

LOVE'S LANDSCAPES



Don't Read in the Closet 2014

TRUNK'D

Tam Ames

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Love's Landscapes

An M/M Romance series

TRUNK'D

By Tam Ames

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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[Sunset](#); [Sunset on the beach](#); [Smooth sunset](#);

[Morning mist background 6](#);

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Photo Description

Two pictures of two men—one, a young man with a sleeve of tattoos and thick hair wearing a dress shirt and suspenders; the other, an African-American man with a goatee. The African-American is a police detective, and the young man is an accountant who found a body in the trunk of his car.

Story Letter

Dear Author,

There is a dead body inside the trunk of my car...

I can't believe this—I leave my car at the airport and when I return from my 3-day trip and am going to put my luggage, there is a dead body in it. It is the body of a senator's son who has been kidnapped several days before. Suddenly, I have a homicide detective asking me questions and reporters trying to get a story from me and the senator making grief phone calls—and not to mention the kidnappers who somehow think I could help the Police Department break this case. How this is my life? I'm just a boring accountant. How the heck could I get out from this mess?

And how can I land a date with the brooding homicide detective who works this case? Uhm, yeah, so this last one, might be a wishful thinking but darn, he's dreamy...

Notes:

I imagine this would fall in the lighter or with humor contemporary story, despite the dead body. Please make the detective African American. The accountant should be white, nerdy guy. No insta-love, please.

Sincerely,

JustJen

Story Info

Genre: contemporary

Tags: interracial, police, accountant, murder mystery, tattoos, HFN

Word Count: 13,904

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Steven muttered and swore to himself as he tried to push the luggage cart through the snow to long-term parking where he'd left his car three days ago. He now had two document boxes full of random papers and receipts, thanks to a client who had no clue what record keeping meant, and the strap on his carry-on had broken. To top it off, his flight was three hours late, and it was now well past midnight, and also well below zero.

He finally found his car, managed to dig the key out of his bag, and popped the trunk. Without really paying attention, he pulled it open and bent to pick up one of the document boxes. As he turned, he froze. He blinked twice, and remained unmoving. There was a guy—in his trunk. His first thought was a hobo had taken up residence in his trunk. Then he realized that no one would take refuge in the trunk of a car in the freezing cold. He put the box back down, slowly reached out his arm, and poked at the guy.

With a jerk, he pulled his hand back. The man was solid. Calling on his extensive experience watching *CSI* and *NCIS*, he was pretty sure if you were stiff that meant you'd been dead for a while. But, then again, didn't you get unstiff after? Maybe he was just frozen. Finally his brain kicked in and he pulled out his cell phone to call 9-1-1. He realized he should have probably been more freaked out by the fact there was a dead guy in his trunk, but all he could think of was he'd be home even later now, and his boss was expecting him in the office first thing in the morning to discuss the trip.

After hanging up, he yanked open the back door, shoved the boxes and his luggage in, and got in the front. He didn't know how long the police would take but figured he may as well be comfortable. He started the car and put the heater on high hoping sooner or later the engine would produce some heat.

As he waited, he rested his head against the seat and starting working up a plan to get the client's documents in order. The man had tossed every receipt he'd received in the last three years into plastic bags. Now Steven was expected to get his ass out of the fire, since the IRS had come calling. He wondered idly if his boss hated him, and that's why he'd been assigned this particular client.

Two police cars with lights flashing, an ambulance, and another car pulling up behind him startled Steven out of his thoughts. As he reached for the door, he was surprised to see one of the police officers leap out of his car, gun pointed at him. The officer screamed, "Step out of the car!" Puzzled, Steven opened the door and stepped out, hands in the air.

"Who are you?" The cop never lowered his gun.

"I'm the guy who called you. About the body in my car." Steven waved his hand in the direction of the still open trunk.

The cop lowered his gun, and another man without a uniform came striding up. Even in the dim glow of the parking lot street lamps, the new guy drew Steven's attention. He was the definition of tall, dark, and handsome. His hair was short, he had a trim goatee, and beautiful brown skin. However, when he spoke, his deep voice snapped Steven out of his ogling.

"What the fuck is going on here, Sergeant?"

The cop turned to the man. "This is the guy who called in the body. He was in his car."

"Why is the car running?" He turned to Steven. "Was it like this when you got here?"

Steven gave him a look he saved for idiots at the office who couldn't understand Excel. "Right, I came back from a trip to find my car running, with the trunk open, and a dead guy in there." That seemed to fluster the guy, and Steven couldn't help smirking.

"Then why is the car running?"

"Have you checked the temperature? I wasn't going to stand out here and freeze to death waiting for you."

"Well, maybe you should have thought about destroying my crime scene. Unless, of course, you are the murderer."

"Excuse me?" Steven's voice squeaked. "Murderer? Are you insane? *I* called you. If I murdered someone, do you really think I'd leave them in my car at the airport and then phone you? Wouldn't it have made more sense for me to dump them in a ditch or throw them in the river? I'm not an imbecile, you know."

"No, I don't know. I don't know anything about you. Perhaps you are a highly functioning sociopath."

“And perhaps you’re an asshole.”

“Do you want me to arrest you right now?” The detective had his hands on his hips and looked ready to do battle.

“You wouldn’t dare.”

“Oh, wouldn’t I? You don’t know me.”

“Obviously.”

Before the guy could retort, an Asian woman approached, and put her hand over the man’s mouth. “Terry? Maybe you better go and check the body that got trunk’d.” She looked between the two of them, and Steven crossed his arms defiantly. It wasn’t his fault. The cop had started the whole argument by accusing him of being a murderer. The very concept was insane.

The man, whose name was Terry, evidently, stared at him for a moment, then turned on his heel with a huff and went to the back of the car where some people, Steven assumed were the crime scene guys, were poking in his trunk.

The woman turned her focus on Steven. “I’m Detective Angela Tran. That’s my partner, Terry Anderson.” She nodded her head in the direction of the surly dude.

She held out her hand, and Steven took it on instinct. “Steven Wright.”

“Okay, Mr. Wright, why don’t you tell me what happened.”

“Happened? Nothing happened.” He looked at the trunk. “Well, obviously something happened. But I came back from my trip, opened the trunk, and there he was.”

“So he wasn’t there when you left?”

“Of course not, you’d think I’d notice.” He paused. “Oh, well, I didn’t open the trunk when I came to the airport, I’d just put my carry-on in the back seat. So, I guess... I guess maybe he was there. Is that possible?”

She looked at him placidly. “You tell me.”

“What?”

“When was the last time you opened your trunk?”

“Oh.” He chewed on his lip as he thought. “Last Thursday, I think. When I moved some stuff for my brother.”

“And it was empty then?”

He raised an eyebrow. "No, it was full of table lamps and bed linens. But there was definitely no body. I think we both would have noticed."

"Angie!" The guy yelled at her from the trunk. "Bring him over here."

"Sir." She held her hand out for him to precede her. Steven didn't really want to go near the trunk again. The guy was dead after all, and that was just gross.

The detective scowled up at Steven. "Do you know this guy?"

Steven glanced at the body. They had twisted the man so he could see the corpse's face. The guy was young, probably early twenties with short brown hair. "I don't think so. I mean, he's kind of average looking, so maybe, but I don't think so."

"Humph."

He shivered. "Can I get back in my car now? I'm freezing."

"No!" the detective practically yelled at him. "You've already contaminated the crime scene." He looked around, and then nodded to one of the police cars. "You can wait in the patrol car." He indicated that the uniformed officer should escort him to the car.

The officer opened the back door, and Steven got in. He shuddered, realizing he was stuck where the criminals sat, and who knew what kind of diseases they had. The seat wasn't even upholstered; it was hard plastic. As the door shut, he wondered if they'd just tricked him into giving himself up. No, he knew Detective Anderson would have taken great delight in slamming him against the car and cuffing him if they wanted to arrest him. Well, actually, that sounded not all bad, if it wasn't so damn cold out. Who didn't have the cop/criminal fantasy once in a while?

