

LOVE Has NO Boundaries



Don't Read in the Closet Event 2013

SILVER ICE

Suilan Lee

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Love Has No Boundaries

An M/M Romance series

SILVER ICE

By Suilan Lee

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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Photo Description

Two men fill the frame, with only their heads, pale-skinned bare shoulders and bare arms visible. The light-haired one is closer, and leans his forehead on the other's shoulder, eyes closed, his face almost peaceful. He grips the dark-haired man's biceps; the other man does the same. The dark-haired man, only partially visible, presses his head into the light-haired man's chest.

Story Letter

Dear Author,

Sure, it started out as a challenge. That twink was so determined not to date an infamous playboy like myself that there was no way for me to resist proving him wrong. However, I didn't expect to actually fall in love with him. How can I make him mine? How do I make him believe I really want him and for him to stop pushing me away?

Sincerely,

Rachel

Story Info

Genre: contemporary

Tags:: sports, young adult, ice hockey player, college love, enemies to lovers, unrequited love, long-time crush, light-hearted romance

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SILVER ICE

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CHAPTER 1

Silver Reese sipped hot chocolate, barely tasting the sweet liquid. His eyes were firmly fixed on the God of Ice skating powerfully toward him. Dressed in carnelian red and white, gloved hands gripping a hockey stick, Knox Thurston dodged an opponent expertly determined to reach the goal. Team captain Jude Martin passed the puck to Knox, escaping a trap from the other team.

A second later, number eighteen scored. The rink filled with thunderous applause, nearly making him deaf. Silver watched in awe as number eighteen skated with joy, jumping into the arms of his teammates.

“You’re going to spill hot chocolate on your clothes,” his best friend, Tina, warned him. She snatched the cup out off his hands and pressed a wad of napkins into his left hand, pointing to a spot on his black sweater. “Stop drooling, it’s embarrassing.”

Silver blinked, the spell broken. He wiped at the wet spot on his sweater with a sigh.

“The Knox curse strikes again.” Rex Granger, his other best friend, chuckled beside him. “I bet you have no idea what Tina was saying a second ago.”

“What?” Silver asked, grimacing at the stain on his sweater.

“I told you it was a waste of time to talk to him when Knox is playing.” Rex gave Tina a small grin. “He’s worshiping the God of Ice.”

“Pay attention, Silver.” Tina touched his left shoulder as the game continued. “The party tonight, I need you there.”

“What, no,” Silver protested, throwing the napkins into the brown bag brought with Rex’s hotdog. Obviously drinking was a bad idea right now, he’d wait until the game ended.

“Come on,” Tina begged beside him. She was a pint-sized redhead with startling green eyes. Her temper turned her cheeks a vibrant red. When he’d first met her five years ago, he’d nicknamed her the sizzling tomato.

She hadn’t liked that very much.

“No way,” he said. Knox was definitely going to be there.

“Beer, pizza, loud music, it’s a simple party. I swear you won’t even get to see Knox.”

“I’m not going.”

“Give it up, Tina,” Rex advised, biting into his hot dog. “I told you he’s hell-bent on dying alone.”

“That’s mean.” Silver turned to Rex.

He and Rex had dated freshman year. After a few disastrous dates, they’d quickly come to realize they were better off as friends.

“When was the last time you went out on a date?” Rex asked with a smirk.

He could barely remember and Rex knew it. Rex knew all there was to know about him, since they lived together. He made a face at Rex and shrugged.

“What does that have to do with anything?” he asked.

“Come on it’s a Psi U party; you know how awesome they are.” Tina wrapped her left arm on his shoulder. “It will be fun. You’ve been stressing over your thesis project and job interviews, this will be a relief.”

He started to protest.

“If you don’t come, I’ll tell Knox the big secret,” Tina threatened with a wicked smile.

Silver grabbed her arm in panic. She was dating Jude Martin, the hockey team captain and Knox’s best friend. Her threat was real.

“I’ll come,” he said quickly. “Please don’t tell Knox.”

“I knew you wouldn’t disappoint me.” Tina winked at him and he shuddered. She was cruel when she wanted to be.

“I’ll give you one thing, Knox is really hot. If he weren’t gay and I wasn’t in full-lust mode for Jude, Knox would do it for me.”

Silver laughed his gaze seeking out number eighteen on the ice again. He had no control over his heart when it came to Knox. This awful, painful crush had started three and a half years ago.

His second year at Alexander University, Knox Thurston had walked into the cocktail lounge looking for Jude and Silver’s world had turned over. Six foot one of powerful muscle, broad shoulders, serious abs, crew-cut blond hair. Knox had taken center stage in all his wet dreams.

Jude had been sitting at their table trying to talk Tina into a date. Knox had come to stand by his chair and to this day, he could still smell Knox’s intoxicating cologne. It was a fresh, clean, woodsy, arousing scent that drove him crazy. Every time he walked into a room and that scent got close, he instinctively looked for Knox Thurston.

His heart and body fully recognized how sexy, gorgeous and lust-worthy Knox Thurston was. His head, however, reminded him that getting involved with Knox would mean serious heartbreak and never-ending tears.

Buckets full of tears, his head reminded his heart when Knox scored again and did a sexy dance on the ice. How anyone could make that padding look sexy—he frowned and forced himself to think of Knox’s faults.

Knox Thurston was a full-fledged heartbreaker. His motto was “love them and leave ’em”. Campus was littered with heartbroken guys who’d once thought they could change him. Others fully recognized he was a man-whore, so they gave it up willingly whenever he deigned to look their way. *Playboy* didn’t begin to describe that kind of self-centered action. So, even though he could easily confess his undying love to the God of Ice, he would be better off hanging on to his safe, happy existence.

Man-whore tendencies aside, Knox was a damn good hockey player and the team was fighting hard tonight. The Reds fans were chanting wildly. This

was a crucial game, if they won against the Celts, the Reds would be going for the semifinals. Tina and Rex drew him to his feet as they joined the chant, “Let’s go Red!”

Knox and Jude were passing each other the puck, flanked by the defense players, and quickly headed to the Celts goal. Silver clapped his hands in excitement as Knox came on their side. Silver gasped as Knox was suddenly body checked and flung against the glass. Knox stared at him for a moment before he fell back on the ice.

“Oh gods,” Silver said, worried that Knox was injured when he didn’t get up right away.

Jude skated toward Knox and Tina grabbed Silver’s arm. A few minutes later, Knox got up as his teammates yelled at the other team.

Silver pressed a hand to his chest in relief. He’d missed the previous game due to his job, but Tina had told him that Knox had been injured. A knock on the glass made him glance up and his eyes widened when Knox flashed him a wicked grin. Silver flushed beet red, blood filling his cock in response.

Hopeless, he thought as Knox chuckled and skated away. *He was hopeless.*

“How’s your wrist?” Jude demanded as Knox glanced at the timer. They had just over a minute of play in regulation.

“I’m good.” Knox gripped his hockey stick tightly and gave Jude an assuring nod. They were ahead two to one. If they won, they’d make it to the championship semifinals. The game resumed, and he focused his attention on the Celts. The Reds put up a furious defense at the blue line as the Celts tried to bounce the puck into their zone. He growled in frustration when one of the Celts defense players managed to swat the puck along the wall headed to the goal line. He chased after the puck, hoping to get it back before it reached their goal.

He stopped the attempt to score, but managed to get his wrist whacked. Wincing in pain, he lost focus and the Celts managed to score and tie the game with forty-five seconds remaining in regulation.

The game went into overtime. Tension brought adrenaline coursing through his blood as they raced back and forth from net to net. The Celts were out for blood, but his teammates didn't falter.

Six minutes into overtime, and the Celts managed to race behind one of their defense players streaking toward their net. Knox raced after him but not fast enough. In the next second, the Celts managed to toss the puck under their goalie for a game winner.

The Celts fans erupted in a deafening roar joined in by the teammates as they piled into each other in victory.

Knox cursed under his breath and threw his hockey stick to the ice. He was sweating; they'd played like mad through an overtime of twenty minutes, giving the best defense they could.

A hand dropped on his shoulders and he sighed.

"Great game," Jude praised, shaking him slightly.

Knox found his gaze fell on Silver, seated beside Tina, his dark Mohawk tipped with red. Knox smiled when Silver stood and clapped with everyone giving their team morale. Knox turned to Jude.

"I'm pissed but we gave it our best," he replied as the rest of the team came over.

In the locker room, the coach was supportive; he thanked them for focused play and urged them not to regret how they'd played the game. Knox sat on the bench staring at his best friend run a towel through his hair after his shower.

"We missed the semifinals by an inch." Jude observed, throwing his towel on the floor. He retrieved his deodorant from his locker. "An inch, Knox, and we would be going to the semifinals."

