



The

SONG

Eric Alan Westfall

## Contents

Love Has No Boundaries .....	3
The Song.....	6
Acknowledgments .....	8
Dedication.....	9
Then—Saturday afternoon .....	10
Then—Saturday evening .....	22
Then—Very early Sunday morning .....	29
Then—Late Sunday morning .....	30
Then—A little after ten, Wednesday evening.....	38
Then—Four a.m. Thursday morning .....	42
Then—A little past noon, Thursday .....	48
Then—Friday night. Shortly before 11:00.....	58
Then—Early Saturday morning .....	85
Then—Later Saturday morning .....	86
Then—Mid-afternoon, Saturday .....	88
Later—Six weeks, Monday, late afternoon.....	94
Now—Saturday evening .....	114
Author Bio.....	159

# Love Has No Boundaries

*An M/M Romance series*

## THE SONG

By Eric Alan Westfall

### Introduction

The story you are about to read celebrates love, sex and romance between men. It is a product of the *Love Has No Boundaries* promotion sponsored by the *Goodreads M/M Romance Group* and is published as a free gift to you.

### What Is Love Has No Boundaries?

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 they 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 Has No Boundaries*.

Whether you are an avid M/M romance reader or new to the genre, 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.

All rights reserved worldwide.

This eBook may be distributed freely in its entirety courtesy of the *Goodreads M/M Romance Group*. This eBook may not be sold, manipulated or reproduced in any format without the express written permission of the author.

The Song, Copyright © 2013 Eric Alan Westfall

Cover Art by Enny Kraft

[ennykraft.weebly.com](http://ennykraft.weebly.com)

This ebook is published by the *M/M Romance Group* and is not directly endorsed by or affiliated with Goodreads Inc.

# THE SONG

By Eric Alan Westfall

## Photo Description

He's mid to late thirties; black hair/eyes; fringe beard, mustache. Muscular, hairy. Gold neck chain. No shirt, black shorts, black trainers, no socks. Legs spread wide, seated on a nondescript couch. A slender, muscular, dark-haired man, also with a mustache/beard, very short hair, possibly naked, rests his head on the seated man's thigh. Three fingers of the seated man's right hand are curled into the sleeping man's mouth.

## Story Letter

*Dear Author,*

*Here I was: thirty-six, closeted, virgin, in Berlin for a conference. In what moment of craziness I had booked into the hippest hetero-friendly hotel (as opposed to gay-friendly) I don't know... but here I was, surrounded by hot men, from the concierge to the hotel guests. But none tempted me as much as this couple: From Paris, they were on a week's vacation as well, and I would run into them almost every night, at the hotel's health club. One was shy and spoke little English. The other was a hunky doctor with a deliciously hairy chest and piercing eyes that wouldn't let you go. Watching them cuddle, nuzzle, exchange loving glances all the time drove me to voyeuristic distraction. His husky voice and flirtatious banter would make me harder than I would have thought possible. And he knew it! His young lover seemed bemused by it all. And then on my last-but-one night, after a frustratingly erotic display of foreplay at the rooftop jacuzzi (all apparently for my benefit) the Hunk beckoned me over and invited me up to their room...*

*Sincerely,*

*Dilton*

## Story Info

**Genre:** contemporary with a twist

**Tags:** a church's lawyer/chief financial officer, a doctor without borders or boundaries, a wounded warrior, a three-way, a downstairs darkroom, a delicacy of dildos, several first times, strands of glowing color twining in the dark, many songs, but only one song

**Content warning:** mentions of past/off-screen child molestation and rape.

**Word count:** 50,878

*Acknowledgments*

Thanks to Averin for setting me on the right road and making this a far better story than it would otherwise have been; to Enny for her above and beyond efforts in creating a fantastic cover, and to Kaje, for recommending Enny.



*Dedication*

Off and on for thirty years, you encouraged me with your gentle, “Just sit down and write, damn it!” The “I know you can do it,” was often silent, but always there. Eighteen years after the aneurysm took you away, I finally did. Some of us take longer to listen than others. This is for you, my love.

# THE SONG

By Eric Alan Westfall

*what's past is prologue*

*Then—Saturday afternoon*

## JONATHAN

I walk in the lobby, trailed by a bellman with my bags. Dieter and Horst are close by. I resist looking at them, touching them, giving the crowded lobby a chance to guess what will be happening soon.

The taxi driver was unhappy about making a side trip on what should have been a twenty-minute or so drive from Tegel Airport to the Berlin Grand Hyatt, particularly since the neighborhood where Dieter was waiting is not exactly the city's finest. I don't think it was a mistake... quite... to have a look around before we left, and Horst caught my eye. I'd already paid for Dieter's services for a week, but there was something about Horst. Probably the fact he was longer, though more slender. I'd shrugged. It was only money, of which I have a more than ample personal supply. I've never spent the Brethren's funds on this, and won't start now. Horst joined us.

The driver's disapproval was obvious, but since the church hadn't hired him, I really didn't give a fuck. I wouldn't be seeing him again, since when I leave, Dieter and Horst will be staying behind, and I'll use a different service to get back to the airport. He was slightly mollified by the size of the tip, but not enough to completely silence some rude mutterings under his breath about Americans.

I enjoyed the expression on his face when I handed him the money and explained in fluent German that I was not a mother-fucking American, but probably more of a father fucker. Not that Father was aware of that. Or Grandfather. Or brothers.

The trumpets of the “Ride of the Valkyries” sing out of my jacket pocket. Joshua’s ringtone. It annoys him, mostly because he doesn’t know why I selected it. Now what? I unfortunately have no choice about ignoring it. I stop, wave the bellman on to the front desk.

“What?” I don’t bother hiding my annoyance.

“Is that any way to greet your favorite brother? Or show the proper deference to the heir to the throne?”

I snort in his ear. “Prince Charles is what, mid-sixties, and he still isn’t king. You’ll probably be in your eighties by the time Grandfather and Father are gone. Now, what do you want? I need to check in and I have work to do.”

Dieter work. Maybe Horst work as well. Not that I’ll be saying anything about that to Joshua. What he and the rest of them don’t know won’t kill me.

“I’ve decided,” he begins, which, translated from Brethren-speak into ordinary English, means that Father told him, “to attend the conference. I’ll be there on Tuesday.”

Well, shit. I can’t have Dieter and Horst around in the suite with Joshua there. Double shit. Triple.

Then there is the “what the fuck?” factor. The Amalgamated Brethren of Christ, third-largest denomination in the States, is expanding into Europe in a big way, including the acquisition of a number of Protestant churches in England, Germany, France and Denmark. This conference is essentially a meeting of finance ministers and legal advisers to hammer out the final details about money and the law. And to lay the foundation for a later meeting of heads of state, to formally announce the acquisitions—though the press releases will probably refer to mergers of spiritual kin or something similar—and for the new hires to swear fealty to Grandfather. There is no need for charisma at this particular conference table.

Except now there is. Andre de le Becque, the head of the linchpin church in Marseilles, the domino that will topple the rest of the French churches into line, has become nervous. He plans to arrive on Wednesday, a surprise to his own people, a greater surprise for me, particularly since he plans to take

charge of his delegation. I start to ask how Josh knows this, but don't because I don't want to sound like an idiot. Frank Harmon, Father's chief of security, is excellent not only with protection, but with intelligence gathering that rivals the CIA at its peak. I sigh. Even with this warning, a semi-hostile pastor accustomed to swaying people with words and emotions, rather than facts and figures, is something I lack the equipment to deal with.

God must have substituted the queer gene for the charisma gene when Father's sperm and Mother's egg did their little dance. I was born Joshua Charles Priestley IV. Great-great grandmother Estelle had named her first-born son Joshua Charles and apparently raised him to believe that a man whose initials were "J.C." could be, if not the second coming, the next best thing to it. As evidenced by his creation of the Amalgamated Brethren of Christ, at the time the consolidation of his own small congregation with another small congregation, with great-Grandfather naturally the man in charge.

"Father had charisma in spades," Grandfather has often said. He has it as well, as does Father. By the time I was sixteen, and my next younger brother, Jonathan Charles (traditional name for the second son) was fourteen, it was clear that it would take a major archeological dig to unearth any charisma in me. Jonathan, on the other hand, was an endless fountain of the stuff. His charisma cup ran over constantly.

So Father switched us. Charisma was the reason he gave, but I have always suspected the real reason was otherwise. Not that I ever have, ever will, ask.

The memory of Mike surfaces. I push it down, hold it under until it no longer struggles to come up. I push again. The memory sinks, down and down and down, until it's gone. For now. Always "just for now." Never forever.

I legally became Jonathan; he legally became Joshua. My eventual boss if I stayed with the church. As I had. So I curse only in my head, as the Brethren do not approve of public or private obscenity or foul language, and then agree I understand why Joshua's presence is required. Though he is only there to deal with "Muh-sure dulla beck," he assures me, and I am still in charge of everything else. This will probably include translating if M. de le Becque

decides to play the language game and insists on speaking French when he is thoroughly at ease in English. I also got the language gene.

He gives me his arrival details, and asks me to arrange a limo. Heirs travel in style. I agree, flip him off (a consummation devoutly to be wished but not actually done), end the call, and move on to the desk.

Herr Adler, the assistant manager, introduces himself with a wide smile. The Brethren's American Express Black card tends to have that effect for its authorized users. As I pick up the pen, I am resigning myself to having only a few days with Dieter and Horst. And no refunds, but then that was always going to be the case, no matter how often or how well they get used. The resignation changes when Herr Adler assures me everything is in perfect readiness. In fact, Herr Gunter had personally checked the suite just that morning.

It isn't paranoia if they really are out to get you. Or keep track of you.

I am sure the suite is indeed in perfect readiness. When you handle the finances of a business that rakes in large multiples of a hundred million a year, something as important as the fact that Frank Harmon had hired a German team for the conference, headed by someone named Gunter, inevitably crosses your desk. The fact that I have designed some programs that get certain types of information to me almost as soon as your fingers lift from the last keystroke, rather than waiting until it makes its way to me through normal channels, or even, God and Father forbid, gets lost along the way, might also have something to do with it.

I also got the computer gene. Frank has access to my records, knows I minored in computer science, knows that I wasn't very good at it, thereby adversely affecting the Priestley perfection statistics by getting Cs while everything else I did was an A or better. A few times asking the IT department for help with programming I should have been able to do, and I became the computer dilettante who posed no threat to his control of security.

He doesn't know that, as Picard might have said, I made it so. And the arrogant bastard can't conceive of the possibility that someone like me has

hacked his systems and added private bells and whistles. And so are they all, all arrogant bastards.

Yes, Gunter would indeed have seen to that perfect readiness, as well as to the discreet placement of cameras and microphones, which would be equally discreetly removed later. Did Father or Joshua really believe I would go along with this? I am merely a lawyer and the Brethren's chief financial officer. The threats have nothing to do with me.

None of the annoyance appears on my face, of course. The Priestley sons follow the example of Father and Grandfather. Public calm at all times, private fury as required. "Do you know, Herr Adler, I think I would prefer a different room. Something smaller."

I am sure Herr Adler is annoyed at the impending loss of income since the suite and the originally requested extra amenities would have been beyond the upper end of their price list, but there is no visible sign of it. He of course makes the effort to change my mind, starting with the ploy of uncertainty over the availability of anything else, what with the rooms the church has booked for the conference, a convention, summer tourists, a charity football match tomorrow at the Olympiastadion that has brought many visitors to the city. My suggestion that perhaps the Adlon Kempinski, where Father always enjoys his stays, though I had hoped to persuade him to use the Grand Hyatt...

My voice trails away. Perhaps, my expression says, you might check to be very sure you don't have a room, a very nice room, the hotel's equivalent of a theatre's house seats. His fingers dance over the keyboard. He looks at the screen, and then smiles in an almost flawless imitation of true surprise.

I smile back. I am better than he is at imitations of a true smile. The gay gene? The lawyer gene? The church gene? All of the above?

I hand him a personal credit card, an account I am sure Frank had someone hack into very shortly after my secretary found it in the wallet I "accidentally" left behind in my office about a week after it arrived. Gunter has probably been given temporary access in order to track my spending over here. I don't particularly care.

The room switch is made; I have the new key card. I choose to make his day.

I tell him that Joshua will be attending the conference. He allows himself the hint of a smile. Joshua is not as good as Father, much less Grandfather, but it is possibly the start of a beautiful friendship, or at least a lucrative one. I authorize him to continue charging the Brethren for the empty suite until Joshua's arrival forty-eight-plus hours from now. To assure its continued availability, of course. I suspect he will rent it out for the next two days anyway, making an even better profit with the double-charging.

Despite my eagerness to get to my room and be alone with the cocks that are bought and paid for, I cannot help but notice the way the hotel uniform molds the chest of the concierge, or the bulge, a very noticeable bulge, when he steps from behind the desk to call a bellman for me. Naturally the man who has carried my bags and laptops in from the entrance cannot be allowed to continue the trip all the way to my room. Tips must be spread around. And then there is the delightful, shapely ass of the bellman. I wonder what he would taste like if he was on his hands and knees, my hands spreading his cheeks and my tongue working its way up inside.

My cock is leaking again. Which is precisely why I don't go commando. Too embarrassing to have that happen. And someone in the family would inevitably ask me to point out the woman who got that reaction from me.

The room is indeed a nice one. Also at the upper end of the price list. The view is better than nice. I decline the bellman's offer to unpack for me, preferring for a wide variety of reasons to do it myself. A ten euro note later, he is gone, the door is locked, and I slowly turn around, giving them time.

Yes!

Dieter and Horst are sprawled out on my bed. Naked. Hard.

I admire the length and girth of Dieter's uncut cock. The cut length of Horst that will get so much deeper inside whatever hole it uses. Both slits are quickly drooling. Their hands smear the thick clear liquid around the crown, milk themselves for more, begin to make their cocks slick and shiny. Father insists that all Brethren who travel on business, travel dressed for business.

That means I have far too many clothes on. I tug open the tie, slide it out of my collar, slip off the jacket, turn toward the closet to hang them up.

“Drop them.”

I am in charge. I bought and paid for these two. It is what *I* want that is important. *I* will give the orders.

But when I look over my shoulder at Dieter’s glacier blue eyes, at the stern line of his thin lips, I do what I am told.

“Strip.”

This is not a “Let Me Entertain You” and tease you before getting down to the real good time strip. This is a get-the-fuck-on-with-it strip. A now! strip.

The Armani is off quickly, but without popping buttons. I don’t pop buttons when they’re sewn onto three hundred bucks. The tee. Shoes yanked off without bothering to untie them—a little touch to show my eagerness. Unbuckle, unbutton, unzip, thumbs inside the waistband of the boxer briefs, fingers grasping slacks, bend, shove below the knees, and then that awkward little dance to get them down to your ankles. I step out of them. Look at the stroking men.

“Socks.” The “you idiot” is heard but unspoken.

I flush. Socks, the old-fashioned black, hold-up-with-a-sock-garter kind... the MenAtPlay kind... are a turn on for me. Wearing them, seeing them. A little late now to explain to Dieter. Although I doubt he would have been interested if I had. He doesn’t strike me as a suit, tie, and socks kind of man. The socks come off and I straighten up, hands at my sides. If I touch my cock I’m going to come. A week without jacking, thinking about, waiting for, this moment will do that.

“Suck.”

I like a man of few words. Especially when the words are what I want to hear.

Dieter is sitting up now, his golden-furred legs spread wide, his fat balls dangling over the edge of the bed. I kneel, bend forward to suckle first one



ball, then the other, my hands on his thighs, my thumbs caressing. I run my tongue up his length, lapping at his knob, licking the precome, and then his hairy thumb pushes his dick down, and his hand pushes my head down, and the twain finally meet.

I used to have a gag reflex. Henri in Paris, Roy in Amarillo, Leon in San Francisco cured me of that. I take him all the way down to his belly, to the thick, gold-tinged-with-flame pubes, sniff the scent of just a little man-musk, pull up and almost off, working his slit as if I'm trying to fuck it with my tongue. Then down again. And up. And down. Working his cock as Horst drops to one knee beside me, jacking himself, his left hand caressing my smooth ass, as I lift myself up, spread my knees a little for balance. His thumb finds, lightly pushes on my hole. I push back to let him know fucking, finger or otherwise, is fine with me.

Are they going to take me this way? On all fours on the floor, Horst pounding my ass, Dieter fucking my face?

“Up.”

Apparently not.

Dieter leads the way to the bathroom. Shower on, the water so quickly hot I can see the steam curling up and away. He makes me step into it, get myself wet, while he stands and watches. He turns me around, shoves me against the wall. A soapy finger breaches my ass.

Fuck. I hate soap as lube. It burns. But it's not as if Dieter is giving me a choice. Two fingers, middle on top of first to get in, then spreading, scissoring as he fucks. Three. The triangle first, then side by side inside, twisting, turning, stretching me.

Horst turns off the water. Dieter gets into the tub, turns me again so I am facing the mirror. I don't need to be told to bend forward. He leans against the wall, getting his dick at just the right height.

“Fuck yourself on me.”

I reach behind. He is hard, leaking, but mostly dry. I take the risk of anger, and pick up the shower gel the hotel has so graciously provided. I twist

awkwardly, squeeze the bottle, work it on until he's slick. I'd rather not use it on my hole, but I know he won't buy the delay for "let me just get some really good lube out of my shaving kit, hmmm?"

Both of us lubed, I twist back again, watching my right arm stretch behind my back to grab his cock and hold it as I push my ass back, relying on my leg muscles and the precarious balance of my left hand on the tub's edge. I gasp as the wide knob pushes in and my ass clamps down on the top of the shaft. A moment, that's all I need, just a moment to get used to it, to relax just a little, but a sharp slap on my right butt cheek lets me know I'm stalling and he's not going to allow it.

I push back. Hard. Breach the second barrier as the pain slices up inside me. I can see the combination of agony and ecstasy on my face as he orders me to open my eyes and keep them open and watch as I fuck myself on him. And yes, I steal book titles during sex.

Bastard makes me do all the work, not caring how awkward the position is for me, the muscle strain for a not-strong-to-begin-with thirty-six-year-old. But if I want it, I have to do it. And I do. Overriding the pain, I pull my hips forward so he's still inside but just barely and then slam back down. I hope the fucker's balls hurt as they bang into mine.

I fuck myself harder, watching the sweat grow at my hairline, the way my face grimaces with lust, with an impending come, with something I don't want to recognize and so ignore, as the speed increases. I can see Horst out of the corner of my eye. Watching us. Jacking. Twisting his nipples one after the other.

Dieter starts muttering brutal obscenities in harsh German, knowing I will understand. He brings me closer and closer, until I scream "Fuck!" inside my head. And then I remember there are no Brethren to hear and report me, no Father, Grandfather, brothers to censor and censure me, I scream "Fuck me!" long and loud and come in large spurts that slime the curve of the tub, arc out and land on the bath mat. The hard clamping of my ass as I come brings Dieter off inside me. Horst's seed lands in his hand.

I see Horst start to lick his hand as I stop, panting. Both hands on the edge for balance now. I work through the not quite so painful process of getting his cock out. I want to collapse but he won't let me. I'm ordered to clean him. Screw it. Horst can take care of himself. I pull the curtain, turn the shower on. Wash us carefully. Ignore the pain inside me, from the depth, from the roughness, from the fucking soap.

I open the curtain, put one foot on the mat to stretch for one of the extra large, extra luxurious towels the Hyatt provides when you're spending as much money as I am. My sole naturally lands in my cooling come. A muttered, "Well, shit," leads to a snicker from Dieter. I wipe my foot on a spared spot on the mat. Step back in and dry us as carefully as I washed us.

We step out. I'm holding onto Dieter with my left hand, the towel dragging on the floor from my right.

And then I stand and stare, just stare, at what I see in a mirror that is stubbornly too unfogged to hide me. Six two. One eighty. A round face. A widow's peak receding hairline above a round face, the former a family trait that looks far better on the charismatic, the latter a sharp contrast to the chiseled good looks I alone did not inherit. Dark brown hair more than a few flecks of grey. Brown eyes that are unfortunately not so near-sighted that I can't see us all clearly. Clean-shaven. A nose that shows it was once broken. At fourteen. Father did not think the nose itself was sufficient punishment for being so stupidly inattentive that I tripped over my own feet and went head first into the wall of the boys' bathroom. Ten whacks with his favorite thick belt were appropriate. It would have been five had I been able to provide a reasonable explanation. I couldn't exactly bare my soul and explain I'd been distracted by the bulge in Mr. Jackson's slacks when he came in to yell at us for taking too long and to get out and back to class.

I blink, refocus my attention on my inventory.

An ordinary amount of hair under my arms, nothing to attract a man with a pits fetish. A bit of hair circling wide nipples that are, I discovered long ago, directly wired to my dick and balls. A slight treasure trail from belly button into the same dark brown pubes. Also with more than a few flecks of grey.

Damn it. A slight belly, the definite beginning of handles, both of which will go away as soon as I start exercising again. Although with no one to impress... I watch myself shrug.

Item, two balls, indifferent size; item, one cock, the same. Hairy legs, narrow feet with hair curling on the toes, just as it does on the back of my hands. Thank God (though only silently) that the hairy palms thing is a myth.

I look down at Dieter, over at Horst, up to eye myself as the letdown begins. As it always does when the first round of sex is over. As it did with Henri, Roy, Leon. With the others I'd bought on other trips.

I look at Dieter in my hand again, and then step forward and set the dildo on the counter. Flat, not standing on the suction cup.

Every time before, I have sworn that it would not happen again. But it always has.

This time is different. This time I do not swear. I know only too well that Dieter and Horst will use me as often as possible in my week here, though they will be safely locked away when I am out of the room. Perhaps they will use me at the same time, one in each of my holes. Perhaps one right after the other. A silicon mini-gang bang if I can work up two climaxes that quickly.

I have a rich fantasy life about the men I have sex with. Another God-given gift to offset the lack of reality.

At least no Brethren are here to hear and report my language offenses, to see and report the sexual offenses that would destroy me.

I have gotten good at hiding. Very good. Two point four decades of hiding from the day I first knew to now. And an infinity of hiding stretches out before me.

It is far too late. Nothing is going to change.

Too bad what Tony had, however brief it might have been, will never happen to me. No air humming, nothing coming. I know. Oh how I know there's nothing just out of my reach, somewhere else, on a beach. There's nothing tonight.

Nothing ever.

I am so fucked.

Which is, of course, the fucking point. I haven't been. Ever.

Except for the likes of Dieter and the others. But afterwards I abandon them, in hotel dumpsters, trash bins in airport toilets before boarding, other places. I've often wondered if any of them were found. Cleaned up. Adopted into a good home where they would be appreciated, used lovingly and well and often.

I pad naked into the room. Pick up the guest packet the bellman put on the desk. Open it. The usual glossy bravura about what I could do, would find, might appreciate without ever having to step outside into springtime in Berlin. I repress the urge to hum that song from *The Producers*. Even carefully hidden queers can enjoy musicals, provided they do so in the closet.

Okay. Club Olympus on the roof. I'll start my workout regimen. Soon.

An envelope slips out of the folder. I pick it up. My name is hand-written on the front in beautiful calligraphy. Inside is an invitation. The Deutsches Historisches Museum is having a fund-raising gala in the main ballroom. A silent auction (no hot young men, unfortunately) with the results announced at midnight. An open bar, as well it should be when the tickets cost five hundred euros apiece. I am, however, to be a guest of the hotel if I wish to attend. Black tie is preferred but not required.

The Priestley men automatically carry black tie attire with them. Perhaps I'll go. Getting drunk in my room will cost me; playing dress up for free booze is a much preferable alternative.

\*\*\*\*

*Then—Saturday evening***JEAN-LUC**

My head itches.

Well, fuck. Or since I am once again French, and currently a Parisian, perhaps I should think “*Bien, merde.*”

But I have become so accustomed to thinking in English over the years, and then translating the words into my other languages before they hit the air, that perhaps it should be a combination thought. *Well, fuck! et bien, merde!*

The witches had their pricking thumbs to warn of incoming wickedness. Others have hair on the nape of the neck stand up, or along the arms, or just a hollowness in the gut, a certainty of... something... imminent.

I can't even be like Tony and just have the feeling, *believe* the feeling, that I have a miracle *due*, that it's out there, only just out of reach, somewhere near, coming here, maybe tonight.

Instead, my head itches.

It has served me well, that itching. In the wars. In my work. In simple survival. And long ago, but far too late, I learned not to give in, not to scratch, no matter if it feels as though my scalp has been rubbed with a thousand poison ivy leaves, with no Calamine lotion or other soothing liquid or paste at hand. Poor Franco learned my tell, relied on it, believed that if I was not scratching nothing was headed toward us, he was safe, we were safe. And one night after I had sworn to myself I would not scratch, would remain dignified but alert to whatever was inbound, one night after I had sworn an oath that I did not share, Franco darted ahead of me, all eagerness to get home. My enemies sprang the trap on him instead of me and he died for my sin.

No one since has relied on that signal but me.

It began when our Air France jet touched down at Tegel, at an amazingly on-time 11:50 this morning. I thought at first something would happen at the airport, but realized the itching was far too mild.

It has merely gotten progressively worse through the day. If it did not quite go away entirely as I fucked Philippe into the mattress in our room, requiring us to shower again, to another mutual satisfaction, at least it was not distracting me.

As it is now.

Ah, well, at least Philippe does not suspect.

Or perhaps he does. My warrior, my wounded warrior, notices more than he lets on.

The lobby is nearly full. Some church or other is having a conference here; there is a business group having a convention, and the museum is having a fund-raiser tonight. Dr. Jouvert gave me his ticket when he decided to stay in Paris and work, preparing to be prepared for our next mission. I wonder if somewhere in this loud, glittering mob with its Babel of tongues—would Miss Heyer call this a sad crush?—is the something, the someone that is headed my way. I refuse to search.

The refusal lasts perhaps fifteen seconds. I am at least subtle in examining my environment.

Philippe looks good in the Boss tuxedo I insisted on buying for him once I was certain the vacation was possible. He didn't want it, didn't want me to spend money that would only go to waste, since we will part soon. The little Swiss gnomes who keep a good part of my money secure know I have more than enough to buy a thousand of these tuxedos and not feel a pinch, and money on a tuxedo that molds itself to a man as ruggedly handsome as my Philippe cannot possibly be wasted, even if, as is likely, he will only wear it this one time.

We click our glasses, sip. Smile just a little. You would have to be incredibly stupid not to see us and understand we are together, not merely standing side by side. And while he is still mine, I do not care who knows. His brothers in the Brigade des Forces Spéciales Terre knew and did not care what made his cock happy, so long as he could kill and kill efficiently, when needed. Médecins Sans Frontières, my current employer, has as little care, so long as my medical skills, and they are many, save lives and limbs whenever

possible, regardless of the conditions which surround us. Actually, I believe that if Dr. Jouvert saw a horse fucking me the night before we were scheduled to fly out, he would merely inquire whether I would be able to sit comfortably on the plane or would I need a special seat.

I save a great many lives, so he has reason not to care about how my cock is entertained.

Jouvert is unaware, I believe, that at times I ease certain ones into death when they do not wish to be brought back from the brink, when their voices or their souls beg, "Let me go." And then there are the others. I do not wish to bring trouble to him, to MSF, as I do what needs to be done, what must be done. Would he balance the scales and look the other way, if he *knew*, not merely suspected? I will not put him in that position and so I exercise the caution that has been a part of me for all these years.

For a moment my thoughts distract me from the urge to vigorously scrub my fingernails, or perhaps a floor brush with stiff bristles, over every inch of my scalp. This has not happened in a long time. And the times before that were this intense always involved imminent danger, which I at least understood, since I was in a war zone, or heading to one, or doing something for my then government (I am serially patriotic) that would or might put my life at risk. Though it is very hard to kill me. Very.

Business wars, social wars, sports wars, the wars of every-day life swirl around us, around the hotel, the city. Nothing out of the ordinary. Nothing that hints of personal danger. And given the guest lists at the events tonight, the various law enforcement and security bureaus, departments, and agencies overt and covert, are not going to permit a terrorist attack on the hotel.

Damn. I am not used to uncertainty.

Philippe leans into me a little, just a quick brush of his arm. Not so very long ago that affection would have been impossible. We sip again. My eyes are restless, though with long practice, my searching is not obvious.

Very well, more obvious than I had believed, as Philippe whispers in my ear, "Moving on already?"



A flare of annoyance goes up and off in my mental sky as I look up at him. Part of it is the looking up. I am forever fixed at precisely five feet eight and three-quarter inches, naked and barefoot, which is, of course, the best way to be for measuring anything. Philippe is six four.

The annoyance vanishes as I realize he has seen something. Something the security teams—men and women who are so very visible to Philippe and me, and invisible to everyone else, well, except for the soldiers in uniform, carrying the most recent Heckler & Koch assault rifles—should know?

No. He tilts his head just slightly, directing my attention across the room, assuming I will understand, and see what he sees.

I do.

Philippe murmurs in a tone I don't quite understand, "Yon Cassius has a not-quite lean, and well-fucked look, don't you think?"