He watched them wrestle the body out of the trunk and winced when the guy's head bounced off the bumper. Steven supposed a dead guy didn't feel the smack, but it still looked painful. He really hoped his trunk wasn't full of blood, because that would be just doubly gross. They loaded the body into the ambulance, and he looked on in shock as a tow truck pulled up and proceeded to get ready to tow his car.

He panicked. He needed those files to get to the office first thing in the morning. He pulled on the door handle, and realized he was in one of those cars you couldn't get out of from the inside. He looked for a button to roll down the window and there was nothing. He banged on the glass shouting for someone to let him out.

Finally, the uniformed officer who'd put him in the car came and opened the door, just as the tow truck was driving away with his car. He raced up to Detective Anderson. "Wait. You can't take my car."

The detective's lips thinned. "It's a crime scene."

"But I need my files, my overnight bag; everything is in the car."

"Well, you shouldn't have put all that crap in there after you found the body."

"Excuse me? I need my stuff. This is not my fault." He stomped his foot and glared at the detective who started snickering. "How am I supposed to get home? Walk? My boss is going to kill me."

His brows drawing down, the detective stared at him. "Is your boss a violent man?"

"Jeez, no. That's just a phrase. You need to lighten up."

"There was a dead young man in your trunk. I don't really think this is the time for levity."

Steven looked down and blushed. He'd forgotten that part. "Sorry."

"The patrol car will take you home. You can come to the station tomorrow and claim the contents of the car that are not deemed to be evidence."

Steven nodded. He had no choice, and it was already closing in on three in the morning.

When his alarm went off at seven, Steven groaned. He rolled over, and the memories all came flooding back: the dead body in his trunk; the files being confiscated; his car being impounded; that sexy-as-hell detective. Oh, yeah. He gazed off into space for a moment remembering the man's intense gaze.

With a sigh, he sat up and reached for his phone. He'd leave a message for his boss. Maybe that would avoid him being chewed out for not having the files. After leaving the voicemail, he showered and got dressed. On his way to the police station, he realized it was unlikely the two detectives would still be there this morning, which was a shame. He'd love to have another gander at the hottie, but his higher priority was getting the file boxes back.

The taxi dropped him off outside an older brick building. He watched the police officers coming and going and was hit by an attack of nerves. He knew it

was stupid. He hadn't done anything wrong, but it was like being sent to the principal's office. With a deep breath, he went up the three stairs and entered the precinct. There was a reception desk to the left of the door.

"Can I help you?"

The woman behind the glass looked him up and down, and Steven was pretty sure she was assessing whether he was a criminal or not. "Um, I, uh, I found a body last night."

"Excuse me? Where did this happen? Did you call us when you found it?"

"Oh, yeah. I phoned 9-1-1 and the police came and they took my car and I need my file boxes back." She just stared at him. He fumbled in his pocket, pulled out the business card and thrust the small piece of paper toward her through the slot under the glass. "I'm supposed to see this person, but I doubt she's here." He looked around frantically. How in the hell was he going to get those files and receipts?

"Let me call and check. What is your name?"

Her voice startled him back to the situation at hand. "Steven Wright."

"You can wait over there." She waved him towards some cracked and filthy vinyl chairs and shoved the card back over to him. He grimaced, but found one that looked the least like it was stained with body fluids.

A few moments later, she spoke. "You can go up to the second floor, and Detective Tran is on the left."

He popped up like he'd been electrocuted and looked down at the chair one more time. "Thanks." He was pretty sure she was looking at him like a criminal again, but he made his way up the stairs. At the top, he entered a large room that reminded him of one of those police rooms you see on TV. Maybe TV shows weren't all fake.

"Mr. Wright," a voice called out from across the room, and he saw Detective Tran waving him over. She looked like she hadn't been to bed, and her hair was up in a crazy bun with some colored pens sticking out. Finally, he saw Detective Anderson sitting at a desk near where she was standing. He nearly stumbled. The man looked even hotter when he was exhausted. He began to imagine what he'd look like naked and well rested.

"In there." The man snapped out the order so sharply, with a wave in the direction of a room behind him, that Steven winced. Obviously the guy was still an asshole, despite how he looked.

They entered a small room with a mirror on one wall, and Steven realized he was in an interrogation room. He whirled to face them. "Do you think I killed him?" He was certain his disbelief came through loud and clear.

Detective Anderson shut the door with what Steven felt was a sense of finality and gestured towards the chair. "Did you?"

Steven slumped down in the chair. "No. I don't even know who the man is."

"Really?" Detective Anderson sat in the chair opposite him and slid a picture across the table. It was the young man from the trunk, obviously dead and with marks around his neck.

Steven closed his eyes and looked away. "No. I still don't know who that is."

Finally Detective Tran spoke up. "It's Kyle O'Haleron." Steven looked at the picture of the man blankly. He wasn't sure if that was supposed to mean anything to him or not. "Senator O'Haleron's son?" Steven shook his head slightly. "He was reported missing and on the news?"

"I don't watch much news. Creeps me out." Steven shrugged. Detective Anderson closed his eyes and appeared to be counting.

"Where were you on Saturday night?" Detective Tran continued as she sat in the other chair at the table.

"At home, getting ready to leave. I had an ungodly early flight on Sunday."

"Was anyone with you?" She wrote something on a pad of paper.

"No. Look, do I need a lawyer?"

"That's up to you." Detective Anderson sat back and crossed his arms. Steven wanted to smack that smug look off his face, and then lick him all over.

"Look. I didn't even know this kid, or that he was missing. I've never seen him before and never met the Senator or anyone in his family. Why in the hell would I want to murder him?"

"Maybe a sex game gone bad?" His eyebrow arched, the detective tapped the marks on the neck of the dead man which were evident in the picture.

Steven looked at Detective Tran who also had an eyebrow arched, but was looking at her partner, not Steven. "Seriously? Eww. That's disgusting. And dangerous. Hasn't anyone told you not to do that? Don't, just don't." He glanced at the picture again. "Besides, what is he? Nineteen? I'm not into robbing the cradle."

“He’s twenty.”

“Oh, well then.” Steven rolled his eyes. “Let’s just say I prefer my dates to be... more mature.” He couldn’t help it, his gaze slid over the detective who was wearing a long-sleeved T-shirt that was tight in all the right places. Detective Tran’s snort of amusement shook him out of his ogling.

They spent the next hour going over his movements in detail since Friday, as it appeared the young man had been killed sometime late Saturday. Since Steven had been at home asleep from eleven to six, anyone could have stashed the body in his trunk. He was relieved the detectives had decided he was not, indeed, the crazed killer.

“So when can I get those files?”

“You’ll have to go to our compound on McArthur and sign for them there.”

Steven gaped at them. “McArthur? That’s across town. I’m already three hours late.”

Detective Anderson shrugged as if he had no concern. Steven glowered at him. A commotion across the room distracted him from his urge to smack the detective upside the head. An older man, wearing what was obviously an expensive coat, was rushing across the room toward them, an ultra-thin, young, blonde woman trailing behind.

“Is this him? Is this the man who killed my Kyle?”

Detective Anderson stepped in front of Steven to shield him from the man. “Senator, please. No. This is the man who found your son. We’ve cleared him of suspicion.”

The Senator stopped, and his mouth fell open. “Oh, my God! You’re the one? You found Kyle?” He flew forward and wrapped his arms around Steven and started sobbing on his shoulder.

Steven looked helplessly at the two detectives who were staring awkwardly at them. “Um.” Steven patted the Senator’s back in a manner he assumed was meant to be a soothing.

The blonde came forward and gently pulled the Senator away from Steven. “I’m so sorry. He’s been devastated, ever since we heard the news.” Her voice had that cool, sophisticated sound only women who attended boarding school managed to obtain.

“I’m Bunny Claythorn. Kyle was my fiancé.”

Steven and Detective Anderson turned to each other and mouthed, *Bunny?* They both turned away, snickering.

When they looked back, Steven raised an eyebrow at the way the woman was clinging to the Senator's arm and petting his head. The whole situation was weird.

Detective Tran gave Steven and Detective Anderson a dirty look and turned back to the upset man. "Senator O'Haleron, this is Steven Wright. Your son was found in the trunk of his car." Steven shook hands with the man. After someone has wiped snot on your shoulder, it seemed rather formal. "Mr. Wright works for Carlton-Heights Partners. Have you ever done any work with that firm?"