"We did our best." Knox touched his right wrist and winced slightly, grateful for the fresh bandage the doctor had applied after the shower. He'd gotten injured blocking a shot the day before. The Celts had truly kicked their asses on the ice tonight.

Jude pulled on briefs and blue jeans, jumped on the bench and raised his arms. “Who’s ready for a party? We might have not won the game, but you all deserve to celebrate tonight. We managed to get to the quarterfinals, it’s been a tough season, and every one of you gave it your best. I’d love to see you at the Psi U house for a victory party.”

A round of whistles filled the locker room, and Knox shook his head when Jude jumped down.

“Great pep talk, Captain,” he said pulling on his underwear. Dropping his towel on the bench, he reached for his black jeans. “Tina brought Silver Reese with her today.”

“Silver never misses any home games.” Jude belted his jeans and sat on the bench to put his socks on. “The only reason he didn’t make it last night was because of work.”

“Do you think he’s coming to the party?” Knox asked, hating that it was taking him twice as long to button his black jeans. His wrist movements were restricted. Gritting his teeth, he finished with his jeans and sat down.

“You promised me,” Jude said with a frown. “You know Silver, Rex and Tina are a trio. You can’t mess with him.”

Knox scowled. “I’m not asking to date Tina, Jude. What’s the problem?”

Jude chuckled. “They’ve known each other since freshman year. Five years in the architecture program. Can you imagine what will happen if you dump Silver tomorrow? Tina will never talk to you and that would be weird. You can’t mess with that.”

Knox finished with his socks and turned to Jude. “Seriously, what’s the big deal? It’s not like we wouldn’t click. I’ve seen him watching me when he thinks I’m not looking. And who says I’ll dump him the next day?”

“You and Silver,” Jude mused. “Those pain meds are messing with your brain. There is no way that would work.”

Knox glared. “What do you mean by that?”

“Knox, I’m your best friend. Glare at me all you want, but remember I know where you used to take your so-called dates for blowjobs.” Jude gave him a knowing look and he laughed.

“Excuse me, do you want me to have a talk with Tina about your dates under the bleachers on game night in high school?”

Jude got to his feet with a soft curse. “I hate it when you threaten me with that one.”

Knox picked up his grey T-shirt and pulled it over his head. The tension in his shoulders eased and he sighed. Now that the season was over for the team, he’d get time to concentrate on his graduation in June.

Packing his hockey gear in a black duffel bag, he turned to find Jude talking to three of their Psi U brothers.

Jude held out his car keys. “Knox, will you give these to Tina? She’s waiting outside.”

He nodded and headed out of the locker room. His duffel bag over his left shoulder, he headed out through the semiquiet rink. Stepping out into the cold evening, he pulled his jacket together clumsily. His wrist wasn’t making life easy.

Ithaca winters were a bitch. He wouldn’t miss the cold weather when he left for good in June. His four years at Alexander University had moved so fast. Or so it seemed, he mused. He could barely remember his freshman year. There were of course a myriad of firsts that he’d never forget. Rush week, joining the ice hockey team, moving into the Psi Upsilon frat house. He smiled at the memories of the endless parties, events and challenges he’d faced within the Psi U house.

He’d gained lifelong brothers at Psi Upsilon and with his teammates. Now if only he could manage to complete the next two months.

Tina was standing by Jude’s black Porsche, bundled up in a black jacket, a red scarf tied around her neck.

“Hey,” he said when she turned to look at him. Dangling the keys with his injured wrist, he smiled at her. “He’s on his way out.”

Tina took the keys carefully before she hugged him. “You guys were great tonight.”

“Thanks,” he said, patting her back. He looked around the parking lot. “Where are Rex and Silver? Are they going to the party?”

“Of course.” Tina pulled back with a wide smile. “Silver drove Rex over. I told them I’d wait for Jude.”

He turned to the black SUV parked beside Jude’s Porsche. Unlocking his car doors, he threw his duffel bag onto the passenger seat and turned to Tina. “Can I ask you something, Tina?”

She paused in the act of unlocking Jude’s car. “What’s up?”

“Silver Reese,” he said, and watched her lips tighten. “I want to ask him out. Jude told me you don’t think he’ll say yes. Why?”

Tina sighed and shook her head. “It’s not that he won’t say yes. It’s that I wouldn’t want you and Silver together, Knox.”

“Why is that?” Knox was starting to hate this general assumption. He might not have dated every guy he’d slept with, but it didn’t mean that couldn’t change.

“Silver is not like you, Knox.” Tina touched his shoulder. “He doesn’t take relationships casually like you do. Even if you like him, can you please stay away from him?”

Knox chuckled and shook his head. “What if I can’t, Tina? Are you sure Silver feels the same way?”

Tina narrowed her gaze at him. “It’s because I know how Silver feels that I’m asking you to stay away from him.”

“Ah...” Knox chuckled. “So he likes me too.”

“Knox,” Tina exclaimed in frustration. “Please—”

He raised his hands up with a wide smile. “All right, jeez, relax. I’ll stay away, mama tiger.”

She glared at him and he laughed. He leaned over and kissed her cheek. “I’ll see you at the party.”

She nodded but he didn’t miss the concern in her eyes. He waited until she entered Jude’s car before he drove off. It took him ten minutes to get to the Psi U house; he smiled when he noticed Silver’s red Mazda parked at the curb.

Silver watched Rex tip the plastic cup, drinking heartily. He sighed as he realized he was officially the designated driver.

“Typical,” Silver said as he planned his next shot. “She twists my arm to come to the party, and then runs off to make out with Jude.”

Rex laughed, leaning on the wall. “I can’t blame Tina. She probably wanted you to come along so you could babysit me.”

“How lucky for me,” Silver said with a small frown. “What’s going on with you, Rex? You’ve been getting drunk more often lately.”

“We’re about to graduate and my thesis is killing me.” Rex tipped his cup again. “I’m not like you and Tina. My project is giving me hell.”

“Would it make you feel better to know that I have issues too?” Silver asked, setting up his next shot. “Not to mention finding a job. Every time I leave an interview I find myself wanting to get drunk. I called my mum yesterday and told her I’m going to end up back in Boston. She wasn’t happy.”

Rex groaned. “Let’s not talk about real life anymore. We’re at a party, surrounded by ice hockey players.”

Silver walked around the pool table, glancing around the room. He couldn’t deny Rex’s observation, but he only had eyes for one ice hockey player.

Silver made his shot and smiled when the ball sank into its pocket.

“Are you looking for a date tonight, Rex?” Silver teased.

Rex leaned on the pool table studying the balls on the velvet green.

“Maybe,” he said with a smile. “Or maybe I’m going to ask Knox out.”

Silver leaned on his stick glancing at Rex in amusement. “Is that supposed to piss me off? I don’t care what Knox does, Rex.”

“Well that’s good because he’s right over there.”

Rex cocked his head to his left and Silver followed the movement. A few feet away stood Knox Thurston, handsome in a grey T-shirt and black jeans. He was standing way too close to a twink staring at him with adoring eyes.

Silver froze when Knox laughed and leaned to whisper into the shorter guy’s ear.

Rex held out a fresh glass of beer with a wide smile. “Drink. Your jealousy is making an appearance.”

Silver forced his gaze away from Knox. He took the cup of beer, sipped it, and ignored Rex’s knowing smile. He aligned his next shot and missed. Rex got his turn.

“I don’t understand you, Silver. Aren’t you always spouting quotes like ‘*seize the day*’? Why won’t you take a chance with Knox?” Rex asked as he aligned his shot.

“I’d just be another notch on his bed.” Silver frowned, his gaze finding Knox and the blond twink. Knox had him pressed against the wall, his right hand braced above the shorter man’s head. It was hard to miss the wrist brace. Knox leaned down and Silver looked away with a scowl. He tried to concentrate on what Rex was saying.

“You’re going to end up regretting not asking him out. We’re graduating in June, and leaving Alexander for good, Silver,” Rex warned. “I think you should take a chance.”

“Stop foretelling the future.” Silver complained his gaze sliding to Knox again. The twink walked away, probably to get more beer. Knox turned and their gazes clashed. Silver looked away quickly. He picked up his cup and frowned when he found it empty. “I think I should get more beer—”

“Hi guys,” Knox interrupted. He perched on the pool table and Silver held his breath. Waves of woody cologne filled his nostrils anyway and his heart started beating wildly. “How’s it going Rex?” Knox turned to look at him. “Silver?”

“Thurston, get off the table,” Rex warned as he aligned his shot. “How’s your wrist? I’m sure Ryan is dying to help you dress every morning.”

Knox chuckled. Silver tried not to love the husky tone or appreciate how it sent a thrill down his spine. He tried to escape Knox’s close proximity by taking a step back.

He bumped into a bench and pain shot up the back of his thigh. He gasped. In his haste to rub the painful spot, he dropped his cue stick, and bent down to pick it up. Knox leaned down at the same time, and they hit their heads hard.