The "Cassius" on the steps, his tux as well-tailored as ours, is looking out over the room, his face illuminated as if the lighting designer for this little scene had created a special effect that would probably not be noticeable to anyone other than someone standing where we stood, and only there. For just an instant I see a kind of wistfulness, a kind of loneliness, and then it is gone, replaced by the look of a man accustomed to power, poised and in complete control.

He inhales, turns his head, and stops. He looks at me. I cannot possibly know it is me, not *us*, not at this distance, but I am utterly certain.

And the itching stops.

## JONATHAN

This is my day for what-the-fucks.

Even at this distance, the man is impossible to ignore, primarily because of the contrast. Shorter than the man beside him, the Cassius-looking-one poured into that tux. My starrer—is that even a word?—is five eight, five nine. Thick, wavy black hair. From here, a wide, black Magic Marker slash of eyebrows in a straight line parallel to that wide mouth with its thin lips. Deep-set eyes.

With that coloring, are they black? Brown? I cannot tell. Up close I could. But I won't. Get close.

Features hewn from a collection of rocks dug up from nowhere important and crushed together, to make a face a peasant mother was undoubtedly the first to love. The basic rock formation goes well with his broad, broad shoulders, which make him look shorter than he actually is. A big chest. Huge, I think in my best *Pretty Woman* knock-off tone. That chest *has* to be hairy. God would not be so unfair as to provide this new reality-show jackoff fantasy to me, only to give him a smooth chest. If Cassius was poured, someone painted *his* tux on.

The man should be in a field, with leather straps around his naked chest, *pulling* the damned plow himself, not here. He is nothing like the men who fill my fantasies, whose imaginary cocks fill my ass and mouth, or come on my face, chest, belly, back. Nothing I admire or lust after. And still I keep staring, wondering who he is.

He is definitely not one of the inbred aristocrats with which Europe is littered, in business and out. Nevertheless, his presence shouts money. Old money. *Very* old money. With a bullhorn. In a silent cathedral. A Priestley *always* recognizes money. The one gene we all share.

Are they strangers happening to stand together, drinking? No. There is something more. Friends. Lovers, perhaps. Lucky bastards. And with that beside him he's staring at *me*?

Thus my what-the-fuck.

Odd.

A flash must have gone off somewhere near. The light reflects off "my" peasant's eyes.

## JEAN-LUC

Philippe steps in front of me, blocking my view. I'm ready to snarl at him, until he says the magic words.

*"Tes yeux, mon ami."*

I close my eyes for the shortest possible interval, to regain the control I do not ever recall losing before tonight, the control I was not even aware I *was* losing tonight.

I open my eyes, silently express my appreciation. Philippe knows me unusually well. He steps aside.

“My” man is gone.

Well, fuck, *et bien merde*.

And also... what the fuck! My warning signal does a Hradani berserker on me for that?

“Your head doesn’t itch any more.”

It is a statement, not a question, and I barely manage not to show my shock. I slowly turn to him.

How does this man know me so well? Only six weeks since he’d shown up at my home, exhausted, thin, grey-skinned, shaking. Begging me, the moment I opened the door and confirmed my name, to kill him as I had killed Bernard, his sergeant, in that Syrian hovel, three months earlier. To ease him into death as I had eased Bernard forever away from the agonies the IED had left behind.

I denied and declined, but let him in, in case I changed my mind. And now we are here, and he is tall and strong and clear-eyed. Yet we both know we have so little time left together. This week, a few days more at most. The dam is weakening, and there is no hot young Dutch man to plug the first leak. Or the rest that will quickly follow.

He takes my look when I turn as a question. He shrugs. “Until today, you have never touched your head once you are dressed. Hell, not even after sex when I’ve managed to thoroughly mess it up. Yet you started the moment we landed. You were getting up, head bent to avoid the bin, and you stopped. Held still, lifted your hand, fingers curled as if to scratch, and then you paused, flattened your hand, stroked your palm over your hair.”

He smiles at my deliberately bland expression. Winks. “You’ve done that off and on throughout the day, and you never seem to be aware you’re doing it. Though you are always so aware of your surroundings otherwise.”

Aware? Given my life, it is dangerous *not* to be aware of what is around me, not to be aware of what I am doing at all times.

I shrug as if the matter is no importance, turn to get the bartender's attention, and order us another pair of drinks from my bottle. Philippe shakes his head. Fine. No need to share.

It is an insult to fine whiskey to gulp it down. I insult the last of the Old Pulteney 40 Year Old single malt in my glass. Then hold the glass out for a refill to the brim with the last of my sixteen hundred euros. This time it is a two-gulp insult.

I briefly wish that once, just once, the alcohol would do something more than taste good, bad, indifferent, beyond brilliant. My wish is not granted. It never has been. But I have long since perfected the appearance of being a bit squiffy, as Bertie used to say he was, right before he dropped his drawers and I put it to his royal arse. There is a fine distinction between squiffed and well-sloshed. I have perfected that distinction. I signal for the bill, sign, pull out my money clip, and hand three hundred-euro notes to the bartender. From his expression, I've grossly over tipped for the service of opening a bottle of whisky and pouring a few drinks. But he doesn't offer to refund any of it. Smart man.

“Shall we dance?”

He lifts one eyebrow. Peasants never seem to have the innate ability to do that. Or perhaps aristocratic shits are taught skills like annihilating the hoi and the polloi, the riff and the raff, with an eyebrow. By supercilious cunts in a secret school somewhere, like Luxembourg.

He smirks. “Who leads?”

I do my invisible single eyebrow lifting. “Who the fuck do you think?”

We head to the ballroom.

I'm sure he'll be there.

\*\*\*\*

*Then—Very early Sunday morning*

**JEAN-LUC**

Philippe is asleep. Deeply so. Coming in his mouth, coming in his ass, certainly helped. He loves being used, my warrior, temporarily giving up the visible control and authority he always has to maintain as a captain, even a former captain, in the French special forces. I eased him deeper into sleep before I dressed and left. But I cannot leave him alone too long.

I am hungry. I snacked a little in the ballroom. A little here, a little there. But I need, no, I want something more.

I find it, just off the kitchen, where no one notices what I steal. Not a full meal, of course, but enough to take the edge off the wanting.

Enough to help me deal with the other wanting.

\*\*\*\*

*Then—Late Sunday morning***JONATHAN**

This is bullshit. This is not happening.

We saw each other. That should have been it. I got some jackoff material, he got whatever it was he got or didn't get out of that look. End of story. Life and the Brethren, the peasant and his lean and handsome Cassius, me and my jackoff fantasies, we just go on.

They did go on from the lobby. To the ballroom I was in. I felt something tug at me, turned my head, and there they were. Weaving their way through the crowd towards me. They stopped only a few feet away, the peasant staring across the empty space between us. I have seen Father stare at people in that way. The stare of a greedy collector, a stare that says "Mine!" before he moves in for the kill, adding a new donor, a new member to the roster. But I am not his, won't... can't... ever be, so even though my cock hardens with the additional fantasy of "he wants me", "he came looking for me", I deny myself the pleasure of checking his groin to see what I can see.

Peripherally, I see Cassius watching the two of us, a subtle Ping-Pong serve and return of glances, a slight smile on his lips over whatever it is that he sees in the ping and the pong.

The song that had been playing ends. In the silence the peasant says, without looking at Cassius, "Shall we dance?"

The man, who should be in one of the camouflage uniforms with the large weapons scattered around the edges of the room, replies with a mocking, "*Pourquoi, je pensais que vous ne demanderiez jamais. Mais attendez, vous avez déjà fait. Dans le hall d'entrée. Et je l'ai déjà dit oui. Faire en sorte que d'une chose sûre?*"

In my mind, I translate it into a sarcastic Southern drawl. "Why, ah thought you'd nevah ask. Oh, wait. Y'already did. In the lobby. And ah said 'yes.' Makin' sure of a sure thing?"

The peasant growls like... well, just like you'd expect a peasant to growl. And at the first notes he spins to his right, Cassius neatly side-stepping to avoid being knocked to the floor. He puts his left forearm out, parallel to the floor, Cassius lays his right on top, and they head to where the other dancers are beginning to get in place. Moses could not have parted the Red Sea of the rich so well as they move to the center.

Flaunting themselves. Dancing! In public. And the peasant probably paid the orchestra to play *The Blue Danube*. It should have been laughable. A peasant and an aristocrat waltzing, with the shorter peasant leading. It should have been humiliating. Both to dance and to watch.

I was appalled by it, offended.

And as mesmerized as everyone else.

They might as well have been Fred and Ginger dancing the Continental, the way the crowd pushed back to watch them. And it wasn't that competition ballroom crap with elbows out, and head tilted just so, bodies even more so, and the faces expressionless because rigor mortis has long since set in. Shades of *Strictly Ballroom*.

This, however, this was... *real*. Breathtakingly real. They moved together as if the sole reason for their existence was to dance this dance, and there was nothing the slightest bit absurd or effeminate about the taller man following, though Joshua would have mocked them to his entourage had he been there to watch, and then built a sermon around them. Not an affirmative one.

They looked the way you expect a waltz to look, an easy one-two-three, one-two-three rotation, starting to make the circle of the open space. But that was only the first minute or so, as if they were settling in to themselves, to the rhythm of the pairing.

And then they... exploded. It wasn't dancing just for fun, or to shock the crowd. This was two men having sex, standing up, not even touching except for the three primary points: the peasant's large hairy left hand holding Cassius' more slender right, Cassius' left hand on the peasant's shoulder, the peasant's large right hand splayed just left of center on Cassius' lower back.

The patronesses of Almack's were right so long ago, believing the waltz to be obscene, refusing for so long to permit it. It was disgraceful.

It made me hard.

Think of two people dancing the most beautiful, complex waltz you have ever seen, ever heard of. Amplify that by several orders of magnitude and you might, you *might* come close to what we saw last night. Just the two of them, circling that space in figures and patterns, filling it so well you knew instinctively there was no room for any other dancers. And then the circling became a spiral, tighter and tighter and tighter until it ended back at the center where they had begun, with the peasant bending Cassius back and back and back into a dip, his head nearly touching the floor, motionless.

The bastards might as well have been kissing, they were so close, and they held it forever, before my peasant straightened them up precisely far enough ahead of the last strains of music for them to separate, left hand still holding right, release, and a brief bow to each other on the very last note. A brief nod to the watchers before they turned to walk off the floor, side by side, to thunderous applause, even shouts and whistles from this crowd of wealth and jaded sophistication.

I managed not to be Lesley Ann Warren when Victoria turns out to be Victor, controlling myself and allowing only a single "bravo!" to escape my lips, despite a momentary urge to make it a mocking "brava!"

I stopped clapping long before the rest, before they even reached the space that had again opened up for them, an exit aisle with an invisible red carpet. I realized what a fool I had been. How many phones were in that room? That dance would be on YouTube in minutes. Viral in hours. And I did not need to be seen by any of the Brethren cheering and applauding two men dancing. Especially not *that* dance. I can sell my presence as unwitting, unwilling; I can make them believe that excuse if they call me on it. But there is nothing the Brethren generally, my family particularly, will accept as an excuse for my approval.

I wiped my expression, leaving nothing that would draw attention to me as the peasant and his partner reached the edge of the crowd. I reminded myself I



was disgusted by their behavior. Not jealous of their freedom. Not jealous of Cassius for being where... I did *not* want to be except for a mental aberration a moment ago. How could I be jealous? I did not know the peasant's name; I knew nothing about him except that look we shared earlier. And the more recent one.

Then I laughed at myself where it wouldn't be seen. The reality is, had I been Cassius in my—no, in *the* peasant's arms—I would have tripped or stumbled or done something unsurprisingly, for me, awkward, and we would have been flat on our asses with the audience in hysterics somewhere within the first minute.

The other reality is that even if I could dance that way, *that* dance would have destroyed me, devastated my family, damaged the Brethren. Father's listing of the priorities of concern would of course put the Brethren first and me last.

The circle was slowly refilling, reshaping itself as another song began and dancers moved in to reclaim their territory. The peasant turned and looked at me. No hesitation, no searching, just a turn and stare. Not long, just long enough for him to know I knew he was looking at me. Marking me somehow. The bastard winked, turned, and they were gone.

And now he is here. Behind me somewhere, though I will not look. Alone. Have I suddenly acquired p-dar—the “p” for “peasant” of course—that I can tell he has arrived, and without Cassius glued to his side? My *harumph* is of course mental. Yon Cassius, the lean, is probably well-fucked in their bed, too exhausted to move. I wonder how...

I turn my attention back to the senior member of de le Becque's delegation, still unaware of what is descending on him, and the treasurer from the church in Hamburg. They are both handsome men. So much so that it is almost as if I called them this morning to be my guests, so that if my peasant showed up for breakfast he would see that I, too, have not one, but two, handsome men admiring me, listening carefully to my every word. He does not have to know it is more the subject of millions—a mark, a yen, a buck or a pound—that focuses their attention.

I insert myself back into the conversation as if I had not mentally vanished for a little time, and... *religiously*... do not look at the man somewhere behind me. Though if I did turn, I could find him without having to search for the peasant I can't have, whose every move adds another layer of complexity and depth to the fantasies I will weave about him with a dildo in my ass that will be, in my mind, the precise size of his cock.

## JEAN-LUC

He knows I am here, even though his back is to the entrance. I don't think he realizes that he stiffened just a little the moment I came in.

The one seated to his left is tall and ruggedly handsome in a gym-rat kind of way. The other, opposite him, is more on the beautiful side. It is some remark of his that has my very own Cassius—an inauspicious name but Philippe planted it in my mind and it won't leave until I know the real one—speaking animatedly, his face alight.

Some brief interruption from Tall, a few words from Beautiful, and then Cassius laughs. A rich laugh, not loud, not intended to fan out across the restaurant, but it does in one of those odd moments when everyone in a room stops talking, other noises vanish, and the space is utterly quiet.

That laugh rings like a great bell, bringing smiles to the faces of everyone here, guests, staff, and the three people who are at just that instant passing behind me. For the length of his laugh, for a moment longer, we are somehow a family sharing joy. But no such sharing can last, not among strangers, and so they all turn their heads back, resume conversations, glasses clink, silverware clatters on china, the observers, all but me, sharing a slight sense of shame over public openness.

My Cassius has no such shame. That laugh is going to sing in my dreams, and I do not dream. Have not for more years than I care to remember.

I select a table close enough for my excellent hearing to be useful.

Ah. His name is Priestley. An unusual enough name that I should be able to track him down even on my own. Better yet, there is nothing between these

men, given the formality of the Monsieur Priestley from Tall; Herr Priestley from Beautiful.

They are talking... money. Church money. My Priestley, whose first name I will discover, is not a priest, of that I am certain, yet even if... I can make him break his vows, become so very un-priestly in all but name. It is not as if I haven't done it before.

They are going to services soon. I contemplate following them only briefly. I want to enjoy this week, not be responsible for damaging a church with the inevitable bolt of lightning to indicate the Lord's displeasure at my crossing one of His thresholds.

They are getting up to go. I rise and accidentally, so very, very accidentally get in his way. He steps back to avoid an imminent collision. Too bad. It would have been an enjoyable collision. For both of us.

"Mr. Priestley." I hold out my hand, not palm down so he can grasp it as a lover, a might-be lover, should, just an ordinary handshake.

The others do not notice the fear that flashes briefly in his eyes and then vanishes beneath the control. "I beg your pardon?"

His voice is a model of an icily professional "Who the fuck are you and why are you talking to me?" Although I could give him lessons, plan on giving him lessons, in ice... and other things.

I leave my hand where it is. "We met last night." Seeing each other from opposite sides of the lobby. Last night, when he looked at me and applauded the outrageous display I made of myself with that dance after I felt his presence, after I paid the orchestra to play *The Blue Danube*. When I walked us up to him, to make sure he knew where his attention should be. When I winked at him after all was danced and done. "We were not properly introduced."

If my hand stays untouched much longer, Tall and Beautiful will believe I have invisible leprosy. He has no polite choice. He shakes it, a business shake, as brief as possible. No swelling of music in the background. No Hitchcock

fireworks to symbolize one or both of us coming. But still. Something. And he knows it.

Well, hell. The bastard, lovely, lovely bastard that he is, has the eyebrow-lift down pat. Did he go to school with Philippe? They are of an age. “And you are...?” his eyebrow inquires.

“Jean-Luc.” Only a slight pause, but I do it often at present. “Picard.”

That surprises a smile from him, quickly guillotined.

“No relation. And unfortunately, I do not command a starship, just a medical team. I work with Médecins sans Frontière.” I do him the courtesy of expecting him to understand the French, rather than offering him the English version.

“Ah.”

The universal noise when someone does not know precisely what to say, precisely how to escape.

“I could not help but overhear you are on your way to church. I wish I could accompany you. It would probably do my soul good, but unfortunately I have other... *plans*... this morning.”

He notices the tiny accent on “plans.” The other two do not. I nod politely to Tall and Beautiful, including them but not seeking introductions.

“Perhaps we will meet again. I would like to learn more about... your work.”

The man who is not yet mine, but will be soon, again picks up on the hesitation, this time the one that converted “you” to “your”.

“Yes, well, anything is possible, even if improbable. I will be very busy today, and with the conference all week, luncheons, evening meetings, before returning to the States.”

Busy, busy man. He has accounted for all his time, leaving no time for me. There. He has put me in my place. And without offering me his first name in return. But he isn't thinking about dinners, especially late and private ones. I am. A bed in someone's room, his or mine. A toilet stall if we are quick

enough, but with him, I do not want quick and quasi-public. Although, now that I think of it, if he is at all adventurous behind the church-driven façade, it could happen. I could make it happen.

Another polite smile from me as I step aside. A slight gesture towards the escape hatch, though fortunately he will not be required to slide down, merely walk. “Enjoy your day, gentlemen.”

## **JONATHAN**

Bastard!

I chant it several times as I make my... as I leave the restaurant.

Picard? Really? He is more of a Lieutenant Worf, with the shoulders and the chest.

Him and his damned plans. Plans to refuel himself and then head back to his Cassius, plans to walk in and strip off his clothes, tossing them anywhere. He'll let Cassius kiss him, play with the thick fur on his chest, before turning Cassius on his belly, dropping spit on his hole, and...

Damn. Triple damn. A hard-on heading for church is not a good idea.

I evade their polite questions about Dr. Picard, fobbing them off with having met so many people last night as Father's and Grandfather's representative, that I simply did not remember him. I force a chuckle over how I would have remembered him, given his name, if we had in fact been introduced.

\*\*\*\*

*Then—A little after ten, Wednesday evening.*

## JONATHAN

I manage—just—not to slam the door in their fucking collective faces.

I did *not* order room service. Which is what I open the door to tell the waiter after he knocked and announced himself. And here they all are. The waiter with his serving cart, covered in a crisp white cloth, holding a linen napkin, two small crystal flute glasses, and a cooler filled with ice. And a bottle of Stoli Elit, just starting to show moisture as it had obviously been in a freezer.

My favorite vodka. A subject I have mentioned to no one since my arrival.

Behind the waiter, my peasant and his Cassius.

I focus on Cassius, standing to the right of the waiter, directly in my line of sight. He is indeed lean, now that I see him without his tux. He is wearing a white T-shirt that showcases his pecs, his nipples visibly straining at the cloth, and picks up every ripple of his abs since he is standing perfectly still. Muscular in a Cassius-appropriate lean sort of way, but there is a hint of gauntness about him. It's in his eyes, too, and in the slight hollow of his cheeks. Low-slung leather pants so soft and so tight the whole world can see he dresses right and isn't circumcised. Boots of some sort, black, naturally.

His eyes smile at me, just a little. I guess the exhausted-looking lawyer, with his tousled hair, wireless reading glasses, barefoot in jeans with a carelessly left-open robe that reveals his lack of pecs, lack of abs, and presence of slightly furry belly in all their *not* glory, calls for some amusement.

I do not look at the peasant. Refuse to look at him. A moment ago, my eyes slid past him en route from the waiter to Cassius, without ever seeing him or acknowledging him, and they can do the same on the way back to the waiter. They do. I'm almost through with this.

I begin to explain to the waiter in German that there has been a mistake, I did not order room service. But I get only a few words in when Picard the

Prick, my new name for him, interrupts with a very faux “*Quelle surprise, Monsieur Priestley. Is this your room?*”

A Chinese child of two, with no knowledge of English or French, would understand how *faux* that surprise is.

“What do you want?” My tone is surly, in part because I’m pissed (glad?) that he’s stalking me, in part because I have no choice but to look at him.

And drool. A disgusting amount of drool that only I can see and feel slobbering out of my briefly gaping mouth.

Yes! He does have a hairy chest. Much of it is visible since he’s wearing a faded blue plaid shirt—who the hell wears plaid?—that’s only buttoned one button up from the wide black leather belt with the intricate silver buckle, a belt that has no functional reason for being on his body since someone... Cassius?... got out the so-pale-blue-it’s-practically-white paint, and brushed on a pair of faux jeans. An excellent painter. He got the image of ripped knees just right. And the tiny, tiny, will-it-rip-bigger-tonight-or-not rip just where his dressed-left, clearly commando, uncut cock rests a good number of inches down his thigh. Black trainers, no socks.

“Why, nothing, Mr. Priestley. Jonathan. We just... happened to be passing by when you opened the door.”

“Happened” my aching ass. Well, the ass that would *like* to be aching from his cock. Cassius, too. Does that make me a slut?

He looks down at the vodka, the cart. Absent-mindedly one thick-fingered hand reaches up inside the shirt to scratch a non-existent itch by his left armpit, and then the fucker twists his left nipple. Someone gives a slight gasp. Thank God it’s the waiter.

I spare a glance at the waiter whose loose trousers are nevertheless visibly tented. Not as well-tented as Picard the Prick and Cassius would be, of course.

“You still haven’t answered me.”

“I don’t want anything, Jonathan.”

And how does he know my first name? We’ve never been introduced.

“But since we are here, do you have plans this evening? Perhaps you’d care to...”

Another fucking faux pause as he “realizes” there are two glasses on the cart. “Oh, you do have plans. Someone is joining...”

“Yes!”

Okay, that was just plain stupid. Pathetic, even. Like I didn’t want him thinking that I was so... what was that word? oh, yes... pathetic that I couldn’t even find a man willing to spend an evening, a night, with me.

“Well, then, how about asking him to throw on some clothes and the four of us can go have some fun together?” He even managed to make it sound like he meant it.

Fucker.

At the rate I was swearing since the first moment I saw him, even just inside my head, I was inevitably going to do it in front of the Brethren.

And the fucker knew... *knew*... there was no one inside my room. Knew I didn’t order room service. Probably set it up this way just to humiliate me.

So with as much dignity as I could muster, I answered him. “Thanks, but I think... *we’ll* just stay in tonight. You two have fun.”

I could swear that just for a moment there was regret in his eyes. Regret that a staid lawyer accountant with a body to match wasn’t going to join two rugged, handsome men as they went cruising for fresh meat? I’m imagining things.

I open the door wider, tell the bewildered, still-stiff waiter to bring the cart in. If he is hoping for anything other than the indecently large tip I give him, considering I am somewhat visibly plumped up, too, from the mouth- and cock-watering display in the hall, he is doomed to modest disappointment. I’d have to look like Picard the Prick or Cassius to rise to the level of great disappointment.

I have to get up early to start another day of religious and financial infighting, as well as dealing with my brother. As tempting as the full, still



extremely cold bottle is, I only have a couple of shots. Perhaps three. Or four. It relaxes me enough that with Horst buried in my ass, and my mind pretending it's my peasant, I manage to come enough to take the edge off and actually slide into a reasonably deep sleep.

Marred only by dreams of me on the outside, always on the outside, no matter what "inside" consists of.

\*\*\*\*

*Then—Four a.m. Thursday morning***JEAN-LUC**

Philippe is asleep. The gentle, deep sleep of the insanely well-fucked.

Not that I can lay claim to be the cause of that sleep. I was only the last, although by any reasonably objective standard, his best fuck of the night. That comes with knowing his body, his soul, so very well.

He decided Wednesday afternoon when we talked about what to do for the next few days of our stay, deliberately avoiding the main issue, that he wanted to go cruising tonight. To Tramps, where men in leather and jeans and uniforms gather; Tom's Bar, with its infamous basement dark room, and the Greifbar with its equally infamous winding dark room, and cabins that look like American portable toilets.

He wanted to be a slut for a night. And as I am his personal wish-granting foundation, I agreed. It's not as if he can be hurt by it, not any more, not any long-term hurt. And I will be there to prevent anything immediate. He does not have the strength he did before the ambush, before we met in the desert, even I cannot work that kind of miracle in the time we have had, the time we have left. But he has enough strength to do this.

Most important of all, it is something he wants. He has had sex with multiple men before. Who has not? But always in charge. Tonight he wants something different, to feel what it is like to have the attention of those multiple men, whose only interest in him is in getting their rocks off.

My beautiful Philippe. He got all that. And more.

Tom's Bar was unusually crowded for the middle of the week, and the doorman decided, since we were unknown to him, clearly not regulars, that no matter how well our images, our *reality*, fit in with the place, we should be the recipients of the restrictive and humiliating door policies the guide books warn about.

No one restricts or humiliates me. Ever. Long ago I had sworn, without any god as my witness, "Never again." I leaned in close, placed my left hand on

his shoulder and squeezed. People assume because of my size that I am strong. They have no fucking idea.

I kept my voice low, so only he could hear me, as I explained the new facts of life, *his* new reality; that if he whimpered or called out, I'd rip his fucking arm out of its fucking socket, or just crush it; that we were going in, and were going to enjoy ourselves, without trouble from him or anyone inside; that if there was trouble, even if he was not responsible, I would track him down and make sure he understood the meaning of "Don't fuck with me, boy." All in perfect German.

I don't think the next few men wanting to get in had any problems, but I am sure he took out his humiliation on others later. Not my problem.

We stopped for drinks. Beer for both of us, assessing the crowd as they assessed us, chests, bellies, arms, thighs, cocks, asses. We passed muster. As if there was ever a doubt. We emptied half of our bottles, and I put my hand on his crotch, squeezed enough to make him squirm, starting the show. Curtain's up. Dim the lights. We've got nothing to hit but the depths... as in the darkroom down below. As I lead the way, Philippe's now-larger bulge still attached to my very large hand, I briefly acknowledge two men I had picked out. If they were too stupid to figure out where I was going, what I was offering (whether Philippe only, or me, or both), and didn't follow, they were too stupid to include. They weren't too stupid.

The darkroom was almost literally that, but with enough very, very dim red or blue lights to allow a hint of visibility to the proceedings. Men tend to be visual when they're having sex, although also perverse enough to enjoy total darkness where no one can actually know it's you doing all those obscene things.

"He needs to be fucked," I quietly told our followers, whose mouths had dropped open as my Philippe peeled off his tee and handed it to me, then unbuttoned the pants, shoved them to his ankles and bent forward, hands on his knees. He has a mouth-watering ass, even if you're not into rimming. They grope themselves, look to me.

"Mouth or ass?"

Two holes, no waiting. No fighting, either, as one says “mouth” and the other says “ass.” No argument, either, as I hand the ass-fucker a condom. Philippe is already well-lubed.

The ass-fucker moans a prayer of thanksgiving to Christ and whatever god he believes in, for the tightness and the heat. The mouth-fucker joins the litany of praise for the skill with which he’s getting sucked. Aware that a man who looks like the meanest motherfucker in any valley on the planet, a look enhanced by the darkness that hangs around my shoulders, could change his mind at any moment and deprive them of their pleasures, they make the logical decision that right there, right then, a fast come was required.

The ass-fucker was considerate, though. He reached around and began stroking Philippe’s hard cock, but I stopped him. “Just use him. He’ll come when I tell him to.” He nodded and began stroking faster, as did the second man. In a minute or less they were exhausted and panting, and pleasantly surprised at how their evening had started. Although from the way the one who got the blowjob was almost frantically putting himself back together, perhaps he had had second thoughts, and so this was the beginning and ending of his night out.

Philippe straightened up, twisted to relieve the inevitable muscle tension from the position. I rubbed his only slightly puffy lips with a thumb. “More?” I ask him quietly, ignoring the men who had followed and watched and were hesitant to move in, to ask for a turn.

“Yes, please.” The smirk in his eyes told me the tone of a little child begging for another treat, a second, third, twelfth, lolly, was deliberate.

I picked another two men, a pair that Philippe might never have tricked with, prowling on his own, men who in all likelihood would not have much of a chance under normal circumstances to sex a man who looks like my Philippe. I sometimes extend my grant-a-wish benevolence to men not under my direct care and protection. These two took turns on his ass, one with Philippe bent over, nuzzling my crotch and grabbing onto my hips for balance; the second with Philippe up against the wall.

Another two were offered his mouth, my temporarily submissive warrior down on his bare knees on a floor that wasn't likely to have been clean to start with, but was unlikely to be the kind of mess it would be later.

