

LOVE Has NO Boundaries



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CREELING THE BRIDEGROOM Neil S. Plakcy

Love Has No Boundaries

An M/M Romance series

CREELING THE BRIDEGROOM

By Neil S. Plakcy

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.

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By Neil S. Plakcy

Photo Description

The photo I chose showed two handsome young men—one in a suit, the other in a kilt. They both have rosebuds in their lapels, and they're kissing as well as clasping their hands together. The background looks like a garden, and all these elements together made me think of a wedding.

Story Letter

Dear Author,

We've been through a lot over the years. We've known each other since we were young and though we've had our troubles we've managed to stay together. My parents never approved of him because my dad was rich and famous and he wasn't. Please tell me how we got to this moment and what's happened in our lives.

**With this prompt you can pretty much do what you like, angst is welcome (even encouraged) and so on. If you want to do BDSM or something kinky, that's fine but please don't make it the central focus of the story. I just want to know how these two got together.*

Sincerely,

Mackenzie

Story Info

Genre: contemporary

Tags: Scottish men with kilts, Florida, first time, angst, reunited, weddings

Word count: 12,140

CREELING THE BRIDEGROOM

By Neil S. Placky

Alistair was my first boyfriend, and I was his, which makes it pretty weird that in about an hour, he's going to be my husband. I doubt there are many gay couples who can make that boast.

Not that it was an easy road to get here though. We met seven years ago, at the Scottish Festival in Miami when we were both seventeen. It was a sunny day in February, the sky a bright blue with just a scattering of flat cirrus clouds in the sky. I was hanging around with my dad, as he rubbed ointment into his palms in preparation for competing in the caber toss event.

A guy in a Campbell plaid kilt passed us with what looked like a fishing creel filled with stones strapped to his back. "What event is he competing in?" I asked

My dad is a huge guy, six foot six, broad shoulders, close to three hundred pounds of muscle—not counting the curling blond hair that streams down to his shoulders. I took after my mom's side of the family, the Cuban immigrants. Like her, I was slim and dark-haired, and barely weighed one seventy-five.

He looked where I was pointing. "Ah, Kirk my lad, who knew they did that anymore?" he said. His Scots brogue had gotten so much stronger since we arrived at the festival. "It's called creeling the bridegroom."

"What's that?"

"It's a very ancient custom. A young lad who wants to marry a lass fills a creel with stones, and carries it on his back from one end of the village to the other, ending at her house, where he waits for her to come out and kiss him. Then the whole village knows they're to be wed."

"So this is our village?" I asked, looking around at the tents full of Scottish crafts, the cluster of bagpipers in one corner, the families wandering around swathed in plaid.

“Aye, laddie.” He clapped his hand on my shoulder. “I’m proud you’re here with me, Kirk,” he said. “It’s time you got a wee bit of Scottish culture, no matter how it is you’re going to grow up.”

I was born and raised in Florida, in a boondock part of Broward County west of Fort Lauderdale, at the edge of the Everglades. My dad had immigrated to the States in his early twenties, knocked around the country for a while, then landed in Florida, where he met my mom, who came from a big Cuban family. He got a job with a company building roads through the swamps, built our house, then spawned me and my siblings. I was the oldest, and the lucky one chosen to accompany him to this festival.

“I’ve got to get my place,” my dad said. “You go enjoy yourself.”

Easy for him to say. I was a weird immigrant hybrid, not completely comfortable in either the Anglo or the Latin world. Being gay only heightened my isolation.

I wandered past a display of clan tartans. Ours, the Strathspey, is a typical plaid in shades of blue, green and black. Ugly, if you ask me. But my dad loved it, and he wore a huge kilt in that pattern. I was wearing a pair of khaki shorts and a short-sleeved shirt in a plaid that almost matched my dad’s. Just another way I didn’t quite make the mark. I wasn’t as tall as he was, or as tough; I didn’t have his self-confidence or his brogue.

I circled around the fairgrounds and ended up back at the games, where the stone put had just finished and the field was being readied for the caber toss. The caber is a pole, about twenty feet long and a hundred seventy-five pounds, and big guys like my dad pick them up and toss them end over end through the air. A perfect try ends with the top of the caber facing the thrower.

All the contestants were built like my dad, tall and stocky, with work-hardened muscles. After I came out to my dad the year before, he’d said, “At least you have a brain, Kirk laddie. So you can work with your head, not your hands.”

It had taken a hurricane to drag me out of the closet. Usually, our tropical storms come in off the Atlantic, smash into the beachfront houses and high-

rise condos of the rich, and run out of steam before they reach where we live. But this hurricane was weird; it came ashore on the west coast and swept across the state with nothing but the hardwood hammocks of the Everglades to slow it down. It smashed into our neighborhood, knocking the roof off our house. When my dad went back to see what he could salvage, he found my stash of gay porn littered around my room.

He was pretty calm about it; I guess the destruction of our house made more of an impact. We were back in the house within a month, and by then it was an accepted fact that I was a boy who liked boys.

I hadn't done anything about that attraction, though. I had crushes on a couple of my classmates, but I was too much of a weenie to make a move on some guy who'd turn out to be straight—and probably punch my lights out.

As I waited for the caber toss to start, a guy about my age came up next to me, a clean-cut all-American type, with short blond hair, a Brooks Brothers polo shirt, and Bermuda shorts in a tartan plaid I didn't recognize.

“Ah, the caber toss,” he said in an affected Scottish accent I recognized as completely phony. “A very manly sport. That is, if you equate manliness with stupidity.”

“My dad's competing,” I said.

“Oh, shit, sorry,” he said, all trace of his phony accent gone. “I didn't mean to be obnoxious.”

“Really? So you can be a jerk without even trying?” I smiled, hoping he'd catch the note of sarcasm. When he didn't respond immediately, I reached out to shake his hand. “I'm Kirk,” I said.

“Alistair.” His hand was strong and warm in mine, sending a tingle of sexual energy direct to my dick, which was all too eager to prong up at the slightest prompt.

“A proper Scots name,” I said, showing him I could do the accent much better than he could. “What's your clan?”

“McGregor. Yours?”

“Strathspey.”

“A Highlander.”

We relapsed back into our normal voices. “Yeah, my dad’s from there,” I said. “The home of single malt scotch, he says.”

Alistair made a face. “An acquired taste. My father loves the stuff but I can’t get down more than a mouthful before it burns my stomach.”

“I grew up getting a thimbleful of whatever my dad was drinking. I’m not even legal age yet but I can tell the difference between five different kinds of single malt.”

“Impressive.”

I’d never flirted with a guy before, but it felt like that’s what I was doing with Alistair. Our eyes kept meeting and we’d smile at each other, and I’d feel that same tingling in my groin. I was glad I’d resisted my dad’s entreaty to wear a kilt myself; I didn’t want it blowing up in the breeze and showing what I had to offer.