The Senator, still sobbing in Bunny's slender arms, shook his head. "I've never heard of them."

"And you, Miss Claythorn?"

She shook her head and dabbed at her eyes with a tissue. Steven was pretty sure the tissue was dry when she pulled it away. He looked at Detective Anderson whose lip was quirked as he watched the young woman.

"I should go now."

The Senator stepped forward. "How can I reach you?"

"Uh." Steven looked at Detective Anderson who shrugged. Steven pulled a card out of his pocket and handed it to older man. "Sure, here. And, good luck?" He looked at Detective Anderson.

"Yes." The detective grabbed Steven's arm and walked with him toward the door. He also pulled a card out of his pocket. "If you think of anything that might shed some light on this, or remember anything, call me."

He was staring into Steven's eyes as he said the words. Steven blinked. Was that *call me* or call me? "Sure, yeah, okay." With a glance over his shoulder, catching Detective Anderson staring at his ass, Steven left with a spring in his step, not quite as worried about his boss's reaction to his tardiness.

After two hours of arguing with the evidence clerk about his boxes of files, Steven finally got to the office and explained the situation to his boss. The man was not happy, but there wasn't much he could do about it. Steven began the painstaking task of separating the receipts, the vast majority of which had no

indication of what they were actually for. They could have been an important business expense, or a snack from the local corner store.

He stayed until after nine, hoping to appease his boss who, of course, was long gone. He called for a cab, as he'd been told his car would be impounded for at least three weeks, and headed home. When Steven arrived at his apartment building, he was nearly run down when a large black SUV pulled into the parking lot, moving far too fast for the turn. The car screeched to a halt, and he stared as the door opened, and a man jumped out, yelling something incomprehensible at whomever was driving.

The man stalked past him, pushing him aside with his shoulder and entered the building, letting the door slam in Steven's face. The guy didn't look familiar, but he wondered if he was just paranoid now and suspected everyone of being a killer. He hadn't noticed the guy before, but with twenty-six apartments, he certainly didn't know everyone who lived there. He wasn't that social.

After eating a dinner of toast, since he had no other food in the apartment, he stood and looked out the dining room window. He could barely see the corner of his parking space. He moved to the bedroom and could see about half, the rear half. If only he'd have looked out the window, maybe he'd have seen whoever put the kid in his trunk. Of course, he had no idea what time the murder had happened.

As he stood gazing out, the black SUV, at least he assumed it was the same one, screeched back into the parking lot and pulled into a spot. He watched a slim woman get out, but he couldn't tell what she looked like. She had on a long black coat and a scarf over her hair, but given the temperatures, that wasn't suspicious. He didn't recognize the woman, but maybe she was the wife of the guy—they'd been having a lover's quarrel, and she finally came home. He watched her until he lost sight of her around the corner of the building.

He lay in bed, unable to sleep after a day spent at the police station, and then sifting through reams of receipts. A goodly portion of that time was spent thinking about Detective Anderson. He'd looked at the man's card. Terrance. That was a good name. He looked like a Terrance. Or Terry, he supposed, as the man's partner had called him. He was exactly Steven's type—tall, dark and handsome.

Ideas of how to call the man without coming off as stalkerish ran through his head. He could claim he remembered something, but he'd have to come up with some kind of evidence. He was afraid of retaliation? That was stupid, since he

didn't know who'd killed the kid. He could just ask the man out for coffee, he supposed. Maybe just to get an update on the case. But he couldn't call too soon, that would look desperate. He developed a plan to call in the morning. Was that too soon? Maybe. He would wait until the afternoon.

He finally fell asleep, with dreams of a hunky detective, turning into nightmares of being chased by screaming receipts demanding he file them.

The next morning, as he waited on the sidewalk for the cab to pick him up, the black SUV once again roared past, and this time, he was certain the gas-guzzler had swerved toward him. He jumped back as it passed him by. He swore at the car, but the dark windows meant he couldn't tell who was driving. For a moment, he turned into his grandmother and muttered, "Damn kids these days."

He'd been at the office for about an hour when his cell phone rang. The number was blocked, but he answered it with the faint hope the caller was Detective Anderson. "Steven Wright."

"I can't believe he's gone." A man began sobbing on the phone.

"Hello? Who is this?"

"My Kyle. He was my legacy."

"Senator O'Haleron? Are you okay?"

"No, I'm not okay. I'll never be okay again." A noisy nose-blowing followed. "You found him. You found my Kyle. You must know something."

"Really, I don't. I'd never met your son. I'm sorry."

"Who's going to help me?"

"I'm sure Detectives Anderson and Tran are doing their best to find his killer. You should check with them." He started wondering how he was going to get the man off the phone. The experience was awkward, and Steven thought the man needed a therapist, not an accountant.

"Can I see you?"

"I'm very sorry, but I really need to be at work. Maybe you could call Bunny?" Steven closed his eyes and took a deep breath. He never expected this.

"She's been a rock. She's kept me together."

Steven raised an eyebrow. Yeah, seeing the way she was fawning over him, he could imagine. “Yes, call Bunny. I’m sure she’ll help.”

“Thank you, thank you so much, Mr. Wright.”

“Sure. Anytime.”

“Oh, thank you, thank you.” The phone went dead, and Steven stared at the device. Well, that had been disturbing. He hoped it didn’t mean the man was going to call back. That was all he needed.

He left the office late again, exhausted from the filing. He thought he had the thing pretty much figured out, though. Of course, the additional four calls from a sobbing senator hadn’t helped improve his day. Once he got home, he ordered a pizza and put his phone on mute. He was not prepared to deal with more calls. Where the hell was Bunny? Why wasn’t she dotting on the old dude? He obviously needed someone to take care of him. Didn’t senators have people to do that? People to tell you “yes” all the time and bring you Starbucks?

The next day was more of the same on the phone call front. Steven finally stopped answering, but the man never stopped calling. Each time he did answer, all the man did was ramble on about Kyle and sob. He’d done a bit of research, and it looked like Kyle had suffered from typical rich-boy syndrome. The kid didn’t do much but attend some snooty college that didn’t even allow Jews, which Steven was pretty sure was illegal, and run around with Bunny. There were lots of pictures of Kyle, obviously high as a kite or drunk, out on the town with Bunny. In each picture she looked perfectly poised, and if truth be told, a little disgusted with the whole thing.

Steven left work on time and managed to grab a few groceries on his way home. He struggled up the stairs with the bags and stopped short in front of his door. There were scratches all around the lock. His first instinct was to rush inside and see if he’d been robbed, but he paused. What if they were still in there? What if he was the next target?

He dropped the bags and slumped against the wall. He pulled out his phone and saw another three calls from the Senator. He pushed the speed dial for Detective Anderson, knowing programming the man’s number into speed dial was slightly presumptuous, and waited, hoping the man was at work.

“Anderson.”

The man's terse reply startled Steven. “Oh. It's Steven Wright? From the, uh, airport?”

“Yes?”

Steven frowned. “There's no need to be testy.”

The man sighed. “Sorry. What can I do for you, Mr. Wright?”

“Oh. It's just Steven, but I think someone either broke into my apartment or tried to.” He glanced down the hallway. “Maybe he's still in there,” he whispered into the phone.

“You didn't go in?” Suddenly, the detective's voice took on a less aggrieved tone.

“No, of course not. There could be a killer in there.”

“Okay, leave the building, don't touch anything, and wait for me outside. I'll be right there.”

The man hung up before Steven could respond.

He gathered up his grocery bags and went back downstairs. He opened the door, and when the cold wind hit, he decided to wait in the lobby. About fifteen minutes later, Detective Anderson came striding up the walk, looking around. Steven opened the door for him, and the man frowned as he came in.

“Didn't I tell you to wait outside?”

“It's cold out there.”

The detective looked like he was about to argue, and then shook his head. “Where's your place?”

“Three-oh-nine. I have no elevator.”

“I noticed.” Steven was sure the man rolled his eyes, but he chose to ignore him and gathered up his grocery bags again. “What the hell is that?”

