

LOVE'S LANDSCAPES



Don't Read in the Closet 2014

AN OLD-FASHIONED LOVE SONG

Michelle K Grant

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Love's Landscapes

An M/M Romance series

AN OLD-FASHIONED LOVE SONG

By Michelle K Grant

Introduction

The story you are about to read celebrates love, sex and romance between men. It is a product of the *Love's Landscapes* promotion sponsored by the *Goodreads M/M Romance Group* and is published as a gift to you.

What Is Love's Landscapes?

The *Goodreads M/M Romance Group* invited members to choose a photo and pen a letter asking for a short M/M romance story inspired by the image; authors from the group were encouraged to select a letter and write an original tale. The result was an outpouring of creativity that shone a spotlight on the special bond between M/M romance writers and the people who love what these authors do.

A written description of the image that inspired this story is provided along with the original request letter. If you'd like to view the photo, please feel free to join the [Goodreads M/M Romance Group](#) and visit the discussion section: *Love's Landscapes*.

No matter if you are a long-time devotee to M/M Romance, just new to the genre or fall somewhere in between, you are in for a delicious treat.

Words of Caution

This story may contain sexually explicit content and is **intended for adult readers**. It may contain content that is disagreeable or distressing to some readers. The *M/M Romance Group* strongly recommends that each reader review the General Information section before each story for story tags as well as for content warnings.

This story is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents are the products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

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AN OLD-FASHIONED LOVE SONG

BOOK ONE OF THE WOODSHED SERIES

By Michelle K Grant

Photo Description

In an austere white bedroom, two men are locked in a passionate embrace. The dark haired man, on the bottom, has one arm draped over the hips of the blond man, on top. His other hand tightly grasps his lover's neck. At the same time, he places a tender kiss on his lover's neck. His lover, instead of fighting to free himself, grips his shoulder, encouraging him to tighten his grip.

Story Letter

Dear Author,

I am so in love with this man, but I'm afraid to say anything because I'm pretty sure he only wants to play and I don't want to scare him off. He thinks I'm too young to commit to someone, but I'm not. He takes such good care of me, but he doesn't realize I can take care of him, too. He needs to take control during sex, and I love it when he does. He knows exactly how to get me going, and I don't want to lose that.

Sincerely,

Sunny

*P.S. *BDSM, please, but nothing too hard core, and no humiliation play. I like it sweet and tender, but also firm and rough ;)*

**Also, no cheating, long separations or big misunderstandings.*

**Bonus points for including this scene in the story, and adding some nipple pinching.*

Story Info

Genre: contemporary

Tags: BDSM, twink, blue collar, age gap, shibari

Content Warnings: breathplay, single-tail

Word Count: 31,592

Acknowledgements

I would like to add a quick word of thanks to my Beta Reader; Stacey Jo Asher and my DH Robbie and my SO Lynn, who both gave this a read through even though neither one of them are fans of the genre. I would also like to thank my editor, Raevyn, who caught errors that we all missed. The Woodshed is a real club in Orlando, Florida. It is used here with the express permission of the club's owners. All characters in this story are fictional.

AN OLD-FASHIONED LOVE STORY

BOOK ONE OF THE WOODSHED SERIES

By Michelle K. Grant

Chapter One

Seth glared at himself in the mirror. Raising his hand, he pointed a finger in the face of his reflection. "This time, it's on. No hiding in the background for you." He ran a hand across his face, turning side to side and inspecting his pale skin. He slapped both cheeks and then pinched his lips to plump and redden them. After fluffing his soft, fine, blond hair to the perfect level of messy, he used his thumb to smooth his eyebrows down.

He put a finger under the black leather collar wrapped around his neck. The heart-shaped padlock fell perfectly in the hollow of his throat. He pulled his black leather shorts down just a little bit lower so his hip bone peaked out above the waistband. He fussed with the straps of the black leather harness crisscrossing his chest until he finally decided they lay just right.

"That's it. You're ready," he addressed the mirror.

With a deep breath, he opened the door.

The music of Depeche Mode assaulted his ears as soon as he walked into the playroom. Eighties night at the Woodshed again.

Despite his bold words in the mirror, Seth crept back to the spot against the wall he had occupied all night. Actually, it was the spot he occupied most nights. It gave him the perfect view of his favorite regular.

And there he stood. No man should look so good in a blue-plaid flannel shirt, black wife beater and rust colored corduroys. His brown hair was rumpled, as if he had just run his hands through it. He was wearing green Chuck Taylor's. In a fetish club! While Seth watched, the man smoothed his beard and glanced in Seth's direction. Seth quickly looked down at his perfectly-shined black boots.

Seth only looked the part. Mr. X was the genuine article.

He proved it the first night Seth worked up enough courage to walk in the front door of the only S&M Club in Orlando.

How strange it had felt that first night. Seth was a bundle of nervous energy bursting at the seams while everyone was so calm. So normal. Most people were smiling. They stood in small groups, laughing and talking. It wasn't at all the dark gothic atmosphere Seth thought a leather club would be. It was an open warehouse with furniture strewn here and there. There were tables and

strange benches. Medieval looking racks were propped against the wall. The room was painted a neutral color and the lighting was dim and warm. The floor was bare concrete. Seth noticed in several places there were drains in the floor. Chains and ropes dangled from overhead rafters.

It was early when he arrived and not many people were “playing” yet. In the corner of the room, an older Asian woman in a blue spaghetti-strapped semi-formal dress had a large, naked, heavyset Caucasian man on a spanking bench. She had a paddle in her hand and was laughing as she spanked him with it. She would hit him repeatedly, stop and inspect her handiwork, laugh like it was the funniest thing in the world and then paddle him again. It was surreal and it went on for hours. Seth had gravitated to what became his favorite spot on the wall and grew roots.

That night was a kaleidoscope of the erotic and the bizarre. He witnessed a self-proclaimed trans-pan man in a full tuxedo suspend his girl from the ceiling using intricate rope bondage while she screamed insults and obscenities at him. Later, they were locked in the most romantic and erotic slow kiss Seth had ever witnessed. Subs and slaves and baby girls and Masters and Mistresses and Daddies and straights and gays and bisexuals all danced before his eyes in a world-changing, life-shifting, door-opening endless parade.

And into the middle of the madness strode Mr. X.

Seth didn't notice him at first. The circus of fetish acts surrounding him was absorbing. Mr. X was average height, with average build, and average brown hair, wearing a black T-shirt and a pair of jeans. He could have easily been ignored in normal circumstances, let alone in the middle of a fetish club.

Mr. X had walked to the middle of the room and held up his right hand. The gesture was controlled, purposeful, but without enthusiasm. Like the smart kid in math class who knew no one else would have the answer, Mr. X stood there, calm, cool, and collected.

To Seth's utter amazement, four people came from different parts of the room and knelt at his feet with eyes downcast and hands held behind their backs. Except for their posture, the individuals had nothing in common with each other. A white-haired bear dressed almost exactly as Seth, an older woman with salt and pepper hair wearing nothing but a collar and a lacy thong, a young redhead in her twenties who was almost morbidly obese, and a beautiful muscle-bound black man, who Seth guessed was about thirty.

Mr. X smiled. Petting each one as he exchanged words, and sometimes kisses, of greeting. He patted the older woman on the shoulder and assisted her

to her feet. The others scrambled away as Mr. X led her to what Seth later learned was called a St. Andrew's cross.

A man of similar age as the woman, with similar salt and pepper hair, dressed in leather pants and a leather vest, joined Mr. X as he strapped the woman to the cross. The man helped as best he could. Seth noticed the man's right arm and right leg were both artificial. The man smiled and laughed with Mr. X as they worked. The woman said nothing. As Mr. X finished securing her, the man slid between the cross and the wall so he faced the woman. His one hand wrapped around to caress her back.

Mr. X stepped back and grabbed something off of his belt.

It was then Seth noticed the coil secured there. Like a lasso, it lay against Mr. X's hip. When Mr. X released it, it unwound like a snake. Mr. X cracked the whip several times in the air. With a nod to the man behind the cross, he began.

What followed seemed more like a dance to Seth than a beating. Mr. X was precise and rhythmic. His strikes landing with the beat of the music playing overhead. Red welts bloomed on the skin of the woman, spreading equally about her back, legs, and shoulders. It looked like Mr. X never hit the same spot twice. The woman writhed against the cross and the man behind her grinned.

At some point, Mr. X paused to strip his shirt off. Seth nearly swooned to see his chest glisten with the sweat of his exertion. His chest was covered in a fine coating of hair the same color brown as his head. His skin nearly glowed in the overhead lights. For a brief eternity, Seth was mesmerized by the roll and twist of Mr. X's muscles as he thoroughly worked over that poor, lucky woman. At last, Mr. X asked a question of the man behind the cross. The man held up his hand, five fingers splayed. Mr. X nodded and with intense focus, landed a vicious strike on the woman's back. She cried out loud enough Seth heard her from across the loud music-filled dungeon. The man lowered one finger and Mr. X placed an identically cruel lash in the exact same spot. The man lowered another finger. Five times, Mr. X flung his whip to bite into the woman's back. Finally, the man held his closed fist in the air.

Mr. X coiled his whip and fastened it to the clip on his belt. He then assisted the man in releasing the woman from the cross. The woman sagged to her knees. When she turned to place a kiss on Mr. X's Converse, Seth could see she was smiling with a blissful expression in her eyes. The man who was standing beside her very carefully got to his knees before Mr. X. He leaned forward and

placed a kiss on what Seth could only guess was Mr. X's erection straining through his corduroys. Mr. X grabbed the man by the back of the head and ground his face into his groin. Mr. X pulled the man's face back and said something with a gesture of his head toward the door. The man grinned at what Seth would have considered the offer of a lifetime. The woman hopped up to help the man to his feet and the three of them left the club together.

That night, Seth masturbated himself to near blindness.

It took three weeks until he was brave enough to go back to the Woodshed. A year had passed and he'd never missed a Saturday since.

And every Saturday since, he occupied this spot on this wall for the entire night.

And here he was again.

Seth looked over again at Mr. X. He wasn't wearing the whip tonight so Seth knew he wouldn't have the chance to offer himself up; wouldn't have to beat himself up when he was too chicken to run out and get on his knees; wouldn't be suffering the ecstasy and agony of watching someone else dance under Mr. X's careful ministrations.

Mr. X had repeated the ritual several times over the past year. It wasn't always the same people who knelt at his feet. He didn't always choose the same beneficiaries for his torture and he didn't always leave with those he played with. He did always take his shirt off half way through.

For all of these things, Seth was infinitely grateful.

One day, it would be Seth who knelt at Mr. X's feet. It would be Seth who Mr. X tapped on his shoulder and assisted to his feet. It would be Seth who was bound to the cross and it would be Seth who knelt again after with his face pressed blissfully against Mr. X's hip. It would be Seth who left the club with Mr. X and it would be Seth who gave Mr. X the best blow job of his life.

It would be Seth who Mr. X would keep. And they would live happily ever after. The End.

But it wouldn't be tonight.

Seth darted his eyes away when Mr. X caught him staring again.

"Not cool, Seth. Really not cool." Seth shook his head as he castigated himself. "It's rude to stare." Seth did his best not to look at him again. But of course that was ludicrous wasn't it? Seth was going to look. It was just a matter of when.

This time when Seth looked, Mr. X was staring at him. Seth blushed and looked down, grinning and covering his eyes in embarrassment.

When he pulled his hand away, he looked up to see Mr. X standing right in front of him.

“Who is your owner?” Mr. X’s gravelly voice rolled across Seth’s skin. Seth’s knees felt a little weak and he leaned farther back into the wall for support.

“I’m sorry?” Seth squeaked. He cleared his throat. “What did you say?”

“Your owner?” Mr. X pointed to the collar Seth was wearing. “Your Dom or Mistress or Top? You know... the one who gave you your collar?”

Seth’s hand flew up to the heart-shaped lock lying against his skin. He nervously patted it. “Oh this? Um, no one gave this to me. I, um, bought this myself.” Seth giggled. Giggled for Pete’s sake!

Mr. X looked perplexed for a moment but then understanding flowed over his features.

“I see. I’m sorry. I won’t bother you again.” He turned to walk away.

“Wait!” Seth’s voice was much too loud in his panic. “Don’t go. Please.” Mr. X turned around looking perplexed again.

“I mean, please don’t go, Sir.” Seth was glad the wall behind him was so determined to remain standing. His legs were not so committed to the idea.

“Okay,” Mr. X answered slowly.

“My name is Seth. Seth Barnum.” Seth stuck his hand out. Mr. X looked at it for a moment before clasping it in his own.

“I’m Malachi.” Seth didn’t let go of his hand. Malachi’s skin was rough and calloused. Seth rubbed his palm against Malachi’s wondering how the raspy skin would feel running over him.

Seth imagined Malachi’s hand scraping up across his chest and gently wrapping around his neck before smoothly threading his fingers through Seth’s hair. Malachi’s firm grip would pull Seth into the position Seth’s knees had been threatening to assume since the man first spoke.

“Seth?” Malachi’s voice ripped Seth from his daydream. A hot almost painful want gripped Seth low in the groin. From just a hand shake, Seth was almost rock hard. “Seth, are you okay?” Malachi’s voice was full of amused concern.

Seth's libido wasn't going to risk this opportunity. Drunk with desire, Seth used his grasped hand to pull Malachi in close. Like a dog in heat, he ground his hips against Malachi while his lips sought out Malachi's ear. The warm masculine scent of Malachi assaulted him and he spiraled out of control.

"Please Sir, please," he whispered in Malachi's ear. "I've wanted you so long. Please let me taste you. Please let me suck your cock." The sheer desperation that overtook Seth was frightening to him. It was as if the world depended on getting his skin as close to Malachi's skin as humanly possible.

"Jesus kid!" Malachi abruptly pushed Seth away and held him at arm's length. Seth actually whimpered at the separation. He felt himself leaning against Malachi's hand.

"Well," Malachi chuckled. "I've heard the phrase 'gagging for it', but I don't think I have ever seen it before."

"I have no shame, Sir," Seth replied. "I want you and I am willing to do whatever it takes to have you."

A gleam shone in Malachi's eyes.

"Whatever it takes?" he asked.

"Whatever it takes," Seth replied.

"We'll see about that," Malachi replied with a smile. "Let's go."

Seth couldn't have stopped the exclamation of joy that escaped his lips if his life depended on it.

"Did you drive or ride with someone?" Malachi asked as they exited the club.

"Cab," Seth replied.

"In that get up?" Malachi asked, pointing at Seth's leather outfit.

"I changed," Seth held up the small bag he had grabbed on the way out.

"Then you have two choices. You can ride on the back of my bike, or you can take a cab again," Malachi indicated a Harley near the door with his thumb. A shiver danced up Seth's spine. Yeah, I know. Easy choice.

"I'll ride please, Sir," Seth whispered.

"You'll wear a helmet too," Malachi said grabbing a black helmet out of the side bag. He slid the helmet on, placing a mike in front of Seth's mouth.

Malachi paused and ran his thumb across Seth's lips. Seth opened his mouth, hoping Malachi would slip his thumb inside. Malachi teasingly refused, tracing the circuit of Seth's mouth as he moaned in desperation.

Chuckling again, Malachi closed the face piece and moved a switch on the side of the helmet. Seth tried not to drool as Malachi straddled the Harley Softail, started the bike and put on his own helmet. Seth jumped when he heard Malachi's gravelly voice in his ear.

"Are you going to get on?"

"Yes, Sir!" Seth straddled the bike behind Malachi, uncertain where to put his hands.

"Come on, get closer." Malachi chuckled, pulling Seth's arms around to his front. "You weren't so shy a moment ago."

Seth blushed at his earlier performance even as he ground his now returning erection against Malachi's back.

"Good. That's the way." Seth glowed at Malachi's approval and ground harder against him. "Seth, if you come before we even get there then that is all you get. So restrain yourself just a bit."

"Yes, Sir." Seth blushed again in the isolation of his helmet. "I promise."

As they pulled off, Seth struggled to prevent the vibration of the bike from making a liar out of him. Seth closed his eyes as the city sped by him.

"So, how old are you Seth?" Malachi's voice was clear over the muffled rumble of the bike.

"Twenty-five."

"That old? That is a relief at least." Seth could hear Malachi's sigh of relief.

"How old did you think I was?"

"Well," Malachi chuckled. "They let you in the club so I knew you were at least eighteen." Seth slapped Malachi playfully on the shoulder. "I really didn't know."

"You approached me thinking I might be only eighteen? Are you disappointed?"

"I approached you to find out who your dominant was," Malachi reminded him.

"Oh," Seth thought a minute. "Why did you think I was 'owned'?"

"Your collar has a padlock. When you told me you didn't have a dominant, I assumed you were using the lock as a prop to keep dominants away. Like wearing a wedding ring to stop people from hitting on you."

Seth's laughter drowned out the motorcycle. He couldn't stop. He almost couldn't breathe. Malachi brought the bike to a stop in a parking lot of the gas station on the side of the road. He took off his helmet, turned in his seat and patiently waited for Seth to get himself under control.

Seth stripped off his own helmet and wiped the tears from his eyes.

"You okay?" Malachi asked.

"Yeah," Seth snorted and ran a hand through his hair.

"So," Malachi paused. "Are you going to let me in on the joke?"

"I've been coming here for a year. Waiting, and watching, and hoping to make a connection with someone," Seth laughed again. "I've been wearing this get up." He gestured to the harness and shorts. "Trying my damndest to look approachable and the whole time I was wearing a big damn sign saying 'Hands off! Don't talk to me!'" Seth erupted again.

When he quieted, he realized Malachi wasn't laughing. Malachi was quietly studying him. In the light of the overhead street lamp, Seth could tell Malachi's eyes were bluer than the green he had first thought.

"Not been involved in the lifestyle long?" Malachi asked softly.

"If watching from the sidelines and dressing like a kinkster counts as being involved in the lifestyle, then I have a year's experience." Seth let a little bitterness creep into his voice. "Otherwise, no, not so much."

Malachi just kept looking at him.

"Is this where you let me down gently and tell me you wanted someone with more experience?" Seth asked quietly.

"Are you a virgin?" Malachi's voice was gentle.

"No," Seth turned away from Malachi's searching gaze. "I've had more than a few lovers." He looked back into Malachi's eyes. "I just never could find what I needed."

Malachi turned back to face forward on the bike. Seth's shoulders slumped as he stared at Malachi's back. He reached up and placed a hand on Malachi's

shoulder. "I can learn, Malachi. I can learn to do anything you want me to." Malachi sat still for a moment before turning back to face Seth.

"Okay, change of plan, where do you live?" Seth rattled off his address and Malachi punched it into a GPS app on his phone. He tapped Seth's helmet and put his own back on. With a disappointed sigh, Seth did as he was told.

Seth wrapped his arms around Malachi as the motorcycle took off again, this time in the direction of Seth's condo. Seth held Malachi as tight as he possibly could since his disappointment had had a distressing effect on the state of his erection.

"Don't worry. I'm not ditching you, Seth. But tonight is not going to go as I had originally planned," Malachi's disembodied voice sounded in his ear.

"Yes, Sir," Seth tried unsuccessfully to keep the disappointment out of his voice. Despite Malachi's assurance to the contrary, Seth could see the Big Brush-off looming in his future. Seth did his best to just enjoy the feel of Malachi in his arms while he could.