Silver moaned in pain, pressing his hand to his forehead. He was seeing stars.

“I’m so sorry.” Knox closed the distance between them. Silver froze as cool fingers touched his forehead gently. “Thank God, I didn’t crack your head.”

“It certainly feels like you did your best.” Silver chuckled hysterically as the feel of Knox’s hands on his forehead overrode the pain.

Knox smiled and picked up the cue stick. “Here you go.”

Silver blindly took the cue stick, one hand still pressed to his forehead, lost in smiling hazel eyes. He’d somehow lost the ability to speak.

Knox studied him for a moment before he turned to Rex. “Ryan and I are over. Are you offering to help me button my shirt in the morning, Rex?”

Silver cursed under his breath and caught Rex’s amused expression.

“Silver, what do you think?” Rex asked, with a wide smile. “Maybe you can help Knox?”

Silver cleared his throat and tried not to blush. “No thanks.”

Rex missed his shot. Silver moved around the table determined to win the darned game and make a quick escape.

“Ouch, Silver, your tone makes it sound as though it’s the worst thing you could do. I’m oddly insulted,” Knox said, slapping a hand against his chest in mock shock. “I’ve never had such an outright rejection.”

“There’s a first time for everything,” Silver replied, playing his turn. “Weren’t you just talking to Ryan in the corner?”

“Ryan?” Knox shrugged. “He was just telling me how great the game was.”

“I’m sure all the twinks on campus tell you the same thing about your game.” Silver made two consecutive shots. Satisfied when the balls fell into their pockets, he straightened and smiled at Knox. “Are you sure he’s not waiting for you? We wouldn’t want to keep you from poor Ryan.”

Knox bit his lower lip and narrowed his gaze. “Rex, is your friend always this...*friendly*?”

Rex was leaning on the wall, staring at Silver in awe. “I’m just enjoying the show, Thurston.”

“Silver, you seem to have a problem with me,” Knox said.

“I don’t know you well enough to have a problem, Knox,” Silver said, as he aligned his next shot.

“Maybe I can give you the chance to get to know me.” Knox’s brow creased with a frown. “I’m pretty sure I’m undeserving of this attitude.”

Rex pushed off the wall and came to stand beside Silver. “Silver didn’t eat his dinner tonight. He gets this way when we haven’t fed him.”

Silver forced a smile for Knox and made his next shot.

“Want to play, Knox?” Rex asked, holding up his cue stick.

Knox stared at Silver for a moment before he raised his hands and shook his head. “That’s all right; I think I’ll go check out the card games in the other

room. It was nice to see you, Rex. Silver, I hope you're in a better mood next time."

Knox left them to their game.

"Why were you so rude?" Rex demanded when Knox left the room.

Silver played his shot and shrugged. "I wasn't rude."

"You could have been nicer," Rex complained.

"I don't see the merits of being nice to Knox," Silver said, throwing the cue stick on the table. "I've had enough of this party."

"You're leaving?" Rex said with a sigh.

"Yes, staying here is just going to piss me off."

"Why can't you just tell him how you feel?" Rex demanded, glaring at him. "He just asked you out."

"You wouldn't understand, Rex." Silver grabbed his jacket from the armchair.

"Tell Tina I'll call her tomorrow. See ya."

"Silver," Rex said in exasperation.

Silver started for the front door. When he saw Knox standing in the front hall talking to a group of sorority cheerleaders, he sighed and turned around. The back door would do just fine. He had to navigate around a few couples making out in the hallway before he got to the back hall. The kitchen was filled with people in the middle of a beer-chugging game. A strong hand grabbed his elbow before he could reach the back door, and he was pulled into a dim pantry.

"You're a stuck-up, ignorant, judgmental, stupid, and annoying idiot."

Silver turned to find Knox glaring at him with burning hazel eyes. "What do you think you're doing?"

Knox leaned closer when Silver tugged on his arm, hoping to escape the dim pantry.

“You smell real good, little tiger,” Knox purred.

“Get off me,” Silver demanded when Knox dragged him against the wall. Bracing his palms on Knox’s broad chest, he said, “I don’t want anything to do with you.”

“We’ll see about that,” Knox murmured. “Are you always this prickly? I want you, Silver.”

Silver stopped breathing when Knox promptly took his mouth in a fiery kiss.

Flames streaked through his bloodstream. Knox moaned their kiss igniting. Silver closed his eyes when Knox’s hands trembled and roamed over his back, down to his ass. He gasped in arousal when Knox cupped his ass and dragged him closer, grinding his arousal against him, his alcohol-hazed mind was overwhelmed by the exploding sensations of their kiss.

They devoured each other ravenously, their tongues dueling, and Knox pinned Silver against the wall. He didn’t remember a kiss ever being this good.

“You taste so good,” Knox whispered hotly into Silver’s mouth. “I can’t wait for you to take me in your mouth—”

Silver froze. *Did Knox tell that to all the twinks he fucked? To that Ryan he’d been talking to?*

His brain screamed at him under the sexual haze in his head. His body was on fire, he wanted to keep holding Knox like this, feel Knox’s hand on his skin—

“What’s wrong, little tiger? Don’t you want to go upstairs to my room?”

“I’m not another one of your twinks,” Silver said savagely, pushing him away with force.

Oh God! Tears stung his eyes. He was so close to becoming another one of Knox’s twinks. When Knox’s larger frame wouldn’t move, Silver kicked out with his left leg, hitting Knox’s shin. Knox yelped and stepped back.

Silver dashed out of the storeroom, blindly heading to the back door. Out in the cold winter air, he started running, hot tears freezing against his skin. He cursed Tina's insistence to get him to the stupid party.

CHAPTER 2

Knox limped upstairs after Silver ran off cursing under his breath. *Good riddance.*

“What happened?” Jude asked, interrupting his thoughts.

Knox lifted his head to find Jude and Tina at the staircase landing. He rubbed his shin in irritation. “I ran into Silver.”

“My Silver,” Tina said in surprise. “What did you do?”

“I’m the one limping here.” Knox pointed to his shin. “He kicked me and ran off.”

Jude laughed. “Did you try to kiss him?”

“Maybe,” Knox said gruffly. “I have no idea why he lost his mind over a simple kiss.”

“Oh, why can’t you keep it in your pants?” Tina accused. She turned to Jude. “I gotta go.”

“It was a simple kiss.” Knox frowned, staring at her in confusion.

“To you, you bastard,” Tina glared at him. “Not to Silver, he’s—” She bit her lip and waved her hands in frustration. “Keep your lips to yourself next time.” She hugged Jude quickly. “I’ll call you later, honey.”

Confused, Knox turned to Jude with a frown.

“It was a harmless kiss. I’m the one who deserves the sympathy, that punk was wearing steel-toe boots.”

Jude chuckled. “What were you doing kissing Silver?”

Knox headed for a small lounge tucked into the corner of the hall. Thankfully it was empty, so he dropped into a couch with a sigh. “He pissed me off.”

Jude perched on the arm of a couch across him. “You don’t go for guys like Silver. Why are you so interested in him?”

“He was playing pool with Rex. I went over tried to have a simple conversation with him. He started acting all entitled—” He shook his head remembering Silver’s condescending tone.

Jude raised a brow at him.

“What?” Knox asked.

“When was the last time a guy said no to you?”

He frowned. “I get told no all the time.”

“Not by guys like Silver.”

Knox shifted on the couch, dropping his head back. “He’s a stuck-up, introverted, know-it-all virgin. I probably gave him his first kiss.”

“And you liked it,” Jude finished for him with a smirk.

Knox glared at the ceiling. Yes, he’d liked their kiss. He’d loved how Silver melted against him, like hot liquid fire. “I’m never touching that idiot again.”

“Well, that’s too bad,” Jude said, his tone making Knox glance at him.

“I don’t like that look; what do you mean ‘that’s too bad’?” Knox asked.

“I’ve always thought you and Silver would make a great couple. He’s the shy, introverted type, and you are loud and outgoing. He might just cure this ridiculous mood you’re in.”

Knox scoffed. “More like a match made in hell. I bet he had a huge coming-out scene in high school and believes in happily ever after and sparkly love. What a pain. I’m not interested.”

“I understand,” Jude said, with a shrug. “Then...let’s go downstairs and find you a new fling.”

“I came up here to hide from Ryan, he keeps hounding me,” Knox complained. “Besides, I don’t think there’s a guy I want downstairs. They all talk my ear off and the sex is becoming mediocre; I could do it asleep.”

“You are getting jaded right before you graduate.”

“I’m jaded by easy sex.” Knox sat up on the couch and met Jude’s gaze. Truth was he was a bit envious of Jude and his relationship with Tina. Jude studied him for a moment. “All right, I have a proposal for you.” Knox glanced at Jude warily. “I’m still surviving your last proposal.”