“Look, they’re starting,” Alistair said.

We watched a couple of guys make some lame attempts, hardly even hoisting the heavy pole off the ground. Then my dad stepped up. “There’s a fine-looking man,” Alistair said. “And I’ll bet he’s got a very fine caber of his own under that kilt.”

“That’s my dad!” I said, elbowing him.

“Oh, shit,” Alistair said. “I did it again.”

I looked him directly in the eye and said, “No harm, no foul. I’ve seen him naked, and he does have a pretty impressive caber.” I watched Alistair’s eyebrows raise and added, “It’s the kind of thing that’s hereditary, you know.”

Alistair didn’t say anything, and I worried I’d gone too far. My dad picked up the caber, and his back muscles strained as he heaved the pole forward. It flipped up and then banged to the ground, pointing back at him in a straight line.

“Sweet Jesus,” Alistair said. “I’ve never seen anything like that.”

“Just a normal day at our house,” I said, with affected casualness.

He looked at me and licked his lips, and my dick hardened again. Then he saw something over my shoulder and his expression changed. “Do you want to get together sometime?” he asked. “I don’t know, see a movie or something?”

I shook my head. “I live out in the boonies, and I don’t have a car.”

“I can pick you up.” He pulled out his wallet and extracted a printed business card, which he handed to me. “I’ve got to go. Call me, all right?”

What kind of kid has a business card, I wondered, as Alistair handed his to me, then shook my hand.

“I mean it. Call me, or text me. Like, tonight?”

I nodded, and he turned and walked away quickly. I watched him walk up to an older guy in a business suit. Must be his dad, I thought. But a business suit? To an outdoor festival? At least the man wore a tartan tie.

My dad was exuberant after winning the caber toss, and we celebrated with shots of Glenfiddich, his favorite single malt, bottled only a mile or two from where he’d grown up. Across from us, I saw the guy who’d been carrying the creel full of rocks, his arm around a pretty, dark-haired girl.

“Ah, so he got his lassie,” my father said. Then he looked at me. “I hope you’ll find a love of your own someday, Kirk lad. Won’t be easy for you, I know. But you’ve always got your mother and me.”

Lots of men came up to congratulate my dad, but Alistair’s dad wasn’t among them. As we walked back to the truck, my dad swayed on his feet, and grabbed a nearby car for support. “You’d better drive us home, Kirk laddie,” he said.

He pulled his keys out and tossed them to me. I caught them one-handed, and he applauded. I blushed and hurried to the truck.

After dinner, back in my room, I looked at the card Alistair had given me. In fancy script, his name, Alistair McGregor, was centered at the top. Below it

read “Student, Ransom Everglades School,” along with his cellular number and his email address.

I had a basic cell, paid for out of my after-school earnings at the greenhouses down the street from our house. I’d never sent a text message, and didn’t think my phone could do it. So I called Alistair.

“Hello?”

“Um, it’s Kirk. Kirk McGowan. We met at the...”

“I’m glad you called,” he said. “Sorry I had to run off like that, but when my dad is ready to leave someplace, it’s either get on the train or get lost.”

I flopped onto my bed, leaning back against the study pillow, and started to talk to Alistair. Fortunately it was a Saturday, and I had unlimited weekend minutes, because we talked for an hour before my phone started beeping that the battery was low.

I plugged it into the charger and we talked for another hour. I’d never had such an intimate conversation with a stranger before—we talked about movie stars we thought were handsome, a couple we thought were gay. We drifted into the personal, about a straight guy at his school he was crushing on, and I told him about the guys I liked, and we both admitted that we hadn’t done anything more than look and lust.

My dick was hard the whole time, and while half of me never wanted the conversation to end, the other half wanted to get off the phone and beat my meat.

“It’s getting late,” I said, when I noticed that the clock read a few minutes after ten. “I should hang up.”

“Yeah, I should too,” he said. “Um, so, you want to get together? Maybe tomorrow? You don’t go to church or anything, do you?”

“Only on the big holidays,” I said. “But like I said, I live way out in the boonies.” I gave him my address, told him roughly where it was.

“That’s no big deal,” Alistair said. “I can shoot right up I-75.”

We arranged for him to pick me up the next afternoon around two. “I’ll call you when I get close,” he said.

“Sounds great. I’m looking forward to it.”

“I am, too, Kirk.” The way he said my name gave me twinges that went right from my ears to my groin.

I could hardly sleep that night, thinking about Alistair. In my mind, I went back over every detail of how he looked, what he wore, what he said. I jerked myself off twice just thinking about what it would be like to kiss him. I’d never kissed anyone on the lips before, but I’d sure read enough about how it was supposed to feel.

I was being stupid, I counseled myself, lying in my bed after I’d wiped up the mess from my second ejaculation—a lot less fluid than the first time, but rubbing my dick was almost painful, and the orgasm that racked my body was pretty amazing. Alistair might not even want to kiss me. Maybe he just wanted a gay friend.

After all, I didn’t look like one of the movie stars or athletes who’d come out. I was just a skinny kid, though my biceps were responding to the work I did in the greenhouse. My mom’s mother and sisters thought I was pretty; they were always pinching my cheek and saying, “*Ay, que lindo!*” when they saw me because of my thick wavy hair and long eyelashes. Girls liked that kind of thing—but did guys?

I finally slept, but all Sunday morning I was as nervous as a cat. “What’s wrong with you, *niño?*” my mother asked as we were finishing breakfast.”

“Nothing. I just didn’t sleep well.”

“Go take a nap then,” she said. “You have all your homework done for Monday, right?”

“I’m fine, *Mami.*” I put on a tank top and a pair of nylon shorts and went for a long run around the neighborhood, and by the time I got back, sweaty and exhausted, I’d managed to wipe out most of my nerves. They all came

back, though, as soon as Alistair called to tell me he was getting off the highway and he'd be at my house soon.

I didn't own any fancy clothes; my best piece of clothing was an Armani Exchange T-shirt I bought at the outlet store, marked down from fifty bucks to ten. I put it on, with a pair of decent khakis.

I waited for him outside, surprised when he pulled up in a new-looking BMW sedan. I hopped in quickly, awed by the leather interior and the confident hum of the air conditioning.

He seemed to know that I wanted him to pull away quickly, and he did. "So," he said when we'd turned the corner of my street and were out of sight of my house. "I don't know this area. Where do you go for fun?"

I didn't want to admit my life wasn't that much fun. "Um... the mall?" I asked. "Sawgrass Mills isn't that far, and they've got restaurants and a movie theater."