The motorcycle roared loudly in the confines of the Uptown Place parking garage. Malachi rolled into an empty spot and shut the bike off. Seth was surprised when Malachi dismounted after he did. Malachi took both helmets and stowed them in a bag on the side of the bike. He looked Seth up and down before taking off his flannel shirt and dressing Seth in it.

"Lead the way." Malachi gestured toward the elevator, a smile on his face at Seth's confusion.

"God you look hot in just a wife beater," Seth nearly panted. Malachi chuckled, threaded his arm through Seth's like an old country gentleman and led him to the elevator.

"You never asked how old I am," Malachi said.

"I don't care how old you are," Seth quickly responded.

"I'm thirty-five," Malachi replied. Seth grinned wickedly.

"Then you're old enough for what I want to do to you."

Seth pressed the button for his floor and the elevator doors closed. Malachi leaned against the wall across from the door. The sight of him made Seth's mouth go dry. Malachi crossed his arms and raised an eyebrow.

"What *you* want to do to *me*?" Malachi's voice dripped with gentle menace.

"Well, um..." Seth stammered as the doors opened behind him. "This way..." He recovered by leading Malachi to his apartment.

Fussing with the lock and turning on the lights gave Seth something to do to cover up his embarrassment. He finally had the star of his most recent sexual fantasies standing in his living room.

"Nice place," Malachi said.

"Not really," Seth said. "My sister loves stark modern and the place has absolutely no personality." He babbled on as Malachi stalked toward him. "I really wish I could do some color but I sublet it from her and I just—"

"Where is the bedroom?" Malachi interrupted.

"That way," Seth pointed. Malachi smiled and left him standing in the living room, finding his own way down the hall.

Seth stood there blinking for a moment before he followed. When he arrived in the bedroom, Malachi was taking off his shirt. He dropped the black wife beater on the sand-colored carpet and stood back. "There. Now there's color." Malachi turned to face Seth. Malachi's hands went to his belt. While Seth stared on wide-eyed and open-mouthed, Malachi grabbed his belt by the buckle and slowly slid it free from the belt loops. The low hiss of leather against corduroy seemed to fill the air. The loose end fell to the carpet in a way that reminded Seth of Malachi's deliciously evil whip. Seth's knees finally did what they had been threatening to do all night and Seth collapsed onto them in front of Malachi.

"Please Master, please. Let me taste you." he rubbed his face against Malachi's zipper.

"Oh Seth, I do love the way you beg." Malachi smiled. "And you will, eventually. You will be so full of my cock you will barely be able to breathe." Seth whimpered. "But not just yet. First, let's get you undressed. Stand back up." Malachi reached out to help him as Seth complied. "And don't call me 'Master'."

Malachi turned Seth around so his back was pressed against Malachi's front. Seth groaned to feel Malachi's erection pressing into his ass. Malachi's hands reached up and slowly began to unbutton the flannel shirt he had dressed Seth in a few minutes ago.

"You said you couldn't find what you needed, Seth. Tell me... what do you need?" Malachi paused at the fourth button. Seth thought a moment. How to explain it?

"This, I need this," Malachi continued the slow progression of buttons and slid his shirt off of Seth. Two quick buckles and the leather harness lay on the ground next to it. Malachi pulled Seth's back against his chest. Malachi bent down and kissed Seth's shoulder and began a slow trail of kisses toward his neck. Seth reveled in the coarseness of Malachi's chest hair against his back and beard against his skin.

"You're panting Seth, so I can tell you need this." Malachi's rough hands slid up Seth's abdomen to his smooth chest. Two fingers traced circles around his nipples. "What about this do you need, Seth?"

"You, I need you." Seth moaned when the gently tracing fingers pinched both nipples simultaneously. It hurt. Oh, it hurt. But it hurt beautifully. It hurt in a way that made his stomach clinch and his dick jump and his knees buckle.

"God, please. Yes. Yes. Take me and use me. Hurt me. Control me. Do whatever you want to me," Seth pleaded. "That's what I need." Malachi's fingers tightened and his teeth bit into Seth's neck.

"Hoch!" Seth cried out. Malachi's rough palms soothed the hurt from his nipples for a moment before the pinching fingers returned. Seth ground his ass back against Malachi. Malachi's left hand slid down and unsnapped Seth's leather shorts. Seth's cock, thick and uncut, dropped from where it was pinned against his body and precum dribbled on the floor. Seth groaned when Malachi wrapped his rough hand around it and gently stroked him. When Malachi pinched Seth's nipple with his other hand, Seth nearly came undone.

"Please, Sir! I can't last like this." Seth shuddered closer and closer to the edge. "Oh no," he cried, powerless to stop it as the orgasm drew near. He was simultaneously relieved and nearly burst into tears when Malachi released his throbbing dick. Malachi spun him around. Malachi's hands buried in Seth's hair and jerked him into a savage kiss. Malachi ate hungrily at Seth's mouth, teeth nibbling at his lips, tongue driving between them. All the while, Malachi's hands fisted in Seth's hair, turning him this way and that, steering Seth's mouth to where Malachi had the most access. Malachi growled and the sound echoed down Seth's throat. Seth rested his hands on Malachi's biceps, desperate to run his hands along Malachi's skin but terrified to do anything that might upset Malachi and end the most excruciatingly wonderful torture Seth had ever received. Malachi used Seth's hair to steer him down Malachi's chest. Malachi held his mouth over each nipple and Seth used his tongue and mouth without being ordered to. When Seth suckled his nipple, Malachi's groan of pleasure surged warmth down Seth's spine. Malachi forced Seth to his knees. With one

hand, he held Seth back far enough to get a good view. With the other, he unfastened the button holding his pants together and slowly lowered the zipper. At last, Malachi reached in and pulled out his cock.

And it was beautiful! Cut and smooth with a purple head. Malachi's cock was almost but not as quite as thick as Seth's. It was long, good Lord it was long. Seth couldn't wait to get the beautiful length of it in his mouth. He strained against the hand in his hair.

"In good time, Seth," Malachi chuckled. "Or, in my time, more like it. Open your mouth and stick out your tongue."

Seth did as he was told and was rewarded with Malachi rubbing the head of his gorgeous cock against Seth's tongue. The taste of Malachi's precum filled his senses and Seth's cock jerked in response. Seth reached to stroke himself.

"Hands on your thighs," Malachi ordered. Seth begrudgingly complied.

"Keep your mouth open," Malachi instructed and slid himself into Seth's mouth. The urge to suck was almost overwhelming. Seth struggled to keep his mouth soft and relaxed.

"Good! Very good!" Malachi praised him. "Keep your throat relaxed." Malachi pressed farther into his mouth. Seth could feel the head of Malachi's cock stretching his throat. For a moment, Seth couldn't breathe. He resisted the urge to struggle and forced himself to relax. Malachi pulled back a bit and Seth inhaled around him.

"Excellent, Seth. I think you could do this. Are you ready to try?" Seth nodded minutely, not really sure, and not caring, what *this* is. He felt Malachi's dick jump in his mouth.

"This is what you're going to do. You are going to inhale, exhale and then swallow. After you swallow, you are going to hold your breath until I pull back. Then you are going to repeat it. Understand?" Seth nodded again. Malachi pulled Seth's head down lower and changed the angle of his thrust.

"Inhale... exhale... swallow," As soon as Seth started to swallow, Malachi pushed his cock as far back into Seth's throat as he could. Seth's eyes watered at the strange discomfort, but his dick didn't seem to mind at all. When Malachi pulled back, Seth gasped around him.

"Very good Seth. I got at least an inch in your throat. We are going to do that again. Inhale... exhale... swallow." This time, Seth was more prepared for the onslaught and did his best to force his throat muscles to relax. Malachi

pushed in deep. Malachi pulled back again and surged forward as soon as Seth exhaled. Seth had to hurry to swallow to keep from gagging. It took several tries until Malachi was able to establish a rhythm Seth could follow. Each time, Malachi penetrated Seth's throat a little deeper and held himself in Seth's throat a little longer. Seth's head began to feel a little swimmy from the lack of oxygen.

Malachi grunted and groaned as he forced himself into Seth's throat. He wrapped one hand around the front of Seth's neck.

"God, Seth!" Malachi panted. "I can feel myself sliding in and out of you." Seth whimpered. "Touch yourself, Seth. I'm going to come this way."

Seth wrapped both hands around his cock. He slowly jacked himself a couple of times. He wouldn't last long and he didn't want to come before Malachi. He looked up at Malachi, struggling so beautifully to make Seth's body take him. Sweat dripped down his chest. Seth realized Malachi was now burying his cock all the way to the base in Seth's throat. Seth's cock wept precum.

"This is it Seth. Take it. Take it all," And Malachi roared as he buried himself to the hilt. Seth felt Malachi's cock twitch and jerk in his throat. As the most powerful orgasm Seth had ever experienced in his life rushed through his body, Seth slowly lost consciousness.

He awoke to Malachi gently tapping him on the face.

"Whoa kiddo. I guess I got carried away," Malachi's face was full of concern. "Are you okay?"

At first, Seth was confused. He didn't even remember his name, let alone where he was. Then it all came rushing back to him.

"What happened?" Seth said, his throat burning.

"You blacked out. I stayed balls deep in your sweet throat just a little too long," Malachi shook his head. "Are you okay?"

"That depends," Seth sat up. "Is this heaven?"

Malachi chuckled. "Let's get you some water." Malachi left Seth sitting on the floor with his back resting against the bed. Seth heard him opening cabinets in the kitchen and then he heard the faucet running. Malachi returned carrying a coffee cup.

"First thing I found," he explained, handing it to Seth. "Drink it." Seth mistakenly took a large painful swallow. Despite feeling like he was

swallowing knives, Seth could tell the cold water was soothing to his throat. As Seth sipped the water, Malachi knelt to remove Seth's boots and socks. Seth helped him slide the leather shorts off of his legs. Malachi stood and helped Seth to his feet. Malachi pushed Seth toward the bathroom. "Go brush your teeth. Oh and what's your favorite classic?"

"You mean book? Or movie?" Seth's head spun with the bizarre topic change.

"Book."

"The Importance of Being Earnest by Oscar Wilde."

"Good, I've never read that one." Malachi gestured toward the bathroom. "Go on."

Seth did as he was told. He returned to find Malachi turning down his bed. Malachi patted the bed. "In you go." Seth climbed in and Malachi tucked the covers around him. Malachi sat beside him on top of the blanket and stretched one arm behind Seth's shoulders. Malachi used his other hand to raise his phone in front of him.

"Oh! It's a play! This'll be different." Seth squinted at the small screen in front of Malachi's face.

"Persons in the Play..." Malachi's gravelly voice began. Seth scooted down into the covers and pulled the sheet up to his nose. He hadn't been read to in bed for at least two decades and he was not going to let this opportunity pass.

"Jack. Well, my name is Ernest in town and Jack in the country, and the cigarette case was given to me in the country." Malachi's voice had taken on a British flavor. Seth was delighted Malachi used different voices for each speaker as he read. A warm comfortable wave overtook Seth and he blinked his eyes furiously. There was no way he was going to sleep. He was dying to hear the voice Malachi used for Lady Bracknell. He would fight sleep tooth and...

Chapter Two

“Un-ca Sef! Un-ca Sef! Un-ca Sef! Un-ca Sef!” Seth was awoken by a forty pound screaming ball of enthusiasm bouncing on his kidneys.

“Unhff.” He grunted into the pillow. “Good morning, Geordi.” Blearily, he raised his head. “Ask your mother to make me coffee.”

“I’m already on it, little brother.” Tasha strode into the room, radiating sunshine. Seth peeked at her through his one open eye. Tall for a woman, Seth’s twin sister looked freshly pressed in her khaki shorts and powder blue scooped neck tee. Her long blonde hair was flipped up in a twist that fell down in curls on her neck. She held a steaming cup of coffee in each hand.

“You are entirely too chipper for this hour.” Seth turned over and sat up in bed. The motion flipped Geordi off of his back and onto the bed, giggling hysterically. Seth took the proffered cup from his sister and cradled it in front of his nose. The first sip burned his throat so intensely he couldn’t stop himself from wincing. He opened his eyes to his sister’s smirking face.

“Good morning, Uncle Seth!” A bronze elfin female face peaked out over the edge of the bed, brown ringlets framing large liquid brown eyes.

“Good morning, Princess.” Seth cleared his throat. His voice sounded a little scratchy this morning.

“Deanna, why don’t you take your brother in the other room and put on the Cartoon Network.” Tasha helped Geordi off the bed.

“No!” Geordi yelled. “Swim! Unca Sef swim!” His startling blue eyes pleaded with his mother.

“Yes.” Tasha assured him. “We will swim in a little while. Go watch cartoons while we drink our coffee.”

“Come on, Geordi.” Deanna took her brother’s hand. “I think Fairly Odd Parents is on.”

“Odd rents! Odd rents!” Geordi chanted as they exited the bedroom.

Seth cleared his throat again. “Good morning, Sis.”

“Good morning. You certainly sound a little rough this morning. Are you coming down with something?” Tasha was smirking again.

"No. Um. I'm fine. It's nothing. Can you hand me my bathrobe?" Tasha turned around as Seth got out of bed and covered himself. "You know, you really should call before you show up here. I could have company."

"Oh, yes." Tasha was obviously very pleased with herself. "I realized the error of my ways this morning. And are you sure your throat is nothing? Malachi seemed pretty concerned about it."

"What?" Seth stared at her from across the bed.

"Malachi." Tasha said, as if it explained everything. "He seemed really concerned about your throat."

"He said that?" Seth squeaked.

"Well, he did in this note I found by the coffee pot." Tasha pulled a folded piece of paper out of her shorts pocket and opened it with a flick of her wrist. "Good morning Seth. I have to say this evening was one—"

"Give me that!" Seth screeched and climbed over the bed to get to her.

"—of the most surprising and amazing—" Tasha continued, darting out of his reach and running around the foot of the bed. "—nights I have had in— Aaahhh!" Tasha squealed when Seth tackled her to the floor and began tickling her ribs. When she jerked her arms down to protect herself, Seth snatched the note from her hands, ran to the bathroom and locked the door behind him.

Good morning, Seth.

I have to say this evening has been one of the more surprising and amazing nights I have had in a long time. I hope you enjoyed our time together as much as I did.

Malachi

P.S.—Take care of your throat today. Gargle repeatedly with warm salt water. Also, drink hot tea with honey and lemon.

Seth leaned against the door as disappointment hit him in the gut. He carefully folded the letter and slipped it into the pocket of his bathrobe.

"Oh bon-bon!" His sister said when he exited the bathroom. "Why so sad? It was a nice note."

"Yes," Seth agreed. "Very nice. Just absent a phone number."

"That must be why he left his business card next to the coffee pot."

"He *did*?"

"Yes and I will give it to *you* once you give *me* all of the gory details!"

"Tasha!"

"I insist," Tasha continued. "This is the closest I've been to sex in about six months and you won't deny me this."

"Okay, okay," Seth said. "Let me get some breakfast and I'll tell you by the pool."

"Deal."

"Wow!" Tasha sighed, reclining on the white chaise lounge next to the kiddie pool. "I mean just... wow!"

"I know! I know!" Seth agreed. "Now will you give me the card?"

"Not yet." Tasha waived her hand in the air. "You actually passed out?"

"Apparently so."

"Jesus, bro. This guy sounds dangerous. Are you sure you want to call him?"

"Is it wrong that thinking he is dangerous makes him seem even hotter?" Seth chortled when Tasha slapped his arm. "Seriously though. I'm not really worried about him hurting me. I'm worried about how your children are going to survive in this life with a father in the army and a mother in the cemetery. If you don't give me the card, I will end you. I hope you realize that."

"All right already!" Tasha dug the card out of her swim suit top. "I knew it was safe from you in tittie city."

"Gross!" Seth snatched the card from between her outstretched fingers.

"You can't call him until two anyway," she said as she sat up. "It says so on the back."

"Fuck! It's one thirty now!" Seth jumped from his lounge.

"Swim Momma!" Geordi called from the kiddie pool. "Swim!"

"I'm coming!" Tasha called to her son. "Say hi to Malachi for me," she taunted as she stepped into the splash pool.

Seth nearly ran in his hurry to get back to his condo. His cell phone was still in the bag that held yesterday's clothes. Of course it was dead. And of course he couldn't find the charger! When it was finally located underneath his bed

and his phone charged enough to make a phone call, it was a quarter till two. Seth looked at the card again: Dorin Landscapers, Inc. Malachi Dorin, President.

Thank you for calling Dorin Landscapers. This is Malachi Dorin. I regret I am unable to answer the phone right now...

Seth hung up before the recording finished. He tried again and the phone went directly to voicemail. He looked at the clock: 1:55. He waited until the exact moment the time changed to two and called again. Malachi answered on the first ring.

"You called early." His gravelly voice was even. Seth couldn't tell if Malachi was aggravated or amused.

"Yes, Sir." Seth cleared his throat. "I'm sorry."

"Don't call me 'Sir'." Malachi's even tone continued. "We need to talk. Are you available this evening?"

"Yes si—Um... Yes I am." Seth tried not to grin. "Would you like to come over?"

"No. We will meet in a neutral place. Somewhere we have to be on our best behavior." Malachi was silent a minute. "No suggestions? Then meet me at the Melting Pot on West Sand Lake Road. I will make reservations in my name. Is this your cell phone?"

"Yeah it is."

"I will text you with the time to meet me." Malachi paused. "Seth, have you done a salt water gargle or had the hot tea like I instructed you?"

"I, um. My sister... I... haven't."

"Good afternoon, Seth." Malachi said calmly. "I'll see you tonight."

And with a click, he was gone. He didn't even wait for Seth to say good-bye.

Tasha's eyes were full of compassion when Seth plodded back down to the pool.

"Bad news little brother?"

"You know, being born five minutes before me doesn't really give you the right to call me little brother. I've got two inches on you at least."

"Don't change the subject." Tasha guided Seth back to the loungers. Seth sat down quietly when he saw Deanna and Geordi sleeping peacefully in the shade of the cabana. "Now tell your big sister what the matter is." Seth rolled his eyes.

"I can't get a read on him," Seth began. "Last night he just about rapes my throat. And I have to tell you it was one of the hottest moments of my life. And then he tucks me in bed and reads to me until I fall asleep."

"He read to you?" Tasha raised her eyebrows. "Holy shit, dude. What did he read?"

"The Importance of Being Earnest. I told him it was my favorite book." Seth nodded at Tasha's astonishment. "Yes. I know. It was awesome," he continued. "And just now, he purposely didn't answer the phone until two on the dot. And I can't tell if he even likes me."

"What do you mean?"

"When he finally answered the phone, his voice was really neutral. He didn't want to talk much. He was upset I didn't do the throat gargle or tea. And he didn't want to come over here tonight."

"Oh bon-bon! I am so sorry."

"He does want to see me again. He wants to meet in a public place where we will have to 'be on our best behavior'. I just don't understand why he was so cold on the phone when he was so passionate in person."

Tasha placed an arm across Seth's shoulders.

"Let me get this straight, no pun intended." Tasha smiled as she pushed him gently. "You met this guy at an S&M club. You have fantastic freaky sex with him. You call him repeatedly before he told you to call. You disregard instructions he leaves for you to do. And you can't understand why he might be a little peeved? Don't these guys like, get off on giving orders and having them followed?"