“Groceries? Duh.”

“You brought them back down?”

“I bought expensive ice cream, which is probably melting. I wasn't going to leave the good stuff there for some robber to eat.”

Detective Anderson sighed, and Steven scowled at him. “Did anyone come in or out before I got here?”

“Nope, no one.”

When they reached the top of the stairs, the cop held his arm out and stopped them. “Give me your key and stay here. Don’t come around the corner until I call for you.”

Steven dug his keys out of his pocket and identified the apartment key, then gulped as the man pulled a gun out of his holster and flicked the safety off. This was getting real and totally freaky. Accountants did not get involved in murders, at least not regular-Joe accountants like him. Maybe if you were in the mob, but he was pretty sure his firm wasn’t involved in organized crime. He couldn’t imagine Mr. Levine sitting around with a bunch of thugs. But who really knew? He’d seen that episode of *Law & Order* where the kindly old man had been a serial killer.

“Okay. Clear.” Detective Anderson’s voice rang out in the hallway.

Hoisting his bags, he walked to his apartment while the detective held the door open, and Steven put his groceries in the kitchen. He paused to look around, and then shoved the bag with the ice cream into the freezer.

The detective raised an eyebrow. “The whole bag?”

Steven shrugged. “It was on sale. So, did they trash the place?” He was afraid to look.

“Doesn’t look like it. The door was locked, so I’m assuming they didn’t actually get in. But you should look around and make sure.”

Steven walked through the apartment. Everything seemed in place, nothing was obviously missing. He was glad he’d picked up his dirty laundry before Detective Anderson went nosing around.

“Looks okay.”

“Have there been break-ins in your building?”

“Never that I’ve heard of. I’m sure Mrs. Bellinski on the first floor would have made sure we knew about it, if there were. She’s a one-woman neighborhood watch.”

“That’s not a bad thing.” The detective seemed a little at a loss as to what to do next.

When Steven heard the man’s stomach rumble, he grinned. Here was his chance. “Do you have to get back to the office?”

The man tilted his head to look at him. "No, I'm off."

"I was going to make myself some dinner. You're welcome to stay and, I don't know, fill me in on the case or whatever."

"I really can't discuss an active case."

"Well, you still need to eat."

He continued to stare at Steven, who just raised his eyebrows in question. "Yeah, okay."

"Great." Steven hoped his grin wasn't coming off as predatory. "I'm just going to change, and then I'll get started. You're not a vegetarian, are you?"

"No." The detective snorted.

"I'll be right back." Steven practically sprinted to his bedroom and peeled off his dress pants, shirt and tie. He hesitated for a moment, then pulled out a pair of dark jeans and a red T-shirt, which he'd been told worked with his coloring.

As he walked into the bathroom to check his hair, he called out. "If you want something to drink, Detective Anderson, help yourself to anything in the fridge."

"It's Terry."

Steven grinned at himself in the mirror. First names were a good start. He wondered if the man had handcuffs on him. Mmmm. Handcuffs. He cleared his throat and adjusted himself in his jeans.

"Chicken Alfredo okay?"

"Sure."

"I have wine or beer. Some soda and water too."

"Beer would be good."

Terry was staring at him in a way that made Steven want to squirm. He was glad he was no longer on the receiving end of the detective's interrogation techniques. "What?"

"I thought you were an accountant."

"I am." Steven had no clue where this was going.

"With a sleeve?"

Steven looked at his right arm and the tattoos that went from wrist to shoulder. "Is that a problem? Accountants have tattoos as well, you know. It's not just the domain of the criminal set."

The man cleared his throat. "I know. I just didn't expect it."

"Why? Do I look that straitlaced? Boring?"

"No." Terry practically shouted. "You're not boring. Oh, God." He ran his hand over his goatee and looked away. "I didn't mean anything. It was just a surprise. Not a bad one."

It looked like the man was blushing. Steven couldn't help a smirk. This was going better than he could have imagined. Maybe the guy was interested, and gay. Terry certainly knew Steven was, because you couldn't miss the giant nude artwork of a man over the couch. And he'd agreed to stay for dinner, so he wasn't running. He had the urge to rub his hands together and laugh like an evil scientist. The man was falling into his trap.

He cleared his throat and turned to the fridge, discreetly adjusting himself. He didn't want to give away too much too soon. As Steven pulled the beer from the fridge, his phone started ringing. Again. He'd forgotten to turn it off after Terry had arrived. He banged his head on the fridge. Not now.

"Problem?" He turned to see Terry looking at him with an eyebrow raised.

"The Senator."

"What? Why is he calling?"

"You told him he could have my number. This is the," he quickly checked his missed calls log, "eleventh call today."

"Really? What does he want?"

Steven continued the preparations for dinner. "I have no clue. He mostly cries and blubbers about his son. I try to get him to call Bunny. Seriously, what kind of name is Bunny? Does she have a sister named Kitty?"

"Uh."

"You're shitting me!" Steven turned, packet of noodles in hand.

Terry blinked a couple of times, and then burst out laughing. They both started laughing so hard, Terry was leaning against the wall. "God, I needed that." The detective took a swig of his beer. "It's been a hellish week."

“I imagine so. Why don't you go and relax, watch TV or something. I'll get dinner going.”

When he smiled, Steven thought his knees wouldn't hold him up. Damn, the guy was gorgeous. When the man left the kitchen, Steven took a deep drink of his own beer and then inhaled deeply, holding it for a moment, before blowing it out. He wanted to run in there and tackle the man, but he'd be good. The way to a man's heart was through his stomach. Well, he wasn't sure he wanted the man's heart yet, he didn't really know him, but into his pants would be good.

Forty-five minutes later, Steven went into the living room only to find Terry out cold on the couch, a sitcom rerun playing on the TV. He stood staring at the man who had removed his leather jacket and had his feet up on the coffee table. Steven had that schmoopy moment where he was sure a unicorn shitting a rainbow would fly across the room.

He leaned over and gently shook the detective's shoulder. Terry woke with a start and reached for his gun. Steven jumped back, hands in the air. “Whoa, whoa, easy. It's just me.”

Terry flopped back on the couch and ran his hands over his head. “God. Sorry. I didn't plan to fall asleep.”

“Hey, no problem. You probably needed a nap. But dinner is ready.”

“Great. I'll take my gun off.”

They sat at the small dining table, and Steven thought he was going to come in his pants, Terry was making such amazing sounds as he ate. It was aural porn. He squirmed and tried to eat his own dinner.

“This is amazing. After three days of prepackaged sandwiches and chips from a machine, I'm in heaven. You'll make someone a great wife someday.” He looked up and grinned, and Steven nearly moaned out loud.

Suddenly, he changed the subject. “So, have you noticed anything strange around here? Anyone you haven't noticed before? I mean besides the fact that someone was messing around with your door.”

“No. Not really.” He thought about the black SUV that had nearly run him down that morning.

“What? There's something.”

“There was just this big black SUV that's been screaming in and out of the parking lot. I would have sworn the beast tried to run me over this morning, but I'm sure I'm just paranoid.”

“Did you see who was driving?”

“No. I did see a man get out the night before, and then later I happened to be looking outside and saw a woman get out. I couldn't tell anything about her though. I didn't recognize the guy, but we aren't really that kind of building where we socialize with our neighbors.”

“Huh. If you see the car again, get the license number, and we'll double-check it just in case. Given it's likely the boy was killed near where they dumped the body, and it was probably while you were parked here, I'm thinking it's someone nearby.”

Steven's eyes grew wide. “Really? You think one of my neighbors is a murderer?” Okay, the whole *but they seemed like such nice people* thing went through his mind. That's what the neighbors of serial rapists always said.

“It could be someone who lives here, or maybe in the neighborhood, and your car was just convenient.” He shrugged. “Hard to say.”

He started thinking about looking for a new place to live. He didn't want to live in a neighborhood with rampant murderers everywhere.

Terry's voice startled him out of his calculations of how much rent he could afford in a better part of town. “Relax. I can see your brain working. This is a good neighborhood, and we doubt the murder was random. We're pretty sure the killer was someone who knew him. We just have to figure out who and why.”