Then I realized I didn't have much cash—certainly not enough for a movie and a meal. And would he expect me to pay for him, since he'd driven all this way? Gas was expensive. I'd never gone on an actual date before, with either a girl or a guy, and I was completely at a loss.

"Sounds cool," he said. "I have my dad's credit card, and we could do some damage."

I was fast realizing I was way out of my league, as Alistair navigated the Beemer back to the highway which would take us to the mall. I knew, from overhearing my parents talk late at night, that money was tight for them. I made a few bucks working at the greenhouse, but I used that to buy my own clothes. We had a family computer I shared with my parents and my siblings.

"You okay?" he asked, as we merged onto the highway. "You look, I don't know, nervous."

"Aren't you?" I blurted out.

He laughed. "It's not like this is my first date ever." Then he looked at me. "Is it for you?"

I nodded.

“No girls either?”

“Nope. Like I said, we’re pretty far out here. I’ve gone out with groups, you know, a bunch of friends. But even that, not so much.”

“I don’t know, Kirk,” he said, and my heart took a swan dive.

Was he just going to turn around and take me home?

“You’re putting a lot of pressure on me to make your first date terrific.” He looked over at me and smiled, and my heart popped back up and my dick started to swell. “Don’t worry, though. I can do terrific.”

After that, everything seemed to move so fast. We walked through the mall, and Alistair tried to buy me a shirt at the first store, but I refused. “My parents know I don’t have cash,” I said, “so I can’t just show up with shopping bags.”

He nodded. “Well, I’ll just have to find different ways to spoil you.”

We ate a late lunch at the Cheesecake Factory, appetizers and entrees and cheesecake and fancy coffee drinks. I was scared to look at the check but Alistair handed his dad’s credit card to the server without even checking it. “You’re sure he won’t mind?” I asked.

“I have a thousand-dollar limit,” he said. “As long as I don’t go over that any month, he doesn’t even notice.”

A thousand dollars, I thought. A month. For stuff. I took a deep breath, but I resolved to enjoy myself.

“This has been a pretty awesome first date,” I said, as we walked back through the mall to where we’d parked. “You were right, you do terrific.”

He looked over at me, and there was a sly grin on his face and his eyes danced. “You haven’t even seen terrific yet,” he said.

What did that mean? I worried, as we got into the car. Did he want to have sex with me? I wasn’t exactly sure what two guys did. I’d seen some porn, of

course, but it was all so fake. I couldn't imagine that real guys did all those things.

"You're shaking again," Alistair said, as we pulled out of the parking lot. "Don't worry. We don't have to do anything you don't want to do."

"I don't know what I want," I said, barely able to form the words.

"Think of it as a meal," he said. "We'll start out with an appetizer—an *amuse bouche*, they call it in fancy restaurants. Something to please the mouth. And then we'll see what else we both want to order."

I was kind of confused, but I nodded and said that was fine.

"As I was driving toward your house I saw this little shopping center, looked abandoned," he said.

"Yeah, I know it," I said.

"Any parking there that's private?"

My heart skipped a beat. "Um, yeah. There are some spots around the back, by the canal. Nobody can see your car back there."

"Then that's where we'll go."

I was so excited I could barely focus. I was scared shitless, but I was horny, too, and I finally understood what guys said about wanting to have sex so bad you'd do almost anything for it.

Alistair pulled the BMW into the lot for the three-store center, all of it shut down, and then circled around the back. "Perfect," he said, as he parked under the spreading branches of a willow. He rolled down the windows and shut the car off.

It was late afternoon, and the air was cool but humid. The sun was starting to set in the west, and we could hear faint splashes from the canal and the sound of the occasional bird.

Alistair turned to me. "So. If this was your first real date, I'm guessing you've never kissed another guy."

I nodded and swallowed hard.

“It’s easy,” he said. “Let me show you.” He leaned over and gently placed his lips on mine. It was the most amazing feeling, the warmth, the moisture, the closeness. I pressed my mouth against his, sucking on his lips, and he pulled off. “Whoa, cowboy,” he said, laughing. “Let’s take it nice and slow.”

He leaned back into me, gently kissing my lips, then my chin, and my throat. I started making these noises I’d never heard come out of my mouth, almost a purring. Then he kissed my lips again, and his tongue slid forward. So this was French kissing, I thought. *Merci, mes amis Français*. Awesome!

We kissed for a long time, gradually adding our hands into the mix. He stroked my cheek and his index finger made its way down to my nipple. Oh, God! I’d never known my nipples could feel like that! And that touching them was almost as good as touching my dick.

By the time Alistair pulled back, his lips red and bee-stung, panting for breath, I was so hard, so stimulated, I was ready to cum in my pants. “I think that’s enough for your first lesson,” he said. “I should get you home. We both have school tomorrow, right?”

“Right.”

I leaned back against the seat. “So we don’t... I mean, go any further?”

“Not on a first date, cowboy,” he said. “Got to save something for the next one.”

There was going to be a next date! I was so thrilled I felt like my mouth couldn’t resolve itself from the broadest smile ever.

“Is your email password protected?” he asked.

I shrugged. “Yeah, but my whole family shares the computer. Why?”

“We probably don’t want to get too graphic if there’s a chance somebody else can read,” he said. “I guess we’ll just have to talk to each other. You have unlimited nights and weekends on your cell?”

“Uh-huh.”

“So tomorrow night, nine o’clock. I suggest you find somewhere private.” He had that devilish grin again.

When we pulled up in front of my house, he reached out to shake my hand. “You never know who’s watching,” he said.

I shook his hand, and adjusted myself in my pants before I got out of the car. My hard-on didn’t want to go down, and I had to get past whatever family members were hanging around in the living room before I could get to my bedroom and take care of business.

My parents were watching some round-the-world reality show, and they waved as I walked past. I scrambled up to my room, locked the door, and pulled out my dick. It took only a few strokes before I shot a geyser of cum on my chest.

Once again, I had trouble falling asleep, dreaming of Alistair and what we’d do on our next date, but once I did I slept all through the night, waking up happy, with morning wood. I closed my eyes and remembered what it was like to kiss Alistair as I stroked myself.

Then my mother called from downstairs. “Kirk, Fiona, Ewan, Jean, you’re going to miss the bus!” I joined my brother and my sisters in a scramble to the bus.

I daydreamed through the whole school day, focused on nine o’clock that night when Alistair would call. That set a pattern for the week; I lived for those late-night calls, when we shared details of our days, and then eventually strayed into sexy talk. He described the things he wanted to do to me, and after some initial hesitation on my part, I began to tell him the same things.

I signed up for a free email address from Gmail, and used the computer at school to send messages to Alistair and read the ones he sent me.

“I don’t want to wait until Sunday to see you,” he said on Wednesday night. “Can we go out Friday night? Maybe a movie?”