Seth slapped his forehead with the palm of his hand.

"You are right. God! I am such a moron."

"That's the baby brother I know and love." Tasha ruffled his hair. Seth's phone gave a R2D2 whistle. Seth chuckled as he read the text.

"I think you are right, little sister. *Our reservation is at six thirty. Arrive at least fifteen minutes early and dress casually. Button up shirt or polo and jeans.*

Text me when you are seated. And if you don't gargle with salt water at least twice, don't come."

"Can you say 'Control Freak'?" Tasha grinned.

Seth sent back.

If I follow your orders can I call you 'Sir'?

The reply came:

Yes. And don't be a SAM

"What's a SAM?" Seth asked his sister.

"Fuck if I know. You've got your iPhone. Ask the all-powerful Google."

Seth found a BDSM slang website and laughed out loud. "It's a smart-assed masochist. He told me not to be one."

"You should text back that you are sorry, but it is too late for you," his sister teased.

"Fuck that!" Seth exclaimed. Instead he texted back:

"Yes Sir!"

Putting his phone down on the table next to them, Seth put both arms around his sister's waist. Giving her a long, firm hug, he kissed her cheek. "I would be lost without you."

"I know it," Tasha said. "I would be too."

"Now that we have spent the morning obsessing over my sex life. Let's talk about yours for a while." Seth let go of his sister and looked over at the sleeping kids. From the tell-tale fidgeting they were both doing, he could tell nap time would be very short-lived. "Have you been able to talk to Alex lately?"

"Yes, as a matter of fact I got to Face Time with him this morning before we came over. Kids did too."

"How is he doing? Any idea of when he will be coming home?"

"No. No idea." Tasha looked sad. "I think he is going to be stuck in Afghanistan for a long time." She shook her head and chuckled. "He looks really good. He's already as dark as he gets here in the middle of summer."

"Black is beautiful," Seth chimed in.

"Alex is beautiful," Tasha added.

“You know Tasha, I’ve been meaning to talk to you about something.” Tasha raised one eyebrow and waited. “I have to tell you. I’m afraid your husband isn’t really black.”

“What?” Tasha blinked at him perplexed.

“I mean, seriously,” Seth continued. “I have never met a black man as fixated on Star Trek as Alex. I mean, the man is completely obsessed. That level of nerdish behavior is usually reserved for crazy white people. I think you’re going to have to consider the fact he might not have been completely honest with you about his racial heritage.”

Tasha punched Seth in the shoulder. “You’re such an asshole.”

“I’m just looking out for you here. And speaking of looking out for people. I am pretty sure when he does return you guys are going to get back to the baby-making business. If you have another boy, will you promise me you won’t let him name the baby Jean-Luc?” Seth jumped up to avoid the swing Tasha took at his head. “Seriously, the kid will hate you if you do.” Tasha chased Seth around the pool threatening his life.

Deanna stood up in the cabana. “Get him Momma!” Both kids cheered when their mother wrapped her arms around Seth and dragged him kicking and screaming into the pool with her.

Chapter Three

Seth looked about nervously as he entered the restaurant. No sign of Malachi. He smoothed down his lavender Oxford and checked his cellphone. Ten minutes after six and no texts from Malachi. A smartly dressed hostess in a white blouse and black pencil skirt caught his attention.

“Good evening, sir. Do you have a reservation?” Her smiling green eyes shone out from underneath a mass of curly red hair.

“In the name of Malachi for six thirty.” Seth coughed into his fist. “I’m a little early.”

“No, sir. The reservation was for six. Your dining companion is waiting for you.”

“Wha...” Seth pulled his phone out and doubled checked his text from earlier.

“If you’ll step this way...” Seth followed her clickety high heels across the hardwood floor. She stopped next to a booth and turned sideways. Malachi slid into view.

He wore his usual uniform of a flannel shirt and matching T-shirt. Tonight’s flannel was a rust and brown plaid. His brown hair was his typical tousled mess and his hazel eyes were sparkling with mirth. “You’re early.” He smiled as he closed his laptop and slid it to the side.

“As you requested.” Seth eased into the booth across from him.

The hostess laid two menus on the table and disappeared.

“How is your throat?”

Seth cleared the object in question. “Fine. I gargled three times this afternoon. And had a cup of tea.”

Malachi directed a tight smile over Seth’s shoulder.

“Good evening. My name is Patricia and I’ll be your server. Have you had a chance to look over the menu?”

“Do you have any dietary restrictions?” Malachi asked Seth.

“No,” Seth replied looking down at his menu.

"We'll have the four-course with the vegetarian option. Caesar salads for both please."

Seth listened with a slight smile on his face while Malachi ordered for both of them, not looking up from his menu until the server took it away. He directed his gaze to Malachi. The older man's face was partially obscured by steepled hands, the paired index fingers tapping gently against his lips. Malachi's piercing hazel eyes were fixing him with a stare that was both neutral and intense.

Seth smiled nervously and decided his own hands were a much safer subject of study.

"I don't normally 'hook-up' with strangers from the club," Malachi began. "I don't normally play with people I don't know very well. Your so very honest and intriguing offer took me off guard and caused me to move outside my comfortable little box."

"I am glad you did." Seth said, raising his eyes to meet that startling gaze.

"I am too... sort of... but now I find myself in a predicament." Malachi laid his hands on the table. "Seth, I am not the dom for you."

"What..." Seth's question was interrupted by the arrival of the food. He took the opportunity to clear his throat and get his nerves under control. "What do you mean?" he finished calmly after the server departed.

Malachi took a bite of raw broccoli and chewed it thoroughly before answering. Seth started picking at his salad.

"Seth, I don't date. The people I play with... they all have doms already. Or slaves... Or whatever." He chewed thoughtfully for a moment. "They are already in established relationships that meet their emotional needs." He took another bite. "I approached you, thinking you already had a dominant. I was thinking maybe I could meet your dominant and discuss the possibility of adding you to the list. I wasn't thinking I wanted to be your Master."

Seth took a sip of water and did his best to hide his disappointment.

"Don't get me wrong. I like you." Malachi's gaze turned hot. "I like you a lot. I noticed you a long time ago and I've been patiently waiting for your dom to show up. I finally got tired of waiting." Malachi closed his eyes. "The way you took my cock down your throat—" Seth shivered to hear the lust in Malachi's voice. Malachi opened his eyes. "So extremely hot. That was an experience I would love to repeat."

"I would climb under this table this very second if you let me." Seth was shocked at his own brazenness. Shocked, but not embarrassed, not regretful. He meant every word that fell out of his mouth.

Malachi closed his eyes again and raised his hand as if stopping traffic. "But... I am not going to."

"Then let's go back to my—" Seth was interrupted by the server refilling their drinks.

"Seth, listen," Malachi began. "I am not the dom for you. I don't have the time or energy it takes to care for a slave, especially a newbie. I like you, I do, but you are young and inexperienced. You need someone to care for you and train you in the lifestyle and give you the emotional support you need through all of it." Malachi sighed. "I am not that guy. I don't have the time to be that guy." Malachi took a deep breath. "But I might be able to help you find that guy."

Seth focused on his dinner to have some time to think. He had no idea what he was actually eating, but he forced more food in his mouth. The words "young and inexperienced" echoed through his head. Maybe he could turn his liability into an asset.

"You're right in some ways," Seth began. "I am inexperienced. Not sexually of course, but with the 'lifestyle' stuff. I have trolled FetLife and I can't even complete a profile because half of that stuff I haven't done and the other half I haven't even heard of. And I am young. Hell, I'm just out of college."

Malachi nodded knowingly, steepling his fingers in front of his lips again.

Time to close the deal. Seth thought. "But you're wrong about one thing. I don't need a dom." Seth let relief show on his face. "I'm not ready for one. I *am* young. I am too young to commit myself to someone like that. I just want to have fun. I want to get some experience. I want to find out if those things that sound hot *are* hot." Seth's expression turned serious. "And I want to do it with someone safe and knowledgeable, who won't demand more commitment than I am willing to give." Seth tried not to hold his breath.

Malachi thought a minute. The time stretched painfully to Seth. Finally he smiled. "Maybe I *am* the dom for you." Malachi chuckled as Seth's grin. "And you definitely need one!"

"What do you mean?"

“You don’t exactly make safe choices, Seth. You barely know me, and yet you allowed me into your home. I would bet cash you didn’t have a safe call set up.” Malachi looked irritated. “You let me deprive you of air until you passed out without once trying to get me to stop or using a safe word. Hot? Yes. Smart? Not even a little.”

Seth decided to see what his cuticles were up to.

“Listen, Seth.” Malachi reached over and wrapped his hand around the fingers Seth found so interesting. Seth looked up to meet his gaze. “If I get involved in your life on any level, there *is* a commitment I will require from you, for your safety and for my peace of mind.”

Seth raised an eyebrow.

“In the lifestyle, there is a relationship we describe as ‘in the protection of’. What this means to you is before you play with anyone else you have to call me and give me the vital statistics about the play date and give me an opportunity to voice my opinion on the matter.” Malachi’s face turned hard. “This will pertain to vanilla play as well and I won’t accept anything less. So don’t agree if you can’t do it.”

“You mean, I have to call you and say ‘I am about to have sex with another man. How do you like it?’ That seems terrible.”

“Not like that.” Malachi chuckled. “It will be more like. ‘I am about to play with or have sex with John Doe. We will be at my apartment or at this address. I will contact you again at approximately X time.’”

“That wouldn’t piss you off?” Seth was shocked.

“On the contrary, it would please me immensely to know you are being safe. If I know the guy (and if you meet him at the club the chances are high I do), I would feel even better about it.”

“Seems strange to me,” Seth sighed. “But it shouldn’t be a problem.” He looked down at their hands. Malachi’s fingers were still wrapped around his. “You should know, I’ve not been very sexually active lately. You might not be getting a call as often as you think.”

“You seemed to have a lot of practice last night.”

“Oh yes, I have had a lot of practice, just not always with... ahem... animate objects.” Seth blushed.

“You practice with a dildo? Just to improve your technique? Or because it gets you off?”

“Both,” Seth almost whispered.

“What else gets you off, Seth?” Malachi’s voice turned rough and gravelly. Seth shivered.

“Your voice for one thing. Also, getting fucked. I am much more of a bottom than a top.”

“Sounds like I hit the twink jackpot.” Malachi got an uncomfortable look on his face. “There is something I should tell you I guess. I gather you’re homosexual. Well, I’m not.” He winced and tilted his head to the side. “Not exactly. I went through high school thinking I was straight. In college, I figured out I was definitely bi. But recently a friend pointed out I am more pansexual than anything else.”

“What does that even mean?”

“It means among the people I have played with, you will find people of both gender identities, that don’t always match their gender of birth. I’m attracted to people of different races, body types, heights, hair coloring and personality. The one constant is I am only attracted to submissive people. Or at least people who behave submissively with me.” Malachi removed his hand and leaned back. “And so you know, I have been intimate with a good many, but I practice safe penetrative sex and I get tested every six months. I’ve never fluid bonded.”

“What does fluid bonded mean?” Seth rubbed his skin. It was still warm from Malachi’s touch.

“A fluid bond is where you agree to have unprotected sex with only the person or people you have bonded with. When was the last time you were tested?”

“It was a couple of years ago,” Seth said, chagrined.

“Do it as soon as possible. When was the last time you had sex?” Malachi smiled when Seth rolled his eyes. “Before last night?”

“Um, sometime in January,” Seth coughed into his hand, “of last year.”

“You haven’t had sex in eighteen months?” Malachi reached over to trace Seth’s palm with his thumb. A slow evil grin spread across his face. “Why don’t we go somewhere and correct that?”

Seth nearly groaned his agreement.

Chapter Four

Seth groaned again as Malachi's rough fingers slid inside his unbuttoned Oxford. Malachi stood behind him so closely that Seth could feel the hardness of Malachi's erection through those crazy corduroy pants. Malachi threaded the fingers of his other hand through Seth's hair before jerking Seth's head to the side. He bit into the side of Seth's neck, his beard chafing roughly against his skin.

Everything about Malachi was rough: his voice, his beard, the abrasive feel of his hands, the way he handled Seth, everything. Seth loved it. Seth couldn't wait to have Malachi's chest hair abrading the skin of his back while Malachi pounded him into oblivion. As if reading his mind, Malachi snatched Seth's shirt down so that it bound his arms to his side while leaving his back bare. Malachi's surprisingly naked chest pressed against Seth.

When did that happen? floated across Seth's mind before Malachi used both of his beautifully abrasive hands to press Seth back against him, abrading Seth's smooth skin with his chest hair.

Malachi pulled back to run open-mouthed nibbley kisses down Seth's spine to near the base of his shoulder blades. There he stopped and sucked hard, drawing the skin into his mouth, using his teeth to torment him further. The pain caused Seth to cry out and arch away, but Malachi used those wonderful hands to hold him in place, sliding the tips of his calloused fingers over Seth's nipples. Using his index and thumb, he slowly squeezed each nipple. Increasing the pressure until the pain of it nearly overrode the pain of what Malachi was doing with his mouth.

Seth groaned and felt tears springing to his eyes. "Please." He begged but he didn't try to extricate himself from the binding of the partially removed shirt. He arched his chest even farther, giving Malachi better access to his sweetly abused nipples.

Malachi released his painful kiss. "I like *this*, Seth," he whispered, punctuating the word with a pulse of intensified pressure. "I like causing pain. Did you realize this before you placed yourself so willingly in my grasp?" he whispered before gently kissing Seth's neck.

Seth shook his head to clear his eyes and sniffled, ashamed to feel a tear trail down his cheek. "Yes," he breathed and pushed his ass back against Malachi.

Malachi chuckled. The sound felt both sinister and warm so close to Seth's ear. "Do you like *this*, Seth?" he asked, emphasizing the word with sensation again. "Do you like receiving pain?"

"Evidently," Seth whispered, leaning his back against Malachi and grinding his hips in the empty air.

Malachi released him, sliding one hand up and across his chest to caress his face and the other slipping down across his trembling abdomen. "Then what is this?" With one finger, Malachi traced the path of another tear that had slipped out. "It doesn't seem to match this." With his other hand, Malachi roughly groped Seth's dick through the fabric of his pants. Seth groaned and ground against him.

"You are rock hard, Seth. So responsive! I've even found a wet spot. Your dick wants me so bad it's weeping." Malachi rubbed against him, using the leverage of his hand on Seth's crotch to pull him firmly back against his erection. "Is that why you're weeping, Seth? Because you want me so badly?"

The tears came steadily now. *Yes!* Seth thought. *That is exactly it!* Seth remembered how well Malachi responded to begging.

"Please, Malachi! Please fuck me! I need you inside of me so bad. I will do anything to have you inside me. Anything!" As Seth begged, Malachi continued to grind against him and massage Seth through his pants.

"I want to make it hurt, Seth." Malachi whispered against his throat. "I want to take you rough and force myself inside your body. I want to fuck you raw."

"Yes!" Seth nearly screamed. "Please!"

Malachi stripped Seth of his clothes in record time. Before Seth even had the time to miss the warmth of Malachi's body, it was pressed back against him, completely naked this time. Seth reached his now free hand behind him to caress the monster that had so violated his throat. Seth wanted him in his mouth again, wanted to feel his throat stretch.

Again, Malachi seemed to read his mind. "No throat fucking tonight, Seth. Not only do you need the recovery time, I want inside of that ass. Here, put this on me." With that he handed Seth a condom. Seth turned to do as instructed when Malachi clarified. "On your knees."

With a whimper, Seth complied, dropping on his knees in front of Malachi's beautiful dick. Seeing it from this familiar angle made not taking it in his mouth

almost torture. Seth licked his lips as he slid the condom on. From the smile on Malachi's face, Seth realized Malachi knew it was torture for him and was glad of it.

"Get up." Malachi grabbed the bottle of lube and sat on the bed. He pushed and pulled at Seth until he stood in front of the bed with his legs spread and slightly bent over. Seth shivered to feel Malachi's lubed finger trace his entrance before pushing gently inside. Seth grabbed the back of his thighs as his legs threatened to give. Malachi worked his finger back and forth before adding a second one.

"Next time, it won't be this way, Seth." Malachi's words floated in through the haze of lust clouding Seth's mind. "Next time I will push my cock inside your tight beautiful ass with no warm up. No gentle stretching to prepare you to take me. Just a little lube and pure force of will."

Seth groaned at the visual and his cock dribbled on to the floor. "Do it." Seth whispered, even as he ground back against Malachi's hand. Seth jerked when Malachi's fingers pressed against his prostate.

"No, Seth." Malachi's fingers worked Seth without mercy. "It's been too long a wait for you to be taken that way. For tonight, you get gentle." Malachi smiled. "Or at least as gentle as I am capable of."

Malachi's two fingers became three. "Also, I am so hot for you right now I might cum before I managed to force myself all the way inside you." Malachi's tempo increased, his hand making a wet slapping sound as it pounded into him. Seth felt the burning roar of an orgasm threatening. With a groan, he struggled not to cum.

"And that would be a travesty. And besides, I would have missed this beautiful sight." Malachi's hand stilled just as Seth was nearing the point of no return. His fingers pressed on Seth's prostate, hard. Seth's moan of pleasure turned into a whimper as Malachi slid his fingers from Seth's body.

"Don't you worry baby. You aren't going to be empty for long. Sit back on me. I want to watch your body swallow my cock." Seth did as he was instructed, letting Malachi guide him into position. His anus tightened when he felt the latex tip of Malachi's cock press against him. "Now don't you undo all my hard work. Relax and sit down." Seth lowered himself crying out when Malachi breeched his opening and slid inside. Malachi grabbed Seth's hips and pulled until Seth was fully seated in his lap. Malachi wrapped one hand around

Seth's waist and with a lurch, dragged them both back further on to the bed, still joined together. Malachi laid down and pulled Seth onto his chest. Then, holding Seth by the hips, he began slowly, steadily fucking Seth, pistoning up into his body over and over.

Tears poured from Seth's eyes. Whether it was joy or pain making him weep, he had no idea. With each powerful stroke, Malachi's cock pressed against that sweet spot. Because of Malachi's length, the pressure was intense, almost painful. And Malachi was relentless. For all his talk of not lasting long, Malachi slowly and repeatedly plowed into him, hitting his prostate with near-bruising force every time. Seth's cock dribbled a steady stream of precum all over his belly. The sensations were mind-blowing, pleasurable enough to carry him over the edge but painful enough to keep his orgasm looming just out of reach. His tender throat now ached from the loud cries Malachi seemed to push out of him with each stroke.

Seth reached to touch himself, to add just that last little bit of friction he needed to crest over the top of the pain. Malachi stopped him. Lacing his fingers with Seth's, he drew both of their arms across Seth's waist. His other hand slid up to wrap around Seth's neck. His fingers tightened around his throat as he pulled Seth's head to his ear.

"Oh no you don't." The pounding continued as Malachi whispered sweet evil to him. "You cum when I say you do." Malachi increased the pressure on Seth's windpipe as he amazingly increased the intensity of his thrusts. Seth reached back and wrapped his hand around Malachi's shoulder. "Do you want to cum, Seth? Beg for it."