“Oh come on, you love ice hockey.” Jude nodded to Knox’s wrist. “You played tonight with a sprained wrist. I call that undying love for ice hockey.”

“You bet me into playing, you punk.” Knox relaxed against the couch. “Not to mention rushing Psi U when I was content to blend in with the population. No wonder my mother loves you so much.”

“I’m good for you.” Jude crossed his arms against his chest in thought. Knox smiled at the dark-haired finance major. With his dark looks, tall physique and charming smile, Jude Martin would probably end up a CEO to an important company in the future.

They’d known each other since kindergarten. Knox had found two kids bullying Jude on his way home and he’d fought them off. They’d watched each other’s backs through the years. Being openly gay would have been much harder for Knox if it weren’t for Jude.

Jude stood and started pacing the length of the wooden coffee table.

“What are you thinking about, Martin?”

“How to get you and Silver together,” Jude said.

“Stop, I’ve changed my mind. I don’t want to be with that punk.” Knox glared at Jude.

“Fine, if you’re happy with Silver’s rejection,” Jude said, with a raised brow.

Knox thought about Silver’s comments in the game room and cursed. “He didn’t even give me a chance. I’ve never been judged so harshly before.”

“Don’t you want to try him again?”

Knox met Jude’s knowing gaze. He chuckled. “You don’t think I can win over Silver Reese, do you?”

Jude smiled and shook his head. “Nope, although it will be fun to see you try. He kicked you on the shin.”

Knox closed his eyes, thinking about Silver’s hot lips. Their kiss in the storeroom had been worth the kick. Would all their kisses be that intense? He met Jude’s smiling gaze. “What do you have in mind?”

Silver fired up the soldering gun and concentrated on joining strips of metal together, his thoughts carefully blank as he forced the metal into the design he’d drawn for his project. The door to the workroom flew open and Tina walked in.

“Retreating into your work,” Tina said, coming around the work table. “You left Rex without a ride.”

“Rex can find his own ride home.” Silver continued joining the delicate metals, hoping Tina would get the hint and leave.

“I’m not leaving until we talk,” Tina said.

Silver glanced up to see her leaning on the storage counter, arms crossed against her chest.

“Are you going to bury your head in work for the rest of your life?” she asked.

“I doubt that’s a danger at the moment. I can’t even get an interview right.” Silver turned off the soldering gun and placed it on its holder. He removed his workshop glasses and placed them on the table. “Tina, you didn’t have to come running because of a simple kiss.”

“I came running because I dragged you to that party. Knox stopped me in the parking lot earlier. He was asking about you and—” She sighed. “I was worried what he might have said to you. Ever since the guy you dated that semester in Italy—”

Silver reached out to touch her shoulder stopping her tirade. “Let that go, Tina. Raphael and I weren’t meant to be.”

“Are you all right?” Tina asked.

Silver chuckled and shook his head. “It was a stupid kiss. My lips and I are fine. I’m pretty sure Knox is the one you should worry about. I kicked him pretty hard with my boots.”

“I heard. Jude and I met him on the stairs.”

“I’m sure he wasn’t happy.” Silver studied his diagram and sighed. There were still a few pieces to solder before the structure took on a better shape. He would end up working all night at this rate. “Tina, go back to Jude, enjoy your night. You don’t need to be here worrying about me.”

“You’re alone.” Tina picked up a cube of wood and studied it for a moment. “I hate that you close yourself off in this workshop. What happens after we graduate in June? Rex and I are heading to Boston. I’m afraid you’re going to run off to Italy—”

“It’s not a bad idea.” Silver removed his work gloves. “Tina—”

“I wish you’d snap out of this funk.” Tina dropped the wooden cube on the work table with a thud and glared at him. “Is Raphael the reason you won’t even try dating other guys? ’Cause if he is, you need to stop punishing yourself. He dumped you, Silver.”

Silver shook his head as he thought about a handsome, dark-haired Italian man. He’d broken Raphael’s heart. He’d been the one to walk away, and instead of telling Tina and Rex the truth, he’d lied. He’d left Raphael to return to Ithaca, thinking that he might get a chance with Knox someday.

“Can you please go back to Jude?” Silver removed his work gloves and left the workshop.

“Jude can handle a few hours without me. I’ll make you a sandwich. You didn’t eat dinner earlier.” Tina followed him to the kitchen. “How is it that on the one night you decide to go to a party, you and Knox end up making out?”

“I blame you,” Silver declared.

He pulled open the refrigerator and got a bottle of milk. He’d made coffee when he’d first walked into the house. Tina found bread, slices of ham, and lettuce. She washed her hands and got to work.

“I try to avoid victory-game after-parties. The last one I went to was when Knox first joined the team,” he said grinning at her.

He got a mug and poured a dash of milk. Taking the coffee pot, he added the fragrant liquid into his mug. “Remember, Rex got so drunk he puked in the Psi U kitchen?”

Tina chuckled. “Jude and Knox had to carry him to the dorm. You were blushing every time Knox asked you a question. Jeez, what happened tonight?”

“Rex and I were playing pool. Knox came over and I told him off. He walked away and I figured the best way to avoid the whole scene was to leave. He cornered me in the storeroom.”

“Maybe you two deserve each other.” Tina frowned as she cut the sandwiches into halves. “Are you sure you don’t want to tell him how you feel?”

Silver sipped his coffee and leaned on the kitchen table. “We have two months left. What kind of relationship do you think we can have?”

Tina put the sandwiches on a plate and slid it to him. She wiped her hands with a dishrag and came to lean on the table beside him. “How good was the kiss?”

Silver picked a sandwich, took a healthy bite, and grinned at Tina. “Mind blowing. It’s too bad I’m never getting anywhere near Knox. He made me want to be Ryan tonight.”

Tina leaned her head on his shoulder. “You’re more handsome than Ryan. Are you still going to take the photographs tomorrow?”

Silver sipped coffee with a slight frown. He’d been anticipating a free Saturday when he’d rushed home from the party. His frown deepened when he remembered Tina’s sorority fundraiser. “I completely forgot. Do I have to go?”

“I don’t have another photographer. You’re really good, and if you can get those photos in the school newspaper even better. Please don’t flake out.”

Silver closed his eyes. “Is Knox going to be there?”

Tina took his hand and squeezed his fingers. “You can go back to your old ways of avoiding him. You’ve gotten pretty good at that.”

Silver stared at his sandwich with distaste. “You’re right about that. Tonight was a fluke; he was drunk. I doubt it will ever happen again.”

CHAPTER 3

The girls of Theta Phi mingled with their guests, wide smiles and charming conversation as they tried to raise as much money as they could for their homeless charity. Their guests were making bids on different gifts that Tina had spent the past month finding. Silver focused his lens on a pair of tickets to the final NHL Stanley Cup game. He was pretty sure Jude and the rest of the hockey team were going to make bids on the tickets.

“Great prize,” Knox said beside him. Silver jerked up, his concentration disappearing. Knox’s cologne filled the air and his heart sped up wildly.

“Morning, Silver. Are you in a better mood?”

“Knox,” he said, clearing his throat. “I’m sure Tina is around here. I’ll go get—”

“I don’t want to talk to Tina.” Knox dropped an arm on his shoulder and gave him a half hug. “You ran off so quickly last night, we didn’t get a chance to talk.”

“I’m pretty sure you didn’t have talking in mind.” Silver tried to take a step away from Knox but he wouldn’t allow it. “Are you sure I can’t find Tina for you?”

“Why don’t you like me?” Knox asked leaning close to his ear.

Silver managed to quell his shiver and shook his head. “I don’t know you enough to hate you.”

“Good, we can correct that. Hang out with me today,” Knox said, with a satisfied smile. “We can get to know each other.”

Silver held on to his camera and shook his head. “I’m busy. I’m actually here to work—”

“I don’t mind.” Knox looked around the room. “How many more photographs do you need?”

“A million, it will take me all day to get them done,” Silver declared, managing to extricate himself from Knox’s hold. Adjusting the camera strap

on his neck, he moved on to the next showcase. “I don’t have time to socialize.”

“Silver, you’re trying to avoid me.” Knox followed him. “By the way, those glasses make you look so adorable. I never realized you wear glasses.”

Silver pushed the black rimmed glasses up on his nose. He’d hoped wearing the glasses would make him obscure. Apparently not. He frowned focusing his lens on a package of expensive beauty products coupled with gift certificates to a popular spa.

“Did you get home all right last night?” Knox followed him. “Tina left the party so quickly; I couldn’t help worrying.”

“I got home fine,” he replied. “What are you up to, Knox?”

Knox studied the package of beauty products. “I’m trying to have a conversation with you.”