I agreed, and we decided on the latest James Bond flick, playing at a massive Egyptian-motif theater right off I-75. Alistair bought the tickets and then led me into the theater, climbing the stairs right up to the back row.

We paid attention whenever Daniel Craig took his shirt off, and made out the rest of the time. He touched my dick, through my pants, and I had to pull his hand off, afraid I'd cum in my shorts.

The lot behind the foreclosed shopping center became our special place. It wasn't much, but Alistair could recline the seats of the Beemer and we could cuddle together, avoiding the gear shift. We went there after the movie, and we kissed a lot, and then took our shirts off.

When he took my nipple in his mouth and sucked, and then nibbled lightly, I thought I had died and gone to heaven. I couldn't imagine anything feeling better. Then he opened my pants and stroked my dick through my briefs.

"Oh God oh God oh God," I said. He pressed his lips against mine and we kissed while he touched me, ever so lightly. Then he reached in the slit of my jockeys and pulled my dick out.

"That is a fine caber you have there, laddie," he said, in that awful fake Scottish accent he had. But I didn't care, because I was realizing how awesome it was to have someone else's hand on my dick. It was so much better than touching myself.

With his other hand he reached behind the seat and tugged out a roll of paper towels. "Can't get the car too messy," he said, panting. He stuck a towel beneath my dick and pressed hard, right below the tip, and I spurted, soaking the paper.

He kissed me again, and I was so excited I think I forgot to breathe for a minute. Then he leaned back against his seat and opened his own pants. I jumped right in, trying to do everything to him that he'd done to me. Stroking him was so erotic that it blew my mind—I was really having sex! With another guy! And not just any guy—with Alistair!

He shot off almost as quickly as I did, and we both sat back in our seats, catching our breath. "That was," he said, and then paused to take a breath.

“Awesome,” I said.

“My first time,” he said.

I turned to him. “Really? I thought you were so... experienced.”

“It’s all a façade,” he said. “But there’s nobody I’d rather have given my virginity to than you, Kirk.”

“Oh, me too,” I said, and we kissed again.

We saw each other Saturday and Sunday, too, each time ending up in the lot behind the shopping center. And in between kissing and licking and rubbing, we talked.

One of the many things we talked about was college. I had already gotten into the University of Florida in Gainesville, and I had gotten a Bright Futures scholarship based on my grades. Between that and a financial aid package of loans, scholarships and a work-study job, I was set.

Alistair knew where he was going, too. “Harvard has this Single Choice Early Action plan,” he said. “I heard back in December that I got in. My dad sent away the deposit right away so I’m locked in.”

“So no chance you could switch to UF?”

He shook his head. “My father would have a cow if I wanted to go to a state school. Especially since I got into Harvard.”

“That makes sense,” I said, though I hated myself for having to say it. “You should go to the place where you get the best education.”

“You could apply for a transfer,” he said. “You’re smart. Do well in your first year at UF and then you could come to Harvard, too.”

I just smiled and nodded. I was smart, but not Harvard smart, and my family was going to scrape just to send me to UF.

It took a couple of weeks for Alistair’s father to figure out that he was seeing someone. I guess he was paying attention to those credit card bills after all. One day he confronted Alistair and asked who he was taking out to all those restaurants and movies.

Alistair told me about it that night in the parking lot. “I told him about you,” he said. “He says you aren’t the right kind of person for me to date.”

“Why? Because I’m a boy?”

Alistair shook his head. “He accepts that I’m gay. He’s not happy about it, but he’s smart enough to know he can’t change me.”

“Then what?”

“Because you go to public school, and your family doesn’t have money. He has this idea that I should find some rich guy to support me, the way he does.”

“That’s ridiculous. You’re going to college in the fall. You’ll have a degree, and you can get a good job and support yourself.”

He looked down. “There’s another thing.”

“What?”

“He signed me up for this summer program at the University of Edinburgh. I leave right after graduation, and when it’s over I fly right to Boston.”

My heart sank. “So we won’t even have the summer together?”

“I hate it, Kirk. But it’s a great opportunity, to go study overseas. Hey, maybe you could come and visit me there.”

I shook my head. “I have to work all summer to make the money for UF,” I said. “My dad says he can get me a job on his landscaping crew, so I can drive back and forth with him.”

Alistair was so excited about all the opportunities ahead of him that I couldn’t tell him how much it was going to break my heart to lose him. And I was sure that I would—after he got to Harvard and met other guys of the same background, with the same kind of future, that would be that.

The day before he was supposed to leave for Edinburgh, Alistair picked me up at my house. “Where are we going?” I asked.

“It’s a surprise,” he said.

“I don’t like surprises.”

“Trust me, you’ll like this one.”

He drove back to the highway, and then toward Sawgrass Mills. “You don’t need to buy me anything, Alistair,” I said. “Having clothes you bought for me won’t make me miss you any less when you’re in Scotland.”

“We’re not going to the mall.”

It sure looked like we were, though. We got off at that exit and drove toward it. But at the last minute he turned into the driveway for the La Quinta hotel. “It’s not much,” he said. “But at least it’ll be clean. I had to pick some place I could pay cash for, because I can’t put the charge on my dad’s credit card.”

I didn’t understand. “Why are we here?”

“Don’t you want this, too?” he asked. “To go all the way?”

At last I understood. We had done all the things you could do without a great deal of privacy—making out in theaters, kissing in the car, using our hands, and then our mouths, on each other. But we’d never been fully naked together, never shared a bed, and never most of those things I’d seen in porno movies online.

“Oh, you mean...”

“It’s all right with you, isn’t it?” he asked anxiously. “I don’t want to pressure you or anything. But I’m leaving tomorrow, and I don’t know when I’ll be back to see you. And I want my first time to be with someone I really love.”

“I want that too,” I said. “But I don’t...”

“Don’t what? Be honest with me, Kirk.”

“I don’t have any condoms or anything.”

He laughed. “Don’t worry. I’ve got that covered. We had a safe-sex event at our school a few weeks ago and I stocked up.”

“You’ve been thinking about this,” I said.

“Haven’t you?”

I was too caught up in losing Alistair that I hadn’t thought of it. And it wasn’t like our sex ed classes dealt with it. “Going all the way” meant sticking your dick into a girl’s pussy, not into a guy’s ass. And though I’d seen a couple of videos of guys going at it I had never made the connection that this was something Alistair and I would do.

“Your hands are shaking,” Alistair said, as he pulled into the parking lot.

I was nervous as hell, but I said, “I’m fine.”

“You want to wait here while I check in?”

I took a deep breath. “It’s no big deal. I’ll come in with you.”

I was sure the clerk knew exactly what we were doing. “Yes, Mr. McGregor,” he said. “I have you in a king non-smoking room. Or would you rather have two queens?”