I ended it then. Surprisingly, the last man to get sucked offered to take care of Philippe. He almost... *almost*... made it sound like an altruistic offer, instead of being the offer of an experienced sucker who liked the feel and taste and smell of cock down his throat. We put ourselves back together, went upstairs to drink another beer apiece. Twelve euros was a reasonable price to pay for that much sex.

Tramps was next. Not quite as active, no darkroom, but a toilet stall worked quite well for the bear who fucked him while Philippe sucked me.

We wound up at Greifbar, with its winding darkroom, and the cabins that look like bright blue plastic porta potties. I opened the door to one of the cabins, took his tee out of my back pocket, folded it, put it on the floor in front of the folding chair, and made him kneel there, his naked ass toward the hallway, his ankles and feet outside the door frame. Three men in—two ass, one mouth—he began to slump and I knew he'd reached his limit.

I put my hand on the shoulder of the fairly bulky, bulging muscles, not-well-inked, shirtless man who had just slid home. "*Es tut mir leid, mein Freund, er hat, zu stoppen.*"

Drink makes stupid men even more stupid. He snarled at me, "When I'm done with the bitch's cunt."

There in the mostly dark, amidst the smells of men and sweat and beer and piss and come and poppers and pot, were there any witches and warlocks whose thumbs pricked just then? Any whose hair, nape or arms, quivered and stood on end? A gut that told its owner it was time to get the fuck outa there?

Humans gave up their sensitivity in exchange for their humanity, but sometimes the animal just beneath the surface comes up and warns of a nearby predator. An imminent predator. An eight hundred pound monster if a *Smilodon populator*, pissed off and ready to use the long, curved fangs to rip your body open from chest to belly and enjoy your entrails. The animal had no chance to warn stupid. My hand was around his throat and I squeezed, with a

surgeon's precision backed by that saber tooth strength. Not enough to crush his larynx, not enough to rip out his throat. Though I could have, even without claws.

My voice was soft, deadly. I didn't know if those who had been waiting in line could hear, but given that the nearest ones had shoved their way back, though still sticking around in case there was a major or even a minor train wreck to watch, I doubted it. "This *man* is mine. Not a bitch. Not a cunt. And no one touches him if I say no. What do you think I just said?"

From the awful sounds trying to fight their way out of his mouth I understood him to repeat my "no" with some degree of fervency. Over the years I have become well able to translate strangled noises when a hand, usually mine, is on a throat. Or a garrote. I squeezed again, just enough to make certain he would have difficulty speaking for at least a day, perhaps longer.

I released him and he fell back on his ass, scuttling backward on hands and butt and heels, his soft, condom-covered cock dangling, getting away from the suddenly, terrifyingly *real* bogeyman. I stepped out of the cabin, felt Philippe pulling his legs up, sliding onto his side. I did my best Cerberus imitation, and the watchers found reasons to look elsewhere for sex.

I gathered my Philippe up, tilted him against the wall, got his clothes back on him. Put my arms around him, even allowing him to rest his head on top of mine, letting him absorb strength from me. "*Je suis tellement désolé, mon ami,*" he whispered.

"*C'est ne rien. Pas besoin d'excuser.*"

He inhaled slowly, exhaled. Again. Straightened. I loosened my hold. His smile was back, visible to me in the dimness. "Do I look as well-fucked as your lawyer?"

I shook my head. "How would I know?"

His turn to shake his head. "As that so very butch SEAL said just before I buried my cock in his ass last year, 'Go for it, ya fucker!'" He let out a soft little *huff!* of air. "You don't need to wait."

I shut that line of thinking down with a kiss.

And when we got back to our room, he stripped before the door was closed, got on the bed on hands and knees, and though I could see the tiniest bit of trembling I did not embarrass him by mentioning it. “Fuck me, *mon cher* Jean-Luc. Make the evening end well.”

I did. Balls-deep in a single stroke since he had been so frequently opened, both hands working his nipples, then holding his shoulders as I power fucked, then folding over him, my lips and teeth working the joining of his neck and shoulder, my damp fur soaking up a bit of his sweat, my callused hand working his cock, squeezing, twisting, stroking until he came with a loud shout, and I followed, coating his innards with my seed.

I made him sleep in the wet spot.

I look down at him again, caress his hair, his face, and in his sleep he nuzzles my hand, just a little. I lay back down again, and fall asleep, too.

\*\*\*\*

*Then—A little past noon, Thursday*

**JONATHAN**

The fucker is stalking me. I have seen him again and again since Saturday night. Four “agains,” actually. Sunday breakfast. Early Monday evening when the first day’s session was ending, though he didn’t say anything, just glanced my way and smiled. A cock-stiffening smile for a sick pervert like me. I dutifully turned away as if I hadn’t noticed.

Tuesday, late, in the spa upstairs. I figured wearing myself out with exercise would get me to sleep, and rest up for Wednesday. Instead I wore myself out jacking in a toilet stall in the locker room. Picard the Prick was on his back on a bench, wearing nothing but thin cotton shorts that bulged alarmingly, just as his arms bulged alarmingly from the amount of weight he was lifting. Cassius, whose name I *still* did not know, and really, I didn’t want to know it, much, was spotting him. If the plates were in pounds not kilos he had to be lifting four hundred pounds.

And then he raised his head, spotted me, winked, and put on an even better show. I told myself I couldn’t really smell that warm man-scent from where I stood. Told myself that the erection that crept down the left leg of his shorts, the side away from me goddamn it, lifting the fabric’s edge, wasn’t because of me. A few more lifts, and then he stopped. Sat up, straddling the bench, and calmly adjusted himself so that the length of him rose up and pointed to his left hip bone.

“*Bonsoir, monsieur avocat!*” he called out, and the few other men there turned to look at me. I hoped they missed my all too visible hard-on, the painful one because it was bent by a freaking jock strap. The Prick did not.

“*Bonne nuit, Monsieur le docteur,*” I grated, spinning around and getting the fuck out of Dodge. Though only as far as the toilet for a quick come, an unusually quick one, brought on in part by how fucking sexy he was, they were, in part by the fear he’d follow me and taunt me, humiliate me. I am usually neat if I have an “EE,” also known as an erectile emergency, that calls for self-abuse and the risk of hairy palms in a public toilet, either spreading my



legs and forcing my cock down to spew in the water, or carefully wiping up the spurts and blobs if I just let fly. Tuesday I grunted loudly, set a long-distance come-shot personal best, and walked out, having let the globs and blobs fall where they may. Fuck 'em if they can't take a joke.

Then that whole charade last night.

And now he's interrupting my lunch. My *working* lunch. Not as in working with someone else, but working at the desk in my room, with some sandwiches and gone-cool tea nearby. He's standing in the doorway. Bulging. Fucking *bulging!* I'll just shut the door in his face; we have nothing to say to each other. There is definitely nothing I want to do with that bulge. So, no talk, no action. He opens his mouth. I hold my hand up, palm out, and he nicely stops whatever he was about to say. This *has* to stop. If the tales were true, I'd be needing a hedge trimmer to deal with the hair on my palms by now.

I brace myself for whatever it is he is up to, as I am not stupid enough to believe that shutting up just now actually means stopping. My "C'mon" is far from welcoming but that doesn't stop him from coming in.

I walk back to the desk. The slight *click!* as he closes it makes my breath hitch.

I sit behind the desk, gesture him toward the chair opposite so I'll be in the position of power, of authority. The bastard does takes the chair, a heavy chair, picking it up one-handed the fucking peasant show-off, and carries it around so that when he puts it down and sits, he's facing me. Very closely facing me. I don't swivel toward him; if I did we would be knee to knee, our crotches on display. I turn my head, just enough to take in those dark eyes, and the way they do something to my insides that is both unnerving in a "head for the hills" way, and warming.

"We have to talk."

Our words are simultaneous. Politeness demands that we each say, "No, you go first," and then resolve the issue of priority. Which is what I say, while *he* says, "I'll go first."

Bastard.

“We need to fuck.”

My mouth drops open.

“You don’t agree? Then why have you been stalking me, arranging these little meetings that appear oh so accidental?”

“But I haven’t...”

“You’re a church big-wig; I’m an atheist doctor who’s going to get his ass shot off in the near future, or at least they’re going to try, so it’s unlikely we’d ever have met under ordinary circumstances. You don’t cruise the bars, do you?”

“I...”

“I didn’t think so. Baths?”

“I...”

“No, you’re not the type. So that lets out cottaging, too, or what do you Yanks call it? Ah. Tearooms. Which means with all this conference shit you have going on, you’re not getting any.”

“And you are.”

Christ, could my voice sound any more childishly resentful?

Bastard doesn’t even break stride. “Yes, I am. My Philippe is a glorious fuck.”

I don’t look at him, even turn my head away, but I can’t prevent the blurt: “Then why would you want *me*?”

Well, bloody, bloody hell as his British pals might say. It appears I *can* sound even more childishly resentful. Vastly more.

There is a silence. Not a long one. Then he sighs. “I have no fucking idea.”

It’s his turn to put his hand up, palm out, to shut me up, to block whatever words of hurt would have come hurtling out just then.

“This is... new for me. Something I have never experienced. Perhaps I am not handling it well. But I know there is something more to... *this*... to whatever the hell *this* is... than just the fact that I want you on your knees

sucking my cock, getting me wet so that I can bend you over a bed, a couch, a table, this desk, and shove my cock so far up your ass I'm going to come in your mouth from the back, and pound you until you scream my name and bring us both off.

“So, first things first. I'm sitting here with the hard-on from hell, which you're trying not to look at. And you got stiff the moment I said *fuck*.”

I open my mouth to lie, figuring he'll go on cutting me off, only the shit sits there. Grinning. How can a grin on a face of crags and crevices and sharp angles make my erection even worse?

I manage to regain a modicum of control over my voice. It only shakes a little as I tell him, “No.”

“No, you're not hard and leaking? Stand up and prove me wrong. No, not here and now? I am not exactly a dumb-shit twink ruled by his dick, since you have to be back at your conference at one. Tomorrow.”

“I have...”

“Yes, my Jonathan, and you *are*, somehow, some way, *my* Jonathan, whether you know it, or just aren't willing to admit it, and I already know you have meetings tomorrow and a banquet at seven. Meet us in Club Olympus at eleven-oh-one.”

The curiosity over how he knows so much is overridden by my cock. Apparently I am not so evolved as he is. “It closes at eleven.”

Smug of face, smug of voice. “Not for me.”

“And... and you said meet *us*?”

“Of course. Philippe thinks your ass and mouth are nearly as fuckable as I think they are. He's hoping your cock fucks equally well. Preferably inside him.”

This is not happening. This is *not fucking happening*. I'm actually asleep with Dieter up my ass, fantasizing all this. Only now, well, now I'm starting to fantasize about the exercise room, the showers, the hot tub, whatever else, with the two of them, naked, hard, and wanting me.

I can't do this. Somehow, some way I'll fuck it up and Father, Grandfather, Joshua, the fucking world will know what I am. But oh how I want this. Not the romantic deflowering in a modern Regency, but something hard and nearly dirty. Just this once. A memory to keep hold of.

My silence has gone on too long. He scoots the chair, leans forward, rests his large hand over my right wrist. His thumb strokes the hair on my arm, just below where my cuff is rolled up. I never knew you could get third degree burns from a thumb.

“Oh, my Jonathan, so lonely, so afraid. You don't have to be. Ever again.”

I have heard of words warming you, just never experienced it before. Yet still, I want to lash out, a preemptive strike to push away the hurt I expect, that I always expect. I want to lash out. I want to cry. I want to just... let go.

Softly, softly. “Jonathan. What do you have to lose?”

“My virginity.”

I clench my eyes shut to hold back the tears that start to well up. I've just admitted to a complete stranger not only am I queer, but I'm nearly as bad as that stupid movie. Just four years younger.

He doesn't laugh, gasp, snort, mock. No judgment as Father would judge. No sneering as they all would sneer. Only a tiny moment of silence, a moment of stillness, and then his hand squeezes in a light caress, and his thumb starts that hawk making lazy circles in the sky kind of motion.

“With a gift like that, you will never regret what we three will do. You'll...”

This time it is his turn to stop. In the stillness that follows, he raises his head, tilts it only slightly toward the door. Why do I think some great cat is in the room, its tail beginning to lash?

Then I hear the sound of the lock. Someone is coming, and there is only one someone who would fucking get a key to my room, and just fucking walk in without a knock. I start to panic, to struggle to get away from this compromising position, but he squeezes again, not to the point of pain, but as a

complement to his words. “Don’t worry, *mon cher*. I won’t let you come to harm. Not now. Not ever.”

And with that, I do it. I simply let go. Cede control. Let myself be amazed by how warm and *protected* I feel. For the first time in my life.

“Jonathan Charles.”

As in most families, when someone your senior in power or rank, even if not in age, uses all of your given names, you immediately understand that you have fucked up. The tone tells you the degree of fuckedness. Joshua’s tone did not... *quite*... indicate a hanging offense. Perhaps only a flogging. I am, fortunately, far too old for Joshua to try the blows to my ass, to my back, that he sometimes used after our names changed, after he was anointed heir. Or... that other. That one time. He prefers, these days, to flay my soul.

It’s only Jean-Luc’s fingertips... I can’t in good conscience still call him Picard the Prick any more... invisible to Joshua beneath my wrist, lightly pressing and releasing, that tether me to a semblance of sanity. He stands with a leisurely lethality, all jungle cat grace. I don’t dare look. Either he doesn’t care if Joshua sees the erection he told me about... and damn it, *I* didn’t get to see it... or he has far more control than I. But then, most do.

Jean-Luc, alone, fills the room as he and Cassius did in the ballroom last night. He looks at Joshua, the weight of that presence making my brother back up a step. My brother never backs up, backs down.

“And you are?” Jean-Luc pauses and while I cannot see his eyes, I know they are raking Joshua, and not being at all impressed. “Ah, you are M’sieur Priestley’s younger brother. Do you make it a habit of entering a room that is not yours without consent? *Comment très grossier.*”

I smothered a snort at my brother being told how very rude he is in a language he does not understand, in a tone that tells him all too well that he has just been insulted.

“Or perhaps it is only because your brother allows it? I think, as part of my prescription, I shall require privacy, and freedom from intrusions. *Un moment, s’il vous plait.*”

He pulls his cell phone out of his pocket. I recognize it, and from Joshua's slight inhalation, he does, too. A Ulysse Nardin Chairman. Father wanted one, but the cheapest model is fifteen thousand dollars, and the top model is in excess of one hundred and thirty thousand dollars. Even Father was forced to realize that a cellphone like that was overly ostentatious for a minister, no matter how wealthy the church he controls. It doesn't glitter, so the many diamonds of the top tier aren't present. I suspect it's about as pricey as you can get without adding in the jewels. Fifty thousand? Sixty?

He punches what is clearly a speed dial number, speaks briefly in German, asking for a Herr Grunewald. The manager of the Grand Hyatt. Jean-Luc shifts to English. "My apologies, *mein Herr*, for not speaking in your language, but I have someone here who needs to understand. It seems one of your staff gave a keycard to Jonathan Priestley's room without his, as his lawyer might say, prior knowledge or consent."

A pause. "No, I have no idea which staff member, but the, ah, gentleman who did the persuading is apparently Mr. Priestley's younger brother. I am sure he was most persuasive. He is, after all, one of those American evangelical preachers..." his tone says double-dealing con artists, "...but I am certain it is not your policy to provide room access merely because someone asks for it."

A pause. "Yes. A family member, but still, your policies surely do not..." A pause. "Quite right. Mr. Priestley—Jonathan, not the other, of course—will be expecting him." He ends the call, turns his head to look at me. I am still sitting.

"Herr Grunewald is most apologetic that someone gave away your room key without authorization. He is sending someone up right now to change the computer code on the door, and he will ensure that for the remainder of your stay, only you will have keycard, without your written permission otherwise. Well, aside from housekeeping and hotel management, of course."

I have seen Father in apoplectic mode, Grandfather, too. Never before Joshua. It is delightful even if I will pay for that delight some way in the future.

The start of Joshua's "Who do you think you are," only gets as far as the owl sound before Jean-Luc interrupts—by turning away from my brother. For just a moment I wonder whether the turn is enough to qualify as a cut direct, or if he has to give Joshua the full back for it to be effective. If that happened in front of the window, it would block off most of the sunlight and plunge us into near-dark.

"M'sieur Priestley, your pulse is a little weak, and you are clearly under a high degree of stress. I will send Doctor Neumann up to confirm my diagnosis."

He looks over his shoulder at Joshua. "I am more qualified these days for battle medicine, you see." He takes in Joshua's somewhat dazed expression. The heir is not used to being ignored.

"Ah. You do not see. I am with *Médecins Sans Frontières*." A pause, a tiny smile that I am sure Joshua misses. In a "hello, is anyone in there?" tone, he adds, "Doctors without Borders?"

I assume Joshua's blink is enough acknowledgment, because Jean-Luc ignores him again in favor of speaking to me. I *enjoy* him speaking to me. "I believe Dr. Neumann will agree that you need to take the rest of the afternoon off. Spend it quietly. Here. *Alone*. You have been working too hard."

He lifts that heavy chair in his left hand again, as if it were a beach chair of canvas strips and aluminum tubes, carries it around to put it in its original position. There. The evidence of our dissolute intimacy is gone, but I will remember it. He walks the few steps to Joshua and puts his right hand around Joshua's left bicep. My brother flinches. "And now, M'sieur, I think we need to leave your older brother to get some rest. Don't you agree?"

Another flinch, and a brief flare of fury. I can read the promise of retribution in the flare. Joshua has no chance to agree or disagree, because Jean-Luc just doesn't let him go, and marches him to the door, holds out his left hand for the keycard, which Joshua reluctantly surrenders. He twists, and left-handed, tosses it to me. No one in the room is surprised when I clutch at it and miss, watching it flutter to the floor.

I don't care. Joshua is being marched out of my room. Damn. Piqued, repiqued, and capot!

I don't realize I said those last four words aloud, until Jean-Luc, Joshua all the way out, puts his head back in, wearing a wide smile, making me wonder what those smiling lips would feel like if *he* was on his knees, working *my* cock, and says just loud enough for me to hear, "As Miss Heyer might say."

My brief shout of laughter is to a closed door.

### JEAN-LUC

The heat, even the heat left by the air-conditioning, drains out of the hallway. I don't slam the asshole against the wall, handling him as he deserves to be handled. But he feels the chill. And knows its source.

"Don't even think about going ahead with it."

He shakes himself, brushes the sleeve that I had slightly crushed. Straightens. Dons the mantle of what he thinks is power. It isn't. He should be thankful his arm isn't pulp inside the sleeve. He opens his mouth to avoid, deny, excuse, make a pitiful attempt to stand up to me.

I cut him off again. "Or do you want me rethink the donation, the six-figure donation, your brother had just about convinced me to make to the Brethren?"

I am not above bribery to keep a bully at bay, until we have resolved things, my Jonathan and I. I will have to call Jonathan, and disturb his rest to let him know. Although I suspect his rest is going to consist in part of making good use of one or both of the dildos Herr Klein found when he checked the room yesterday. The Hyatt's Onity locks are not as secure as the hotel allows everyone to believe. Will he be thinking of me as he uses the dildos? Of Philippe? Of both? My warning is because it would not do for Jonathan's mouth to drop open when his brother mentions my imminent gift. As he will. Much better, much, *much* better to have Jonathan's mouth open so that Philippe or I can put something far better than silicone in it.

Joshua's father or grandfather might have been a little more difficult to deal with, but they are not here and this little tyrant is. And if he ignores the



order, ignores the bribe, he will just have to learn the very hard way that I am indeed not someone a little pissant like him messes with.

\*\*\*\*

*Then—Friday night. Shortly before 11:00*

### JONATHAN

I'm not going. He's just playing a trick on the poor pathetic virgin queer. So I'm getting my hopes up to match my hard-on and when I walk through the doors, even assuming they're unlocked, he's not there. *They're* not there. Or they both are, and they suck and fuck and do all the shit I want to do, just once, with someone willing. With no one unwilling. Except, it just them doing the doing because they get off on having someone watch, but not touch, jack but not join. Get off on my humiliation as I watch and jack and then get told to leave. All those are more likely to happen than their truly wanting *me*.

So. It's decided. I'm not going, not going to put myself at risk this way.

Five minutes ago I was going. Certain this will be the best night of my life.

Five minutes before that, I'm listening to Banjo singing in the back of my head, asking me if I had the feeling that I wanted to go, asking me if I had the feeling I wanted to stay. Go to the spa? Stay in my room?

Five minutes before that...

I have to make a choice. Yes or no. Stay or go. Traipse through the hotel halls in my exercise clothes which are kind of sweat-smelling from my two uses of the club, knowing everyone who sees me will know I'm off to do something wicked and perverse and unnatural, since they will all know that Club Olympus is closed at this time of night. Or change again, into something I can strip off easily if they're not mind-fucking me, and are instead going to pick a hole—at the same time? sequentially?—and shove a cock in. I can carry my gym clothes wrapped in a towel in case it's only exercise after all.

Fuck it, fuck them.

I put on my sweat-stained tee with ragged holes instead of sleeves, the shorts I picked because they're tight enough, thin enough to emphasize what bulge I have, and hey, that's okay, that's not faggy, Joshua, Father, Grandfather, guys, real guys, real men, do that all the time. Commando. The worn trainers I carry with me for exercising comfort, ASICS low-cut socks

that are almost invisible. Shaving kit, cell inside because even heading out for maybe sex they have no qualms about calling whenever it is most convenient for them.

I exit, lock the door, tuck the keycard into the bag. I must be hitting a traffic lull, as I see no one between my room and the elevator that goes to the spa. A young man is standing beside the elegant doors to Club Olympus. If you're going to name your spa after the home of the gods, you have to have the good taste to go with the name. The management had the good taste to hire this one.

Twenties, for sure. Compact, muscular, wearing a strained short-sleeved shirt in the hotel's colors and with the Olympus logo on his chest. Shorts not quite as tight as mine, and a better bulge, though obviously encased in a jock or a cup. Trainers and socks. Tanned, fit. Look at what you, too, can be, if you only get with the program while you're our guest for two days.

He holds out his hand. "Good evening, Herr..."

His voice trails off to give me the opportunity to fill in the blank. I don't. I just shake his hand, with a "*Guten Abend*" of my own, let go, and reach for the door.

The "letting go" process is a little longer than it should have been.

"Sir..."

I look back at him. He oh so casually brushes his hand across his crotch, absent-mindedly, as if flicking off crumbs. It certainly isn't to draw attention to the bulge that is a bit more noticeable. He smiles when he notices where my eyes go to. He pulls a business card out of his shirt pocket, extends it to me.

"My card, sir, in case you, and the other gentlemen, the ones who are waiting, should need me. For anything. Anything at all."

I naturally take the card. It wouldn't do to offend the help. It has a handwritten number on it, in addition to the official information.

The little slut.

Well, right now, *I'm* the only slut, or slut-wannabe, that's going into action here.

"I'll be sure to let them know."

Which leaves him with no choice but to go to the elevator. I enter the spa and the door clicks shut behind me. I hope it is locked, as I have no way of knowing, short of going out and shutting it and yanking, which would then leave me with no way of getting in, since I have no cell phone numbers for either of them. If they even carry phones when they're... maybe... planning on having sex with a stranger.

Where would I go if I were the one planning that sex? The weight room? Too much equipment with handles to put your eyes out, and the benches are too few, too small. The locker room? All sorts of fantasies to go with that, plus longer benches, but the floors are damned hard. Steam room or sauna? Not to start with. Obviously not the lobby or someone would be sucking already.

Ah. The hot tub. Stress-relieving heat, followed by *stress-relieving heat*.

I make my way through the dimness, open the door. Almost right. They're by the pool, seated on hopefully very sturdy lounge chairs, dressed in the thick, ultra-soft white robes the hotel provides. All closed and belted unfortunately, but if you can't hope that things will get better, and robes will magically evaporate, where are you?

As I get closer I notice the two ice buckets. One has my vodka, and the other... my vodka as well. Gentlemen, gentlemen, no need to get me drunk.

I stop to admire the view. What there is of it. Jean-Luc looks up at me and smiles. "Don't you have too many clothes on?"

Shades of Dieter, though a little more wordy. And how hot is it for a man whose body isn't "all that" to get naked while two Vesuvius-hot men are covered and watching?

Very.

The one who is not Jean-Luc, whose name I think I was told, but which I cannot recall, sits up, swivels to his right, stands, turns to me. A hint of chest at the top, sides overlapping all the way down to mid-calf. Below, he's bare.

His feet are long and slender with just a dusting of hair on his instep and toes. I wonder what they would be like over someone's shoulders, curling as he gets close to coming.

And then there is a puddle at his feet. A white puddle of expensive cloth. My head quickly lifts from its moment of floor-oriented admiration, recording the image as I go.

Long, long, long muscled legs, layered in straight dark hair, except, holy fuck, for a thick, ridged scar curving down his left thigh. I gulp, and gape. Both at the scar and the cock that is indeed uncut, a long foreskin that covers an arrowhead shape. A lush, deep-brown, almost black bush at the base of his cock, fat balls in an up-close sack, which is also hairy. I'd like to visit for a while but the tour director is going to get impatient.

Very little hair above his pubes, except for a slight treasure trail. An unquestioned six-pack as my accountant side quickly calculates. Small nipples, more thick hair curling out from his armpits. But what holds my attention are the scars. Small, large, in between. Short, long, straight, twisted. Three, count 'em, three puckers that have to be from bullets. And another long scar from beneath his right pec slanting down toward his left hip. It seems... newer than the rest.

His long-fingered hands, with curly hair on the knuckles as well, hang loose at his side. No nervous movement, no hip-tilted and flaunting pose. But still, a pose. He knows it, I know it, and his brilliant eyes, a startling blue, confirm that he knows I know, once I manage to get that far. His upper arms and upper chest have a marked strength. On someone bigger those pecs might have been a shelf, shading what was below.

Close-cropped hair. Straight full lips. A beard around his jaw, a mustache, neatly trimmed. Even I can recognize a warrior when I see one, though I have never been so close to one, and certainly not a naked warrior. My instinct was right, in the lobby. He did indeed look like he belonged with the men in their uniforms.

But no. I look into his eyes, notice their depths, notice the hint of tension at the edge of his eyes, the slight gauntness I saw on Wednesday. He does not

belong with those men after all. They are watchdogs trained to bark and frighten intruders away. He is a sleek Doberman, trained to take the intruder down in swift silence.

He opens his mouth, but my—did I really say that out loud?—“Cassius,” wins the race.

He blinks, and the pose falls apart as he tosses his head back and laughs, turns his head towards Jean-Luc, laughs some more, and waves his left hand in a clear, “Tell him, tell him,” gesture.

Jean-Luc hasn't laughed but a broad smile agrees with the laughter. “That's his name for you.”

“What?”

“Until I told him your name, of course. But the first time he saw you, he said, ‘Yon Cassius has a not-quite lean, and well-fucked look, don't you think?’”

I flush. Almost do that Venus and foam bit and try to cover my belly and bits, the latter being not dangly at all, but definitely in the mood, or heading there.

“Were you, Jonathan? Were you indeed freshly fucked when I... when we... first saw you?”

I wonder if the flush is worse. Don't... can't answer.

His voice is harder. “Whose cock had been in your ass?”

This is absurd. There is no possessive tone. I don't hear a silent strong voice, most definitely not my own, whispering, “Mine.”

Is there? Do I?

“Jonathan.” I hear the silent “Tell me, damn it, tell me now.”

Does Cass... no... Philippe. Now I remember.

Jean-Luc apparently has no patience, since my brief side trip down memory lane to collect Philippe's name went on too long. “Did you lie to me last night?”

The snarl tells me he doesn't like being lied to. It's clearly a preliminary snarl, though, indicating more, many more, to come if the circumstances warrant.

A swift side-ways glance at Philippe nets me a "Son, you're on your own," look, straight out of *Blazing Saddles*.

"It... it was just Dieter." I can't tell him. It's just too damned embarrassing.

"Dieter."

How does he make a single word sound like "I'll grind his bones to make my bread?"

"Where is he? Who is he?"

Okay. Embarrassment is good. Better than having him arrested because he's damaged the first Dieter he finds in the hotel.

"He's, uh, well, he's, uh, it's just a dildo."

With that, the tension drains away. I don't dare look at Philippe to get a soldier's sneering opinion of a nerd who names the dildos he fucks himself with. It's bad enough when Jean-Luc says, "Jonathan, really, you *name* your dildos?"

What I *hear* is the sneer I expected from Philippe, but somehow, not from him; what I *hear*, is the arrogant judgment of an outsider.

I am unexpectedly angry, speaking well before my mind catches up with the actuality of gentle, just-us-guys, maybe that's kind of hot, teasing.

My turn to snarl, or what passes for a snarl in someone like me. "Who the *fuck* do you think you are, and what  *fucking*  business is it of yours if I have no..."

This is the first time I have ever used that word aloud, to anyone, about anyone.

And then the reality of his tone and the realization of what I have admitted catch up with me at the same time. The self-inflicted humiliation, a pattern of my private life, is too much.