Silver finished with the package and straightened, focusing his lens on Knox. He was perfect for the camera, chiseled profile, clean-shaven jaw, sharp hazel eyes, and soft lips. He’d never seen Knox grow out his hair; it was always cut short. He lowered his lens, cradling the camera against his chest.

“I’m not going to change my mind and date you.” He’d thought about it all night and while he’d love nothing else but to kiss Knox again, the pain wasn’t worth it. “You can stop trying to talk me up.”

Knox gave a low whistle and followed him to the next table. The Statler Hotel was offering an expensive dinner and one night stay in their VIP Suite. Silver wondered how Tina had managed to swing this one.

“How do you make friends?” Knox asked.

“I make them just fine,” Silver replied, focusing on the package on the table. He took three shots.

“What can I do to make you drop this negative attitude toward me?”

Silver straightened and glared at him. “The only reason you’re talking to me is because we kissed last night and you think you can wear me down to go out with you.”

“Is that so terrible?” Knox asked, with a raised brow. “It’s been my experience that when you like someone, you go after them with all you’ve got. Do your best to get to know them.”

Silver gritted his teeth. “What happens if that person doesn’t want to get to know you?”

Knox smiled. “I do my best to change their mind. Is it working? Or do I have to promise to wait on you all day and night?”

Silver tried not to laugh but Knox’s expression was way too innocent. He bit his lip but his smile widened when Knox chuckled.

“You think you’re pretty charming,” Silver said. “What happened to the friend you talked to last night?”

“We’re not together. We’re just friends by the way...with benefits.”

“Is that a fancy way of calling Ryan your booty call?”

“Do you know him?”

Silver shrugged and concentrated on taking pictures of the full Harry Potter series.

Knox cleared his throat. “So, you work for the newspaper?”

“Yes,” Silver answered. “I take photographs for the various events happening around campus.”

“I’ve never seen you at the sports events.”

“Someone else’s department,” Silver said. He’d specifically asked not to be assigned any ice hockey team events. He’d perfected reducing his chances of meeting Knox.

He adjusted the focus on his lens and leaned closer to capture an elegant picture frame made by one of the art students at Theta Phi. When he was done taking pictures, he took a step back, almost running into a guest. Knox moved him out of the way with a gentle hand on his elbow.

“I heard you’re still going for interviews,” Knox said gently. “What are you looking to do after graduation?”

Silver sighed, hating the reality of how close graduation was. It was tempting to hug the comfort of Alexander University, maybe apply for a graduate program. But he'd spent five years in college training to be an architect. Finding a job, however, was next to impossible.

"I have ten interviews set up next week." He afforded Knox a small smile. "I'm hoping to have better luck in impressing all those firms."

"I've seen your projects, you're very good," Knox assured him. "I went through the same thing last month, until I finally landed two offers with investment firms. I have to choose whether to go to Manhattan or Boston soon."

"Congratulations. Although, I'm a bit surprised," Silver said, pausing by wide windows in the Theta Phi living room. The sun was shining outside, melting the snow. "I always thought you'd end up playing hockey professionally."

Knox put his hands into his navy blue chinos and leaned on the wall. He was handsome in a subtle aqua V-neck shirt and a light blazer. "Ice hockey is a hobby, but I'm not as good as some of my teammates."

"I don't know about that." The only reason why he liked going to watch the ice hockey games was Knox. "I can't imagine you in an office crunching numbers."

"I can't imagine you at construction sites."

"A white hard hat suits me very well, thank you." Silver winked and checked his camera. "Last summer I got a chance to work at an archeology dig in Italy. It was very interesting work and I've been thinking I might try to do that if things don't pan out with my interviews next week."

"Would that mean you'd have to leave for Italy?"

Silver frowned at the tinge of disappointment he heard in Knox's voice. "Probably," he replied, meeting unreadable hazel eyes.

Knox nodded. Silver looked away. "How's your wrist?"

Knox pulled his right hand out of his pocket to show off the black bandage tied around his hand. “Better,” Knox said, turning his wrist slightly. “I tortured it during the game last night but it held up.”

“Why would you play with an injury like this?” Silver asked, dropping his camera against his chest to reach for Knox’s hand. “You’re right-handed; you could have hurt yourself worse than this.”

He held Knox’s hand gently, studying the bandage and Knox’s fingers. They looked a tad swollen and were warm to the touch.

Knox cleared his throat, and he looked up in surprise. “I didn’t want to let Jude and my teammates down.”

Loyal, he added to Knox’s pro list. He’d compiled a very long “Knox’s cons” list last night after Tina had left. Sadly, he’d worked at making the pros list very short. He let go of Knox’s hand and took a step back. “Shouldn’t you be wearing a brace?”

“It wasn’t working with the look,” Knox replied.

Silver gave him a onceover and rolled his eyes. “You look great in anything. You should take care of your hand, Knox.”

“I like this side of you, Silver Reese.” Knox pushed off the wall. “That little frown on your forehead is making me feel very special. Are you sure you don’t like me?”

Silver started for the next showcase. “I show general concern for everyone who’s hurt.”

“I’ll remember that.” Knox touched a set of cutlery on the showcase table. “I don’t see anyone bidding for a set of dishes.”

“They’re very expensive china,” Silver said, taking rapid shots of the dishes. “Aren’t you bored yet?”

“Nope,” Knox said quietly. “Are you hungry? I’ll get you a plate.”

Silver watched Knox walk to the dining room, and almost jumped when Tina touched his shoulder. “Don’t sneak up on me like that.”

“Tell me everything,” she said, excited. “He looks so handsome today; I think he took extra care knowing you’d be here.”

Silver gave an exasperated sigh. “Happily-ever-after theories are running away with you.”

“I think not,” Tina said with a wide smile. Her auburn hair was tied in an elegant bun, and her dress was vivid blue. She was all business today. “You two looked so great talking. I’m imagining double dates in the future. Go to the dining room, take a break, and talk to Knox. He’s making an effort.”

“What? No,” Silver refused. “I came here to take photos, then go back to fighting my thesis into shape.”

“You’re no fun, Silver Reese. You’re not turning into a prude on my watch. Go into the dining room now,” Tina ordered, pushing him in the direction Knox had gone.

Silver grumbled under his breath, and capped his camera lens to protect it. He’d been taking photographs all morning, anyway. He detoured to the kitchen where Tina had kept his camera bag. His heart was pounding at the thought of spending an hour in Knox’s company. Maybe he was wrong? Knox was interesting, and it was a definite plus watching him smile. He pushed the kitchen door open, eager to pack his camera so that he could go to the dining room.

He stopped when he found Knox pressed against the counter, with Ryan’s lips fused to his mouth. Hot pain lanced through him, anger, shock, disgust; he couldn’t be sure which emotion to assign to how he was feeling. He’d been ready to buy into Tina’s excitement, and Knox...he gaped. Why had Knox been flirting with him?

Ryan opened his eyes and saw him. Silver felt a sharp stab through his chest when Ryan smiled at him and stepped back from Knox.

“I missed that,” Ryan purred.

Silver blindly reached for the camera bag sitting on the counter. He turned and made an escape just as Knox called out his name. He rushed out to the living area and found Tina.

“I have to go,” he said when he found her talking to a professor. Pulling her aside, he tried to stay calm. “I took enough pictures for a pictorial. I’ll make sure they get to the editor. I’ll see you later.”

“What’s wrong?”

“Nothing, talk to you later,” he said, kissing her cheek. He made it out the front door before Knox grabbed his arm to stop him.

“Silver,” Knox said tightly. “I’m sorry, what you saw in there—”

Silver pulled his arm out of Knox’s grasp fighting his anger. “What you do with Ryan is none of my business. I have no idea why you think I need an apology.”

“Don’t say that. I saw your face in the kitchen.” Knox hissed angrily. “You’re trying so hard to keep your distance, but I can see you’re interested. You like me too.”

“Children want to play with fire, doesn’t mean they get to do it.” Silver started for his car in quick strides and was glad Knox didn’t follow. He slammed into his red Mazda and drove off.

Knox cursed under his breath, kicking a stone. Things had been going so great, Jude had been right. Silver was easy to talk to if you found the right topic. If he hadn’t needed to get napkins in the kitchen, he’d have made it back to Silver without Ryan’s interference. Damn it. The hurt in Silver’s green eyes in the kitchen...He closed his eyes with a sigh. He didn’t ever want to see that defeated pain again.

“I told you he was going to walk away,” Ryan said behind him. “I don’t know what you see in Silver Reese.”

Knox grabbed Ryan’s sweater and slammed him into the pillar beside him. “You had better stay away from me. I’m going to hurt you real bad the next time you pull a stunt like that.”

“Jeez, Knox,” Ryan gasped, holding his wrists tight. “Since when do you care so much for the guys you want to fuck?”

“I don’t care for the guys I’ve already fucked,” Knox hissed. “Only the one I want to make mine. You stay away from me and Silver from now on.”