“The king is fine,” Alistair said, and I wondered if I was the only one who heard the shakiness in his voice.

He asked for Alistair’s ID and method of payment. “Cash,” Alistair said, handing over his driver’s license.

The clerk scanned it and frowned. “It’s hotel policy that the guest renting a room must be at least eighteen,” he said.

Oh, fuck. We were both seventeen.

“But since you’re paying cash…” the clerk hesitated. “I guess I can break the rules. Wouldn’t want you guys to end up on the street.” He smiled. “Here you go. Two keys.” He gave us each a plastic card the size of a credit card. “The elevator is to the left. You can bring your bags in from the car whenever it’s convenient.”

Was that a dig? I wondered. We didn’t have any bags, just Alistair’s backpack. I kept worrying that his pack would come open and spill whatever sex toys he had brought with him onto the marble floor.

Once the elevator doors closed behind us, Alistair sagged against the wall. “I nearly crapped my pants when he said one of us had to be eighteen,” he said. “Thank God he was gay and he knew what we were doing.”

“He was gay?” I asked.

“Couldn’t you tell? From the way he looked at us, especially when he asked about the king-size bed?”

“I live in the middle of nowhere,” I said. “The only other gay people I know besides you are actors on TV, and one teacher at my high school.”

“You’ve got a lot to learn, my laddie,” he said, and that fake accent made me laugh again.

“Are you a good teacher?” I asked, as the doors opened to our floor.

“You can tell me after the lesson,” he said.

I figured out pretty quickly that Alistair and I were about on the same level when it came to full-on sex. We stood on opposite sides of the big bed and quickly took our clothes off. Alistair was naked before I was, and he stared at me.

“What?” I asked.

“I’ve never seen all of you before,” he said. “Your skin is so smooth, but you’ve got hair in all the right places. I never noticed what great pecs you have. You’re always wearing such baggy shirts.” He sighed. “You’re beautiful.”

I blushed. “You don’t say that to guys,” I said.

“Sure you do. Turn around.”

My face was burning, but I did. And then out of nowhere, I remembered a move one of my *tios* had taught me, at a big Cuban family party, and I put one hand on my stomach, raised the other, and swiveled my hips.

I heard Alistair take a deep breath behind me, and when I turned back to him he was fully hard, his dick standing up almost parallel to his belly. He

started to get onto the bed but I stopped him. “Wait,” I said. “Let me look at you.”

His blond hair had been bleached by the Florida sun, and he had a ruddy tan. He was slim, like me, but hairier—reddish gold hair sprouted between his pecs and trailed down to his belly button, then met up with a thatch around the base of his dick.

I twirled my index finger. “Go on, turn around.”

His back was breathtaking—a light furring on his shoulders, and smooth sides that tapered to a narrow waist over a high, tight butt. He bent forward and spread his ass cheeks, and his hole winked at me, pink, and surrounded by a circle of hair. My dick spasmed at the sight.

Then he flopped down on the bed, and I jumped in next to him, and we began kissing and hugging each other and touching our bodies together in a hundred different places. We rubbed against each other, and suddenly Alistair yelped and squirmed, and I felt his jism shoot against my thigh. “Crap,” he said. “I didn’t mean to do that.”

“I’ll have to keep up with you,” I said. I pressed down against him and rubbed my dick against his belly, fast and hard. It hurt, but I couldn’t stop until my whole body shuddered and I came in a hot spurt.

“Man,” I whispered, when I had slumped beside Alistair. “We wasted so much time just jerking each other off when we could have been doing this.”

“It’s better because we waited,” he said. “I love you, Kirk.”

I had been holding back my own feelings because I was afraid Alistair didn’t feel the same way, but I didn’t have to do that anymore. “I love you too, Alistair. I love you so much.”

We kissed, and rubbed our bodies together again, until we were sweaty and scummy. “We should take a shower together,” Alistair said.

“Really?”

“Why not? We paid for the room.”

We jumped up and raced each other to the tiled bathroom. My fumbling fingers ripped open a bar of soap while Alistair turned the water on. When it was warm, he stepped in and looked at me through the open shower door.

He was so gorgeous, and I loved him so much. I didn't want to move—I wanted this moment to last forever. "Come on," he said. I stepped in with him, immediately enveloped by the steamy heat.

We kissed under the spray again, and then we washed each other's bodies lovingly and carefully. He stuck a soapy finger up my ass and I shivered into him. "Does that feel good?" he asked into my ear.

"Yeah," I breathed.

"Do you want to..."

"Oh, yeah," I said. We were both hard again by then. Alistair turned off the water and we stepped out, drying each other with the skimpy bath towels. Then he took my hand and led me back to the bed.

"Get up on all fours," he said.

I climbed up on the bed, and I felt him spreading my ass cheeks. Then something warm and moist. "Is that your tongue?" I gasped.

"Do you like it?"

"Oh, yeah," I said. I understood why he wanted to make sure I was clean back there. The licking and slurping was so sensual—I had never felt anything like it.

"I'm going to try a finger," he said. He grabbed for a bottle of lube, and I heard him squirt some out, then felt the cool gel around my hole as he rubbed it in. Then he had a finger in me, and it felt so weird, but in a good way.

It took us some scrambling around to get into the right position for him to get his dick into me, though. On all fours like that I was too high for him to reach. Leaning on the bed put me too low. "They don't teach this in sex ed," he grumbled, as we twisted around.

"Could you imagine?" I asked, laughing. "They could show movies."

“We saw an animation of how to put a condom on,” Alistair said. “That was about it, though.”

“More than I got,” I said.

I ended up lying on the bed on my side, with my legs spread open. I watched as Alistair ripped the condom packet open and rolled it down. His dick looked so weird encased in latex like that, like some kind of alien penis. He caught my eye, and then smiled lasciviously and squirted more lube into his hand.

He stroked his dick a couple of times to get it covered, and then he knelt down above me. “Take a deep breath,” he said, and he spread my ass cheeks wide and positioned himself.

I yelped the first time his dick head got into me, and he said, “Are you all right, Kirk?”

“I’m good,” I grunted. It was that same pleasure/pain thing again—it hurt, but I didn’t want it to stop.

He pushed forward, a millimeter at a time, and I took lots of deep breaths and wiped my tears on the pillowcase so Alistair couldn’t see them.

And then the pleasure half of the equation took over, and I found myself pushing back on Alistair, contracting my ass muscles around his cock, and he began pushing into me and then pulling back, and when I closed my eyes I saw stars.

He began yipping like some kind of dog in heat, and he pushed his hips against my ass, forcing his dick even farther into me, and then he cried out and I felt his dick spasm inside me. He pulled out fast, and flopped back on the bed next to me.

