. For him. Adam moaned and arched, drove his cock through Matt's fingers. Humming, Matt's hand tightened on him, began to move.

Yes. Fuck, yes. He rode the touch, grunting and moaning into the man's mouth. Tight, fast, Matt worked him, urged him toward getting off. His heels dug into the mattress, adding his strength to the touches.

Matt nibbled a path to his ear and bit down on his lobe. "Come for me, Adam. I want to smell you. Taste you."

"Oh!" Seed pulsed from him, the bite stinging, surprising him.

"Yes." Matt slid along for several moments, their heat mingling together on his belly.

He moaned, shivering, a bit undone. Matt let him take the man's weight, solid and heavy, a soft kiss landing on his neck. He hummed, relaxed, moaned.

"So good, Adam. I knew you'd feel so good against me like this."

"Thank you, Sir." His voice was shaky.

Matt shifted off of him, brought their mouths together, kissing him. At the end of a scene, he usually cleaned up and gently eased the Dom out, but... What did he do with this?

Matt tugged him closer to the strong body. "Will you stay the night?"

"I can stay until the morning, yes." If he couldn't sleep, he'd be leaving at dawn anyway.

"Good." Matt kissed his forehead and then brought their lips together again, this kiss soft and lazy, so easy.

He rested their foreheads together, breathing with Matt.

"You feel just right here."

He met Matt's eyes. "Thank you, Sir."

"It's the truth."

That made him smile. He believed it.

Matt settled him in, close and warm, and tugged the covers up over them. It was like a nest of softness and warmth. A nest that smelled like Matt. Matt. He snuggled in, hummed.

He felt safe and cared for in the strong arms. He *felt* in Matt's arms.

It was the scariest, most amazing thing he'd felt in years.

## Chapter Three

Matt smiled at the Hammer's doorman and went in, blinking as his eyes adjusted to the lighting. He looked for Adam first -- if he couldn't find the man, he'd talk to Oliver.

When he'd woken this morning, Adam was gone, nothing but a note left where a warm body should have been. The note had been polite, dear. "Thank you for the dance and for holding me. Meeting you has been a true pleasure and quite special. I hope you enjoy your new home. A."

A true pleasure and quite special. Not special enough, though, he noted, for Adam to stay and say so in person. To give him a phone number and agree to meet again. It made him a little growly and a little sad.

It also made him determined.

Oliver was seated at a table with his sub, the two of them laughing and feeding each other something chocolaty. He didn't want to interrupt their evening, but Oliver was his only link to Adam.

Oliver smiled at him, nodded. "Our newest member. Welcome."

Matt beamed. "You've approved my membership? Thank you." He'd been a little worried that his inability to detach himself during the scene with Adam was going to hurt his application. It wouldn't have been right, though, to have feelings trying to happen with Adam and to just use them to get in.

He was far more interested in getting to know Adam better -- a lot better -- than he was in joining the club.

"Adam gave you a glowing review." Oliver nodded to the chair across from them. "Would you like to sit?"

"Sure, thank you." He offered Oliver a smile, trying not to burst right out with a demand for Adam's

whereabouts. Gave him a glowing review, but hadn't stayed to say good-morning. "I was hoping to see him here, actually."

"No. No, Adam rarely comes to the club when he's not hired to."

Jack chuckled softly. "Too many temptations."

"Temptations?" So Adam did hold himself aloof, even when he wasn't working?

Jack nodded. "Booze. Rich food. Sex. Dancing. Adam is deep into that whole 'my body is a temple' thing."

"Ah. Not all of that is bad for a body." And he wanted to worship with Adam at his temple...

"Indeed." Oliver fed Jack another bite of chocolate. "I don't believe it is his body he's protecting, I believe it's his control."

Matt nodded. Now that made sense. "I'd like to get in touch with him."

"I can give you the cell number he uses for clients. However, he doesn't answer when he's working."

"Working? Oh, of course." He didn't like to think of Adam being with someone else, testing them. "And do you have him on a job this evening?"

"No. No, he... He is a professional submissive, for a living."

"He works for more than just you?" At least he knew that Adam's heart would not be involved with anyone, but it still tore at something inside him, knowing that Adam would be with another Dom.

Jack shrugged. "Sometimes. When a Dom isn't finding what he needs, or another Dom wants practice on something his sub isn't ready for."

Matt had to bite back his growl. Adam wasn't his to growl over.

Not yet.

Oliver nodded. "Also, if someone needs a sub for a show -- whipping, bondage, the basics. He's lovely and has perfect control."

Matt wanted to break that perfect control, to push Adam beyond it. He handed his cell over to Oliver to input Adam's number. Oliver typed it in easily, then handed it back without comment.

"Thank you." He smiled at the waiter who came by the table. "I'll just have a coffee, please."

"Of course, Sir. Master Xavier has some paperwork for you, when you have time."

"Oh, bring it over now and I'll deal with it. If you don't mind, Oliver. I have to admit, I'm excited to make it all official."

"Of course." Oliver's smile was warm, friendly. Welcoming.

In fact, everything about the Hammer had been welcoming, and he was pleased to have been accepted into the community.

"We'll be having a Dom night to welcome you. Please let us know when it's a good time."

"Oh, how nice, thank you. I have an opening at the gallery in three weeks. My hours are much more civilized after that." Really, he would make his own hours once he had his staff of two in place and fully trained.

Oliver nodded. "Excellent. I look forward to introducing you around."

His coffee came, along with a folder filled with paperwork.

"Thank you, Oliver." He seemed to be saying that a lot. "You've been so kind."

"Nonsense." Oliver's laugh filled the air. "This is my home. It is in my interest to harbor good will with the men around me."



Matt nodded. He could see that.

He started in on the paperwork, filling everything out. He made himself do it before he could call Adam. Jack and Oliver shared their dessert, introducing him to one person after another. By the time he'd filled out all the paperwork, he'd had a second cup of coffee, indulged in a lovely cheesecake, and met at least a dozen people.

He was relaxed and laughing, completely at home. The only thing missing was Adam.

He finally gave in to his urge, pulling his phone back out and dialing the number Oliver had put in for Adam.

The phone rang twice before a soft voice answered. "Adam. Can I serve you?"

Warmth went through him at the sound of Adam's voice. "Adam. Hi, it's Matt."

"Oh... Matt. Sir. How are you?"

He smiled. "Good. Happy to hear your voice."

"Master Oliver said you've been accepted to the club. Congratulations."

"Thank you. For the good review as well." He lowered his voice. "And for last night."

"It was absolutely my pleasure, Sir."

"I was hoping it would be your pleasure again tonight."

"Oh... I... I happen to be free this evening. My appointment canceled."

"That's great! Not that you lost an appointment, but that you're free to come out with me. Would you like to have dinner?"

"Are you at the club? I would come sit with you."

"I am, and that would be great. I can't wait to see you." *To kiss you. To lick you.*

"I'll be half an hour or so."

"I'll be here. See you later." He was still smiling as he pocketed his cell phone.

Oliver was involved in listening to a story Jack was telling him. The older man's eyes were warm, fond, as the wee sub chattered. Waving off a waiter, Matt simply sat back and took it all in, content to watch his fellow members. The place was fairly busy -- a few couples on the dance floor, a few around the bar. Honestly, it was low-key enough to be just another bar, except for the periodic collar, the random blindfold. And the obvious activity going on at the table to the far right. Someone was getting one hell of a blow job.

He thought he could feel at home here; hell, he already did. Oliver -- everyone -- had been very welcoming.

It didn't take long before Adam came in, nodding at a few people on the way to his table. The man was incredibly observant. And stunning. Matt swallowed and then stood.

Adam smiled for him, came to him. He hugged Adam, took a soft kiss. "Thank you for joining me." He was saying 'thank you' a lot, but then he was feeling very grateful; coming to a new city, finding a new place to call home could be very difficult. So far, this hadn't been.

"It's my pleasure. Were you sharing a table or should we get one of our own?"

"We can get a table of our own. I've intruded on Oliver and Jack for long enough."

"Of course, Sir." Adam led him to a quiet corner booth, and they slid in together.

He held on to Adam's hand. "I'm glad you agreed to come meet me. I missed you this morning when I woke up."

"I have a four a.m. yoga class."

He knew he was gasping; he couldn't help it. "Four a.m.?"

"Every morning for two hours."

"Wow. That's..." He shook his head. That was dedication.

"It helps me keep my center."

He nodded, watching Adam, enjoying everything about the man. "What else do you do?"

"During the day? I garden, work out, cleanse, meditate."

"It sounds very... austere."

Adam nodded. "It can be."

"I like giving in to those temptations you try to stay away from. Good food, nice wine, art, dancing, sex..."

Adam nodded, reached out, and took his hand. "I never ask anyone to follow my path. Most people aren't interested in my lifestyle."

He squeezed Adam's hand. "How did you come to be on this path? What led you to such a life?"

"I was an addict in high school -- drugs, alcohol, adrenaline, sex -- and I discovered the lifestyle from a man who showed me how to center myself, control myself, my emotions. I served him for five years and then, once I'd learned what he had to teach me, he sent me away. Working as a professional submissive was an easy choice."

It sounded so cold. "So you live an emotionless life?"

"I live a simple life."

"I didn't mean to be insulting. It's just that most people are looking for passion, myself included, and you seem to have done all you can to eradicate it."

"I can't do my job and be passionate. Can you imagine?" Adam shuddered.

"What happens if you meet someone special?" He looked right into Adam's eyes. Someone like him.

"I don't know." Adam's fingers squeezed his.

"Maybe we'll find out together."

"I think that might be very bad for business."

"Is that more important than finding love? A Master for yourself?"

"I... I don't have another skill set, really."

"You garden, know yoga..."

Adam nodded. "I do. You should come see my gardens some day."

"I would love to see them. Soon." He reached out and slid his hand along Adam's cheek. "What if you find a Master of your own and he doesn't want you to sub for other men?" He didn't know if he could handle it; he knew he wasn't happy with the thought of it. And Adam wasn't even his yet.

"That's why I don't have one. How can I pay my bills without my job?"

He nodded slowly. "That would be something you'd have to work out." That they would have to work out. Of course he didn't even know if it was mutual yet.

"It's a problem. So many things are." Those fingers kept exploring his.

"Your touch is magical, Adam."

"Thank you, Sir."

He leaned toward Adam, eyes on the man's lips. Adam closed the space between them, their lips meeting. He moaned as skin met skin. Adam felt so good, tasted so good. The kiss remained gentle, but lingered, went on and on. His tongue slid along Adam's lower lip, slipped in between them. He loved it, how Adam opened to him, let him in.

He slid his hand up, tilted Adam's head, and deepened the kiss. Drinking in the soft cry, Matt took Adam's mouth, luxuriating in the heat, the softness of the man's tongue. He could take days to explore Adam,

months, years. Every part of the lovely body was fascinating. He settled, for now, for being thorough with Adam's mouth.

Adam was surprisingly untutored in kissing, and Matt could admit he liked that. He wanted to be something more, something bigger than another Dom. He teased Adam's tongue back into his own mouth, inviting his lover -- for that was how he wanted to think of Adam, what he wanted Adam to be -- to taste for himself, to play.

Adam shivered, then began to kiss him, one long exploration becoming another and another. Matt rubbed his fingers over Adam's scalp, let them sift through the lovely hair. Adam's tongue slid over his teeth, almost counting them. He hummed, fingers tracing the shells of Adam's ears.

"Mmm." Oh, that made Adam shudder.

He did the right one again, then the left, wanting to know where all of Adam's sweet spots were. He felt Adam's hips shift. "You have sensitive ears," he murmured. How cool was that?

"Shh. Don't tell my secrets."

"I want to discover them all." Every single one of them.

Adam moaned for him, hands on his shoulders. He deepened the kisses, his fingers sliding to caress Adam's neck. He felt Adam swallow, like the tiny touch was huge.

From nearby, he heard the whispered, "Is that our Adam?"

No, it was *his* Adam.

"I think so. He doesn't kiss, though."

Matt broke off the kiss and smiled into Adam's eyes. "Would you like to go somewhere quieter? Like my place?"

Adam nodded. "Please, Sir. This is... my workplace."

He nodded in return. "Come on, then. Unless you're hungry for food?"

"No. No. I had a protein shake earlier."

"Let's go, then." He was happy now, that he'd settled his bill after his coffee.

He stood and held out his hand, wanting to stay connected to Adam. Adam's hand slid into his, and he could hear the murmurs as they left. People were surprised. Shocked. In one way it was annoying, but in another, it proved that what he was feeling for Adam, and Adam for him, was unique, unusual. It also let him know that Adam was cared for here. That he was thought of fondly.

They made their way out of the club and over to his car. He liked the way Adam looked sitting in the passenger seat next to him.

"Thank you for calling." Adam squeezed his fingers.

He squeezed back. "Thank you for coming. I was worried when you didn't stay this morning..."

"I." Adam stopped, took a breath. "I wanted to stay. That was unnerving."

He glanced over at Adam. "Unnerving?"

"I've never had a relationship with someone at the club. I rarely make friends there, even."

"I'm new."

"I know. You're special, too."

He beamed at Adam. "Thank you -- I was thinking the same thing about you."

He turned the car onto his block. Adam pinked but didn't answer. Matt was smiling as he pulled the car into his parking spot beside the neatly manicured lawn.

"Come on in."

"Yes, Sir." Adam frowned, looked at him. "Would it be all right with you if I didn't call you 'Sir'? That's what I call my clients."

"Then I definitely don't want you to call me 'Sir.' I am not a client." He was very clear on that point.

"No. No, you're not, Matt."

"I'm so glad we're on the same page with that." He stroked Adam's cheek, let his finger trace the lovely lips. Adam leaned into his touch, moaning softly. Leaning in, he kissed Adam gently before backing off. "In. Or I'll get lost in you and we'll give the neighbors a show."

"I wouldn't embarrass you like that."

He chuckled. "No, but I might embarrass myself."

He held Adam's hand from the car to the door, wanting the connection. Adam took his hand, kissed his knuckles. Smiling, he got the door open and barely managed to close it before he pushed Adam up against it, bringing their mouths together. Adam's arms wrapped around him, lips opening eagerly. He pressed their bodies together, sliding against Adam's body to get some friction for his prick.

"Yes." Adam groaned into his mouth, hands clenching his shoulders.

He slid his hand between them, palming Adam's hard on through the soft pants. The heat was amazing, proving that Adam was as affected as he was. Swollen, wet-tipped -- that cock begged for attention. He pushed his hand into Adam's pants and stroked his hand along the hot flesh, wondering how many times he could make Adam come tonight.

Could he make Adam beg? Could he dent that control? He wanted to, very much.

Groaning, biting at Adam's lips, he tugged harder, eager to make Adam come right now, just like this. He felt Adam shudder, shiver, heard the deep moan.

"Give me your pleasure, Adam."

"Matt!"

He tugged one more time and heat hit his fingers, wet and musky. "Yes. Oh, yes." Groaning, he brought their lips back together, his tongue pushing in as he tasted Adam's mouth after orgasm.

The man's lips were soft, swollen. Open. Adam tasted like pleasure, and Matt groaned, squeezing the now slick prick in his hand. Adam shivered, hips still moving, cock still hard. Matt brought his hand up, offered Adam a taste of his own. Adam took his wrist, carefully, seductively licking him clean. Groaning, he humped against Adam, his cock straining against his slacks. That tongue was smart enough, clever enough to drive him to weak knees. He leaned against Adam, letting his lover keep him up.

"Want you."

"I'm here." Adam slipped to his knees, opened Matt's slacks.

"Oh, damn. Yes." He nodded, hand sliding through Adam's hair.

Adam's mouth was heaven -- wet and hot, slick and eager. He cupped Adam's head, drew him even closer. Adam opened easily, taking him to the root, the tip of his cock slipping into Adam's throat.

"Adam!" He cried out, body jerking.

Adam nodded, took him, swallowed. It felt so good, the heat and wetness, the tight swallowing. One hand cupped his balls, rolled them carefully. He spread his legs, giving Adam more room. The careful, amazing touch moved, smoothed behind his balls. His nerves all lit up, pleasure climbing through his body. Adam's head bobbed, throat working, the suction perfect.

"Oh, God, that's good. You're good." He was nearly keening, the pleasure almost too much.



Then Adam rubbed his perineum, nudging his gland from the outside. He cried out, hips snapping, his spunk pouring into Adam's mouth. Adam drank him down, tongue carefully cleaning him.

"God, you're good at that."

Adam hummed softly, the sound vibrating around him. His knees nearly gave out again and he reached out for the door behind Adam, bracing himself. Adam smiled and that amazing mouth kept working him, keeping him hard.

"Keep that up and I'll be able to take you." He hardly recognized his own voice, it was that strained and needy.

The soft chuckle made him want to scream.

He tugged Adam up. He would discover what made Adam lose control. A short kiss was all he offered.

"Come to my bed."

"Yes, Matt. Please."

He took Adam's hand and led him down the hall, tried not to be in a hurry, but he was.

Adam started undressing him, tugging his clothes off. He returned the favor, pulling away Adam's clothes. He had the sudden urge to leave marks -- bruises and ink, scratches and touches, so that everyone knew Adam was loved. He tugged Adam close as soon as they were naked and took a long, hard kiss. He could feel Adam's lips swell, part for him.

"I want your control," he told Adam, meeting the sub's eyes.

"Matt?"

"I want to make you crazy."

Adam pinked. "You can try."

Matt laughed and nodded. "I can. I plan to."

That got him another kiss, a grin. He grabbed hold of Adam's hair, tugged his head back, and took a kiss. A tiny, soft cry pushed into his lips. Yes.

He pushed Adam back farther, bending the man's back as he devoured Adam's mouth. Adam's body rubbed against his, chest to knee, so smooth and warm against him. He found Adam's ass with his free hand, squeezing one taut buttock. The muscles under his fingers rolled as Adam's hands landed on his shoulders.

Yes. He wanted Adam to cling to him, to need him. He bent Adam back farther, making Adam hold him for balance. He could feel the hot cock against his leg, his own sliding on Adam's belly. Adam tried to pull up, get his balance back, hard abs rippling. Matt didn't let him, keeping Adam off balance over his arm. He could feel Adam's heartbeat speeding up, responding.

He let his teeth dig into Adam's lower lip. Adam jerked and shuddered, fingertips digging in. That was it. He wanted that, he wanted everything. The kisses went on and on, making him breathless, making Adam shake.

Matt finally broke it, staring into Adam's eyes as they panted together. Fuck, the man was beautiful. Matt wanted to wrap around him, hold on tight. He licked at Adam's lower lip.

"I." Adam swallowed. "How can I please you?"

"By letting me please you." He lowered Adam to the bed and encouraged his lover to move up into the middle of the mattress.

Adam's eyes never left his, never left him. Bending, he licked Adam's right nipple, still holding that amazing gaze.

"What do you want me to do?"

"I want you to feel. I want you to beg and scream."

"I don't. I haven't been a screamer." Those eyes met his. "I'm not interested in faking it with you."

"No, no faking. Don't ever fake it with me."

One hand was held out to him. "I won't."

He shook Adam's hand. "Good."

"I still don't know what to do, Matt."

"Feel. React naturally. Be yourself."

Adam looked at him, eyes suddenly worried. "And if I don't remember how?"

"I think you can. I think you know here." He pressed his hand against Adam's belly.

Adam's hand covered his. He stared into Adam's eyes. He waited until he got a single, tentative nod.

"Good." He kissed Adam softly, teasing Adam's tongue with his own.

Those pretty lips were swollen, the taste of desire luscious. He encouraged Adam's tongue back into his own mouth. Adam hummed, explored his mouth, tongue sliding against his almost lazily. It made him feel good, that Adam wanted to taste him, to explore, when he knew the man didn't kiss a lot, especially not during the scenes he was paid for.

Each moan stoked the flames of his desire. He pressed Adam into the mattress, lying on top of his lover. The sensation of skin on skin was heady. Adam wiggled, rubbed them side to side. He slid his hand between them to find a nipple, fingers pinching. That little nipple tightened for him, sweet as could be. Groaning, he pinched harder.

He felt Adam's moan rumbling in his chest, but it didn't escape his throat. Growling, Matt shifted to the other nipple and twisted it. Adam stilled, eyes searching his. He held Adam's gaze; he wanted his lover's responses, Adam's *true* responses. If Adam didn't like it, Matt wanted to know. Equally, if it sent Adam over the moon, he wanted to know that, too.

Adam shivered, looked unsure, worried.

"There's no right or wrong here, Adam -- I want to know how each touch affects you." He twisted Adam's nipple again.

"I just want to please you." Adam's voice cracked as he pinched.

"No. Take your pleasure. That's what I'm offering you, what I want you to have."

"I'm..." Adam sighed, frowned. "I'm trying."

"You need to stop trying and just feel." He bit at Adam's lower lip, then soothed it. Somehow he thought that scared Adam more than anything.

He took Adam's hands and held them up over his lover's head. Adam stretched for him, body graceful.

"Keep them there." Let Adam focus on keeping his hands up.

"Yes, S... Matt."

He smiled and nodded. Focusing on keeping his hands up just might loosen Adam from his restraint in other areas.

Matt let himself look at Adam. Thin and tanned, the man was classically beautiful, almost like an ancient statue. Not as cold as one, though; Matt was sure of it. There was a vein of passion running deep through Adam. He was going to discover it.

He bit at Adam's lower lip again, then moved to nibble on an earlobe. That earned him a moan, Adam's neck stretching. Oh, pretty.

Matt lowered his touch, licking at Adam's neck, trying to decide where he was going to bite. Where he was going to leave his mark. He ran his nose over Adam's throat, sniffing and then licking. He found a little hot spot right below Adam's ear, felt the man shiver with delight. He licked the spot, then used his teeth to put a little pressure on it. Adam gasped, fingers curling around his headboard. It made him hum and bite harder.

"Oh." The single sound was so quiet, but it was all for him.

He nodded, rubbed his nose along Adam's skin. Adam stilled, panting softly, waiting for him. He bit gently at the juncture where neck met shoulder. Adam hummed, the sound peaceful. He bit harder.

"Matt!" The word was surprised.

That made him smile, and he licked where he'd bitten, tasting the salt and Adam flavor there. Adam relaxed again, easing under his mouth. Then he nipped, teeth dragging over Adam's skin. He was going to explore every single inch. Belly. Thighs. Those pale little nipples. Licks and bites and sucking-up marks. It was going to be glorious.

He spread Adam's legs, fingers stroking the inner thighs. He let his fingernails scrape over the soft skin. Adam's ball sac drew up, wrinkled. He rubbed it, tugged a little. So soft. Velvety. Matt could see it with a tiny ring behind, something secret. He let his fingers tease behind, stroking the spot where he would put it. Adam's body moved, shifted almost convulsively.

"This is mine. This spot right here." He pinched gently.

"Wh...what?"

"This spot. I'm going to put a ring right here."

"I." Adam's words cut off, but the man's ball sac went tight, tiny at his words.

"A place that belongs to no one else. Just me."

"I. I don't. Oh, fuck, man."

Listen to that. Rough, raw, uncontrolled. He liked it.

Matt scraped the spot with his finger. Adam's leg bent, his lover spreading for him.

"Yeah, right there. This spot. All mine."

Adam didn't answer; he groaned, arched as Matt pinched again. Matt slid down, pushing Adam's legs farther apart so he could slide his tongue along this secret place. The scent of Adam hit him like a freight

train, the musky male smell going straight to his cock. Moaning, he humped against the mattress a few times before getting himself under control enough to start licking the sweet little spot he was claiming as his own.

His. His spot. He kissed and licked and even bit gently at the spot. Then he wrapped his lips around a bit of the flesh and sucked, pulling up the blood; he'd leave Adam with a little hickey, right there.

"Oh..." Adam rolled, spread farther. "Hot."

Yes, it was. Adam was.

His slid his fingers along Adam's cock. The long, thin shaft was engorged, heating, the tip wet. He wrapped his hand around it, stroking as he rubbed his tongue along the mark he'd made. He heard Adam pant, heard the way his touch made the man's breath hitch. Moaning, he stroked Adam's cock faster, loving the way it leaked for him.

"So fine."

Adam groaned, licked his lips. Matt pulled a ball into his mouth, sucking on it as he continued to work the long prick.

Adam's hips rolled, toes curling. "Oh..."

He would have smiled, but his mouth was full. Adam's ball sac relaxed, weighing heavy on his tongue. He slowly let it go, and then took the other one in.

"I don't know what to do, Matt."

"There's nothing for you to do but feel." And if he had to tie Adam up to get that through to the man, he would.

"I." Adam sighed, nodded.

He pressed his thumb against his spot behind Adam's balls and kissed his way up the long torso.

"I'm sorry, Sir. Matt. I'm sorry."

"For what?"

"For not pleasing you."

"What makes you think you're not pleasing me?  
Besides, I'm trying to pleasure you right now. You're not on the clock, Adam."

"I know. Still. I want to. I want to please you."

"You do. You being here makes me so very happy."

Adam moaned for him, kissed him carefully.

"Every new relationship takes time to develop. You're used to jumping in and knowing exactly what the master you're helping needs. We need to start from the beginning. Which is far more exciting." He kissed Adam on the nose. "If also scary."

"A bit, yes."

"Only a bit?" He licked at Adam's lips.

"I don't like being out of control. I'm not good at it."

"No, but I think it's good for you. I think you need to be pushed beyond your control to find out how deeply you can feel."

"I don't have an answer for you, Matt. This..."

"Is something I want. Do you? Are you willing to try? Do you want to try with me?"

"I'd try for you, yes."

"Good. Then let's just see where this goes."

Adam nodded. "I swear, I am not a problem for my other masters."

He laughed and rubbed their noses together. "No. They never got the real you."

"No. No, I couldn't work like that."

"I want the real you. That's all, Adam." It was everything.

Adam met his eyes, suddenly looking young. "That's a lot, Matt."

"I know."

Adam kissed him, the act slow, painfully gentle.

"I want every single piece of you." He brought their mouths together again, letting Adam take another

infinite kiss. Adam moaned for him, deep and low, body pressing close. "See? That's all I want from you. How you feel. How you really feel."

Adam nodded, kissed him again, the sound pushing into his lips almost desperate. He fucked Adam's mouth with his tongue. Sweet, swollen -- Adam tasted like fucking heaven. This was the taste of his man.

Adam seemed just as eager to taste him, tongue sliding on his, hands still on the headboard. He slid his fingers through Adam's hair, stroking his scalp. Adam leaned into the touch, head heavy, hair soft as silk. His fingers drifted down along Adam's neck, over his shoulders. He was amazed all over again by the soft, smooth skin.

"Do you shave your chest?"

"No, Matt. I had electrolysis."

"I like it. Did you do it for yourself?" Or for the many men Adam played sub to?

"It was good for business. Smooth chests are popular. I didn't do my pubic area. I left it."

"Good for business." He pursed his lips.

"Yes." Adam met his eyes. "I let men use me as their fantasy, Matt. That's how I make my living."

"I know. I don't like it because you're mine. I don't want anyone else to touch you."

"Too bad. I have an appointment for a flogging tomorrow at noon, and I'm demonstrating anal beads at the Hammer at eight." Adam looked at him quite seriously. "I have to work, Matt. I have to feed myself."