“This was a mistake.”

I turn my back on them, drop to my haunches, scrabbling for my shorts and the bag. That’s all I need to get back to safety. Fuck anyone who sees me in the halls or elevator. Fuck the rest of the shit.

Jean-Luc is in front of me, on his haunches as well. How did he get there without my noticing?

Oh. Maybe my eyes being shut while I “looked.”

Those huge hands, with their rough-textured fingers and palms, are gentle on my wrists. Just enough of a hold to stop the grabbing, not enough that I don’t understand that if I pull away he will let go.

He leans and his forehead touches mine as we stay still. “I am sorry, *mon cher* Jonathan. *We* are sorry.”

An utterly inappropriate “What do you mean *we*, white man?” almost escapes. *We*? Philippe didn’t say anything so there is no “we” unless Philippe sneered, and if he did he gets a free pass since I didn’t check.

“Forgive me, *mon petit chou*?”

At that I do look up, tug my hands loose, and then give him a shove he is clearly not expecting. He lands on his ass. As do I, what with all that action, reaction, equal, opposite physics crap.

“I am not your fucking little fucking cabbage! And what is with you people calling people cabbage like it’s a compliment or something? Cabbage is unpleasant. Nasty. There is nothing at all nice...”

His “Shut the fuck up, Jonathan!” is accomplished by looming up and over me, knees on either side of me, immobilizing my head with his left hand, starting my very first tongue-fucking, pulling me up and to him, and putting his right hand to work on my very interested cock.

Geez, guy, all ya had to do was ask. But I prefer his Plan B.

I sort of sense Philippe moving in, not paying all that much attention since mouth-work plus cock-work from Jean-Luc equals no focus left for the fact that he is removing Jean-Luc’s robe.



Both naked now, he maneuvers us so that we're on our sides, and then just keeps on moving until he's on his back and I'm on top of him. His heavy thighs and knees nudge my legs and I get the message. Whoever will be watching this later on the security cameras I am sure are running, is going to see some ungainly geek sprawl with my legs outside his, spread like I'm going to try for a split.

Sprawl is good. More so when you feel warm breath on your ass. Or more particularly, your hole. Strong hands kneading your cheeks, and then a tongue just licking around and around. It isn't possible for my asshole to be sensitive. It's had too many dildos up it; the nerve endings are shot.

Like fuck.

Something sizzles inside when his thumbs tug and my hole gives way, just a little, kind of like it does when it notices Dieter or the rest getting ready to go on in. And then his tongue is inside. Not all the way, just a little, slurping, lapping, making me whimper into Jean-Luc's mouth. A little deeper, deeper, and then there's a finger joining the lips and tongue. Just the tip.

Tongue out, finger slick with spit, straight on in. Just a mini-mini-dildo. No big...

Oh fucking deal. So damned much difference between your prostate being worked over because you've juggled and jiggled the dildo into just the right angle, no matter how contorted you have to be to get it there. A world... a galaxy... of difference when what's inside is not controlled by you.

Then both of Jean-Luc's hands are back there, clamped tight, forcing me to grind my cock against his, sudden sweat and precome lubing me. Two fingers inside me, stretching me, then none, and Philippe's mouth on me, exploring me, wetting me inside, emptiness, the buzz building.

I try to pull away, to explain I don't want to come, I can't, only my thoughts are skittering away, three fingers, pushing, twisting, turning, my eyes shut, my mouth moaning into his, and in the darkness behind my eyelids colored strands, ribbons, something, begin to twine, the fingers move faster, his hands control my hips and then he breaks the kiss long enough to say into my mouth, "Come, Jonathan."

I do what I am told, soaking both our bellies with shot after shot of seed.

I shake, trying desperately not to be a wimp and cry. This isn't what I wanted, what I hoped for. A variation on a dildo fuck, fun, yes, and making me come long and hard. Too long, too hard. I can't come again soon, so my evening is as good as over.

Jean-Luc doesn't let go. He strokes my back, soothing me. Long strokes from shoulder to lower back to ass and repeat. Philippe's hand joins his.

When the shaking stops he gently slides me off to his right, rolls left, gets up, turns and looks down at me.

### JEAN-LUC

Such a beautiful man, though it's clear he doesn't think so.

I lean forward, hold out my hand. "You getting up?"

He shakes his head. Whatever it was that troubled him when he came appears, if not gone, at least gone away.

"I just want to admire the view for a while."

Many men over many years have "admired the view," which has always meant admiration centered on my cock. It is unquestionably worth admiring. All nine point two-five inches of it. I prefer precision when I am asked, as I am always asked, either before or after they have it in one or both of their holes.

Except... Jonathan is not looking at my cock. My cock is hard to overlook, especially when I am standing over someone and it's this hard, the skin pulled back from the leaking, dark purple knob.

He is actually looking at my face.

I suspect that what I denied on Saturday night is true.

I am fucked.

Even without a dick going up my ass tonight.

## JONATHAN

I like the view very much.

The nervous-making cock, of course, that looks like it's about to do a Niagara on me, is worth admiring. I do admire it. And consider the technicalities of getting that much man up inside me, even with years of dildo preparation. I've never had the guts to try one that large.

It's his face. Oh, yes, the harsh angles, the eyebrow slash drawn with a level, the mouth and jaw that look as though they are capable of chewing granite and spitting out dust, the impression that his head was originally shaped like a block of stone easily able to hold up a pyramid, and then carved down into oh-so-rugged humanity, all of that adds up to the peasant I saw that first time. And dismissed.

Stupid, stupid Jonathan.

It isn't merely that I've grown accustomed to his face when we've seen each other this week, as if I were "forgiving" his peasant origin as his face became familiar, the way your nose becomes "accustomed" to a foul stench and eventually you don't notice it.

Part of it is the "mine!" I see in his eyes when he looks at me, even though we both know that if I am his at all it's only for this one evening, part of an evening. We each have our separate realities in which to immerse ourselves in the morning. Mine, a church and mergers and millions. His, more missions of mercy. And Philippe. Certainly Philippe.

The other part or parts, the rest of the why his face is so very special, I have not figured out. Eventually, perhaps, I will, though not until tonight is long in the past.

His extended hand is beginning to exhibit signs of impatience with my lingering on the floor. Is it itching to give my bottom a hard *whack!* for being such a bad boy?

I examine the thought, and after a nanosecond of careful consideration conclude that as a joke it's fine, but I am definitely not going there.

As I lift my own hand to take his, even though I am perfectly capable of doing it on my own in a Fred and Ginger, pick-myself-up, start-again sort of way, I start to offer a prayer to a generally non-responsive God. Just a small one that maybe, just maybe, my balls could generate some new sperm far more rapidly than usual so that I might perhaps come again, but this time with a cock inside me, or my cock inside someone else. I don't think it counts if all you get is rubbing yourself off against someone, especially someone who didn't bother to come himself.

For a moment, the pull of that massive hand and arm makes me feel like my soles are actually on air before settling down to the deck, and as I reach my feet I recall Father's? Grandfather's? thundering words that the Lord *their* God does not hear the sound of a sinner's voice. Being a fag is fairly high up on the sin list.

Jean-Luc rumbles at me, my hand still in his, "Let's get cleaned up."

I restrain the sigh. Right. Come and done, clean me up, send me on my way, and they can enjoy themselves. I turn toward the locker room and showers, he turns the other direction. We stop, look at each other, and simultaneously say, "Where are you going?"

"Uh, the locker room? Where the showers are?"

The tug this time is more of a yank as he heads toward the end of the pool. I do a quick little double-time step or two to get with the rhythm.

"The hot tub will be better."

"But you're supposed to be clean before..." Now I'm nearly trotting, which is ridiculous because I'm taller, and my strides should easily match his.

We get to the side of the tub, which is large, lit from the inside, sending up curls of steam.

"Here's a new accounting formula for you. Heat plus chlorine plus I give a fuck with what I'm paying equals clean enough. Stop worrying and get in."

I stand there in my admire-the-damned-view-and-make-a-mental-video mode as he steps up and bends forward to rest his right arm on the edge, giving me a glorious view of his large, not-at-all-fat, hairy ass, of his heavily

muscled legs as he lifts the left one, showing me just how low his balls hang, and then he's over, in, standing sideways, and easing himself down.

Philippe follows, all scarred and sleek and dangerous.

Their contented sighs are orgasm-making. I blink when my cock twitches in response. Only a little, not Lazarus risen quite yet. But it could also be just a taunt, giving me a rising expectation only to ultimately leave me deflated. God... or Someone... has done that before.

I stop worrying and get in. Seated, slumped so that the bubbling water is up to our pits, our arms extended on the sides, but not quite touching, we form a neat triangle on our separate shelves. We sit in silence, enjoying the heat. But not for long, as Jean-Luc and Philippe move in on me, sitting now on either side.

Philippe pulls my head to his for a slow, deep kiss. The second time in my life a man has kissed me is only the tiniest measurement less than my first from Jean-Luc. All seventeen, perhaps eighteen, of their hands—I seem to have lost some of my ability to do basic math—are caressing me and contributing to the moans I'm breathing into Philippe's mouth.

He breaks the kiss, leans his head back, rubs a warm thumb across my wet lower lip. My mouth doesn't want to close. "Such an adorable mouth, *mon cher*. It will look so good with my cock inside it, with Jean-Luc's. Shall we take turns fucking your face and teach you deep-throating?"

My enthusiastic "Yes!" comes out as a strangled whimper.

"But first, you should feel it yourself, know what will be expected of you when it is your turn."

I can't find any words to use for a response, in large part because of the hairy thumb on which I am practicing my sucking technique, such as it isn't.

He swaps his tongue for his thumb, and I find I am a natural tongue sucker. And then it is Jean-Luc's turn.

They'll have to remake *The Day the Earth Stood Still* just one more time. With entirely new subject matter. By the time he lets me go I am amazed that the hot tub hasn't boiled dry.

## JEAN-LUC

It is a far, far smarter thing I do than I have ever done before, breaking that kiss. A second or two longer and we would have boiled off the water and shorted the tub out.

I put my hands back underwater, on his waist, lift. He rises, dripping, and I plop his ass down on the edge. He shivers at the sharp contrast between the water of the tub and the air. He'll heat up again soon enough.

“Suck him, Philippe.”

I actually need not have spoken as Philippe was already in motion, not quite shouldering me out of the way so that he could get to Jonathan's not-dangly-at-all bits, more... a missile in launch mode waiting for the countdown. Jonathan groans as Philippe swallows him and thus stays there, nose buried in Jonathan's wet pubes. Philippe has marvelous staying power, both holding his breath and otherwise. Jonathan groans again, louder, as Philippe swallows and swallows and swallows again, his throat muscles stroking Jonathan's cock.

I like seeing my Jonathan being pleased, even if it is only for this night. Or perhaps this last weekend. I cannot and will not let it be more.

It is time my own cock is buried in heat other than the water.

Philippe is of course already in place, his left hand bracing himself on the edge of the tub, leaving his right free to work Jonathan's body. His balls at the moment. His legs are bent at just the right angle to allow me the easiest entry.

“Watch me, Jonathan.”

His eyes had been closed, his head thrown back, his mouth open and panting, so very vulnerable. He opens them now, raises his head, looks down the scarred length of Philippe's back to the slender waist, to the stark white ass checks, to my cock. I fist myself, make my cock weep in joyful anticipation, smear the slick fluid on my knob, on a little of my shaft. He looks up at me.

“I'm going to shove my cock inside Philippe, Jonathan. Deep and fast, a single stroke. By the time this night is over, I will do the same to you.”

I unlock his eyes from mine, let him look down, let him watch as I keep my word. The force of my hip thrust makes waves in the tub, that slap up against Jonathan's knees and Philippe's face.

“Do you like having your cock sucked, Jonathan?”

“Christ, yes!”

He does not notice his blasphemy. Philippe is an inordinately talented distraction.

“Do you want to fuck his face?”

Jonathan manages a grunt.

“Hold his head in place and skull-fuck him, controlling him, using him to get your rocks off?”

He is nearly delirious with the pleasure Philippe is providing. His “yes” is drawn-out and quivering.

We will do more later, in a bed. For now, I pull my cock out of Philippe, who understands the point. He slides Jonathan's cock out of his throat, into his mouth and then into the air.

Jonathan's “no” is even more drawn out than the “yes” a moment ago.

Philippe and I change our positions, and Philippe is once again bent over. The waves we make splash over the sides, making a mess that someone else will have to clean. Jonathan finally understands and makes waves of his own as he almost lunges off the edge of the tub, manages to avoid slipping, and then is standing in front of Philippe, who immediately places his hands on Jonathan's ass and draws him closer. His tongue darts out and licks Jonathan's slit.

“Shall we fuck him together, Jonathan? Balls deep in a single stroke at both ends, trying to make our cocks meet somewhere in his belly?”

Jonathan's grunt as Philippe laps around the knob and nibbles just a little is affirmation enough.

“Hold his head in place, as I hold his ass.” We do, getting our cocks seated at the entrance to the holes we are about to use. “On three.”

It is a fast count, and then we are in. I tell him to hold still, let himself get used to the feeling. Let Philippe get used to the most recent intrusions inside him. Jonathan shudders, pauses, gathers himself. I can tell he is about to start fucking.

“Did I remember to tell you that whatever you do to us, for us, whatever we do to you, for you, you will also do?”

That gets his attention. “I... don’t think you mentioned that.”

I do my best, or some reasonable facsimile of my best, to make my “I must have forgotten” seem believable.

He doesn’t believe me.

“If I, ah, skull-fuck Philippe, ah, he...” Jonathan interrupts himself with three little noises. Philippe is letting Jonathan know he is getting impatient.

“He... or I... will skull-fuck you.” I think Jonathan hears the “by George, I think he’s got it” sarcasm.

He did. “I think I’ve got it.”

He starts moving his hips, slowly and carefully, easing in and out of Philippe’s mouth and throat. Too bad. But it is his choice. And Philippe gives superb head, whether fast or slow.

After a few strokes during which he is concentrating on the view of his cock making use of Philippe’s mouth, he looks at me. “Skull fucking, huh?”

He speeds up a little. “Am I skull-fucking yet?”

I smile and shake my head. I also modify my own speed to match his.

Another increase. “Am I skull-fucking yet?”

Another head-shake. Two more small increments and then a final one, and he is moving at what a Roman war galley captain would have called ramming speed.

He manages to lift an eyebrow above the grimacing men do when they are enjoying the warm wetness of a hole that is giving them pleasure and they’re about to fall over the edge. “I think I can live with that.”



Moments later we are erupting inside Philippe, whose hand is moving frantically under the water until he finally shudders, too, and lets go.

Jonathan and I ease out of Philippe who straightens up, raises his hands above his head, clasps his hands like a boxer declaring victory and twists and turns for a moment to ease the strain of his position.

“This time, Jonathan, I think a shower is a good idea. Although we could, if you wish, since this is your night to lose as many of your virginities as possible, stay here, instead of adjourning to the king-sized bed in our suite. It’s up to you.”

He smirks. “I can live with king-size.”

Smart aleck bastard.

## JONATHAN

I have never showered with another man before. Much less two.

I don’t count gym showers in school, or the occasional country club locker room shower after an obligatory round of golf because of some financial negotiation for the Brethren. That was just get naked, get scrubbed, get rinsed, get dry, get dressed, get out, all without overtly noticing the cocks and balls and asses, the chests and thighs and feet, of the men around you.

It is wonderful to have two men washing your body, or really, the three of us alternating pairings to wash the third. When we’re done, Philippe is hard again, and he gently pushes my shoulders down. I suppose I will acquire more grace in getting on my knees the more cocks I suck in that position.

I’m nervous about going directly from the very first dick in my mouth to getting skull-fucked with that same dick. But I’d given my word. Philippe, however, is gentle, and I do manage to get all of him down my throat. Perhaps I have a special queer gene, or perhaps playing “let’s pretend we’re really sucking dick” with silicone trained my muscles. Either way, he fills my mouth and I swallow every drop.

*I like being a cocksucker.*

I tell them so. Their laughter is friendly as I swivel on my knees, making a mental note to investigate the cost and longevity of kneepads for use when giving blow jobs, to see how well I can do with Jean-Luc.

He just hauls me up, though, kisses me briefly and strongly, gives my ass one swat that echoes against the tiles, and tells me to get my ass in gear.

We head toward their room. Those two wear skimpy swim suits, not quite bikinis but enough to emphasize more than cover, and I'm in my shorts again, no shirts, towels around our necks. I'm not certain whether I'm glad or disappointed that our trip is uneventful and we see no one.

## JEAN-LUC

Jonathan actually wins the race that wasn't, by being the first one naked as the door to our suite shuts behind us.

He heads directly for the bed, plops down on it, legs spread wide, feet on the floor, cock alert and checking the surroundings for incoming activity, leaning back a bit and supporting himself on his palms.

The bastard actually bats his eyes at me as he says, "I believe I owe you a blow job, Jean-Luc."

He pronounces my name perfectly, but there is something subtly erotic about the way he does it.

"I believe you do."

He starts to slide sinuously down to the floor and onto his knees, but my "no" startles him, and sinuous winds up sloppy, and on his ass.

"Fucker," he mutters.

"Impatient, my Jonathan? You will be soon, if it's your ass you are talking about. If it's your mouth, that will be even sooner. On your back, head over the edge."

Apparently when you are breaking in a virgin, the eyes-widening thing is a frequent occurrence. But with Jonathan, wide eyes are for the most part accompanied by acquiescence.

Philippe's eyes do not widen, as for him this position is been there, done that, couldn't find the T-shirt, definitely doing it again. It is, indeed, one of his favorite positions for me to use his mouth. It is also one of my favorites. He knows that I know, and I know that he knows, and so on, which is why I am not surprised when Philippe strides over, steps up on the bed, walks toward the other side, drops on his ass, and then falls back to land almost shoulder to shoulder with Jonathan. There is just enough space between them for someone's knee, a large knee. Mine. Philippe wiggles his ass to move himself just a bit further up and then drops *his* head over the edge.

He grabs on to Jonathan's left hand, intertwines their fingers. He looks sideways and says, "The peasant with the big dick over there is *un grand artiste* at this." And then he tilts his head back again, with a "Well?" expression on his face.

I smile at the two of them, enjoying the sight of two mouth holes with bright neon signs above them, signaling "Open for use. No waiting."

So far, I am certain Philippe does not feel himself to be an outsider in this. But he knows there is something between my Jonathan and me, a connection that appears to be more than the usual "I'm a top, you're a bottom, let's fuck."

I fuck Philippe first. He opens his mouth and throat and takes me in. It was not something I had to teach him when he got well enough to be used for some payback. I was curious about who trained him, but not enough to question him. I just enjoy the benefits.

His mouth is like what I imagine one of those flashlight-looking jackoff devices to be, though I've never used one, or had a need for one. The difference is that my device is intelligent and eager to be of service. I pump slowly and steadily, drawing my cock out until his lips are barely on the end of my knob, and out of the corner of my eye, I watch Jonathan watching. And learning.

When I am good and slimy I withdraw, move over to Jonathan. His eyes show eagerness and fear. A good combination.

I tease him by rubbing my spit and precome slick knob over his lips. "You've sucked a dildo before."

It is not a question, but a certainty. Nevertheless he nods.

“All the way down. Training yourself.”

He can only grunt a little in affirmation because my knob and a part of my shaft are in his mouth. And then the only thing he can concentrate on is relaxing and accepting all the rest of me into his mouth and throat. There is a moment of panic, and another as I move in. I am as inexorable as a glacier, just not *that* slow. When he has all of me, when my balls are draped across his head, I pause to admire the joining.

And to maintain some control. I am nearly ready to come without ever actually fucking him.

Jonathan whines around my prick and I look up. Philippe is sucking him, but has no intention of letting him come that way. Not with the sucking alternating with sucking his own fingers and working them into his hole. I ease back a little to distract Jonathan. Short, easy movements. Then a little stronger as the mattress moves with Philippe's rising up and straddling the prone Jonathan, then getting to his knees, his strong hand holding Jonathan's cock upright, guiding it to Philippe's spit-wet pucker, pressing down just a little to be sure it is in the right position, and then Philippe opens himself and slides down. Jonathan has another set of balls on his body.

Philippe has strong legs. He has no need to brace himself on the bed. He begins fucking himself on a living Jonathan dildo, head momentarily thrown back, eyes shut, his hands working his own cock. Jonathan moans again, more loudly, as he instinctively begins fucking Philippe's talented tail, and the vibration in his throat as I fuck faster moves me closer to the breaking point.

He is taking all of me, every damned inch, even the last quarter. I speed up. Not enough to be the kind of power fuck that would be the repayment I'd warned him about. Philippe is looking at me now. His left hand is twisting a nipple, his right is furiously jacking. We stare intently, off temporarily in a space where we use the man between us for our exclusive gratification. A use the man... my Jonathan... enthusiastically cooperates with.

Philippe has the pained expression of a man about to explode; Jonathan's grunts and moans and his desperate hip thrusts that nearly throw Philippe's rhythm off tell me he is close as well.

I deliberately drop my voice into its lowest register. After all this time I know the effect it has on the men I am using. "Come. Both of you."

"Jean-Luc!" Philippe half-shouts, not the way he screams when I am fucking him into oblivion, but an expression of almost-love, of gratitude. If Jonathan is trying to scream anything there is no way anyone can know.

And then I am coming, letting my seed release in a long faucet-on flow.

We are done all too soon.

Philippe half-sighs, half-laughs as he lifts himself up and off Jonathan's wilting dick. He swings his left leg over and is kneeling beside Jonathan. I slowly ease my cock from Jonathan. He gulps several times, shudders. He did well, for a virgin. Better than well. I tell him so.

The little shit looks offended as he lifts his head to ease the strain from that position, then rolls. I half expect him to roll *away* from us, a subtle withdrawal that is not entirely unexpected. He surprises me by rolling *toward* Philippe, getting on his side and scooting himself further across the bed so he can rest his head on his elbow-braced palm.

He says nothing for a moment. And then sighs. And smiles. He looks up at me. "That went pretty well, don't you think?"

Philippe and I both chuckle. "Yes, you are a fine cocksucker. Although you need to practice your new-found profession. Often. I will be happy to help."

My slight sarcasm briefly dims the light in his eyes, then he pushes the slider back to full. He is, I am sure, thinking of this only as a one-night stand, a memory for when he goes back into that closet which is being so briefly unlocked here in Berlin. I suspect he is in far more than a closet.

He hides himself in a windowless room, barred by layers of locks, in a dark corridor in the lowest level of a reverse Empire State Building. Occasionally, but only occasionally, he lets himself out, but only where no one can see.

I get into the bed, put the pillows against the headboard so I am comfortable, which leaves none for them. That doesn't seem to bother my men as they move up beside me, Philippe on my right, his head on my shoulder. Jonathan sort of sprawls half on his side, half on his belly, the right side of his head resting on my chest. The fingers of his left hand play with the fur on my belly, and with my pubes.

I see his lips twitch in a slight smile, and I ask him. He moves his head, not really breaking contact, so that he can at least somewhat see both of us. "I was just thinking that I had expected to be bored Saturday night. A charity ball with expensive tickets just to get in, and then no free booze after all, just extremely over-priced cash bars everywhere, all of them willing to put the tab on your room bill."

"Ah, yes," Philippe says in the ennui-laced tones of a bored aristocrat, "a sad crush, but one does..." He stops. Flushes. I think perhaps he intended to only think those words.

"You read Regency romances?" Jonathan's voice is all amazement. "*You?*"

Philippe doesn't bother with denial, just jerks away and sits up. "And what the fuck..." I am sure the rest of the sentence is going to be "business is it of yours?" But Jonathan interrupts him, bolting upright himself.

"So do I."

I pray for a lightning bolt to come down from the suite ceiling. No, a pair of lightning bolts. Express delivery just for them.

They're sitting cross-legged now, my legs between them, my no longer quite as interested, but not entirely *disinterested* cock plainly visible. And ignored. They start with Heyer, enthusing on particular favorites (*Frederica* and *The Grand Sophy* for Jonathan, *The Unknown Ajax* and *Devil's Cub* for Philippe), momentarily move on to Cartland (some good, some bad, but so prolific you'd have to wait a few years to read anyone else), and are about to embark on the Bridgertons and the Cynsters, when I put a stop to it.

If God actually existed, I would readily pray to Him, Her or It to deliver me from romance novel fanatics, as I find myself saddled with two of them. But since there is no “One” to handle this I take care of the problem myself.

“Jonathan needs to be fucked. In both his holes at the same time.”

That shuts them up. And starts to get them up.

“All fours, Jonathan, head toward the foot of the bed.”

Jonathan eyes my cock nervously. He has already had it down his throat, so he shouldn't be that concerned about it going in his other end. But he is.

He will get over it.

Despite the air conditioning, we are all sweating. As Philippe kneels in front of Jonathan, Jonathan leans in and inhales deeply through his nose. If there were going to be another time, and a small part of me has begun a minor clamor for one, I would remember that and use it. I *will* remember it, though there will be nothing more than this night.

Will there?

## JONATHAN

Showtime.

I'm going to get what Philippe got earlier. I am not sure I can handle it, because I suspect Jean-Luc is not going to be as gentle as he was with my sore but satisfied throat earlier. I will have to have a touch of laryngitis tomorrow from all the conference talking. I cannot exactly tell Joshua and the others I'm hoarse because I'm pretty damned good for a newbie at getting my throat fucked.

I gasp. Loudly. I'm not certain why it is a surprise that Jean-Luc is rimming me. With a tongue that I had not noticed when it was in my mouth as being longer and thicker than Philippe's. And with having had my ass in use already, it is far easier now for him to get well inside me. My hard-on aches. I have no idea why or how I'm getting hard and coming so often tonight, but I won't stop to count my blessings in case the counting cuts them off.

When Jean-Luc has me whimpering, and kind of moaning, “Please, please, please,” he lifts his head away and then the other head is in position. I can feel the smooth flesh of his knob touching me, getting ready.

Wait. *Smooth* flesh? I have never used a condom, never had reason to, never experimented. But that is bare skin gently tapping, tapping at my asshole door.

So I clamp my all-too-eager asshole tight, and drop it out of reach. Sit up, twist to look over my shoulder.

“Whoa. Condom.”

I don’t understand the look in his eyes. “Why?”

I start to name off the reasons, starting with total fucking strangers, but his next words kill that.

“But you have already fucked Philippe bare. You trusted him.”

My voice is definitely in self-righteous-shit mode. “I definitely did...”

His expression stops me, and I pause, thinking, replaying the sensations of that incredible fuck.

What I just said was true, just in a way other than I thought. I definitely did fuck Philippe bare. But that doesn’t mean I have to compound that act of stupidity.

His rough hands are gentle on my shoulders. “I promised I—we—would not harm you, Jonathan. You haven’t been harmed. You won’t be. Trust me.”

Those words always trigger the memory of seeing Jackie Mason, and hearing him tell what became my favorite joke:

“*How do you say, ‘Screw you’ in Yiddish?*”

“*Trust me.*”

I never have. Trusted, that is. I have always examined everything between me and the person speaking, whether the speech was personal or professional, involving the Brethren, far more closely once the words were out.



And yet... and yet there is something about this man I will never see again after this week is over. I feel... safe. I feel... protected.

I agree. And the expression on his face is not one acknowledging my having given in, but one acknowledging a gift. The gift of my real-cock-virgin ass, the greater gift of my trust.

He is obviously concerned, when I am once again on all fours, that this delay has made me go dry, where I most need to be slick. He remedies the situation, so long and so well that he has to swat my hand away when I try to jack myself.

Then he is in place once more. I have never had reason to pray during sex, not since... I shove that thought away, bury it. I make a joyful noise unto the Lord, if a sort of shout of "God, yes!" when he breaches me counts.

He lets me get used to him. Get used to the fact that for all my preparation with dildos I've never had the nerve to use one in his size. His length and breadth are definitely going where no man has gone before, although I will never, ever say that aloud. However, his definition of "get used to" and mine are clearly somewhat at odds, because I am certain it is only a hemidemisemiquaver of time before he's moving on down that road, pushing and rearranging to suit him.

It turns out that what suits him suits me, once I feel his balls resting against mine.

Philippe turns my attention away from my so-full ass back to the cock at hand, or rather, the cock at mouth, by tapping it on the top of my head. I raise up and obediently, eagerly, spread my lips wide. As he slides all the way in, all at once, he gives me some good advice. "If you're going to get a blow job from someone while he's getting his ass fucked, wait until the cock is all the way in that ass before inserting your cock in his mouth. The wrong fucking technique and you're minus a dick, or part of one."

The semi-sarcastic "*Oui, oui, mon capitain,*" is of course only in my head. My mouth is otherwise occupied.

As they start to use me, understanding wordlessly that that is precisely what I want and need, my mind is off on a jet plane, no idea when it will be back again. I am nothing more than pure sensation, every atom of my body somehow sizzling, or whatever it is that atoms do when excited. I let myself go, a full surrender to Jean-Luc, letting him take me wherever I need to go, wherever he wants me to go. The cocks sliding in and out of each end of me manage a rhythm that is either fortuitous or from frequent repetition.