I turned to face him. “Are you all right?” I asked anxiously.

He gave me a goofy grin. “Never better. Let me catch my breath, and then I want to give you the same pleasure you just gave me.”

My dick was so hard it was leaking precum. Alistair rolled the condom down on me, and then rubbed my dick with lube, and then turned on his side.

I was so horny but so nervous. I pried open his ass cheeks and applied the lube, and it was almost like the lips down there were opening for me. Before I could over-think things, I positioned myself behind him and pressed against his hole.

Nothing happened.

“Is it in yet?” he asked.

“No. I can’t get it to go.”

“Push, Kirk. Don’t worry about hurting me.”

“Maybe I’m just not cut out for this,” I said. “I’m like, only a bottom, not a top.”

“Don’t be ridiculous,” he said. “Come on, Kirk. Stop fooling around and fuck me.”

I realized that he wanted this just as much as I did, and I had to do it. I took a deep breath and grabbed my dick. I positioned it at his hole and pressed forward. It hurt at first, but then I slipped past some kind of barrier and I was inside.

Alistair groaned beneath me. “Oh, yeah, Kirk,” he said. “Your dick is inside me.”

I tried to do what he had done to me—inch forward. But I ended up just plowing forward, and he yelped, but I couldn’t help myself. I started pressing forward with my hips as if I was dancing, and Alistair squirmed beneath me, and my dick felt so good, it was sending waves of pleasure through my whole body, until I came in a big, shuddering orgasm.

I slumped beside Alistair. “I didn’t hurt you, did I?”

“I may not be able to sit for a week,” he said, turning to face me. “But it was worth it.”

We cuddled for a while, and my ass started to feel uncomfortable, from the stretching and the slippery lube still there. Alistair had dozed off, so I crept out of the bed and went into the bathroom, where I showered a second time.

I came back out of the bathroom with a towel wrapped around my waist. Alistair was still asleep, looking like some kind of fallen angel, his hair tousled and his lips bee-stung. He stirred and looked up at me and my heart broke because I knew he was going to leave me forever.

I didn't go to the airport to see Alistair off to Edinburgh. I didn't have a way to get there, and I'd already decided that there was no future for us. Seeing him one last time would be too painful. I shut down the Gmail account, and just to be certain, I changed my cell phone number. I didn't want to get any desperate messages from Alistair professing his love for me when I knew there was no future for us.

I worked hard all summer. I got up before sunrise, ate breakfast, and drove with my dad to work. By the time we got home, I was exhausted. I ate dinner and went to bed. And so I managed to keep most thoughts of Alistair out of my head.

I drove up to Gainesville to start at UF in August, and I was so busy with classes and roommates and making new friends that I didn't spare many thoughts for my first real boyfriend. I started without a clear idea of what I'd major in, but very quickly I found I had a talent for my computer science classes. I'd had so little exposure to computers back home that it was like a whole new world opened up for me. My work-study job was in the computer lab, helping other students with their assignments, and I ate up everything I could find about hardware, software and emerging trends.

I spent much of the spring term of my senior year going to job fairs and on-campus interviews and filing online applications. Everywhere I went, people were positive about my credentials but negative about opportunities. The economy was contracting, and nobody was hiring. I'd entertained some hopes of moving to Silicon Valley or one of its offshoots in Chicago, Austin or North Carolina, but the only offer I got was from a small company in Sunrise, Florida, not too far from my parents.

They were doing localizations for South America—adapting existing software to be usable in Spanish. It wasn't as easy as just translating the manuals; you needed to understand the language and how people operated, as well as adding in all the special characters. Because I'd grown up speaking Spanish to my mom and her family, I was able to snag the job.

The work wasn't hard, and I spent a lot of time sitting around waiting for approvals or contracts from places like Caracas and Quito. I kept myself busy by writing my own software.

It was the dawn of the app movement back then. More and more people had smart phones, and they were looking for ways to make them work harder. I taught myself how to use the open source software and then started looking around for something I could do. Around that time, I was talking to a college friend who had graduated and moved back home to Sarasota. He complained about the limited pool of girls there—he kept running into some of the same women in bars. Sometimes they were all over him, and other times treated him like he was made of dog poop, and he was always unclear why. “I can't keep track of which ones I know and which ones I don't,” he said.

“You need an app on your phone,” I said. “You type in the name and up comes a picture, a record of where you went out, and what her problems were.”

“That sounds great,” he said. “Where can I get it?”

I scouted around and couldn't find something like I was thinking of, so I created it myself. I used a basic database with search capability, but added the ability to upload photos and links as well. You could choose the girl's characteristics by a drop-down menu—hair color, eye color, etc. Or you could type in your own description or comments.

If I had ideas about the app while I was at work, I wrote them out in longhand on a lined legal pad. I did all the actual work at home, on my own computer. I knew how easy it would be for someone to audit my computer and then accuse me of using company resources for my own benefit.

My buddy agreed to beta-test it for me, and I emailed him the software at the end of a long weekend spent bug testing. During the week, he input as much of the data from his past girlfriends as he could remember. The next Monday evening he called me as I was on my way home from work.

“Dude, the app is awesome!” he said. “I saw this blonde who looked so familiar but I couldn’t place her ’til I overheard one of her friends call her Monica. I pulled up your app and punched her name in.”

“And you saw why you dumped her?”

“Actually, she broke up with me. She said I was cute and funny but she couldn’t date a guy who didn’t have a decent job. That was back when I was still working at the call center. So I figured with my new gig I could give her another try.”

“What did she say?”

I could hear the pride coming through in his voice. “That she was sorry she’d broken up with me over something so shallow, and she missed the fun we had. I didn’t even tell her about my new job until the second round of drinks.”

“Sounds great,” I said.

“Dude, you’ve got to sell this app. Tons of guys can use it.”

“I’ll think about it.” I ended the call and kept driving toward home, passing Sawgrass Mills and the La Quinta hotel.

I thought I’d stopped thinking about Alistair by then. I regretted the lost chance, but since then I’d had a couple of boyfriends and lots of sex, and my head knew that breaking off with him back then had been the right decision. But driving past the place where we’d both lost our virginity, I wondered if I really had done the right thing.

Over the next couple of weeks, as I kept testing and improving the app, I thought of Alistair more and more. I wondered what he’d been up to. I was sure he’d graduated from Harvard, probably gone on to graduate school. He

was probably very successful, with a boyfriend who matched him in wealth and background.

One afternoon, when all my projects were either finished or on hold for some reason, I googled his name. There wasn't much to find; but I did discover that as I'd expected, he graduated from Harvard and then enrolled in the MBA program there.

I closed the browser quickly, as if I'd been caught doing something I shouldn't, like surfing porn at the office. That was it; Alistair was set on his career, and there was no reason for a guy with such bona fides to ever come back to Florida.