Everything inside him clenched. "I know."

Adam's hands left the headboard, fingers on his cheek. "This isn't going to work, Matt. I'm sorry; I'm happy to be your friend, but you need a lover, a man who can be only yours."



He shook his head. "But you are mine. You've said yourself that you don't get involved with any of those men."

"No. No, I don't, but that doesn't change things." Adam's eyes were so sad.

"I want to try, Adam. You're special, and what we have together is special." He needed to be man enough to allow Adam to earn his living with his body. He needed to trust in what was between them.

Adam sighed softly. "That's not very fair to you, Matt."

"I have a deep feeling that you're worth it."

Adam chuckled, the sound somehow weak. Pale.

"You do feel it, don't you? That there's a connection here?" He had to know this wasn't one-sided.

"I do." Those hands kept moving, soothing him, petting him.

"Then stay and give me what you don't give anyone else." He bent and brought their lips together again.

Adam kissed him, gentle, delicate, sensitive. He let the kiss go deeper, sinking into it. Adam breathed with him, slow and steady, fingers trailing over his shoulders, down his arms. He began to move against his lover, their cocks sliding together. Adam hummed for him, fingers drawing circles around the small of his back.

He got a hand between them, jacking them together as they rocked, bodies sliding and bumping. Adam's hand joined his, sliding on his prick, working the tip of his cock. He was going to have to tie the man down and spend the rest of the night blowing Adam's mind. Once he'd come, as he was so very close.

"So good. So fine." Adam's words brushed his ear, a low whisper.

"You are." Adam was. Extremely so.

"Come for me, Matt. Please."

"You first."

Adam's laughter made him grin. He meant it, though; he wasn't losing entire control of this encounter. His hand sped, his hand moving both of theirs.

"Come on, lovely. Come for me."

"Lovely. How dear."

He squeezed his hand hard. "Come. Now."

Adam's eyes flew open, shock in them as heat sprayed from the long prick.

"Yes!" He jerked a few times, his own orgasm hitting him hard.

Adam shivered, moaning softly, just for him. He curled up with Adam, holding on. Adam's arms wrapped around him, held him tight.

It wasn't perfect, but it would do for now.

## Chapter Four

Adam finished his scene with Kevin, proving to Kev's sweet little twink lover that no one died from a caning, kissing the wiry top on the cheek after he dressed. "I hope I helped out." These were the absolute best kinds of scenes. Honestly. He felt helpful, needed, necessary.

Well, right now he just felt sore and in desperate need of a glass of juice and two hours in the hot tub with some sappy romance on the television, but still.

Kev smiled at his lover, heat in his eyes, and nodded. He was still smiling when he turned back to Adam. "I believe you were very helpful, Adam. You always are." Kev patted his cheek. "I'm going to put you in a cab." The man already had his cell phone out when Adam's vibrated in his pocket.

He nodded to Kev, then answered. "Hello?" Please don't be another gig. He was taking a couple of days off.

"Adam, hello." It was Matt, voice warm, intimate.

"Matt." He smiled and grabbed his shoes. "How are you this evening?"

They hadn't seen each other much. It was just a bit weird -- knowing that it hurt the man when he was with other Tops.

"I'm good. Are you busy tonight?"

"No. I just got finished working. I was intending to bubble in my hot tub and drink a gallon of orange juice, as soon as the cab gets here."

"Oh, that sounds like a fun activity to share with someone special."

Adam chuckled softly. "It does. I will warn you, I was just pretty thoroughly caned. There are marks, if that bothers you."

"It does, but I want to see you anyway. You need aftercare. Can I come get you?"

"You don't have to, Matt. I hate making you uncomfortable..." He should be incredibly wealthy; then he wouldn't have to work and could just pursue what was there between him and Matt.

"I'm fine, Adam. I want to see you more than someone else's marks on you will bother me. Now, can I pick you up, or can I meet you at your place? We can come back to mine if you'd prefer."

"The taxi is here. I'll text you my address. I need my hot tub." And his home, small and quiet as it was.

"Okay. See you soon, Adam."

"Goodbye, Matt."

He slipped into the cab, eyelids heavy as they headed home. His body was beginning to hurt now, the burn uncomfortable, sore. Matt was there when the cab pulled up, leaning against his car, a sports bag on the hood. Adam eased himself out, offered the cabbie a tip, then headed over to Matt.

Matt slid a hand around his arm and tugged him close, kissing him softly. "You're looking a little pinched."

"Been a hard few days. Come on in." He kissed Matt back, sighed, and smiled.

"A few days? There's more than just the caning?"

He opened up the front gate, the foliage surrounding them, protecting them from the real world. "Welcome to the garden."

"Wow, this is lovely."

"Thank you." He led Matt up to the porch and into his tiny little house.

"So what all is hurting?"

"Please have a seat. I need juice." The sofa was comfortable, soft. Cushy.

"Stop that." Matt growled at him. "Tell me what's hurting, what you need."

"Juice and a hot soak. I'm sore." And tired.

"Then go soak. I'll get the juice."

"Are you sure?"

"Go. Now." Matt kissed his cheek and moved into his small kitchenette.

He headed out to the little covered deck with the hot tub and started heating it. Stripping.

Matt's hiss alerted him to the man's presence. "That looks painful."

"It was intense." And he was close to hysterics. "I usually spend this time alone."

"You're not alone now." Matt nodded at the hot tub. "Get in."

Matt climbed in, too, after putting a large glass of orange juice and the jug on the shelf around the hot tub. Adam's hands were shaking when he got to the juice. His reserves were shot, and he was so tired. Matt helped him sit, putting him between the man's legs so he could rest back against the solid chest. One of Matt's hands moved to the bottom of his glass, holding it steady.

"Th...thank you."

Soft kisses pressed along his neck, comforting and gentle. He let himself cry a little, silently. He was tired. Time to take a few days off.

Matt didn't try to arouse him or talk or anything other than offer him one sweet, comforting touch after another.

"I'm sorry, Matt. I'm not very good company."

"You're excellent company. And it seems to me that you need someone to take care of you after these scenes you do. A real master would hold you, make sure you were okay after. Whether the scene is small or big, the TLC after it is a part of the reason it works so well."

"One day." One day he would have that. Maybe with Matt. Hopefully with Matt. He let himself have the thought for tonight.

"Well, you can have some TLC today, lovely. I'm here for you."

His breath hitched and he nodded. "Thank you."

Matt kissed the skin beneath his ear. "You need a break, lovely. You need a few days to heal from this."

Adam nodded again, then let himself turn, lean into Matt's embrace, rest his cheek against one shoulder.

Matt kissed the side of his face. "You feel good in my arms, Adam. You feel right."

"Thank you for coming over. It's been a long week."

"You're working too hard, all on your own."

"Everyone works hard these days." Everyone.

"Not everyone is someone I care about."

Oh. Oh, God. So dear.

Matt's fingers slid over his arms, then to his sides, careful to avoid his sore areas.

"I don't like the canings. After."

"It isn't right to be sent home alone after a thing like that."

"Kev needed to comfort Bradley. Brad's very new. Scared." He understood that.

"So you took the caning and Brad got the comfort?" Matt snorted and nuzzled his neck.

"That's the job."

"Bah. Well, now you have me, and you get the comfort. I'm not leaving you to your pain and your juice and your tears on your own."

He sobbed a little, kissed Matt's jaw. Matt turned, bringing their mouths together. The kiss was soft, gentle. He let himself go, crying hard, trusting that gentle strength would surround him. Matt let him cry, holding and kissing him. There for him.

"I'm sorry, Master."

Matt held him closer. "For what?"

"Crying." Needing this comfort so badly.

"It's a release, lovely. A release that you need. Don't apologize for that."

"The water feels good, hmm?" He was starting to melt.

"It does. You feel even better."

"Yes. So good. I feel so much better." His eyes closed.

His glass was pressed into his hand. "Have some more, lovely."

"Kay." He hadn't eaten in two days. Tomorrow, he needed to remember breakfast. One he had to chew.

"We'll have to get out soon. Do you have salve for your back?"

"No. We will? I sleep in here a lot."

"It's not good for you, lovely. I'll get you some salve in the morning. You need to take better care of yourself."

"I can't reach my back, so I never worried."

Matt grunted, kissed him softly, and stood, bringing him up as well. He dangled for a minute, then let Matt help him out.

Matt wrapped him in a towel and picked him up, carrying him back inside.

"You'll hurt yourself." He pointed to the corner where his bed was.

"I'm just fine, lovely." Matt carried him over.

It smelled good to him, earthy. Houseplants filled the area, surrounding his bed.

"It's like being in a garden." Matt set him gently down.

"It is. This is my favorite spot." He hissed as his back touched the pillows, his ass the mattress.

Matt growled softly and pulled his blankets aside, then moved him carefully onto his side and covered him up.

"Are you leaving?" He didn't want Matt to leave.

"No. I'm just making sure you're settled properly." Matt slid into the bed next to him.

"Oh. Thank you." He met Matt's eyes. "Thank you for coming over."

"It's my pleasure." Matt's arms wrapped around him, tugged him closer.

He curled in, whispering a soft "Good night, Master," as he dozed off.

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Matt held Adam in his arms, just watching the man sleep.

Master. The word echoed through him, calling to a place deep inside him. Adam had called him Master. Hurting, tired, needing, and instinctively calling him Master. Matt wasn't sure he'd be able to sleep. Of course he did, warm and snuggled under the comforter with his lover.

Adam's alarm went off at an unreasonable hour, and he heard Adam slap it off, groan.

Matt tugged him closer. "You're not going," he said decisively.

"Hmm?" Adam pressed into him, head tucked under his chin.

"No yoga this morning."

He thought the sound Adam made was grateful.

He pressed a kiss to Adam's forehead. Who'd ever given this man comfort? Eased him after his many scenes with different Doms?



Adam sighed softly, relaxed for him, falling back into an easy, exhausted sleep. One hand was on his hip, keeping him close. Matt took a deep breath, and then another. He was so drawn to Adam, knew this man was his. He couldn't ask Adam to be his sub, though, not until he'd reconciled his feelings about Adam's job.

It wasn't that he thought what Adam was doing was wrong, not at all. But... The idea of someone else marking Adam, topping him, didn't sit well. Still, neither did the idea of someone else doing for Adam what he could do now -- giving the man the comfort and care, the intimacy that eased one through the aftermath of a scene. That was his.

"Master... I was dreaming." Adam was muttering, still asleep.

His whole body bucked at the word 'Master.' "Sweet dreams, I hope." He kissed Adam's forehead.

"Mmmhmm. Gonna get to eat today. Real food."

Matt frowned. Adam clearly needed a keeper. Because real food was not optional depending on the day of the week it was.

Adam kissed the underneath of his chin, then soft snores sounded again. Poor, exhausted man, looking out for, and helping, all those people and taking nothing for himself. Matt was about to change all that. He might have to convince Adam of it, but convince the man he would. Feeling better about the whole thing in general, he drifted back off to sleep himself.

He woke to Adam sliding out of his arms, padding toward the bathroom. The long, lean back was striped, bruised.

He bit back his growl at the sight of someone else's marks on Adam's body. This other Dom might have marked Adam, but where was he now when Adam truly

needed a master? Not here. Now Matt was here, and he was going to make that work.

He got up and followed Adam behind the little curtained-off area.

Adam turned on the shower, moving slowly to the sink to take some Advil. "Morning. I didn't mean to wake you."

Matt checked the temperature on the shower, making sure it wasn't too hot or too cold. "I wanted to be awake when you were. You take your shower. I'm going to go get something for your back." And some breakfast. Real food.

"You don't have to." Adam offered him a smile. "It was amazing, resting with you last night. Thank you."

"I want to." He left out the part where he did have to, for now. "And I've got some thoughts. We can talk when you've been tended to. Stay in the shower a while -- I won't be long."

Adam nodded. "I can do that."

"Good." He gave Adam a firm good-morning kiss, swatted a corner of unblemished ass, and went to find his clothes.

It didn't take Matt long to go to the pharmacy and pick up the things he needed. He was going to put together a post-work scene kit to keep in a backpack, so he could care for Adam anywhere and under any circumstance.

He stopped at a small café on his way back, grabbing a couple of brie on croissant sandwiches and some green tea lattes. At the last minute, he added a bunch of grapes and some oranges to his haul. Then he drove back to Adam's place. This time, he had the time, and the daylight, to look over Adam's little house.

It was cute and truly small, but what made it special was the greenery all around it. Once you were through

the gate, it was like you'd been transported into another world, one of trees and flowers and all manner of growing things. He followed a small rock path around to the back, where flowers and vegetables filled a surprisingly large area.

The little enclosed deck that held the hot tub had stairs down to a small, stone-paved area big enough to hold a couple of wire-metal chairs and a tiny table. It would be a beautiful spot for breakfast.

He went back around to the front of the house and let himself in. The shower was still going, and he nodded. Good. Adam was pampering himself. Matt left the food in the kitchenette, the bag of pharmacy extras on the bedside table, and took only the salve for Adam's back into the bathroom area with him.

His lovely boy was sitting in the tub, water falling on him, sound asleep. Matt shook his head and found a clean towel. He turned the water off and wrapped Adam up.

Adam blinked awake. "Master."

"Yes." He nodded and encouraged Adam to stand. "You've worn yourself thin."

"It's been a long week." It was beginning to sound like a mantra.

"How many days before your next appointment?"

"I need some time to recover. I took a week."

"Good. That means we have a week together." He did a quick mental perusal of his schedule. "I have a few things to move around and a couple I can't, but it's doable."

"You don't have to change your schedule for me..."

"Yes, I do." He wasn't going to even listen to any arguments on the matter. He pulled Adam out of the water, into his arms. Thin. His Adam was thin. "Back to bed. It's time someone pampered you. Fed you."

"I can eat today."

"What's this business about being able to eat today? You don't eat every day?"

"No. I don't eat on days I work. I drink juice and fast."

Matt had to keep his jaw from dropping. "You what?" Surely he hadn't heard Adam correctly.

"I fast when I work to keep myself clean for the Doms."

"And how many days in a row have you worked?"

"Five."

He shook his head. "That's not going to happen again." He tugged Adam over to the bed.

"What?" Adam followed easily, fingers twined with his.

"You need to take better care of yourself. Or should I say, you need me to take care of you." He encouraged Adam down onto the bed. "Lie down on your stomach."

Adam stretched out for him, showing him that poor, bruised back. Matt noticed that Adam didn't argue about needing his care.

He opened up the container of salve and ran his fingers through it. "I'm putting the salve on now." It was likely going to hurt some as he worked it into the welts and cuts.

Adam nodded, groaning softly.

"Breathe through it." He started at the shoulders and worked his way down, going back for more salve over and over again.

"Master." Adam panted for him, the sound honest, real.

"Your poor back."

"He wanted to show his sub."

Matt snorted. "I'll bet you any amount you like that he won't cane his sub as hard as he caned you."

"Can I tell you a secret?"

"You can." Please.

"I don't like the canings. I don't mind most of my job, but I don't like that. It's... cold."

"Especially without the aftercare." He kept carefully working the salve into the awful welts.

"Yes. Yes. I know I'm supposed to be patient, but... I don't like it."

"Then don't do it." Surely Adam could afford to be a little picky.

"It's harder than you think, to turn down men who have been good to you."

He almost smiled. Adam was a sub. This didn't surprise him at all. He rested his hand on Adam's ass and leaned in to murmur into the man's ear. "Then I forbid it. No more canings."

Adam's body shuddered; a hungry little cry hit the air.

Yes.

"That's right." He nodded, feeling good, settled inside himself about that.

Adam's eyes met his, wide, bright. "Yes, Master. Okay. Yes."

"Yes." He smiled, pressed his lips to Adam's.

Adam shivered, then settled back down for him, cheek on one arm.

Matt stripped and then lay down with Adam. "There's food, when your back goes numb. And green tea lattes."

"Oh." He could hear Adam's stomach snarl.

"Your body is making itself known."

"I'm sorry. It's just been a while."

"Don't apologize for your needs, Adam." He kissed his lover softly. "You stay here and I'll get the food and drinks."

"You shouldn't have to care for me, Matt."

"I'm your Master. It's part of the territory."

"My Master. You're... it's good for you?"

"You're good for me, Adam." He put a kiss on his Adam's forehead and headed over to the kitchenette.

It didn't take him long to retrieve the fancy sandwiches and tea and return to the bed. The sunlight shone through a skylight, bathing Adam with a golden glow.

Adam was on the phone, back to him. "Sorry. I really feel the need for a few days off. Tonight is not good for a scene."

He growled. "You said a week."

Adam looked over at him, eyes worried.

"You need the week, Adam. Tell them no, or I will."

"I. What? I. Master? No. No, Sir. Not you. I."

Matt held out his hand for the phone. Adam blinked at him again, and he snapped, "Now."

The phone was put in his hand.

"I'm sorry, but Adam is not available for the next seven days. If you'd like to call back and leave a message, he'd be happy to get back to you in a week. Good bye." He hung up the phone without waiting for an answer from the master on the other end of the line.

Adam's lips were open, eyes wide, and Matt deliberately turned the phone off. "You need that week, Adam. And if you don't take care of yourself, then I'll have to do it for you." He could see Adam's body respond to his words, long cock beginning to fill. "That's right. I'm in charge now. We'll discuss a workable schedule, but not today. You're on vacation."

Adam swallowed hard. "I don't know how to. You. We weren't a pairing even yesterday, Master."

"I know. That was stupid of me, not to make my claim earlier. But I'm making it now. You're mine, Adam, we both know it."

Adam nodded for him.

"Sit. Eat and drink. We have a week to explore what we have." He sat next to Adam, offered one of the brie sandwiches.

Adam's fingers were shaking as he took the sandwich, and he ate a tentative bite. Matt put a hand on Adam's leg, squeezed.

"It's good." Adam ate another bite.

"I have a feeling you'd be happy with cardboard right now." His poor Adam was practically starving.

Adam shrugged. "You have to be empty, I think, to do my job."

"While you're doing the job. Not while you're at home. Not while you're mine."

"No. Not while I'm yours."

"That's right." He reached across and stroked Adam's cheek. Adam's eyes closed, the sandwich landing back on the plate. "Have another bite." Food first, making love second.

"Maybe. You're better than the food."

He beamed at Adam. "Still, a couple more bites, okay?"

"A couple." Adam didn't move.

"Yes." He took the hand holding the sandwich and moved it up toward Adam's mouth.

Adam took another bite, eating slowly. Matt watched every movement, eyes on his lover.

"Am I keeping you from work?"

"No." He had a few calls to make, but it wouldn't be a problem.

"No?" He got a quick, playful wink. "Me either."

That made him chuckle, and he leaned in to steal a quick kiss. Adam kissed him back, opened to him.

He pulled back, smiling. "One more bite." Then Adam could have more later.

"One more." Adam took a bite, groaned over the sandwich.

"It's good, isn't it? You'll have the rest in a bit." He was going to make sure Adam ate more than enough over the next week.

"It is good. You should have some."

"I'll have my sandwich if you'll keep eating while I do."

"I'm filling up, but I'll have a few more bites."

"Good." He ate his own sandwich, taking his time so Adam had more to eat as well. The green tea latte didn't taste anything like tea or coffee, but was good.

Adam ate about half his sandwich, drank his entire latte with a sigh.

"Feeling better for that?"

"Yes. Yesterday was hard."

"I imagine the whole week was hard. You need to spread out the days you work." He put his fingers across Adam's mouth. "No, we won't talk about this now. We have all week, and our first few days are for healing, loving."

Adam moaned, nodded for him, eyes on his. He leaned in and brought their mouths together, his lips soft against Adam's. His. His lovely man. He smiled, addicted to the look of Adam's skin in the sunlight. He shifted them, careful to make sure Adam didn't go down onto his back as they stretched out on the bed. He pressed against Adam's body, his cock sliding on the silky smooth belly.

"Mmm. You're warm." Adam's hand slid up and down his spine.

He smiled and pressed kisses over Adam's face: forehead, cheeks, chin, all of him. Adam's cock began to fill again, slowly, responding to him. He found the pretty nipples and stroked them, urging them to hardness



as well. He wanted rings in them, delicate ones that he could decorate.

"You're a beautiful canvas, Adam. So lovely." He got a soft chuckle in response, gentle and sweet. "I'm going to paint you as I want, too. Your skin, your body. Make it all mine."

Those eyes went wide again, searching his.

"I'm serious, Adam. You're mine. Everyone should know you have someone who cares."

Adam groaned. "I don't know... The Doms don't want me to be anything; they want me to be everything. Nothing."

"Too bad for them. You're mine. If I can put up with you doing scenes with them, they can put up with the fact that you have a Master." There was only so much he was willing to concede.

He loved how Adam's face changed every time he said something like that. It spoke to something deep inside him.

"We can go get that guiche this week. Once your back has healed a little bit."

"Master?" Adam took his hand. "You'll talk to Oliver?"

"About what, lovely?"

"You. Me. The work?"

"Of course. But you can still work."

"No. No, I mean." Adam stopped, took a breath. "I'll speak to him, but he may wish to speak to you as well."

"I have no problem talking to him about you, about the work. I have no intention of keeping us hidden."

"I have to look at my contract with the club. I imagine it will all be fine."

"It will be fine. And you don't need to worry about any of this. We don't worry about anything but us for awhile. You have the time."

"Right. Right. Of course." Adam took another of those deep, slow breaths.

"Mmm. I have you off-balance." He liked being able to do that.

"I'm sorry." Adam sighed, leaned into him. "I'm just a bit tired."

"You're a lot tired. I'm going to make love to you, and then you're going to sleep some more."

"I am?"

"You are. We are."

He pressed their lips together -- no more talking. He focused on the kiss, on stealing Adam's breath, on making himself Adam's focus. He explored with his fingers, learning and re-learning Adam's body. He was super careful with Adam's back, the stripes which were going to be heavy bruises.

"You do mark beautifully."

Adam nodded. "I bruise easily."

"It's delicious." He nibbled at Adam's lower lip and then made his way to the long throat, contemplating where to put his mark.

He focused on breathing with Adam, in and out, slowly, steadily. He wrapped his lips around the spot on Adam's neck and began to suck, tongue licking, teeth biting, lips pulling. Adam jerked against him, hands wrapping around his arms. He didn't stop; Adam was his to mark as he wanted. His to touch, to love. To care for. To explore. His. His. His.

HIS.

Growling, he pulled harder, feeling the skin heat up beneath his lips.

"Master!" Adam shifted, nails digging into his skin. "Please!"

"Please what?"

"I don't *know*."

"I do, though. I'm marking you."

Adam arched, chin lifting as more throat was offered to him. Moaning, he latched back onto Adam's skin, sucking hard. The skin was bruising, hot to his tongue, his lips. He sucked a little harder, determined that it would still be there when Adam went back to work.

Those hungry sounds started filling the air, sharp, needy. He slid his hand down to Adam's cock, wrapping his hands around it. Full, hot, hard, the wet tip kissed the inside of his wrist. He stroked a few times, the heat of it making him moan and suck harder.

"Master. Master, I dream about you now."

He stopped only long enough to murmur, "Tell me more."

"I dream about your body, your heat. Your voice. Needing you."

"Good." He wanted Adam to need him, to want him.

Adam groaned for him. "I'm very taken with you." So proper.

"Good. Don't stop."

"Don't stop?"

"Don't stop being taken with me. Don't stop dreaming about me."

"I don't think I can."

"Good." This time he said the word fiercely.

"I never... why are you so different from everyone else?"

"Because I'm me." It was the best answer he had.

"Yes, Master."

"I do like the way that sounds from your mouth."

"You do? It feels so right."

"That's because it is. We are." He pressed their lips together, hand working Adam's cock with hard strokes.

"Master. Master. Master..."

"Yes. Adam. Let me smell you."

Adam's head tossed, marked throat working. "My Master..." Heat spread over his fingers.

"God, yes. Yours." The scent of Adam was intoxicating.

"Mine." A single tear slipped from Adam's eye, a dazed smile on the man's face.

"And you're all mine." He leaned in and kissed the tear away.

The skin under Adam's eyes looked bruised, the man almost dozing already.

"Sleep, lovely. I'll still be here when you wake up."

"You promise?"

"I promise. I'm not going anywhere for the next week." He was making his claim right here, right now.

"I trust you."

Then boom, his Adam was asleep.

He pressed a kiss to Adam's forehead and sat up, looking for his cell phone. He had a few calls to make to clear his schedule so he could keep his promise.

## Chapter Five

Adam slept and dreamed, then slept a little more before hunger drove him out of his bed. He stumbled toward the kitchenette and grabbed the kettle. Tea first, then food.

Matt appeared, moving to lean against the counter. "I thought I heard you get up."

"Tea. Food." His head ached a little.

"You make the tea; I'll see what I can rustle up in the food category." Matt didn't move to the cupboards or fridge, though. Instead, he came over, hand sliding along Adam's cheek. "Hey."

Oh. Warm. Adam's eyes closed and he leaned in. "Hey."

"Mmm." Matt's lips brushed across his. Then they came back, pressing harder this time.

The kiss was warm and easy and he opened to it, like a morning glory to the sun. Matt's tongue swept through his mouth, sweet like cherries as well as hot. He forgot all about the tea, stepping closer, snuggling in. Matt's arms were warm and sure around him, the sweet tongue opening his mouth as the kiss deepened.

The touches to his sore back were careful, comforting, letting him relax. The kisses were long and leisurely, as if they had all the time in the world to do this. Adam could handle that. A vacation from life.

Eventually the kiss ended and Matt cupped his face, smiled at him. "So. Tea and something to eat? I'll join you. Do you like sports?"

Matt went to the fridge, looking in it with a frown.

"It depends on the sport, I suppose. What's wrong?"

"Is there anything edible in here?"

"There are greens and juice for fasting..." He leaned in and looked. He fasted when he worked, and when he wasn't working, he fasted every third day.

"Okay, there *are* greens and juice, but you need to eat, not fast, at the moment." Matt looked at his watch. "I guess we could head over to the all-night grocery store, though I'd rather wait and do the market with you in the morning. We can get fresh and local that way. That still leaves tonight... I know you don't have much in the cupboards -- I was looking for chips and dip earlier, to go with the game I'm watching." Matt turned and smiled at him. "You don't mind that I've made myself at home, do you?"

"No, Master." He kissed the man's nose. "I don't keep junk food."

"That's not all you don't keep." Matt chuckled and rubbed their noses together. "All right, revised plan. We'll have some tea and then find a late-night diner to get some real food into you."

"I had the sandwich earlier. You don't have to put yourself out."

"You had half a sandwich this morning. It's almost ten o'clock. And I'm hungry, so you have to be starving."

"A little. I have food issues." He poured the water into the kettle.

"Food issues? You should tell me about them. I need to know."

"Oh, it's just a thing." He wasn't comfortable sharing that, not yet.

One of Matt's eyebrows went up.

"Would you like tea?"

"I would. And then I'm taking you out for supper. There's a little café that serves meals all night on Elm Street."

He nodded and started the kettle, pulling two mugs from the cupboards. He could feel Matt's eyes on him as he moved about. He forced himself not to hurry, not to show any nerves.

"You have amazing grace, lovely."

"Thank you. I practice."

"I've heard. Yoga for two hours most mornings."