"Please Sir!" Seth's voice sounded strange. It was hard to get the words out with the ever-increasing pressure on this throat. "Please let me cum." The last word was almost a gasp. Without realizing he was doing it, Seth pulled Malachi's shoulder toward him, subtly encouraging him to increase his grip. Seth's head got swimmy again as Malachi tightened his grasp even more. Malachi kept steadily pounding away as spots began to blur Seth's vision.

"That'll do." Malachi released Seth's throat. Before Seth completed his first deep breath, Malachi rolled them both over so that Seth lay on his belly and Malachi lay on top of him. Malachi wrapped his arms underneath Seth's and grabbed his shoulders. Holding Seth down as he ground even deeper inside of him. In this position, Malachi's cock rubbed against and pushed past Seth's sweet spot, instead of pounding into it. The change from pleasurable torture to pure pleasure made Seth's breath come out in a long-winded moan.

Malachi's rhythm changed. He had been a machine before; steady and constant, never varying his speed. Now he was an animal, grinding into Seth's body with a fierceness that was surprising. Faster and faster he pushed, each stroke sliding his cock against Seth's prostate. "Come for me Seth," he whispered before burying his teeth in Seth's shoulder.

Like sweet fire, Seth's orgasm hit him and he shouted his release in the pillow. He heard the near deafening yell of Malachi's pleasure only somewhat muffled by the skin of his shoulder. Malachi paused as his orgasm overtook him with his cock shoved deep in Seth's ass and pressed firmly against Seth's battered prostate. This pressure, just microseconds after release caused Seth's orgasm to drag out painfully long. Seth's body, in response, clamped down hard on Malachi's cock, milking him and drawing his out as well. Their bodies locked together as the climax ripped them up and shattered them against the sky. Weightless, they hung before floating gently back to earth.

Malachi dropped all of his weight onto Seth and laid there embracing him.

"That was a beautiful thing," Malachi nuzzled Seth's neck. "You okay in there?" Seth nodded yes.

Seth felt Malachi reach between them to grab the condom and slip out of his body. Malachi kissed his shoulder before getting up.

"Looks like I gave you a hickey on your back," Malachi said as he walked toward the bathroom.

You can give me a hickey anywhere, Seth thought.

Moments later, he heard the toilet flush and Malachi in all his naked glory strode back into the room. He climbed on the bed and began inspecting Seth everywhere, even the crack of his ass. He rolled Seth over and gave his front the same perusal.

"Looks like a hickey on your back. Some fingerprint bruises on your hips. And maybe your neck as well, although those will be slight if they show up at all. How do you feel?"

"Gah..." Seth cleared his throat. "Good. I'm good... Very good." Malachi smiled.

"Glad to hear it," Malachi's face turned serious. "So that's it. That is what I have to offer. A lot of what I have to show you will be me causing you pain mixed with pleasure. Or making you do things just because I want you to, like kneeling or crawling. Or..."

“I’ve read some books. I have an idea of the things you might want to do to me,” Seth blushed. “If it is anything like tonight, or like last night, then I think I have hit the dom jackpot.”

Chapter Five

“And then what happened?” Tasha asked. Her bright blue eyes sparkling.

“And then he tucked me in and read aloud to me again until I fell asleep,” Seth sighed and rested his face in the palm of his open hand.

“No shit?” Tasha asked.

“No shit, dear Sister,” Seth’s face dropped its dreamy expression and a more serious one took over. “I think I’ve got it bad.”

“No, you have just finally been fucked properly for once.”

“Tasha! Language.”

“Geordi can’t hear anything over that blasted Barney. I swear the only reason I don’t set fire to every one of his stuffed purple dinosaurs is: one, I’m not a psychopath; and two, that scary freak of nature has somehow managed to convince both of my kids that housecleaning is fun.”

Seth chuckled and glanced over at his beloved nephew. Tasha was right. Geordi was glued to the set. As Seth watched, Geordi threw his hands in the air and exclaimed, “Clean up! Clean up! Eh-ree body clean up!”

Not even the ringing of the phone distracted Geordi from his favorite TV show.

“Barnum Construction, this is Tasha Riker. How may I help you?”

Seth turned back to the payroll spread sheets. He just couldn’t focus today. *I should have called in “fucked silly.”* Seth smirked at the idea of telling his boss, who also happened to be his father, that he couldn’t come to work because he was in an emotional spin over finally making time with the guy he had been obsessing over for the past year. His father would probably have just patted him on the shoulder and said, “That’s nice son. No details please.”

Seth checked his phone for the millionth time this morning.

I had a great weekend. I have been thinking about you a lot today. Makes it hard to work. Pun intended.

“Oh my God! He texted!”

At that moment, Patrick Barnum opened the front door of the trailer that served as the company’s portable office. Seth’s father was taller than both of

his children. His face showed the passage of years and the wrinkles adorning his eyes said there had been far more smiles on that face than frowns.

"Seth got laid," Tasha chimed in, hanging up the phone.

"Tasha!" Seth cried out.

"O-K." Patrick drew the letters out slowly, emphasizing the awkwardness of the moment. "Well, I hope he is a nice man Seth 'cause you deserve nothing less. And Tasha, T.M.I."

Geordi, upon hearing the voice of his favorite person in the world, ditched Barney without a backwards glance and ran screaming across the office, "Grampa!" With wild abandon for safety and reason, he leapt in the air and launched himself into his grandfather's waiting arms.

Patrick caught the boy easily and swung him in a wide arc before bringing him in close for a hug. "Hey there, Geordi bear!" This was followed by an exchange of loud smacking kisses all over Geordi's face.

"Thank you, Dad." Seth looked pointedly over at Tasha who did not look apologetic in the least bit.

"And I gather the gentleman in question is the one who texted you?" Patrick's attempt to rejoin the adult conversation was thwarted by Geordi who placed a hand on either side of Patrick's face and forcibly turned his grandfather back towards him.

"Grampa, Barney clean up!" The last two words were sung along to the tune that surely saved Barney from evisceration from millions of parents.

"I know Geordi man. That dino is one tidy dude!" Turning back to Seth. "Will we be expecting him for dinner soon?"

"Hey Dad! Guess who's coming to dinner?" Tasha grinned like an idiot.

"Yeah, romantic controversy in the new generation." Patrick turned back to Geordi. Bouncing him in a sing song voice he continued. "Poor Tasha and Seth. Just can't shock their old father no matter how hard they try."

"Hey! We don't live our lives to shock you," Tasha exclaimed.

"I know that." Patrick turned to his daughter. "If I really thought you were trying to shock me, I would have let you. What kind of parent denies their child a basic need like that?" Still bouncing Geordi in his arms, he nodded at the clock. "Speaking of basic needs of a child, it's three. Don't you need to go pick Deanna up from school?"

"Not just yet, but I do need to leave soon. Today is ballet and I am doing a car pool swap with another mom." Tasha stood up and grabbed her purse out of her desk drawer. "But you're right, I do need to leave. I got so caught up with hearing the details of Seth's sexual escapades that I put off running to the grocery store. Chicken enchiladas tonight!"

"Ooo! Yum!" Patrick grinned. "What's for dessert?"

"No dessert Dad! I'm trying to keep my figure so my husband will still want me when he comes home."

"De-ssert! De-ssert! De-ssert!"

"Now you've done it." Tasha sighed, taking Geordi from Patrick. "I guess we *will* be having dessert. Boy will I be glad when this chanting stage is passed."

Patrick handed off Geordi with a wink. "Good job, kiddo!"

"De-ssert! De-ssert!" With a wave, Tasha was out the door. Geordi's chants continued off in the distance.

Seth looked down at his phone.

"So, *are* you going to invite him for dinner?" Patrick quietly asked, sitting at Tasha's vacated desk.

"I don't think so, Pop. I kinda told him that I wasn't interested in anything serious. That I just wanted to play around."

"Well, Son, gay or straight, you aren't the first guy in the world to set the rules up like that. The young man should respect that you are honest with him right from the start."

"That's just it, Dad. I wasn't honest with him. I've been crushing on this guy for a long time and I already feel half in love with him after just two, um... dates."

"Oh dear," Patrick took a deep breath. "Let me guess. You told him you weren't interested in anything serious right after he said something along the same lines."

"Yup," Seth whispered, still looking at his phone. "Saw right through that didn't you."

"In that case, I wouldn't invite him to dinner yet." Patrick raised his eyebrows. "Actually, I wouldn't introduce him to your sister at all."

Seth laughed at that. Then he had the disturbing visual of Malachi flirting with his sister. “No,” he agreed. “I think you are right about that.”

“I also wouldn’t get all worked up over that if I were you. Did you know that your mother told me something very like that right before I asked her out on our first date?”

Seth looked his dad in the eyes. His father rarely talked about his mom. None of them did. “Really?”

“Yes, really.” Patrick nodded his head. “I had just said something asinine about how I was young and raring to sow my wild oats. Her mom and my mom went to the same church and were trying to set us up. She was really pretty, but I wanted her to know right away that I wasn’t ready to settle down with some sweet little church girl. She giggled in that delicate little girl way she never outgrew and said, ‘Did you think I wanted to marry you? I was just planning on fucking you.’ Then with a smile and a flounce she skipped out of the room.”

Seth face-palmed himself. “T.M.I. Dad! T.M.I.!”

“I am only telling you this to make a point. At the beginning of any relationship, no one really knows what they want from it. If saying ‘it’s only for fun’ takes the pressure off, then so be it. Maybe it is, and maybe it isn’t. Only time will tell.”

Patrick walked over to Seth’s desk and gently ruffled his hair. “Besides,” he said, kissing the top of Seth’s head, “maybe you’re not the only one fibbing.” With that he strode out the door. “I’m off for my mani-pedi. Lock up when you leave.”

“Mani-pedi?”

“Yessirree! I’ve got a date!” Patrick let the door close behind him.

Seth shook his head and looked back down at his text.

I had a great time too. The best! When do you want to get together again?

He took a deep breath to brace himself. He may not have been completely honest when stating his intentions, but he would be completely honest when showing his feelings. He added *I’ve been thinking about you a lot too* and hit send.

A deep yawning sensation rolled through his stomach. He slid his phone into his pocket, determined not to sit there waiting for the reply. Before he let go, it buzzed in his hand.

Whatcha doin Friday night?

Chapter Six

Seth gave the table a quick once over. There was a fruit and cheese platter, some cucumber cups with avocado cilantro white bean dip made by himself last night at a very reasonable hour; a few sweet n' tangy lime seitan skewers assembled by his sister this afternoon in the office trailer's kitchen after she googled vegetarian hors d'oeuvres, quite a lot of savory pâte à choux with cream cheese and olive made last night by his father in the cooking class no one knew he was attending; some pita chips with sweet potato mash and smoked almonds made by himself this morning after a neurosis-induced three in the morning trip to the grocery store; and a big pile of stuffed mushrooms that were dropped off this afternoon at the office by a dark-haired, statuesque, older woman claiming to be his father's girlfriend.

When he had asked Malachi if he should make dinner for their "date" Malachi had replied, "Make some snacks, you know, finger food."

There was enough finger food here for a seven course meal.

This is obvious overkill. Oh my God! I forgot dessert! As Seth checked his watch to see if there was enough time to run to Publix for chocolate-covered strawberries, there was a knock at the door.

"Yikes!" Seth ran over to the mirror to check his teeth and wrestled with his hair. "Just breathe!" he told his reflection. He ran back over to the dining room table and sat in a chair in full view of the front door. His sister had insisted on a mad shopping trip this week in preparation of tonight and the white linen top and light grey linen pants looked good on him. Arranging himself as artfully as he could he called out, "Come in."

A moment passed before the knob turned and Malachi entered. He was wearing jeans for a change, dark stonewashed ones that were tight but not too tight. An unbuttoned dark green Oxford replaced the plaid flannel he usually wore and a dark blue tank stretched across his chest. He was wearing tan suede docksides instead of his usual Converse. He was carrying a black leather duffel bag.

He dressed up for me. Seth's stomach rolled at the thought.

When Seth's gaze traveled back up Malachi's body, he realized Malachi was still standing in the open door with one eyebrow raised. Seth jumped up,

knocking over his chair in the process. He ignored the chair and darted over to take Malachi's bag. "Please, come in."

Malachi crossed the threshold. "You don't lock your door?" Seth shook his head. "Hmmm," was Malachi's only response. Malachi closed the door behind him, and looking Seth in the eye, he turned the deadbolt. Seth gave him a nervous smile. He handed Seth his bag and walked slowly over toward the table looking about the apartment as he went. "You must really like the beach."

"I do," Seth replied. "But if you are referring to the décor, it's my sister's doing. She decorated this place and won't let me change it. I would prefer something a little more... gothic."

"Gothic?" Malachi turned to focus on Seth.

"I meant Gothic like Victorian, not like Goth," Seth clarified.

"I assumed that was what you meant," Malachi said slowly, watching Seth. He continued his slow, steady incursion into the condo. He stopped to peruse the offerings on the table. He didn't say anything and he didn't look away from the table. Seth placed his bag on the kitchen bar and went to stand next to him. Seth picked at his cuticles and tried to determine what Malachi was thinking. After a few moments of them both staring at the table in silence, Malachi calmly and Seth nervously, Malachi spoke again.

"Did you make all of this, Seth?" Malachi asked quietly.

"No," Seth shook his head, even though Malachi wasn't looking at him. "I made that," Seth pointed to the cucumber cups. "And that," he pointed at the pita chips.

"And the rest?" Malachi gestured across the table with a broad wave of his hand.

"Some of it was bought, some of it was made by my sister... and my dad... and his girlfriend."

"Are you nervous, Seth?" Malachi asked, still not looking away from the table.

"Yes, Sir," Seth whispered.

Malachi reached up and threaded his fingers through the hair at Seth's nape. Taking a handful in his grip, he pulled tightly and tugged on Seth's head. With a surprised gasp, Seth stopped fidgeting and dropped his hands to his side. By exerting a constant downward pull on his hair, Malachi guided Seth to his knees

on the cream colored Berber and then guided his cheek to rest against Malachi's hip.

"Better?" Malachi asked, his gravelly voice echoing through Seth's bones.

"Yes, Sir," Seth rubbed his face against Malachi's jeans, like a cat seeking a caress. Malachi chuckled. "Whenever you are nervous, or if you don't know what you should be doing. Do this Seth. Just like this. You will always be welcome on your knees beside me."

Seth's heart fluttered at the word "always" but he did his best to ignore it. "Yes, Sir."

"Hmm. I wish I didn't eat earlier. This looks delicious. Are you a vegetarian Seth?"

"No, Sir."

"You are now. At least when you are with me," Malachi picked up a cucumber cup and popped it into his mouth. "Mmmm! It's delicious. Here," Malachi held one in front of Seth's mouth. When Seth reached with his fingers to take it, Malachi pulled it out of his reach.

"Open," Malachi commanded.

Seth parted his lips and Malachi slipped the food inside, tracing the curve of Seth's lower lip as he pulled his hand away.

"Ever watched the movie *Nine and a Half Weeks*?" Malachi asked. Seth, still chewing, shook his head.

"Stay right there," Malachi walked over to the kitchen counter and grabbed his bag. "Let's get you out of those clothes."

Seth chuckled, wondering if Tasha would be pissed or thrilled by how quickly he was shedding the clothes she'd spent hours finding.

"Stand up." Malachi set the bag down on the floor and reached with his other hand to help Seth up from the floor. Seth struggled awkwardly to get to his feet, relying heavily on Malachi's hand for balance. Malachi smiled. "We will work on that soon."

Malachi gently lifted his shirt. Seth dutifully raised his arms over his head, feeling more childish than sexy. Malachi carefully folded the shirt and placed it on the table. He undid the drawstring of the new linen pants and let them drop to the floor. Seth stood there, self-consciously, while Malachi ran an appraising eye over him.

Malachi traced the sides of the gray silk-knit thong Tasha had spent twenty minutes talking him into. "You work out. Gym?"

"Yeah," Seth whispered. "And yoga."

"Alone?"

"With my sister."

Malachi slipped his fingers into the sides of the thong and slowly drew them down to nestle with his pants, still pooled around his feet on the floor. Seth's cock, which had been at half-mast the minute Malachi walked in the door, hardened completely before the thong made it halfway down his thighs. This had the disconcerting effect of putting Seth's erection inches from Malachi's face.

Seth pulled his hips back, moving his jutting cock out of Malachi's personal space. Malachi's hands lashed out with the speed of a viper strike and wrapped around Seth's hipbones. With fingers biting painfully tight, he pulled Seth's hips back.

"What are you doing?" Malachi looked up into Seth's eyes, still bent over with his mouth tantalizingly close to the head of Seth's cock. "I didn't tell you to move."

"I'm sorry!" Seth said. He was having a difficult time looking down at Malachi with his lips so close to Seth's now aching cock. He was having an even more difficult time looking away. Seth's submissive head might be having issues with the surprising visual of Malachi swallowing him down to the root, but his dick had no such problems. "I was just," Seth stopped, not really sure what he wanted to say.

"You were just thinking. You were just second guessing. You were just afraid." To Seth's horror and surprise, Malachi dropped gracefully to his knees in front of Seth. "Uncomfortable, Seth?"

"Yes, Sir."

Malachi smiled at Seth. "Stand up straight and grasp your wrists behind your back," Seth complied. In this position, his chest nearly blocked his view of his dick pointing directly at Malachi's smiling lips.

"Well done," Malachi leaned towards him, his hands still holding Seth in place. Seth felt the warm moist tip of Malachi's tongue trace a line from the inside of his upper thigh, across the bend in his hip, toward but not quite

reaching the base of his cock. Seth shivered and unconsciously released his hands held behind his back and leaned over to see more clearly. Malachi's fingers tightened painfully again. "I didn't tell you to move, Seth!"

Seth snapped back into position. A wet kiss on his cleft of his hip was his reward.

"Much better," Malachi moved his face closer to Seth's crotch and inhaled, deeply. He turned his head causing his rough beard to drag along Seth's tender skin. "Never forget I am in charge Seth. If I am on my knees, I am in charge. If I am on my back, I am in charge. If I have your beautiful," Malachi inhaled again, "intoxicating dick buried in my mouth, I am still in charge." As Malachi spoke, Seth felt his warm moist breath tease up one side of his cock and then back down the other. Seth closed his eyes and whispered. "Yes, Sir."

Seth nearly gasped when he felt the tantalizingly light tip of Malachi's tongue trace a gentle line towards the head of his cock. When Malachi reached the edge of the bulbous tip, he pulled his tongue away. Seth let loose a groan of disappointment. It quickly morphed into a moan of pleasure when Malachi repeated the move on the other side. Back and forth, Malachi teased with his tongue. After a few repetitions, he added a trace of the vein on the underside of Seth's cock to the pattern.

Seth tried to stay in the position Malachi put him, but his hips juttied out a little with each tickle of Malachi's tongue. Before Seth realized it, he was nearly bent over backward with his body's attempt to get his dick as close to Malachi's mouth as was humanly possible.

Malachi's fiendishly teasing tongue laved a firm fully-encompassing swirl around the head of Seth's aching cock. Seth cried out and his back arched precariously more. Only Malachi's firm grip on his hips stopped him from completing a full backbend.

Malachi held him there, nearly suspended, while he continued the torturously slow teases with his tongue. Now he added the head encompassing swirls with increasing frequency, until Seth thought he might lose his mind. Finally, Malachi slowly slid Seth's cock in his mouth.

Seth nearly came undone.