I posted the app on a website, and within a couple of weeks, sales were very strong, as more and more people—men and women—downloaded it and then reviewed it.

Then one day my boss called me into his office and turned his monitor to face me. "This is your app, isn't it?" he asked.

"Yup. Just something I fiddled around with in my spare time."

He opened a manila folder on his desktop and pulled out a piece of paper. "Recognize this?" he asked, sliding it across to me.

It was the non-compete agreement I'd signed when I was hired. "Sure. But I haven't broken the agreement. I did all the work on my own time, and it doesn't compete with any of your products."

"I assumed you'd say that," he said. "So I had your computer audited."

My heart skipped a couple of beats. I thought I'd been careful—but what if I'd slipped up? I decided to go on the offensive. "I never used any company resources."

"No, but you did surf to some inappropriate websites." He gave me another piece of paper, a copy of the employment contract I'd signed, and pointed at a clause. It allowed for termination of any employee who visited any website the company considered "inappropriate".

He showed me one last piece of paper, a printout of websites I had visited. Most of them were innocuous—news sources, hurricane information, that kind of thing. But there were a couple of general interest gay sites as well. “We can’t have you looking at pornography at work,” he said.

“These aren’t porn sites. See the article title?” I pointed. “It’s about the ruling on the military’s don’t ask, don’t tell policy. News, not porn.”

He shook his head. “You don’t understand.” Then he buzzed his secretary and told her to send in Armando, the security guard who sat at the front door, signing visitors in.

“You are terminated effective immediately, without severance. Within two weeks you will receive your last paycheck, including compensation for any sick time you have accrued. Armando will escort you to your desk, where you can remove your personal effects. Your access to our network has been deleted. You are prohibited from returning here.”

Armando came in then. I was so astonished I couldn’t say anything. I just stood up and followed him out.

I had always been out at work, and I knew I hadn’t broken any rules about forbidden sites. So the only reason I could see that I was being fired was for creating the app. How stupid was that? You get an employee who shows some talent and some initiative, and you fire him? Why would I want to work for a company that treated people that way?

I packed up my stuff in record time; in the two years I’d been there I’d never done much to personalize my cubicle anyway. Then I drove back to my parents’ house.

I’d been saving up, and I was almost ready to move out and get my own place. Now I figured my savings would have to go toward survival instead.

I was angry, sad and confused. The world just didn’t make sense. I moped around for a couple of days then got up the gumption to revise my resume and start posting it.

One of the first responses I got was from an entrepreneur who was starting an app development company on South Beach. I drove down there one day to meet with him, and as I approached Miami Beach on the MacArthur Causeway, the condo towers glowed in the sun and the water in the ocean and the bay sparkled. It was like driving toward the Emerald City. When I passed an electric signboard that invited me to “friend” the Miami Beach Police Department on Twitter and Facebook I knew I was heading into a strange new world.

The guy was a Russian-American named Boris, and this was his third start-up. “I want to create custom apps for corporations and non-profits,” he said, his English strong but coming out from under a heavy Russian accent. “There’s real money to be made there. But I need good staff with track records.”

There was a catch, of course. He wanted me to work for free for two weeks, until he had a meeting with a venture capital firm he hoped would fund his operations. If the deal went through, he’d hire me, with a generous salary and benefit package.

I had nothing else in the works, and though South Beach was a real hike from my parents’ house, if he did hire me I’d be able to move down to the beach almost immediately.

I worked my butt off for the next two weeks. I didn’t even drive back to my parents’ place each night; instead I crashed on the couch of one of the other guys. The evening before the presentation, Boris let us go early. “Go home. Sleep. Eat. Shower. Come back tomorrow looking like human beings, all right?”

We all agreed. The next morning I was at my desk in the programmers’ room when the receptionist, a Goth-looking Russian girl called Mila, came in to summon us to the meeting. I was already nervous, knowing how important this meeting was to Boris, and to me personally. But my heart did a series of back-flips when I saw that one of the dark-suited guys on the other side of the table was Alistair McGregor.

Boris introduced me and the other programmers to the investors, but didn't introduce them to us. When I finally made eye contact with Alistair I saw he was staring at me and that made me feel like I had to throw up.

We each had to talk about our backgrounds, and what we could bring to the company. I managed to get through my speech without barfing and then followed the rest of the guys out. "What's the matter with you, dude?" gloomy, heavysset Dominic asked. I'd been crashing on his couch. "You look like you saw a ghost."

"I did. Ghost of a past relationship."

"Seriously? You dated one of the money dudes?"

"Back before he was a money dude," I said. "Then he was just the son of a rich dad."

"Don't tell Boris," Dom said. "He'll pimp you out."

"Don't tell Boris what?"

We turned around to see our boss standing there. "I just came out to tell you guys that you did a good job. But what is it you don't want to tell me?"

Damn, I needed that job. I loved the environment and the work, and I hated still having to live with my parents. "It won't matter," I said. "I used to date one of the money guys, that's all. I haven't seen him in years."

"Hmm," Boris said. "Go back to work. They discuss deal right now. With good luck they say yes this afternoon. They have the financials for a week already."

None of us could concentrate on work. Dom put on his headphones and listened to death metal. The other guys stared into space.

I looked at my computer and thought about Alistair. What did he think about seeing me, after all this time? Was his world as rattled as mine?

Probably not. He was a successful Harvard MBA in a perfectly tailored suit. He probably already had a boyfriend, a model or actor or even some older

dude with tons of cash. That was what his father wanted for him wasn't it? And Alistair was probably still dancing to Daddy's tune.

We heard a clamor in the reception area and all of us swiveled our chairs close to the partly-open door. Boris was effusively thanking each of the potential investors. I saw Alistair hand a piece of paper to Mila, who put it on her desk.

What was it? A warning to me? Don't bother me, Kirk? As if I was some kind of stalker. I was building up a righteous indignation when they all walked out, and Mila called me to her desk.

"Your boyfriend left this," she said, handing me the note.

"Ex-boyfriend," I said. "I haven't seen him in six years. And how did you know he knew me at all?"

"I read the note, dummy," she said.

I opened the piece of paper. "Kirk. I have to see you again. Call me." At the bottom he'd written a phone number.

My first instinct was to run back to my cube, grab my phone, and call Alistair immediately. Then I took a couple of deep breaths.

It had been six years. We could both wait a few more hours. And I had to be careful of jumping ahead too much—Alistair's note could have meant that he was closeted at work, for example, and didn't want me to out him. The men with him had all been wearing very conservative suits; maybe it wasn't cool to be gay in such an environment.

I was puzzling over the possibilities when Boris came to the door of the programmers' room. "Kirk? I can talk to you in my office, please?"