"Yes. Every morning. I haven't missed in months."

"You missed this morning," Matt pointed out. "Not that that's a bad thing. You were utterly exhausted."

"I was. I worked a lot this week."

"Yeah." Matt drew him in again once the kettle was heating, the mugs full of teabags. A kiss landed on his lips. Then another, and another.

He melted, leaned into Matt. Once again, the kisses went on and on, like they didn't have anything else in the world to do. Adam found himself moaning, slowly rocking against Matt, focused on nothing but their kisses. Matt's hands landed on his ass, encouraging his movements. *Master*. The word echoed in his head, in his heart.

It was the whistle of the kettle that brought the kisses to an end, its shriek startling them both.

"Sorry. Sorry, I forgot about it." He'd gotten lost.

"So had I." Matt pulled him back, letting the kettle scream as he took another kiss. Matt's kisses left him stupid. The kiss ended slowly, and then Matt rubbed their noses together. "Okay, now you can get it."

"Get what?"

"The kettle, lovely."

His cheeks went red hot. Burning.

"Shh. Don't be embarrassed. I'm flattered."

"You make me dizzy." He grabbed the kettle, poured.

"Yeah? Good. I like having a strong effect on you."

"No one ever has."

"That's because I'm your Master."

"Yeah." He met Matt's eyes. "You know, I waited for you a long time."

"I'm glad you did." Matt reached out and cupped his cheek, hand dropping a moment later so he could deal with the tea.

"I am, too." He made his Master tea, fingers shaking with the sudden need to make it right.

Matt's hands slid over his, wrapping around his fingers. "What's wrong, lovely?"

"I just want to make things good. Right. Perfect." He spent a lot of time on perfection.

"You're making tea for yourself and your Master -- that's perfect right there."

"There is also room for improvement."

"Sometimes you have to be happy with how things are."

He nodded, not really believing it.

Matt growled softly and tugged him around. "Look at me, Adam. Nothing is perfect. We can only do our best."

"I try to, always."

"Trying is fine, as long as you don't turn yourself inside out doing it."

"I. You're making me uncomfortable."

"I don't mean to. But I'm not going to change my mind about this."

Adam nodded. "Do you want honey?"

"No, just a little bit of milk, please."

"Okay." He nodded, made Matt's tea.

Matt stayed close, one hand sliding onto his back, rubbing small, almost not-there circles. The touch made his eyes cross, just a bit.

When he'd made his tea as well, Matt took his hand and kissed his fingers. "Come watch the rest of the game with me."



"I can do that." His fingers danced over Matt's face.

Matt turned to kiss his palms. Then his hand was taken, Matt leading him toward his little living room area.

"Do you like the house?" It was simple, but he found it comfortable.

"I do. It suits you."

Matt drew him onto the couch, a basketball game playing on the TV, the sound turned down. He curled in, resting against Matt's shoulder. Matt's arm wrapped around him. "This is nice, huh?"

"It is." He sipped his tea, the warmth good from outside and inside.

"Do you have a favorite team?"

"Not really. I love to watch the extreme sports, mostly."

"Like cage match extreme or snowboarding extreme?"

"Snowboarding. Shaun White is hot."

Matt laughed softly. "He is. It's the hair."

He nodded. "Yes. And the grin. He's a magical creature."

"Kind of like you."

That made him smile. "If I was talented."

Matt looked at him, surprise in his eyes. "You're talented."

Adam laughed. "At bruising and following directions?"

"You're the consummate sub, lovely. It's a gift."

"Thank you, Master."

"Mmm." Matt took another soft, lazy kiss. "You're welcome."

If only his gift wasn't the one thing that he did that hurt his Master.

Matt's team scored and Matt cheered, laughing and kissing him. He laughed, cheering alongside.

"Man, this is so much more fun with someone."

Oh, that made him feel like a million dollars. "It is."

They cheered again as the ball sank in the basket. It wasn't about sex and it wasn't about subbing, it was just about watching the game together. Matt's arm felt good around his shoulders, like it belonged there.

His hand came to rest on Matt's belly, his head on the man's shoulder. Matt hummed, hand sliding along his arm, rubbing circles on his back. He wasn't even sure Matt knew he was doing it. It didn't matter. He was happy. He thought Matt was happy. It worked.

Matt chuckled when the game was over. "Sorry, I didn't mean to wait so long to take you out for supper. It was a good game, though."

"It was. I'm happy." They didn't have to move.

Matt's stomach growled and the man laughed again. "Okay, like I said, if I'm hungry, then you must be starving."

"I'm okay. I am." He could snuggle forever.

"Still, we should go eat. And then tomorrow we can hit the market so we have food at home we can make."

"Okay. I could murder a pancake."

Matt laughed. "All right, pancakes for the bloodthirsty it is."

"Bloodthirsty?" That made him laugh, hard.

"You did say you could murder a pancake." Matt gave him a wink.

"Punny. Very punny."

Matt laughed, stood. "Come on, lovely. I have my man to feed."

God, that was an amazing set of words. Just amazing.

Matt's hand wrapped around his, tugging him up. Their lips met for a moment, a little 'hi, how are you,'

and then they were on their way to the front door. On a date. Him and his Master.

They headed to the car, Matt humming, holding his hand the entire way.

"You sound happy."

"That's because I am." Matt stopped at the side of the car and turned to face him, looking into his eyes.

"Very."

"Very. Good."

"Yeah, it is." Matt opened the passenger door for him, going around to the other side.

He eased himself in, back still aching, sore.

"It's not far," murmured Matt as he pulled out onto the road.

"I'm fine. Don't worry."

"I do worry, though." Matt glanced at him, smiled.

"That's my job."

"No. No, it's my job. I'm here to worry for you, make sure your needs are met."

"That works both ways, though, Adam. I know you don't have experience with a master of your own, but trust me, it's supposed to work both ways."

He chuckled, a little unnerved. He had experience with dozens of masters, but never someone who was there for *him*.

Matt turned down the street with the all-night diner, and pulled into the parking lot. "Best pancakes you can find, this time of day. You discover a lot when you've just moved in and don't have anything unpacked."

"Midnight pancakes are the best. I used to come out here when I was a teenager in high school."

"Really? That's so neat."

"Yeah. When I was a kid, I was a serious night owl."

"Were you out back then?"

"Of the closet? Yeah. Yeah, my folks weren't worried about that." His folks had worried about his anorexia then. They still worried a little bit.

"No? That implies that they were worried about something, though." Matt came around and opened the door for him.

"I. Thank you." He didn't talk about it. He'd had to talk about it a lot after his year in, during his recovery, and he watched his clothes to make sure he never lost more than ten pounds, ever.

The waitress led them to a booth and they sat across from each other, Matt ordering them both the short stack.

When she'd gone, Matt looked right at him, reached and took his hand. "What were they worried about?"

"Oh, just stuff. My parents were very liberal." He held Matt's fingers, looked away.

"Very liberal? So they were worried you were going to be conservative?"

"I. Me? No. No. God, no. I was the wild pink and green-haired punk child."

"Oh, I hope you have pictures!"

"Mom does, yeah." He grinned. "You'll have to meet her someday when she and Pop come back into town."

"They don't live here anymore?"

"They travel. A lot. They bought a travel trailer and go and go. All the time." It was adorable.

"Sounds like, uh, fun?" Matt grinned, squeezed his hand.

"They love it. They're in Florida right now, at the beach."

"That sounds nice. Do you spend a lot of time at the beach here? I haven't really had a chance to check it out yet."

"I run there, yeah."

"How often do you run?"

"Every morning after yoga. Well, not this morning, obviously."

"So there's yoga and there's running and there's fasting. You don't do things by halves, do you?"

"I. No. No, I... I don't." This felt a lot like lying.

Matt tilted his head. "What's the matter, lovely?"

"Nothing. Nothing, I just... I have sort of like an old secret and I'm not interested in sharing it, but not saying feels weird."

"If not sharing it feels weird... maybe it's your subconscious saying you should."

"Maybe. I don't want you to treat me differently, though."

Matt tilted his head. "I care for you a lot. I want to take care of you. I know you work too hard and until now didn't have anyone to look after you post-scenes. I know you don't eat enough. And I know that I'm going to do my best to make all that better. I don't know if what you're going to tell me will change any of that. I can't see it changing things."

"I spent a year in a rehabilitation hospital."

Matt's hand squeezed his tighter. "Rehabilitation for what?"

"Anorexia nervosa. When I was eighteen. I was very ill."

"Ah, you said you had food issues. Does it stem from that?"

"Yes. Yeah. I don't. I'm very careful not to lose more than ten pounds from my target."

"That would be far easier if you ate more than you do." Matt raised his free hand. "We're not discussing this until later, though, remember?"

He nodded. "I'd prefer not to discuss it at all, honestly."

"I can't promise you that."

Adam sighed, but smiled. "Later." It wasn't a situation he needed disturbed.

"Much later."

Their waitress came back with their pancakes. He took a deep breath, nodded, and grabbed the strawberry jam.

Matt took his hand again, squeezed it, and then let it go. "These look good."

"They do. I like the strawberries on them."

Matt grabbed one of the strawberries and offered it to him.

"Thank you." The tart sharpness tasted good.

Matt seemed more interested in watching him and feeding him and than in eating himself.

"You should eat, hmm?" He drank his coffee.

"We both should." Another strawberry was fed to him.

He chuckled, nibbled, forked up a bite of pancake and offered it over. Smiling, Matt opened up, let him feed his Master. Better. Much better. A piece of pancake was offered in return, a berry sitting on top of it.

He opened up, hummed. "It's good."

"Yeah, best midnight pancakes in town." Matt offered him another bite.

He shook his head. "They're yours."

"So feed me yours." Matt pressed the fork against his lips.

He opened, hummed, ate the bite, then offered Matt a huge bite of his.

Matt laughed and shook his head. "I can't get my mouth around that, lovely."

"No?" He chuckled, cut the bite in half. "Better?"

"Much. I'll have it if you'll eat the other half."

He chuckled and popped the bite in Matt's lips. "Eat."

Matt ate, nodding toward his plate. "You, too."

He nodded, nibbled, sipped his coffee.

Matt devoured most of his pancakes, sharing the larger part of his strawberries in one bite after another.

"I thought you were starving."

"I was. I ate."

"You nibbled." Matt smiled, though, and didn't push the matter.

"I did. I conquered."

Matt chuckled. "You feel like dessert?"

"God, no. I'm full. You go ahead, though."

"No, I just like watching you eat the things you like. It's very... sensual."

That surprised a chuckle out of him. "Really?"

"Yes Everything you do is graceful, beautiful." Matt smiled. "Lovely."

"Lovely." That made him smile.

"You are. My lovely."

That made him lick his lips, duck his head.

Matt made a sound, a hum, a moan. "Very lovely."

"I. Thank you, Master."

"It's the truth, and you're welcome."

He nodded, teeth sinking into his bottom lip.

"I want to take you home and make love to you." Matt sounded very sure.

"Is now good for you?"

"Yeah, now would be very good." Matt waved to their waitress, make a 'check please' sign.

Adam grabbed his wallet, pulled out a twenty.

"I have it, lovely."

"Are you sure?" He had money.

"Yes, lovely, I am." Matt paid for their dinner and held out a hand to him.

"Thank you, Master."

"You're welcome." His hand slid into Matt's, his Master leading him back out to the car.

Lovely. Someone thought he was lovely.

How cool.



## Chapter Six

The alarm went off and Matt groaned. He looked over at Adam's little alarm clock and groaned again. Four fucking a.m. That was just too damn early.

Adam slipped out of bed, almost silently, dressing and gathering running shoes.

"Give me a minute and I'll join you." He wanted to see what all the fuss was for himself.

"You want to come to yoga and run?"

"Yes." Okay, not particularly, but he wasn't going to judge it without having taken part.

"Okay. Yoga is first, then running. I usually go five K. Do you have running shoes?"

"Yeah, I brought them to go do the yoga with, is that okay?"

"Yes. Of course. I'll make some water for us."

"Make some water?" What did that mean?

"Bottles of water for hydration? I put vinegar in mine."

"Ah, see -- it was the 'make' that had me wondering, but if you doctor it, then it makes more sense."

Adam nodded and headed to the kitchenette, seeming to be running mostly on autopilot.

Shaking his head, Matt quickly got dressed and joined Adam. "Are we having breakfast first?"

"I don't eat before working out. Would you like something?"

"No, no. I want to follow your routine this morning. Get an idea of how everything works." No food before two hours of yoga... he supposed he maybe could see the value in that.

"Let's go. Dan gets mad if you're late."

"I'm ready. Is this my vinegar water?" He picked up one of the reusable bottles.

"It is." Adam smiled at him and they headed out, walking quickly through the dark streets to a dimly lit place in a strip mall.

There were five people with mats, and they all turned when the door opened. A huge, bearded man in the front of class smiled hugely. "Oh, thank the Goddess. I was worried about you, Adam. I'm so glad to see you."

The huge bear grabbed Adam up in a hug, then turned that smile on Matt. "Hey, there. Welcome. Please sign in and grab a mat. Are you new to yoga?"

"Matt, this is Dan. Dan, this is my Master, Matt."

Dan's eyes widened. "Like in not a job?"

Adam nodded. "Like in not a job."

"Wow. Welcome. This is Cara, Lesley, Hank, and Robin."

Matt smiled and nodded at everyone. "Hi." Man, there were five other people crazy enough to be up at four a.m. for two hours of yoga. Who knew?

Adam grabbed two mats while he signed in, and then they got started. Up. Down. In. Out. Bending. Jesus.

By half an hour in, he was sweating, breathing hard, and Adam looked like a pretzel. At the end of the two hours, he was utterly exhausted. Utterly. And Adam usually went running now? Was the man insane?

Adam looked at him, frowned. "Dan, can you drop Matt off at my place? He looks tired, and I have my cardio to get in."

Matt shook his head. "I don't think that's necessary. I'll join you." He could at least walk Adam to the beach and sit to watch the waves while he waited.

"Are you sure?" Dan met Adam's eyes. "You know, you could..."

"Shh. Running." Adam winked, fingers on the big man's lips. "Stop worrying, Big Daddy. I've been weighing, I'm in my range."

Matt felt himself bristle, more than a little. "He's good, Dan. I'm making sure he eats."

"Excellent." Dan offered him a wide, pleased smile. "He's been my cousin for his whole life. I worry."

Matt backed down, smiled. "Cool. I'm gonna take good care of him."

A cousin. Wow. The man couldn't look more different from his lean, blond, fine-boned lovely.

"Is this the only course you offer, Dan?"

"You mean Hatha yoga? No. I teach a ton of classes. Restorative, Ashtanga, flow -- would you like a schedule?"

"I would. Maybe there's something that would be less early that we could do."

"Sure."

Adam was waiting for him, talking to one of the girls from the class. He thanked Dan for the schedule and joined Adam by the door.

"Are you sure you want to come running?"

"No, I'm pretty sure I don't. I do, however, want to see what your mornings are usually like." Used to be like, anyway. Matt didn't see why Adam had to do all this every day, especially without eating.

"I. Okay?" Adam looked at him, a little panicked. "I'm sorry, I don't understand what you want me to do."

"I want to take you running." He stroked Adam's arm, not entirely sure why Adam was panicked.

"I just. You don't want to, but I have to."

"What do you mean, you have to?" He took Adam's arm and headed toward the beach.

"I just do. I run every morning. Keep myself in shape."

"You do yoga for two hours every morning, too."

"I do." Adam put his running shoes on.

"I think you need to rethink this."

"Rethink what?"

"We'll talk after the run." He couldn't run and talk at the same time. Not as wiped as he already was from the yoga.

"Kay." Adam started running, feet hitting the ground hard.

Groaning, Matt took off after him, doing his best to keep up. Adam ran like a man possessed, head down, feet slamming. No music. No expression. Just this drive. At some point, Matt had to give up on keeping up, and he slowed to a light jog.

Adam turned, jogging in place. "You okay?"

He nodded, managed a, "Hungry."

Adam stopped, came to him. "Okay. Okay, come on, lover. Come on. There's a Carl's Jr. right there. Breakfast sandwich for you."

"You have to eat, too."

"I-- Come on. Sit." Adam eased him down and headed inside.

Matt snorted, trying to figure out how Adam managed all this on no food, on as little food as the man seemed to eat altogether.

Soon Adam came out with two coffees and a bag. "Here we go. Something for you."

"Something for both of us." He took the bag, looked inside. There was one sandwich, a bag of hash browns.

"I have a coffee."

"You can have some of my sandwich. You can't do all that running without anything to fuel you."

"I do it every morning." Adam sat across from him, nodded. "Now eat."

He took half the sandwich and handed it over to Adam. "You, too."

"I don't eat before I work out."

"And you're not shaky and tired afterward?"

Adam shook his head. "Only if I've been fasting more than a day or two."

He shook his head, eating his sandwich. "You're pushing yourself too hard, lovely."

Adam murmured noncommittally, sipping his coffee, sweat drying as the sun shone on them.

"Have a hash brown."

Adam's nose wrinkled. "No, thank you."

Matt laughed. "You shouldn't feed me stuff you won't eat yourself, lovely."

"This was an emergency situation."

"I'd have been fine." He reached for Adam's hand, though, squeezed. "Thank you."

"I care for you. I'll take care of you."

"Yes, that works both ways, too." He kissed Adam's hand and stood, stretched. "God, sorry I put a wrench in your run."

"Don't be sorry. I go every morning."

"I think you should alternate. Or run in the afternoon or something." He grinned, winked. "All this exercise can't be healthy."

"I could run in the afternoon."

"You could." He couldn't help but think it made more sense for Adam not to run for an hour right after doing two hours of yoga, and he thought it was a huge step to have Adam consider moving the time that he ran at Matt's suggestion.

"We'll see how it goes. Maybe."

"Your ability at yoga is very impressive. It's sexy, you know, all that bendiness."

"It's good for focus. For releasing tension."

"It's also damn good exercise." He'd been ready to quit long before the second hour.

"Yes. I try to get no more than twenty hours a week."

He stared at Adam, sure he'd heard wrong.

"Eat your sandwich."

"It's almost done." He had the last few bites and finished off his coffee.

"Feel better?"

"Yeah, I do. I just needed some calories in me."

Adam cleared the trash away, then came to help him up. "Come on. Let's take you home and get you a massage."

"Oh, that sounds amazing." He chuckled, putting his arm around Adam as they walked. "I'm not making a very masterly impression."

"You're fine. I'll care for you."

It was, he thought, a role Adam was very used to. "Thank you."

"Anytime, Master."

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Adam made Matt lunch, fed the man, then went outside to water and mess around in his garden, get some sun while Matt napped. There were eighteen messages on his phone, and a bunch of texts that he had to answer, too. So after his gardening was done, he plopped down with his calendar and tried to schedule scenes after his mini-vacation.

Matt came outside while he was doing it, stretching and yawning, and looking adorable all sleep-tousled and somewhat blinky.

"Feel better?" He texted back Marcus with approval for a show on Dom's night, scribbled out that space on the calendar.

"I do." Matt came and sat next to him, frowning. "I thought we were going to talk about your schedule after a few days of relaxing?"

"I know. I just needed to get back with some people." He'd relaxed yesterday.

"Well, how about letting me help you? I wanted to go over it with you." Matt pointed to the dates marked off. "You've already filled a bunch of days -- do you mark in what kind of scene each one is?"

He nodded. "C is caning. A is assplay. HC is hardcore. S is service. CBT is cock and ball torture. If they want something specific, I'll make a note."

"I'd really like to see you take a day in between everything but service to recover."

"I don't do service often. I don't have sex in a scene." A whole day?

"You may not have sex, but caning, assplay, hardcore, and cock and ball torture all need recovery time. I want you healthy and whole, lovely."

Adam reached out, took Matt's hand, held on. It felt odd to have Matt worry over him. None of the Doms abused him, none of them. In fact, they were quite generous to him.

Matt squeezed his hand. "You were not in a great state when you came home from that caning, lovely. And I need to have your schedule, so I know what to expect when you get home."

"No. The canings are hard. I... this is very new, Matt. Very new."

"I know. For me, too. But my work is well-suited to afternoons and evenings, which means I have the time to care for you after scenes. You no longer have to come home to an empty house."

"They're not mean to me, you know that, right?" He didn't want to be disloyal.

"Of course they aren't. But at the end of the scene, you part ways. That's not how most subs experience the afterglow of a scene."

He nodded. He'd never had a scene with Matt, not really.

"So I'll be here when you're done, and you'll get the care you're supposed to get."

He met Matt's eyes. "Do you want to?" How long would Matt be satisfied, caring for a man wearing another man's stripes?

"I do. I want to care for you, Adam. I'm your Master, it's my place."

He nodded, smiled, but a part of him knew that Matt could change his mind.

Matt took his pen and marked off a number of days. "Time off is important, lovely."

"I...Those are a lot of days."

"Your body and your psyche need time to recover from the scenes, lovely."

"I don't know what to say, Master."

"Yes, Master' would sound good."

He made a soft sound. Worried. This worried him a bit. Maybe a lot. "Yes, Master."

Matt stroked his cheek. "Talk to me, lovely."

"I'm worried. I have a system. I have a real system, and I have to think about how to make changes."

Matt regarded him for a long moment, then took the pencil and erased the dates that he'd marked as time off.

"Okay. But you need to take care of yourself, to not push to the point you did over the last week. And you have to remember that I'm here for you, and that sometimes I'm going to want more than one night and morning to take care of you."

Oh, God. He hadn't meant to fuck up. "I'm sorry."

"For what exactly?"

"I just." He stopped, took a couple of cleansing breaths, centering himself. "Not being more adaptable."



"You've been on your own for a long while. I imagine it'll take time to get used to having someone else in your life.

"I have. I haven't had someone who I considered signing a contract with before."

"I'm glad. I want to be the only one."

"We'll have to discuss it, together. But I am willing to commit." His own words made his heart beat a little faster.

A smile bloomed on Matt's face. "Me, too."

"Yeah? Even though I serve other men?"

"Even though you serve other men. You don't have sex with them. You don't spend the night with them. It's a business transaction." Was Matt telling Adam or himself?

"I don't have sex with them. Sometimes I do get aroused, however." He had to be honest.

"You'll have to tell me when you do, so I know what you like."

That request felt good to him, relaxed him a little bit. "Yes, Master."

"I like the way that sounds." Matt moved closer.

"I like saying it." He took Matt's hand. "Are you the kind of Master who likes to make rules?"

"I usually do. Not about everything, but I am used to setting the tone."

He nodded. "I like to know the rules. In fact, it's important to me."

Matt smiled. "Excellent."

He reached out, touched Matt's lips, and smiled.

"Rule number one. No more than one scene a day. No more than four scenes a week." Matt's lips moved against his fingers as he spoke.

Adam nodded. "That's fair." His eyes were on Matt's lips.

Matt's tongue came out, licking across his fingertips. Adam moaned, traced the soft lips again. Matt's lips slid over his fingertips, closed, and gentle suction began. Adam let his eyes fall shut, focused on the rhythmic suction, his body swaying with it. A low moan from Matt vibrated against his fingers.

"Master..." So good. So hot.

Holding his gaze, Matt bit at his fingertips. His cock filled, swelled, his balls aching from that tiny bite.

"You're so sensual, lovely. A man could spend years exploring you in tiny increments." Matt bit again, and then resumed sucking.

Adam let his head fall back, focused on nothing but his fingers, that sweet, steady pressure. Matt stayed right there, letting all but one finger drop out of his mouth, tongue, teeth, and lips all working together.

Deep moans began to escape him. One finger after the other was slowly, carefully explored. By the time Matt got to his thumb, Adam was aching, needing. The heat in Matt's eyes was nearly as arousing as the things he was doing with his mouth. Adam wanted to go to his knees and worship every inch of his Master.

"Come for me, lovely." Matt kissed the center of his palm.

His cock jerked, his balls emptying at the words, his orgasm crashing over him. Matt moaned, kissed his palm again.

"Master." He knew he was gaping, lips open like a fish, but he was stunned.

Matt smiled and tugged him in close, pressing their mouths together. He opened, offering Matt everything he was, everything he had. Cradling his head, Matt kissed him absolutely breathless. To his surprise, his cock started to fill again, swell again. The kiss turned into two and then three, Matt's tongue sliding, twisting

around his. He shifted, grunting as the wet mess in his pants made itself known.

"You okay, lovely?"

"Little messy."

"Ah, of course." Matt grinned and kissed him quickly. "Your shower's big enough for two. If they get close."

"We're close." He stood, took Matt's hand.

Matt chuckled. "I hope so."

"Me, too."

They went inside. Matt stopped at the curtain to the bathroom and tugged him in to take a kiss. His Master. His.

"That was very sexy, you know."

He was still lost in the kiss. "Hmm?"

"You. You're very sexy."

"Me? You... did you see what you did?"

Matt nodded. "I smelled it, smelled you."

"That's sexy."

"And so are you." Matt's hands slid over him, tugging at his clothes.

"It means something, coming from you."

Matt nodded. "I'm glad you realize that. I'm not just another master. I'm *your* Master."

He met Matt's eyes. He knew that. He believed it.

Matt smiled and grabbed his hand, pulling him into the bathroom. "I'll wash your back if you wash mine."

"Always."

## Chapter Seven

Matt didn't go with Adam to yoga, but he did wake with his lover for a brief kiss and snuggle.

He had breakfast ready for when Adam got home -- pancakes and veggie-sausage, which he wasn't sure was going to be edible, both staying warm in the oven. All he needed now was Adam to get back. Taking another sip of his coffee, he traded the sports section for entertainment.

The front door opened and closed, the sound of heavy breathing echoing on the way to the bathroom.

He headed that way, calling out, "Hey, lovely. You okay?"

"Uh. Uh-huh."

"You look tired." A little wiped out.

"Just post-workout." Adam shuffled to the shower, not even undressing all the way before getting under the water.

"You're exhausted. No more yoga and running without a break and without eating first." It was time for them to sit together and officially work a few things out, establish a few more rules.

"I'm okay." Adam leaned forward, panting.

"Sure you are." He dragged the rest of Adam's clothes off, piling them in a corner to deal with later.

The cool water finally worked the deep red blush off Adam's golden skin. Matt stayed there, enjoying watching his lover. Adam was graceful and, well, lovely.

"How was your morning?"

"I had a nice lie-in. Tomorrow I'll go to yoga with you."

"So don't have to, but I'd love to have you there."

"I liked the yoga." He chuckled wryly. "Okay, 'like' is an awfully strong word."

"You honestly don't have to."

"I honestly want to. It'll be good for me. I will, however, pass on the running. And I want you splitting them up. You can run in the afternoon while I work."

Adam looked at him, eyebrows concerned. "In the afternoon."

"Yes. It's a rule. No more than one activity at a time."

"But... I don't know. I don't know if I can wait that long to eat."

"Uh, you aren't going to. You do your yoga and then you have breakfast."

"I." There came that long, slow, centering breath.

"We should sit and talk. I have pancakes sitting in the oven."

"I'd like that."

"Why don't I go dish up while you get dry, get dressed?"

"Okay. Sure. Or I can help, if I hurry."

"I can manage, but you can hurry if you want."

Adam leaned toward him, kissed him. "Have I upset you?"