I shove that moment of jealous speculation (who? when? how often?) away, sink back into mindlessness. They begin to speed up, heating me from the inside out, making my balls feel fuller, making my cock desperate for release. Faster still, a ruthless rutting that has my eyes and cock weeping in ecstasy. And faster still, the sound of flesh on flesh, the scents and tastes of sweat and sex and body fluids sending me into near-delirium.

The explosion, when it comes, takes me entirely unaware. No one has touched my cock but it is spewing all over the bedspread, and I am gulping down Philippe's seed, while I swear, I swear I can *feel* Jean-Luc's semen splattering and painting the walls of my ass.

And we are done.

Philippe slowly slides his only slightly softened cock out of my throat, out of my mouth. I tiredly lap at it, but I am too exhausted to do him justice. I feel each callus on Jean-Luc's hands as he caresses my sweat-slick back, my waist, my ass, my hips, and then slowly, carefully, leaves me empty and adrift.

But only for a moment. He moves so he is to my left as I collapse on the bed, my feet nearly in his face. I look over my shoulder. He is rearranging the pillows in a potentially sharing arrangement.

"Come." His voice is soft as he settles on his back, his right hand gesturing me to move to him.

I manage to do it without kicking him in the face or any pertinent part.

Philippe joins us.

We are silent, our bodies lightly touching.

A part of me wants to just stay here, satiated, until someone on the housekeeping staff finds my desiccated remains.

I have fucked a stranger without a condom. I have let another do the same to me. I should be terrified. I am not.

Not now. Yes, perhaps later. But now...

I get up, turn yet again, and they shift to give me room.

I sit cross-legged between the two men who have fucked me so well. I can taste Philippe's seed in my mouth. I mourn the fact that I cannot taste the seed Jean-Luc has buried so deeply inside me.

I admire the pair who have given me far more than I ever dreamed of. No fantasy lose-my-virginity-with-a-willing-man scenario was ever remotely close to the joy I have had tonight.

I stretch out my left hand, curl my fingers around the length of Philippe; reach out with my right, curl around the girth of Jean-Luc. Their cocks stir, lengthen, even if only a bit.

Philippe sighs. "These former virgins, they are insatiable, no?"

Jean-Luc's sigh is as false as Philippe's. "Insatiable, yes."

I continue stroking them... stop... realize... start up again, and as they harden, chuckle under my breath.

Jean-Luc notices not merely the sound, but my expression. I seem to have abandoned my control of the façade. Actually, more than "seem to." The façade vanished, I think, the moment I came all over Jean-Luc's belly on the spa floor.

"What?" he asks

"I was just thinking about how Joshua... how Father, Grandfather... might react to my interpretation of the Bible."

I enjoy the puzzlement on their faces. I hold their cocks upright, my thumbs rubbing at the base of each head, lightly, lightly smearing the somewhat sticky remains of our sex, the hint of precome starting again.

“The twenty-third psalm.”

Jean-Luc’s eyes light. I squeeze his cock first. “Thy rod”—and I squeeze Philippe—“and *thy* staff, they comfort me.”

They burst out laughing. I have never made anyone laugh before. Not real, spontaneous laughter, as opposed to the necessary reaction to a joke, a quasi-humorous comment made by someone (me) from whom something is wanted.

My own cock is hard again. I might as well be thirteen and secretly, obsessively jacking and fantasizing, again and again in a single day. But this is my moment. My hands still.

Their laughter fades. They look at me, only concern in their eyes.

I struggle with the realization. This *is* a moment... a moment out of time. An interval between the tick and the tock, between the end of one second and the beginning of the next. It will never exist again. Tomorrow, no, sometime soon, later tonight, later this morning, I go back inside the shell that is the chief financial officer of a powerful American-heading-for-global church, who is so dedicated to his job, to his family, to the Lord his God, that he sacrifices marriage and children. What is the line that ends that book whose title I cannot recall? *I enter into hell*. Or go back to it.

My smile is tentative, rueful. “I was just... thinking.” What the fuck. I have a decent voice, a joyful noise unto the Lord and all that shit. I sing softly to them, making no attempt to do a Jim Bailey on Garland’s voice. It’s just my voice, telling them that this, here and now, is *my* moment, *my* destiny, and though it may only be just this once in my life, I *will* do great things.

And one of those great things is to get fucked again. I think they will cooperate.

They do.

\*\*\*\*

*Then—Early Saturday morning*

**JEAN-LUC**

“I have never seen you dither.” Philippe’s voice is amused. “Not that I have known you all that long, but I am certain this is unlike you.”

“I do not dither.” How very arrogant I sound.

He laughs at me. My normal reaction to laughter at my expense is pain—for the one who laughs. We have become too close, a closeness I never wanted, but I do not regret changing my mind and letting him into my home, my life. Letting him learn... what he had to learn if I am to do anything for him. As I will. As I have promised.

My smile is rueful. “Very well, *mon capitan, mon cher capitan*, I grant you a slight dither.”

“Go to him.”

I know he can see nothing on my face, but he has in such a short time acquired something of an ability to read me, despite that. It is not entirely unpleasant, although I have never experienced it before, and would have expected it to be impossible, had I ever thought about it.

“Tell him.”

Tell him what? Some of it? Most of it? Everything? *Truly* everything?

I decide.

\*\*\*\*

*Then—Later Saturday morning*

**JONATHAN**

“I called you last night. You didn’t answer. Where were you?” Joshua’s voice is cold, accusing.

I regretted the necessity of letting him in the moment I knew it was him knocking on my door. “I turned my phone off.”

“I came to see you. You weren’t here.”

Liar.

“I was.”

“No. I came in and checked.”

I lift an eyebrow at him.

“I was concerned. You were not answering. I thought perhaps you were ill.”

Liar.

He would be believed by anyone who did not know him as well as I regrettably do. He might even fool Father and Grandfather.

“I was here, Joshua, as I said. I would have heard you. And besides, how could you have gotten in? Has Herr Grunewald changed the hotel’s keycard access policies?”

I am bluffing for all I am worth, but Joshua fortunately breaks.

His voice is almost little-boy sullen as he says, “But I did come by. And knock. Loudly.”

I can imagine Joshua in a temper, banging his fist on my door.

I was here, asleep, I heard nothing. That is my story and I’m sticking to it. I make my voice slightly exasperated at having to go over the obvious yet again. “Joshua, if you did all that, I’m truly sorry. I was asleep, and apparently so deeply I didn’t even hear you. What was so urgent it could not have waited until now?”

He has not thought far enough ahead. He probably did call, and there will be messages on my cell when I check. He probably did make a near-scene hammering on my door. Joshua has always wanted, gotten, what he wanted, when he wanted, by suasion or coercion, whichever is most convenient, most effective at the moment. But even he would have realized in fairly short order the kind of image he would present, of himself, of the Brethren, if he were discovered in a near-shrieking rage attacking my door, so I am sure he cut it short before that could happen.

So he expected I would simply cave, and provide him with information he could use against me in some way, not immediately, but eventually.

I haven't caved. I won't.

Now he has no fallback. He is not going to cross-examine me on my whereabouts when he cannot prove my absence. While in any he-said-he-said competition where Joshua is one "he" and I am the other, Father and Grandfather will generally believe him, this little incident would not win him any points if he tries. And he will not try, if for no other reason than that he had no reason, or at least no reason he could tell them, for why it was so urgent to speak with me late last night.

"And you wanted to see me last night because..."

He has regained control. The scowl is only a slight one. He waves the "reason" away. "It is no longer important."

"Then if you will excuse me, I have some final preparations for the lunch meeting. I think their representatives will be pleased with the figures."

I am grateful that he is out of the room when the house phone rings. It is Jean-Luc.

\*\*\*\*

*Then—Mid-afternoon, Saturday***JEAN-LUC**

“You didn’t tell him.”

“No, I didn’t fucking tell him. I never got that far. Have the two of you been having some secret Regency romance festival this morning, making me the big bad rake who proposes marriage while keeping a mistress on the side? Or perhaps doesn’t bother with marriage and instead of an heir and a spare wants two goddamned mistresses?”

Philippe falls apart.

I glare at him but it has no effect on his laughter. Laughter is indeed good medicine, unparalleled at times, but not enough for him, not now.

His eyes are slowly reacquiring the haunted look I saw that first day. The pressure has been building, and tiny cracks are showing. I promised him that if he worked, got better—not well, well we both knew was always an impossibility, but better was achievable—I would make his final days worthwhile. Unfortunately, the end time is near. Just two more days. He knows the date. Has known since the day after his arrival at my door. He is far too much of a warrior still, not to be told the truth.

The bastard shithead finally stops laughing, wipes the tears from his eyes, holds his aching sides. “Wh-what happened?”

Years upon years of experience and I almost have no fucking idea how to answer. Except for one possibility. Jonathan’s outrage over my proposal that he come live with me, relocate to Paris, begin a new life, started when he asked about Philippe and I told him Philippe was not an issue, would not be a problem, we could be together, just he and I. Philippe’s story was not, is not, mine to tell, not to anyone, even to Jonathan.

It seems my proposal was not sincere, that what I was asking was for Jonathan to be my bit on the side, to sit and wait for the dribs and drabs of my attention in a flat paid for by me. To be my fucking mistress! Or no, wait, I was just kicking poor Philippe to the curb, dumping him for Jonathan for no



other reason than a promiscuous prick that wanted what it wanted. How dare I?

But the rapid rise of his outrage held the tiniest of false notes in the angry aria. As if he'd latched onto those foolish thoughts so he wouldn't have to tell me the real reason. And the real reason... what I understood once I put the little grey cells to work... is that he is afraid. Terrified of letting the world in general, his family in particular, discover that he likes to be fucked. Gently, slowly, hard and fast, anything between or beyond. Although we wouldn't have to take out an announcement in the papers, or blog it on the Net. We wouldn't even have to be that specific. All he has to do is take than one small step, that one giant leap for Jonathan-kind, out of the closet and into the glorious sunshine. Where I can protect and care for him.

I finish telling Philippe all that. He understands there is more.

I explain that I tried again. Came near to humbling myself, to begging him to listen, but Jonathan began to shake, and tell me, "I can't, I can't, it was great, what we had, uh, what we did, and I'll always remember, but, no, please, stop, just go, just go, just go!"

So I did.

"I did ask him if he was sure. I did tell him that I didn't give anyone a second chance, that no one was worth that. But he told me to go. I did want he wanted."

Philippe's smile is far too understanding. "You are going to give him another chance. Find him, tell him."

"Yes, damn you."

We sit in silence until it is broken by the sound of Olivier's voice saying, "Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more." Jouvart's ring-tone. Philippe recognizes it, too, becomes still as a sniper in the final moments before his target arrives.

"*Oui.*" Curt. To the point. I don't waste time on politeness when Jouvart calls unexpectedly.

I listen. I could say no, could walk away. I only volunteer. But I promised him. I do not break my word.

My “*oui*,” this time is agreement. I turn it off, look at Philippe. He already understands.

“When?”

“I have to meet the team in Brazzaville as soon as possible. Overland to the interior.”

“Then... tonight?” For the first time in weeks he sounds unsure.

“I promised...”

He waves an impatient hand at me, cuts off a reminder that I had promised him two more days. At least. His voice is stronger. “*Oubliez ça. Ce n’est rien.*”

He looks down. Inhales slowly, slowly, slowly. Looks back at me. He has brought the warrior back, dressed in his warrior’s armor. He understands orders. A colleague, a brother, has been called into battle, though it is not the kind of battle he could wage. He cannot go, but he will not delay me. Hold me back. Will not give me anything to look back on with regret.

“Now, then?”

It is partly a question, partly a demand that I fulfill the real promise.

“Now.”

He is already naked under the sheet. He tosses it back. His cock is... hesitant... for a moment, but when Philippe sees that I am not, that I am nearly naked, then fully naked, hard and weeping, his cock joins me.

I get on the bed with him, kneel with my large, hairy thighs spread wide, my cock standing tall. I pull the back of his head and he lets himself be pushed down until he has my cock all the way in his throat, breathing through his nose, smelling my pubic hair, the ordinary man-sweat and funk of a not quite ordinary day.

He pushes against my hand. I let him lift his head. Those gorgeous eyes look up at me. He licks his wet lips. “Fuck me. Harder, faster, deeper than you

have ever fucked me. Come inside me so that when I cough it will be in my mouth and I will give your seed back to you in a kiss.”

I reach over to turn out the light, to dim the room even further. He stops me. “Don’t put out the light.” He smiles, and if I had not abandoned tears so very long ago, I would have wept at its beauty. “And then, put out the light.”

I give him what he wants. My fingers nearly bruise his thighs as I lift his legs high and wide, dive for his ass, begin eating him out with all my experience working to open him up, to have him shivering and begging as my tongue pushes its way inside and fucks him.

“No more!” he gasps, demands. “Fuck me now. I want your cock inside me.”

I rarely follow orders. I follow this one. I breach him with a stroke that takes no prisoners, plunging roller-coaster fast down and down and make him shout. I fuck him hard, fast, deep, as he demanded, as he needs, but as we build, I realize he needs something more. A reminder.

We are music lovers, he and I. I do not allow myself to be distracted by the thought that Jonathan is, too, of his voice as he sang to us last night. My own voice will never compete with Bryn Terfel, a favorite of Philippe’s, but I slow the pace, and when he opens his eyes from his furious contemplation of completion, I sing *Miss Saigon* to him.

We share that song with the solo saxophone, the brass that makes such a lonely sound, telling us still that love goes on and on, telling me I that should hold him tight, telling me, telling... *us*, that we should... dance. As if the world might end tonight.

“Oh.” His eyes fill with tears. Of joy, gratitude. He is not a warrior too proud to weep. “Oh, yes, *mon cher*, dance with me as if it’s the last night of the world.”

And so we dance. Gently, slowly, at first, hearing that solo saxophone playing tunes that only we can hear inside our heads, and then a rising urgency, and the saxophone fades into silence, letting us move on. We fuck.

As hard and fast and deep as I promised him just now, as he promised me. We use each other to pleasure ourselves, to pleasure each other.

I don't silence him with a kiss as I might have done with someone else. His eyes are closed, but he has no need to see. He knows where he is, what is happening. His voice is all wonder, tremulous, starting to lose control. "*Merci, merci, mon Dieu, mon coeur.*"

Faster still and he writhes beneath me, his hands bruising my biceps, if I bruised. "I see... I see *strands, mon cher*. Such colors, so many, many colors against the dark, twisting, turning. Untwining. And I... dear God, sweet Savior Jesus, Bernard! Bernard, my heart, my love!"

He calls out "Bernard!" a last time as he comes, spraying us both, and I follow him over the edge.

I loom above him, panting, ease myself down, still inside him, clasp him to my chest as the last two days shimmer... and fade away. He eases into that good night, as I promised. I hold him, though he is gone and will not know. And only I will know. But I hold him so that *I* will know that for a while, so brief a while, I cared. Even loved.

I ease myself out of him. Straighten him gently. Pull the sheet up so that the unknowing the relaxed, peace found at last expression is of a man sleeping well.

Duty.

I rise. Get my cell. Punch in the call to the Paris number I memorized. I tell Philippe's colonel, "It is time." I give him the hotel name, our room number.

I had told him, weeks ago when I gave my word to Philippe, that his warrior had only a few weeks, a month, a month and a half to live. That his heart had been damaged by the explosion. I did not tell the colonel that Philippe's *heart* had been damaged by the explosion. I had not the right to share that. I did not care whether the colonel truly believed me, so long as he acted as if he did. He knew I would be with Philippe to the end; we agreed I would place this call.

I got dressed. Not the kind of clothes one throws on after a good fuck because someone is dropping by. Not formal wear. But clothes that honored the still warrior on the bed.

They are quick, these colleagues, these brothers of my Philippe. I can see in their eyes they are indeed his brothers, not merely men on a distasteful assignment from the embassy.

Their leader looks at me. He has to know but neither judges nor condemns. Instead his eyes ask a question, since to speak it aloud would be a form of betrayal, an insult to my warrior by doubting what the answer will be, instead of knowing without asking. I smooth his uncertainty. Tell him what he wants to know. Tell him the truth. "He died with honor. Not with the one he wanted and lost, but with one who cared."

And then I recognize him. He had been at the base when we brought back Philippe and the remains of Sergeant Bernard and the others. His nod... acknowledgment, appreciation, even approval... is a nearly invisible tilt of his chin. Mine back is also brief.

They treat him with care, with a warrior's love for another warrior, and remove him from the hotel with no one knowing a body has left. Perhaps back to the French embassy, or perhaps directly to the airport where military transportation awaits. No one will know he died here. The newspapers, the media, the Internet, will tell the nation, the world, that one of France's heroes died tragically young, of a heart weakened in battle.

I hope he is indeed with his Bernard.

\*\*\*\*

*Later—Six weeks, Monday, late afternoon*

**JEAN-LUC**

Powerful Priestley the petty prick. Powerful Priestley the petty prick.

I've got the rhythm right as I follow Joshua over the river and through the woods of the Brethren's New York complex towards Jonathan's office. All I need is Dorothy and her friends doing that precision step with me to have a bit of fun at his expense. *More* fun at his expense.

Though I freely admit he has an admirable ass, it's my opinion, long-held, over many years and based on an inordinate amount of experience, that a straight man whose slacks are tailored to show off his gym-honed butt isn't all that. However, it's not like I'm interested in tapping it. Not with Jonathan available. Not even if Jonathan plays hard to get. Again.

This is his second chance. I have never given anyone a second chance before.

Joshua of course makes his point—*my* turf, my right—by opening Jonathan's door without knocking. I already knew he had not called ahead.

Now to get rid of him. Unfortunately, picking him up and throwing him through the floor to ceiling windows behind Jonathan's desk, purely as a scientific experiment to determine the effects of thirty-three stories of gravity on an ego inflated with copious amounts of hot air, was not a viable option.

Just as punching him had not been a viable option when he showed up in the lobby just after the receptionist, a more-than-a-bit uptight little faggot who ought to have known better than to work for people like the Brethren, explained to me that Mr. Priestley never saw anyone without an appointment. I would have to call tomorrow. The response and the once-over, accompanied by the restrained sneer, were not unexpected.

I looked precisely as if I had just traveled directly from Brazzaville to Newark in a bit over twenty-two hours, and then had the limo he couldn't see bring me here. My travel attire consisted of beltless, worn 501s, a comfortable but equally-worn plaid shirt hanging open over a grey tee, sandals, a scarred

leather shoulder bag, and a floppy hat most recently used for warding off African sun. My appearance was therefore not conducive to a belief I actually *belonged* in this building. Except, perhaps, through the peasant's entrance, back and behind, if I was applying for some menial job as a janitor.

The security guard, young, serious, ready to leap in the fray to defend God and the Priestleys and the Brethren from this uncouth invasion, had his hand hovering about the gun I wasn't at all confident he knew much about.

“What's going on, Royce?”

Royce-the-receptionist, also known as the self-important twit, relaxed. He could hand off the very large problem in the lobby to a higher power. He opened his mouth to explain, but I cut him off. “I'm ‘going on,’ Joshua.” A little security-receptionist gasp at my first-name audacity. “I assume your older brother is still here.”

That “older brother” remark annoys him. It is why I use it so often.

“So you can con him again into believing you intend to make a donation to the Brethren?” He uses that fucking eyebrow crap to look me up and look me down, mostly down, given his height advantage.

He is actually entitled to an explanation, much as I would prefer the punch and then roaming the hallways floor by floor, doing a not-very-good Brando imitation, with T-shirt, without being soaking wet, pathetically yelling, “Hey, Jonathan.”

“I had to go on a mission. It was unexpected.”

Another sneer. “And did you manage to save the world, muh-shoor le dock-tour?”

The man doesn't even realize what he is doing to my original language.

I keep the reins on my temper. If my temper had been a horse right then, it would have been a furious Clydesdale, ready to rear and drop both those hooves on his skull, followed by a dance that will never be seen in a Budweiser commercial.

“Not at all. Just several hundred young African children, and their families, from a cholera outbreak.”

“Ah.” That useful noise, as he tries to figure a way to regroup after that hit. I make it a little worse.

“Not just me, of course. I was part of a multinational volunteer medical team. Doctors Without Borders.” I give a side glance to the quiet twins to make sure they get the point.

And a little worse still.

I don't tolerate cretins well, especially ones wanting to stand in the way of my getting something, *someone*, I want. “About that donation...”

His turn to interrupt. “Yes. Six figures, I think you said?”

Asshole. He had forgotten, or not noticed, the Ulysse Nardin cell in Berlin. He has not noticed the Patek Philippe on my left wrist, which I'd put on en route from Newark, dropping the everyday Timex (takes a licking and keeps on ticking even in jungles) in the bag. An aggregate of six figures right there, and still his subtext is, “And where would a peasant like you, a doctor who *volunteers* to do shit for poor people instead of setting up a practice with the right people and getting rich, get six dollars to donate, much less six figures?”

I reach inside my bag, and the idiot child with the gun actually puts his hand on it. As if he could possibly get it out of the holster and do anything with it before I pulled the mini-Uzi out and started spraying bullets. He flushes when all I retrieve is the trust's Black Card. Joshua flinches.

Baby boy get a spanking if papa and grandpapa find out he disrespected a man who carries the same card *they* flaunt? I put it back.

There is something about that flinch. Something more than “My God, a wealthy sucker on the line and I didn't even know it.”

“I did make a promise, if you will recall. When we spoke in Berlin. You might even call it a bargain. You certainly did not believe I would break my word.”

A question masquerading as a statement.



The fucker did.

Another question-statement masquerade: “And of course you honored your part of the agreement as well.”

The fucker did not.

Whoa, Thor. I yank very hard on the reins of my imaginary Clydesdale. He will get his chance to stomp later, whether real or metaphysical.

I wave off the formal answers he hasn’t given me. “I’m here now. I’d like to see Jonathan.”

“If you’ll come this way, I can see to...”

“Jonathan. Now.” My voice leaves him no choice.

And thus we begin the powerful-Priestley-the-petty-prick walk.

Which ends with an open office door, me just a step inside, Joshua off to one side after announcing on the way in, “Someone to see you, brother. About money.”

And there is my Jonathan, head down, frowning at a spreadsheet printout flat on his desk, his hand holding what is probably a red ballpoint given the red notes and marks and slashes on the page. “Tell him to come back later. Make an appointment. Better yet, deal with it yourself, Joshua. I don’t have time.”

“Not even for a six-figure donation?”

Jonathan’s head whips up at the sound of my voice. His face flushes, losing control, letting Joshua see there is something here, there, somewhere, that makes him furious. His fist clenches on the pen, and then forcibly relaxes. He plasters a pointedly fake smile on his face.

“Do you need a pen to write a check? We also take MasterCard, Visa, American Express and Discover, although we do request that you add two-point-five percent to your donation to cover the cost of the credit card transaction. Will you need a receipt now for tax purposes, or may we mail you one?”

I step further into the room, against the sensation of a portcullis being lowered in front of me to keep me out. He really does not want me here. But I

want to be here. Joshua wants me here, and when it comes right down to it, in terms of power, this office is more Joshua's than Jonathan's. I look at Joshua.

“Reverend Priestley.” His eyebrow lifts again at the unexpected courtesy. “As your older brother is the chief financial officer for the Brethren, I would like to consult with him on the terms of the donation. I have some specific proposals on how the funding should be used, but I don't want to run afoul of American tax laws or the mission of the Brethren.”

Joshua hears the underlying, “Run along now, little boy, let the men get down to work.” But he can't do jack shit about it.

Duty *versus* personal preference. I understand Jonathan's dilemma all too well. And we both know which one trumps the other. With a breath that doesn't quite manage not to sound put-upon, Jonathan says, “Thank you, Joshua. I'll handle the paperwork. If Dr. Picard has any questions about policy I will of course refer them to you, or Father.”

The door shuts behind me and I stay still. He takes off his glasses, pinches the bridge of his nose, puts them back on. He gestures toward the chair opposite the desk, and something in his eyes tells me there'll be hell to pay if there is a repeat of Berlin's not-quite-musical chairs.

As I sit, he slides a paper form across to me. “*M'sieur le Docteur*, if you would be so kind as to fill out this donor information sheet...”

“Jonathan...”

He interrupts me as I interrupted him. “Sir, this meeting will progress more efficiently if the Brethren have your donor information. Do you need a pen?”

I nod and he hands one to me. I finally look down at the form. His hand is nearly flat on the upper edge. Between his thumb and forefinger is a pale Post-it, almost unnoticeable against the white of the paper. A single word is written on it. “Cameras.”

“You are right, Mr. Priestley. Let me fill this out.” As I lean forward to write, his hand withdraws and the note vanishes with it. Smoothly done. Did he want to be a magician as a boy, practicing sleight of hand?

When I am finished, I hand him the form. He puts it in a folder. Obviously the data entry into the computer will be later. “Now, sir, what ideas do you have for how the funds might be used, consistent with the mission of the Brethren?”

I slouch back in the chair, allowing the bag to slide off my shoulder and onto the carpet. I deliberately raise my right hand and run my fingers through my hair. It gives him a nice view of my just slightly sweaty pit. I remember how much the scent of a man, of two men, turned him on. He remembers it, as well, if the “you bastard” in his eyes is any indication.

All the watchers will see is a slightly less than fully filthy, rich fucking traveler, scratching his head.

I drop my hand to my lap. Unless the cameras are directly over this chair, it’s unlikely the fact that my thumb is touching the right side of my cock, near the base, and my forefinger is touching my balls, the other fingers resting on my thigh muscles with only the tiniest of caressing movements, will be seen. Jonathan can’t see me, either, not across that desk, but the repeat silent “bastard” lets me know he knows what I’m doing.

“You know, I just flew here from the Congo. Layovers in Amsterdam and Paris. Been *up* for about thirty hours.” No hard-on innuendo there, no, indeed. “I’m too wired to rest right now, and the meals on the plane weren’t exactly haute cuisine. Let’s discuss this over dinner.”

His lifted eyebrows, both of them, ask whether I plan on treating him to McDonald’s, given what I’m wearing.

I stand up, grabbing the bag, taking his agreement for granted. With six figures in the offing, so far as he and the watchers behind the cameras know—does Joshua get off on this? their father? grandfather? fucking all of them?—dinner is a not unreasonable request.

“I have Charles waiting in the limo. I can stop at the hotel and get changed. A nice car, the Mercedes S550-Rolls Royce edition. Perhaps the Brethren should consider it for someone? I bought it last year. Today is the first time I’ve ridden in it. Nice. Excellent, actually. I think you’ll enjoy the ride.” No, not a fuck innuendo in the paragraph. Not at all.

Pretentious pricks. I'm enjoying rubbing it in. Are the watchers checking Google, finding out that the MSRP was one hundred and sixty thousand dollars? Understanding that I can afford a fucking pricey car like that and let it sit, with all the attendant New York costs for a year, without using it?

I watch patiently, if deliberately bland of face, as Jonathan meticulously rolls down his sleeves, puts the gold cuff links carefully back in, adjusts his tie, turns his computer off, takes his jacket off the hanger on the coat rack, puts it on.

Our conversation as we leave the complex is mundane. I am certain they will get nothing out of it. I have far too much experience, and for all his youth, my Jonathan does well. There is nothing even remotely unprofessional about our demeanors, our stance. Nothing to indicate that not quite two months ago he was drooling on the linens as Philippe and I took turns fucking him until he finally passed out.

Inside the cool dimness of the car, he sags, letting everything drain out of him. So to speak. The real draining will be in the not too distant future. The limo moves, Jonathan inhales, gathers himself for the next round of battle.

"It can wait, Jonathan. Berate me later. For now, let's just deal with food... and anything else that might arise." I smirk at him as I push the button. "Charles. White's, please. Side entrance."

He looks amused. White's is one of the finest restaurants in the city, and I'm sure it's tempting for him to tell me I'll never get a reservation: (a) looking like I do and (b) this late. He refrains. A smart man, my Jonathan.

En route I call Michael, who is waiting to greet us. I let Charles know we shouldn't be more than a few minutes, and get out, dragging Jonathan behind me. He snatches his hand away from me the moment our feet touch ground. Holding hands with a man in public? Another *quelle horreur!*

Michael is a little terrier of a man, a whole two inches shorter than me. But he fits the stereotype of the small man who is feared. He offers a formal handshake in light of Jonathan's presence, but I lightly bat it aside, grab him up and twirl him around. It has been several years since I have seen him.

“Michael, one of your best private rooms for a moment.” He looks upwardly askance at me. “Get your mind out of my crotch, Michael. Jonathan needs to see the room. Oh. Jonathan, Michael, Michael, Jonathan.”

Introductions complete, Michael takes us to Room 1. It is intimate, elegant, and suitable for dining... and entertainment. Think of the room where Nicky Arnstein tells Fannie Brice, “You are woman, I am man, let’s kiss.” Then make it classy.