He let go of Ryan’s sweater and walked back into the house. He needed to find Tina. There was no way he was letting the day end without another chance with Silver.

CHAPTER 4

“Are you sure he’ll come to this party?” Knox asked Tina later that evening at the house she shared with four other girls.

Tina carried a platter of finger food into the living room to a table set in the corner, Knox following her closely. “Silver always makes it to our little get-togethers. Usually he keeps away from the main Theta Phi events. Instead he comes to the evening after-parties. He’ll be here.”

Knox sighed and shook his head. “I messed up, Tina.”

“I know you did,” Tina said, placing the tray on the table and turning to glare at him. “I told you to stay away, but you won’t. Silver likes you. He likes you so much I worry. But you, and your flings, you can’t be trusted to be with him. Do you know how pathetic that makes him?”

“Why have you never told me?” Knox asked. “I could have—”

“Could have what?” Tina demanded. “Stopped sleeping around, asked dear Ryan to let you go?”

“That’s not fair,” Knox said with a shake of his head.

“Yeah well, love never is,” Tina said with a sigh. “I’m not even sure what to tell you. I think you and Silver should walk away from each other. You’re not yet together and mines keep exploding left to right.

Knox grinned. “That just means we have awesome chemistry. It means he is jealous, and he likes me.”

“I swear if you hurt him, I’m going to skewer you alive and roast you in a pit in the front yard,” Tina warned, her eyes flashing with anger. “I mean that literally, Knox Thurston.”

Knox gaped, and watched as she headed back to the kitchen. Tina’s guests started arriving a few minutes later, mostly neighbors from Cook Street. Knox prowled around the common living room nursing a beer. Jude showed up an hour later with Jamie Foster, the team’s goalie, and Gabriel, who was the Psi U president.

He hung out with them, making sure they stayed in the front living room so he could see the front door. At around ten o'clock, he'd lost all hope that Silver was going to show up. He stood to stretch, and paused when the door swung open and in came Silver and Rex wrapped around each other. Behind them, four of their Delta Chi brothers were singing loudly.

Knox dropped his hands and stared when Silver kissed Rex, sinking his fingers into Rex's hair. White hot anger swept through him and he started for the kissing couple. Jude stopped him with a hand on his shoulder.

"Calm down," Jude advised. "They do that all the time, especially when they're wasted."

Knox cursed under his breath as Silver broke away from Rex and smiled blindly at Tina.

"Are we late?" Silver pulled Tina into a tight hug and sighed. "We forgot about the party, you know Delta Chi. I went over and my brothers had drinks, we made a small party of our own."

"Must have been a hell of a party," Tina said, touching Silver's Mohawk gently. She tugged the red tips with a grin. "How much did you drink?"

"I don't know," Silver said dismissively. He looked around the room. "Wow, there are a lot of people. Do they all live on Cook Street?"

"Most of them," Tina said. "I need to get you coffee. Rex why the hell did you let him get this drunk?"

"I don't think he could be stopped." Rex turned then and met Knox's gaze. Rex gave him a hard look before he wrapped an arm around Silver's waist and led him toward the kitchen.

"I'm going to see what's going on," Knox told Jude through gritted teeth. Jude allowed it although he followed him to the kitchen.

They found Rex forcing Silver to sip coffee.

"What's going on?" Jude asked, stopping to kiss Tina. "Rex?"

Silver looked at them with bleary eyes. “Oh, look who it is.” He chuckled pointing at Knox. “Are you here to make out with Rex too? You can’t, Rex is mine, my kissing friend.”

“Silver,” Knox sighed. “I’m sorry about what you saw earlier.”

Silver shook his head. “There’s nothing to be sorry for,” he slurred. “Right, Rex. Knox and Ryan...” Silver hiccupped, “Knox kissing...Ryan...” His eyes filled with tears.

Rex pressed coffee to his lips and Silver swatted the cup away. It crashed on the floor. Tina gasped and Silver pressed a hand to his forehead in frustration.

“Rex, take Silver upstairs to my room,” Tina said, grabbing paper towels to clean up the floor. Rex reached for Silver’s hand.

“You guys are handling me,” Silver complained refusing to follow Rex.

“I’ll take you upstairs,” Rex cajoled. “Come on, you can’t even walk.”

“I can walk just fine.” Silver pushed Rex away and stumbled toward the living room.

Knox grabbed his arm to stop him. He gaped in surprise when Silver turned on him with stormy green eyes. “Get off me, you bastard.”

“Calm down,” Knox said, aware their little altercation was gaining an audience. He tried to pull Silver back into the kitchen, Silver wouldn’t have it.

“Don’t tell me to calm down,” Silver yelled. “I don’t even know why you’re here. Shouldn’t you be out with Ryan or one of the other twinks you fuck? This is not your thing.”

“Silver, you’re making a scene,” Knox said, keeping his tone calm even though he was on the verge of shaking Silver senseless. The music had stopped and everyone was watching them now. “If you want to talk, let’s go elsewhere.”

“I’m fine right here,” Silver scoffed.

Knox narrowed his gaze. “What is your problem? This isn’t you, getting drunk, raging out of control.”

“How do you know what is me or not?” Silver asked, anger shaking his slender body. “You know what; this is me finally taking a step into sanity. I should be locked up in a psych ward for liking you for as long as I have. You drive me crazy just by breathing. Standing here with you this close is killing me, but you can’t see that, can you? You never have.”

Knox gasped in surprise. “Silver—”

“Don’t ‘Silver’ me. You’re a bastard man-whore heartbreaker and you deserve Ryan. That punk will never love you like you deserve because you’re incapable of having a relationship. Don’t touch me again.”

Silver pushed him off and turned to the guests watching them in the living room. Taking a bottle of beer from a coffee table beside him, he held it up. “Let’s party!”

The music started again and the party continued. Knox stared after Silver in shock.

Sunday morning, Silver woke with a pounding headache. After a hideously cold week, the sun had decided to make an appearance, shining right through his windows. He took dark glasses from his dresser and jammed them over his eyes. Rolling out of bed onto bare feet, he wasn’t surprised to find he was still in his jeans. Habit got him to the bathroom since he could barely see. Taking a piss, he reached up to scratch his chest and his fingers came away with a paper.

He stared at the note for a moment and then dumped it in the sink; he finished taking a piss, flushed, and turned on the water in the sink.

“Shit,” he cursed under his breath, grabbing the wet paper clumsily. It ripped and he tried to read what was on it.

Rex must have been nuts to write him a note after a night spent drinking. Giving up on saving the wet note, he threw it into the trashcan, washed his

hands, and avoided looking into the mirror. He left the bathroom and followed the scent of freshly brewed coffee into the kitchen.

Taking a mug from the cupboard above, he poured himself coffee and added a generous heap of sugar.

“I’m glad to see you awake.”

He hissed in irritation when he burned his tongue with hot coffee in surprise. Holding the mug carefully, he turned to find Knox leaning on the kitchen door jamb.

“Hangover must be killing you,” Knox said casually. “You mixed a lot of drinks last night.”

Silver winced, pressing his fingers to his left temple. He couldn’t hold a full conversation right now; even the sound of Knox’s voice was grating against his nerves.

“Please lower your voice,” he managed.

Knox sighed and came into the kitchen. Silver tried to ignore his presence in his house, hoping the man would get the hint and leave. His hopes were dashed when Knox took his arm and led him to a chair.

“Sit, I’ll make you a cure.” Knox returned a few minutes later with a tall glass filled with lemon-yellow liquid. “Drink,” he ordered.

Silver grimaced at the color. “I’ll stick to my coffee, thanks.”

Knox took the coffee mug deftly, and pushed the glass into his hands. “It works, believe me.”

“I bet.” Silver wrinkled his nose before he took a quick sip from the glass. “Pickles,” Silver said, gagging a bit.

Knox chuckled softly. “It’s good for hangovers.”

Silver finished the concoction quickly, and slammed the glass on the table. “Thanks, you can leave now.”

Knox gave him back his coffee. “You don’t remember last night?”

Silver looked at him with a frown. He remembered leaving Tina's fundraiser and going to hang out with his frat brothers. He'd found them drinking and joined in; the rest was unclear.

Knox smiled and Silver scowled in annoyance. Why did that smile, so simple, send riotous thrills through him? He looked away. "I remember just fine. Got drunk with the guys, came home to sleep. I woke up to find you prowling around my apartment. What do you want?"

"Missed out on a couple of events between the drinking and coming home parts," Knox said with a smile.

"What are you talking about?"

"Well, where to start," Knox said in an amused tone. "Should I start with your friends crashing Tina's party, you strip dancing on top of a coffee table, or the epic confession you gave me in front of everyone?"

Silver choked on his coffee—a horrible wet sound that resulted in coffee spewed over the table. Knox held out a bunch of napkins from the holder and Silver grabbed them. He wiped his nose and mouth. Pulling off his glasses, he wiped the table and moved his coffee mug to the side.