"What? No, not at all."

"Oh, good." He got another, gentle kiss.

Matt licked Adam's lips and patted the sweet ass. "Don't be long."

He went to the kitchenette, got two plates ready. He took out syrup and jams, setting it all up along with a couple mugs of coffee on the little table.

It was time to talk to his sub, to start building their relationship, to help Adam find that support and structure that they both seemed to need. It would make it easier having Adam perform scenes with other masters.

Even if the thought of that still had the ability to knot up his belly.

Adam came to him, hands on his shoulders, rubbing. "Master."

"Mmm. Feels good. Come and sit, though."

"Okay, yeah." Adam sat, fingers twining together.

"Homemade pancakes. The best kind."

"Wow. I'm spoiled."

He chuckled, but it made him a little sad. No one ever did for Adam. All those masters, and none of them knew what a treasure he was.

"They look great." Adam waited for him to start eating.

He put maple syrup on his and cut a bite off, munching happily.

Adam put the tiniest bit of syrup on his, ate a bite. "It tastes good."

"Of course it does!" He winked and ate another bite. Then he offered one of the fake sausages. "They're vegetarian."

Adam's eyes widened, his lovely obviously pleased. "You... thank you!"

He smiled and grinned. "Don't say that before you've tasted them."

"They could taste terrible, and it would still rock that you thought of me."

Reaching out, he touched Adam's cheek. "Thank you, lovely."

Adam leaned into him and smiled. He put his arm around Adam and enjoyed his lovely's company. They ate slowly, Adam seeming to appreciate every bite. He couldn't remember the last meal he'd enjoyed as much and knew it was the company.

When they were done, Adam turned to him. "So, what is your plan for the rest of the morning?"

"I'd like to sit with you and discuss the parameters of our relationship."

Adam nodded. "Okay. I have a list that I use with my clients; do you want to see that?"

"No. I'm not one of your clients, Adam." He wanted them to be distinct and different from that.

"I know. I know that. I just offered." Adam looked a little affronted. It was... adorable, actually.

He kissed Adam's nose. "Okay. I'd just rather start fresh between us. No trappings that you use on the job."

"Okay." Adam stood, rinsed the dishes.

"I'd like to make a number of rules for you."

Adam looked back at him, the electricity in the air sharp and sudden. "Would you?"

"I would. Where would you like to do this? Here or in the living area?"

"In the living area." Adam met his eyes. "I'd like to be close to you, touching you."

"Yeah, I'd like that, too, lovely. This is for both of us."

He could see the tension ease in his lovely's shoulders. "Yes, Master."

"I do love the way that sounds."

Adam came to him, leaving the dishes behind. He wrapped his arms around Adam, bringing their mouths together. Adam opened for him, easy as pie. It felt good and right; Matt knew his relationship with Adam was important. Probably more important than any other relationship he'd had.

He led Adam to the living room, sat on the couch, then drew Adam into his lap.

"So we have one rule already."

"We do."

"So, rule one is only one scene a day, and only four a week at most. I'd like to add that I pick you up from all

your scenes and you tell me what happened. I know your clients need confidentiality, but I need to know exactly what kind of care you need."

He still didn't like the thought of other men doing scenes with his lovely, but he hated the idea that Adam was left to twist in the wind on his own after these scenes, no matter how intense they were. Caring for Adam afterward would help remind them both whose sub Adam really was.

"That's an enormous amount of work for you, Matt."

"It's not work -- it's caring for you."

Running the gallery meant that, aside from openings, he could make his own schedule, work when Adam was running and doing scenes. "And we set your schedule together so you're not working when I've got long evening commitments I can't get out of."

Adam's fingers moved over his face, his shoulders. Matt was learning that this was a sign that Adam was heading somewhere stressful for him. "Yes, Master."

"Does anything about that arrangement bother you?"

"No. I mean, I hate to be a bother for you."

"You aren't a bother, Adam. Caring about you comes as naturally as breathing."

Adam leaned into him. "I'm supposed to care for you."

"I believe it works both ways, lovely." It made him want to scream, how little Adam expected from his Master, from the masters he'd worked with.

"Shh. Shh. We're good." Adam was so attuned to him, to his moods.

He wondered if that came from years of experience as a sub for hire, or if it was what made him good at his job. Or maybe, it was just him in particular. Matt liked that thought. "Okay. Good. We are good. We're very



good together." He kissed Adam softly, fingers stroking along his lovely's back.

Adam rested with him, quiet and still. "What else do you want?"

"I'm not going to ask you not to do yoga and running, but I don't want you doing them together. Yoga every morning, and then running in the afternoons while I'm at work. And you have to eat in between. Something when you get back from yoga and something light, even if it's just a smoothie, a little while before you go running."

"I'll get f..." Adam closed his mouth, took another breath.

He tilted his head, ran his fingers up and down Adam's back. "You'll get what?"

"Nothing. That's not the way to think."

He nodded. "That's right. I'm not asking you to do less exercise, just to rearrange how you do it."

"I'll try. If the scale moves too much, though, we'll have to revisit it."

"I'm betting the scale isn't going to move." He smiled. "But revisiting is allowed for all rules, as needed."

"When do I have to start?"

"Tomorrow." It was already too late for today.

"I'll try."

"And you'll tell me if you can't do it. I'll help you."

Adam gave him that confused look again, but nodded. "Okay."

"Okay." Clever fingers moved over his skin, teasing him lightly. "Are you trying to distract me?" Matt asked quietly.

"No. No, I'm just waiting, touching." Adam met his eyes. "I'm not scared of rules."

"Good. I like it when you touch me."

"I know."

He slid his knuckles along Adam's cheek.

Adam leaned into his touch. "What else do you want?"

"I want two hours set aside after you're back from yoga for just us."

"When you're here?"

"Yes. And maybe sometimes you'll come to my place after yoga."

Adam nodded. "I rarely have scenes in the morning."

"I would prefer to keep it that way."

"Me, too. I like to work in my garden." Adam smiled. "Not that I dislike my job. There are times the scenes are incredibly fun."

"Fun? Like what?" He was going to want to do scenes with Adam, too, and he wanted to know what Adam thought was fun.

"I like the shows. Marcus always makes sure I'm aroused, excited. Simon does the ropes, and I love those because you can relax and he makes me laugh."

Matt made a mental note of the names of the masters Adam liked. "He tells you jokes or he tickles you?"

"He tells me jokes." Adam settled closer, fingers moving again. "It's not about sex, usually, you know? It's about control. Well, no. Not anymore. It's about teaching, training. It used to be about control, at the beginning."

"Tell me more about how it's changed."

"When I started, I was always thinking about controlling my passion, my erections, my reactions, because that's not what I'm there for. Now I think about teaching, about making sure I'm doing it right."

"When we do scenes together, you'll be able to relax, to just enjoy the scene for what it is."

"What kind of scenes do you like?"

"It depends on my mood, on how much time we have. Intense, playful -- we should always enjoy each other."

"If there's anything you need me to keep here for you, you'll have to tell me."

Matt nodded. "Clothes, for sure. We each need to have a change of clothes at each other's places."

Adam nodded. "I'll make sure you're comfortable."

"You already have. I feel like I belong here. With you."

Oh, look at that smile. He wanted to keep that smile there, for Adam to always be happy.

"I have a bag of supplies, but those are for work."

"No, we need a box for here and a box for my place. Stuff that is ours."

Adam looked down, then looked back up at him. "You're talking about a lot of trouble. Money."

"We don't have to go out and buy everything at once. We can build our inventory slowly, not to mention I have a lot of stuff already at my place, so it won't take a lot of extra to stock my place up. And it doesn't sound like trouble to me -- it sounds like fun."

"I don't want to become work for you. It's very important to me."

"You think being your Master is work?" It came as naturally as breathing to Matt.

"Of course it is."

He guessed that made sense. Being a submissive was Adam's work.

"It's a pleasure, Adam. And any meaningful relationship takes work." Work and sex and laughter. Love. Joy.

"I can't think of anything I'd rather spend my time on." Adam cupped his cheeks, kissed him, long and slow.

He opened up, letting Adam in. Adam's kiss was a slow burn, tongue sliding against his. Groaning, he fell slowly back against the couch, bringing Adam with him. His lovely one followed, cuddled into him.

"You feel so good." So right.

"I hope so." Adam's kiss brushed his cheek.

"I hope I feel good to you, too."

"You feel like I couldn't be professional with you."

"Good." He said the word fiercely, glad all the way to his toes.

"I've never called another man Master."

A thrill went through him at that. "And you never will."

"Never is a very long time, Master." Adam's tongue slid over his bottom lip.

"I don't care how long never is. I won't make it a rule -- I like that it was something you just did. Something that came naturally."

"It's something I wanted to do."

"Thank you." Matt kissed Adam, pulling on his upper lip and then his lower lip, moaning softly.

There was something about Adam's kisses that made Matt shake, made him want to bury himself in his lovely's tight body. "Need you." The words pushed out of him between kisses, his hips bucking, pressing against Adam.

"I'm yours. Master."

His. All of Adam.

"Yes. And I think we should move this to the bed." Where there was lube, condoms. Where he could take his time.

"We're done talking?" Adam nodded, took his hand.

"For now. We can revisit, we can talk more after. I want you now."

"Good." There was a look of pure satisfaction on Adam's face.

He stood and took Adam's hand, tugging him up, taking a kiss. Adam's lean body pushed against him, the touch the most demanding he'd ever felt from his controlled lover. Groaning, he grabbed hold of Adam's ass and pulled him in even tighter. Adam's hands tangled in his hair, tugged him close, tongue fucking his lips almost aggressively.

He grabbed hold of Adam's tongue with his lips, sucking as he started walking them backward, eager to get to the bed, to push Adam down onto the mattress. It was time to drive his lovely man insane.

He kept one hand on Adam's ass, tugging him along the short distance to the corner of the room where the bed was. He pushed Adam's loose pants off, loving the easy access. It didn't take much to get Adam's shirt off, either, and he slid his hands along Adam's back, feeling the healing welts. Adam didn't even flinch, didn't pull away. In fact, there was the slightest arch into his hands.

It made him groan, made him press harder, making the welts his. Theirs.

"Master..." Adam shivered, pushed against him. "Please."

"I've got you, lovely."

Adam's lips brushed his ear. "I don't know what you want me to do."

"I'm not asking you to do anything. We're making love, both of us together."

"Making love. I can do that."

"Good." He brought their mouths back together again and tugged his t-shirt out of his jeans. Adam's fingers were on his skin immediately. "Your hands feel so good."

"Your skin feels like magic."

He moaned at that, Adam making him feel so good, so important. Special. He wrapped his hand around Adam's scalp, bringing him in for another kiss. Adam's fingers framed his face, the heavy silk of his hair tangling. He took kiss after kiss, tongue licking into Adam's mouth. His lover tasted good, sweet and spicy together. His hands found Adam's back again, playing the bruises, making Adam feel them.

"Finish undressing me, lovely."

"Mmm." Adam's fingers were clever, moving over him.

"Love your touch." He watched Adam as his clothes were removed.

"I... Thank you, Master."

"Mmm." He took Adam's mouth again, exploring as he rubbed their bodies together.

Adam kissed him like it was the last thing the man was ever going to do. He liked the intensity. It was hot. One kiss melted into another and another, then another. They leaned toward the bed, his knees slowly giving out. Adam landed in his lap, fingers framing his face, tongue fucking his lips.

He pulled their bodies together, wrapped his hand around their cocks. Adam wanted him -- prick full and leaking, swollen for him. He wrapped his lips around Adam's throat, tugging at the skin with his mouth.

"Marking me..."

"Making you what, lovely?"

"No. No, marking me. I've never let anyone, not like this."

"I'm not anyone, lovely." He was Adam's master.

"No. You're everything."

He kissed Adam hard. "So I can mark you."

Adam's eyes met his. "I'm yours."

"That's right. Mine."

"Then you can mark me as you wish."

He was going to blow his load. He latched back onto Adam's neck with a moan, sucking hard.

Adam arched, "Master!"

He kept sucking. Adam's fingers tangled in his hair, pulling hard. He scraped the skin with his teeth. He could taste Adam's skin, Adam's salt. It tasted good. Adam tasted good. So very good.

Soft sounds filled the air, Adam jerking against him. He held tight to Adam's ass, squeezing the sweet globes.

"Want. Want you, Matt."

"Me, too." He shifted them, putting Adam beneath him and pressing down against his lovely's body.

Adam spread for him, legs cradling him. He wanted to be wrapped in Adam's heat so badly. He forced himself to take his time, though. He wanted Adam to beg for it, beg for his cock. He slid his hands over Adam's hips, teased them over to the long, hard cock, then danced them away again. Adam arched, offered over to him. He slid his hand beneath Adam, grabbing one butt cheek again and squeezing.

"Mmm." Adam spread for him, cock rubbing against his belly.

He licked his way along from Adam's lips to his neck, nuzzling and licking the mark he'd drawn up. He felt the shivers, heard the moans. He licked again, reaching for the lube on the bedside table. Adam's eyes watched his fingers, one leg drawing up.

Humming softly, he slicked his fingers up, slid them between Adam's legs. That sweet, tight hole was right there, waiting for attention, waiting for him. He stroked it, teased just the very tip of his finger in. Adam bore down, rocking against him.

"You want more, lovely?"

Adam nodded, moaned softly.

"We'll get there." He stroked over the wrinkled skin again.

"Get there?" The look he got was confused, distracted.

"Get to giving you more, to making love."

"Oh. Sorry. Was... yeah."

"Focused on my touch. You don't have to apologize for that." He stroked over Adam's hole again.

"Focused... you feel so good."

"You feel pretty great yourself." He pushed his finger into Adam suddenly.

"Master." Adam's ass left the bed.

"That's right, Adam. Master." He pushed the finger deep, wriggling it inside the tight, velvety heat.

Adam nodded. "My Master."

He loved how that sounded. He couldn't imagine hearing it from anyone else, not now, not now that he had Adam. He rubbed a second finger against the wrinkled skin around Adam's hole as he pushed in and out with his index. Adam moaned, moved with him, moved for him.

"You're so hot. So tight inside." He finally pushed the second finger in with the first one, using both now to stretch Adam open.

Adam's eyes were closed, lips parted, focus on his touch. He pressed kisses over Adam's skin, licked at his mark, at Adam's throat. Every kiss made Adam moan, reach for him. He pressed a third finger into Adam, stretching.

"Yes. Fuck, yes." Adam bore down with a moan.

"Lovely, needy man."

He loved the way his words made Adam blush. He spread his fingers wide, pushed them deep.

"Fuck yes!"



His eyes went wide, Adam's outburst completely unexpected. He pushed in again, pushing just as deep once more.

"Yes..." Oh, somebody liked that.

"You have a very sweet spot." He wanted to get it with his cock, nudge that little spot and send Adam to the moon.

"Uhn."

He hit it again, and again, and Adam twisted, fingers digging into his shoulder. He nipped at Adam's earlobe, then again at the mark he'd made. "You can come, lovely. I want you to come now and then again on my cock."

"Master. Master. Master." It was like a song, really. Adam's hymn to him. Each time Adam said it, he felt like his own gland was being hit, sweet pleasure going through him, settling in his balls.

He watched Adam's balls go tight, body jerking, spunk spraying from his lovely. It made him moan and press close, his fingers finding that gland one last time. A wild cry left Adam, tore from his controlled lover. He'd done that, he'd made Adam feel this way. He felt like a fucking hero.

He wriggled his fingers again, groaned as a shiver worked its way through Adam's body.

"M...Master."

"That's right. My man, my sub. Mine." He let his fingers slide slowly away.

"Yes..." Adam panted, lips open.

"Me, now." He took a quick kiss as he reached for a condom.

"Yes, Master." Adam grabbed his own knees and pulled.

"Oh, fuck. Adam." So fucking sexy.

"Yes. Fuck Adam."

He started laughing, almost hiccupping with it. He got a sweet, tickled grin, the look natural, making Adam look like a young man.

"I am, lovely. I'm going to fuck you through the mattress."

"Good."

Adam pulled his legs tighter, giving Matt a show. He swallowed hard and tried not to let his hands tremble as he worked on the condom. That tiny little hole was pink, glistening, waiting for him. He wrapped his hand around his prick, spreading the lube over the latex. Then he lined up, tip of his cock nudging that sweet little hole.

"Master." Adam spread for him easily.

"Yes. Yes." He began to push in, the tight heat of Adam's body gripping him hard. Adam's eyes went heavy-lidded, body still relaxed after his orgasm.

Matt kept pushing, going in farther. It made him moan, how tight Adam was, how it felt like his lovely's body was grasping, pulling him in. He could feel the muscles ripple, work his cock. He sank in and in until he was buried all the way inside his lovely. Adam's legs wrapped around him, held him tight. He rubbed their noses together, breathing in his lover.

"Mmm. Feel you." Adam smiled for him, slow and easy.

"I feel you, too. So hot. Tight. God." It felt amazing. Adam felt amazing.

Adam stretched, moaned deep in his chest. Matt wondered how long he could stay still like this. Those muscles worked him, rolled against his cock.

"Oh, God. So good." He couldn't hold off any longer, his hips pulling and then pushing again.

"Mmm." Adam looked at peace, face relaxed, eyes happy.

He could watch Adam like this forever. He kept thrusting, moving slowly.

"Mmm. That's fine."

"Better than fine," he insisted.

"Better." Adam met each thrust.

He held Adam's gaze and moved faster, his thrusts stronger. He searched for Adam's sweet spot, cock sliding in that tight sheath. He kept shifting slightly until he found it, Adam going from lazy pleasure to something much stronger in an instant. Those pretty eyes went wide, an almost pained groan sounding. He stayed right there, prick hitting Adam's gland with every push in.

"M... Oh, fuck..."

Oh, yes.

"All day long." Okay, so maybe not all day long, but the spirit was there.

"Uh-huh." Adam was with him.

He pressed their lips together, losing himself in the kiss as his hips punched into Adam over and over. Adam groaned, body clenching, jerking around him. Oh, God, he wasn't going to last if Adam kept doing that. He moved faster, his breath starting to gasp from his chest.

"Come for me." Adam was working him, driving him mad.

"Not yet." He moved faster, pushed in harder.

"Oh. Oh, fuck. Fuck..." Adam groaned, swallowed hard.

"Soon, lovely." He couldn't do this much longer, and he could barely get the words out.

"Soon." Adam squeezed him, holding him like a vise.

"Yes!" he shouted, burying himself deep as he came hard, filling the condom in long spurts.

His lover, his lovely, his sub watched him with warm, fond eyes. He collapsed onto Adam, still buried

deep. Adam's hands wrapped around him, held him close.

When he'd caught his breath, he murmured, "My sweet, lovely man."

"Yours."

He nodded. Adam was. Truly.

"Mine." He let their foreheads rest together as he reveled in that.

## Chapter Eight

Adam was thinking about his Master. About his eyes. His laugh. His smile. He heard the thuds of the flogger, but they didn't really register. He didn't really care.

"Mmm. You're hard, Adam. Would you like my Simeon to take care of you?"

"No. No, Sir. Thank you for the offer." Oh, God.

"If you're sure..." At his nod, Master James smiled and patted his shoulder. "Thank you for your help today. Simeon is feeling much more ready to submit to the flogger now."

"You're welcome, Sir." He stood, went for his slacks.

His phone was in the right pocket; he was supposed to call his Master when he was finished with his scene. He pulled on his clothes, drank a glass of water, then dialed Matt as he moved into the Hammer's main room.

"Lovely. Are you ready to be picked up?"

"Yes, if you have time."

"I'm making the time, lovely. It's a rule, remember?"

"Yes, Master." The high was going to fade soon.

"Won't be long." Matt noisily blew him a kiss and hung up.

He leaned against the wall, sipped his water. Different people came up to him, chatted, but his mind wasn't there. Matt came in, face lighting up when he caught sight of him.

"Master." He smiled, one hand lifted in a wave.

Matt strode toward him, wrapped him in a gentle hug. "How are you, lovely?"

"Horny. I was thinking about you, during. I have to learn to not do that."

Matt beamed at him. "I like knowing that even though another man is flogging you, you're thinking of me."

"How was your evening?" How could he not think of Matt?

"I pretended to read while I waited for your call."

"Can we go?" This was a place to work, and he wanted to be in Matt's arms.

Matt took his hand and led him out of the club.

"Thank you." It was raining, big, fat drops.

"Come on." Matt ran for the car, getting him settled without getting too wet.

He was laughing as he slid in, tugging his seatbelt on.

Matt grinned over at him. "That's a great sound."

"Just happy."

"I know. It's great." They moved with the traffic. "My place is closer, okay?"

"Mmm. I like your house."

"Cool. I like my bed. I like you in it even better. How's your back?"

"Sore." He shrugged. "It wasn't too intense. It just wasn't fun."

"Yeah? So a little TLC for the back and a lot of not so T but lots of LC for the rest of you?" Matt gave him a grin, eyebrows waggling.

That made him chuckle, nod. "I've been asked to do another scene tomorrow. Bloodletting."

"No." Matt shook his head, his hands tightening around the wheel. "Our agreement is you have a day of rest in between scenes."

Adam nodded. "I. Can we sign a contract, please? So that I can..." He searched for the words. "Invoke your name if a Master is insistent?"

"I'd like to sign a contract, and not just for that. I want you to know I'm truly committed to you." Matt pulled up at his place and turned as he shut off the engine. "Do you have problems with Masters not taking no for an answer?"

"Sometimes. Mostly it's a problem with disappointing a client."

"They can't expect you to be available twenty-four-seven. Or to do everything they want you for. If I'm honest, I'm very uncomfortable about you doing bloodletting with another master."

"Me, too." It was dark outside, easy to admit.

"Then no bloodletting. If anyone asks, you can tell them your master won't let you."

"Thank you." He reached over, fingers squeezing Matt's.

Matt squeezed back, then brought his fingers up to kiss. "You're going to sign my contract."

"Yes. I am." What he felt for Matt was honest, real. Unique.

Matt leaned over and kissed him, then laughed softly. "Come on, let's go in and do this properly."

He slid out of the car, heading to the house with its big windows, its soft bed. Matt locked up the car and joined him, the two of them going in together, shoulders rubbing as they approached the front door. He'd swear he could almost smell Matt's desire for him.

"Master?"

"Yes, lovely?"

"I want to suck you."

"Fuck yes, please."

Matt took the keys out of his pocket, dropping them once and bending to pick them up before pushing the key into the lock. That's what he'd been imagining while he worked. Doing a scene with Matt. That cock spreading his lips, fucking them.

Matt opened the door and then took his hand, tugging him into the apartment. "On your knees, lovely." The words were out before the door had even clicked shut.

"Yes, Master." He knelt, his cock hard and aching in his pants.

Matt's fingers stroked his cheeks. "Suck me."

"Yes." He pulled Matt's trousers open, lips wide, hungry for that fat cock.

Matt groaned and his cock pushed toward his lips. Adam didn't tease; he dropped over Matt's cock, sucking hard. Matt's fingers slid into his hair, wrapping around his skull. Yes. Please. Please. He opened wide, offering himself to his Master. Matt slowly fed the fat prick into his mouth. He gave his control up, let his throat relax.

"Adam..." Groaning, Matt sank in all the way.

*Take me, please.* He begged with his eyes, his heart. Matt's breath caught in his throat, and then that hot cock slid on Adam's tongue, pushing in and out. His prick was aching, throbbing in time with Matt's thrusts.

"So hot. Good. Adam."

The praise made him moan, made him pleased.

"Feel that. Feel you. God." Matt's hips moved faster, cock pushing deeper into his throat. Matt grabbed him, fucking his lips, taking him hard. "Yes! Yes! Adam!" Matt's cries filled his ears.

Adam tightened his lips, swallowed hard. With another cry, Matt pushed forward and then froze, pouring spunk down his throat. Adam drank his Master down, moaning and sucking. So good.

"God, yes. So good." Matt's words echoed his thoughts as Matt moved along his tongue, slowly now, the motions gentle.

He cleaned Matt's cock, his own cock aching.

"No coming," Matt ordered, voice husky.

Adam moaned in response, his balls heavy.

"You can come when I say so." Matt's fingers stroked through his hair.



Adam moaned his agreement, forcing his hips not to move.

"Let's go get you clean. You'll come when you're mine again."

"I'm always yours."

"When you smell like mine, then." Matt held out a hand, tugging him up.

He stood, stomach rumbling softly.

"Someone's got more than one hunger."

Adam shook his head. "I'm fine." He'd gone much longer than a day.

"Your stomach says different, but don't worry. I intend to doctor your back and then take you, let you come, hold you."

"Good." He could eat any time.

Matt took his mouth, sucking his tongue. He pressed close, opening to the kiss, to the touch. Matt's fingers slid over his face, then moved down to slowly undo his buttons. The shirt was carefully removed, Matt always conscious of his sore skin.

Matt ran his hands up and down Adam's back -- not actually touching his skin. "A cooling salve, I think."

"Okay." He stretched, wincing at the tug.

That had Matt frowning. "Come on, bathroom."

"I'm okay, just sore."

"Uh-huh. You need to be taken care of."

He didn't know what to say to that, not really.

Matt drew him into the bathroom and sat him down on the toilet, looking through the medicine cabinet.

"Did you have a good day?" he asked, watching Matt.

"It wasn't bad. I was worried about tonight's scene, about how harsh it was going to be on you."

"Don't worry. The bad one is Saturday."

"Saturday?" Matt paused in his search and looked at Adam.

"Yes, Master."

"Which one was that?"

"It's a demonstration of striping on the feet." He wasn't particularly looking forward to it.

"How many days off have you got booked after that?"

"Sunday."

Matt shook his head. "You'll have to cancel Monday's, too. That'll give you three days for your feet to heal."

"Monday?" He couldn't. Isaac was his biggest private client, and he'd canceled on the man last week.

"You can't do foot striping and not have more time off. It won't work."

"I'll have to think about it. Isaac is a huge client."

"Reschedule him. Explain you won't be at your best on Monday." Matt gave him a serious look. "Tell him your Master said you had to."

"I." He nodded. Fuck. Fuck.

Matt tilted his head. "It's not ten p.m. yet. Would you like to do it now, get it over with?"

"I. What?"

"We seem to have killed the mood here, and I'm wondering if you wanted to do it now."

"No. No, I'm off work now."

"Cool." Matt seemed happy with his answer. "Then we should find the mood again, shouldn't we?"

"Yes." He could deal with all... this later.

Matt got down the antibiotic spray and he stood. Matt used the medicine, cooling down his back.

"Oh." Adam stepped forward, stumbling a little.

Matt's arm came around his waist, supporting him. "Cold?"

"Yeah. A little." It had surprised him.

"It should take the sting out of the welts, draw the heat out of your back."

"It's good. Thank you." Good and a little shivery.

"Good. If I'd put them here, I'd want you to feel every moment of them."

Adam's moan surprised him.

Smiling, Matt brought their mouths together, tongue slipping in between his lips. Adam stepped in, lips wrapping around Matt's tongue. Matt's groan filled his mouth. He sucked, focusing on Matt's pleasure, Matt's need.

"Mmm, I'm supposed to be washing you now."

"Uh-huh." He took another kiss.

"I could give you a tongue bath."

"We could shower together."