Malachi worked Seth's dick deep into his throat, swallowing around him. Seth's hips began to tremble under Malachi's grasp. Seth's cries grew louder and louder; his sack tightening with impending orgasm.

Malachi released Seth's cock and pulled back, giving the head one last swirling lick as he did.

Seth felt tears well in his eyes again. His orgasm receded as the cool air blew across his damp skin. Without any warning, Malachi swallowed his cock again and worked him just as fiercely. It took mere seconds before he was again ready to explode.

And again Malachi stopped. Before beginning again.

Seth lost track of how many times Malachi brought him nearly to orgasm only to deny him release. His back hurt from the prolonged awkward bend. Tears flowed freely down the sides of his face to the floor. He was even drooling. His throat hurt again from crying out with the now painful need to cum. He barely recognized the pitiful sounding repeats of "Please!" as his own voice.

Malachi stopped and his gravelly voice filled the air. Seth's head was foggy. He had heard what Malachi said, but the words made no sense.

"I'm sorry," Seth said. "What?"

"Release your arms and put them out behind you. I am going to lower you to the ground."

This time Seth understood. It took force of will to make his fingers let go of their grip around his wrists. He reached over his head and behind him to complete the backbend Malachi was lowering him into. Once his hands were securely on the ground, Malachi released his hips and Seth lowered himself all the way to the ground. Through a fog, he felt Malachi remove his thong and pants from his feet. He was startled when Malachi grabbed his thighs and pulled him closer. The rough Berber carpet chafed his back.

Seth watched as Malachi undid his belt and lowered his pants. His long cock fell out and bounced in the air. Seth wondered if the poor thing was hurt by being so hard and trapped in those tight jeans.

Malachi materialized a condom and slid it down his shaft. Just as mysteriously, he produced a small packet of lube and spread it over his dick. Dropping down on all fours, he caged Seth with his arms. Seth felt the wet tip of his dick against his sack. Seth swallowed and looked up into Malachi's bright hazel eyes.

Malachi lowered his weight onto Seth, pinning his tormented cock between them. Seth felt the tip of Malachi's cock nudge against his anus. Malachi

pivoted his hips and the tip pushed against Seth's opening. Malachi closed his eyes and smiled.

"This may hurt a bit, Seth."

Opening his eyes, he lowered his mouth to Seth's and kissed him, wrapping his hands up under Seth's shoulders to hold his head in place. Malachi tensed and changed the position of his hips a little more. The tip breached Seth's opening. Seth gasped. Another slight change in position and then Malachi bore down, burying himself in Seth in one steady onslaught.

Seth screamed into Malachi's open mouth. The sudden penetration burned like fire in his body, but Seth wasn't sure it was pain. Malachi held himself buried deep for a moment before pulling back and thrusting in again. Seth screamed again. It felt like Malachi was swallowing his screams, taking them away and absorbing them. This time, Malachi had slid firmly against his prostate and his scream was of pleasure and joy. When Malachi pulled back and thrust again, Seth exploded.

Malachi pounded him furiously, scooting them both across the sand-colored carpet. With a final stuttering stroke, with the length of him buried deep in Seth's body, with his lips hungrily feasting at Seth's mouth, he gave back the scream he had taken.

And then, he erupted with laughter.

Seth joined him with a giggle, not sure exactly what the joke was.

"Hello Seth, you look nice tonight. How was your week?" Malachi chortled.

"That, right there, is hilarious," Seth said, his grin spitting his face in two.

"I intended to take things slowly tonight," Malachi smiled sheepishly. "I even brought some toys to introduce you to. I planned on some talking, a little flirting, and quite a bit of playtime before I took you like an animal."

Seth realized Malachi was apologizing. Seth stretched to reach Malachi's lips and shut him up with a gentle kiss. Malachi responded in kind, his lips a tender caress.

"The night is young..." Seth whispered when the kiss ended.

"Why, so it is," Malachi replied with a smile.

Chapter Seven

Seth screamed and leapt up like a cat, his eyes trying to make sense in the dark.

“Oww!” He recognized Malachi’s voice at the same time he recognized his own living room. He reached over and turned on a lamp. Malachi stood there looking at him and holding his mouth with both hands.

“What happened?” Seth asked, pointing at Malachi’s face.

“When you jumped up, your head busted my lip.”

Seth touched his head. His slow-waking brain was just now telling him it was tender. Pieces of the mystery began to clarify in his head. “You kicked me!”

“I didn’t know you were on the floor!” Malachi rebutted.

Finally, Seth’s sleep-deprived brain put the pieces from last night together. After the amazing sex, they had sat on the floor laughing and talking. Malachi hand fed him tidbits, snacking himself as he did.

After they had eaten their fill, Seth cleaned up the food and Malachi excused himself to the restroom. Malachi returned and sat on the soft oversize cream leather couch and Seth took the opportunity to freshen up.

Seth took a little extra time in the bathroom. If Malachi was going to put him ass up over his lap like he threatened, he was going to make sure said ass was tidy. A quick rinse in the shower did the trick.

He emerged to find Malachi had figured out how to access Netflix on his TV. And he was a sci-fi geek. And he was totally passed out. A light snore was just barely audible over the sound track of *Firefly* episode one.

“Sir?” Seth called out quietly. “Malachi?” There was no response. Seth looked at the clock. It was just now nine thirty. Seth smiled to himself and went to sit by Malachi on the couch. Malachi leaned against him and laid his head on Seth’s shoulder. Seth nuzzled him and reset the show to the beginning. If Malachi liked it, he would watch it. Even if it was cowboys in space.

Before the end of episode two, Malachi’s head was nestled in Seth’s lap.

By the end of episode four, Seth felt himself nodding off. Loathe to wake him, Seth executed a deft maneuver, exchanging his lap for a pillow without

waking Malachi. He stretched a snuggly blanket up to Malachi's neck and turned off the TV.

Seth lasted about five minutes in his own bed. Dragging his pillow and comforter with him, he lay down on the floor in front of the couch and let Malachi's gentle snores lull him to sleep.

That was about midnight. Seth looked at the clock. It was four in the morning.

"It's four in the morning," he told Malachi, as if it explained everything.

"I have to go to work," Malachi sniffed and checked his hand. "I'm really surprised there's no blood."

Seth blinked his eyes twice, brain still not firing on all cylinders. "I'll make you breakfast."

"Don't worry about it. I normally just grab coffee and a bagel."

"Then that's what I'll make," Seth insisted on his way to the kitchen.

Malachi followed. He slid up behind Seth as he was putting grounds in the coffee maker and wrapped his arms around Seth's waist. "I'm sorry for crashing on you last night. I work long hours and it's physical work. I am wiped most of the time. It's the main reason I said I didn't have time for a relationship."

Seth pushed the start button on the coffee maker and dropped a bagel in the toaster. He turned about in Malachi's embrace. "I had a good time last night and I don't mind that you fell asleep. I just settled in and watched TV. It's what I most likely would have been doing anyway, only without having my brains fucked out first."

Malachi chuckled, "On a Friday night?"

"Yes, 'fraid so," he sighed. "My one exciting venture during the week is heading out to The Woodshed every Saturday night in hopes of seeing my favorite dom make his single-tail dance. One day I was going to get my courage up enough to volunteer."

"I would never have chosen you without talking to your dom first."

"I know that, *now*," Seth replied. "Rumor has it I am under the protection of a very competent and knowledgeable dom. You could see what he thinks."

"He thinks the first time you feel the kiss of my lash it won't be in front of an audience." Seth shivered at the quiet menace in Malachi's voice.

The coffee pot beeped and Seth turned around to pour it into a thermos he grabbed from the cabinet overhead.

“Did you really come to the club to see me?” Malachi asked from behind him, backing off from the embrace to give him room to work.

Not looking up from his task, Seth replied. “Yes, Sir. I’m afraid once I fixated on you, no one else could hold my attention. I would come and lean against the same wall and watch you from the shadows. It’s kinda creepy and stalkerish when you think about it.” Seth grabbed the bagel from the toaster with a napkin and, with breakfast in hand, he turned to hand them to Malachi.

He found Malachi leaning against the counter away from him, a calculating look in his eyes. Seth swallowed, pinned by Malachi’s searching gaze. Perhaps he had been just a little too honest. This was supposed to be “just for fun”. Stalking and fun didn’t go hand in hand. “I...” he began, almost too quietly to hear.

Which Malachi evidently didn’t. “I was thinking,” Malachi said. “If you only go to see me, we can skip that part of the evening and hang out here.” Malachi smiled. “Maybe I could get more done than just fucking you.”

Seth released the breath he didn’t realize he was holding. “I wouldn’t describe the way you fuck me as ‘just’.” He let a lazy seductive grin cross his face. “Sir.”

Malachi crossed over to him and wrapped an arm around his waist. Pulling Seth’s body against his, he took his lips in a passionate kiss, morning breath be damned. He ended it with a look of regret. “Shame I have to work today.” He shook his head. “Waste of a beautiful day.”

Seth looked over at the sliding glass door to the still dark sky outside. He turned back to Malachi, who still was holding him close. Malachi’s gaze never left his face. He smiled when he realized Malachi wasn’t talking about the weather.

“Yes, Sir,” he agreed. “It is.”

Malachi kissed him again, just a quick peck before releasing his waist and grabbing the coffee and bagel from his hands. He looked down at his clothes. He was still wearing the same outfit he had arrived in. “I’m heading home to change. I don’t work on Sundays, is there any reason I shouldn’t bring a change or two of clothes and stay the night again? On purpose this time.”

Seth thought of all the shenanigans they could get up to with an entire free day at their disposal.

“Please do, Sir,” he breathed.

Malachi nodded before walking out the door. “See you tonight.”

The door closed behind him, and Seth threw his arms in the air and let out a “whoop” of joy. To his embarrassment, Malachi opened the door in the middle of it. Seth froze on “who...” and Malachi grinned.

“Lock the door,” he commanded.

“Yes, Sir,” Seth squeaked, arms frozen in the air. Malachi smiled and closed the door again. Seth ran over and locked it behind him. He placed both palms over his eyes in chagrin but it didn’t stop his feet from dancing for joy.

Chapter Eight

Seth texted at nine, after he woke from his nap.

Should I cook?

Malachi replied at nine thirty.

There are plenty of leftovers.

Seth looked in the fridge. He didn't think there were plenty of leftovers. Maybe he should cook, or at least have some ingredients on hand in case he needed to cook.

Seth texted at ten from the grocery store.

Do you like chocolate?

Malachi replied at ten thirty. Seth sighed, disappointed he didn't get more chocolate.

Love it.

He texted back.

How about petits-fours?

Malachi replied an hour later.

I don't know what that is, but if it's vegetarian, I will eat it. I am going to be taking a nap from noon to two, I will have my phone off.

Napping on the job?

Seth teased.

Malachi texted back immediately.

Advantage of being the boss. I set the rules.

Seth put the groceries away and set about cleaning his apartment. Since the place was already clean it took him all of an hour. Seth looked at his watch to find it was only one in the afternoon. Malachi wouldn't be over for at least six hours.

Normally, Saturday was spent hanging out with Tasha and company, but Seth had warned her not to come over this morning in hopes Malachi would sleep over. Maybe she hadn't made other plans yet.

"Did he just leave?" Tasha answered the phone, her voice ringing with excitement.

"No, he left a while ago."

"And you're just *now* calling me?" Tasha shrieked.

"He left at like four thirty in the morning."

"Oh," she said, apparently appeased. "Oh! A late night or an early morning?"

"Early morning," Seth replied smiling. "Definitely early morning. Hey, are you doing anything?"

"Not really," Tasha sounded bored.

"Wanna hit the gym? We can gossip on the treadmill." Seth asked, fingers crossed.

"Meet you in twenty!" Tasha replied. "Never mind, make it fifteen!"

Twenty minutes later, Seth strolled in to the crowded gym to find his sister already on the treadmill. When he greeted her, she smiled and pulled off the "out-of-order" sign on the treadmill next to her. Seth ignored the angry glances of his gym mates as he jumped up and started the machine. Tasha handed him a cup of Starbucks.

"Next time give me a chance to mess around with it and pretend I fixed it at least!" Seth whispered loudly.

"Last time we did that, management busted us, dumb ass!" Tasha hissed back. "Besides..." Tasha pointed emphatically and not too discretely at the two young men on the stair machine in front of him. *God, I love my sister.* Seth thought.

"I see." Seth said aloud.

"So... Give me dish sweetheart!" Tasha entreated. Seth did, to the best of his ability. To the amusement and embarrassment of everyone around him, Tasha kept insisting on the gory details and wouldn't rest until she got a blow by blow account. To Seth's horror, someone behind him shouted, "Speak up! We can't hear you."

Seth turned around to see two crazily dressed women in their forties, walking on the treadmills behind them. The taller one, who had a shaved head, had a hand cocked around her ear to emphasize she couldn't hear. The shorter

one next to her, who had salt and pepper dreads swooped up in a knot on top of her head, had one hand covering her eyes in embarrassment at her friend's behavior. Seth started to say something rude when he noticed the two women were holding hands as they exercised together. Instead he smiled and directed the rest of his story in their direction as well. To his continued amusement, he noticed the taller lady kept repeating the story to the shorter one; the shorter one smiling and nodding the whole while. A young blond personal trainer appeared behind them and tapped the tall one on the shoulder. Off they went still smiling and holding hands on to the gym floor.

Seth finished his tale soon after.

A seventyish man got off the exercise bicycle next to his sister's treadmill and sashayed right up to Seth's. "I know I'm being rude, sweetie, but hang on to him! He sounds hot!" Turning, he addressed the young men who had captured his sister's attention. "Good-bye boys, thanks for the show!"

They both turned. "Good-bye Mr. Brenner." They chimed in unison and waved as he walked off. Seth was chagrined to realize they were barely out of high school. It made him feel like a pervert. Then he did the math and realized the age difference between Malachi and himself was not much better. *Something to remember*, he thought.

"Oh my God!" Seth tittered as Tasha snickered behind her hand.

"You know, I think Mr. Brenner has it right," she said.

"Don't I know it?" Seth asked.

"So what's the plan? Are you seeing him again?"

Seth grinned at her and raised his eyebrows. "Tonight!" he squealed.

"You dog! I hate you!" Tasha raised a clarifying finger. "No, I love you. I just hate that my sex supplier is half a world away with an unknown ETA."

"How do you think your husband would feel if he knew you were referring to him as your sex supplier? You may as well have been calling him a whore."

"No," Tasha shook her head. "I only call him that in bed."

"You're a pervert!" Seth punched her in the arm.

"After what I know you plan on letting that man do to you, you have some nerve calling me a pervert."

"Yeah, well they say it takes one to know one," Seth replied with a grin.

"Come on, let's burn some calories." Tasha sped up her treadmill to a running pace. Seth did the same. The next twenty minutes were spent by the siblings trying to one up each other on the speed setting.

Both were nearly hyperventilating when twenty minutes passed and they turned it down to a fast walk pace. When breath allowed, Tasha asked, "When are you going to let me meet him?"

"Right after we get married." Seth replied.

"I'm serious!"

"I am too!" Seth said. "He likes girls too. He might decide he likes the girl version of me far better than the boy version. Easier to take into public too."

"I am not the girl version of you! We are nothing alike!"

"We look *a lot* alike."

"We act *nothing* alike," Tasha countered. "Didn't you say he likes submissive people?" When Seth nodded, Tasha continued. "Then you can be sure he will *not* be attracted to me. Besides, if the boy is fickle, you need to ditch him at the soonest possible opportunity."

"I'm not saying he's fickle, I just want a little more time to convince him he can't live without me before I risk it."

"Okay, little brother, I'll leave you two alone for now. But soon enough I need to meet this guy to see if he's worth all of the effort you are putting into him."

"He is definitely worth it," Seth replied.

"I'll take your word for now," she said. "Now let's hit the shower, go get those kids of mine, and head to the movie. We have time to get some Maggie Moo's first if we hurry!"

Chapter Nine

Six Months Later

Seth felt the drool he was unable to control seep down his chin. He knelt there on the cream-colored Berber, firmly secured by hemp rope intricately tied about his person.

Malachi had recently decided he wanted to learn Shibari ties that “emphasized the beauty of the male physique”. Malachi was an amateur practitioner of the Japanese art form, but only had experience with female rope bottoms. As a result, Seth had spent a good bit of their shared time these past few months with hemp rope tied and retied about him while Malachi flipped through books on rope bondage spread all over the floor. It was surprising how many books on rope bondage there were.

The line between “play session” and “practice session” was never clear. Some sessions were lighthearted. Malachi would laugh as he contorted Seth’s body into different positions and Seth would giggle like he had in junior high. These were usually just practice sessions. Malachi would experiment with one tie or another until he was done. And that would be it.

Sometimes, during these sessions, the look in Malachi’s eyes would change and his smile would turn just a little sinister. The books would be pushed out of the way and Seth would be treated to some of Malachi’s not so tender mercies.

Sometimes Malachi would begin the session with a dangerous and sexy look in his eye. The only giggling on those nights came from Seth and it was all the nervous type.

The open-mouthed gag Malachi had secured to his head wasn’t uncomfortable exactly, but it did cause him to salivate nonstop. Seth was always disturbed by this.

It was usually very easy for Seth to give up control when he was in Malachi’s hands. Each request, each command, each instruction felt like just another opportunity to prove himself to Malachi. Every one gave Seth the opportunity to prove his happiness, his acceptance, and even his love.

And Seth was totally in love with Malachi.

And Malachi was totally in love with this gag.

Seth realized what he found most disturbing about the gag, was not how it fit. It was the uncontrollable drool. He worried about the unattractiveness of it. Seth, while not vain, was very conscientious of his appearance around Malachi. How sexy could he be with drool running down his face?

"You look absolutely beautiful," Malachi's voice came from overhead. Seth wanted to look up, to see Malachi's face, to see if the expression matched his wondrous tone. Seth knew better. He kept his eyes obediently lowered to the floor. Without being consciously aware of it, he pushed out his chest and arched his back just a bit more, proudly displaying those parts of his body Malachi seemed to love putting his hands on most. It didn't escape Seth's notice that most of the bondage ties Malachi put him in prominently displayed his ass. Malachi seemed almost obsessed with Seth's ass. Seth didn't mind in the least.

Malachi ran a finger around Seth's lips wrapped around the gag. This had the embarrassing side effect of making Seth drool even more. "Oh God," Malachi whispered and disappeared.

When he returned, Seth glanced up to see he was holding a glass of orange juice. Malachi knelt in front of him before dipping his finger in the glass and sliding it into Seth's held open mouth. The shock of sour hit Seth's tongue and his saliva production tripled. Seth felt the pool of it welling in his mouth and briefly, very briefly, was nearly overcome with the desire to try to swallow it, to prevent it from running down his chin. He restrained himself and, knowing it was what Malachi wanted, gently coaxed the pool over his lip with his tongue.

He was rewarded by Malachi's moan. Malachi touched the side of Seth's face with an open hand, his thumb caressing Seth's eyebrow with an unusually gentle touch. Seth risked raising his gaze to meet Malachi's. He was surprised to find Malachi was panting through barely parted lips, his hazel eyes bright and searching. He was gazing at Seth with the most intimate and tender expression Seth had ever seen. Gazes locked, Malachi slid his juice-soaked finger again into Seth's mouth and allowed the drip to fall, perfectly placed on his exposed tongue.