I tell Jonathan to remember the room because there might be a quiz later, then turn again to Michael. “We arrived at seven at the private entrance; you greeted us, took us here. I ordered my usual. Jonathan, would you eat, let’s say, French onion soup to start with, a small salad with raspberry vinaigrette, boeuf bourguignon, and a nice merlot, but you don’t recall the name?”

“What?”

“If I ordered that for you would you eat it, enjoy it?”

“Yes. Fine. Wait a minute. What? Take-out? From *White’s*?”

I ignore the latter part, and tell Michael, “We stayed until eleven. You personally served us since I’m a good customer and we were talking some sort of business the entire time. You think you overheard us saying something about brethren, but you aren’t sure.”

“I understand. When should I expect them, and whom shall I expect?”

I turn to Jonathan again. “How soon will they check up on you?”

He hesitates, reluctant to admit that someone *will* be checking. Gives in. “Tomorrow, most likely; the day after at the latest. Someone from the Brethren.”

At Michael’s puzzled expression, Jonathan elaborates. “The Amalgamated Brethren of Christ. The church I work for.”

“Ah, a church.” Michael gives a dismissive wave of his hand. It is an authentic Gallic wave, which Michael has perfected in the years since he left Des Moines.

“Michael, I think we’ll finish off the evening with a Bollinger Blanc de Noirs Vieilles Vignes Françaises 1997.” I smile as his eyes light up in anticipation. I’m going to enjoy what I say next.

“No, actually, we’ll take it with us. That way you won’t have to suffer the pain of drinking it all by yourself, so that your inventory matches the tale.”

He smiles with only the slightest regret at lost alcoholic ecstasy, nods, and is soon back with the bottle.

In short order, we’re in the limo, heading to my place. Poor Jonathan is suffering in silence, at least for the moment. I can sense the several repetitions of “What the fuck?” building up inside so that when he finally lets them all out, one right after the other, the last will be a roar. The eruption... the *wrong* eruption... is imminent when Charles drives into the garage below my building. The trust actually owns it, through several layers of companies. I pay rent on a very comfortable apartment, though it is not leased in my own name.

I tell Charles to be back at 10:45 and to ring me when he arrives, escort Jonathan upstairs, open the door and for all practical purposes, shove him through. He does that little stumble-dance, recovers, and turns around to unleash the WTF barrage.

I’ve already carefully set the wine down. Care is indeed in order for *that* vintage. My tongue down Jonathan’s throat stops the incipient explosion. My left hand is pulling his head down, holding it in place so I can devour him. Six fucking *weeks*! My right hand is on that just-right ass, clamping tight, and pulling him close so that our cocks grind together.

I let his ass go so I can get my hand between us, unzip him, force my hand inside, then more forcibly through the fucking boxer briefs, and work his cock out. He whimpers. He likes the roughness of my hand against the smooth flesh of his dick. Likes the way I work it. Likes the way I stroke him, with that special twist around his knob on the out-stroke. Likes it enough to work his hands up between us, heading for my nips.

Only he doesn’t like it enough to keep his mind on the task at hand. Getting off. He pushes and the surprise is enough to make me let him go and step back. It is not an off-balance stumble. I do not stumble.

It is, indeed, a “What the fuck, Jean-Luc Picard!” that rushes out of his mouth.

Mission partially accomplished. My estimate is that this is mid-range in intensity and volume, so I’d tongue-fucked the initial WTF out of him, and jacked the really loud one away, too. I reach out for him and he kind of dances back. The fucker is well aware of my reaction to the still-hard prick standing out and proud from his business slacks. It would look even better if accompanied by his balls.

Still holding my hand out, wriggling my fingers just a little as if I’m enticing a reluctant puppy to come closer, closer, closer, so he can be grabbed and not get away again, I offer him a deal.

“I talk, you listen, I jack, you don’t come yet.”

“The last condition is unacceptable. ‘Yet’ is too imprecise. Define the time frame.”

“Goldilocks time. Not too short, not too long, just right.”

He reluctantly twinkles at me, pretends to give the matter deep thought, and nods. I continue my hand-wriggling, “here, cocky, cocky, cocky,” gesture. He steps right up and gets with the program. Prick well in hand, I lead him to the couch, let him go for a moment, reclaim my other dick (one on me, one on him, both for me), and start gently working it. Fingers over the top of the shaft, thumb rubbing the bottom, pausing to caress that very sensitive spot just beneath his slit on the up-stroke.

“I decided you decided you didn’t really want to waste our time having dinner in public when we could be together in private doing, well, shit like this. But you still have to have that public dinner where we talk about my donation so that you can explain the details when you get cross-examined. Your brother? Your father?”

Three little huffs of breath before he can answer. I do good work. “Father. Perhaps Grandfather. Six-figure donations, particularly from someone with enough money, despite his ostensible job, despite his generally poverty-stricken looks combined with ostentatious displays of the material things the

Brethren inveigh against and wallow in... you're slowing down. If you're slowing down, I'm not talking."

I resume my more capable stroking. Even my ability to multitask seems affected by the nearness of him.

"Those kinds of donations, from someone who might be persuaded to let us dip the bucket in the well again, are rare. They'll want to know."

"And they will. If I asked, could you describe Room 1 at White's?"

A snort of mock indignation and a little groan are my answer.

"Michael? The fact he personally served us? What you ate and drank? The crudity with which I devoured my twenty-four-ounce sirloin?"

He's panting now. "Uh, yes, yes, of course. Just a little faster. *Please?*"

"Tell them whatever they want to hear about the course of the negotiations, I won't deny anything. Hell, I'll refuse to talk to them if they ask."

He's nodding his head just a bit frantically now. "Uh, Jean-Luc, please, uh, I think, dear God I think, well, the time is just right... *right now!*"

I drop my head, clamp my mouth over his knob, and swallow every tasty drop he gifts me with. He can't go back with come-stained pants, after all.

I make a point of smacking my lips as I raise up and he swats at me. "Tell me, Jonathan, does talking about food and money make all Priestleys come, or just you?"

His "bastard" is accompanied by a little smile.

"We have a few hours alone, Jonathan. You know and I know I'm going to fuck you, but it's your choice. Sex now and talk later, or the other way around."

His light dims, and his eyes shift away from my face. He looks so very sad that for a moment there is a temptation to say the hell with everything on my schedule, and just hold him, comfort him. I resist. I'm giving him a second chance. I don't give anyone a second chance. My memory is flawless and so I know that I never have, no matter the pleading, no matter the reasons given. But for him I am.



And if this does not work...

If this does not work, as I am beginning to fear it will not, I will be patient. A great cat can be patient, lying motionless, waiting for its prey. Though Jonathan is more than prey for reasons that are still mostly incomprehensible to me. But not completely so. I wait him out.

He looks at me again. Finally. His voice is hesitant. "Sex... sex now. After we talk... you, you may not want to."

I hold out my arms; he moves into them, sighing as I enfold him. "I will always want you, my Jonathan. Even after talking."

The sex is gentle. He climaxes twice more. I come once. He tries to prolong it, so that all the time that is left will be enough, just barely, for a mad dash through a shower and getting back into his clothes in order for Charles to pick us—or him—up, and return him to his own home by eleven. I don't let him get away with it.

We shower, dry off. I give him a soft robe, almost floor-length, but fitting perfectly. I ordered it that Saturday morning, just in case. I don a robe of my own. I know he will not want to talk naked, although I often find it fascinating to do so.

But not this time. Not with what is a stake.

We sit in silence for a while. I let it build as he is certainly never going to break it.

I remember, watching him breathe, watching the rise and fall of a chest so recently flushed with passion, that I have... stolen... things in my life.

Sometimes what I steal is words. Why try to paraphrase "How do I love thee?" when the words, good words, great words, words of unparalleled magnificence are all there, waiting quietly in their pages or pixels, eager to be spoken, to be given the gift of life, by someone who understands them, understands their nuances. Someone who will take that gift and cherish it.

I am putting myself at risk. But I have to try again. Though I know with unfortunate certainty that this is not likely to end well.

He is not looking at me now. We are sitting close enough that he can feel my presence, but not so close I overwhelm him. Or at least not entirely. I can only do so much to make myself temporarily *less* than all I am, and that temporary never lasts for long.

“I said when I left in Berlin, well, not merely left, more... walking away after you told me to leave, after you told me, in essence, that all you were interested in was losing your virginity and you got what you wanted with a hot three-way, but now you had to get back to the real world, to your life... I said when I left that I would not be back. That no one was worth a second chance. That *you* were not worth a second chance.

“But you are. You already know what I’m going to ask you. I think you are already certain what your answer should be, must be, whether you want it to be or not. So I’m not going to screw you senseless as I might just have done, muddled your mind so thoroughly that you would be willing to agree to whatever I ask, and then have no recourse but to follow through on your word because you are that rarity, an honorable man.

“And no, there is no subtext of ‘so are they all, all honorable men,’ in what I say.

“So let me steal some words, twist and twine them in a different pattern, to say what I need to say, what I need you, want you, to hear, understand, accept.”

Philippe told me I must tell him. I can’t tell him all, but if he accepts part, the first part, then the rest can follow. All I risk is my pride; the possibility of being mocked. I do not take blows to my pride, I do not take mockery, well. There are, have always been, serious penalties for inflicting either on me.

He sits very still, head and eyes still averted. I haven’t sung for him before; I’m not certain I should now, but still... He sang for me, for Philippe and me. I sang for Philippe. And so...

I sing my own version of “If I Loved You,” telling him that since I love him, I have tried, over and over again I have tried to tell him all I wanted him to know.

He is looking at me now, lips parted, not quite breathing.

But because I love him, and never having loved before, I couldn't find easy words to say, no words at all, just my mind going around and around in circles, wanting to tell him, but too uncertain... I will not admit to fear... to try. And so I almost let my chance for him pass by.

He is crying. I have no idea whether that is good or bad. Damn the gods to the nethermost hells for making me this unsure of myself!

I don't want to believe I am actually begging him not to go, but I must, since the song and I so clearly are. And if he walks away, leaves in the song's mist of day, or brilliant noon, or midnight dark, how would he ever know how I love him? And I do love him.

And then there is just silence but for the sound of the tears he tries to stop but cannot. Endless silence otherwise. The length of all of Scheherazade's tales, and more, all without words.

Except the ones in my head. *He's going to say no.*

"I can't." He puts out his hand, as if to touch me, but pulls it back.

He dries the tears on a sleeve.

"I... I am sorry, so very, very sorry, about all I said in Berlin. I never believed it about you. But *you* frightened me. And my feelings *terrified* me."

He inhales and exhales slowly and carefully, bringing the trembling that had accompanied the tears under control. The lawyer and accountant are not yet back, but they are entering the room, starting the walk toward him. But at least for just a few minutes more, he is just *my* Jonathan.

Yes. Even if I want to shout it and grab him and shake him and kiss him until he understands, and I cannot... he is still *my* Jonathan.

"They... they are, still and all, and after all, my family. They are all I have ever had. It would destroy them to know... dear God... to know what I am. The humiliation and the scorn that would be heaped on the Brethren if the world finds out Father's oldest son, even though he is not the heir, is a

cocksucking faggot. I cannot do that to them. I am... I am just too weak, and you, you would come to hate a weak man.”

I open my mouth, but he stops me. “No. No protestations. What you would say is what you have to say. Just let me get through this. I... believe you. What you said... sang, I will remember and cherish for as long...”

His pause lets me know he hears the words, too: “...as we both shall live.”

“...for as long as I live. But I can’t. And even if I could, J—”

He stops. Flushes. Visibly pulls himself together. “I—I’m sorry, Jean-Luc. I need to get dressed. Leave. I will—I will tell them that despite my best efforts you changed your mind.” I can see him reaching out to the lawyer and accountant, frantic to bring them all the way to him, to hide him.

No. To hide *something*.

That “J” sound. Every fucking male in the Priestley family has a first name that starts with a “J.”

Joshua. Fucking, fucking Joshua.

“And even if you could, Joshua... would what?”

He freezes. Then crumbles, folding in on himself. Shaking his head in a silent “I can’t, I can’t, I can’t.”

My size... *all* that I am... has so very often inspired fear. Frequently, terror. Only rarely, trust. But my Jonathan trusts me when I move to him, close my arms around him, hold him as he sobs, the great, gulping sobs that are never pretty to look at.

“Tell me.”

He starts to shake his head against the wet robe, but stills. Only my excellent hearing allows me to hear him say, his breath soft on my fur, “Even if I could, Joshua will... will tell the world I molested him. When he was sixteen. And I was eighteen. Statutory rape.”

Somewhere there is a great cat squalling, rage shaking the night sky. But there is no hesitation when I say, “He lies.”

He looks up at me, wonder in his eyes. “You... don’t... wouldn’t believe him?”

“Of course not.”

“But I did.”

I make myself chuckle, a soothing noise while the cat stalks, finds its prey, leaps, holds it carefully by the throat, and disembowels it with his claws.

“Now *you* lie.”

Another head shake. Anguish on his face. “No. I did. I... I sucked him, swallowed him. He... he fucked me. So, oh, Jean-Luc, I didn’t give you and Philippe anything at all in Berlin. Just another queer who wanted to be in your bed. Pre—pretending then, all this time, that I was a virgin, that I wasn’t, that I hadn’t...”

I squeeze him. I am not used to comforting squeezes, they’re mostly the “you’re going to hurt now, fucker,” kind, so he squeaks a little. I quickly let go, but he snuggles back in.

“How did he force you?”

“Me being weak. He came to my bedroom one day, when I was stressed out over... *things*. At school.”

“Another boy.”

He nods, doesn’t look up at me. Talks to my robe and my chest. “I... we had never done anything. Not for lack of my wishing, but because I knew what would happen if I did. Besides getting punched out by him, and then beaten to a pulp by his teammates.

“I was so unhappy right then, that when Joshua, my wonderful little brother of whom I was so proud, came into my room and told me he knew what I was, I didn’t let him finish. Didn’t let him say the rest of the words he said to me later, about how my being a queer disgusted him, but we had to think of the good of the Brethren, the family, the Lord.

“I thought he was comforting me that instant he held me in his arms after I threw myself at him. I thought he was going to tell me that he loved me, that

everything would somehow, in some the Lord works in mysterious ways fashion, everything would be all right.

“Only he didn’t. And it never was. He explained coldly, clearly, that he felt he should let Father and Grandfather know, that it was his duty, no matter how much it would hurt them. But if I would pray to God for forgiveness, if I would abandon my sinful desires and sinful ways, if I would do... just *one* thing... he would never tell.”

“And that one thing, two, actually, was to give him a blowjob, and let him fuck you. Your first time. The bastard fucker.”

“A man had to know the sin he was fighting, he said, had to understand it in all its seductive depravity. He was... overjoyed... to learn I was a virgin. That he could soil me and make me understand how depraved I was. That he had this power since I had confessed my sin and no one would take my word against the word of the anointed heir. And he promised that it would only be once. Never again.”

“He kept his word. But he told you he had pictures.”

Jonathan looks up at me in shock. “How did you know?”

I carefully do not shrug. It is what I would have done had I been like Joshua. Predators recognize each other. I just had not fully recognized this one. Not until now. I smile a smile Jonathan would not like to see. And sometimes one predator destroys another.

“Doing it again was too risky to him. Once he could get away with. Twice and he would have been suspect. And you have never seen the photographs, the ones he has kept hidden in a safe place, because they don’t in fact exist.

“If they existed, and did not show his face, then they are just photos of you having sex with another male, who probably didn’t have ‘I’m only sixteen’ tattooed on some visible spot. He would have no proof that it was his dick in your mouth or ass, except his word. And the world would think it more than a little weird that he was trumpeting ‘That’s my dick, that’s my dick!’

“More likely than not they don’t exist and never have, because the risk to him is even greater, once someone asks why the pictures exist at all, why he didn’t do something at the time if his older brother had in fact molested him.

“And there was one thing more, wasn’t there?”

A confirming blink.

“Shall I tell you?”

“No, oh great Carnac. You can take the envelope away from your forehead.” His smile, so very, very small, was wobbly, but there. “I’ll tell you. I agreed to stay with the Brethren.

“And now, I am so used to my cage, I know I cannot cope with freedom. So I jack and pretend, and for one glorious evening actually *did*. And then I returned to my cage, and pulled the door behind me, and latched it again.”

We sit quietly. I am grateful that he cannot hear, cannot see, the great cat finish off its prey. Prey that looks suspiciously like Joshua. I think if I had ever visited the Oracle at Delphi he might have welcomed me as a fellow seer. A prophet extraordinaire.

Our silence, a quiet one now that the tumult has passed, stretches out. But reality is on the verge of intruding.

I lift him away from me, carefully, so that he knows he is not being rejected.

“First, you *were* a virgin in Berlin. Rape—a knife at your throat, metaphorical or not—can’t take that away from you. In fact, I would have to say, that in a long, long line of virgins...” I lie so very well, he was the first. “...you were by far the best. A blue ribbon winner.”

He smiles at my teasing. Seems to absorb the more serious part.

“Second, I will make this right. No, I am not going to grab the antique Colt handgun, the Army’s M1911 that’s over in that drawer, and load it, and blow your fucking brother’s fucking brains out. As much as it would give me pleasure to do so. But I have my Hippocratic oath to consider.”

It is good that he cannot read my mind, cannot realize that it's the hypocritical oath I am swearing. An oath to do... if not precisely that, then something. A *long*, and *very painful* something.

"I will protect you, and you will not need to fear him again."

I do not ask him to trust me on this because his fear is too great.

"Third, and I promise last, I will give you time. Time to think and consider whether the rest of your life will be cabined, cribbed and confined, bound to the rock that is your brother. Time to decide.

"But Jonathan, you have to understand. I do not give second chances to those who refuse me anything, vast or infinitesimal. But I did tonight, for you. And I will try again, one more time. A final time. I promise you that when I ask you to make a choice, that will be the last choice. I will not do this ever again."

"Okay."

I make my tone brisk. "Good. Now we have to get you cleaned up, and do something about your eyes. Michael is terribly broken up by his clumsiness."

"Wh... what?"

He is back to being confused and adorable, with red, red, puffy, puffy eyes.

"You remember, don't you? How could you forget? He was bringing in a small silver serving dish with one of those tiny silver spoons, filled with his special blend of Malabar, Tellicherry, Lampong and Muntak peppercorns, freshly but not too finely ground, when the idiot tripped, tossed the dish in the air, and the mixture blew into your eyes. He should market it. It's far more effective than pepper spray or Mace. He was devastated."

My Jonathan grins at me. "Don't you mean he *will* be devastated when you call to let him know what he did last night?"

I smile back.

"And you'll owe him even more for making the owner of the world-famous White's seem to be a temporarily clumsy oaf."



True, so very true. Michael will make me pay for this. But what are friends for, if not to use and be used when needed?

We shower, get dressed, are ready when Charles calls. My Jonathan leans into me for a quiet kiss, the merest modicum of tongue. He looks nervous for a second. “How... how will...”

I soothe him with another kiss, a little deeper this time, with the inevitable immediate results down south for both of us. But we are, regrettably, in control. He lets it drop.

We ride in quietness back to his condo, Jonathan thankfully oblivious to the great cat with bloody paws batting that head around, playing with it, playing with that special, hugely-better-than-catnip toy.

A final chaste kiss in the car, the windows so well-tinted no one can see, and I let him go. Watch him, though, until he is safely past the doorman.

I tell Charles to drive around for a little.

I need to think.

The great cat needs to think.

We need to ponder on how best to get that head in play. The one that oddly enough looks so much like Joshua.

\*\*\*\*

*Now—Saturday evening***JEAN-LUC**

“You gotta be kidding,” he says.

He stands inside what I am sure the Priestleys call a cabin, only a house this large is anything but. He holds the door open, the screen door (in winter!) the only visible barrier to my entry. Tendrils of house-warmth reach out, wrap about me, each coil alternating with bands of moon-cold bouncing off the snow on ground and walk and steps and the porch railing behind me.

I shrug, smile, not bothering with seduction or domination. *Before*, there was no need of either. Poor peasants keep their heads down if they want to survive. *After*... ah, *after*, when I learned... all that I needed to learn... I have always had what I wanted, whom I wanted, when and in the ways I wanted.

Except for Jonathan. Yet here I am, as I promised. A third time. A last time. I promised that as well.

It ends tonight. One way or another. I will do what is required. And then... and then I will leave.

My hopefully only temporarily dead rental car, the one I was assured was just the thing for a Montana winter, including the storm I had hoped to beat, is a mile? two miles? behind me. Fighting through snow that is three and four feet deep in places has depleted me. I draw on my reserves. Stand quietly. Let the chill swirl around me but not feed off me. Wait.

**JONATHAN**

I look at him, wonder why I am about to do what I am about to do, and simultaneously tell myself, convince myself, that I am not going to do just that: invite him in. It's not as though I don't know why he is here. He told me. One more time; he'd come to me one more time. And then... no more time. He made a promise, told me he always keeps his word. But still, there was the possibility that this time would be that one time that he didn't.

I did not run that first time, in order to be some damsel in need of pursuit and rescue. Perhaps with pillaging and raping along the way, just to keep his

hand in. I did not tell him “no” in New York so he would follow and stroke my ego and my cock again.

Or perhaps I did.

I stare at him, cataloging all the reasons why I should: intelligent; handsome in that *peasant* sort of way, that is now so damned hot; hung; wealthy, cultured, everything my formerly secret romance novel fetish tells me a hero should be. The man *sang* to me, for God’s sake. A love song, not some flat, out-of-tune, no-tune mockery. What’s not to like? Love? Tell him “take me, I’m yours!” and rip my bodice before he can?

And for all that he’s “swave and deboner” as I told him in Berlin, he doesn’t have that kind of well-bred European arrogance that would set Father’s teeth on edge and have him sharpening the verbal fileting knives if they ever meet. Which they won’t. Not Father, nor Grandfather. Not Joshua again. Oh, definitely not Joshua again.

I don’t think he knows I saw the expression on his face. Is he really angry enough to take action against Joshua? Beat him to a fucking pulp, perhaps, in such a way that he doesn’t know it’s Jean-Luc, or so he knows but somehow can’t do anything about it to him? To me? I’m not a violent man, okay, well, perhaps a little rough when I’m getting fucked, but the thought that someone, that *Jean-Luc*, actually cares enough to be angry on my behalf is... Well, hell, another two seconds of this and I’m going to yank on my Empire-waist gown, fan myself delicately and fucking swoon.

But he has done nothing. I would have heard. Though he has been on missions since then. Africa. The Middle East. The aftermath of a typhoon in the Far East. I have become a groupie for MSF. Perhaps... perhaps he is just biding his time.

“Well?”

The word, neither patient, nor overly impatient, with absolutely no subtext of “Make up your fucking mind!” snaps me out of my fog.

He stands there in the cold. Controls the shivers he has to be feeling given the temperature outside and the fact his suit, a fucking Dolce & Gabbana, is

soaked. No gloves. Hands at his side. He just stands. Silent. Watching. Waiting.

Dear Lord, give me a fucking break!

The screen door is patently not locked. I am standing here holding the door open for him, just as patently shivering with the arctic air groping me here, there and everywhere, and he just stands. What is he? A fucking vampire waiting for an invitation?

He's insane. Completely, fucking batshit crazy. And he did the same thing in Berlin.

I'm not going to freeze my balls off, so I end the goddamn game.

I open the door the rest of the way, holding it with my left hand, while with my right I make a sweeping gesture to indicate he is free to enter.

The bastard stands there.

Okay, okay, *fucking okay!*

"C'mon in."

He does. Precisely as he did at the Hyatt.

I wonder, briefly, if he will play his game as he did in Berlin. Leave the moment I tell him to, no arguments, nothing except an immediate exit. I did it then, I can, I should, do it again, now.

Because I already know. I've made my decision. I just have to tell him this will never work, I'm not strong enough to uncage myself, to let him uncage me. Maybe Toulouse had it right, that the greatest thing *is* to love and be loved in return. But not if you're not strong enough to do both.

Except... except he seems to think I can.

Dear God in Heaven, if You even fucking exist, what now? I am no nearer a decision than I was in New York. Than I have been all these weeks.

I can just... tell him to get the fuck out of here, out of my life. Go die in the snow. He would have to go, wouldn't he? If he's going to be consistent in this subtle, silly game. And then I wouldn't have to make a choice. Only... that *is* a

choice. Making him, if I even can, go or stay. Which just leads to another choice and another until I reach the one I don't want to make.

I am insane.

I am the world's greatest idiot. I am standing in front of a still open door with my balls begging for mercy, pleading for a match to light a fire in my jeans, and I am fantasizing about having just invited a fucking vampire into my home?

The man has no fangs. I have had my tongue down his throat exploring where his tonsils used to be. I worked over every perfect tooth, providing a cleaning with my saliva a dentist would envy. So I know. A perfect syllogism. All vampires have fangs. Jean-Luc has no fangs. Jean-Luc is not a vampire.

That settled, I slam the fucking door. Pause long enough to decide I don't really need to put up a quick sign outside that says "No Vampires Allowed" in English, French ("*Aucun Vampires Autorisés*") and German ("*Keine Vampire Erlaubt*"). Romanian is probably as close as I can get to Transylvanian, so I could get to my computer, use Google Translate. Just to be thorough and keep the bloodsucking hordes away.

All of which is stalling.

I'll just go tell him I know the weather outside is frightful, and my fire is so, well, delightful, and I know he has no place to go, so, there's not going to be any let-it-snow, stay-here shit, and I'll just tell him, "Jean-Luc, please, just get the fuck out!"

Yeah, right.

All of my jittering has given him time to unerringly walk down the hall and turn left into the living room. Time to walk past the large leather couch. Time to reach the fireplace, and get warm. Since he isn't, well, undead and can therefore feel it. Maybe.

I stare again. Well, shit.

Time to get naked, too. His clothes have just been dropped in piles that are starting to puddle, as if it's his home and he has the right to be messy. He probably toasted his front first, just a bit, while I was in my second fog, before

turning his back on the fire. Before planting his legs wide, his arms down and slightly spread, his palms toward the flames. The flames that silhouette him in bright red-orange-yellow.

I gulp, turn my eyes away. Begin doing host-like things, turning on lights, not too many, not too bright, this is not a party, this is just sex. That's all it will turn out to be. Sex, and then, and then, I'll tell him again I cannot do what he wants. And then he'll go. This time forever.

And I'll die.

Damn... not, not damn *him*, damn me!

I shake my head, more of a twitch, turn on the CD player. I'd forgotten I'd put *that* disc in last night. Well, why not? I straighten little things that don't need to be straightened, not looking directly at him. Glance quickly at him so he won't notice me doing so, but he does. There is nothing the slightest bit shriveled about him.

On the contrary. His cock thickens, rises until it is pointing at me. My cock tries to join the pointing game, but it's all tangled up in the damned denim.

"My beautiful Jonathan." His voice is low, caressing.

I just stand there. "Am... am I?"

"Are you what?"

"Ei... either?" I hesitate. "Both?"

When did I get so needy?

When haven't I been?

"Both." His turn to hesitate. "You are mine, aren't you, Jonathan? You ran once more, didn't tell anyone where you were going, but I tracked you, ran you down... and now we are through with the games, the fears, the rest of the bullshit that has had you running since Berlin?"

I think my face tells him I *want* to say "yes," but even though his face is in shadow, I can see the warmth of his eyes fade into a slight chill, as I say, "I... I don't know."

*How can he want someone so weak?*

I somehow manage to avoid the I'm-so-misunderstood wail of barely a teen, when I tell him, "You don't understand."

Hell, I don't really understand.

"Explain it again."

"I can't be gay."

"But you are."

"That's beside the point, goddamn it!"

The chill is lightened, just a little, by his smirk. "And a very nice point it is, too. I remember it well, so Hermione has no need to correct me."

When did we get only a few steps apart?

And now he's in front of me, his hands grasping the front of the shirt I'd thrown on and loosely buttoned when I heard his knock. Although it sounded more like Thor's hammer slamming into the wood, than the ordinary knock-with-your-knuckles variety.

He's going to do it to me again. I can't. I won't stand for it. He can't manipulate me this way.

He can.

He uses his thumbs to slide between the sides of the shirt, and doesn't use much strength at all to pop the buttons off. His thumbs gather up the fabric, pushing toward my shoulders, pull it off, down my arms. A tug and he disposes of it. Nothing dramatic like flinging it away, just dropping it out of the way.

He pauses, looks down at my hard-on, reaches down, twists his hands so that his palms are towards me, hooks his fingers between the buttons on my jeans.

He doesn't exactly ignore the hands I clamp on his wrists, just holds still. Inside my head I can hear the bastard saying, "Choose, Jonathan."

I choose. Lift my hands away.

With a single yank the buttons do their best fast-as-a-speeding-bullet imitation. I think Father will be pissed about the one that loudly hits his Hommage á René Lalique Boulouris vase, and chips it. I can't find it in my heart or conscience to care, not when my jeans are now at my ankles, my cock is angling up, and he's on his knees, lifting my feet one by one to peel the denim off. Shove it aside.

Then his mouth is on my cock.