"That probably is more convenient." Matt gave him a wink.

"Less tiring for your tongue, too." He winked.

"I can think of worse uses for it."

Matt pulled him in again, tongue sliding between his lips. That made him laugh, made him smile.

"I love that smile, that laugh." Matt tugged him into the shower stall, Matt's so much bigger than his own.

"I love you." Oh. Oh, had he said that? Out loud? Shit.

"Adam... Oh." Matt kissed him again, the intensity nearly overwhelming. Matt's fingers dug into his hips, hard enough to bruise. "Mine." The word was fierce, joyful.

Adam nodded, offering his mouth for another kiss. Matt took it, took another, small, happy sounds filling his mouth. The water was warm, beating on Matt, then pouring on him.

Matt eventually grabbed the soap and slowly worked it over his body. The touches were slow and sensual,

adoring. He turned and stretched, offering every inch of himself. Matt cleaned him everywhere, from head to toe. Each nook and cranny was stroked, caressed, the slick, unscented soap sliding on his skin. So good. That touch was so good.

Matt made sure the water didn't splash directly on his back as it rinsed him down.

"Thank you, Master." Matt bent him over slightly, soap-slicked fingers on his hole.

"This is mine. You're mine." Those fingers slid in.

"Yes..." His hole clenched, the touch unbearably intimate.

"Mm. So tight. So hot." Matt kissed his shoulder.

The fingers spread him, cleaned him, and he found himself groaning, thighs shaking.

"Want you. Want you so much. God."

"Yours." He wanted Matt to fill him, fuck him, stretch him.

"God, yes." Matt's fingers disappeared and there was a moment's wait, then something far hotter was pressing against him instead.

"Master." He bore back, hands braced on the tile.

"Right here, lovely." Matt slowly spread him.

"Please." That fat cock pushed in deep, stretching his hole.

"Yes." Matt sank slowly all the way in. The pressure was perfect, the feel of Matt's hands on his hips even better.

"Oh, lovely. So good."

He nodded, spread wider. Yes. Good.

Fingers wrapped around his hips, holding on tight, Matt began to move, sliding out, pushing back in. He felt each and every inch, each thrust.

"Mine," murmured Matt, pushing in hard. "Mine."

"Yes, Master. Yours. All of me."

"Yes!" Matt thrust in hard.

He cried out, that thrust perfect, deep. Matt must have felt it, because the next push hit the same spot.

"Fuck!" The single obscenity split the air.

Matt made a satisfied noise and hit that spot again. Adam jerked, hands crawling up the wall as his body begged.

"Mine. Mine." Matt moved faster, hips pushing into him over and over.

"Please!" Adam's fingers curled into fists.

One of Matt's hands slid away from his hip to curl around his cock.

"Please." He needed.

Matt squeezed and began to stroke.

"Master. Master." Adam moaned.

"Love that. My lovely."

"Yours. More, please."

Matt drove into him, each thrust harder than the last, better. Adam shook, his entire body alight with the pressure.

"Come. Adam." The words rasped out from Matt, the thrusts getting harder.

"Master." He clenched hard, his balls emptying.

"Adam!" Matt's shout rang through the small bathroom, bouncing off the tile.

He caught himself as he slumped forward, breathing hard.

Matt kept hold of his hip and his cock, breathing just as heavily behind him. "Mmm."

"Uh-huh." He agreed. Totally.

Sliding out, Matt groaned, hands tightening on him for a moment. He turned as Matt disposed of the condom, hands reaching for Matt. Matt drew him close, bringing their mouths together.

"Master," he whispered into Matt's lips.

"My lovely." Matt's hands slid over him. "Mine. All mine."

"Yes. Yours. Yours."

"Come to bed. I need to hold you."

He nodded, happy. He could so do that.

## Chapter Nine

Matt got up shortly before Adam was expected back from yoga and made coffee, set out a couple of bowls of granola, and settled in the little patio area of Adam's lovely yard, drinking his coffee, head tilted back to the early morning sun. It was a beautiful day.

He heard the front gate open, Adam whistling under his breath. It made him smile to hear Adam so happy. Adam who loved him. God. That made him smile, too; it made his heart beat faster.

Adam turned the corner, smiled at him. "Master. Good morning."

He smiled back, waved. "Good morning, lovely. How was your yoga today?"

"Excellent." Adam came to him, leaned down for a long, slow kiss. "Did you sleep well?"

"I did." He let his hand linger at Adam's hip. "You?"

"Just fine." Adam leaned into the touch.

"There's coffee in the kitchen, and an envelope on the kitchen table."

"An envelope?"

"Yes. It has our contract in it." He met Adam's gaze, smiling as he waited for his lover's response.

"Oh." Adam's smile grew wider, brighter.

He petted Adam's ass, enjoying his lovely's pleasure.

"Do you need another cup of coffee?"

"No, I'm good, thanks."

"Okay." Adam headed in; Matt thought the man was bouncing a little. God, he was a lucky guy.

He finished what was left in his coffee cup and enjoyed the sunshine as he waited for Adam to return. Adam brought the contract and a cup of coffee with him.

"Did you bring a pen, too?"

"I did."

"Excellent." He patted the chair next to him and Adam sat. "It contains the things we've discussed. You should read it over before you sign."

"I will. You have that we're exclusive, sexually, and that you understand I will perform scenes with other men?"

"Yes. I also have that I can veto those scenes if I feel they're going to tax you too much." That was important to him, that he could keep Adam from overdoing.

Adam nodded. "I have to work some scheduling things out. It may take a while."

"We'll get it figured, lovely." He gave Adam the pen.

Adam nodded again. Matt knew there would be problems. In fact, Adam's phone had been dinging with text messages all morning. "I feel like we should have champagne on hand or something."

"It's very early for champagne." Adam read the contract, then signed.

"Maybe a sparkling screw, then." He winked, taking the pen to add his own signature. Adam's laughter filled the air, his sub settling next to him.

Matt signed the document, feeling something... warm go through him. It was settled -- Adam was his now.

"It's done." Adam smiled at him.

"It is." He leaned in and brought their lips together. The bowls of granola rattled as Adam's hand rested on the table. Matt tugged on Adam, pulling the man into his lap.

"Hey." Adam's arms wrapped around his shoulders.

"Hey. Mine."

"Are you sure?" The gentle tease was accompanied with a kiss.

He laughed into Adam's mouth. Adam grinned, rubbed their noses together. He licked at Adam's lips, hands sliding gently along Adam's back.



"Master." Adam stroked his hair, his face.

He nuzzled into the touch, humming happily. Adam leaned back and grabbed his cereal, offering him a bite.

He opened up, let Adam feed him. "You next."

Adam muttered, took a small bite, then fed him another. Chuckling, he took the spoon from Adam and spooned up a big mouthful.

"That's a lot of cereal."

"It's a spoonful. Eat."

Adam looked like he was going to argue, and Matt stared until the pretty mouth opened.

"Good choice." He slid the spoon in. Although it was an interesting thought, punishing his sub. Pushing him. He took another spoonful and offered it over.

"It's your turn."

"You first."

"I did."

"Eat it, lovely."

"But..."

He pushed the spoon into Adam's mouth. Adam ate the bite, reaching for the spoon. He shook his head and got another spoonful to feed to Adam.

"It's your turn." Oh. Stubborn.

"I think you should take another turn, and I'm the Master."

Adam pouted a bit, but opened to him. "One more."

"Or more, if I think that's what should happen." He fed Adam, nodding happily as the man chewed and swallowed.

Adam grabbed his coffee, drank deep. Oh, someone was trying to avoid getting another spoonful of cereal. He fed himself a couple of bites and then pressed another mouthful to Adam's lips.

"I."

He pushed it in. "Indulge me."

He got another spoonful while Adam was chewing and offered that. Adam rolled his eyes but ate it. He swatted Adam's ass lazily. Adam's eyes dilated the tiniest bit. Matt had another few mouthfuls, watching Adam as he ate before offering his lover yet another large spoonful.

Adam shook his head. "I'm full."

"You've had a quarter of a bowl. At most."

"I'll eat more this afternoon after my run."

"Adam. You can't live on a quarter of a bowl of granola. I want you to eat half of it."

Adam stood up. "I have to get some more coffee."

He grabbed hold of Adam's wrist and tugged him back down. "No. Man cannot live on coffee alone."

"I don't want any more."

"But your body needs more fuel, Adam."

"Granola has tons of fat."

"Then what would you prefer that has more protein and less fat?"

"Egg whites. I'll make egg whites in a little while."

"I'll make them myself if you don't, lovely. You need to nourish your body."

"Please, Matt. Please, you have to leave the food situation alone. You have to let me deal with that."

"You're not eating enough, Adam. You're going to pass out."

"No. I won't." Adam met his eyes. "I weigh myself every day. I allow myself five pounds when I'm stressed. Only five pounds. But I can go without eating for a couple of days."

"Not eating for a couple of days isn't healthy, Adam."

"I know."

"Okay. I'll leave it for now. But you can't go for days without eating. I won't let you."

"I know. I know. I just. This is a big thing for me, okay? It's a trigger, and I have to have it in control."

"Okay. But I'm going to monitor. I worry about you."

"Don't. I'm careful."

He wasn't sure Adam could afford to lose five pounds. He grunted. "I'm your Master, lovely -- it's my job to worry."

"I know, but the food situation is off limits, okay?"

"I can't promise that, lovely; I'll do my best not to interfere." If it was working and Adam wasn't getting any thinner.

"Okay. That's fair."

"Come back out when you've gotten your coffee. My lap is lonely."

Adam met his eyes, then came to him, leaving the coffee cup behind. "I'd rather have your lap."

Beaming, he wrapped his arms around his lover. Adam leaned down, kissed him, slow and easy. He opened up, inviting Adam in deep. Adam groaned, tongue sliding in, pushing against his own. He played with Adam's tongue, his hands wrapping around the lovely hips and bringing their groins together. His lovely one cuddled right in, snuggling with him.

"Right where you belong."

"Yes, Master." He loved how easily Adam relaxed for him.

He slid his hand along Adam's back, moving in to wrap his mouth around Adam's throat.

"Mmm."

He felt that little sound against his lips. He hummed back, lips pulling on Adam's skin. Adam made sweet, hungry little sounds for him. He kept working Adam's throat, working the mark up hard. One of the things he knew was that Adam hadn't allowed men to mark him

with their mouths. This belonged to him. He intended to do it as often as possible.

Adam's phone rang again, even as Adam's fingers tugged him closer. He ignored it. Later, there should be a rule about setting the phone to vibrate when they had an off day. He wanted Adam's focus solely on them, together. He bit at the skin in his mouth.

"Master." Adam shivered, fingers clenching. "I want you."

"I'm right here."

"I know. I know. I just had to say it."

"I like to hear it."

"Do you have plans for today?"

"I do. You."

"Me?" There was a patent excitement in Adam's eyes.

"You. All. Day. Long."

"Yes, please. All day long." Thin wrists were offered over to him easily.

He undid his belt, holding Adam's gaze as he did. Adam's pupils dilated, arousal obvious. He wrapped the belt around Adam's wrists, putting it through the buckle and pulling it taut. Then he pulled the end through the loop. It would be easy enough for Adam to slip loose, but still, it was a binding. Adam responded beautifully, cock hardening, stomach tightening.

"Mine." He pulled on the end of the belt, tightening it.

"Yours." Perfect, beautiful sub.

He tugged, pulling Adam off balance, making the man fall against him so he could take that sweet mouth. Adam's tongue fucked his lips, his sub almost aggressive. He took control of the kiss, sucking vigorously on Adam's tongue.

Adam's bound hands were caught between them, and the way they pressed against him was exciting. His prick

filled, pushing against his pants in an effort to reach Adam. They should have stayed at his place, where he could lay Adam out, stretch that sweet hole, fill him, tease him.

Next time.

Of course, he could still do some of it. He slid his fingers beneath Adam's shirt and tweaked one of his nipples. Adam chuckled, shifted closer.

"Not hard enough?" He twisted the other nipple harder.

"Mmm. Feel you."

"I'm feeling you."

Adam chuckled, "Good."

"Mmm, very good. Come on -- I'm taking you to bed, going to make you feel."

"Yes, Master." Adam stood for him, cock hard in his yoga pants. So very lovely.

Matt stood and led Adam back into the house by his bound hands. Adam's bed was waiting for them, that damned phone ringing again as they walked by.

"How do I turn this off, lovely?" He wasn't having it interrupting them another minute.

"The button at the top." Adam looked at the phone, sighing softly.

The phone said Isaac MacMillan.

Matt turned the phone off. "He's not your Master, lovely."

"No. No, he's not." Adam looked worried, though.

Matt jerked lightly on the belt holding Adam's hands together. "Adam."

Those bright eyes met his. "What?"

"You need to forget about the phone, the clients, everything but what's right here -- you and me."

Adam's cheeks heated, eyes dropping. "God, I'm sorry. I'm sorry."

"I know. You just need to learn to let go of the world when it's our time."

"I do. I do, I just... He was very upset with me, and I'm not used to that."

"There might be a lot of that as people get used to you having a Master of your own."

"I just... It's a hard situation."

"Isn't it time for you to put yourself ahead of your clients, Adam? Don't you deserve it?"

"It's just... your clients don't hit you with a cane when they're frustrated with you."

"And neither will your clients. If they can't put aside their frustration, they don't get to touch you."

Adam tugged the belt. "I'll work it out. I promise."

"I know you will. We just need to work through the growing pains." He got Adam to lie down, then drew the belt, and Adam's hands, up over his head.

"You'd think I've been doing this long enough to not have any."

Matt shook his head. "No. This is the first time you've had a Master of your own. It's different."

Adam smiled for him, nodded. "It is that. So different. Magical."

"Then it's all going to be okay."

He made sure the end of the belt was firmly looped around the headboard and then he began to undress Adam. His lean lover was stretched out, muscles obvious, lovely. With Adam's hands tied, he had to leave the shirt open but on. He tugged the soft yoga pants off, revealing the rest of his lovely. The tiny row of curls framed that long, thin cock that was rapidly filling again. He groaned, making his pleasure at just the sight of Adam known.

Adam shifted, legs spreading.

"Beautiful, wanton man." He touched Adam's toes, fingers rubbing along Adam's sole.

Adam chuckled, one leg drawing up away from his touch. He grabbed it back, pressing harder so it didn't tickle.

"Oh..." Adam's eyes crossed.

"Mmm. Good, isn't it?"

"Yes. God, yes."

He kept working Adam's soles, then began to work himself up along the man's ankles. Adam visibly relaxed with every touch, body easy, open for him. He was going to touch Adam everywhere, dig his fingers in and bury himself in Adam's skin. Adam's legs were lean, covered in a fine dusting of white-blond hair that stood out against the tan.

"You're so lovely."

"Thank you. You have always looked at me like you wanted me."

"That's because I have -- I do." He kissed Adam's foot.

"Mmm. Ditto." Adam's toes curled.

He chuckled and sucked on Adam's little toe for a moment before slowly kissing his way up from ankle to shin to knee to thigh. Adam smelled amazing here -- rich and male and wonderful. He nuzzled the sweet sac, moving Adam's balls gently. The velvety skin drew up, wrinkling at his touch. Smiling, he nuzzled a moment longer and then took one into his mouth.

It spoke to Adam's experience that the man didn't tense, didn't still. Trusted him. Moaning, he sucked gently on the little ball, rolled it with his tongue. So warm, so delicate. The orb weighed hardly anything on his lips. He released it slowly, then moved to take the other one in.

"Master." Adam spread wider. That was right. He was Adam's Master. Him.

He let go of Adam's ball and licked his way down to the sweet little hole.

"Oh..." The tiny word was just breathed out, one needy sound.

It made his cock throb to hear it, and he carefully worked the tiny hole, licking all around it and flicking his tongue back and forth across it.

"Yours. Yours." He heard Adam test the belt, heard the headboard creak.

He pushed his tongue into Adam's hole, the hot flesh clamping down tight. Adam spread and arched for him, offering himself more fully. He pushed his tongue in farther, fucking the sweet hole.

"Master. Master. Yes." The words were soft, happy, almost peaceful.

He spread Adam's ass with his fingers, tongue working hard. Adam rocked, meeting his touches, eager for him. He wanted to bury himself deep inside his lover, make Adam scream for him. Needy, hungry man. Adam bucked down against him, taking his tongue. He slid his hands up along Adam's body. Adam stretched for him, nice and long.

He pulled away from Adam's hole, leaving a lick on the sweet balls and the hard cock before tearing off his own clothes. "Want you."

"I'm yours. Signed, sealed, delivered."

He nodded. "You are. You so are." He leaned over Adam's body, getting the lube and the condoms from the nightstand. Adam lifted his head, kissed Matt's chest on the way. "Mmm." He stopped long enough on the way back down to kiss Adam on the lips, his tongue searching out Adam's.



His lover was right there, focused and hungry for him. They kissed for a long moment, and then he sat back to slowly work the condom down over his prick.

"You've got a beautiful cock -- fat and hard."

"Thank you. It's going to feel amazing to have your body wrapped around it."

Adam nodded, knees drawn up. Matt settled between them and put Adam's heels up over his shoulders. He took a second, looked. His. Long and stretched, tanned and perfect. He could see the need in the way Adam's breath panted from him.

He rubbed the tip of his cock against Adam's wet hole. "All mine," he murmured, sliding right in.

Adam took him in like he belonged there, balls deep.

"Oh, God. Adam. Fuck." He was incoherent for a few moments, his whole body singing.

"Yes. Yes, please."

"Yes." He nodded and started fucking Adam, hips working his cock in over and over again. That was perfect -- the tight heat felt like it was made for him, for his prick. "God. So good." He wasn't even sure if he was saying the words or just thinking them -- he was so lost in Adam's body.

Every master should have a man with muscle control like his lovely. Every single one.

"Lovely... Mine." He slid a hand around Adam's prick, holding on as he thrust.

Adam's ass worked him, rippling and rocking around his cock. He'd never felt anything like it. His hand began jerking, pulling on Adam's cock in time. Every tug echoed around him, through Adam's body. They worked in rhythm together, driving each other higher and higher.

Adam made him crazed.

He squeezed Adam's prick tighter, not wanting to get to the finish line before his lover. A little flick of his

wrist on the upstroke let him rub his thumb across Adam's slit time and again. His sub was fighting him, though, trying to make him crazy.

Finally, he growled out, "Come, Adam."

Adam's eyes flashed to his, surprised, shocked. Heat splashed between them, Adam's orgasm squeezing down on his cock.

Yes.

Matt grabbed Adam's hips, slamming in deep. He thrust a few more times, then shouted out loud, coming hard. Adam panted for him, flushed and stretched.

For the first time, though, Adam had fought him -- even though it was tiny and for his pleasure -- and Matt had the delicious opportunity to punish the man.

"You've earned a spanking," he told Adam softly as he nuzzled the lovely neck.

"Hmm?" Adam arched for him, slow and easy.

"You fought me. Wouldn't come."

Adam rumbled softly. "I was making you feel good."

"You were -- it was well intentioned, but it was still disobedience. It'll just be a small punishment." He could feel the response to the word punishment around his cock.

Groaning, he took Adam's mouth. Adam's kiss was a touch wilder, a bit more desperate. He gave as good as he got, plundering Adam's mouth, making it his own. He slipped from Adam's body, Adam's groan filling his lips.

Making quick work of discarding the condom, he was soon lying on Adam again, hands sliding up to stroke the outstretched arms. Adam moaned as he turned that lovely body, propped a pillow under Adam's hips. The marks from the latest whipping were mostly concentrated over Adam's shoulders, his upper back. The beautiful, pale ass was free of marks. Waiting for him.

He spread Adam's thighs, exposing the tight body a little more fully. He'd been buried in there, balls deep. Only him. Moaning, he bent to kiss the hot, swollen flesh. Adam groaned, hips tilting, cock rubbing on the pillows.

"No coming from this," he warned, gently popping Adam's ass.

"No?"

"No. You can get hard, but if you come, your punishment will increase."

It excited him, having Adam push a bit, trusting him with this. "Yes, Master."

"Good boy." He rubbed Adam's ass, making them both wait. He could almost smell Adam's excitement.

Groaning, he let his hand fly. It landed with a satisfying smack. Adam hummed, skin going white, then red.

"Mmm. So pretty. God, you're lovely, Adam." He hit the other ass cheek. God, that skin pinked beautifully.

He let his hand come down a few more times, reveling in the way Adam's body responded to each smack. Adam began to move into the touch, dancing for him a bit.

"Love the way you respond to me. Love it."

"Master." Adam tugged at the belt, thighs spreading.

"That's right. I'm your Master. Yours Adam. Me and no one else."

"Please."

"Yes. Yes." He smacked Adam again with each word.

Adam was flying, fucking the pillow, cock hard and leaking. Matt smacked twice more and then stopped. It was after all, just a small punishment. The sound Adam made when he stopped caused him to smile. Maybe stopping was Adam's punishment.

"If you're good, I'll continue the spanking tomorrow."  
Adam moaned for him, nodded, fingers gripping the belt.

"Good." He placed a kiss on each ass cheek and in the small of Adam's back.

Adam's ass rubbed against him, wanton.

"So needy." Did anyone else know how wanton and lovely Adam was? He hoped not. He wanted to protect this, shelter it.

He reached up, working at the belt until he freed it from the headboard and then undid it from around his lovely's wrists. Adam pushed close to him, rubbing against him.

He wrapped his arms around Adam, holding his lovely tight. "God, you're something else, Adam. Something special."

"I'm yours."

"You are. All mine. And I'm your Master. Your one and only."

Adam nodded, sighed, cock sliding slowly over his hip.

He chuckled. "Needy boy." He loved it.

"Who are you calling boy?" Adam grinned at him, winked playfully.

"The one with the hard prick."

"Moi?"

He fell a little more in love every time Adam relaxed a little further.

"Yes." He kissed Adam's nose. "You."

Adam lifted his chin, kissed Matt. "Oh, good."

He reached down and slid his hand over Adam's ass, feeling the heat of it. Adam immediately pushed into his touch. He squeezed. Adam moaned. Shivered.

"No coming until I say you can." He wanted to play a little first.

"Yes, Master." Adam was groaning, body moving almost restlessly.

He pinched one of Adam's nipples while gently stroking the other one. Adam's little nip tightened, went dark for him.

"God, you're so lovely." Matt reveled in the fact that this beautiful man was his.

"Need you."

"I know." He did, and that knowledge thrilled him. He pinched that nipple again, tugging hard. "Are you ready for my ring?" He slid one hand down between Adam's legs, rubbed where the guiche was going to go. They hadn't had a chance to do it earlier when he'd first wanted to, but he certainly hadn't forgotten about it.

Adam's eyes went wide. "What?"

"My ring, remember? Hidden here."

"I thought-- You were serious?" That pretty cock throbbed, balls drawing up tight.

"Of course I was." He pinched that bit of flesh again.

"Fuck." Adam arched and Matt licked his lips. Adam was going to come and earn another punishment.

Groaning at the thought, he slid his hand back, touched Adam's hole. Hot and slick, Adam groaned and tried to take his finger in.

"So pushy."

"Not me." Adam winked again.

He laughed, hands coming to cup Adam's balls, roll them. The sac was tight, hard, and when he tugged, Adam whimpered. He tugged again, one finger reaching back to scratch at the delicate skin behind them. Adam bucked, hard, spunk spraying over the lean belly.

Fuck, Adam smelled good. "You came."

"Uh-huh..."

"I told you not to."

"You made me." Playful little minx.

"And here I thought you had all this control," he teased.

Adam stilled, smile fading. "I'm sorry, Sir." Sir. Adam hadn't called him Sir since that first night.

"Ah, lovely, I was teasing you." He pressed their foreheads together and looked into Adam's eyes. "I'm not a Sir, lovely. Not to you."

"I'm sorry. I just. I simply wasn't thinking."

"Neither was I -- it was an ill-thought comment. I really was just trying to tease you."

"I. Do you want that? My firmest control?"

"No. I was trying to make you come -- I'm looking forward to punishing you. Much more than I want your obedience and control."

Adam relaxed, took a deep breath. "That's... that was what I was feeling."

He chuckled. "You're so in tune with me. It makes teasing hard."

"You make me hard, Master."

"Good. You make me hard, too."

Adam nodded. "Good."

"It is. We're very good together. Very good."

"Master?"

"Yes, Adam?"

"Can we go to your house?"

"Of course." He was pleased Adam had asked. "My home is always open to you."

"I'd like to go there. For our time off, together."

"I like that. It'll be easier for you to get out of work mode there, won't it?"

Adam nodded for him. "I want to simply be yours. All of me."

"You are, lovely. Top to bottom. We have a contract. And we have what's between us here." He pressed his hand against Adam's heart, and then his own.

"I know. But sometimes I don't want to think about being a pro."

"And this place makes you think of that?"

"Sometimes. This is where Oliver comes to talk to me. This is where I meet my private clients for the first time."

"Then we'll use my house unless you request it."

Adam kissed the corner of his mouth. "Thank you, Master."

"My pleasure, lovely. I want to make you happy."

"I want to be able to give everything to you. To be off work."

"Thank you." He kissed Adam hard, his pleasure at the words huge. As the kiss ended, Adam clung to him, swaying. "I'm going to put a cock ring on you and a plug inside you. Then I'm taking you home."

"Yes, Master." Adam moaned for him, swayed.

He kissed Adam again and then got up. "I have them in my bag." He'd brought a number of toys, things to use if he wanted. They still hadn't equipped Adam's place. Maybe they'd both known all along that they would be making his place their home.

He bent Adam over the bed to wait while he searched for the toys. "Spread your legs a little wider, lovely."

Adam spread, balls hanging.

He found what he was looking for, the plug fairly heavy -- Adam wouldn't be able to forget for a second that it was there. The cock ring was heavy, too, heavy enough that it would tug. Adam's cock and balls would look wonderfully obscene, too, naked as they were and exposed and pushed forward as they would be in the cock ring. Matt moaned, eager to see that, to admire it.

"Plug first." He stroked Adam's ass, finding the reddened areas from the spanking, rubbing them.

Adam moaned and rocked back toward him.

"Lovely..." His voice was thick, full of the need that grew by the second; Adam did it for him.

"Master. Please."

"God, Adam. So damn lovely."

He slicked up two fingers and pushed them into Adam's ass. Adam moaned, went up on tiptoe, ass offered to him. He pushed deep, searching for Adam's gland. He found it, working it relentlessly, forcing Adam higher on his toes. He pressed a third finger in, stretching and twisting and nailing that spot again and again.

"Oh. Oh. Oh. Master. Fuck. Fuck!"

"You ready for the plug, boy?"

"Oh, fuck. Gonna make me come. Master, please."

"No coming again without permission." He slid his fingers away and lubed up the plug.

Adam's hips rolled, bucking, fucking the air. He let the man's own movements pull in the plug. Adam moaned, fucking himself on the thick plug, motions almost desperate. Grabbing the cock ring, Matt quickly wrapped it around the base of Adam's cock, and around his balls. Adam whimpered, shoulders rolling.

He raked his fingernails down Adam's back on either side of his spine.

"Master!"

He saw Adam's ass clench.

"That's right." He soothed the touch with the pads of his fingers. The air seemed filled with hunger, desperation. "Your need is stunning."