Lost in the depths of Malachi's eyes, Seth forgot to be self-conscious. Now he willed the saliva to flow, pleased something so simple, so easy brought about an expression on Malachi's face Seth would gladly climb a mountain to get. When Seth's tears began, Malachi added a tender smile.

"That's my boy," he whispered hands combing through Seth's hair. "That's my beautiful boy." Malachi's hands slid down Seth's shoulders to rub his arms

as they lay bound behind his back. "I think this is my favorite tie." Malachi's gaze swept over Seth's body. His fingers traveled along Seth's chest, stopping to torment his proudly displayed nipples and to tickle across his ribs. Malachi slid his hands along the outsides of Seth's bound and spread thighs pausing to slide his fingers under the bands of rope. Cresting the knees, he looked up to meet Seth's eyes. "Eyes down Seth."

Seth resisted the urge to say, "Yes, Sir" as he complied. Experience had taught him trying to speak with the open-mouthed gag only resulted in garbled nonsense.

Now Seth had an unblocked view of Malachi's hands as they traveled a long slow path up the insides of his thighs, his normally rough fingers touching so delicately it almost tickled.

At the apex of his thighs, Malachi wrapped both hands around Seth's painfully throbbing cock. The unexpectedly firm caress pulled the orgasm from Seth without warning. The fiery tide rolled through him, pushing him forward and nearly tipping his immobilized body over. The brace of Malachi's shoulder stopped him from falling.

Malachi wrapped one arm around Seth's shoulders, holding him against Malachi's bare chest as the orgasm ripped through him. With the other, he continued to stroke Seth's cock, milking him and dragging the climax out as long as possible.

When Seth's vision cleared, he was looking up into Malachi's devilishly smiling eyes. Seth groaned in frustration.

"Oh, yes, my lover, you might regret that." Seth let his head drop onto Malachi's shoulder and groaned again. But he really didn't regret it.

They played this game often enough for Seth to be very familiar with the rules. Nothing stopped because Seth climaxed. If his post-coital sensitivity made some sensations harder to tolerate, then so be it. He suffered through anyway.

This pleased Malachi endlessly. He put a great deal of effort into trying to make Seth climax early and Seth did his best to resist, to hold on as long as possible. The painful pleasure of having his prostrate pounded after an orgasm was so overwhelming it drove Seth nearly out of his mind.

But Seth still didn't regret it, for many reasons.

For one, Malachi would be so excited by Seth's discomfort the pounding wouldn't last very long. Knowing Malachi was that turned on by him, for *whatever* reason, was satisfying in itself. For another, Seth actually liked doing things that were difficult. The more Malachi asked of him, the harder something was to do, or to tolerate, the more joy Seth felt at doing it. He supposed it was pride, but it was accompanied by such a rush of *gratitude*.

These things were both true, but the biggest reason Seth wouldn't regret his early orgasm was because it hadn't been Malachi's touch that had been his undoing. It had been the almost reverent expression on Malachi's face. And for that look, Seth was willing to deal with any consequence.

"You may get a reprieve tonight," Malachi breathed, the same treasured expression crossing his face again. "I think I need to bury myself in your throat tonight."

Seth shivered and closed his eyes. Malachi stood and Seth glanced up again, his eyes riveted to the slow tease of Malachi unzipping his faded blue jeans.

Patiently Seth awaited his prize, feeling more rewarded than punished. He wished Malachi would take the gag off of him and let him do the work, but he knew it wasn't what his lover wanted. He relaxed his throat as much as he could and waited.

Holding his dick in one hand, Malachi rubbed it along Seth's chin. Caressing himself in front of Seth's eyes, he was almost shiny with Seth's saliva. He rubbed the tip around the ring of Seth's lips before slipping it inside of the gag and pushing it into Seth's throat. He threaded both hands through Seth's hair and grabbed the back of his head for leverage.

Seth swallowed him down on the first stroke. He'd had much practice over the past six months. It was easy now to follow Malachi's rhythm, to time his breaths around him. He hadn't passed out since the first time. Malachi was more careful with him for a while after that and had insisted Seth learn better breath control.

Now Seth knew just how to breathe and just how to swallow when the head was pushing past his esophagus. He knew how to vibrate his voice box with a hum when his lover was buried as deeply as he could be. And he knew, even if his hands weren't bound, not to wipe the drool or tears from his face.

Seth looked up to see Malachi watching his dick slide in and out of Seth's mouth. Their eyes met and the same beautiful expression shone in Malachi's

eyes. "Oh... my... Seth!" he whispered. Then, still staring into Seth's eyes, he came, so deeply buried Seth didn't need to swallow.

He held himself there for a moment, before pulling out and dropping to his knees in front of Seth. A quick release of a buckle and Seth's mouth was free of the previously dreaded gag. Now Seth thought, it might just be his favorite. As he stretched out his jaw, Malachi cleaned his face with a damp cloth. Taking Seth's face in his hands, Malachi gazed into his eyes again.

Malachi kissed him.

Gently, tenderly Malachi ate at Seth's mouth, his tongue slipping inside to caress Seth's. When he pulled back to look at Seth, his eyes still gleamed with fervent adoration.

Yup! Thought Seth. *Definitely my new favorite gag.*

"Are you okay?" Malachi asked. Seth cleared his throat.

"Yes, Sir." It wasn't even a little bit scratchy. Seth was becoming quite the pro.

Malachi was unusually quiet as he released Seth from the ropes. He looked more at what he was doing than at Seth himself. Seth let him be. Seth had learned Malachi sometimes needed to stew before he would be ready to say what was on his mind.

Malachi rubbed his hands over every one of Seth's rope marks, massaging the blood back in to the pinched flesh. As he worked, he pulled Seth off of his knees to sit on the floor. Malachi sat behind him with a bottle of lotion and began rubbing Seth's shoulders. Seth curled them forward as Malachi worked. Being bound with his arms behind his back had left his shoulders cramped and achy. Seth relaxed and leaned against his lover's kneading hands.

"Seth," Malachi began. "When we began this, you agreed you would let me know whenever you played with anyone else."

"Mmmmm..." Seth agreed.

"You haven't, though," Malachi said.

"No," Seth answered dreamily. "I haven't."

"You haven't played with anyone else? Or you haven't told me?" Malachi asked. Seth stiffened.

Oh, shit! Seth panicked. *What should I say?* Seth's mind raced. If he was only having fun, he should have been dating other people. Was Malachi going

to call him out? Was Malachi going to tell him he's too attached? *Oh, well. There's no hope for it if he is. I swore it would be the only lie I told him.*

"I haven't played with other people since we met."

"What about sex? Have you had sex with other people?" Seth shook his head. Malachi continued the massage, bringing his hands up to work the back of Seth's neck. Seth tried to relax, but his nerves had him strung tight.

"Me, neither," Malachi breathed. Leaning forward he kissed Seth on the spine. Seth felt the tension flow from him and a warm glow take its place. He had tried not to think about whether or not Malachi had other lovers. He was always at Seth's place every weekend so Seth had just assumed (hoped) he didn't. He never dreamed of broaching the subject, so hearing Malachi had been faithful to him for the past six months was an unexpected gift.

"Do you have any prospects on the horizon?" Malachi continued. "Any plans to take on another lover?"

"No," Seth chuckled. "I have all the lovers I can handle right now." Malachi laughed and pulled Seth back against him.

"I've been thinking. We have been intimate with only each other for six months now, and I have never been fluid bonded with anyone." Malachi turned Seth's head to see his face clearly. "I think we should do it."

"Do what?" Seth asked, confused.

"Let's get tested! When we get our results, we can ditch the condoms." Seth blinked at him a few moments. Was Malachi offering him a commitment? For a moment, it was difficult for Seth to breathe. "Listen," Malachi continued. "I'm not proposing! If either one of us wants to take on another lover later, it's a simple matter. We just go back to safe sex. But in the meantime, we can enjoy each other without a barrier. I've never had that before and I would love to know what all the fuss is about."

Seth felt his chest deflate. Not proposing indeed! Malachi wasn't offering a commitment at all! Seth fumed quietly for a minute before the significance of Malachi's idea registered. Malachi was offering to be monogamous with him officially and to let him know if that condition was going to change. It was certainly more of a commitment than he had now. He would be a fool to say no.

Seth smiled at Malachi. "You're right. We *should* do it." Malachi grinned ear to ear and squeezed Seth in his arms.

"Thank you," Malachi said. "Is there anything about our relationship you would like to change? Ask me now! I'm feeling generous anticipating my first bareback sex." Seth was pleasantly stunned. Malachi was thanking *him* for agreeing to be monogamous, had used the phrase "our relationship" without breaking out in hives, and had pointed out that he got to be a first for Malachi for a change! Seth sputtered for a moment.

"Um... well..." he stammered.

"Um, well, Sir," Malachi corrected, still grinning.

"*Sir*, I was wondering if you were ever going to use the single tail on me." The grin fell from Malachi's face.

"I'm not saying you have to—"

"The problem with the single tail is logistics," Malachi interrupted. "Your apartment doesn't have enough clearing to swing it, and I don't want your first experience with it to be at the club."

"What about your place?" Seth asked.

"My place?" Malachi chuckled. "Yeah, my place has enough clearing. It's just a disaster."

"I don't mind a mess. I could even do some cleaning for you. If you'll let me."

"Mess is an understatement. I bought the house as a fixer-upper. It was more than a mess when I moved in. Add the few improvements I have started and not finished and you have a house that's just this side of condemnable." Malachi cocked his head. "Actually if the right authority got inside the front door it might be condemnable."

"Sir, I would love to see where you live."

Malachi laughed outright. "You won't be using the word love when you see it but that's okay. We can go in the morning."

Chapter Ten

Seth tried not to let his dismay register as he took in the grey peeling paint on the exterior of the craftsman style home in front of him.

“Home sweet home!” Malachi teased, taking him by the elbow and leading him up to the front door.

“Is that you Malachi?” A shrill female voice called out from the porch next door. The neighbor’s house was a near twin of Malachi’s, but the paint on her exterior was a soft yellow, bright and clean, obviously newly painted. It made the non-descript, who knows what color it was originally, gray of Malachi’s home all the dingier.

“Hi, Mrs. Oates,” Malachi raised the hand not dragging Seth forward in a wave. “How’re you?”

“Oh! Malachi!” A bent female frame stood up and waddled over to the railing. “Is he the young man you were telling me about?” Mrs. Oates patted her pockets in search of her glasses. “Let me get a look at him!”

“Not right now, Ma’am,” Malachi laughed. “I’ve got to give him the grand tour.”

“Grand tour!” Mrs. Oates snorted, finally locating her glasses on the top of her head. “Poor thing, watch where you step!” Mrs. Oates padded back over to her rocker. “Grand tour! Did you hear that Sparkles? Mr. Malachi made a funny!” Her voice took on the ridiculous tone people generally reserved for young babies and treasured pets. “Oh does Sparkles want his tummy rubbed?”

Seth was saved from the discovery of Sparkles’ opinion on the matter by a firm tug on his elbow. Malachi led him up the dilapidated porch steps and unlocked the door. Seth’s nose was instantly assaulted by the unlikely combination of fresh paint and mildew.

They walked inside to find a large, if totally unfurnished living room. Seth supposed one could count the mad pile of paint cans and supplies in one corner as furnishings, but he didn’t think they were intended to be. He did notice the drips drying on the outside of the cans were the exact same color as the exterior paint on Mrs. Oates house. He raised an eyebrow at Malachi who simply shrugged his shoulders in response.

"I'm getting rid of the carpet," Malachi said. Seth didn't let the sarcastic reply forming in his mind out of his lips. *Of course* he would be getting rid of the heinous green carpet, paint stains or not.

He followed Malachi into a large dining room that *was* furnished. A large, obviously picked up from the side of the road table dominated the space. It was accompanied by a single office chair that at least appeared to have been recently purchased. The table had worn, scuffed up ornately carved wooden legs. Seth couldn't tell what the top of the table looked like because it was covered in loose sheets of differently sized paper. A receipt spike filled past capacity lay on its side. Seth looked at Malachi with both eyebrows raised this time.

"That's my office for the business." Seth looked back and realized a laptop lay buried near the office chair. "Oh," he replied.

Malachi led him then to a kitchen that was good sized and clean, if seriously out of date. Malachi looked at Seth's face and laughed. "It's not that bad!"

Seth schooled his features into a more relaxed, less horrified state and smiled, "No, Sir, it isn't."

Downstairs was another large room. Seth decided it would make an excellent den or library. Malachi was currently using it as a small engine repair shop. Blowers and weed whackers in various stages of assembly lay strewn about. Seth just smiled and nodded.

There was a half bath at the foot of the stairs. At least Malachi said it was. He kept the door closed.

Upstairs was not much better. The horrible green carpet continued up the stairs and throughout the house. Malachi showed him two bedrooms furnished only with boxes, and a full bath as dated as the kitchen. Malachi paused in the hallway with his hand on the knob of the only door Seth had yet to enter.

"This is the best and worst room in the house," he said and dramatically opened the door.

Seth was completely surprised by a monstrous wrought iron and oak canopy bed. It was beautiful! He walked into the room almost in a daze. He ran one hand along the smooth wooden frame before he realized the room was much bigger than it should be. He turned and discovered Malachi had attempted to remove a wall and turn two rooms into one big one. Attempted as in started, but hadn't finished.

"Oh, my," he said, staring at the crumbling plaster. It looked like the Kool-Aid Man had just been there, complete with debris on the floor.

"I wanted to make this room big enough to use the whip in," Malachi explained. "After I got started, someone asked me if it was a load-bearing wall and I realized I had no idea, so I stopped. I wasn't sure if I should fix it, finish tearing it down, or just pretty it up." Malachi crossed his arms. "I don't exactly have a lot of time for home improvement."

Seth said nothing. He looked at Malachi, then back at the wall, then back at Malachi.

"It's not that bad..." he began. He looked at the wall again. "It's..." Laughter finally overtook him and he slapped his hand over his mouth. Malachi glared at him. This only made Seth laugh harder, tears rolling out of his eyes.

Malachi chuckled. "I guess it's pretty bad," he agreed. This made Seth snort and collapse to his knees. "That's completely unnecessary!" Malachi exclaimed.

"I beg to differ!" Seth said.

Malachi joined him on the floor.

"Now you see why I never want to hang out at my place."

"Yes, I can see why," Seth agreed, getting his giggles under control. "It's a great house though, despite all this." He gestured vaguely with his hand. "These craftsman homes look fabulous when they're fixed up."

"Yeah," Malachi agreed, "but the fixing up part turned out to be more time consuming than I planned."

Seth sat there for a few minutes, calming himself. "Malachi, let me help you."

"What do you mean?" Malachi ran a hand along the back of Seth's shoulders, an absentminded and tender touch.

"You know I work for the family construction company. Did I tell you I am the accountant?"

Malachi shook his head, "I'm not surprised. You're very smart."

Seth smiled at the compliment. "One thing I would like to do is organize your 'filing system'. Your table gives me the professional heebie-jeebies!"

Malachi chuckled. Raising a hand in surrender, he smiled, "Gladly! Knock yourself out."

Seth grinned. "Okay." He leaned against Malachi's rubbing hand.

"And the other thing?"

"Let me... redecorate for you."

Malachi snorted. "You mean, let you fix the mess I made with this house?" Seth nodded yes and Malachi turned silent. Seth simply bided his time and let Malachi stew.

"Okay," Malachi finally said, "but under one condition. I pay all the expenses, any materials and any hired labor."

"What about design decisions and color choices?!"

"Nah," Malachi reached into his pants and pulled out his keys. Removing a key from the ring he continued. "I come home every day for a nap from noon till two, sometimes three." Seth nodded, well familiar by now with Malachi's daily naps. "If you want to be here making noise while I am napping, let me know and I will find somewhere else to sleep. I work every evening till sometimes eight or nine o'clock, depending on the day." Seth's eyes widened. He knew Malachi worked long hours, he just hadn't realized *how* long until now. "I would like to keep that bed," Malachi pointed at the bed with the key he had just freed between his fingers, "I prefer darker colors, and I hate yellow." He offered the key to Seth. "Otherwise, use your own judgment."

Seth looked down at the key in front of him, and then back up at Malachi's face. Malachi swallowed nervously and pushed the key at him again. Seth reached up and gently took it from his fingers.

"Yes, Sir," Seth's voice cracked on "Sir."

The doorbell rang, breaking the tension of the moment. Seth winced. It was a pathetic sounding thing. "Feel free to replace the bell, too," Malachi smiled and kissed him delicately on the lips. "And that noise means Mrs. Oates has been as patient as she possibly can and now simply must satisfy her curiosity about you. But she will provide us lunch in the process so it's kind of a win."

"Oh? Is she a good cook?" Seth asked as Malachi helped him to his feet.

"Traditional old southern lady like her? Hell, yes!" Malachi pulled him into an embrace, holding Seth tightly against his chest and trapping his eyes in an intense stare. "Make sure you get this room done first, Seth. I want to watch you dance."

"Yes, Sir," Seth whispered.

Chapter Eleven

Seth banged the door to the trailer office closed behind him. Perhaps he should have made two trips. The papers piled on Malachi's dining table took three document boxes to contain them and Seth was attempting to carry them all at once. Tasha hung up the phone and jumped up to help with the load.

"What the heck is all this? And you're late. What gives?"

"I called and left a message letting you know I was running late."

"And... So... That means nothing to me. You didn't say why you were late."

"You're not my boss, Tasha."

"Duh! I just want the skinny! Were you playing hide the salami with Malachi?"

"Freak."

"Prude!"

"If you only knew, Tasha!"

"Well freaking tell me!" Tasha sat the box down on Seth's desk. "And what is all this. Wait, is that a bandage on your arm?"

"Yes, it is. And I will tell all, just let me get settled and get some coffee."

"You get settled. I'll get you the coffee."

"Thanks, Sis." Seth smiled as he situated the boxes around him. A quick check of his agenda for the day revealed he had nothing more important than payroll and some billing to deal with today. He was just booting up his computer when Tasha returned with the coffee.

"Where's my darling nephew?" Seth asked, just now realizing Geordi wasn't camped in front of the TV.

"He was up with a stomach bug most of the night, so he is sacked out asleep on the couch in Dad's office."

"Poor thing! Is he okay?"

"I think so. I'm going to wake him up in a little while and see if I can get some Pedialyte in him." Tasha rolled her office chair over to Seth's desk and sat down. "Now quit avoiding my questions and spill!"

“Okay, Okay.” Seth looked over at her nervously. “Malachi and I got tested this morning.”

Tasha's face went stark white. She placed one hand on her stomach and then the other on Seth's hand where it rested on the desk. “Oh God, little brother. Are you okay?”

Seth blinked at her for almost a full minute until he realized what she must be thinking. “Holy cow, no! Tasha, I'm fine! We just got tested, I don't have AIDS!”

Tasha stared at him with pinched lips as her color slowly returned. To Seth's surprise, she reached up and slapped him upside the head. “The way you said it, of course I would think it's a big deal! Bastard! I love you. Don't fuck with me like that!”

“It is a big deal, Tosh! We got tested, not because Malachi thinks there's any real risk we have HIV, but because he wants to, you know... stop using condoms.”