Silver stood, taking the dirty napkins to the trash can. He sighed when he noted that their trash bags were going to overrun the kitchen soon. But he had bigger problems right now. What in the hell was Knox talking about? Confessions, strip dancing...he didn't remember any of it. Where was Rex?

Knox answered as though he could read his mind. "Rex was arrested; Tina went to get him out. She asked me to check on you."

Silver slumped against the counter. "What the hell happened last night?"

Knox pushed his chair back so that he could look at him. "What happened last night was a result of you denying yourself the pleasures of life."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"You didn't need to get roaring drunk to tell me you liked me." Knox smirked at him when he gasped. Silver shook his head in denial and Knox

stopped him. “No use denying, you declared it pretty loud. The whole street knows you like me.”

Silver bit his lip and wondered if his frat brothers would let him hide at the Delta Chi house until graduation. He was melting with embarrassment.

“Silver—”

“I think you should leave.”

“We need to talk,” Knox said his hazel eyes serious. “Do you really think I’m incapable of having a serious relationship?”

“Is that what I said?” Silver folded his arms against his chest, marveling at the lows he’d reached this weekend.

“There were also words like man-whore, player, and heartbreaker thrown in there.” Knox came to stand in front of him. “All I got was that you’ve had a crush on me, and you don’t think we can date.”

“Looks like I covered everything, so what are you doing here?”

“Despite what you saw with Ryan yesterday, there’s nothing going—”

“I don’t need to know.” Silver dropped his head into his hands. He wished he could forget the image of Knox and Ryan in the Theta Phi kitchen. He’d felt hurt, having been the recipient of one of those kisses just the night before. He’d felt betrayed—he had no right to feel that way—yet he had. Eyes closed, he berated his heart for the painful twist every time he thought about their kiss in the pantry. “Please, Knox, can you just go away. I’m sorry for embarrassing you.”

“Silver—”

“Stop,” Silver said quietly. “You started this when you kissed me Friday night. I’ve tried to stay away from you, but you—” Silver shook his head. “I don’t need you complicating my life.”

“I like you too,” Knox said, taking a step closer. “I’m here because I’d like to make it work with you.”

Silver chuckled bitterly. “You’re caught up in the drama, Knox. I’m sorry I apparently lost my mind last night, but we’re too different to make it work.”

Knox’s eyes narrowed in irritation. “I think I like you better wasted—you’re more truthful. I’m taking you out for dinner tonight.”

“Call Ryan, take him out.” Silver ran a hand through his choppy hair. He needed to find his cellphone and find out if he could make it up to Tina and Rex. Shit, the last time he’d had one of these drinking blackouts he’d woken up half naked in his frat house backyard.

Knox reached out to touch Silver’s jaw with his left hand. He tried to turn away, but Knox wouldn’t let go. He closed his eyes as Knox’s traced his stubble with a thumb. “I’m hoping you’ll remember what you told me when we finally got you home. When your head is clearer, please try to remember. I’ll pick you up at seven tonight.”

Knox surprised him with a kiss on his forehead before he left. The moment the front door closed, Silver rushed back to his room determined to find his phone. If he could just remember what had happened last night.

His socks and T-shirt were on the floor. Picking up the black T-shirt, he grimaced when a whiff of stale beer hit him. He dropped the shirt and stared at the bed. He hadn’t noticed before, but he’d slept on top of the covers. His ring tone jingled, drawing his attention to the black phone on his study desk.

He answered on the second ring.

“Did you read the note?” Tina demanded.

“It fell in the bathroom sink,” he said, moving to sit on the bed. “How bad is it?”

“You promised to give Knox a chance last night,” Tina told him with a laugh. “I wrote the note to warn you that he might show this morning.”

Silver dropped his head and rubbed his eyes. “How’s Rex?”

“Rex is fine, suffering a hangover.”

“How did he get arrested?” Silver asked.

“Disturbing the peace,” Tina said. “You and Rex started a porch fight yesterday with my neighbors. Knox saved you; Rex got caught with a few of Knox’s teammates. They were too drunk, so the cops kept them overnight.”

Silver groaned. “I’m sorry, Tina.”

“Don’t be,” Tina laughed, making him feel better. “It was great to see you let loose for once. Take a shower; we’ll be right over, all right?”

She hung up and he stared at his phone in shock. His life seemed to have spiraled out of control in the past twelve hours. Letting a sigh escape, he threw his phone on the bed and headed to the shower.

Silver hugged Rex when they finally came back home. Rex looked beat, hangover, and his clothes reeked. “Go take a shower, there’s coffee in the kitchen.”

Rex hurried to his room. Silver turned to Tina and raised his brow in question. “What happened last night?”

“You,” Tina said, walking into the living room. She sank onto the couch with a wide grin. “You and your frat brothers got wasted. Rex says it started around one o’clock, by the time you showed up at my house, you were definitely drunk. Knox was there, and you two had a fight in the living room with everyone looking on.”

Silver groaned and sat down in armchair. “I feel like I’m in freshman year again.”

“I thought it was fun as hell.” Tina grinned at him. “I know you didn’t read the note I stuck on your chest. I hoped you would.”

“It fell in the sink.” Silver sat back in his chair. “Knox was here when I woke up. He told me he was taking me out to dinner. Do you know what that’s about?”

Tina reached for her bag and pulled out her cell phone. She came around to sit on the arm of his chair and held out her phone. “I’m your best friend, and

last night happened to be the craziest night you've had since I've known you. I taped this because I figured you'd want to remember."

She handed him the phone and stood. "I'll be in the kitchen."

He frowned as she hurried away. He started the video and gaped when he saw Knox laying him down gently on his bed. Knox started to move away, but he stopped him. Grabbing onto his shirt, he pulled Knox close.

"Silver," Knox whispered, bracing his palms on either side of him on the bed. "You need to sleep."

"I need you," Silver slurred out. He bunched his fingers into Knox's shirt.

"I'm right here," Knox said, leaning to press a kiss on his jaw, then his eyes.

Silver moved slightly and Knox's lips found his. They kissed, Knox still braced above him.

"I love that," Silver murmured a few minutes later. "I love kissing you Knox. I'd do anything to have you kiss me all day and night. Why do you have to break my heart with Ryan?"

"Silver, I didn't know," Knox said. "I didn't know you cared about me at all. Why didn't you say anything?"

"Why would I? You'd have used me and thrown me away and I wouldn't have been able to live with myself."

Knox sighed and pulled him into a tight hug. "I promise you if you give me a chance, I'll commit, Silver."

Silver scoffed, his arms going around Knox's waist. "Will you hold me for a while before you go?"

Knox shifted on the bed, until he was lying beside him. Silver watched as Knox held him against his chest gently.

The video ended and he sat gaping at Tina's phone. No wonder Knox had been so persistent this morning. Placing Tina's phone on the coffee table, he sat back in the armchair and thought about dinner with Knox. Maybe it was

time to give in, he thought, his heart beating wildly. To have Knox, to be with Knox always. He closed his eyes. Wouldn't that be heaven?

CHAPTER 5

Knox stood at Silver's door at exactly seven o'clock. He adjusted the collar of his double-breasted black jacket and stuck his car keys into the pocket. Ringing the doorbell, he stepped back, nervous. He'd waited for Silver's call all day. When the call hadn't come, he worried that Silver might stand him up.

He waited a minute before he reached for the doorbell again. Before he could press the button, the door swung open. Silver looked handsome in black: black slim blazer, black T-shirt, black jeans, and on his feet, black Nike kicks. His mink-black hair was trimmed to a shorter Mohawk. The red tips were gone, sad, but the new look suited Silver. Green eyes met his and he smiled.

"Are you ready?"

"Question. Is this an official date?" Silver asked, holding on to the door. "You're not going to be kissing Ryan tomorrow, are you?"

Knox sighed. "I promise this is a serious first date. No more Ryan."

Silver gauged his answer before he stepped out and closed the door. Knox led the way to his black SUV. He opened the passenger door for Silver and earned himself a short smile. He drove them to Just a Taste; Tina had told him it was Silver's favorite restaurant.

They were seated at a secluded table, and Knox watched Silver order dinner. As they waited for their food, Silver hugged his wine glass, a frown dancing on his forehead.

"I wanted to apologize again for screaming at you last night," Silver said quietly. "For embarrassing you—"

"Apology not accepted," Knox said, making Silver's head jerk up in surprise. "I would never have known how you feel about me without that outburst."

Silver blushed slightly. "The last time I drank like that, I was in freshman year. I woke in the backyard at Delta Chi half-naked with pen marks on my face. It wasn't the best experience."

Knox chuckled. "I would have loved to see that."

“I bet,” Silver said, sipping his wine. They both laughed, and Knox felt relief as the air lightened.