"Please."

"You're perfect, just like this." Ass plugged, cock bound, body his for the taking. And wanting. Matt loved it, how Adam was learning to want him.

He helped Adam straighten and turned him around to bring their mouths together. Adam slammed up against



him, rubbing the bound cock against him. He grabbed hold of Adam's hips, holding him in place.

"We're going home now."

"Home." Adam was wild, Matt could see it.

"Yes." He went to Adam's chest of drawers and pulled out a pair of his soft yoga pants. Matt caught his breath when he turned back around.

Erect, flushed, eyes wild -- Adam was beautiful.

Matt passed the yoga pants over. "Put these on and we'll make a break for the car. Get home."

Adam nodded, hands shaking a bit. Adam moaned as he slipped the pants on.

"No shirt." Matt slid his fingers along Adam's neck. "If you had a collar, I'd lead you out to the car by it."

The full body shudder made him feel ten feet tall. Once Adam had decided to submit, the man offered him every sensation.

He got dressed quickly, then grabbed his bag in one hand and Adam's hand in the other, leading the man out. When they opened the door, Adam's phone was vibrating on the table.

Adam never looked back.

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By the time they got to Matt's, Adam's level of need had faded enough that he wasn't mad with it, wasn't desperate. Of course, the looks Matt kept shooting him promised that they'd get there again. And probably soon.

He'd never let himself do this -- be open and eager, let himself lose control. It was heady. Arousing. Scary.

Matt let him in, tugging him close as soon as the door was closed.

"Master." He lifted his face for a kiss.

Matt's lips closed over his, the kiss eager, full of need.

Yes. Yes. He groaned, lips parting, opening. Matt's tongue pressed in, his Master's hands sliding on his skin, pushing at his pants. His hips rolled, body fucking the air restlessly.

"I love how hard you need me."

"I do." He'd never needed any single man so much.

Matt's hands slid his pants down, his bound prick springing free, so hard. Groaning, Matt reached for him. The ring kept him from shooting at the mere touch, and his ass clenching around the heavy, thick plug. Matt made a soft sound, fingers exploring him.

"Please. Please, Master." He needed Matt to control him, to touch him, make him fly and feel and need.

"It's my turn now. My turn to touch, to feel, to know you."

Oh, God. Please. "Yes, Master."

Matt's fingers were everywhere, exploring him all over. His skin was alight, his muscles jerking and rippling. "I could touch you forever."

"Please." Forever worked for him.

Matt's mouth covered his, swallowing his next plea. It was more than he could do, to not work the plug, cry out into Matt's lips. One of Matt's hands found his ass, fingers playing with the base of the plug. He rocked and whimpered, pushed his sounds of hunger into Matt's mouth. No one made him need like his Master.

"You look amazing like this, so needy. For me."

Matt tugged the plug partway out and then pushed it in again, giving it a little twist just before seating it back inside him. Adam groaned, the stretch a sweet burn inside him. "I love those sounds. I love that I'm the reason you're making them." Matt pressed another kiss on him, even as he kept playing with plug.

He went up on tiptoe, ass sliding on the wood of the door. Matt pushed hard on the plug.

"Master!" Electricity slammed through him.

"Right here, lovely. Right here."

He was spinning wildly, and he took a deep, cleansing breath, trying to center himself. Before he could, though, Matt worked the plug out and back in again, banging firmly against his gland and lighting his entire body up. He groaned, hands on Matt's shoulders to hold on. He needed to breathe. Needed to.

"You owe me a punishment, Adam." Matt's eyes shone with heat, with desire. "For coming without permission. Whatever shall I choose? I could always give you another spanking." Matt's hand landed hard on his ass.

He groaned softly, the sting sweet. "Anything."

"Yes. Anything that *I* choose. And I'm going to mark you. Two hits with a riding crop across your nipples."

The needy growl, the wicked promise, was so different from anything Matt had done before, so perfect.

"But first I need to come. So badly. You make my cock hard and my balls ache." Matt squeezed his ass and pulled him up tight against the clothed body. He could feel the hard heat of Matt's need, even through the layer of clothes still hiding Matt's body away from him.

"Master. Use me." Mouth, hands, ass. He was easy. He just wanted Matt's spunk, that fine cock.

"I want your mouth." Matt let go of his ass and held his gaze as the strong hands landed on his shoulders and pushed.

He knelt easily, eagerly, tugging open Matt's jeans. Then his lips dropped over Matt's prick, pulling feverishly. Matt pushed the thick cock deep enough that the open zipper rubbed against his cheeks. Adam cried

out, sucking like his life depending on it, like his world was spinning.

Groaning, Matt pulled partway out, then slipped deep again. His hands wrapped around Matt's hips as he swallowed. His Master found a rhythm, sliding into his mouth, pushing into his throat again and again. Adam's cock was full, heavy, aching between his thighs. The plug inside him seemed to throb with his pulse. So did the cock in his mouth, Matt's heart beating as quickly as his own.

He slurped, jaw open and aching, body hungry and wanton. Matt's hands slid into his hair, tugged his head back a little, the thick cock pushing deeper into his throat. He let himself open up, let Matt in to the root.

"Adam!" Matt shouted, fucking his mouth hard.

*Yes. Yes, Master. Love. Please.*

"Gonna. Oh, fuck!" Matt came, spunk pouring down Adam's throat.

He swallowed, filling himself up with the salty come. Matt's hands slid through his hair, the harsh pants sounding loud in the quiet apartment. Adam reached up, hands sliding over Matt's body. Matt grabbed one of Adam's hands and brought it to his mouth, kissing the palm. Then those strong fingers wrapped around it, holding his arms up.

"Up," murmured Matt, tugging gently and keeping his arms up over his head as he used his core strength to stand.

Matt stretched him tall, pulling him.

"Stay just like that." Matt held his gaze, slowly letting his wrists go.

He kept his arms up, the muscles straining.

"I'm going to get the crop for your punishment."

"Yes, Master." He curled his fingers into fists, his nipples going rock hard.

Matt disappeared, leaving him standing against the door. His muscles started to shake after a minute, and he closed his eyes.

"Mmm. Look at you. You make me very proud."

Matt's words were followed by two sharp, sudden hits across his nipples. His muscles convulsed, jerked, but his arms stayed up.

"So good. So strong." Matt's hands slid around his wrists again, taking on the task of holding up his arms. Adam let his arms relax, sucking in one deep breath after another. "You make me so proud."

Adam opened his eyes, lips trembling. "Master." God, his chest burned.

"Yes. Your Master."

Matt brought his arms down and let go of his wrists. Then his Master bent slightly, picking him up, one arm beneath his knees, the other his shoulders.

"Oh..." He reached up, held on.

"How's that plug?"

"Heavy."

"Good. That's holding you open for me."

He nodded, asshole squeezing around the base.

Matt carried him into the bedroom and laid him out on the bed. "You look perfect there."

God, Matt made him feel beautiful.

Reaching out, Matt grabbed his cock. "You want to come, lovely?"

"I want to please you. Need to." It was what he was made for.

Groaning, Matt leaned down and took the head of his cock in, sucking and licking around the tip.

"Master!" He arched, head banging against the bed.

Matt's tongue teased his slit, pushing gently at it, swiping across the whole thing. He groaned, arched,

then settled at the touch of Matt's fingers on his belly. Matt grunted, the sound vibrating around his prick.

"Yes. Yes, Master."

One hand slid behind him, fingers pushing at the plug that filled him.

"Oh. Oh." He wasn't sure if Matt wanted him to come.

Matt unsnapped the cockring and his teeth scraped across Adam's cockhead. He shot hard, bones rattling, lost in sensation. Matt swallowed him down, tongue lapping at his cock, cleaning him.

"Master. Master. Yours. I'm yours."

Matt pulled off, licking his lips. "I know you are, lovely."

He nodded, heart beating fast. Matt slid up the bed and tugged him over to lie with his head on Matt's shoulder, the plug still heavy and good in his ass. Adam curled in, cuddled.

"Love you," Matt whispered, the sound sweet and solid in his ear.

"Love." He nodded, happy, settled, and right where he wanted to be.

## Chapter Ten

At some point during their time together, Matt realized that it was crazy to try and make sure that what he did with Adam was different than what the man's clients did. Adam subbed for many different masters and, really, anything he and Adam did together would be different simply because it was the two of them.

So when Adam came back from yoga this morning, he would be ready.

He grabbed a couple of towels and set them over the back of his couch -- it was the perfect height to have Adam lean over. He could use the flogger on Adam's back, ass and thighs, and then fuck him until they both screamed. He set out the condoms, the lube, and the flogger, and made sure there was a soft blanket for cuddling under once they were done.

Adam hadn't gone home to check his phone once in the last two days, had been totally focused on him, on them together. It was wonderful, and it made him feel a lot better, a lot more confident, about his place as Adam's Master. He was becoming more comfortable with Adam's eating needs as well, and he had silver dollar-sized whole wheat pancakes and maple syrup waiting for a light breakfast before they played.

Adam came in, whistling softly, lovely and loose-limbed. Matt hummed happily, opening his arms for his lover as Adam came in.

"Good morning." Adam came to him easily.

He pressed their lips together and lingered in the kiss. Adam tasted like heaven to him, like the best of everything.

"There's breakfast," he murmured, lips still mostly glued to Adam's.

"Mmm. You?" Little flirt.

His prick reacted eagerly, though, lifting in his jeans, pushing at the zipper. "I suppose I could be dessert."

Adam went to his knees, the move graceful and easy, fingers already baring him.

Matt groaned. "Lovely..." He'd meant for Adam to eat the pancakes first, but how could he deny what they both wanted so badly?

Adam's lips wrapped around his cock, the touch soft, gentle. Matt closed his eyes, moaning softly. That sweet touch wrapped around him, the suction sure, strong, hungry.

"I'll never tire of your mouth." It was always magic, always sent him barreling along to his orgasm.

Adam's little moan felt amazing around his cock. He slid his hands around Adam's skull, holding his lover's head in his hands. Those pale eyes looked up to him, so turned on, so pleased.

"So good, Adam. You make me feel so good."

Adam swallowed around his prick, throat working the tip.

"Fuck. Gonna." It was always so quick.

Adam nodded, head bobbing over his prick. He pushed deep, coming with a jerk. His lovely one sucked him dry, throat working around him. He went weak in his knees, his hands sliding to pet Adam's head. Adam smiled up at him, tongue cleaning his cock.

He smiled back, took a deep breath. "You're far too good at that."

"You enjoy it."

"I love it. I love you."

Adam's smile was brilliant. "Ditto."

He reached down and tugged Adam up. "Come on. There's whole wheat pancakes."

"Mmm. I love pancakes."



"I know. That's why I made them for you." He led Adam to the table, sat his lover down.

Adam beamed at him, drank the coffee happily. They were soon munching away at the pancakes, butter and syrup dripping from his, a far lesser portion of those on Adam's. Adam ate three-quarters of his plate, humming over each bite. It was good to see his lover eating, to not hear excuses for why he shouldn't.

"I have a scene planned," Matt murmured when Adam began to clear the table.

"For us?"

"Yes. For us."

"Oh." The dishes rattled in Adam's hands.

He took them from Adam, smiled. "For you and for me."

"Sorry. I just. We never have."

"I know." There had been sex, some light play, and some punishments, but never a real, planned-in-advance scene. "I think it's about time we had one that belonged to us, don't you?"

"Yes. Yes, I would like that."

"Good. Let's leave the washing up for later." He put the plates down and took Adam's hand, led his lover to the living room.

Adam looked over at his set up, nodded. "Do you want me to bathe first?"

"No. I like the smell of you au naturel. Even with a little sweat on top. Pure Adam is heady."

Adam's cheeks flared. Oh, now, that was indeed lovely.

"Undress yourself and then me." He smiled, touched Adam's hot cheek. "If you happen to stop for kisses and touches, that would be a good thing." This wasn't going to be like one of Adam's working scenes.

"Yes, Master." Adam turned, kissed his palm, then slipped his sandals off, the loose pants.

Matt leaned back against the wall, enjoying the show. He loved watching the lean body slowly appear. The shirt went next, then Adam came to him, lips on his jaw as his shirt was unbuttoned. He tilted his head back with a groan, enjoying each of Adam's touches, both with hands and lips. Adam worshipped him, from his lips to his ankles, fingers and lips adoring him.

By the time they were both naked, his cock was hard and leaving soft, wet kisses on his belly. Adam's lips wrapped around the tip, the suction unbearably light. His balls ached, his cock going even harder. No one would ever have guessed that he'd just come a short time ago. Adam made him need so badly.

That hot tongue slid through the slit, gathering up his flavor, loving on him.

He groaned, hand running through Adam's hair. "Okay, lovely. Enough."

One last kiss was pressed to his cock.

"You may look at the flogger if you want to. Otherwise, I want you bent over the couch."

Adam nodded, moving to bend over the sofa, trusting him.

Matt groaned, letting Adam know how aroused he was by the sight of that pale, naked ass. The marks -- other men's marks -- were gone for the moment, leaving Adam a bare canvas for him. Moving in, he rubbed Adam's ass, slid his fingers along the hot crack. Adam relaxed more deeply over the sofa back, letting him in.

He played with the sweet little hole for a moment, teasing, stroking the wrinkled skin and pushing the very tip of his finger in. Adam didn't respond, really, just moaned and rocked. He rubbed his cock along Adam's

ass, his hands moving to knead his lover's shoulders. Adam groaned, stretched, moved for him.

Staying right there, snugged up against Adam's ass, he leaned a bit and grabbed the flogger, the leather firm in his hands.

"Do you want me silent, Master?"

"God, no. I want to hear every sound. I want to hear what I'm doing to you."

"You're letting me be who I am."

He tilted his head and then nodded. "Yes. That's who I want here with me. You."

"Yes." Adam hummed softly, the sound incredibly pleased.

He stroked Adam's spine, and then left a kiss at the base of Adam's neck "I'm going to start now."

"Yes, Master. I love you."

He stopped a moment, his hand in the middle of Adam's back. "Thank you." Then he stepped back and let the flogger fly.

Adam hummed, stretching under the blow. It was beautiful watching Adam take the hit. The sweet skin pinked for him, and he hit again. He laid the blows down, criss-crossing the hits to leave a pattern. Adam began to move, hips rolling in a lazy circle.

"Mmm. Nice." He let the next hit land on Adam's ass.

Adam's ass muscles clenched. He groaned and hit the other cheek. Adam's ass started to pink for him. He moaned again. His sub was so lovely, sexy. He hit the pale flesh again.

"Mmm. So good. Thank you, Master."

"Trust me, it's my pleasure."

Adam groaned and moaned, arching for him. He colored the sweet ass, and then began to leave more patterns across Adam's back. He could see Adam begin to move, begin to rock with it. Feel it. He found a

rhythm, giving his lover something to work with. Soft moans filled the air, Adam's hips bucking slowly and carefully. It was like a dance, beautiful and strange and theirs.

Adam could take and take, more than any other sub he knew. He moved the hits down to the backs of Adam's thighs, the skin growing pinker and pinker. It was stunning. Adam was stunning.

The groans faded, Adam trying to catch his breath, center. Matt sent the flogger thudding across Adam's ass again; he didn't want Adam's control, he wanted Adam to fly. Adam's toes curled, the man fighting him. He grabbed the lube with one hand, trying not to interrupt his rhythm as he worked it open, slicked up the fingers of his left hand. Adam's skin was turning a deep, rich red.

Without warning, he stopped flogging Adam and pushed two fingers into the tight little hole.

"Master!" Adam's head came up, hands slamming on the couch cushions.

He pressed his fingers deeper, pushing against Adam's gland.

Adam grunted. "Oh, fuck. Fuck, Master. I never. Oh, God..."

He kept fucking Adam with his fingers, reveling in the sounds.

"Harder. Please. More."

He used the flogger to smack Adam's ass, and then pushed in another finger, making it three.

"Thank you!" Adam's head tossed, asshole gripping his fingers.

"Love you." He threw down the flogger and grabbed a condom, tearing the wrapper open with his teeth and then putting it on one-handed. In no time at all he was yanking his fingers out and driving his cock home.

Hot and tight -- that sweet ass gripped him, held him in deep.

"Yes. Oh, fuck, Adam." Groaning, he grabbed hold of Adam's hips and used them as leverage as he pounded into the fine ass over and over.

Adam nodded, letting him in. He leaned down, whispered low. "You don't get to come until I say so."

Adam's response was a soft whimper. It made his balls ache, his whole body on fire, loving Adam.

He found Adam's gland, pegged it hard. The response he got made him shout and stay right there, pegging it again.

"I'll shoot!"

He smacked Adam's ass. "Not yet!" He wasn't ready yet.

"Oh, fuck!" Adam jerked, feet shifting on the floor.

"Yes. Yes, so good." He slowed his thrusts, making Adam feel each one. His fingers dug into Adam's ass as he pulled the man onto his cock.

"Master..." Adam stood, taking him to the root.

"Adam!" He cried out, thrusting several more times, hitting hard.

Adam groaned, "Please. Please. I."

"Just a moment more. Hang on for me." He didn't want this to stop, to end.

"For you."

"Yes. For me." He slammed in a few more times and then nodded, close enough that Adam's coming should be good to drag him over the edge. "Okay. Okay, lovely. Now." He reached for Adam's cock, finding it and squeezing.

Heat sprayed over his fingers, Adam's hole convulsing around his prick.

"Yes!" He cried out, body jerking as he filled the condom.

Adam slumped forward, groaning, body working his cock. He leaned over Adam, pressing breathless kisses on his lovely's shoulders. Sweet, lovely man.

Groaning, he pulled out, his hands staying on Adam's body. The skin was warm, bruised, marked with his blows.

"Love you," he whispered, kissing his way along Adam's spine.

"Love. Master."

He got rid of the condom and helped Adam up, drawing his lovely over to sit on the couch with him. The long spine was covered in welts, Adam resting hard against him. He leaned against the pillowed arm and drew Adam between his legs. Pressing kisses over Adam's face, he moaned softly, enjoying the moment. Adam was right there, lips clinging to his.

He ran his hands up and down Adam's back, enjoying the welts, the heat of them, the feel of them. He loved knowing that he'd done that, these were his marks. Every time Adam shivered, Matt knew it was for him.

This had been a good idea. Long overdue, maybe, but it was theirs now. All theirs.

Adam's cheek rested on his shoulder, heavy and solid. It was perfect, and he held on to it.

## Chapter Eleven

Adam grabbed his phone, wincing as he saw Isaac's name come up. "Good morning, Sir. How are you today?"

"Where have you been, boy?"

"I was taking a few days off." Loving his Master. Relaxing. Laughing a lot.

"Since when can't you answer your phone and make an appointment?" Isaac sounded pretty angry.

"I'm sorry, Sir. My phone was off. Would you like to make one now?" He had his calendar in front of him and he was booked for the month, really -- there were fewer days now that he only did four scenes in a week -- but he'd make an exception for Isaac.

"I'm supposed to be giving a private demonstration tonight, but I had to cancel because I didn't know if I would be able to reach you in time."

"I'm sorry, Sir." It had only been three days. "How can I make it up to you?"

"I want you for the day tomorrow."

He looked at his calendar. He had Marcus in the evening, but he'd just double up.

"I can be at your house in the morning, Sir."

"Eight a.m. And I expect you to stay right up until six."

"Yes, Sir. I'll be there."

That gave him two hours to get cleaned and to the Hammer. Then he'd have the night to be with his Master.

"Lovely? Did I hear you make an appointment for the morning tomorrow?"

He looked over, nodded at Matt. He had to. Isaac was his biggest private client.

"You don't work in the mornings, lovely."

"Who the hell is that, boy?" Isaac was raging now, and Adam winced.

"I'll see you in the morning, Sir." He hung up the phone, rubbed the back of his neck.

Matt was frowning fiercely. "Adam? What's going on?"

"One of my private clients is unhappy. Wants to book a full day. It's only a one-time situation. He's used to more access."

"You're already working tomorrow night, lovely. This is not a part of the rules." Matt drew himself up. "And I didn't hear what he said, but I didn't like the way he said it, at all."

"I'm sorry, Master. I just... It's a one-time thing." He had to make this right.

"Does he treat you better than it sounds like he does?"

"He's never been mean to me." Adam had never given the man reason to be.

"A one-time thing, lovely. My rules are in place for a reason."

"Yes, Master. I swear. I'll talk to him." He could help Isaac understand.

"Good." Matt opened his arms.

He went, easily, eagerly. There was something inside him, something worried, that needed comfort. Matt's arms wrapped around him, holding him close.

"Mmm. Master." His eyes closed and he luxuriated in the contact.

"My lovely." Matt's soft kisses slid over his face, warming him through.

"Yours." He lifted his chin, offering Matt everything.

Humming, Matt took his mouth, the kiss gentle, but also thorough. That was what he needed. Matt's touch. Love. Care. Matt's warm eyes smiled into his own, the



kiss becoming stronger, beginning to steal his breath. He cupped Matt's cheek, thumb moving on the strong chin. Matt pressed closer, their bodies rubbing.

"Come to bed, Master. Let me love on you."

Tomorrow was a work day. Not today.

Today he was Matt's.

And happy.

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Matt supposed it was too early to be waiting for Adam's phone call, but he was anyway. He hadn't liked the Dom's tone of voice on the phone, and part of him said that he should have simply forbidden Adam to go, but he didn't want to be a jealous ass. He didn't want to interfere with Adam's work.

His phone rang and he grabbed it, "Yes?"

"Matt? Matt, it's Marcus Goodfellow. I need you down here. Now."

He was out the door before he even had a chance to reply. "What's happened?"

"Your boy's been beaten. Badly. This is... This is inappropriate, Matt. Absolutely inappropriate. He's close to hysteria, in shock, feverish. And he came in to work here."

"God damn it. I'm on my way. I'll be there in ten minutes. You take care of my boy until I get there, Marcus."

"I have him in the back, room three."

"Ten minutes, Marcus."

He hung up and started the car, forced himself not to break every speed law known to man. He was going to beat the animal who'd done this to his lovely. HIS Adam. He was going to beat the asshole who'd done this over and over again.

He pulled into a parking space, headed into the Hammer. He didn't stop until he hit the door of room three.

Adam was there, naked, draped over the arms of a chair. The man was black and blue, swollen.

Marcus was at the sink, chilling rags. "That's the best position for the least pressure."

*Oh, my God!* He managed not to say the words out loud, going straight to Adam's side. "Lovely? It's Matt. I'm here."

"Master. I need you."

"Who did this, Matt? Tell me he isn't one of us." Marcus sounded like he was going to kill something. Matt figured Marcus had to get in line.

"I'm right here, lovely. Right here." He moved so Adam could see him. "Adam's calendar is at home. The man's name will be there."

Marcus started putting cold cloths on Adam's back. Adam gasped. "Just for a minute, Adam, just to help the swelling. There's warm ones coming."

"It's okay, lovely. We're here to help you." He stroked Adam's cheek. "Right here. Marcus, what have you given him for the pain?"

"Nothing but topicals. I know he has a thing about what he puts into his body, and you were coming."

"You're right, he doesn't usually use painkillers, but we'll make an exception." He shook his head. "Why didn't you safeword, lovely?"

"I did." The words landed in the room like a boulder.

He looked up and met Marcus' eyes. "Call the cops, Marcus."

"No. No. Please. Just take me home." Adam sounded panicked.

"You safeworded, and he didn't stop, lovely. That's assault."

"No one will believe me. I was there willingly. I was *paid* to be there."

"That doesn't give him the right to beat you." He looked at Marcus again. "Marcus?"

"Adam's right, Matt. They won't press charges."

He shook his head. "That's not right."

"No." Marcus sighed. "That's why I urged you to drop the private clients, sweet boy."

"I..." Adam's shoulders started to shake.

"Marcus." He snapped the word out, glaring at Marcus. "This isn't your fault, lovely." He pressed a kiss to Adam's lips. "You didn't do anything wrong."

"Your Master's right, Adam. I'm sorry." Marcus headed back for the sink. "You've got me all stupid with your poor back. I swear to you, we'll take care of this."

"If you can swear that and mean it, then I won't insist on the cops." Matt kissed Adam again. "I'll take you home once you've been doctored as much as you need. Is there a doctor, Marcus? Who can take a discreet look at his back?"

Marcus nodded. "I've called Manning. He's coming."

"Good." He turned his attention back to Adam, looking into his lovely's eyes.

Adam's pupils were dark, tears staining the pale cheeks.

"I'm so sorry, lovely." He should have followed his instincts and forbidden it -- to hell with everyone, including himself, thinking he was being a jealous ass. He hadn't liked the tone of the man's voice on the phone, and he should have just gone with that.

"Not your fault. He was... He's never been. Master."

He pressed their foreheads together. "Shh. It's okay. It's okay. You're safe now. I have you. We'll get you better."

A sharp knock came to the door, a tall, blond man coming in. "Marcus? You called... Jesus Christ, who is responsible for this? Adam, it's Doc Manning."

Matt nodded. "I'm Matt -- Adam's Master."

"I... You did this?" Doc looked shocked.

Matt shot to his feet, growling. "I did not!"

"But..."

Marcus cleared his throat. "Doc, Adam was working with a private client. He came here to work for me and I saw his back and canceled."

"I would never beat my sub this badly. I love him."

"I'm sorry. I misunderstood."

It was understandable, but it still rankled that anyone would think he could do something like this to his Adam. His lovely needed his focus now, though. "Can you do anything for him?"

"Does anything feel broken inside, Adam? I'm going to touch your back, gently."

"Nothing's broken, I don't think. It hurts."

"I bet it does. I'll write you some pain pills and an anti-inflammatory." He touched Adam's lower back, wincing at Adam's cry. "Kidneys are swollen. Lots of water, and if there is *any* blood in your urine, I want you in the ER."

Matt nodded. "I'll be keeping a very close eye on him."

"I want him to take it easy -- very easy for a few days. Lots of liquids, no yoga, no scenes, no running, just relax and heal. Sleep on your back. Your skin is leaking blood and fluid, just be gentle." Doc met Matt's eyes. "This is going to be incredibly sore for a few days. Cool, not cold, warm, not hot. Make sure he drinks and eats."

"I will." He reached out and stroked Adam's face. "I'll make sure he sticks to your regime."

"Good." The big man sighed, wrote two prescriptions, then handed him some samples. "These will get you through tonight. Here's my cell number, too."

"Thank you. And you're sure about the sleeping on his back thing?"

Doc groaned, rolled his eyes. "No. God. Long day. Long. On his stomach. Good catch."

Marcus looked over. "Is your boy driving, Manning?"

Doc Manning nodded. "He's ordered supper."

"Thank you for coming to see him. We'll go to the hospital if there's any blood or if he gets worse." Matt would see to it.

"Call me tomorrow, keep me updated."

"I will. Thank you again." He shook the doctor's hand and then went back to Adam, sitting so his lover could see him.

"Can I come to your house? Please? I don't want to be alone tonight."

"Of course you're coming home with me." He slid his hand through Adam's hair. "I'm not letting you out of my sight."

"I tried to come in for Marcus."

Marcus made a soft sound.

"You should have called me, lovely. I would have come for you. Marcus would have understood."

"I... I couldn't think."

"You must have been in such pain." He figured Adam probably still was.