A big, slow smile broke across Tasha's face. “Now that is a big deal little brother! Hang on.” Tasha picked up his desk phone and dialed a number. “Seth's going steady,” she said with a sing-song before hanging up.

“Who's that?” Seth asked.

The front door of the trailer burst open and his father strode into the office. “Really? You're going steady?”

“Sort of...” Seth said and then slowly explained the entire weekend, leaving out the kinky sex bits.

“Seth, that man's seriously into you.” Tasha tapped her fingers on his desk and sighed.

“You think so?”

“Let's see. In one weekend he suggested monogamy, gave you his key and told you to use it however you want, gave you carte blanche on decorating his house and handed over his financial records?” Tasha gave him a grin. “You'd better start shopping for a wedding dress.”

“Jerk!” Seth thumped the hand Tasha was resting on his desk.

“I have to say, son. I think your sister's right. Those are some pretty heavy duty levels of trust he's showing you.” Patrick rubbed his hands together. “Let's see what we can do to help?”

“What?” Seth looked completely bewildered.

“This project’s doing well and right on schedule. The foremen are starting to get aggravated with me poking my nose around anyway. I wanna have some fun and get my hands dirty! Take me to this boy’s house and let me see what I can do.”

“Ooo! I’m coming too.” Tasha darted down the hallway to grab Geordi before Seth could object.

Seth looked at his father. The man was practically bouncing with excitement. This was a colossally bad idea. He looked at his watch. If they left quickly, he would have just enough time to get them in and out of the house before Malachi came home for his afternoon siesta.

Seth looked at his watch again. It was eleven thirty and he had almost managed to get his family back out of the house. Of course, Geordi had to go to the bathroom just as they were about to exit the front door. Poor kid had been on the toilet now for about fifteen minutes. Seth looked at his watch again and slapped his forehead.

“What time is he due home?” Patrick asked. Before Seth could answer, he heard the door creak open behind him. He turned to see Malachi standing in the front doorway.

Seth was dumbfounded. He stared at Malachi, his eyes wide open, his eyebrows trying to climb into his hairline and his mouth opening and closing like a fish gasping for water. Malachi looked at Seth, looked at Patrick, and then looked back at Seth. Patrick just stood there, smiling.

“Seth,” Malachi finally broke the silence. “Why is Dick Van Dyke in my living room?”

Seth looked at his father and broke out into hysterical laughter. Just then, he heard his sister coming up behind him talking to Geordi. “Poor baby! No more French onion dip for you!”

Another crazy burst of laughter slipped from Seth’s lips and he slapped both hands over his mouth to contain it. Patrick looked at his son, and then stepped forward, proffering his hand. “Hi, you must be Malachi. I’m Patrick Barnum, Seth’s father.” More muffled laughter came from Seth’s direction. “This is his

twin sister, Tasha, and his nephew Geordi.” Malachi took Patrick’s hand and shook it firmly.

“Nice to meet you, Sir,” Malachi said. “Sorry for the dirty hands, I came here straight from the job.”

“Oh I don’t mind dirty hands, son. In fact, it’s why I pressured Seth into letting me come take a look at the place. I just love home improvement projects. For a while, we ran the occasional remodel job on the side, just to keep me happy.” Patrick shrugged his shoulders. “The problem with remodeling is nobody likes it when I have to put their house on hold to focus on a bigger job.” Patrick chuckled. “You’re not the first person to say I look like Dick Van Dyke. I’m just surprised you’re old enough to remember him.” Another outburst of nervous laughter escaped from Seth.

“I caught him on reruns. My mom was a big fan.” Malachi turned his attention to Tasha. “And you’re his sister? He never mentioned you were twins.” Seth dropped his hands and subtly slid in between Malachi and Tasha. Tasha pushed him out of the way and took Malachi’s hand.

“You’re just as good looking as my brother said you were,” Tasha said with a predatory smile.

Seth hissed and Malachi coughed into his fist. “You’re very kind ma’am. Who’s this fellow?”

“This is Geordi. He’s my youngest. I have a daughter just a few years older than him named Deanna.”

“Fans of Star trek?” Malachi asked, grinning at her.

“Their father is.” Tasha’s face dropped. “He’s in the army, overseas.” Malachi nodded at this.

Malachi reached a hand out to Seth who responded like a drowning man being flung a rope.

“I hope you don’t mind me getting involved, Malachi. This house has real potential and I would love to help make her shine,” Patrick smiled at Malachi. Seth recognized the distant look in his father’s eyes. His father was already seeing the house the way it *would* be.

Malachi slid his arm around Seth’s waist and pulled him close. He smiled gently at Seth, looking him in the eyes as he replied to his father. “I don’t mind at all.” He turned to Patrick. “It would be an honor to have someone with your

experience onboard.” Seth just about melted. Instead of being angry, Malachi was trying to charm his father. Seth felt tears spring to his eyes. He blinked them away before anyone else noticed.

“Well, we have to head back to the office. It’s a pleasure meeting you, Malachi. If you don’t mind, I’ll have some of the guys out to help me get this nasty carpet up. We’ll get started this afternoon.”

“I don’t mind, Mr. Barnum. Please bill me for your labor though.”

“Don’t you worry about it,” Patrick smiled. “We’ll call it a ‘testing day’ present and leave it at that.” Seth covered his face in horror and so missed the blush flood Malachi’s cheeks.

“Yes, Sir,” he said quietly, a small smile gracing his lips. “Thank you.”

Seth looked at Malachi with apologetic beseeching eyes. Malachi kissed him briefly on the lips and brought him in for a hug. “It’s fine,” he whispered. When Seth pulled back, Malachi’s eyes were bright with laughter. “Really,” he said. “It’s fine.”

Seth held him desperately close for a moment before leaving. He waved at Malachi standing in the doorway as he climbed into the back seat of his dad’s truck.

“That man’s way too scruffy for me, bro,” Tasha said.

“I like it,” Seth said quietly, watching out the window as they pulled away. Malachi stood in the door until they were out of sight.

The family drove on in silence for a while. “I think your sister’s right, Seth. I do believe that boy’s in love with you.” A hopeful flutter filled Seth’s chest before he took a deep breath and silenced it. Seth said nothing the entire ride back to work.

The rest of the week was spent sorting through Malachi’s receipts and invoices. Tasha helped. They went through the boxes, entering absolutely everything into an excel spreadsheet. By detective work and frequent text messages to Malachi, Seth had every paper identified and coded properly in the worksheet. Malachi was really surprised to find out one of his big commercial clients hadn’t paid him in eight months. “That clears up my Saturday afternoons,” he told Seth on the phone after hearing the news. The disappointment in his voice angered Seth. After Malachi hung up the phone,

Seth spent an hour creating a stationary for Dorin Landscapers just so he could type up a nasty letter. After reading it, he balled it up and pitched it in the can. Two more tries and he had a much more diplomatic letter stating “due to failure of payment, services would be temporarily suspended”. No sense burning Malachi’s bridges for him.

Seth also discovered Malachi was still paying for advertisements. Seth knew Malachi turned down new clients all the time. He made a note to himself to talk to Malachi about either discontinuing the advertisements or hiring help and putting another truck on the street.

Seth’s father was in hog heaven. He had been over to Malachi’s house every day that week. The nasty, multilayered disaster of carpet had been pulled the first day to reveal totally undamaged original hardwood floors underneath complete with an inlaid frame border. Their beauty was apparent even through the thick layer of grime. Patrick texted endlessly about sanding them down and seeing what they looked like with a high shine. He was already eyeballing the wooden beams crisscrossing the ceilings. They had been painted white at some point in the seventies. Patrick was using phrases like “stripped to their bare bones” and “refinished to their original glory”. Several of the foremen had popped into the office just to say how happy they were Patrick was having such a good time and could Seth keep him busy for the next decade or two.

It made Seth more than a little nervous. He worried Malachi would feel overwhelmed by his father’s enthusiasm and regret his decision. He worried Malachi might realize his father’s repeated use of the endearment “son” when talking to Malachi was a big fucking hint he thought their relationship was more permanent than it was. He worried Malachi might change his mind about the whole “fluid bonding” idea. He worried Malachi was pulling away.

They hadn’t had sex all week.

That was normal really. Usually, Seth only saw Malachi on the weekends. He came over Saturday night and stayed all day Sunday. Sometimes he would come over on Friday. He went home every Sunday night and Seth normally didn’t see him until the following Saturday. So it made sense they only had sex on the weekends. But with the mess his father was creating at his own place, Malachi had spent every night this week with Seth. This was especially distressing to Seth since they had both been tested on Monday morning and had waited in the office for the results. They had received a clean bill of health. Bare backing was a go!

But Malachi had done no more than cuddle him all week.

Seth pulled himself in check. Here he was complaining that *Malachi had cuddled with him every night this week!* He should be grateful for that. He *would* be grateful for that. He squared his shoulders and left work a little early. He wanted to stop by the Tub Connection and make sure *his* “testing day” gift would be delivered tomorrow.

Chapter Twelve

Seth stared at the claw footed tub monstrosity in front of him. It looked beautiful on the showroom floor. And it was still beautiful. The copper finish gleamed in the bright morning sun. It was just so big! The delivery guys couldn't even get it through the front door, let alone up the stairs! Patrick had sent a couple of the guys to the job site to get the crane. He thought it would be a cinch to pull out the triple window, frames and all, on the second floor and pass the tub through. It would get the tub right into the room it would finally reside in and it wasn't a bad idea. It just took more time. His chances of having the bedroom finished today were diminishing rapidly.

Seth looked at his watch. It was already ten o'clock. Since Malachi had lost a Saturday account, he planned to work through his nap and be done for the day around two this afternoon. He might get the tub installed before then. He most likely wouldn't get the windows replaced by then.

Seth was extremely pleased with his father's work. The wall Malachi had partially removed was not load bearing. His dad had ripped that down on Wednesday. Thursday, he'd had the plumbers out while he recreated the wood beam pattern on the ceiling downstairs across the entire bedroom. With a slight blush, Patrick had let him know the beams were attached "very securely" to joists in the ceiling and could hold a significant amount of weight. Seth had covered his eyes at that point. On Friday, his dad put up a partition wall to create a huge walk-in closet. "Plenty of room for two men," he said with a smile. Then his smile dropped. "Neither of you guys has a shoe thing do you? Cause this would not have been big enough for your mother."

It had been Tasha's idea to turn the tiny closet into a bathroom. Tasha, who at one point had studied interior design, had assaulted Seth with picture after picture of tiny toilets and corner sinks until he had finally relented. He left it up to her to make the final decisions. The room wouldn't match the rest of the house, of course. All the teeny toilets and sinks were of ultra-modern design. But nothing could be done about that. Seth suspected his sister would decorate it in a beach theme anyway. They would simply keep that door closed.

Seth had decided if they were going to be replumbing the house, he wanted a claw foot tub, right there in the master bedroom. The plumber had looked at him like he was nuts, but Seth was okay with that. Maybe he was.

Seth's head jerked up when he heard a shrill scream come from the house. A heart beat later, Tasha ran out of the front door carrying Geordi. Deanna ran shrieking behind her. Two heartbeats later and out runs his dad and the other workers. They looked panicked for second before breaking out in hysterical laughter.

It was right then when Malachi pulled up.

Everyone was still laughing when he walked up. "What's up?" he asked, glancing repeatedly at the tub sitting in the middle of his front yard. The cackling began again.

Seth looked at him and shrugged his shoulders. Malachi glanced at the tub and then back at Seth, raising both eyebrows. Seth shrugged again a little more sheepishly and looked at the ground. Malachi turned his attention back to the giggling crowd. "So, what's the deal?"

It was Deanna who answered, with a finger pointed at his open door she piped, "Mister, you've got a skunk in your house."

Malachi swore and walked inside. Seth could hear him in the kitchen, opening and closing drawers. "There you are!" They all stared in wonder as Malachi strode out carrying the largest skunk Seth had ever seen dangling in front of him. A rhinestone collar twinkled on his neck.

Malachi walked over to the neighbor's porch and called out, "Mrs. Oates?" Realizing his hands were full, Seth ran over and knocked on the door. Mrs. Oates emerged just a moment later.

"Sparkles!" she exclaimed. "Did you go wandering *again*? Bad girl!"

"She was in my silverware drawer." Malachi explained.

"Oh my!" Mrs. Oates chuckled. "Hello again, Seth. Are you guys having a party? Oh! Are those children? Sparkles loves kids." She took the skunk from Malachi's hands. Seth was impressed the little lady was able to carry the obviously obese creature. "But I bet she has had enough adventure for today. How about I put her in her crate and bring over some cake? I just made a hummingbird cake this morning."

Malachi grinned. "You know I love your hummingbird cake, Mrs. Oates."

"Seth," Mrs. Oates said. "Go in my garage and pull out the kiddie pool. You can set it up in your front yard. I bet the kids would love it. Ooo! Get the large umbrella too and my lawn chair. Oh and there is a little table I can use to set up

on, fetch that too would you.” Seth looked to Malachi for direction. Malachi just closed his eyes and subtly nodded yes. “Malachi, you follow me in here and get the cake while I whip up a pitcher of tea. I think I have some paper cups... Oh, maybe some Kool-Aid for the kids.” Mrs. Oates wandered back into the house, cradling the skunk. Malachi leaned over and gave Seth a quick peck on the lips. In his best imitation of Mrs. Oates accent he admonished Seth, “Now hurry up! We can’t have them poor kiddies overheating!” Seth chuckled and went to do Mrs. Oates bidding.

In short order, they had Mrs. Oates set up in the front yard. Surrounded by several folding tables, a lawn chair, a large pitcher of tea, a larger pitcher of grape Kool-Aid, a huge shade umbrella, a cake on its platter, another platter of assorted homemade cookies and her feet soaking in a kiddie pool, she looked like an eccentric southern matriarch set up to receive court. The kids absolutely loved her. They splashed in the pool with her and ate far more of her cookies than their mom would approve of. When Sparkles made an appearance in the afternoon, on a harness and leash this time, the kids absolutely loved her. Evidently skunks are very playful and loving if you raise them right. Mrs. Oates looked happier than a pig in mud, although she did look quite nervous when the crane reached over her to lift the tub into the house.

Malachi didn’t go back to work. He had pushed two of his accounts off until Sunday, telling Seth it just didn’t feel right not to be there when everyone else was. He dug right in and helped as much as he could. Seth was amused to find the man could not hammer a nail to save his life. He successfully managed to keep his amusement from Malachi. Around lunch time, Patrick’s girlfriend showed up with boxes and boxes of food from Sonny’s barbeque. Seth was initially excited until he realized he couldn’t eat any of it with Malachi there. He tried not to give the pulled pork longing looks. Mrs. Oates disappeared in her house only to emerge later carrying a platter covered in little sandwiches. When his dad realized some of Mrs. Oates sandwiches were watercress, he abandoned the barbeque to sample them. Then he got into an intense discussion with Mrs. Oates, who insisted he call her by her given name Beatrice, over recipes and baking techniques.

Seth was shocked to realize his dad was flirting with Mrs. Oates. Feeling sympathetic shame, he did his best to avoid looking at his dad’s girlfriend who was standing right there.

“Do you realize your dad’s girlfriend is flirting with Mrs. Oates?” Malachi whispered in his ear. Seth gasped.

"Dad's flirting with Mrs. Oates!" Seth and Malachi watched the drama of their elders enfolding in front of them. When it became apparent they were *both* right, they erupted in laughter.

"Go Dad!" Malachi whispered. Seth's heart warmed to hear Malachi refer to his father as Dad. Then his thoughts took a more melancholy turn.

"Do you miss women?" he asked quietly, turning to look Malachi in the eyes.

Malachi nodded knowingly and put his sandwich down. "I've been expecting this."

"Expecting what?" Seth asked, surprised by Malachi's reply.

"You're going to ask me if I need to have a girlfriend. I'll say no, but you won't really believe me. You'll worry for months if I am going to start missing women and it will eat at you." Seth shook his head in denial, but in truth he already wondered. It already sometimes ate at him. "Eventually, you might even push for me to take on a girl, thinking if you pick out someone you trust then she would be willing to share me and not try to steal me from you."

Seth gasped. This was not where he wanted the conversation to go. "Malachi I—"

"Seth, listen," Malachi interrupted. "You will. Or worse, you will start thinking either I have found a girl on the side or I will find a girl on the side. No, listen," he cautioned when Seth tried to speak again. "I want to explain this to you now in a way that will make sense." Malachi took a deep breath. "Bodies don't matter to me. I mean, don't get me wrong. Bodies are nice. Cocks are nice. Pussies are nice. Breasts and chests are nice. But they're not important. *People* matter to me. The person matters to me. *You* matter to me. You turn me on because *you* turn me on. The rest is just window dressing."

Seth threaded his fingers through Malachi's. "I don't think I could share you."

"I don't think you could either," Malachi replied. "And I don't want you to try." Seth looked up to find Malachi looking intently at him. The air grew thin and Seth felt dizzy. Malachi's hazel eyes seemed to bore right through him.

"What about 'just having fun'?" Seth whispered, his mouth suddenly dry.

"I am having fun. Are you having fun, Seth?" Malachi replied, his voice hoarse with emotion. Seth nodded and Malachi kissed him, deeply and passionately, right there in front of everyone.

"Oh, my!" Mrs. Oates exclaimed.

"Get a room!" Tasha yelled. Malachi broke off the kiss with a smile.

"Weren't we working on that?" he asked with a grin. Everybody except Deanna laughed.

The rest of the day was spent sweating and struggling. With everyone's help, the bathtub was installed, bathroom finished, and bed was back in place by four thirty. Seth happily finished cleaning the handprints off the copper sides of the tub and draped a plush towel over the edge. He looked around the room. He still needed to refinish the floors and replace the baseboards. And he wanted to get some blackout curtains for Malachi's siestas. He thought a ventless fireplace might be a nice touch, but he still hadn't made up his mind. But, it was good enough for now. It was actually wonderful.

He went downstairs to see what everyone was up to. Before he finished descending, he heard Deanna's clear piping voice, "Mr. Malachi, are you going to marry Uncle Seth?" Seth quietly palmed his face. *Damn it!* He had worried about his sister giving Malachi a hard time. It never occurred to him her progeny was just as stubborn as she was.

"No, Deanna," Malachi's voice was amused and a little condescending. "Uncle Seth is too young to get married."

"He's the same age as our momma! And she's been married my whole life!"

"You know, you're right." Malachi's voice sounded surprised. He had lost the condescending edge.

"If you don't want to marry him then why did you kiss him?" Deanna persevered. She sounded indignant on Seth's behalf. "Don't you love him?"

Seth heard creaking and assumed Malachi was sitting down on the wood floor. "I never said I didn't want to marry him. And yes, I do love him." Seth stifled his gasp with his fingers.

"I mean love him like *love* him. Like *in love* with him. Not like I love my little brother. You know. I love him, but he's a pain." Malachi chuckled.

"I think all little brothers are pains. But to answer your question, yes. I am in love with him."

"Then why don't you want to marry him?" Her sweet piping voice continued.

"I would like nothing better," Malachi replied, "but Uncle Seth is not ready yet. As a matter of fact, he's not ready to know I am in love with him yet, so let's keep that our little secret." Seth felt tears running down his cheeks. He heard Malachi shifting and the boards creaking as he stood up. "How about we both give Uncle Seth a year or two to figure out how he feels and then we can talk about getting married. Okay? And let's go see what your mother is up to."