Dom gave me a thumbs up. "If you have to take one for the team, pal..." he said.

I frowned at him and followed Boris to his office, where I sat down across from him.

“We need this money, Kirk,” he said. He leaned across the desk to me. “Is very confidential, all right? I don’t want nobody else, especially not big-mouth Mila, to hear.”

Fuck. Good conversations never start that way.

“I talk to every investment banker and every angel investor in town,” he said. “All are agreeing app business will take off in big way, but none have capital now. These guys are last chance. You can talk to your friend, help convince him?”

“Boris. I haven’t seen the guy for six years. The truth is that we dated, and I broke up with him. I don’t think he has very fond memories of me.”

“But he wants to see you,” Boris said.

Nosy Mila. She not only read Alistair’s note but told Boris about it.

I looked around the office. I liked working there, and if Boris folded I’d be back on unemployment, programming for my own enjoyment. Living with my parents and hating the wreck my life had become.

How could it hurt to be nice to Alistair? “All right. I’ll call him.” I glared at Boris. “Tonight.”

“*Ochen chorosho!*” he said, which I had already figured out meant very good in Russian. Yeah, *chorosho* for him, I thought, as I walked back to the programmers’ room. Maybe not so much for Alistair and me.

I was going to wait until I got home and had dinner to call. But the drive from South Beach back to my parents’ was so long and I was so antsy that I couldn’t resist. I turned on the Bluetooth and dialed the number on the paper, my fingers shaking.

“Hello?”

His voice sounded older, more mature than it had during all those late-night conversations we’d had. “Alistair? It’s Kirk.”

The next move was his. But the phone was so quiet I worried the call had dropped.

“Sorry,” he said finally. “I’m still at work. I wanted to get somewhere quiet so we could talk.”

Okay, the ball was back in my court. “You look good,” I said. “Prosperous. Congratulations on the job.”

“Don’t congratulate me so quickly,” he said. “This is the first deal they let me sit in on. So far I’ve just been a flunky and a gofer.”

“How does it look?” Might as well get right to the point. “Are we going to get the money?”

“Kirk. I can’t tell you that. Besides, there’s still a lot of due diligence to finish.”

“Do what?”

He explained due diligence to me—the process of checking all of Boris’s bona fides, dotting the i’s and crossing the t’s. And then it was like we ran out of things to say, and we were both quiet for a moment. Until he asked, “Are you seeing anyone?”

I had to slam on my brakes to avoid hitting an eighteen-wheeler that merged into my lane without notice. “What does that mean?” I asked.

“It’s a simple question. You can say yes, no, or none of my business.”

“I work like twelve hours a day, and I alternate between living with my parents and sleeping on my co-worker Dom’s couch. So, no, I’m not seeing anyone.” I took a deep breath. “How about you?”

“Not since I left Boston.”

“But there was someone there?” I asked.

“I haven’t been celibate since the last time I saw you,” he said. “It was six years.”

“I was in love with you,” I said, blinking at the way the setting sun glared in through my windshield as I drove west. “I’ve gone on dates, I’ve gotten laid. But I haven’t met anyone else who made me feel the way you did.”

Fuck. I didn't know where that had come from, somewhere deep in my soul. If you'd asked me about Alistair the day before, I'd have said he was just a guy I used to date. If pressed, I'd have admitted he was my first. But that was it.

"I've been a serial monogamist," Alistair said, his disembodied voice floating around me in the cocoon of my car. "I've had a couple of boyfriends, in college, and then in business school. But it's the same for me. Nobody made me feel the way you did."

"Where are you?" I asked.

"I told you, at the office."

"But where's that?"

"Coral Gables."

I accelerated and swerved across two lanes of traffic to make it into the LeJeune Road exit. "Give me the address," I said. "I'm on my way."

Alistair was waiting outside his building, his jacket over his shoulder and his red power tie loosened around his neck. He was even more handsome than he'd been the first time I saw him, at the Scottish Festival. I pulled up at the curb in my crappy ten-year-old Toyota sedan, put it in park and leaned over to open the door.

Alistair slid in beside me and closed the door. Then he looked at me, and before I knew what was happening our lips were locked together. I felt like a teenager all over again, making out in a parked car with my boyfriend, although we were in the middle of a crowded business district and certainly old enough to know better.

Over the next few weeks, Boris got his funding, and I got a full-time job creating apps for his company. Alistair and I moved into a one-bedroom apartment in a high-rise with a view of Biscayne Bay. The Scottish Festival had moved from Key Biscayne to Fort Lauderdale by then, and we drove up there to see my brother Ewan compete in the caber toss. I insisted on wearing my family kilt in the Strathspey tartan.

“If you’re doing that just to impress my father,” Alistair said.

“No.”

“Well, he’ll be impressed anyway.”

We met up with Alistair’s parents near the entrance, and then introduced them to my whole family, including my *abuela*, a stooped little Cuban lady who didn’t speak much English.

My dad pulled me aside. “I brought the creel you asked for, Kirk laddie. It’s in the car.” He handed me the keys. “Good luck.”

“Thanks, Dad.” I leaned over and kissed his grizzled cheek. “But I’ve had all the luck I need to last a lifetime, meeting up with Alistair again after all this time. Now he’s all I need.”

I retrieved the creel from the car’s trunk. It was pretty damn heavy, but I didn’t mind. I slung it over my shoulder and began a careful circuit of the fairgrounds, planning my route so I would end up at the caber toss.

Alistair watched me approaching. The creel was beginning to weigh me down, and I was sweating in the warm breeze, but I was determined. He and his family stared as I approached. When I reached them I dropped it, and got down to one knee. I looked up at Alistair and said, “Alistair McGregor, I love you with all my heart and soul. Will you marry me?”

Tears streamed out of his eyes. “Of course,” he said, and he pulled me to my feet and we kissed.

“It’s an old Scottish tradition,” my father said. “We call it creeling the bridegroom.”

“I know the tradition,” Alistair’s father said. “Never thought my son would be on the receiving end, but...” He stuck his hand out to me. “Welcome to the family, son.”

And now here we are, at St. Margaret’s, the Scottish church in Fort Lauderdale. Ewan is my best man, and he’s right outside waiting for me. Alistair and his best friend from college will enter the church from the left, and my brother and I from the right. Alistair opted for a black morning coat with

tails, but my brother and I are in our clan kilts. We have matching red rosebud boutonnieres.

I can hear the skirl of the bagpipes beginning, and it's time now to step forward into the life I dreamed of, with the only man I've ever loved.

THE END

Author Bio

Neil S. Plakcy is the author of the Mahu Investigations, about openly gay Honolulu homicide detective Kimo Kanapa'aka, as well as the Have Body, Will Guard adventure romance series and the Golden Retriever Mysteries.

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