Adam nodded. "Please take me home. I need a shower."

"Has the pain pill kicked in? Are you up to it yet?"

"I will be. Please, Master. Please. I need to be home now."

"Okay. Marcus? Help me get him dressed."

Marcus winced. "Can't you pull around? We'll put him in a robe?"

"Yeah, yeah. That would work. If there are pillows, he can lie on his belly in the back seat."

"We'll set it up. I'll grab Xavier. You get the car."

He cupped Adam's cheeks. "I'm going to get the car. Marcus and Xavier will get you in a robe and bring you out, and then we'll go home. Okay?"

"Okay." Adam looked so fucking young.

"It's going to be fine, lovely. You're going to be fine." Matt pressed their lips together.

"You're not going to leave without me."

"No, I'm not. I'm just bringing..." He stopped, shook his head. Xavier or someone else could bring the car around. Hell, someone could drive the car home while he held Adam in the back. These people were Adam's family.

He pulled his keys out of his pocket and held them out to Marcus. "Get someone to bring the car around, someone who can drive us home. I'll arrange for a taxi back to the club for them."

"You got it."

Adam's tears broke through then. "I'm sorry, Master."

"This isn't your fault, lovely. Not your fault."

"He was disappointed in me. He said... I should have paid attention."

"That's no reason to beat you half to death." He growled, unable to stop himself. "Not to mention he's not your Master. He's only a fucking client."

Adam shook his head. "I don't fuck them. Ever."

He smiled softly. "No, lovely, I know that. I was calling him an asshole, not saying you were fucking him."

"Oh." Adam nodded, reached for him, wincing in pain.

He pressed their foreheads together, aching for his lovely man.

"I want to go home. I want you to hold me."

"Someone's bringing the car around now. Can you stand?"

"Yes, Master." Adam stood, pale and sweaty, but upright.

He went to put his arm around Adam's waist and stopped himself. "How can I help?"

"I'm okay. Just stay with me." Adam moved, one careful step at a time.

"I'm right here, Adam. I'm not going anywhere." And neither was Adam. He was canceling the man's appointments for the next month.

"Please. Thank you. I need you."

"I know." He kissed the side of Adam's face. "I have you. I do." He would kill the Dom. He would.

They headed outside, Marcus behind the wheel, waiting for them patiently. Matt slipped into the back seat and helped Adam get in, lie down on the pillows provided, his sub's head on his lap. He winced with every soft sound of discomfort Adam made.

"Tell me where we're going, Matt."

"We live at 478 Archer Avenue. The new houses."

"I'm on it." Marcus drove carefully but quickly, getting them there in a flash.

"I usually leave the car at the top of the driveway."

"You got it. Xavier's behind us, he'll take me back to the club."

"Thank you, Marcus. For everything." He turned his attention back to Adam. "We're almost home, lovely."

Adam nodded, then moaned. "Home."

"Yes, lovely. Home." He had salve for Adam's back, the pills Manning had given him. Then tomorrow he'd

get the prescriptions filled, get easy food for Adam, and love his sub.

It was going to be all right. Adam was going to be all right.



## Chapter Twelve

Adam woke up in the middle of the night, burning alive, aching, lost. "Master..."

"Adam?" Matt was right there, hand on his cheek. "What do you need, lovely?"

"I'm hot." Scared.

"Are you up to the shower? Some nice cool water."

"Please. It hurts."

Matt gave him two pills, held a glass of water to his lips. "This first."

He took the pills, trusting Matt. "I'm so sorry, Master, for waking you." He'd do it again, though.

"Adam! Of course you woke me. You're in pain, and it's my job to take care of you."

"I need you."

Matt helped him move, helped him into the shower. Every breath hurt. His Master turned on the shower, the flow low and cool. "It'll probably hurt at first."

"Stay with me?"

"I'm not going anywhere, lovely." Matt went in first, and then gently pulled him in.

The water made him whimper, made him shake, and he pushed into Matt's arms.

Matt held him, hands so careful on his hips. "Too cold?"

"I. I." He shook his head, beginning to tremble.

"Okay, okay, lovely." Matt pulled him to rest against his Master's front, the water cooling him down. "It'll be okay, lovely. It'll be okay."

"Master." He rested, let the water fall on him. It wasn't long before the cool began to feel cold.

"That's enough. Let's go out." Matt turned the water off and helped him out of the shower.

His teeth were chattering, soft, hysterical sounds leaving him.

"Adam." Matt pressed their lips together, the kiss forceful, demanding his attention. Everything stilled a little bit. Eased. He could breathe. Matt's hands stroked his cheeks. "Just breathe, lovely. The pills will kick in soon."

"I was... I was so scared."

Matt nodded. "It must have been terrible."

"He was angry at me." No one had ever hit him in anger before.

"Then he shouldn't have continued the scene."

"No. No, he shouldn't have. I safeworded." It was not supposed to be like this.

"Why didn't he listen to you? Why was he so angry?"

"Because... because I'd turned my phone off. Because I'd ignored him."

Matt growled a little. "He's not your Master."

"No. No." And maybe that was it. Maybe he wasn't supposed to have a master. Maybe he couldn't do this. Maybe...

"There's something wrong with him, Adam, that he would do something like this to you."

"Or something wrong with me. He thinks I betrayed him."

"No, Adam. He was only a client. He was never your Master. You're allowed to have your own life. And besides, even if you did do something wrong, that doesn't give him the right to beat you almost to death."

"I only have one Master. I *never* called another man Master."

"I know. Lovely, I know. And that makes me so happy." Matt pressed more kisses on his face.

"I need to lie down. Please."

"Of course, come on."

Matt led him back to bed, helping him get in, a pillow beneath his hips. Then Matt climbed in next to him, staying right there. He may have cried a little, but he wasn't sure. He wasn't sure of much. Except that his Master was there, talking to him quietly, touching his face, his arms.

"Love." The drug took him over, and he fell asleep, murmuring Matt's name.

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Matt left Adam long enough to make whole wheat pancakes, knowing they were his lovely's favorite. He poured out a glass of orange juice and brought it and Adam's pills back to the bedroom. Adam was awake, staring out the bedroom window, eyes shadowed.

"I have your pills, lovely."

"Again? Oh, God. Good. I hurt."

Tomorrow would be the worst, then the healing would begin. "I know, lovely." He gave Adam the pills, the juice, watching carefully to make sure Adam wasn't having problems taking them.

"Are you okay? Did you get any sleep?"

"I'm fine, lovely. Pissed off at Isaac, but fine." He'd taken a few minutes away from making pancakes to call Marcus with the name of the man who'd done this to Adam. He's also started calling to cancel Adam's appointments.

"I don't want to see him again."

"You won't. He'd better not even call you."

"I don't know where my phone is."

"It's in the kitchen. I've canceled your appointments for the rest of the week. Later I'll cancel the rest of this month's for you."

He saw the worry in Adam's eyes, but Adam didn't argue. "The Hammer Tops will understand."

"So will the others, lovely. The ones who are decent human beings."

Adam's eyes closed, his lovely one taking a deep breath.

"You didn't deserve this."

"No. No, I didn't. I should have been smarter maybe, or more informational or something."

"More informational?" What the heck was Adam talking about?

"Like I shouldn't have made him think I was ignoring him."

"Adam, this isn't your fault. Nothing you did or did not do 'earned' you this. He was a client, nothing more. He was not your Master. He doesn't own you."

"I know. I know. I just... I should have been more careful."

"You shouldn't have made an exception for him. We had our rules, we should have insisted on them being followed and made him wait." It might not have helped, but surely the man would have understood his place then.

Adam's eyes fell. "I'm sorry."

"No, you were doing what you thought was best. You didn't know he was crazy."

"No. I didn't know he was so mad at me."

"Because he had no right to be, no reason."

Adam nodded, arms around his belly.

"This isn't your fault." He pressed kissed to Adam's face. "It isn't."

"It feels like my fault."

"That's what he wanted you to feel. That doesn't mean it's true." Matt was seriously going to find this

man and beat him as badly as he'd beaten Adam. Maybe worse.

There were going to be tears, maybe. Or maybe not. Adam was so centered, so strong. His sub needed to know that he was here, that he was standing strong by his lover. That if the tears came, Matt could handle them, that he wouldn't think less of Adam. As if he would, no matter what happened.

"I tried."

"I know, lovely. You're a good man. You did right by him."

"I tried." Adam repeated, eyes closing.

"You did all you could do. This is down to him. It's his fault, lovely."

"He yelled at me. I don't like that."

"You never have to see him again." In fact, Matt was going to forbid it.

"Okay. He..." Adam took a deep breath. "I thought he was my friend."

"I'm sorry. lovely. I really am."

"I'm going to sleep some more, I think."

Matt nodded, stroked his cheek. "Your body needs to heal."

"Uh-huh." Adam sank back into sleep, and it wasn't until Matt stood up that he realized Adam hadn't eaten a bite.

He shook his head at himself. He'd have to make sure the man did eat the next time he woke up.

## Chapter Thirteen

Adam spent the next two days in agony, refusing to eat, refusing to move more than necessary. It all hurt too much. Everything hurt.

Matt fretted and cared and held him. At one point, Doc Manning came in, gave him an injection of something, and he floated away, muscles relaxing.

It was the smell of something cooking that had woken him up this morning. His stomach growled and he ignored it. He wasn't hungry.

He couldn't ignore his Master, though, when Matt came in a few minutes later with a tray. "Morning, lovely. How are you feeling?"

"I'm sore. Better though."

"You look less strained." Matt put the tray on the bed, sat next to him.

"Thank you. The shot helped."

"Good." Matt's palm cupped his cheek. "Food will make you feel even better."

He pressed into the touch. "Maybe a bite or two." He didn't want anything.

"I made you pancakes."

"Oh, you didn't have to." There was something comforting about it, though. Like it was *theirs*.

"I wanted to. Real maple syrup, too."

He smiled, touched. "Thank you." One bite wouldn't hurt.

Matt cut the pancake up and poured on the syrup before grabbing a fork and offering him a bite.

His lips parted and the maple hit his tongue. The first thought in his mind was, "You haven't worked out. You can't eat. You've been in bed for days. Days." He almost spat the bite out.

Matt was smiling at him, though, looking at him like he was the center of the universe.

"How does it look? My back?"

"It looks bad." Matt fed him a second bite. "It'll be awhile before you can work again."

"Oh." He didn't know what to say to that, really.

"I've called your appointments, made sure everyone knows you won't be keeping them."

"I'm sorry."

Matt's head tilted. "For what?"

He chuckled, the sound shaky. "I don't know."

"Oh, lovely." Matt stroked his cheek, and offered him another bite. "This wasn't your fault. The man was a good client, you had no reason to believe he'd become unhinged."

"I just..." He shook his head at the bite. "I think I'm full."

"Lovely, two bites isn't enough. You haven't eaten in days."

He looked at Matt. "I haven't worked out." He'd get fat. Swollen. Gross.

Matt stared at him for a long moment, and then took a breath. "You need calories just to stay at your current weight. Like probably a couple thousand. Just to maintain status quo. And you're healing right now. That takes extra energy, too. You need to eat, lovely. If you want, we could ask Manning to come back, he could let you know what your calorie intake should be. We can hire a nutritionist to help..."

"I can't. I can't cope with this. I can't..."

"You don't have to." Matt cupped his cheeks, made him look into his master's eyes. "Trust me with this, Adam. Trust me to feed you correctly. Trust me not to let you get fat or flabby. Trust me to take care of you."

"Master." He shook, this request huge. The biggest one anyone had ever asked of him.

"You know I love you, Adam. You know I want what's best for you. Please. I need you to trust me with your body, your heart, and your soul."

He did all he could do -- and it took every ounce of will he had. He opened his lips for a bite.

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Every time Adam woke up, Matt made sure he was there with some treat or another for his lovely to eat. He knew it was a huge thing, that Adam was letting Matt feed him; he also knew it was necessary. Not eating at all because he wasn't working out was going to kill Adam if it went on for too long. Adam still wasn't getting anywhere near what he should have been, but Matt had managed to make most of the food count -- even the custard was loaded with protein.

Now he was putting together a banana split to share with Adam -- made with frozen yogurt instead of ice cream.

Manning had been back in twice, both times for shots of muscle relaxants, and Adam was moving around more, sitting up. Matt'd recognized Adam's movements as he began to wake up and that's when he'd slipped out to get the banana split ready. Grabbing a spoon, he headed back to the bedroom.

Adam was sitting on the edge of the bed, breathing slowly.

"Hey, lovely. You're doing well." That Adam had moved that much without prodding was awesome.

"I think I want a shower."

"I have a frozen yogurt banana split. Wanna share that first?"



Adam met his eyes, the worry, the stress right there.  
"Are there strawberries?"

"There are. Bananas, strawberries, fresh cherries, raspberries and blueberries." He picked up one of the strawberries and offered it.

"That smells amazing." Adam ate it.

"It is amazing. I might have eaten a few while making it." Oliver had sent a huge fruit basket from the club. Huge. He picked up a raspberry, the fruit staining his fingers as he pressed it against Adam's lips.

Adam opened for him, tongue lapping at the juices. He slid his fingers against Adam's tongue, loving the soft touches.

"You should have some."

"I ate a lot while I was preparing it." He took a strawberry, though, eating it for himself as he handed over a cherry.

"I don't blame you. I love fruit."

"It's okay, there's still a ton left. Oliver sent the most amazing basket." He grabbed the spoon and offered some of the frozen yogurt.

Adam opened up, ate the bite slowly. Soon, the protests would start. He was going to get as much food into Adam as he could before that began, though.

One more strawberry and Adam sighed. "I should get cleaned up."

"You should let me feed you properly."

"Properly?"

"More than a bite or two."

He dipped the next strawberry in the frozen yogurt and held it up for Adam to eat. Adam opened for the bite, took it.

"That's good, lovely. Have some with the raspberries this time." He held the spoon up.

"It's a lot..." Adam's lips opened.

"It's barely enough to feed a bird, lovely."

"I'm so tired, Master."

"I know. Your body is working hard to heal. Eating will help, Adam. You said you'd let me worry about that, that you wouldn't balk at the food."

"I did." Adam opened for another bite.

He fed Adam another couple spoonfuls of the frozen yogurt, and then two more strawberries. "Good. Give yourself time, lovely."

"I'll be okay. I will."

"I know." Matt pressed soft kisses on Adam's face.

Adam leaned against him a little longer, then sighed, eyelids going heavy.

"We should walk around the house, lovely."

"Hmm?"

"To keep you from getting too stiff."

"Oh." Adam nodded, stood in a forced move.

He took his lovely's hands, helping. "Okay, that's it, good."

He'd called Dan, told the man that Adam would be missing yoga. Dan had wanted to come, had called daily to check on Adam. He'd given Matt some advice on how to keep Adam from stiffening up from all the sleeping.

Matt held onto Adam's arm and slowly led him along the hall. Adam was shaky, weak, and still stoned, but moving better. He brought the man into the living room, over to the large, soft couch with its pillows. Adam looked at it, shivered, then steeled himself to sit.

"No, you can lie on your stomach." He grabbed one of the smaller cushions and put it down.

"Oh, thank God."

"You have to say something, lovely, when you have needs." He wanted to think of everything for Adam, but there would be times when he didn't; he wasn't perfect,

and much as he'd like to be able to, he couldn't read Adam's mind.

Adam eased himself down. The bruises were vicious, still, but starting to heal in places.

He sat on the floor next to Adam's head, and leaned them together. "I love you."

"I'm so sorry about this. So sorry."

"Shh. This wasn't your fault, lovely. Stop apologizing for it."

"It was. I should have..." Adam sighed, closed his eyes.

"You should have what? Read his mind? Cloned yourself?" He shook his head. "Not. Your. Fault."

"What am I going to do?"

"We'll think of something, lovely. For now, all you need to do is heal."

Adam nodded, took a shaky breath. "Has he called me? Is he looking for me?"

"No. Marcus assured me the Hammer would take care of him."

"What does that mean?"

"I don't exactly know, lovely, but I trust Marcus."

Adam actually smiled. "I do, too. Implicitly."

"Then we won't worry about it right now."

"Okay." Such a good man.

"We could watch a movie." He didn't actually expect Adam would stay awake all that long, but he wanted to get his lovely moving in the right direction -- back to the land of the living, so to speak.

"If you want to, that would be fine."

"How about *Strictly Ballroom*? It's one of my favorites." And one he thought Adam would enjoy very much.

Adam nodded. "I've never seen it."

"Cool. It's a lot of fun." He kissed Adam's nose and went over to find the movie on the shelf.

When he turned back around, Adam was looking out the window, a lost, desperate look on his face.

He shook his head. "Lovely. Look at me." He took Adam's face in his hands and looked deep into his lover's eyes.

The tears came, then, hard and harsh, Adam trusting him with it, with the loss of control. He pressed their foreheads together and stroked Adam's hair, his arms, anywhere he could reach that wouldn't hurt. When the storm was over, he stayed close, proud of his lovely one for letting him in.

He kissed away the tears, licking the salt from Adam's face. "Love you," he whispered. "Love you so."

"Love. I'm so tired." Adam blinked for him, panted.

"You can sleep. It's okay. We'll watch the movie again later."

"Stay." Adam's eyes closed.

"Oh, I'm not going anywhere." He kissed the side of Adam's face. There was something broken in his lovely one. Some trust, some joy that was simply gone. He would have to figure something out, because he was never letting this happen again. Ever.

"I'm sorry, Master. I tried to make things work."

"Shh. Shh. We'll figure out how to make it work together, lovely." Who'd have thought it would be a client's jealousy that got in the way and not his own?

Adam lifted up. "Can I rest my head on your lap?"

"Oh, yes." He sat carefully and helped Adam settle. Adam's cheek eased onto his thigh, his lovely man right there. He stroked his fingers through Adam's hair, humming softly along to the music over the opening credits.

Soon his lovely one relaxed, slept.

Matt wished he could relax. He wished that he could stop being angry at Adam's client for being a possessive, stalker asshole. He wished he could come up with a response to the knowledge that he wouldn't be able to let Adam go back.

Until he did, he'd just concentrate on loving his man.

## Chapter Fourteen

Adam woke up before dawn, slipped from the bed, and put on his yoga pants. He could do this. He could. He stared at his t-shirt for a long minute. He could do this.

"Lovely?"

"Uh-huh?" *Go back to sleep, Master.*

"Why aren't you in bed?"

"I was thinking about going to yoga." If he could figure out how to get his shirt on.

"I don't think that's a very good idea, lovely. Why don't we call Dan and have him come in and work with you one on one?"

"I'd hate to bother him. I just can't bear the thought of putting this shirt on." He swayed, dizzy and suddenly bone tired.

"Lovely." Matt got out of bed and helped him back over to it, laying him down carefully. "He wants to come and help. He's called every day."

"I..." He moaned and settled, lifting his hips so Matt could take his pants off.

"You are allowed to be pampered. You're even allowed to do it yourself -- not attend yoga, eat decadent things that make you feel better, let your Master take care of you!" Matt grabbed the Lidocaine spray, spread it over his skin to ease him. "You are not alone anymore, Adam. No man is an island, and that is especially true for a man in a relationship like ours."

"I know. I'm just... So tired, Master. So very tired."

"I know. Your body is working so hard. And your spirit has been bruised."

"Yes." Yes, exactly.

"It takes time for both to heal."

"They will, though." They had to.

"Of course they will. We're working on it together, hmm?" Matt kissed him softly.

"I tried to go. That counts, right?"

"You safeworded, lovely. You did nothing wrong. Nothing."

He didn't know about that. He had to have some culpability here.

Matt kissed him again, finger stroking his cheek softly. "Shall we get up and have something to eat? You could lie on the couch and I could feed you that touchy-feely granola you like so much, even if you think it has too much fat in it."

"I'm not hungry, Master. I'm sorry, I'm not." He didn't think he'd ever be hungry again.

"You'll eat anyway, lovely."

He sighed, trying not to grump, to fight.

Matt chuckled. "That sounded very long-suffering."

He stuck his tongue out at Matt. His Master laughed and leaned in, trying to catch his tongue. He pulled it back in, winked, trying to play, to be right.

Matt smiled at him, rubbed their noses together. "I love you."

"I love you. I'm going to have to go home, soon, huh? Water my plants. Weed." He didn't want to, somehow.

"Or we could ask someone to water them for you." Matt smiled gently. "I like having you home here with me."

He nodded. "I like it here."

Matt nodded. "It's ours. I wasn't here long enough to make it just mine."

"I didn't intend to just push into your life."

"Adam." His name was little more than a growl.

"You are my lover, my sub. You belong in my life."

"I just... This is everyday for you, now."

Matt beamed at him. "Yes, it is."

"You're good with it?"

"I'm great with it. I love having you here full time."

He smiled. "Thank you." God, that felt good.

"It's the truth, lovely."

"I need this, right now. Everything else is wrong."

"You've got this. You've got me. I love you. I want you here."

He twisted and pushed into Matt's arms, holding on tight, trusting Matt to hold him and not hurt him.

Matt buried his face in Adam's neck, arms careful but sure around him. "I'm right here, lovely. With you."

"Okay. Thank you." Stay. Let him stay.

"What would you think about moving in?"

"I'd say I'm hurt and shouldn't make decisions."

"All right. You can give me your answer when you feel well enough. And until then, you're staying here with me."

"Yes. Please. Thank you."

Matt nodded, pressed another kiss on him. "Come on. Touchy feely crunchy granola."

He chuckled. "Granola is good."

"I know you like it."

"I do." He closed his eyes. "I want an egg white, though." Those were fewer calories, more protein.

"Sounds good. We can save the granola for snacking on while we watch another movie."

He'd watched more movies in the last few days. It was lovely. Matt helped him stand, moving them easily toward the kitchen. He leaned, breathing. The pain wasn't any worse than a scene now. He used to come home from those by himself; no one ever took care of him the way Matt did.

"Do you think depending on you so much will make me weaker?" He didn't think so, not really. He thought it would make him grateful.



"You of all people know that there's nothing weak about being a sub." Matt kissed him softly. "I think being willing to cede control to me makes you stronger."

He nodded, pleased that they were on the same page there. "I think so, too. I just wanted to know where you stood."

"By your side. Always."

That made him smile. "Thank you, Master."

"My pleasure."

Matt put a pillow on one of the chairs and helped him to sit carefully, then went to the fridge and began to take out vegetables. Adam watched, leaning on the table. He loved to see the way Matt moved. Matt took out the box of egg whites last, and then began to wash and cut the vegetables.

"Do you need help?"

"No, you just sit there and relax. Would you like some tea?"

"That sounds nice. Thank you."

Matt filled the kettle and put it on before sliding a frying pan onto the front burner. Garlic and onions went in with a little bit of oil, the heat turned on. "Won't be long for either."

"What are you doing?" He leaned forward, watching.

"Cooking the garlic and onions first. Then I'll add the potatoes, then the softer veggies, and then the egg whites."

"You don't have to go to any trouble." It smelled good, though.

"It's no trouble, lovely. It's just breakfast."

"I just throw egg whites in a pan."

"This'll taste way better than that." Matt stirred the concoction, then threw more vegetables in it. Adam watched, loving the way Matt moved, the actions of the long fingers. It wasn't long before he had a steaming cup

of tea at his elbow and a plate of egg whites with vegetables. "Ta da!"

"Thank you." He grabbed Matt's arm, pulled him in for a grateful kiss.

Moaning softly, Matt opened up, encouraging him to deepen the kiss.

"Master." He whispered the honorific into Matt's lips.

"Mmm." Matt's tongue slipped between his lips, stroked his own.

He moaned, opened, and reached up, cupped the back of Matt's head. Matt fucked his mouth gently, tongue pushing in with that age-old rhythm. He moaned, responding happily, stupid in love.

It was Matt who ended the kiss after several more moments, leaning their foreheads together. "We need to eat. Then we can make out a little more."

"Mmmhmm." He wasn't paying attention.

Matt sat next to him and offered a forkful of food. He opened up, more interested in Matt than food. The food slipped between his lips, the flavor exploding on his tongue. He hummed, actually enjoying it. Matt beamed at him and fed him another mouthful.

"It's good." And it couldn't be bad for him.

"And all it has in it are vegetables and egg whites."

More forkfuls were fed to him. He ate a few more, then pushed Matt's arm. "You, too."

Matt handed over the fork. "I'll eat mine if you continue to eat as well."

"I will." A little, anyway.

"Good."

Matt dug into his own food, making a happy noise at his first bite. They sat together, Matt finishing his eggs, Adam picking, eating a bite here and there. Each bite made him feel more and more full. He should get out for a long run today.

Matt tutted. "I can hear you thinking that you're eating too much. I tell you what, how about a stroll after lunch today?"

"I'd like that. We could go down to the beach."

"That's what I was thinking!" Matt began to clear up their plates.

He nodded. "Do you have to do into the gallery today?"

"No, I don't have to go back for a few more days."

He smiled. Matt was too good to him.

Matt smiled back and finished up the dishes, then came over. "You feel like a movie? There's popcorn."

"We just ate." And it was early in the morning.

"That doesn't mean we can't snack on popcorn. There's no calories in it. Especially if you eat it curled up with your Master."

"There are, too." He let Matt move him into the living room.

"Not enough to make you fat."

"I worry about it. Gaining weight."

"I know you do, but I'm worrying about your intake and calorie burning for now, so you don't need to think about it."

"You swear? You're really paying attention for me?" That was a huge pressure on his shoulders.

"I promise you that you will stay in your five-pound zone."

His knees buckled, and he headed for the couch.

"Easy, easy." Matt guided him down.

"Sorry." It was such a weight.

"It's okay, lovely." Matt rubbed his belly. "Are you okay?"

"I. No. No. No, I'm not okay." He wasn't okay. He was tired of saying he was okay.

"Tell me what's not okay, lovely." There was a hint of command in Matt's tone.

"I don't know! How can so much be wrong when so much is right?" His chest was going to crack open.

"Because you're focusing on what's wrong. We'll make it right. Together."

"I can't. I can't make anything right, right now."

"But you don't have to, Adam. Leave everything with me and heal and enjoy every day we have together."

He nodded, knowing that he couldn't do what Matt asked, but willing to try, to submit. Matt gave him an approving kiss.

He kissed Matt back, then settled in to pretend to watch a movie, to listen to the madness in the back of his mind.

## Chapter Fifteen

Adam's back was healing nicely, though Matt was pretty sure his lovely's spirit was an entirely different matter. Dan had been coming in every morning around eight to help Adam stretch and go through some poses, fifteen minutes stretching over the days to just about an hour now. He and Adam were going walking in the afternoons along the beach. They were up to nearly two hours of that. Adam was also letting him worry about calorie intake, letting him feed his lovely. High protein, low fat, and lots of fruits and vegetables were what he was concentrating on.

He was trying to make the food as interesting as possible, as well, bringing home lots of different spices and adding them to the dishes he prepared. So far the scale had proved him right -- Adam wasn't putting on weight. What he was doing was getting the nutrients he needed to work and heal.

"Lovely, let's go have dinner at the Hammer. They usually do something yummy with seafood on Friday nights."

Adam looked at him, the stillness less control and more depression. "Okay."