"Okay," Deanna seemed mollified. "Can I call you Uncle Mal?"

"If you like."

"Will you pick me up?"

"Okay..." Seth fought back hysterical laughter at the obvious reluctance in Malachi's voice. Seth smiled through the "heave-ho" of Malachi lifting Deanna up and her joyful shrieking giggle. As quietly as he could, Seth snuck back up stairs.

He didn't make it even half way when he heard the front door bang open.

"Seth! Deanna! Daddy!" his sister's voice broke into a sob on the last word. Seth ran down as fast as his feet would take him. Dashing into the living room, he found his sister hugging Deanna close to her, tears streaming down her face, her cell phone clutched in one hand. Deanna was crying as well, sobbing into her mother's neck.

Seth stumbled and Malachi reached out to grab his hand. Seth squeezed it in gratitude.

"Tasha?" Patrick asked. "What's going on?"

"He's coming home!" Tasha smiled through tears. "Alex is coming home!"

Chapter Thirteen

Seth leaned back into the comfort of Malachi's arms.

Tasha had wanted to celebrate, but she couldn't stop crying. Patrick had declared they would celebrate another day and had driven her and the kids home. Seth had cried probably as much as she had. He wasn't able to stop until after she had left.

"Does it bother you I cry so much?" he asked Malachi.

"Not in the least," Malachi smiled. "When you do it during sex it turns me on."

"Really," Seth pulled to the side to better see Malachi's face. "Why is that?"

"Because I'm a sick fuck?" Malachi replied.

"I'm serious!" Seth slapped him playfully on the arm.

"Yeah, me too," Malachi replied.

"Well, you're my sick fuck, so that's okay," Seth laughed and Malachi got quiet. Seth laid his head back against Malachi's shoulder. "Sir, can I show you what I would like to do with the tub." Malachi chuckled his agreement and let Seth lead him up stairs.

"You truly have done an amazing job," Malachi said, looking around the room. Seth started the water running, testing the temp to get it just right. When he was satisfied, he plugged the tub and poured in the sandalwood scented bubble bath he had ordered online. He lit the pillar candles surrounding the tub and turned off the overhead lights.

"I'm not finished yet," Seth replied. He walked over and slowly undressed Malachi. The familiar heat brightened Malachi's eyes. When he was completely naked, Seth tried to lead him to the tub. Malachi resisted, pulling Seth back to face him.

"You next," he whispered.

Seth smiled and ripped off his shirt. He kicked off his shoes and dropped his shorts to the ground. Malachi chuckled at his exuberance.

Seth took his hand again and this time Malachi allowed himself to be led. Malachi stepped into the tub and slid down into the soapy water, groaning as the warm water enveloped him.

Seth grinned and slid a footstool over. He snatched up a cloth and knelt on the stool near where Malachi's back rested against the lip of the tub. Reaching in, he glided the cloth over Malachi's chest, squeezing it to make the water run in rivulets across his skin. Dipping it again, he repeated the process near Malachi's neck.

He lathered the cloth with the bubble bath and using small, gentle, deliberate circles, he scrubbed every inch of Malachi's skin. He started at his shoulders and moved down his chest. When he reached Malachi's waist, he stopped and moved the footstool down to the foot of the tub. Taking Malachi's foot in hand, he massaged each toe with the cloth before scrubbing the rest of the foot and then up the leg. He repeated with the other foot.

When he reached Malachi's hips the second time, Malachi grabbed his wrist. "Touch me Seth," he commanded as he guided Seth's hand to his erection. Seth gladly complied. Abandoning the cloth to float in the water, Seth wrapped his hand around Malachi's cock.

Malachi's hand enveloped Seth's hand, and he directed each stroke. With his other, he pulled Seth in for a kiss. Seth leaned in, mouth slightly parted. Malachi devoured his mouth, his tongue surging inside at the first touch of lips. Seth moaned into his mouth, and then squealed when Malachi pulled him into the tub.

Water splashed onto the floor and a flying droplet smothered one of the candles. Malachi ignored it. Settling Seth between his thighs, he grabbed the floating cloth. Quieting Seth's protest with a finger to his lips, he treated Seth to the same meticulous washing. Or at least as meticulous as he could be without getting out of the tub.

"Tell me about your plans for the rest of the house," Malachi said.

"I thought you didn't care."

"I don't. I just want to hear you talk," Malachi replied.

And so Seth did. While Malachi massaged him with the cloth, he went on about island kitchens, and creating a library. Breathlessly, he talked about creating an English garden in the backyard. He was rubbing his face against Malachi's shoulder and rambling on about not being able to grow lavender in Florida when Malachi wrapped the cloth around Seth's now throbbing cock.

Malachi's hardness was firmly wedged in the cleft of Seth's ass. When he stroked Seth, he ground back against Malachi. Malachi took the lobe of Seth's

ear between his teeth and bit gently down. "Pull the plug," he whispered in Seth's ear.

As Seth reached down and pulled the chain, Malachi reached up and grabbed the hand-painted olive oil dispenser from the candlelight washed shelf. The water drained quickly and made a loud sucking noise as the last dregs disappeared.

Malachi held the bottle of oil over Seth's chest and poured a steady trickle all over him. The familiar scent of Malachi's favorite organic olive oil, the only lube he would use anymore, made Seth shudder with anticipation. Using the other hand to spread the oil about, Malachi coated his body. Then Malachi poured the oil between them.

Malachi set the bottle back on the shelf and set both hands to the task of spreading oil over every reachable inch of Seth's skin. Using both hands to massage his cock, Malachi reached between Seth's legs, his fingers coating Seth's balls and questing lower. Seth arched his hips forward. The oil between his back and Malachi's chest caused him to slide and one of Malachi's fingers slid unexpectedly inside.

"Oh God, Seth!" Malachi whispered. "I can't wait to feel you." Seth groaned and pushed himself farther down on Malachi's finger. "That's it," Malachi hissed. Grabbing Seth by the hips, he lifted Seth in the air to reach between him.

Seth had to wedge his feet against the end of the tub to not slide out. Malachi spread the oil on his chest down to his cock. Holding himself up with one hand, he used the other to guide Seth's hips back down again.

Seth moaned when he felt Malachi press against him. The strange position made it difficult to relax and let Malachi in. Malachi pulled down on his hip and Seth obediently pressed down. The copious amounts of olive oil accomplished what Seth could not. With a sudden pop, Malachi slipped past the ring of muscle to slide halfway in Seth's body.

Seth cried out with pain at the sudden intrusion. He heard Malachi echo his cry in his ear. The wave of pain passed quickly as Seth's body adjusted to the familiar feeling. His head cleared enough and the noises Malachi was making registered.

"Oh, God! Don't move! Don't move!" Malachi sounded in pain. Seth panicked and tried to get up. "Seth!" Malachi yelled, his tone commanding. "Don't. Move!"

Seth froze, impaled less than halfway down on Malachi's cock. Malachi was panting behind him, repeating "Oh, God!" over and over again, and occasionally crying out. "Seth stop moving!"

Seth realized his hands were slipping on the tub. Coated in oil, he wasn't able to keep himself steady. "I'm trying, Sir!" he cried out.

"Oh, Oh, Oh!" Malachi hyperventilated a few breaths. "Fuck it!" he hissed. Wrapping one arm around Seth's hips and the other wrapping around Seth's chest to grab his shoulder, he yanked Seth down into his lap, burying himself to the hilt in Seth's body. Still holding Seth tight, he wailed, pushing deep and roaring his climax in Seth's ear. Seth relaxed, trying not to giggle when he realized all the panic was Malachi trying to hold back an orgasm.

Malachi dropped his head against Seth's back and Seth lost the fight with his giggles. He laughed while Malachi shook his head in shame.

"That didn't go at all like I pictured." Malachi snorted and smacked Seth gently on the head. "Control yourself, minion!" Seth's giggles quieted as Malachi pushed his hips forward and slid out of his body. "Let's see how giggly you are when you feel the bite of my whip." Malachi threatened as he turned the water on.

Seth's giggles died instantly. "Seriously?" he squeaked. "When?"

"Tonight," Malachi replied. "As soon as we get cleaned up and dried off." Malachi grabbed a bar of soap and began to wash the olive oil off of himself and Seth. "It's what you did all this for." Seth was quiet as Malachi cleaned up.

Finally, in a small voice, Seth replied. "I did all this for you."

Malachi grabbed his hair and turned Seth to face him. "I know lover. I was just teasing." Seth nodded, believing the sincerity in Malachi's eyes.

The clean-up took longer than Seth thought it should. Finally, they took turns standing in the tub and rinsing with the handheld shower nozzle. Seth would have enjoyed the experience a lot more if it weren't for the butterflies in his stomach.

Malachi patted him down with the plush towel. Lifting Seth's chin, he looked into his eyes. "You know you can trust me." Seth nodded. He did know he could trust Malachi. It wasn't what he was nervous about.

This was it. This was what Seth had dreamed about all of those nights leaning against his wall at the Woodshed. Malachi walked over to the bed

where he had stashed the whip in his pillow case. As he pulled it out of the case, Seth decided he wanted to do this the right way.

Seth walked over and got on his knees in front of Malachi. When Malachi caressed his head, Seth laid it against his hip. Malachi gently combed his hair back with his fingers. "Come," he whispered and assisted Seth to his feet.

"Let me show you why I love this bed." Malachi led Seth to the foot of the wrought iron bed. Clipped to the bed were fur lined leather cuffs. Malachi removed them and buckled one on each wrist, turning Seth to face the bed. Spreading Seth's arms one at a time, he connected the cuffs to chains hanging from the canopy frame Seth had not noticed before. He stepped back and disappeared from view.

Seth decided right then a very large mirror was going to be installed over the headboard of the bed.

The whip cracked behind him and Seth jumped. He had felt the breeze on his skin but nothing more. Suddenly, he felt the warmth of Malachi's body being pressed into him. Malachi walked his legs closer to the bed until his thighs pressed against the mattress. The slack in the chain left his arms dangling, so he wrapped them about his wrist until he could hold the chain in the palms of his hands.

Malachi threaded his fingers through Seth's hair and pulled until Seth cried out. Malachi's hands, empty now, slapped against the skin of his back, sharp and stinging. A continuous barrage, Malachi's hands drummed against his skin until his entire back buzzed with heat. "Tell me you want this."

Seth didn't hesitate. "Please Master, please! I want to feel the bite of your whip! I want you to mark me! I want to scream for you! Please Sir! I beg you!" Malachi silenced him with a kiss. When the kiss ended, Malachi looked intently in his eyes. "If it is too much, I want you to say stop. Do you understand Seth?"

"Yes, Sir!" Seth promised. "I will." Malachi disappeared behind him again.

This time when Seth heard the whip, it was more of a pop sound than a crack. And he definitely felt the breeze on his skin. Shivering he whispered, "Please, Master. Please Malachi."

The next pop Seth heard was lost in sea of fire consuming his back. He rode the wave of pain, pulling hard on the chains, his mouth locked open in a silent scream. As the pain dimmed, he felt Malachi's warm wet tongue caress his skin right where the whip had bit. Seth groaned as the fire spread from his back to

his cock and his erection surged back to full strength. Malachi chuckled. He disappeared again and again the quiet pop precluded a sea of fire. This time, the pain turned into lust without the assistance of Malachi's talented tongue.

Seth's head swam. "Breathe," Malachi whispered in a voice that carried over the roar in his head. Seth complied and the whip bit him again.

An unknown eternity, Seth stood there. He had no idea how long, or how many strikes of the whip he had received. Malachi's warm presence behind him didn't surprise him, but his removal of the cuffs did.

"Done?" he mumbled, nearly incoherently.

"Oh, yes my sweet. I think that's more than enough for your first time." Malachi chuckled. "You have the potential to be a real whip slut my lover."

Seth smiled sleepily. "Like it," he sighed. "How many?"

"Ten," Malachi whispered and then placed ten kisses on Seth's back. Seth hissed at the sting. "And I have never seen the lash taken so beautifully. Come, love." Malachi turned him around. Pushing Seth back on to the bed. "Scoot," Malachi commanded. Seth groaned when the motion caused his back to rub against the sheets. Malachi chuckled. "You certainly seem to like the pain." Seth was startled by the warm embrace of Malachi's mouth around his cock. Moaning he tried to sit up. He wanted to watch Malachi's mouth work. He was in no state to move. He flopped his head back on the bed and closed his eyes. He opened them to find Malachi's face in front of his. Malachi's hand lazily rubbed up and down his cock. It felt slick, unusually slick. Malachi straddled him. A little bit of fog cleared out of Seth's head when he felt the cleft of Malachi's ass rub against his dick.

"Malachi?"

"Shhh, Seth. Kiss me." Malachi leaned down and claimed his mouth. Still kissing, Seth felt Malachi reach between them and position Seth's cock. Malachi leaned back and Seth was treated to the amazingly beautiful sight of Malachi accepting Seth's cock inside his body. He took his time, easing his way. Seth stared on wide eyed. Finally, his ass rested on Seth's hips. "Another first, Seth." Malachi whispered. He ground his ass in a slow circle that ended in a gasp. "So that's what all the fuss is about." Malachi rolled his hips, rubbing Seth's cock against his prostate.

"Oh God!" Seth groaned when Malachi took his own cock in hand and began to pump it in time with his grinding circles.

"Oh God, is right," Malachi said. "I'm going to come again! And soon!" and he ground down hard. Now it was Seth who was fighting for control. The feel of his lover's channel gripping his cock was intense all on its own, but the sight of Malachi masturbating himself while riding him was overwhelming. Seth stared as Malachi's expression of intense focus dissolved into one of rapture. Malachi drove Seth's cock as deeply as it would go and held himself there, pumping his cock, once... twice more.

With a yell, his cum shot into the air. Seth watched, riveted as it curved through the air and landed on his chest. The warm splatter of Malachi's release on his skin sent Seth suddenly cresting over the edge of his own orgasm, roaring his joy to the ceiling.

Malachi leaned over and kissed Seth, tenderly, on the lips. "That was a *lot* more fun than I thought it would be," he said, smiling into Seth's mouth. "Be still," he whispered. *Like I could move*, thought Seth. Malachi slid off of Seth's body and disappeared toward the tub. Seth was too exhausted to even lift his head and watch him go. Seth smiled when his ears let him know Malachi stumbled for the first few steps. He heard him cross to the tub and then turn on the water. Seth must have drifted off because the next thing he was aware of was a warm cloth cleaning first his chest and then his cock. He gave a sleepy smile, "I didn't know you were a shooter."

Malachi chuckled. "That's because I usually come in you instead of on you." Malachi left him again. Seth heard him blowing out the candles. He drifted again.

Malachi returned to the bed and rocked Seth by the hip. "Not yet sweetheart, let me see your back." Seth protested as Malachi rolled him over. "Not bad at all," Malachi sounded pleased. "It didn't even break the skin."

Seth found that hard to believe. It felt like the whip had ripped the skin from his bones. It was so painful, and yet Seth hadn't wanted it to stop when it did.

"I'm a sick fuck," he mumbled into the mattress.

"Well, you're my sick fuck, so that's okay," Malachi echoed his words back to him from earlier in the evening.

"Hey!" Seth raised up on his arms. "I didn't cry!" He looked over his shoulder at Malachi. "Are you disappointed?"

"Not in the least," Malachi replied. Placing tender kisses along Seth's back. Seth realized there must be marks because Malachi's lips unerringly found each whip bite.

"It's just really weird. That hurt more than anything else and it didn't make me cry," Seth smiled. "Don't get me wrong, I'm glad. I hate it that I cry so easily. It's just weird."

Malachi turned the bedding down and Seth slid under them. Spooning Seth from behind, he pulled the covers over them both. He wrapped his arms around Seth and pulled him close. "I don't think pain makes you cry," Malachi said, kissing his head. "I think emotion does. I think this hurt so much you didn't have any room for emotion in your head."

Seth felt a tear form and slide down to the pillow. This man understood him so much, in so many ways. If only he understood Seth's heart.

"You know, Seth," Malachi's sleepy voice tickled his ear. "I've been thinking. You're putting so much effort into fixing this place up and I know you don't like the way your sister's place is decorated. You want to move in here with me? You could redesign one of the bedrooms to just the way you like it. I'm sure your sis would understand."

Seth's eyes snapped open, suddenly awake. Malachi was asking him to move in? But in another bedroom? The man made no sense.

"Something to think about," Malachi's voice drifted off. Soft snores followed soon thereafter.

Seth rolled onto his back and stared at the ceiling. Malachi confused him. He acted like he was totally into Seth, but talked like he wasn't serious. He told Deanna he wanted to marry him but told Seth nothing of the sort. He was acting like...

Seth smiled when he realized what Malachi was acting like. He was acting like someone trying to gentle a wild animal. Seth was being *handled*. Seth was being *tamed*. Malachi was slowly *conning* him into a relationship. Malachi was *lying* to him.

Seth tried to feel indignant. It didn't work. He couldn't stop grinning.

"Malachi," Seth whispered. "I might have to stay in here until my room gets finished. Would that be okay?"

"Hmmm..." Malachi's gravelly voice was thick with sleep. "Yeah, that'd be nice. You can stay as long as you like."

Seth flipped back over and snuggled into Malachi, still grinning. It could take *forever* to get his room just right. Especially when *so much* needed to be

done on the rest of the house. Seth tried not to giggle. Two could play this game.

Seth began to fantasize about how Malachi might try to con him into marriage. Silly, romantic scenarios danced about his head. Each one seemed less plausible than the last.

One day they were going to have to be honest with each other. One day, one of them was going to have to take the first leap.

"I love you, Malachi," his voice echoed loudly in the dark room. Malachi shifted behind him and snuggled tighter against his body. Malachi stilled and Seth waited. He realized Malachi had only shifted in his sleep.

Seth lay there, bathed in the warmth of Malachi's body and stared out the window. He hoped he had the courage to tell Malachi tomorrow, to look into those bright hazel eyes and repeat those words.

"I love you too, Seth," Malachi's voice was clear. Seth rolled and looked at Malachi over his shoulder. He was startled to find those beloved bright eyes shone with trapped tears. While Seth watched, one slipped out and rolled down his Malachi's face, disappearing into his beard. Seth reached up and kissed him, offering his heart with the offer of his lips.

Malachi took them both and gave his own in return. It was the sweetest kiss Seth had experienced in his life.

The kiss ended and Malachi flipped Seth back on his side. He sniffed and settled against the pillow, "Now go to sleep," he admonished. Seth smiled.

"Goodnight, Malachi."

"Good night, Seth."

Cocooned in the warmth of his lover's arms, Seth drifted off, visions of weddings and renovations dancing in his head.

The End

Author Bio

Michelle K Grant is a knitting, hiking, kayaking, guitar-playing, song-writing, singing, tarot-card-reading, video-game-playing, book-reading, coffee-drinking, movie-watching, fire-dancing, drum-playing, nature-worshiping, firefighting, dungeons-and-dragons playing, paramedic medicine giving, incest-surviving, pet-hoarding, yarn-shopping, squirrel-raising, Bob-Ross-painting, grandkid-spoiling, snake-keeping, bad-spelling, constantly-forgetting, sexually-deviant, fiber freak. In between all of these hobbies, Michelle is working on her first novel which she hopes to complete this year.

Contact & Media Info

[Email](#) | [Goodreads](#)