It's acceptable to thank Jesus for winning a football game, to praise the Lord for making that basket from the far end of the court, launching it a millisecond before the final buzzer sounds. It's blasphemy to thank either of them for a blow job.

I blaspheme. Loudly.

He is sucking like there is going to be no possibility of a tomorrow. What's that song? Oh, yeah, like's it's the last night of the world. Warm breath, hot mouth, as he takes me all the way down. Show-off. He slides up slowly, clamps on my knob until the suction is almost painful, his tongue lapping, teasing my slit. Then down again and up; down and up. A pause to get his forefinger wet with spit and a dollop of precome I eagerly provide.

I spread my legs, knowing the destination of that finger, welcoming it. He shoves it inside, and pushes my button, perhaps the best of my buttons that he pushes so well. Not what I want up there, but a reasonable substitute. For now.

Christ! Is having sex—what? I count quickly—fourteen times enough to create a slut? Fourteen? I recount, peripherally aware of my whimper when a second finger joins the first. Yes. Ten at the Hyatt, four at his apartment. Of course I didn't come that many times myself, but applying what I remember of my class in tort law, I figure if I caused or contributed to cause a come, each one counts. So, yes, fourteen.

The climax-postponing distraction of this legal and numerical analysis ends when three brethren fingers, none of the capital B variety, plunder my hole. Repeatedly. With a great deal of skill. My whimper becomes a moan, a long, drawn-out one that in turn becomes a babbling "oh please, oh! please! ohpleaseohpleaseohplease," over and over again until I scream "Jean-Luc!"



and he swallows my cock and my seed, stopping the sucking and easing his fingers out at the instant before both would have become painful.

I stand there, my hands resting on his shoulders for balance, my breath coming and going in great gulps. He has dropped back on his haunches.

I look down at him. He looks up. Smiles.

Smug bastard.

## JEAN-LUC

My smile generates another “bastard!” in his head. It’s his pet name for me, though I don’t think he realizes how often he says it, thinks it. I wonder what adjective he has put with it this time? For my money, it’s “smug.”

I rise smoothly, none of the bending forward, hand on the floor for balance, ass in the air, straighten-up crap. Jonathon starts downward. An excellent thought, but I stop him. Eventually he will learn that sex is not always a contract, a *quid pro quo* transaction, a come for you, a come for me, two for you, two for me.

I reach up to tilt his chin so he’s looking at my eyes and not my leaking prick. I realize—for the first time in more years than I care to remember—the ever-present tiny twinge of resentment that I am not taller, was not unusually tall when before became after, is not present.

“You want my cock inside you.” Not quite a question, not quite a statement. A nod is his reply, that and a quick suck of my thumb tip as it caresses his lower lip.

“You’ll probably get it.” His eyes widen just slightly at the possibility of *not*. “But first we have to talk.”

“You’ve got to be kidding. You blew my cock, you blew, well, *part* of my mind, so I’ll expect you to take care of the rest later, but first we have to *talk*?”

He is far too eager for sex, my Jonathan. Not that I don’t appreciate it. I do. But still, his fear is using sex as a way to postpone. The way he did in New York. Ah. I can see he remembers New York. *His* choice.

My turn to nod.

The lawyer and CFO, so pleasantly absent for so short a time, leach back into his system. “I don’t negotiate naked.”

He backs away, reaches down, grabs his jeans. Left foot in, a tug, right foot in, a tug, a little hop, a wiggle, and the well-worn fabric slides up over his hips. He routinely tucks himself inside left and only then realizes he has no buttons. “Bastard.”

I admire the little belly, the treasure trail down to the grey-brown... ah, no, I’d best think of it as brown-grey since he’ll be thoroughly annoyed if I put the grey first... pubes where so lately I nuzzled.

“Fine!” He peels them back off and pitches them onto the floor with only a pinch of pissed-off petulance. “And you’re not negotiating naked, either.”

“What makes you think...”

“I’m not a complete fool. Foolish in Berlin? I still don’t know. Foolish in New York? More than likely. A possible, no, more likely probable, fool for letting you in here? Definitely. But don’t even bother trying to claim that besides planning on fucking what few brains I have left, right out of my fucking skull, that you’re not also here for negotiations, discussions, the fate of nations rest on our shoulders, decisions must be made, talking.”

He stalks away. I’m admiring that only slightly sagging, mostly muscular ass, waiting, waiting...

He stops. Turns back to me.

The smile I don’t smile is nevertheless visible to my Jonathan, given his glare. The light has dawned! Enlightenment has set in!

I give him another careful not-smile, gesture at myself, at him, silently pointing out the now obvious. I’m wide and short—shorter; he’s tall and thin. Thinner. My clothes are soaking wet. Why, I could get a chill, catch a cold, pneumonia even, if I put them on. He has no clothes that could possibly fit me.

This time I let the smile out. “I guess we’ll have to talk naked, after all.” I move my hips from side to side, and my only slightly softened cock waggles, too. “Surely my dick won’t be a distraction.”

He just glares at me. And then that Warner Brothers cartoon brush pops into the frame and quickly paints a Eureka!-style light bulb over Bugs' head. Or is my Jonathan more Daffy?

His turn to smirk as he turns again and quickly moves out of the room, down the hall. I hear the clattering and banging of doors and drawers, and gentle words of love he doesn't realize I can hear.

“Smug bastard. Arrogant damned bastard. I'll show him. I'm not fucking negotiating fucking anything with his fucking dick fucking waving in my fucking face.”

I have clearly corrupted him. A consummation devoutly wished for—and achieved. Five fucks in a single eloquent sentence. I give myself a mental high five.

“Ah, ha!”

He actually says, “Ah, ha?”

Another bang. Bare footsteps on the smooth wood floor. He comes straight for me, carrying colorful, *brightly* colorful... towels? Stops. Throws one at me and I give him the satisfaction of letting it hit me in the face instead of plucking it out of the air. Beach towels. Mothball-smelling beach towels. He throws another of the evil-smelling things at me. This one I catch.

“One around your shoulders. One around your waist.”

I let him have his way, instead of tongue-fucking his mouth, his mind, his cock and his ass into submission. In short order, our dangly bits are decorously covered, except my bit still isn't cooperating with Jonathan's just-dangling agenda. Our shoulders and, for me, *part* of my chest are covered. Too bad his supremely sensitive nips are hidden by his upper towel. Ah, well, not forever.

Tonight will not be a repeat of New York. I learned truths then. Truths I have yet to fully deal with, though that has begun. It is his turn now for truth. Tonight he will accept the truth of what we are to each other. Learn the truth about me. Accept those truths. Or not. But he *will* choose.

I make my cock soften so he cannot claim distraction. We sit on the couch... and I tell him everything.

Well, not everything. If I told him everything I'd finish somewhere in the summer of 2961 and Jonathan would have crumbled into dust centuries earlier. So, not all, but enough for him to make an informed decision.

Not surprisingly, he doesn't believe me. At first he laughed, and then he began to withdraw from me. Physically, emotionally. Expected, but still hurting. I had not expected how *much* it would hurt.

What he feels for me, though perhaps that is now past tense, battles with what my words tell him, with what he *knows* with the certainty of universal truths like sun/east, sky/up, gravity/down, is an utter impossibility. A violation of the laws of God and nature, a denial of Darwin.

There's another battle as well. Between primal fear and the garden variety fear that a variation on Norman Bates or Hannibal Lecter is at large in his home. The home he willingly opened up to the monster.

When I stop, he takes several deep, slow breaths. A calming device. It doesn't work very well.

Eventually, while the music waxes and wanes, the logical lawyer, the accountant with an obsession for ensuring that everything adds up, reappears.

One more breath.

## JONATHAN

Batshit crazy. Certifiable. Neither comes close to the reality. Joshua, Father, all of them who have shown I am not good enough, will never be more than marginally good enough, are clearly right. Only someone like me would have let someone like *him* in my life. And now I'm trapped here with a psycho on my couch.

A psycho whose soul touched mine, or so I thought.

One final... no, bad word choice... one more breath. I look at him, hoping he will believe I am actually calm.

"So, let me get this straight. You love me. You've loved me since our eyes met across that lobby. And ever since. You want me to give up everything to

be with you. Leave my family, my work, my freaking *life*.” Just as he wanted in Berlin. In New York.

I pause, take another breath, and then practically shriek, “And you quoted a good part of ‘Come live with me, and be my love, and we will all the pleasures prove’ at me just now!”

I think the shriek, no, the *almost* shriek covers the fact that his bass voice rumbling those words at me made me want to go into puddle mode.

Another breath. Another. He sits silent, as he damn well should. Another.

“And then... and then, it’s oh, yes, ‘in the interest of fairness and honesty,’ you’re a vampire.”

“Yes.” Another basso almost-profundo rumbling that does things I should not allow it to do but cannot seem to help permitting.

Insane. Fucking insane. He has to be. Or just deluded. I can talk him down, talk him back from the edge. A motion for partial summary judgment on his fantasy. Establish the uncontrovertible facts. Get the judge to rule.

“You don’t have fangs.”

“You noticed.”

“Well, then.”

“Well, what? I never said I sucked blood. Life, yes. And other things.” His damned gaze strokes over my towel-covered nipples, does that tweaking, touching, down and down, to that tongue thing he does with my slit. “I suck other things... very well. Don’t you agree?”

I flush and ignore him. Ah. More proof.

“Do you get cold?” Step by step logical analysis.

“You mean us, the evil undead, generally, or me in particular?”

I blink. I hadn’t been thinking exactly those words, but still... in the interest of fairness and honesty, I nod.

His brief laughter is sarcastic, wounding, a sound that says, “Stupid child.”

“You were in bed with me. I had my cock buried inside your ass, fucking you until you screamed my name and begged me not to stop. You had my cock in your mouth, fucking you again. Was I cold and undead then?”

It’s not really a second flush, as the first hasn’t had time to fade. How does he do this? Unnerve me so?

## JEAN-LUC

So delectable, so vulnerable, so confused.

I will not just haul his ass up, bend his ass over the damned couch, and fuck him until he collapses. And then does what I want... what I *need*... him to do. To make the right choice.

At least not yet.

I will before I leave. At least once. No. More. Definitely more.

“If you prick us, do we not bleed?” I murmur. Just loud enough for the sound to float across the space between us, drift into his ears.

“What?”

“You heard me.”

“Vampires don’t bleed,” he says triumphantly. It isn’t exactly on a par with *cogito, ergo sum*, as an analytical breakthrough, but he acts as if it is.

I can’t help it if my “Stay,” sounds like a command to a recalcitrant puppy, as I stand, look around the room, do not find what I need. Ah, well, I brought what I needed in case this happened.

I walk over to my jacket, pull the small, sheathed blade out of the pocket, walk back, sit down. I hold it out to him, pull off the sheath, drop it between us. The blade is silver, the handle ornately carved. Niccolò gave it to me shortly before he died. Of natural causes I will swear, on any holy book anyone cares to name so long as it will not self-combust from my touch.

“If you prick us, do we not bleed?”

His mouth drops open as I hold out my left arm, elbow bent, palm up, place the still-sharp point against my skin, dig in and slice in a straight line

toward my hand. The flesh parts, and blood wells up, begins to pour out. I stop cutting, which breaks his frozen horror.

He shouts, “No, you fucking fool!” and whips the towel off his shoulder, lunging forward to use it to staunch the flow.

And stops.

And stares, open-mouthed again.

There is still blood on my skin, wet streaks and blobs and spots of it on my towel, on the couch. But the skin is closing, the gash going... going... gone.

“If you tickle us, do we not laugh?”

“Wh... wh... what?” He looks away from my forearm, up at me, back and up again. He is so adorable when he is confused.

“You did, remember, you... and... my Philippe... and I tickled you back. Do you want to tickle me now, to be sure?”

He shakes his head. Shivers.

“Will got the next one wrong, but then he wasn’t writing about me at that moment, since if you do poison us we are unlikely to die.”

I don’t move closer to him. Not yet. I am already an invader deep inside his personal space. Does he see a Genghis Khan with a great pyramid of skulls behind me? When my cock is hard, in just a moment, ah, there, he notices the tent in the towel. He doesn’t want me to know he notices, but I do.

“Ah, but the next line. So very, very accurate when it comes to us. ‘And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?’”

That pulls his eyes up and away from my cock. His “*I haven’t wronged you,*” is not merely indignant but angry.

“You had to know. All of this. In—”

He finishes my sentence. “The interest of honesty and fairness?”

“Just so.”

My voice steps outside the circle of warmth around us. Far outside. In a galaxy far, far away outside. It has all the weight of my years, the cold, dark

mass of what I have been and done, will be and do again, to protect myself, to protect the others. No matter the cost to me.

He has pulled the lawyer, the astute businessman, back around him, as armor. If he is tempted to shiver, to back away, to let me see the uncertainty, the beginnings of fear, the outright terror depending on circumstances, that generally accompany my tone, he does not give in.

“I haven’t wronged *you*.”

Stubborn fuck.

## JONATHAN

Arrogant fuck.

He *wants* me to be afraid. Not bloody likely. Well, hell, now I’m swearing Brit-style in my head.

And ignoring what I’ve just seen. It’s some illusion, some magic trick. David Copperfield, Harry Houdini magic. Not *magic* magic. Not Harry-fucking-Hogwarts.

I can’t help myself. I move closer, reach out, snatch the towel open, grasp his prick. Apparently the undead have a temperature after all. I stroke all the way toward me, my thumb rubbing his slit.

“You’re warm.” I have to help him understand. “If you’re warm, you’re not undead. If you’re not undead, you can’t possibly be a fucking vampire. A vampire who fucked me. *Quod erat demonstrandum*.”

“I’m not dead.”

“But you say you’re a vampire.” The whole *you thorough-going whack-job* part is silent. But he understands.

He sighs. The sigh of a father having to explain things to a less-than-bright son.

“Stoker and Rice have much to answer for. Though I am finding that perhaps that whole Argeneau one true love, soul mate thing may be somewhat



accurate after all.” He puts his right hand over mine, stills my stroking, lifts my hand away.

“Hath not a vampire eyes?” he mocks. “You have looked into mine, so very closely in Berlin, and again in New York. Were they empty and lifeless? Are they now?”

He pushes the towel all the way off, pitches the shoulder one onto the floor. He turns so he is leaning back, his legs sprawled wide, his large, hairy feet firmly planted on the floor, looking almost obscene as he looks over at me, and slowly strokes himself. He stretches his left arm out along the back of the couch. Just a little more, only a little, and he could, if he but would, touch me. I wonder if the thick hair in his pit will smell as good as it did that first time. Mentally I Gibbs the back of my head, pull my stare away.

“Hath not a vampire hands, organs?” His eyes flick downward to emphasize his point, look up again to ensure I’m following.

“Dimensions?” Another smirk. Bastard. Just because he’s bigger than me.

“Senses, affections, passions?” On the final word his eyes gleam, becoming... *odd*... and then the oddity is gone.

“We eat, but are not fed with the same food. We are hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases... and healed by vastly different means... warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer.”

He is pleasuring himself while he mangles and mocks Shakespeare at me.

I won’t reach down and touch my own erection. I won’t lick my lips and wonder if his cock in my throat would be as good as the last time it was there.

I do both.

Did I just enroll in Vampire Lore 101? But I can’t help myself.

“Why did I have to invite you in? I was holding the door open. The invitation was implicit. You could have walked in.”

His smile is faint. His voice tonight is without accent. “A man’s home is his castle.”

I snort at the cliché.

He shrugs. “If you want to know why we must ask, get yourself a research grant, find some test subjects and figure it out. It is a fact of life.”

“Of undeath.”

“Or that.” He shifts and his left hand pats the couch beside him.

I move closer, until we are side by side, but still not touching. I don't sit too close. I wouldn't want to interfere with his jacking, wouldn't want him not to have a hand readily available if he... wanted it for some other reason than teasing his nipples.

“Think of a castle. A fortress with only one entrance, the way controlled by drawbridge and portcullis. You can only get in if someone inside raises the portcullis, lowers the drawbridge. Even in war, you may never gain entry, without destroying the castle itself. Which defeats the purpose. Your home, your true home, your soul's home, not just the physical place you call that word, only allows us entry with your consent.”

He shrugs. Looks around. “This place? Your soul is only temporarily here so I might have come in without consent, though with you it would not have been easy.”

“And if I'd said no, when I opened the door? Told you to stay the fuck out? Slammed it in your face?”

“As you wanted to?”

“Yes.” Forthright. Firm. The prosecution's star witness confirming the defendant killed Cock Robin.

Or not. His stare, his left hand rising to rub himself at the top of his chest, then burrowing down the fur into the thick pubes, to splay his first and second fingers around the base of his cock, reminds me. As if I need reminding.

I snatch control back, don't look at him as I ask, “What then? What if I had?”

“I would have made a willow cabin in your yard.”

I groan. Not again. He is inexorable. I briefly consider clapping my hands over my ears, and loudly “la-la-la-ing” him in a sing-song sort of way, but give up. I look at him so I can get the full impact of the train wreck.

“Called out to my soul within your house. Written silly love songs, and sung them gleefully even in the dead of night. Shouted your name to the reverberating hills, making the air echo with the sound of ‘Jonathan!’”

The bastard smirks at me. “You wouldn’t have rested well until you surrendered, pitied me, invited me in.”

“To suck my blood.”

He laughs. Opens his mouth wide. “Look, Ma, no fangs.” He pauses. “Aren’t we past your fang fixation yet?”

I nod, but it isn’t the nod of someone who has just closed a fifteen-million-dollar deal for the Brethren. It’s far too uncertain for that.

He smiles, reaches out. Cups the side of my face, rubs his thumb briefly across my lower lip.

“But sucking you? Oh, definitely.”

His left hand lifts away, drops down across the joiner of hip and thigh, leaps the tiny, tiny chasm which was all I could make myself make when I moved. He strokes down my forearm, lifts my hand to his mouth. My body twists to follow the movement as he brings my fingers to his lips. His tongue darts out, moistening both fingertips and lips, opens, slowly, slowly, slowly engulfs my index finger, his tongue swirling about it inside the warmth of his mouth, then equally slowly pulling back until just the tip rests on his lower lip. He smiles, bends his head, his tongue pulling up an unresisting second finger, swallowing them both, just holding them there while tiny exhalations from his nostrils pat the back of my hand. I am so hard I hurt. He clamps his lips tight, bobs his head up and down rapidly for just a couple of strokes, and then slowly, slowly, slowly slides back and off and away, lifting his head to look at me.

He picks up an edge of his towel, uses it to gently wipe my fingers. “I also clean up afterwards.”

He smiles.

## JEAN-LUC

He is watching me, still not fully understanding why I am here. Well, aside from the reason that is so very obvious because it is standing up and saluting him, and weeping with eagerness.

Oh, he understands the words, the idea that he has to choose, but it hasn't sunk in.

In ordinary times, in centuries of ordinary times, I would have been here to fuck and feed. Nothing more. Two needs fulfilled, taking a year, two years from him at the most, out of the forty-three he has left.

But there is no need to feed. The man last night was enough.

He'd never been with a man before. Certainly never one like me. Only children. Young children. I rarely hate. After all this time there is no need for it, nor for any other emotion, really, especially not as motivation. I make an exception for those like him, for him. Perhaps because I was raped the first time when I was ten.

Before departing from Saint-Valery-sur-Somme for the invasion of England, my father decided to get in some practice raping and pillaging. He chose my mother. She was twelve. He survived Hastings, was rewarded with a title and estate wrested from the losing English. And when he triumphantly passed through the village again, ten years later, we knew each other, recognized the link between Norman baron and Norman peasant boy. It was in our faces, in our eyes. A reunion, a first meeting actually, that ends as that one did offered no pleasure. Well, not for me. *He* seemed to get great pleasure from using me the few days he carried me with him, but then he dumped me beside the road, his seed leaking out of my ass one last time.

Not that he realized that the repeated satisfaction was fleeting until years later. Eleven, to be exact. After my second rape. After I understood the change, what I was, what I could do. I found him in Paris, took him, used his own money to get him back to England, where I paid men he had hurt, whose children he had hurt, to use him. To fuck him, once for every time he had

come inside me, a final fuck for all the children since. And then I stripped away his life. Slowly, painfully, feeling his soul howl in agony as I drained the thirty-three years, six months, and nine days he would have had, but for me.

Yesterday. Edgar. Kind, gentle, glasses-wearing Edgar, skillfully appearing to be not quite right, but a harmless kind of not-right. He was only nineteen, but had already had three. Two were dead, the third too terrified to talk. He boasted to the “fellow-traveler” I appeared to be, and then he regretted, more than regretted, his sharing, as I did for Edgar the last thing I did for my father. Fifty-eight years, two days, three hours, seven minutes. Gone in shrill screaming where no one could hear, and in far more pain than my father had felt. With experience comes superior technique.

A satisfying, *full* meal, not just the occasional snack of a few minutes, hours, days, here and there.

I could have turned around, driven away, let someone find the body, mourn the so-sad heart attack in one so very young. Gone back to Paris. Ended that life and started a new one. I could have let Jonathan be. Except I could never be certain what he figured out, if anything at all. I had a Watergate need to know what he knows and when he knew it.

I have to be sure. Have to be certain I will not, can never be betrayed. I have to give him a chance.

Give myself a chance.

Jonathan sits so very still now, watching me stroke so intently. But lurking behind the lust is the uneasiness.

I did not recognize what “this” was in the moment when first his eye I eyed across that people-packed space. I smile and he catches it, lifts that fucking eyebrow to ask “What?”

I shake my head in “Never mind.” He pretends annoyance when I quote things at him. I’ll leave his annoyance level flat a while longer.

The music in the background intrudes.

The song.

I once had that song sung to me, just me, alone in my bedroom, while the rest of the party laughed and chattered its frantically pretended enjoyment in the rest of my suite at the Waldorf. And for those few minutes, and only those few minutes, I believed it was possible.

I am not sure I believe now.

## JONATHAN

I inhale, an almost-gasp, as he turns left, making me scoot a little away. He lays his leg flat on the couch, his thickly-haired knee and shin rubbing against my towel-covered hip and thigh. He leans and twists and puts both hands on my nipples and tugs. A bit harder, a tiny twist. The almost becomes actual. Smug bastard.

“Get naked for me.”

A little more wordy than Dieter, but then, this is real.

I start to rise up, but his left hand on my shoulder easily stops me.

In my porn collection—the one hidden so very well on the laptop Father and the Brethren don’t know about, the one sitting on the nightstand in the bedroom, open, a video probably over by now, as I hadn’t bothered to turn it off when I heard the knock—getting naked while staying seated, for the most part, on a couch, seemed generally graceful.

Reality is otherwise.

So simple. Feet firmly on the floor. Brace the back of your head on the back of the couch for leverage. Lift your hips. Tug the towel left-handed. Dispose of the towel next to you. As easy as one, two, however many.

Not that easy when the bastard stays leaning forward so he can twist your left nipple, one of a pair directly connected to your cock and balls and all your erogenous zones everywhere, and sucks on the right. Not when your back arches toward that wonderful sensation, giving you more than ample space under your ass to get rid of the towel, except that the sensation makes you forget whatever the fuck it was you were supposed to be doing. Not when his

right hand leaves your nipple bereft, but travels south, to work its wiles on your cock. Squeezing, releasing; squeezing, releasing.

I will not whimper. I will not whimper.

Of course I whimper.

My asshole is twitching. Clenching and unclenching as though it's trying to get in some last minute practice before the big game.

And then he stops the taunting. Lets me do what I was told to do. I fling the towel... somewhere. Obviously I should have looked. I wonder which of Father's collection made that sound when it hit the hardwood floor. I never before realized it is possible to love the sound of shattering glass.

I'm panting. Just a little. But he isn't holding me down. I can still jump up, run off, grab the phone while praying that the landline isn't out. I can call 911. Have them send a helicopter. The National Guard. The fucking SEAL team that killed bin Laden.

I don't.

## **JEAN-LUC**

What I am doing to him is unfair. A gross violation of the Geneva Convention on Sexual Negotiations.

I gave him promises. I never promised I would play fair in fulfilling them.

I grab his head, move it to me. Capture his mouth. Ravage it until he responds, until he chooses to respond, though there is no real choice, not with what is between us.

And then I stop. Pull back. Watch. Work my cock, cup my balls, my fingers disappearing as if they might, just might, work back and tease my hole.

Not fucking fair at all.

## **JONATHAN**

This isn't fair!

He is stroking just a little more rapidly now, playing with his balls, making me remember how he and Philippe did that, getting me so hot. Is he really going to finger his own hole?

The slick smacking sound of body-lubed flesh on flesh is loud in the room where we both seem to be holding our breath. Or does he, for all the movement of his chest, need to breathe? I can't get past the undead-not undead thing.

He is content for the moment to let me think, the taste of him filling mouth, the scent of him filling my nostrils. Content to let me sit, and stare, and tentatively, tentatively, jack myself. No, not really jacking. Just... caressing. Not enough to derail my thoughts, but somehow a necessity.

Misunderstood, he said. Pity the poor, misunderstood vampire, his tone said, just another abused minority. All those myths, all those lies and fantasies, perpetuated by story after story, novel after novel, especially the last decade or so; Anne Rice knowing better but catering to the masses nonetheless. No bats, no mist, no shifting of shape; no seductive liars compelling obedience with a cobra-stare; no entry without consent, no feeding or converting without consent, but consent so easily obtained; no death but by flame, decapitation, removal of the heart, although a stake in that vicinity will slow them down.

A moment ago I was kissing this... man... so deeply both our bodies trembled, and right after that kiss, surrounded by the music and the touching and the lust, he is telling me how I might kill him.

## JEAN-LUC

I release my cock, let it stand upright, or rather stand with a Pisa tilt toward my belly. I pull hard on my nipples and twitch my length. Jonathan licks his lips. I lean back again, letting my legs sprawl ever more lewdly wide once more, my eyes never leaving his. My sex is glistening and sticky.

My cock likes Jonathan. I like Jonathan.

I have never liked men like Jonathan. Ordinary men. Not warriors, not men who actually *work*, physically work, for a living. Grey-flecked hair on head and chest and pubes, not uniformly dark, not the occasional flame or sun gold.



A belly, not smooth, taut abs to contrast with my own thick fur. A man you might want to hold you close, give you the illusion that not only is there a God but He's in His heaven and all's right with the world, despite the knowledge that some North Korean asshole fucker could punch a button and launch a nuclear holocaust any second now. A kind of man who, even in his first attempt to be a consummate slut, was actually making love to you. To both of you.

Damn him. Damn me for more than liking. For loving.

### JONATHAN

I inhale quickly, suddenly remembering to breathe instead of wondering whether he really does or not, whether I have been fooled, compelled into believing I've seen his chest rise and fall, heard inhalations, exhales.

Vampires, he says, are a thoroughly ecumenical lot. There are Jewish, Christian, Muslim vampires; even a vampire cardinal, he says, noted for his virulent public hatred of gays, who feeds for the most part on priests and altar boys.

Imagine, he'd said, a wide Broadway stage at night. The largest you've ever seen. Completely bare. Total darkness, not even a ghost light.

Imagine an enormous spotlight trained on center stage, opened as wide as it will go, but not quite filling the stage, the edges of the circle of light gradually fading into darkness at the wings. When you are born you are at the core of all that brightness, but as you grow, as your life creeps in its petty pace from day to day, so that for most of you your days are full of sound and fury, signifying nothing...

He just never stops. Now he's throwing the Scottish play at me.

You move, he said, slowly, slowly, slowly from the glowing center, to dimness, to death. We know your allotted span. Your three-score and ten. Or more. Or less. We know precisely how long you will live. If chance, or one of us, does not interfere.

We eat and drink as you, he said, but we live because of what we take. Seconds, minutes, hours, all the divisions of time, drinking from the end of

your life, so that the distance you walk from center stage is not quite to the wings. Necessary, but not satisfying. Not like a full meal. Not like taking the life itself, every watt of it, the spotlight spiraling in and in and in so you die of natural causes, sometimes unexplained natural causes no coroner can figure out, because you look just as you are, you don't go through some CGI version of aging into death, flesh oozing away into nothing but bones, bones dissolving into dust.

But you *can* survive on snacks, he'd said.

He did not tell me how many full meals he has had. I did not ask.

We are the most minor of the minorities of the world, he said, and the most powerful. But we have no desire to come out of our closet and ask permission to exist. To be hated and feared and hunted. We are content to be a tale told by idiot humans.

Everything he said, so well thought out, so logical, even the power to alter DNA, modify genes in real time, as the way they converted, his voice mocking the images of ripped throats and veins, and blood exchanges, sounded so true, so real as he spoke. He clearly believes it.

And so I have a lunatic, a well-hung lunatic, sitting on my couch playing with himself, his eyes wide open and staring into mine.

I move closer.

I can't help myself.

## JEAN-LUC

He was motionless there for a while. A fear-frozen goat faced with a great tiger, sleek-pelted, broad muscles rippling beneath the fur, waiting, waiting.

He moves closer. As if he has no choice. Prey coming to predator.

But he *has* a choice. Not the one he may be expecting, but a definite choice.

I shouldn't have told him. I should have just made the choice for him. For us.