"You don't have to talk to anyone, lovely, if you don't want to." Even if all Adam did was sit there and eat a bit of shrimp, at least it would be getting out, going into the world again.

Adam nodded. "I'll get dressed. Give me five."

"Take your time; we don't have a reservation." If there were no tables for two, they both knew enough people that they would be invited to sit. The invitations might come anyway.

Adam disappeared like a puff of skinny smoke. Matt shook his head and settled on the couch, waiting for his

lovely's return. He had to come up with something. Some solution for them that would work.

Adam's subbing for other masters bothered him a lot less than it had at the beginning, less than he'd thought it would. Him providing aftercare and knowing in his heart that Adam was his had made all the difference. He was uncomfortable now, though, even contemplating letting Adam go to a job with a master he hadn't met himself. No matter how well Adam already knew them.

He wasn't even sure he wanted Adam doing a scene without him there to supervise, to assure his sub's safety. He was honest enough to admit that he needed to get some of that control back. What would Adam think of that? He would have to ask.

Adam came back in, neatly dressed, face carefully controlled. He stood and held open his arms. "You look nice."

"Thank you." Adam came to him, leaned against him.

"I have you," he promised, wrapping Adam in his arms.

"I know." Adam kissed his jaw.

"Good." He put Adam's hand in the crook of his arm and headed them out. Adam's head was down, his lover quiet beside him. He waited until they were in the car and on the road. "Talk to me, lovely?"

"What about, Master?"

"About how you're feeling, what you're thinking."

"I'm trying not to. I'm trying to just sit."

"I don't want an automaton, lovely. I want *you*."

"I know. I just... I'm very tired, very down."

"I know. How do I help?"

"If I knew, I would ask you." Adam offered him a smile, visibly trying. "I'll be happier."

He reached over and touched Adam's hand. "I don't want an act, lovely."

Adam's fingers twined with his. "I can't stop worrying about things, Master."

"Share them with me."

"They're ridiculous and not worth your time."

Matt thought that was the closest Adam had come to refusing him as he ever had.

"Nothing about you is ridiculous or not worthy of my time."

"We're almost at the club."

"I can pull over if you'd like."

"No. No, I'll be fine. Are you looking forward to supper?"

"I am. I love seafood, but I can't cook it. It always comes out overdone and rubbery."

Adam nodded. "I don't cook it."

"You eat it, though, right?"

"I haven't since I became a vegetarian, but I used to crave it."

"Why did you become a vegetarian?"

"Honestly? It was easier to watch my weight."

Matt could see that, could see how Adam would come up with something like that. "But seafood has very few calories, lots of protein. It's great."

"I liked it."

Matt had to wonder if that was why Adam didn't eat it. "Then we can enjoy it together this evening."

"Maybe..."

He parked the car in the back lot for the Hammer and turned to look at Adam, one eyebrow raised. Adam wouldn't look at him.

"You ceded control of this to me, Adam. And you've done so well with that -- keep trusting me."

"I'm trying." The words were barely controlled.

He reached for Adam's hand and squeezed gently. "I know you are. And you've done very well. You need to

continue to do so, though. I have promised not to lead you astray. And being able to eat things you enjoy in moderation is very healthy."

"I don't want to eat anymore."

"Ever again, you mean?"

"Sometimes." There was a storm raging behind the shadow of his lover.

"We need to talk about where this is coming from, lovely."

"Let's just have our supper."

"All right. But, I'm not dropping this."

Adam nodded, slipped out of the car, not waiting for him to open the door. Matt growled. His sub needed to be reminded who was Master here. Getting out, he walked around and held his arm out for Adam. Adam took his arm, but his lovely one was a million miles away.

He led his lover into the Hammer, hoping Adam's friends would help bring him back. Everyone greeted Adam fondly, the subs giving Adam gentle hugs, all the Doms respectful, warm. They were shown to a table for two in a quiet corner. Adam sat, eyes down, face carefully still.

Matt considered his lover, his sub, for a long moment.

Adam's eyes met his. "Master?"

"I'm worried about you, lovely."

"I'll be fine. I promise."

"You will be. I promise."

Adam blinked, looked confused. "You promise?"

"That you'll be fine. I'll make sure of it." He'd figure out what his lovely man needed.

Adam's smile seemed sad, worried.

Matt waved to Xavier. When he came over, Matt smiled. "Is there a private room available?"



"Let me make sure. Give me two minutes."

When Xavier walked away, Adam looked at him, obviously confused. "Master?"

"We need a scene, lovely. You need your Master." Adam's eyes went wide.

"I won't have you fade away to nothing, like a shadow."

"I won't. I'm eating. You saw."

"And I see the sadness in your eyes, the worry. The withdrawal."

"I'm fine. I will be fine."

Xavier handed him a key. "Room four."

"Thank you, Xavier. Come on, lovely. It's time for your scene."

Adam stood, the act automatic. Matt could tell his lovely simply didn't quite understand. His sub, the professional sub, had never had a scene here for himself. A scene with his Master because his sub needed attention, care.

"I love you," he told Adam as they arrived at room four.

"I love you, Master."

"Good." Matt kissed Adam lightly and drew him into the room.

He could see Adam go into what he thought of as 'work mode' -- dimming the lights, checking the temperature so the client would be happy.

"Stop. Right there. Stop."

"What? Do you want more lighting?"

"What I want is for you to strip and kneel on the floor. I will prepare the room how I want it for my sub."

Adam stared at him for half a second, then blinked. "Yes, S..." Adam's eyes closed and his lovely took a long, deep breath. "Yes, Master."

"That's right, lovely. I'm not a client. It's me -- Matt."

Adam nodded for him, smiled. "I'm sorry. I was on auto-pilot."

"I know. Now that you're not, get ready for me."

He went around the room himself, deliberately changing the lighting somewhat, upping the temperature just a touch, arranging the pillows on the chaise lounge. His lover stripped, folding his clothes carefully before kneeling.

Matt moved to where Adam was, slowly walking around his lovely, examining every inch. Adam was seen by him, and he needed his lover to know that. The swelling was gone, the bruises mostly faded. His lover was there, lovely. Solid.

He moaned softly, let his pleasure in Adam be known. Adam's prick jerked at the sound, began to fill a bit.

He slid his hand along Adam's right shoulder. "You're so lovely -- you make me hard, make me want."

"Thank you, Master."

Bending, he kissed the shoulder he'd touched. Then he touched the other one, kissed it, too. "You make me want to do perverse things to you, my lovely."

He felt Adam shiver.

"First, I'm going to use a flogger on you." It was what Isaac had used to beat Adam so badly. Matt needed to show Adam it was still safe. Adam paled, but didn't argue.

Matt went to the little cabinet and pulled out a good, heavy flogger. This wasn't going to work with something light, something toy-like. He brought it back over, showing Adam. "There will be no punishment for safewording should you need to, lovely. And you will safeword if it becomes too much. Or even if it begins and you can't bear it."

Adam was pale as snow, red spots on the man's cheeks, but all Adam did was nod.

"I love you." It was important that Adam know who was wielding the flogger, that Adam remember that Matt loved and cared for him.

He snapped the flogger gently, the tails thudding softly over Adam's left shoulder. Adam didn't move, didn't shift. Matt wasn't sure Adam was breathing.

"I've always found the flogger to be a very solid tool." He hit Adam again while he was speaking, across the shoulder blades this time, still not putting very much force behind the hit. The words themselves were just words, just something so Adam would hear his voice.

One tear left Adam's eyes, slipped down the lean cheek.

"You can cause a lot of damage with it, but wield it properly and you can make magic." His voice was thick with emotion, but he kept talking, even as he sent the flogger across Adam's ass, then over his right shoulder.

Adam shuddered, sucking in air, trying so hard.

Matt didn't think it would take long for Adam to safeword; then his lovely would know that was still safe, that everything would stop. "A few more, lovely."

The tears came faster. "Master..."

"I'm right here, lovely." The hits barely touched Adam's skin now, more brushing him.

Still, the safeword came, not a second before Adam broke, stumbling away.

He tossed the flogger aside and followed Adam, wrapping his arms around his sub from behind. "It's okay, lovely. I have you. You're safe."

"Leave me alone. Please. I need time. I can't..."

"No, lovely. I stopped the scene when you safeworded, now we deal with the aftermath -- like we're supposed to."

"Please..." Adam shook like a leaf in a tree.

He picked Adam up and took him over the lounge, sitting down and holding his lover close. Adam only fought a moment, the little rebellion more than he'd ever seen before, then his lovely one gave in.

He stroked Adam's skin, touching his lover's back, shoulders, ass. "I have you. You're safe."

"I don't know what to do."

"You let me hold you and comfort you. You believe me when I promise you that no one will ever hurt you like that again."

"You can't know that. I can't know that."

"Yes, I can know that. From now on, I'm going to your clients with you." He hadn't meant to let that just pop out, to lay it on the line like that, but now that he'd said it, he had no intention of taking it back.

"What?"

"I don't mean to be controlling, and they're your clients, but I won't risk this happening to you again. I won't risk *you* again. Any master with legitimate intentions will not have a problem with you having a chaperone along."

Adam searched his eyes, and he steeled himself for a fight.

"Yes, lovely?" At least a fight on this matter would be something other than the dull quiet of late.

"I... You have a job."

"We'll work something out. Or... change my job."

"I can't do that to you. What kind of person would I be if I did that?"

"You're not doing anything to me. I think I could get into, well, being your Master for hire." He wasn't sure how to put it. "Helping teach others, you know? Leading by example. A master wants to learn to use the flogger properly, they hire us. I demonstrate on you, they

practice on you, they do it on their sub while we're still there so we can help them through it." He was making it up as he went, but the more he talked about it, the more sense it made.

"I..." There was a glimmer of excitement in Adam's eyes.

He nodded. "It would work. Instead of just a sub for hire, we'll be a team."

"Maybe. Maybe, I don't know."

"Think about it."

"Okay. I can, maybe. I can."

"Nothing is set in stone. We can try it out and see if it works for us."

Adam nodded. "We can plan, maybe. Talk about things."

"Yes. I'd like that."

Adam looked... more there than he'd been since this had happened. "I don't. I was worrying. Worrying."

"You can always share your worries with me, lovely."

"I don't know if I can do it again."

"Do you want to try or do you want to retire?"

"I don't know. I don't know anything right now."

"Adam, we don't have to decide anything right now. No one is going to force you to go back to it. And I'm not going to ask you to decide before you're ready."

Adam nodded, sighed. "Okay. Okay, thank you."

"You are the most important thing to me, lovely. I want you to be happy. I need you to be happy."

"I just... I need to get up. I need to run."

"Then let's go run."

Adam stood up, nodded, but didn't leave, just paced the room.

"We can go to the gym or to the beach." He grabbed his clothes and began to get dressed.

"Master."

He stopped and turned to Adam. "Yes, lovely?"

"I need you." Adam sighed, looked at him. "Our first night, you spanked me, and I was hard for you, wanting so bad. I want that back."

He dropped his clothes and opened his arms. Adam came to him, relaxed. Easy as pie. He ran his hand over Adam's body, touching every inch of skin that he could. Adam's forehead rested on his shoulder, heavy, solid.

"I'm going to put you over my knee and spank you, lovely. Ground you."

"Thank you, Master. I want you to make this yours."

"It is mine. You and me, whatever we do together, it belongs to us." He sat and drew Adam down with him. Adam was warm, solid against him. "You're going to lie over my lap with your prick between my legs while I spank you. Remind you who your Master is."

"Yes, Master. I do know, I promise."

"I know you know here." He touched Adam's head. "I think you need to know here." He touched Adam's back where his heart was, and then that fine ass.

Adam nodded, heart in those pretty eyes.

Matt fell in love all over again. He cupped Adam's cheeks and slowly kissed his lovely. When the kiss ended, he moved his sub, his lover, putting that sweet cock between his thighs. He rubbed Adam's ass, fingers sliding over it. Adam didn't tense, didn't respond, but he imagined he could feel Adam's heartbeat speed.

"I love you," he whispered, hand coming down on Adam's ass.

Adam's body responded perfectly, eagerly. The lean hips rocked the tiniest bit, the skin went pink, and Adam moaned.

"Mmm. Yes." He smacked Adam again, getting the other ass cheek this time.

He needed to remember how much he enjoyed a simple spanking -- the connection was perfect, fierce. He continued, Adam's skin coloring, his hand warming. They found a rhythm together -- Adam moaning and shifting, him panting and bringing his hand down. Adam's cock grew hard between his legs, his own rising to meet it.

"Please, Master. Don't stop yet. Please." The whispered words made him ache inside.

He shook his head, even though Adam couldn't see it. "Not stopping."

"Thank you. Please. Yours." Adam let his thighs spread.

"That's right, lovely. You're mine. Top to bottom and in between." He let his fingers slap against Adam's perineum. Adam jerked, stiffened, pushed against his thighs. "I have you. You're mine."

"Tell me again?"

"You're mine." He smacked Adam's ass again. "All mine."

"Master." Adam arched, cock driving faster.

"You wait 'til I tell you."

"Master!"

He wondered if he could push further. "Not yet." He slapped his fingers on that soft skin between asshole and balls again.

"Fuck!"

Oh... How wonderful.

"Yes, soon. After I let you come."

Adam groaned, one hand wrapping around his calf.

"Yes. You've got me. I'm not going anywhere. You're mine. For always."

"I need." Adam's fingers dug in.

"I know what you need, lovely. I'm what you need."

Adam's hips were sawing between his thighs, driving harder, faster.

He wouldn't let Adam fail. "Now, lovely. Give it to me now."

"Now. Master. Master..."

He hit that fine ass again and heat sprayed between his thighs.

"Yes! That's my lovely."

Adam moaned for him, the sound wild, perfect.

It made him moan, too. "I want you."

"Yours. I'm yours."

"You are." He tugged Adam up. "Straddle me."

Adam's cheeks were red, but those eyes were bright, alive. Focused. "Yes, Master."

He grabbed the lube from the table. Adam started moving before he even got the lid open.

"Mmm. Sexy beast."

Adam's chuckle warmed him. "Rowr."

He laughed softly, nodded. His lovely sub leaned forward, forehead resting against his.

"Love you," he whispered, slick fingers moving, sliding along Adam's crack.

"Yes. Love." Adam moaned, eyelids heavy.

"Lovely. So lovely." He pushed his finger into Adam's hole.

"Want your cock." The ribald request made his prick jerk.

"You're gonna get it, lovely." He added a finger, stretching Adam quickly, eager to give his lover exactly what he wanted.

"More. Please. Please, I want."

He knew what Adam wanted. He wasn't going to hurry this, though, and pushed in another finger, stretching the tight ass.



"More, damn it." Oh. Someone was pushing. The fact that Adam trusted him that much was... huge. Simply huge.

"You'll get more when I'm ready to give it to you."

Adam shivered, asshole clenching around his fingers. He pushed his fingers deeper, hitting Adam's gland. Adam's lips parted on a moan, body flushing dark. He moaned and kissed Adam, letting his fingers fall away. Adam shuddered, hips following his touch.

He slid a condom on his prick, then, reaching beneath them, he put his cock at Adam's hole. Adam tried to bear down, take him in, but he kept his hand at Adam's waist, controlling this.

"You're mine," he reminded Adam.

"Yours. No one else's."

"That's right. All mine." On 'mine,' he thrust into Adam's body.

Adam grunted, head falling back. So fucking beautiful. He pressed in again.

"Master. Master. More."

"I'll give you all you need." He wrapped his hands around Adam's waist, pulling him down into each thrust.

Sharp little sounds tore out of Adam's throat, his lover's body jerking around his cock. He kept pushing up into Adam, holding his lover's gaze. He could be strong enough for Adam to lose control, for Adam to be wild.

"Give me all of you."

"You have me!"

"Every bit of you." He thrust in hard.

"Every..." Adam's body went tight.

"Yes. All of you. Everything." Each word pushed out of him with a moan, Adam's tight heat so perfect.

"Harder. Harder. Fuck. Fuck, please."

"Patience, lovely."

Adam growled, body trying to force him to thrust harder.

He pulled Adam down, held his lover there. "Stop. I'm in charge."

He felt Adam fight him, the need and electricity between them fierce. He held strong to Adam's hips, not letting his lover control this.

"Master!"

"I have you."

"Fuck. Fuck. Please. I need. Please."

"And I will give you what you need."

Adam whimpered, hands on his shoulders.

"That's right." He held Adam's gaze and slowly started moving again. Every time Adam started moving with him, he slowed, stopped. He kissed Adam's lips. "I'm your Master, lovely."

"I know. You are. I swear." Adam's cheeks were pink, body sheened with sweat.

"Good." He flipped them, putting Adam's back on the couch, and he started to fuck Adam hard.

He knew the bruises ached, but he also knew Adam was with him, needing this.

"Mine," he began to say as he drove in.

"Yours. Only. Only. More, please."

"Yes. More. Mine." He pushed harder.

"Yes." Adam's body took him in, held him close.

"This is all that matters, lovely."

"Us. We're..." Adam moaned, eyes rolling.

"We're so good together."

Adam nodded, lips opening and closing. Matt slid his hand around Adam's prick, jacking as he thrust. Adam was wet-tipped, hard, cock burning in his hand. He pushed harder and harder, his pleasure and need growing impossibly huge.

"Master!" Adam's head tossed, body convulsing.

"Yes! Come for me! Come on my cock!" He was so close himself -- almost there.

Spunk sprayed on Adam's belly, up along the lean chest. That sweet ass went tight around his cock, making him cry out as his own balls emptied, too. His. His lover.

"Love you," he whispered, kissing Adam.

"Yes." Adam relaxed, and Matt could see how tense his lover had been for days.

He pressed kisses over Adam's face as he carefully pulled out, dealing with the condom one-handed. Adam's fingers brushed over his face, so carefully. He settled on the couch, tugging Adam in close.

"I want to start going bareback, lovely." There didn't need to be any barriers between them. None.

"Really? You're not worried?"

"You don't have sex with your clients. You get tested regularly. And you're *mine*."

"But... what if someone... takes advantage?"

"No one is going to take advantage of you. I'm not letting anything happen to you."

"You swear it?"

"I swear it, Adam. You will never face another master on your own, and no one will ever hurt you again."

"I won't ever disappoint you, or make you ashamed of choosing me."

"That has never been a concern, lovely. Not ever."

"It is for me."

"You never will disappoint me or make me ashamed. You couldn't." He cupped Adam's cheeks, looked into the lovely eyes.

Adam held his gaze, the look solid, calm. Sure. Adam was his sub. His. He felt the truth of it deep in his bones.

He stroked Adam's throat, the touch gentle. "So lovely."  
And so loved.

"I'm glad you think so."

"I do. I think you're the loveliest man I've ever seen."  
He kissed the tip of Adam's nose.

"I think I'm hungry."

He beamed at Adam. "And I think they have the most  
amazing shrimp dish on the menu tonight."

"Can I try yours first? In case I don't like it?"

"Of course. In fact, we can order a few different  
things and share them all."

"Oh, that's a lot of trouble..."

"No it's not, lovely." And even if it was, that didn't  
matter.

"I..." Adam's fingers twined with his, held on.

"Are mine." He squeezed Adam's fingers

"Yes." The single word sounded incredibly satisfied.

It made him smile and rub their noses together. When  
he heard Adam's stomach growl, he chuckled. "Time to  
go eat, lovely."

Time to live their lives.

## Chapter Sixteen

Adam let himself slowly rise from his meditation, shocked to find the rest of the class was gone.

"Did I fall asleep?"

Dan chuckled. "Maybe a little. It's cool, man. I was here."

"Still." He sighed. "My control is shot."

"Hey, I'm just tickled to see you here again." Dan helped him sit up, sat next to him on his mat. "I was scared for you."

"I know. I'm fine."

"Are you? Really?"

He shrugged. "No. I put the house on the market. I think about going back to work, and I stiffen up."

Dan took his hands, squeezed. "Have you got a plan? What are you going to do?"

"I don't know. I mean, Matt's got my back, says he'll stand with me, but his gallery's suffering, too."

"Of course he'll stand with you -- the man loves you. Anyone with eyes can see that. To be honest, I have my doubts that he'd even let you go back to work."

"He wants to be there. I just... I don't know, Dan." It just wasn't the same anymore. Even the Hammer wasn't quite the same.

"Have you thought about changing jobs?"

He shrugged. "What else do I know how to do? I mean, this is my job."

Dan tilted his head, squeezed his hands again. "Have you thought about changing cities?"

"What? You mean like San Fran?"

"Hell, anywhere -- the world is your oyster. Matt has contacts back east, doesn't he?"

"He had a place in Vermont. His family was from there."

"We both know there are people in your lifestyle all over the country. You could start fresh together." Dan grinned. "I'm not trying to push you away -- I'd miss you so bad."

"I just... This is where I'm from, you know?" He leaned over, rested against Dan.

"I know, but maybe it would be good for you both."

The door of the yoga studio opened, and Adam didn't even have to look. Matt worried when he was late.

"Lovely!" He heard the relief in Matt's voice, but there were no recriminations in his Master's eyes -- just happiness. "Hey, Dan. How's it going?"

"Hey, man! He fell asleep during final relaxation." Dan grinned at Matt. "Thought he might need the rest."

"Yeah. Though you usually bitch at me if I fall asleep when I come for class." Matt came and sat next to him, down on the ground.

Dan chuckled, eased him over to lean on Matt. "I figure I'm about to lose him, I can't bitch at him."

One of Matt's eyebrows went up. "Lovely?"

"Oh, Dan is trying to convince me to move away. For us to go start businesses somewhere else." It was ridiculous.

Matt looked over at Dan. "Now that's an interesting idea."

Dan nodded. "You could sell everything and just go. Start a life fresh. Adam's never left California. Not once."

He stared at Dan. "You are trying to get rid of me."

"No, he isn't, lovely. He's trying to help you -- help us -- come up with a solution to things. We already talked about being a team, teaching together. That'd be easier in a place where they don't know you as a solo."

Dan reached over, patted his head. "I'm just offering options. Sometimes you get stuck in your head, man."

"It's an idea that's got merit. We should think about it, add it to the other options we have." Matt's hand wrapped around his hip.

"We'll see." He wanted to climb into Matt's lap, rest.

Matt tugged gently, the offer to do exactly that clear. "We don't have to decide anything today, lovely. You've got savings, you're selling the house. We don't have to rush into anything."

Dan got up, left him there, let him crawl into Matt's lap and lean, cheek on the strong shoulder. Matt's arms circled him easily.

"It's all about what we want, lovely."

"What about your gallery? Your home?"

"Those are just things. I can sell them. We can go anywhere, be anything we want."

"What a neat fantasy."

"Adam. Lovely." One of Matt's hands slid behind his head, tilted it so they were looking into each other's eyes. "It's not a fantasy. We can make it happen."

"Just like that? You and me? We'll just go?"

"There'll be more details to sort out than just like that, but why not? What's stopping us?"

Adam shook his head. "I've always lived here."

"But that doesn't mean you always have to. We could move somewhere, buy a little house. Convert the basement or just some of the rooms into a studio, someplace masters and subs can come and learn their craft."

He nodded, listened. "Like a bed and breakfast?" A little hotel. Just for people in the lifestyle.

Matt nodded. "Yeah. Yeah, something like that. We need to refine the idea, decide exactly how it's going to work and stuff, but that's the general idea."

"Wow."

Dan had left the lights down, left them their privacy. The man's office door was closed.

"I'll miss Dan."

"Of course you will. You're not afraid of flying, though, are you? Is he? Because loved ones are only a call and a flight away."

"No. No, I'm not afraid." He met Matt's eyes. They could just leave. Just go and become whatever they needed to be.

"Then what's holding us back? We have each other -- everything else is just details. And those details are whatever we choose to make them."

"Just the fact that people don't do things like this."

"We're not 'people,' We're us, and we can make this work. I know we can."

His fingers curled with Matt's. "We can."

A flame of excitement burned in his belly.

"We can."



## Epilogue

Matt taped the box closed and looked around his house. The place was starting to look more like a storage facility and less like their home every day. Of course that was all right, because their new home was in Vermont, empty and waiting for them. They'd sold the gallery, and Adam's place and the condo were on the market now that they had somewhere else to go.

And Adam... His lovely was glowing, excited. It made Matt happy just thinking about it.

"Master? I brought coffees." Adam came in, coffees in one hand, a shopping bag in the other. "I found toiletries for our drive, too."

"Yeah? Cool." He wrapped his arms around Adam, more interested in a kiss than the coffee and toiletries just at the moment.

Adam kissed him back, eager, happy. Almost young. His lovely one was becoming more and more relaxed, easier in his skin. They'd traveled to Vermont a half dozen times in the last six months, but when they'd found the place -- a huge, older eight bedroom that needed work, but had amazing bones and a huge, gated garden -- Adam had begun to blossom.

"You ready for our long drive?" They would take their time, stop when something caught their eye.

"I am. I stopped and said goodbye to Marcus and Oliver. They gave me a lovely going away check."

"Wow, that was nice of them. I know the Hammer is going to miss you."

"I'll miss Marcus." It was never that Adam would miss the Hammer. Never.

"He can come visit. Bring some of his leatherwork and give demonstrations." They could do whatever they wanted with their new space, and Marcus was always

welcome, not least because he'd taken care of the Isaac situation for them, making sure no sub in the community would ever be hurt by him again

"I'd like that. Oliver is letting other organizations know, too, about the Briar." Adam had decided the name upon seeing the roses surrounding the house.

"That's great." The people at the Hammer had been very supportive. It had made him glad to see them wishing Adam nothing but good things.

"Yeah. I told him it will take us six months or so, to be ready for guests."

"And we want to start small. Make sure we're good with it with a couple or two before we fill all the rooms." He took another kiss, then licked along Adam's neck. His lovely couldn't move, the coffees and bag binding him as effectively as any ropes.

"Uh... uh-huh." Adam swayed the barest bit.

He put his hands on Adam's ass, squeezing gently and supporting his lovely at the same time.

"The coffees." Adam moaned for him, stretched.

"Don't drop them." He licked at the hollow at the base of Adam's throat.

"I... We need to..." Sweet, lovely man.

He sucked the skin into his mouth, rolled it between his lips, and then let it go, tongue searching for Adam's collarbone.

"Master." That sweet, happy laugh rang out, just for him.

He nosed his way beneath the fabric of Adam's shirt, laughing softly.

"Your coffee will get cold..." And Adam's nipples -- adorned with little rings for their first anniversary -- went hard for him.

"The microwave is still on the counter."

His fingers found those sweet nipples through the cloth. The handle of the shopping bag crinkled as Adam's fingers tightened. He pinched lightly, then managed to grab a ring and tug before the material had it slipping from between his fingers again.

"Master." Adam stepped forward, like he'd pulled Adam toward him.

"Yes. I am." He found that ring and tugged again.

The coffees shuddered in their holder. Grinning, he stepped back and grabbed the holder from Adam, setting it down on the table. Then he took his lovely back into his arms.

Adam came eagerly, lips offered to him. "We're going to have an adventure, Master. You and me. Together."

"I know." He kissed Adam soundly. "It's going to be wonderful." It was going to be whatever they wanted it to be.

"It already is." Adam touched him, the caress slow, sweet. "And it's all ours."

He melted, just like he always did when Adam said something like that, and nodded. "It is."

end