“It creeps me out.”

“It should.”

Well, discussing murders was a buzz kill. Steven's horniness had diminished with the talk of murder and mayhem. Well, murder anyway.

“I should go.”

Steven jerked his head up when Terry spoke. “Oh. Okay.” He watched as Terry put his gun holster back on and then his jacket. He walked toward the front door.

“Keep your door locked.”

“Duh.” Terry gave him the look scolded children got. “Sorry.”

He noticed an envelope on the floor at the front door. “What's this?” He bent to pick the paper up, assuming one of his neighbors had received his mail by mistake and had simply slipped the lost document under his door.

Terry grabbed his arm before he could reach it. "Don't touch it!"

"It's an envelope. Probably some of my mail." He thought Terry was going overboard.

"Just wait." The detective pulled a pen from his pocket and flipped the envelope over. The front was blank, with no stamp or return address.

"Junk mail?" Steven hoped it was.

"Maybe." Next Terry pulled out latex gloves and slipped them on. He picked up the envelope and eased open the flap. He pulled a piece of paper out by one corner. When Terry shook the folded paper open, Steven gaped. There were a series of tiny letters glued on, just like an old-time ransom note. He was surprised anyone even did that.

When Terry walked back to the table and laid it down, Steven could read the words. *KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT IF YOU KNOW WHAT'S GOOD FOR YOU OR WE'LL SHUT IT FOR YOU.*

"What the hell? I don't even know anything."

"Well, they obviously think you do."

"Oh, crap. I have to move now. I can't stay here. Shit. I have nowhere to go."

"Okay, take a deep breath. I'll stay here tonight, and in the morning we'll take this to the lab. Maybe they can find some fingerprints or something."

Steven raised his eyebrows. Terry would stay here? All night? The two of them alone? Perhaps having murderers in your building wasn't all bad. Okay, he felt slightly guilty thinking that given a dead kid had shown up in his trunk. But silver-linings were everywhere.

His phone started ringing again. "Oh, God. I have to answer it. He's never going to stop."

As he went to pick up the phone, Terry snatched it out of his hand and answered. "Hello?"

Steven could only hear Terry's side of the conversation, but he could hear the sobbing of the Senator on the other end. Terry tried to get him to calm down. When he mentioned Bunny, the dead boy's fiancé, it made the man even more distraught.

Terry finally managed to hang up, and then immediately pulled out his own phone and made a call. Steven stood watching him curiously.

“Miss Claythorn, I think you should contact the Senator. He’s quite distraught, and I wasn’t sure who else to call.”

He paused. “Great. Thanks so much.” With a sigh, he turned to Steven. “Wow. That was something. I’m not sure what, but something.”

“Exactly. And I blame you.”

“What?”

“Hey, you said I could give him my number.”

“No I didn’t.”

“Well, you didn’t stop me.”

“You’re a grown-up aren’t you?”

A door slamming, and heels stomping down the hall outside his apartment door, stopped them both in their tracks. Steven shrugged. It wasn’t long before an engine roaring in the parking lot sent them both to the window, and the black SUV went screaming out of the parking lot, very nearly hitting a motorcycle parked near the entrance.

“Huh. That’s the car. The one that almost hit me. I think they have road rage issues.”

“Woman driver, huh?” Terry mused aloud.

“I guess.”

“Hmmm.”

“What?” Steven was curious now.

“Nothing.” Terry crossed his arms in a defensive pose.

“Tell me.”

“No.”

“Oh, my God, you make me crazy.” Terry’s refusal to say what he was thinking was making Steven more and more frustrated.

“Me? You’re the one who keeps arguing.”

“You started it.”

“Are you twelve?” Terry frowned.

Steven had moved closer, until he was standing toe to toe with Terry. “Do I have to call my mother?”

Terry frowned, laughed, then suddenly grabbed Steven by the shoulders and laid a hot kiss on him. Steven was startled, but it didn't take him long to wrap his arms around Terry's neck and try to wind one leg around his thigh.

They started moving toward the living room, when Terry wound his fingers in Steven's hair and pulled his head back. "We shouldn't do this."

"Fuck it. Or me." Steven pulled Terry in for another kiss. He wasn't paying attention, but Terry had changed direction, and they were now heading down the short hall to the bedroom.

The pair of pants Steven had discarded on the floor tripped him up, and he nearly landed on his ass, but Terry caught him before he could fall and hauled him up against his chest. Steven nearly swooned right there when Terry lifted him up and tossed him on the bed. That was hot.

He propped himself up on his elbows and watched as Terry let his jacket drop to the floor, and then removed his gun and holster and placed the weapon on the dresser. Steven wasn't a fan of guns, but he had to admit knowing Terry was *packing heat* was kind of a turn-on.

"Do you have handcuffs?" The question popped out of his mouth before he could think about it. His face heated, as he realized what he'd let slip.

Terry stopped unbuttoning his shirt. "Not here."

Steven shrugged. "Just askin'."

"Have you ever?"

"No. Have you?" Terry looked away. "You have! Are you a naughty detective?" Steven laughed.

"You're kind of a brat."

"Uh huh. Come on. Finish. I wanna see."

"Next time I'm bringing the cuffs, and you'll get what you get when I'm good and ready."

"Promises, promises." Steven wasn't sure throwing his arms in the air and shouting *yes* was appropriate, so he gave his best, what he hoped passed for, sultry smile.

Terry kicked off his shoes and unbuckled his belt.

"Show me," Steven said.

Terry just raised one eyebrow and snorted and pushed his pants and underwear down in one move.

Steven was pretty sure his jaw nearly hit the floor. The man was hung, to say the least. For a moment, Steven was a little self-conscious about his own *normal* size, but the idea of getting up close and personal with the monster in front of him soon had him pushing his insecurities back in the closet. He figured a guy Terry's size was used to being with someone smaller than him, because Steven was pretty damn sure there weren't too many bigger.

"Wow." Steven swallowed, his eyes glued to Terry's crotch as he moved forward.

"Huh. I finally found a way to shut you up."

"Wha?" Steven looked up, blinking, and pouted as Terry laughed.

"You next." Terry nodded his head, indicating Steven's clothes. He just stood at the side of the bed slowly stroking his dick. Steven was pleased to see he was a show-er, and not a grow-er, because that would have been truly frightening.

"Yeah. Okay. Um... I... I'm not..." Suddenly the insecurity was back.

Terry stopped, placed his hand under Steven's chin, and tipped his head up until their eyes met. "Hey. I don't care about your size, and if you'd rather, we can switch it up, or do something else. Whatever you want."

In that moment, Steven's insecurities fled. "No, no. I want to, it's just..." He licked his lips and stared at Terry's cock. "Damn, you are hung."

"So I've been told."

Steven looked back up. "It does fit?"

Terry huffed out a laugh. "Well, it has in the past, and I don't think I've grown any, since about tenth grade." He smoothed his hand over Steven's hair, and then wrapped the thick strands around his fingers and leaned in for a hard, wet kiss. "Don't worry, I'll take my time. You tell me what you want or need."

"Yeah, okay." He was ready to get this show on the road. He wasn't sure this was going to work, but he wasn't going to throw in the towel without giving it the old college try. He pulled his T-shirt over his head and started working on the zipper of his jeans. They soon followed, along with his underwear and socks.

He lay back, and for a moment, wasn't sure what he was supposed to do with his hands. Put them under this head? Maybe that looked too casual. Fold them on his chest? That felt too much like he was in a coffin. Cover his junk? That was dumb, since they were going to have sex. He didn't have much time to deliberate, as he was distracted by Terry kneeling on the bed beside him.

"Pretty." He ran his hand up the tattoos on Steven's arm.

"Men aren't pretty."

Terry's smile was wicked. "You are, with all this thick hair, colorful tattoos and," he paused, and suddenly his hand wrapped around Steven's cock, "this is very pretty."

He leaned down and sucked on the head. Steven's back arched off the bed. "Holy fuck!" His hand scrabbled to get a hold of Terry's hair, but the cropped curls meant there wasn't much to grab. He settled for grabbing his shoulder. The man had a talented tongue. It was doing amazing things to the head of Steven's dick, and his worries about his size, or Terry's for that matter, soon fled under the onslaught of pleasure.