Fuck it.

I tell him to jack for me, to work his nipples, show me...

### JONATHAN

He wants me to show him. Show him whether I fear him, or want him, or both. My erection at least answers part of his unspoken questions.

I look in his eyes. He says it again. He says he has no mystic powers, no compulsion, only persuasion, but what if he lies? Would I feel any different, would I know I was being compelled?

He's crazy, he must be, or pretending to craziness for a reason I can't fathom, or has a compulsion to make himself different and noticeable, as if his looks and wealth are not enough to set him apart from the hoi polloi like me. Or perhaps he enjoys mind-fucking, knowing that as soon as a man sees his body, feels that cock, he won't be thinking or caring about the mind that goes with it.

*This makes no sense!* I want to shout. I don't. I lick my lips again, watch the oozing precome slide down his shaft.

I realize: I should tell him I can't go through with this, don't feel well (never good, always well), sorry I actually have a lover, a big day tomorrow even though we're trapped here by the snow, have a headache, sorry, so sorry, but please, just fucking please, get the fuck up, get the fuck dressed and go.

I realize: He'll have to go. He said so.

Realize: I won't tell him.

Realize: I can't tell him.

Realize: I'm afraid of him.

Realize: I love him.

Realize: I want, I *need* something from him, with him, more than anything I have ever wanted, ever needed, before. Yet still I am terrified, because of all I would have to leave behind.

Realize: If I give in and help him, go with him and “all those pleasures prove, that hills and valleys, dale and field, and all the craggy mountains yield,” I will destroy myself, my family, my life. A Catholic excommunication is a mere bagatelle compared to what Grandfather will do.

There is no one to explain, to tell me why this is happening, why me. No one to ask. So I ask myself. With all the men he could pick from, who would be naked and on their backs before the credit card was completely out of his wallet, or his dick was out of his pants, *why me?* And if there is even the remotest possibility of truth in his outrageous words, I ask myself again, and yet again, *why me?*

My self has no answer. Except to realize that only fools want reasons, and fool though I am for loving him, I am wise enough not to ask.

He slides further down on the couch, tells me to get up, straddle his legs, sit. I do as I am told. There is no sign he’s uncomfortable with my weight as I rest my butt just north of his knees, my balls touching the inside of his almost pressed-together thighs. He reaches behind me, grabs my cheeks, makes me scoot up until my the head of my cock slides over the underside of his own.

Both hands reach up, grab my nipples, twist *hard!* and then relax when I gasp and whimper. He pulls me down to him, by the fingers that expertly hold my hardened nipples, murmurs, “Come for me, my Jonathan, come on me, get me wet and slick.”

As he pulls me into a kiss, his cool (just cool, not undead cold!) lips push mine open, his tongue does its imitation of the German army invading Paris, entering without opposition since the man in charge had decided to collaborate. I wrap my hand around both our cocks, my thumb pressing down on my shaft, just below the head of my cock, adding minute extra pressure as I stroke and stroke, holding us both against his belly. The kiss goes on and on. He is not holding my head, but still he keeps me there, while his hands roam my chest, shoulders, back, ass, rubbing, caressing, teasing, hurting with the kind of hurt that is pleasurable.

And inside (inside my head!), inside I see... strands—hundreds? thousands? millions? I cannot begin to count the strands—glowing in infinite

darkness, in a range of colors I've never experienced, never dreamed possible. One strand, then a second, a third, each so very far apart from the other, drifts out from all the rest, begins to twine... The image fades, vanishes.

"Jonathan," he murmurs softly against my lips, "when you come, come just a little, only a little, not much at all."

Ridiculous. Come *just a little* when my breathing is out of control, when his hands, oh God just his hands excite me like nothing we have done before. I tremble, then shake, and the shaking turns into tremors racing through my body. I gasp unthinking agreement, and as I begin to spew semen between us, I feel his mouth on my neck, feel my pulse thunder, feel his teeth nip, gently, gently, not even breaking the skin, I turn my head, baring my throat for the fangs that aren't there, moan loudly as I spurt and spurt and spurt.

Unable to stop, I collapse on him, and after an infinite while, regain control, struggle to sit up, get all that dead weight... Christ what an image... off of him. His arms wrap about me, hold me to him. He is hard beneath me, his length pulsing against my flaccid cock, my fist, my belly.

I move, sit up on his knees, look down at the mess on my belly, on his, on the globs of seed smeared on his cock.

That is far more than just a little. I'd done what I was asked, told, but still... "I'm sorry. Let me get a towel."

I start to rise, but his hands above my elbows clench, stop me easily. I gulp.

## JEAN-LUC

A flicker of fear passes over his face. I catch his eyes, smile, release the pressure of my hands so that my palms, fingers, are merely caressing him. "No need for a towel. We're going to need all that."

Uncertainty now. He looks at my still-rigid cock, licks his lips. He knows what I want, knows he is going to agree. "I... look, just give me a little bit... if you want to fuck me I... I can't take it right now, let me recover, it's just, I can't..."

"Do you really?" I ask him. "Do you really need time?"

My right hand cuddles his balls, my thumb spreads the last drop around the head of his cock... which begins to get, *is*, hard again. He looks down at the shaft angling up and out over my legs, looks at me, wonderingly.

He scoops up the semen from my belly, from his, smears it on me with the precome that steadily oozes out of me. With my right hand at the base, I hold my cock upright, use my left hand to bring his right to my mouth, lick him clean, suck one, two, three fingers, lapping until he shudders.

He knows. But still he asks, "C-condom? I, uh, I have..."

"No need, my Jonathan, no need. Never again."

He is uncertain, afraid. He should not be. I told him in Berlin I was safe. I do not lie.

I do not *always* lie.

He stands, shifts so that his knees are on the edge of the couch, balances himself with his left hand on my shoulder, spits on his right, moistens between his cheeks, does it again, takes my cock, guides it to him, hesitates.

"Fuck yourself, Jonathan," I whisper. "You know you want me inside of you." My voice coils about him as the streamers of warmth had done to me on the porch.

He winces, *gasps!* as the head pops through his opening. He holds himself still, breathing heavily.

Slowly, slowly, slowly he lowers himself, bending forward, his fingers trying to gouge holes in my shoulders from the muscle tension in each arm. My palms rest gently on his nipples, making tiny, tiny circular motions, gradually absorbing his weight as he leans further, the tautness leaving his arms until he uses them only for balance. He does not even notice the ease with which I hold him as he becomes used to my length so far into his body. I twitch deliberately. He moans.

"Fuck yourself, Jonathan. Fuck yourself well. Jack off for me, cover me with your come."

He begins rising and falling, slowly; increasing his speed as he becomes used to my width and length once again. His dildos, some of them, have to be fatter and longer than me. But there is nothing like a cock. His eyes are shut, his head thrown back, his cock fucking his fist as his ass fucks my cock. He is so warm inside, so very hot, clinging to me. I grab his buttocks, stop him half up my shaft, hold him still, raise my hips, lower, raise, lower, raise, no full strokes just that half over and over and over again, the *smack!* of my flesh against his an isolated sound in the room. I rotate my hips, circle my cock corkscrew fashion in and out and within him, he moans, moans again, louder.

Each breath is more ragged than the last as I let him take over again, watch the frenzy coming over his face, knowing my own matches his. He rises and falls on my cock wantonly, slamming his body down hard, ignoring whatever pain I may or may not feel though I feel none. He shudders, getting close.

“Jonathan, just a little, Jonathan, so very little, not much, not much at all. Will you give me a day, one day, just that, no more?”

My words rise, drift upward one by one by one with the up and down thrusting of his body, circle his ears, slide in, melt into his mind.

And he says “yes,” a frenzied consent in words I can barely hear.

Strands... infinite strands glowing and singing in the darkness. I select two strands, gather up the strands twined not long ago while Jonathon watched me, unaware it was me, weave them together, stronger now, and as the strands and darkness fade, I grunt, shout, begin spewing my own lust... love... into the heat of his bowels, cool-by-comparison semen hissing against the volcanic walls.

That spotlight I'd told him about tightens its focus. Just a little. Only a day.

The most delicious day I have ever had.

Jonathan, my Jonathan, shouts as well, inarticulate, pumping a stream of semen in long, long spurts onto my face, neck, chest, while I match him, exceed him. And then we stop.

## JONATHAN

Two climaxes so close together. I haven't done that since... I don't think I ever have. I know it can't be true but I feel his seed coating the walls of my ass, sliding down a cock that has indeed gone where none has gone bare before, well, just in a Berlin before, a cock still more than half hard.

As I am.

Impossible. I am not capable of this, never have been, not even when I was young and had all the proverbial young teen energy and recuperative powers.

I bring my panting under control, raise my head from where I'd rested it against the back of the couch, look him in the eyes, see only... satisfaction, that indefinable smugness of a man who knows with absolute certainty that he has just caused frenzied, mind-shattering pleasure in another man, all the while enjoying himself to the fullest. His hands are gentle on my shoulders, softly, slowly, pulling me down into a kiss, his lips inviting, his tongue delving into my mouth as mine does to his.

I shudder, unconsciously swiveling my hips, feeling his length and girth so wonderfully deep inside me, so wonderfully filling.

Two times close together. Of course I'm tired. But I recall his words, wonder. I pull my head back, start to speak. A cliché gesture—two fingers on my lips—silences me. He asks where the bedroom is.

A courtesy only. I am certain he already knows. Reluctant to let him out of me, I start to pull up, to show him. He easily stops me, tells me to just tell him, as he shifts his weight so he is more upright on the couch, still thrust deep into me, still more than half hard. He reaches between us, his thumb on the underside of my cock, pressing, rotating, slick with sweat and come. I start to get harder.

He sits upright, tilts me back, impossibly begins to—does—stand, his cock still buried, holding all my dead weight easily. My mind wants me to cackle out loud about dead weight, undead weight.

Impossible, impossible. I am not being carried by him, my legs wrapped around his waist, my head towering over his. I am *not* feeling his cock get harder inside me, only partially drawn out by the angle of my body. I am *not*



being carried down the hall, up the stairs, through the door, across the room. I am *not* being held while he kneels on the edge of the bed, the muscles of his arms in sharp relief, then kneel-walks until he can lower me gently, gently, gently onto the covers.

Damn, but I am.

My... my man, my... vampire? is surprisingly strong. Vampire-story strong. So not everything is a lie.

I drop my legs, spreading them wide, bent, my feet flat on the bed. I stare at him as he starts running his fingers across my chest, his head lowered, staring intently at the sticky mess on my stomach. He rotates his cock, now fully hard again, and I moan softly.

I cannot stop myself. "You didn't succeed in making me see stars, you know."

"Oh?"

I laugh. "Well, I guess I could count the strands. Brightly colored ribbons or something. Floating in the air?"

He does another of those going-still moments.

"I've never done that before," he finally says, not looking at me.

My laughter, loud and far too attention-gathering or so my family has always said, startles him, causes him to twitch and then he calms. "You just screwed what little brains I have right out of me. Again? For the three-thousand-and-umpteenth time, and you're claiming you're a virgin?"

He still doesn't look at me. "No, not that. I haven't been a virgin in, oh..." He pauses, the shape of his lips starting the word "centuries," and then he says the word aloud. It's shocking, somehow, to *hear* it rather than think it. More real.

He turns inward. "About nine hundred thirty-six years, actually."

My turn to stutter a "Wh-wh-what?" again.

His face tells me the memory is not a pleasant one. "I was born nine months after Duke William headed off for the Battle of Hastings."

I do the math. He was born in 1067? He lost his virginity when he was *ten*? His eyes look down at me and tell me unequivocally not to ask.

“I’ve never woven the strands and had someone remember. But you have.”

He is far too solemn about what should be a “well, duh!” moment since I have already told him what I remembered.

He continues manipulating my flesh, tweaking my nipples, delicately running his fingers over the head of my cock, cupping my balls. I am hard again, not with the ache of drained balls but as fresh as if I had never climaxed at all.

“Are you a vampire? Some mutation I have never seen, felt?”

I am having the most glorious sex of my life and the man who is providing it wants to know if we are vampirically related! I can’t help laughing. All I really want is for him to fuck me again, long and slow, but my absurd sense of humor, so-called humor, has surfaced. “Well, you see, I didn’t want to tell you, but we actually *are* related. My great-great-however-many grandmother on my father’s side was Vlad Tepes’ third cousin, twice removed. Pleased to meet you.”

He does not find my humor funny. But then, not many do.

His eyes harden; something feral passes through them, as a blood-stained white tiger lopes by, nearly invisible against the snow, against the grey clouds dipping down to the horizon, against the bare trunks of vast trees in twilight, too far to see clearly, yet you are certain of two things: tiger... and blood.

I focus on memories.

I remember: The strands... twice, first in Berlin, and just now, short strands of light against endless night, the deep dark between galaxies, woven by hands I could not see, into... something.

I remember: The ease with which he picked me up, carried me here, moving with a strength more than human. Inhuman? Is this not a fantasy, a role-playing game we are enacting for mutual pleasure?

I remember: My fear.

## JEAN-LUC

He is afraid again. Good. Then he won't see mine.

Human... merely human, not some vampire able to imitate human life.

I lean slightly back, move my arms beneath his legs, use my thighs to push myself up, forward, the crooks of my arms caught behind his knees, pushing, pushing, forcing the few inches which slid out when I carried him here, back in again. I lean forward, deliberately, slowly... very, very slowly... spreading his legs wide, folding them to his body, lowering my head until I nuzzle the hollow of his neck once again, my teeth resting on his moist flesh.

He flinches... again.

Good.

I kiss my way down his chest, tonguing the slight hair, my lips, tongue, teeth, worrying his right nipple, teasing it, taunting it into its own erection yet again. With my mouth barely lifted from his skin, my lips touching it like the lightest of summer breezes, I ask, "Do you want to live forever, Jonathan?"

"What? No preface of 'C'mon, you sons a bitches?'"

I nip him, not enough to draw blood, enough to mark him. I like to mark my territory this way. So much better and far less messy than pissing on him.

I pull nearly all the way out, the head of my cock barely contained by the muscles that guard his entrance. His body quivers with conflicting urges: the instinctive urge to squeeze and expel me, the emotional urge to relax, thrust forward and up, pulling me in. I decide for him, and thrust.

I trail my mouth across his chest, wetting him, suck his left nipple hard, matching it with several rapid, deep strokes. He grunts, tries to talk, fails, moistens his lips... visibly decides not to speak.

An excellent decision. For the moment.

I raise up slightly, my arms coming around his legs, palms flat on his chest so I can squeeze and release his pecs, squeeze and release, squeeze and release, while I am moving in and out in short, easy jabs.

“Make it a philosophical issue, Jonathan,” I whisper. “Pretend you don’t believe, pretend you aren’t afraid, pretend you’re just talking fantasy to a friend, a lover. Tell me, Jonathan, shall I weave the strands again and make you live forever?”

My fingers are long, strong, my right hand snakes around to catch his cock, my knuckles against his belly, my fingers curved around him, stroking and stroking and stroking while his precome lubricates our flesh. He whimpers, gasps a little, shoves his hips up to meet mine on an inward push. His eyes are closed.

“Weave... ahhhhhhhhhh!” He gasps again, pants, recovers. It hits him. “Weave the strands *again*?”

## JONATHAN

That wasn’t just my imagination? Some odd quirk of my exceedingly odd mind?

*What have you done to me?* I scream inside my head. Voices of coldly intellectual disbelief and primal terror fight within me. Neither overwhelms my body’s desire to climax again, to somehow, some way, provide him with the pleasure he has given me, *is* giving me. I only manage a faint, “Tell me,” as he begins sliding into me, slow and deep, then out again oh so very slowly, and again and yet again.

His voice wraps around me, caresses me as his hands, his mouth, caress me.

“As I said, Jonathan, dear Jonathan, the strands are... DNA. Not literally so, just an image, the way I think, the way it works. Tell me, Jonathan, are you always so erect so fast, do you always come so often, so well, so close together?”

## JEAN-LUC

I look at him, see the confusion, the fear, the unwilling acknowledgment that his body has changed, see the thought quickly suppressed, the one that is nearly always asked.

I kiss him, force his lips open, force him to accept my tongue, using my length, my thickness, to ram him into submission, into eagerly returning the kiss.

“Can’t do it, Jonathan,” I tell him, holding his face in both my hands, unable to turn while my spread knees keep him up, my hips steadily thrusting, locking his gaze with mine. “I can’t change the way you are... no extra height, no new face, new build, new body... no extra length and thickness down there.”

He licks his lips; lust flickers across his face as I rotate my hips, the head of my cock deliberately caressing his prostate. “Wh... what then?”

I don’t answer. Release his face, use my hands on his nipples again, increase the speed of my hips. He gasps, gulping air, lets it out in a ragged, shuddering sigh. I nearly fold him in half as I bring his buttocks up in the air, lift myself so I have even more force, shoving in deep and hard, kissing him nearly as hard as I am thrusting, one hand working his right nipple, twisting it, pulling it, the other stroking his slick cock. I am moving faster now than I have yet moved tonight, his hips move with me, meeting me, his hands grab my shoulders, my waist, he moans into my mouth and with a scream I swallow he erupts again, coating us both.

I have not come. Not yet.

I go on, but slow once again, slow and steady. His head thrashes from side to side in post-come release, trying to get enough oxygen to satisfy his needs. He begs me to stop, to give him a chance.

I go on.

I raise myself, palms flat beside him now, his knees hooked behind my arms. I look between us at his flaccid cock, at what is for him an incredible amount of semen smeared on his belly, his chest, on mine. His cock twitches. I shift my gaze to his eyes.

“Biology lesson, Jonathan. I don’t know what this is. Don’t really care. A virus? Mystical Atlantean nanos? Whatever it is, we look as we were before the change. We just function differently. Age more slowly. Live longer. Our

motto should be 'live long and prosper.' Because we do both. I was nineteen, twenty when I was changed. I look... what?... thirties now? Early forties?"

I bend, kiss him lingeringly, not interrupting the steady action of my hips. He is erect again.

## JONATHAN

"You have a *disease*?" I fasten on that one possibility, and gift him with a shaky laugh, shaky because the humor is shaky, shaky because of what his cock is doing to me. Again. "Christ, just file suit under the Americans with Disabilities Act and get yourself protected."

For an instant, behind his eyes the ghosting silver-white tiger lifts its muzzle, dripping blood and gore, fangs bared in a silent snarl, and then it is gone.

He kisses me again and my thoughts dissolve in jangling disarray.

My body knows what it wants—him—again and again and again. I appear likely to get my body's wish.

My mind, more importantly, my heart are... uncertain. And more than a little afraid.

## JEAN-LUC

I tell him to begin stroking himself. He does.

"Let me weave the strands, Jonathan. Some of us can; you don't have to drink our blood to make the change. Let me do it, love."

His eyes widen. I said it earlier, but he seems to be hearing it truly for the first time.

"Come with me, Jonathan. I'll weave the strands, give you more than just testicles that refill with semen almost as soon as you empty them. I can show you things you've never dreamed of, show you..."

He's laughing.

Hard.

## JONATHAN

I can't help myself. I have seen how he reacts to laughter, and yet... I have this image in my mind of Jean-Luc holding my hand, leading me up a great curving staircase, telling me of all the glorious adventures we will have in India.

“Oh, God, J... J... Jean-Luc, I'm sorry. But... I just... oh, God, there's this picture in my head of a bloodsucking Auntie Mame, and little Patrick and the staircase, and...”

I dissolve in laughter, closing my eyes.

## JEAN-LUC

I do not move. He is still impaled, but I stop moving. He finally becomes aware, stops laughing, wipes his eyes with the non-sticky hand, looks again at me. And becomes still, too.

Not the stillness of a pause while fucking.

Not the stillness of taking a moment to think something over.

The stillness of a mouse sensing a hunting hawk overhead, saying tiny mouse prayers in hopes of being unseen.

## JONATHAN

Dear God in heaven.

His eyes.

I shut my eyes against the blaze that tries to sear my retinas. A brilliant molten gold, like looking at the sun without protection.

That... *flashbulb*... reflecting off his eyes that first night. It never existed. It was this I saw.

Dear God in heaven. It's true.

He is... what he says he is. I can't even bring myself to think the word.

So I become more stupid still. Say the thing that I am for some reason so hung up on.

“But you have no fangs.”

## JEAN-LUC

Sub-zero temperatures for cryogenic preservation are not nearly as cold as my voice. The darkness between the stars is not nearly as cold as my voice.

“Because I do not drink blood. As I have told you before. And will not again.”

I sigh, and my eyes become less bright. I would prefer to fuck, rather than give a lesson in mid-fuck, but needs must...

“We starve, Jonathan, if all we eat is mortal food. Because whatever gives us this power cannot survive without infusions of humanity, of some of the life you mortals have as you waste it away and steadily slide down to death. To stay the same, to stay immortal or nearly so, we need that life, and we get it from you because we can't get it from each other. *Take* it from you, if you won't give it willingly.”

Shall I tell him about Joshua? About the strands being cut, every slash a slice of pain, and no one can figure out his agony? I will owe Felix for that. But no, too much like bribery. See how I am ensuring your safety? And I will definitely never tell him... however long our never might be... of the unfortunate financial and other reverses the Brethren are beginning to suffer. He might remember Shylock. And if ever asked, I shall be as pure and innocent as the driven slush.

I move my hips again. An inch, no more. Out. Then in. Repeat. Repeat.

“Are you willing, Jonathan? Will you feed me until I am full? Until you are gone? Or shall I feed enough, just enough, to weave and make a supernova of your spotlight? A spotlight like my own?”

Two inches... three. Just slightly faster. My eyes hold his. I move forward, rest my weight again on my elbows, caress his chest, his shoulders, his neck, with my hands.

## JONATHAN

This... is real.



Dear God.

## **JEAN-LUC**

He knows.

He finally believes.

Farther out. Farther in. Faster.

He moistens his lips, asks hurriedly, his words tumbling and staggering over themselves as I am sure he has never before done, what happens if he says yes... yes to anything... yes to everything. Or no.

I tell him.

Tell him the strands once woven cannot be unwoven.

Kiss him.

Tell him we can be together, feed together, forever and a day... or until one grows tired of the other.

Kiss him again. Longer, harder, my hips faster, changing the angle, rubbing his gland.

Tell him I love him. Tell him he must choose.

## **JONATHAN**

No. Not now. I can't. It's too soon, too quick, I can't, I can't.

I tell him.

Don't tell him my fear. Don't tell him I don't want others. Don't tell him, as incredibly stupid as it is, that in this moment I'd rather die than share... for fear he will agree.

Tell him... ask him, beg him, to give me a chance to think, to decide.

Tell him to stop... in a voice whose tone leaves no doubt that is the last thing I wish.

Ohgodohgod, he's pulling all the way out, all the way in. My hand moves faster on my cock, sloppily wet with body-lube and semen and sweat and fear

and lust and love. His thick, hairy belly comes down, my knuckles rubbing it as my hand moves back and forth, back and forth, back and forth.

### JEAN-LUC

I am losing control. Not slowly. Exponentially fast.

I will *not* lose control.

“Choose, Jonathan.”

In the silence the music flows around us; I have no idea how many times the CD has played.

“I can’t.”

My hips are moving with more speed, more power than I have used tonight. His body seems to swell with life as he responds, beginning to pant, beginning to glow as the strands glow, waiting to be woven, waiting to be unwoven.

I make my voice calm and cold, the near-frenzied thrusting of my body, the quivering in my muscles, the raggedness of my own breathing, giving the lie to the cold and calm of my words.

“Choose. Or I’ll choose for you.”

### JONATHAN

I can’t breathe, I can’t breathe, Christ, I can’t breathe! My fist is a blur as I stroke myself, feel myself surging toward an end. My arms are shaking. My face and chest and soon all of me tingles as I start to hyperventilate. I am unable to look away from his face, unable to close my eyes. My mind slips, whirls, my voice is disconnected from the reality of what builds in me. “You said... You said...”

### JEAN-LUC

*Said what?* I ask, but only inside my head.

That I will not feed, cannot feed, without consent?

That I will not weave, cannot weave, without consent?

I lied.

It is what predators do. I became a predator the night of my second rape, in 1077. Nine hundred thirty-six years have perfected my skills.

Choices, Jonathan, choices.

My hips are moving fast, fucking you hard and deep, centuries of experience used for my benefit, and now yours. You moved your legs up over my shoulders, but now they are tired, trembling. You want to refuse now, scream *no!*, but your body knows what it wants, knows what it needs. Does your soul?

You move with me, adapting to the new rhythm, more powerful still, your thrusts back at me as hard as the ones you receive. You clench as I pull out, open wide to let me back in, into your body, into your soul, shivering in ecstasy when I do.

Choices, Jonathan, choices.

But I have no choice. I cannot let you just walk away, knowing what you know, now that you believe. I cannot risk myself, risk all of us, out of love, or even lust.

I love you, Jonathan, as I have never loved in all these years. I've found you, when I never expected to find anyone. I want to make you my own. I want to not live alone. But I will not, cannot, sacrifice myself for love.

So I have no choice. Or rather, a single choice. My choice, which is all the choice there has ever really been.

To feed while I unweave the strands, draining off a second from the end of your life, a minute, then hours, days, weeks, years, your ending approaching the now at Bugatti Super Sport speeds.

Or feed and weave the strands until you become as I—and risk your hate where now you love, or say you love.

A choice to make your soul scream—in ecstasy beyond your imagining, or in devouring agony as you die. Because if you choose wrongly, I won't let you

go gently into that far from good night. I'll let you go, but I won't let you go easily if you choose to abandon me and all we might have, all we might be.

“Choose, Jonathan.”

Our lips touch yet again, slick, wet, trembling. You hear the words I will not say aloud again. *Or I will choose.*

Our lips part, mine moving in gentle kisses, soft counterpoint to the savagery of my cock ramming inside you, kiss your eyes, your cheeks, your ears, nuzzling your sweat-dampened hair, gliding down and down and down until I am, this last time, perhaps only tonight, perhaps forever, touching the hollow of your neck, feeling your erratic pulse, feeling the way your flesh pulls away from me while your hips urge me on. “Choose, Jonathan,” I murmur again, barely lifting my mouth from your warm skin.

Your “no” is long and slow and faint, almost unheard above the sounds our bodies make. A choice? A refusal to choose? Or merely lust sensing a climax too soon?

The song is back. Coincidence? Omen? It falls on us, enfolds all we have been and done since that first night, that first look. We hear, you and I, the approaching last four lines, changing the pronouns in our heads before the words arrive. You whimper, and moan and cry out. You thrust your hips up, your hands grasp my ass, pulling me deep, your cry one of... despair, sorrow, rapture? We pause, locked in place, me buried deep, so very deep in you, our chests heaving, lungs aching.

## JONATHAN

Songs surround us. That song he sang just now. That was *my* song, those were *my* words. I should have sung them to him, with him, in heart's harmonies.

He has every nerve ending in my body, every crack and crevice of my mind tingling, poised on a precipice, ready to tip and fall, shattering into a trillion, trillion shards scattered among the stars.

And *that* song.

I am so very afraid.

We are a perfect storm here and now, no ship to suck down, no crew to drown, just the two of us, to survive... or not.

I... let go of that last little bit.

I lift his head away and up, look at the beloved hills and dales and craggy mountains of his face, kiss him. "Since the invention of the kiss, there have only been five kisses that were rated the most passionate, the most pure." This kiss leaves those five, and the Dread Pirate Roberts, far behind in the dust.

I choose.

### JEAN-LUC

You lift my head away from your neck with both hands, fingers buried in my hair, thumbs caressing. Your sweaty legs slide off my shoulders, down until your knees are caught once more in the crooks of my arms, holding you wide and open. Tears fill your eyes. They begin to run steadily from the corners, falling silently onto the nearly flattened pillow.

You have let go. At last.

You kiss me with a hunger and a passion beyond anything tonight, and when you release me, release my mouth, you pull my head down, and whisper your choice in my ear.

I sigh.

So be it.

We are stilled no longer. We move in absolute synchronicity, the first hammer stroke making you gasp and cry out, the next and the next and all the rest are met with a ragged chant in a raw voice, of "do it do it do it!" Your cock leaks, a steady stream of precome that flies to your belly, your chest, your arms, as your body quivers with an urgent need for one more release.

Your choice, my love, your choice.

I begin to weave and as I do, I hear the voice of your soul, far and wee as the poet said, screaming.

\*\*\*\*

Some  
enchanted  
evening.

\*\*\*\*

**THE END**

## **Author Bio**

*In the “real world” I write for a living, in a non-fiction “genre,” in which what we write is all too often considered fiction. That same profession would not appreciate this story, thus a pen name that has a meaning for me. The dedication above should explain a lot about me. And having finished this, I am wondering whether or not I will finish the gay Regency novel I started so long ago, or that tale of starships and unicorns, or the one with a hopefully different (enough) take on elves, and changelings, and the magic of sex and death. We, or I at least, will see.*

*As I am not a social media person, you can reach me by email, if you have the good kind of “wow!” to share... or even other words.*

## **Contact & Media Info**

[Email](#)