After a few minutes, Steven tugged on Terry and pulled him up for a kiss. He soon managed to get him shifted around until he was lying on top of Steven, their cocks grinding against each other as they kissed. Their hands roamed, grasping, touching, and kneading. The feel of Terry's goatee against his face was a delicious contrast to the soft lips and hot tongue. He was looking forward to the feel of it rubbing all over his sensitive skin.

Terry propped himself up on his elbow. "Lube?" The man's pupils were blown wide, and his eyes looked almost black. Steven waved toward the bedside table where the bottle was sitting next to a box of tissues. Terry raised his eyebrows. "Keeping it handy?"

"You never know. Sometimes you get a need, and I used to be a Boy Scout. Always prepared."

Without asking, Terry pulled open the drawer in the bedside table and dug around inside, coming up with a condom. He looked at the wrapper for a moment, and then frowned. "I don't think this is going to work."

Steven blushed. He was pretty sure the condom was a regular, and Terry definitely needed the extra-large. And despite the guy being a cop, which Steven considered a fairly trustworthy job, he wasn't going bareback. "Shit."

“No problem, we’ll just switch it up. Unless you’re an exclusive bottom?”

“No, switching is good.” Steven’s heart kicked up a notch, and his cock got even harder. “But first, I want a taste.” He grinned at Terry, who smirked and flopped onto his back beside Steven.

“Have at it.”

Steven didn’t waste any time. Terry didn’t seem quite as big as he’d feared, once he got his mouth on the man, but he was still larger than Steven was accustomed to. He started licking around the man’s balls, and before long Terry had his legs spread and was moaning and tugging on Steven’s hair. Steven opened wide and took as much of Terry’s length into his mouth as he could. He knew he was going to have a sore jaw if he did this for long. He wondered if practice would make giving Terry a blow job more comfortable. He wasn’t going to complain, though, the stretch of muscles kept him in the moment and completely aware of what was happening.

A strong tug, with both hands on his hair, finally got his attention. “You better move on unless this is all you’re interested in. I’m not going to hold out much longer.”

Knowing he’d brought Terry close to the edge gave Steven an ego boost. He reached for the lube on the side table and squirted some onto his fingers. Terry pulled back his legs with his hands under his thighs, and Steven didn’t waste any time in getting the lube where it was meant to go. He ripped open the condom and quickly rolled it on.

“Ready?”

“Oh, yeah.”

Steven placed his hands on Terry’s thighs and gently pushed forward. His gaze shifted between Terry’s face and watching his prick stretching the man’s hole beneath him. He didn’t want to hurt the guy, but it was hard to hold back. Once he was all the way in, he paused and tried to steady his breathing. He felt like his heart was going to beat out of his chest.

Terry’s hand touched his arm. “Are you okay?” He had a little furrow between his brows.

“Yeah. Damn. Tight. Hot. Fuck. Oh.”

When Terry laughed at Steven’s inability to string two words together, Steven groaned. “Okay, this might be fast.”

“Fast can be good.” Terry then wrapped his legs around Steven’s waist and pulled him in even closer.

Steven leaned down and kissed Terry, their tongues tangling. Terry wrapped his arm around Steven’s neck, holding him close while he wedged his other hand between their bodies and wrapped it around his cock.

The sensation was more than Steven could handle. He undulated his hips and tried to hit Terry’s prostate as he drove forward. He wasn’t sure he was successful. Between the kissing, the moans, and Terry’s hand moving on his cock between them, it was driving Steven over the edge. Soon he scrunched up his nose, closed his eyes and pressed his face against Terry’s neck as he shuddered and came.

Terry held him for a moment, then nudged him. Steven pushed up on one arm and watched as Terry started stroking his cock faster, giving a small twist when he got to the head. He suddenly went silent, and his eyes opened wide as the cum shot over his stomach. Steven moaned at the contractions around his still sensitive cock.

Steven gently pulled out and flopped over on his back. “Wow. Sorry about the speed thing.”

“Hey, I’m not complaining.”

The sound of a phone ringtone disturbed their state of blissful silence. “Not mine.” Steven got up and headed for the bathroom, peeling off the condom. Terry moaned behind him and was scrambling to find his pants and his phone when Steven closed the bathroom door.

When he came out, Terry was dressed and putting on his coat. “Hey. What’s going on?”

Terry refused to meet his eyes. “It’s a call. I have to go. Angie is waiting on me, and uh, I’m not sure this was such a good idea. I mean the case is still ongoing and you’re involved, and I shouldn’t have done this.”

He finally looked at Steven. Steven didn’t know what to say. He certainly wasn’t prepared to beg, since it was obvious the man was having regrets, and who needed that kind of drama? Steven simply crossed his arms and knew his mouth was probably a thin line, but he wasn’t about to smile and say “Yeah sure, see ya around,” as if it was all fine and dandy. Terry was blowing him off.

“Look, I’ll let you know if we find anything and, well, keep your door locked. If you get any more notes or anything suspicious happens, call me.”

“Yeah. Sure.” He didn’t move from where he stood near the front entry.

“Okay. I... I have to go.”

Steven didn’t respond. What did Terry want him to do? Throw his arms around him and thank him for the pleasure? That wasn’t Steven’s style. The door closed behind Terry. After a few seconds, Steven finally moved. “Fucking asshole.” He locked the door, then went into the kitchen and grabbed a beer. He looked at the pile of dirty dishes from their dinner and wanted to just toss them all in the trash so he didn’t have to think about what had happened. Instead, he just ignored them and threw himself on the couch, where he flipped on the TV and pulled out his laptop. He figured between the two of them, they’d manage to distract him. That and another beer or two, or seven.

The next morning, Steven woke to elephants stampeding through his head. He had a doozy of a hangover, and the noise outside his apartment wasn’t helping. He supposed the pounding wasn’t elephants, but there were definitely more people than usual running up and down the stairs. He covered his head with the pillow and hoped whoever they were would be gone soon.

When someone started hammering on his door, he threw the pillow across the room and swore. This was obviously not meant to be his weekend. First the blow-off by Terry, now a hangover and assholes in his building.

Whoever it was banged on the door again. “Jesus Christ. Give me a minute!” he shouted. He winced, as his head throbbed. He pulled a pair of old sweats and a T-shirt out of the drawer and put them on. He took a deep breath to settle his stomach, ran his hands through his hair which, when he glanced in the mirror, looked pretty scary. He didn’t really care. Whoever had decided to wake him up at noon on a Saturday deserved his “mad scientist” look.

He yanked the door open and froze. Terry was standing there looking exhausted. For a moment, that’s all he could focus on, and then he noticed his partner standing behind him, and the flow of cops in uniforms and others who moved back and forth in the hallway behind them.

“Can we come in for a minute, Mr. Wright?” He blinked and looked at Detective Tran who had spoken.

“Oh. Yeah. Of course. It’s Steven.” He stepped back to allow them in.

As he ushered them into the living room, he became aware of the empty beer bottles, chip bags and empty containers of ice cream on the coffee table

and floor around it. Steven blushed, and grabbed some of the bottles. "Have a seat, and I'll be right back." He tried to gather more in his arms and practically ran to the kitchen. He dumped everything in the trash. He stood with his arms braced on the counter and took his time breathing in a steady rhythm.

"Hey, are you okay?"

Steven literally yelped and spun around when Terry spoke from behind him. The man held the rest of the garbage in his hands. He dumped everything in the trash, and looked at Steven with a frown.

"Of course. Why would you think otherwise?" He grabbed a glass out of the cupboard and the orange juice from the fridge. "You don't have to worry. I won't tell your partner about your little mistake."

"What?"

"What?"

"What is wrong with you?"

"I believe I'm suffering from what is commonly called a hangover."

"That's not what I meant. Why are you behaving this way?"

"Excuse me? Behaving this way? Like someone who got fucked and dumped within fifteen minutes? Like that?"

"You know last night was a mistake."

"I know nothing. Obviously. Since you made the decision entirely on your own."

"You're being ridiculous."

"No. You are."

"You are."

"Ahem."

They both spun around toward the open entryway to the kitchen. "What?"

"If you two are finished having your little lovers' spat in here, can we get on with the job?"

"We're not." Terry looked at Steven, who simply crossed his arms. Steven might not tell the man's partner the dirty details, but he wasn't going to deny the truth either, like Terry was obviously prepared to do.

“Whatever. Move it you two.” She glared at them, and they both winced.

“Wow. She’s tough.” Steven downed the rest of his orange juice.

“Yeah, she’s great.”

Steven snorted. “Do you want any juice? Does she?”

“I think we’re good. Let’s go.”

In the living room, Steven sat in the chair, while Terry sat on the couch next to his partner. “So, what’s going on?”

Detective Tran took the lead. “How well did you know your neighbors next door?”

“I don’t. I’m not sure I’ve even see them.”

“The lease is in the name of a George Cooper. Does that ring a bell?”

“No. Should it?”

“His body was found last night in a park near the river. He’d been strangled.”

“Seriously? That’s freaky.” Neither detective spoke for a moment. “Wait. You don’t think I murdered him do you? I thought I was cleared.”

Detective Tran just raised an eyebrow. Steven looked at Terry who said nothing. The unspoken allegation was the last straw. He sprang to his feet. “Oh. Fuck you, *Detective Anderson*. Fuck you with a cactus sideways.” He vaguely heard someone snort, but he started pacing.

“What was last night? Some kind of plot to get me to spill my guts? Did you hope to fuck the truth out of me?”

“Steven!” Terry jumped to his feet and nearly tripped over the coffee table.

“Don’t *Steven* me. I didn’t kill that kid, and I sure as hell didn’t kill my neighbor.” He spun to face the other detective. “When was he killed?”

“Sometime between eight and eleven.”

Steven turned a withering gaze on Terry. “Well, I’m sure Detective Anderson will be happy to provide my alibi. Should I give her a blow by blow account of what I was doing during those hours, Detective?”

“Oh, yes, please do.” Detective Tran’s grin was a mile wide.

“Angie!” Terry’s outburst only caused her to start laughing.

“You, madam, are a perv. I will not give you the pleasure of hearing the details from me. He can tell you.”

“I will not.”

“You’re ashamed of me.”

“I’m not ashamed of you.”

“Then why are you pretending this didn’t happen?”

“Oh, my God. Will you two shut up? You’re like twelve-year-olds.”

“Sorry.” They both answered in unison.

They sat down, Steven chastened by Detective Tran’s reprimand. However, he was sorely tempted to stick his tongue out at Terry just to make his point. He resisted, and looked at the file folder the detective placed on the table. She flipped it open and pulled out a picture of the man Steven assumed was his neighbor.

“Is that him?”

“Yes. Have you seen him?”

He stared at the picture for a moment, and then it hit him. It was the guy who had been having the fight with someone in the black SUV. He looked toward Terry. “Remember when I told you last night about that SUV that was driving erratically in our parking lot? Well, two nights ago, the thing pulled up, and this guy got out. He was arguing with someone inside, and he stormed past me into the building. Later, I saw the SUV come back, and a woman got out, but I couldn’t tell who she was. I assumed they were just a couple having an argument.”

Detective Tran spoke up. “You didn’t see him before?”

“I don’t think so.”

“Okay, we’re going through his apartment to see if we can find any clues to who killed him. If we have any further questions, we’ll let you know.”

“Sure.” Steven stood up with them. Terry turned to him at the door as if to say something, but Steven held up his hand. “Don’t. Just go do your job.”

Before he could say more, someone pushed Terry aside and rushed into his apartment and threw his arms around Steven. He recoiled, trying to get the man off, but he was like an octopus that refused to loosen his grip. When he could finally focus, he realized the man at his door was the Senator.

“Senator? What are you doing?”

“I heard about the killing on the news. I had to come and see you.”

“Why?”

“You were the last one to see my Kyle.”

“Not exactly. I just found his... him in my car.”

The Senator spun to the two detectives who were still standing slack-jawed in the hallway. “Is it a serial killer? Was my son killed by some psychopath?”

“We have no evidence, as yet, that the murder of this man and your son are related.” Steven thought he heard Detective Tran muttering about the Goddamned press as she stood behind Terry. “I thought you were with Miss Claythorn.”

“She left me last night. Said she had to take care of something. She never came back.”

The older man looked like a lost child. Steven wondered where his handlers were. He thought rich politicians had people who did things for them. He was pretty sure Senator O’Haleron should not have been let out on his own. The man had obviously tipped over the edge, if his behavior was any indication.

Terry looked at Steven. “Is it okay if he stays here with you until I can track down Bunny?”

Steven sighed. He couldn’t kick the man out. “Sure, no problem.” He gave the Senator a tight smile, then hoped the look he gave Terry was *you owe me*. Although when Terry mouthed *Bunny*, they both started giggling, and Steven couldn’t help but laugh out loud when Detective Tran smacked Terry on the back of the head.

“Twelve. Twelve, I tell you.” She grabbed his arm and pulled Terry down the hall.

When Steven shut the door, he offered the Senator coffee. After he’d made a pot, he made his excuses and had a quick shower and dressed in jeans and a button-down shirt.

For the next two hours, they sat awkwardly, the Senator moving between tears and staring off into space. It was the most uncomfortable time Steven had ever spent alone in a room with another man, including when he’d lost his virginity to his math tutor in the eleventh grade.

He couldn't jump to his feet fast enough when someone knocked on his door. He opened it to find Terry standing there. "How's it going?" the detective asked.

"Oh, my God. The man needs a psychiatrist, or a keeper, or something. This is brutal. Where's Bunny?"

"I don't know. She's not answering. Can I show you some pictures we found?"

"Okay." He stood back and let Terry walk past him. Terry entered the living room and did a double take when he saw the amount of ruined tissues around the Senator.

"Senator." Terry nodded his head in the direction of the man on the couch, in acknowledgement.

He turned to Steven and opened the folder again; this time, there were several pictures of the man who'd been killed, taken with a woman. "Have you seen this woman? Is it possible she's the one you saw getting out of the SUV that night?"

Steven flipped through them, laying each one on the coffee table. "I couldn't say. I couldn't see her face or hair, and she had on a long coat. She was thin, but that's about the only thing I can say is the same."

"Why do you have pictures of Bunny?"

Both Steven and Terry looked at the Senator in confusion. The man tapped a couple of the pictures, frowning. "This is Bunny, with this man. But her hair is different."

They picked up the pictures and examined them more closely. Steven had never seen Bunny smiling, but if he imagined the woman in the picture with blonde hair, it would definitely be her.

Terry sat on the other end of the couch and focused on the older man. "Senator, have you ever seen Bunny with the man in the pictures? Could he be a relative?"

"He's not a relative. She said she has no siblings, and her parents live in Europe."

"What about her sister, Kitty?" Steven asked looking puzzled.

Terry rolled his eyes. "I was kidding." He turned back to the senator, leaving Steven blinking in surprise behind him. "Have you met her parents, Senator?"

“No. They were going to come for an engagement celebration this spring.” He burst into tears again.

Steven and Terry both sighed, and Steven rose from the chair in the living room when Terry got up from the couch. “What the hell is going on here?”

“I have no idea. We have to find Bunny.” Steven walked Terry towards his apartment door and stepped outside into the hallway with him.

Detective Tran came toward them from the other apartment. “We found a name, Gloria Sanderson. Based on the pictures, they seemed to have been in a relationship either currently or in the past.”

“It’s Bunny.” Steven blurted it out.

Detective Tran stood blinking at him, then finally looked at Terry, obviously hoping he would clarify.

Terry nodded towards the still open door of Steven’s apartment. “The Senator noticed the resemblance. The woman is Bunny, but with a different hair color. Although, how she became Gloria, or how Gloria became Bunny, I have no idea. She’s not answering my calls.”

“Okay, we need to put in a call and put out an APB. Something funny is going on.”

Steven couldn’t stop the grin on his face. The action was just like a TV cop show. He certainly didn’t get this kind of excitement in his job as an accountant.

Before Detective Tran could even get through to the station on her phone, the click of heels on the stairs alerted them, and they turned to see Bunny herself coming around the corner. She froze for a moment and looked at them, then visibly swallowed and came forward. “The Senator left me a message that he’s here and needs me.”

Her appearance stunned them all into immobility. Finally, they jerked back to reality as one, and Detective Tran spoke first. “Yes, he’s in here.” She waved her hand at Steven’s apartment. “We also need to speak to you.”

A fine blonde eyebrow was raised. “Oh? About what? Have you found Kyle’s killer?”

Steven snorted, and Terry elbowed him in the ribs. “We have a very strong lead that maybe you can help us with.” Terry had used what Steven had already come to recognize as his *serious cop* voice.

He followed the detectives into his apartment and watched as the Senator leaped to his feet, calling out Bunny's name when she got in the living room. He then threw his arms around her, sobbing. She stroked his head and murmured soothing words, while turning up her nose at the sheer number of tissues on the couch.

Steven and Terry looked at each other with raised eyebrows. *Creepy* was the only word Steven could think of.

"Why don't you sit down, Miss Claythorn." Detective Tran stood with her arms crossed, staring at the woman. Steven shuddered. He hoped he'd never be on the receiving end of that look again, because it was terrifying.

Bunny delicately flicked a few tissues aside and sat down, the Senator in her arms. "So what do you think I can help with?"

Steven thought she looked pretty cold. She didn't even flinch when Terry took a step closer and loomed over her. "Did you know someone called George Cooper?"

She simply raised an eyebrow in response. "No. Should I?"

"What kind of car do you drive?" Steven watched in amazement as Terry and Detective Tran started to do a back and forth questioning routine.

"An Escalade."

"What color?"

"Black. Kyle bought it for me."

Steven wanted to say something, but he figured if he ever wanted to convince Terry to see him again, he'd better keep his mouth shut.

Detective Tran pulled a picture out of the folder and put it on the table. It was a picture of the dead man. Steven had to admire the way she was keeping the pictures of Bunny/Gloria back. "So you've never seen this man before?"

"No."

"Have you ever been to this building before?"

She looked around Steven's apartment and wrinkled her nose. "No." Once again, he wanted to speak up, but he caught Terry looking at him, and he had to settle for glaring at Miss Snooty Bunny.

He watched Detective Tran pull out one of the other pictures, and he waited in anticipation. "So this picture doesn't look familiar?"

Bunny's face grew white. "N-n-n-o."

Terry and his partner looked at each other. "Or this one?" Detective Tran threw another one on the table. "Or this one?" Another picture hit the table.

"I have no idea what you're talking about." It was the first time her ice-princess exterior had cracked even the slightest.

"Really." Terry almost growled and leaned in closer. "So you're *not* Gloria Sanderson?"

The Senator shook his head sadly. "Oh, Bunny. What have you done? Why did you do this?"

Like a flash, the Bunny-facade vanished, and Gloria was there, Long Island accent and all. "Do? What did I do? I had to put up with your imbecile of a son!" She turned on the politician and waved a finger in his face. "Do you know how stupid that boy was? Seeing this," she waved at the sea of tissue, "it's obvious the apple didn't fall far from the tree. How you ever got elected, I'll never know."

She turned to the two detectives, spittle flying from her lips as she snarled. Both of them stepped back out of the line of fire. "The little dipshit found out who I was and was going to turn me in. Who'd have thought he'd be smart enough? I spent two years cultivating Bunny—Bunny, what a stupid, fucking name." Steven and Terry looked at each other and nodded. Detective Tran smacked Terry on the back of the head again.

"I wasn't about to let George destroy what we'd worked for. We figured I should move on to this idiot." She indicated with her thumb at the Senator, "But then George decided he wanted us to get out. I wasn't about to let all this work go to waste, so..." She crossed her arms and shrugged.

Steven pulled back. He was shocked to see that kind of coldness in another human being. Maybe the whole murder mystery thing wasn't all it was cracked up to be in real life.

"Turn around." The woman snarled at Detective Tran but did as she was told. The detective snapped the cuffs on and spun her around.

Steven looked from the cuffs to Terry and grinned. As Detective Tran walked past him, she smacked Steven on the back of the head.

"Hey!" He rubbed the back of his head. "What was that for?"

"You two are going to be the death of me. Move it, Anderson."

Terry shrugged and followed her out, leaving Steven with the Senator. "So." He had no clue what you said to someone after he'd just had what was left of his world upended.

"Well." The man cleared his throat. "I should go, and I apologize for everything." He was out the door and gone before Steven could even respond.

Steven sighed, and started to clean up. He was kind of creeped out by the tissues as well, so used a plastic trash bag as an improvised glove. After gathering all the trash, he realized he hadn't eaten since he'd gotten up. He made himself some cereal and ended up falling back into bed. Sadly, he was unable to ignore the smell of sex that still lingered.

All day Sunday, he kept expecting Terry to come back, but he didn't. The case was closed, so the man couldn't use the excuse of Steven being involved in an active case anymore. When there was no sign of him, Steven decided the guy really wasn't into him, and he needed to move on. Not that they'd been together more than a few hours. At least, he could check off his life list that he was with a super-hung guy.

Monday, he got a call saying he could pick up his car. It had been pure chance, and the fact he'd forgotten to lock his car that resulted in a body in his trunk. He had all the luck.

He ran out at lunch to pick up the car and was just entering his office building when he heard someone say, "I'm looking for Mr. Wright."

When the receptionist responded in a flirty tone, "Aren't we all, honey," Steven wanted to tell her to back off. That gorgeous black stud was his. Instead, he cleared his throat and crossed to where Terry was leaning on the desk.

"Detective Anderson. Can I help you?"

Terry gave him a look of disappointment. "Steven. Can we talk for a moment?"

"About what?"

"Can we do this in private?" Terry looked at the receptionist who was hanging on their every word.

"Oh, please don't." She fluttered her eyelashes at them.

Steven glared at her. "Fine. This way." He led Terry to his office.

When they got there, he shut the door and turned to face the man, arms crossed. "So. What did you want to tell me?"

"I wanted to apologize."

Steven's mouth fell open and his arms dropped. An apology was the last thing he expected. "Why?"

"Because I was a dick."

"Yeah. But why apologize? If you're not interested, you're not interested."

"Who said I'm not interested?" Terry tilted his head like a curious puppy.

"Well, you ran out of there like your ass was on fire, and I remember a brush-off conversation in my kitchen."

"That wasn't a brush-off." The implied "duh" tone in Terry's response had Steven bristling.

"Yes, it was." Steven glared at him.

"No, it wasn't."

"Why do you do this?" Steven wanted to bang his head on his desk.

"Do what?"

"Argue with everything I say." This time, he did bend over and smack his head on the pile of papers laying there.

"I do not." Before Steven could say another word, Terry yanked him into his arms and silenced him with a kiss. His tongue plunged in Steven's mouth, and Steven's knees went weak.

Terry pulled back, but kept his arms wrapped tightly around Steven. "I suppose that's one way to shut you up." Steven opened his mouth to retort, then Terry put a finger on his lips. "Shhh." After a moment, Steven nodded.

"I came because, well, I'd like to see you again. Maybe go out on a real date."

Steven's cheeks hurt, he smiled so hard. "Okay."

"No arguments?" Terry laughed.

"Nope. Not this time. You just have to tell me things I want to hear. Solves the problem."

"Indeed." Terry snapped Steven's suspenders. "I like these. Very dapper."

Steven laughed. "Thanks. They're my thing."

"I think you could become my thing."

"I promise I'll work very hard at doing so. Starting tonight."

"Deal." Another smoking hot kiss in the office was a very good start in Steven's opinion.

The End

Author Bio

Tam Ames is a newly empty-nester with a daughter in university and currently lives in Ontario, Canada. She is currently in the process of uprooting her life and starting a new adventure in the Middle East for her job. It was the encouragement and dares of some friends that inspired her to start writing m/m romance, and she's grateful for their continued support. Traveling as much as possible, reading, writing, and playing around online keep her busy, in addition to her day job.

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