He relaxed, and they ended up talking about Silver’s thesis and his own plans after graduation. They moved on to talking about their families, and during the main course Silver told him about his semester in Rome.

It was surprisingly easy to talk to Silver. Knox loved Silver’s quick wit, and the easy way he listened. Silver’s green eyes held his with interest, clearly enjoying their conversation. Knox couldn’t remember the last time he’d had such a good time. They lingered over dessert.

Watching Silver fork bites of a chocolate soufflé into his mouth turned into an exercise in self-control, his gaze continually drawn to Silver’s lips as he licked whipped cream from the corner of his mouth.

Knox dropped his napkin on his lap when the waiter brought their bill. He didn’t want to leave just yet, but he wanted a chance to kiss Silver tonight. Reaching for his wallet, he paid the bill.

They left the restaurant and Knox drove slowly back to Collegetown. Silver sat quietly in the passenger seat, so Knox reached out and took his left hand.

“What are you thinking about?” he asked.

Silver held Knox’s bandaged hand gently. “I had fun tonight. I don’t want the night to end yet.”

Knox nodded. “I have an idea.”

Silver glanced at him with a frown. “What kind of idea?”

Knox grinned. “It’s a surprise.”

Silver laughed squeezing his fingers. “I don’t know if I like surprises.”

“Trust me?” Knox asked quietly.

Silver hesitated for a moment before he answered quietly. “I trust you.”

Trust, Silver thought, as Knox drove through campus.

The past two days seemed like a whirlwind. It seemed as though one minute he'd been standing by the pool table wishing Knox would see him and the next, they were kissing and having fights—and now they were out on a date. An actual date, with Knox Thurston. Silver's heart was dancing merrily in his chest. He was glad Rex and Tina had urged him not to cancel on Knox. *“You can't live your life on the sidelines, Silver. He wants to give it a try, and you've wanted him forever. Seize the day.”*

So here he sat, in Knox's car, playing with the bandage on Knox's right hand. Whatever happened, he decided, he'd always have this moment.

Knox pulled into the Alexander Rink. He parked his car in the back and urged Silver out.

“What are we doing here?” Silver asked. It was almost nine o'clock; he wondered if the rink was still open. Knox smiled mysteriously at him. They entered the building through a side entrance.

Knox paused long enough to get them skates from the skate rental booth before they headed to the lighted ice rink. Silver sat on a bench, removing his kicks so that he could wear the skates.

“What happens if we get caught?” Silver looked around the deserted rink warily.

“We won't be caught,” Knox promised, helping him with his skates. “Do you know how to skate?”

Silver shrugged, tying the laces on his skates. He'd never really skated, but it couldn't be that hard. “I can manage.”

Knox held out a hand to help him up. Knox rubbed his upper arms to keep him warm and buttoned his jacket. He pulled out gloves from his pocket and handed them to Silver.

“When did you start playing ice hockey?” Silver asked when they got on the ice. He managed to keep his balance as he watched Knox glide a few feet away. Knox was the picture of grace in dark chinos; his double-breasted jacket fit him to perfection. Silver caught his breath when Knox did a few turns on the ice.

“I was in second grade,” Knox said, coming to take his hand.

Silver breathed out in relief when Knox tugged on his hand slightly and he managed to glide his skates on the ice. It was terrifying and fun. He was half afraid he’d fall on his ass.

Knox stayed by his side as they skated slowly. “My mother thought I was crazy, but she liked ice-skating. She thought I was going to turn out like those guys who do flips and jump all over the ice.”

Silver laughed. “I can imagine you in tights.”

Knox grinned. “You wish. I’d rather die than be caught in those. When I joined the community ice hockey team, my mum cried buckets. She thought I was going to end up with no teeth and all my bones broken.”

Silver’s gaze fell on Knox’s right wrist. “I can understand her.”

“Were you worried about me too?” Knox asked with a raised brow.

“I’ve been to the ice hockey games. I’ve seen how bad the players get hurt.” Silver tightened his hold on Knox’s left hand.

Knox turned to look at him, skating backwards. “It’s ridiculous how happy I feel right now.”

“Why?” Silver looked at him with a raised brow.

“You worried about me,” Knox said, stopping abruptly. Silver bumped into him and gasped as he started to lose his balance. Knox wrapped a strong arm around him. Silver glanced up to find Knox smiling at him. “It warms me deep inside, Silver.”

Silver held on to Knox’s shoulders and stared into hazel eyes.

“I guess you’ve found me out,” he murmured. “It’s not exactly easy liking a guy like you, Knox. You’re handsome, popular, reckless, not to mention your dating flaws.” Silver sighed. “With all those odds, my stupid heart seems hell-bent on caring for you.”

Knox leaned to kiss him, the touch of his lips intoxicating, sending wild thrills through him. He clung tightly to Knox's shoulders. When they pulled apart, Knox smiled.

"I don't think your heart is stupid. And the only reason why I've dated like I did before was because I hadn't met you. Yesterday, after your confession, I wished we'd met earlier. I wished I'd paid more attention and seen your heart, Silver."

Silver buried his face into Knox's shoulder. It felt like a dream to have Knox talking to him like this. His resolve and anger melted as Knox held him tight. His body burned for Knox, needing him.

"I'm afraid," Silver said quietly.

Knox rocked them back and forth for a moment. "Me too," Knox confessed.

Silver pulled back to look at him. "Why are *you* afraid?"

Knox shrugged. "I'm worried you're not going to give us a chance. I'm scared you're going to judge me too soon and walk away."

Silver reached up to touch Knox's jaw.

"I won't," he promised.

Knox smiled and kissed him again. He closed his eyes and melted into Knox's embrace.

They left the rink, and Silver clutched Knox's hand during the short drive to Knox's apartment on Cook Street. The rink was always cold, his fingers freezing every time he went to an ice hockey game. Tonight there was none of that; Knox's warmth seeped into him, awakening his body. As they stepped into the living room, they were both glad to discover a note from Jude saying he was staying at Tina's.

"Want coffee?" Knox asked as he removed his jacket to reveal a white Henley. "I'll make it—"

Silver closed the distance between them and leaned up to kiss Knox. Now that he had him so close, he didn't want anything else. Knox moaned, dragging him close.

“Are you sure, Silver?” Knox asked, breaking their kiss abruptly. “I don't want to hurry you—”

“I'm sure.” Silver reached for the edges of Knox's shirt, pulling it up. “I won't be afraid anymore, Knox. I want you.”

Knox stroked his jaw, “I want you too.”

They undressed each other in frenzied passion, clothes strewn on furniture. They ended up on the floor. Silver's body arched in silent ecstasy when Knox took him into his mouth. He came violently, fingers digging into the carpet as Knox stroked him. He begged for more and got it, clinging to broad shoulders when Knox took him with slow thrusts, building up their passion. Driving him mad with need each time he thrust and hit that spot deep inside him that made him grind his hips against Knox. He wrapped his legs around Knox's waist and leaned up to kiss him. Their lips fused, and they found their rhythm, finally coming apart in each other's arms.

CHAPTER 6

Silver pushed his reading glasses higher on his nose and adjusted his drawing pen. His project was almost done; his final thesis review was scheduled for eight in the morning the next day. He'd been working nonstop for a whole week now; it felt endless. One minute, he was making progress, the next; he discovered an aspect that wasn't working with the plan.

"Food time, Silver." Knox interrupted his thoughts. "You have to eat; it's almost midnight."

Silver smiled, loving the sound of Knox's stern voice. They'd been together for a month and a half. Endless nights spent together at Knox's apartment, or his, making love. He blushed at the memory of their insatiable bouts. Their passion was unrelenting, burning him to a crisp each time they came together.

Knox came around the desk to sink his fingers into Silver's hair. Silver closed his eyes when Knox pressed a hot kiss on the back of his neck.

"Hello, sexy," Knox purred into his ear. "How's the project going?"

"I'm almost done," Silver said, turning to look at Knox. He moaned when Knox took his mouth in a heated kiss. He dropped his pen and pushed back his chair so that he could stand. Knox pulled him into his arms, breaking the kiss after a moment to hold him.

"I'm worried this project is stealing you away from me," Knox complained. "Rex says you didn't go home to shower today."

Silver chuckled. "You were worse two weeks ago when you were doing your final finance project. I barely saw you."

Knox groaned and held him tighter, if that were possible, before he let go. "I brought you a hamburger and coffee to help you stay up. I'll keep you company until you're done."

"You don't have to stay here," Silver said in surprise. "I mean—"

Knox stopped his protests with a kiss. "I love you, Silver. I'm worried about you. Keeping you company will make me happy."

Silver grinned at Knox.

“What?” Knox asked, staring at him when he didn’t move to the small table in the workshop where the food was. “Do I have something on my face?”

Silver shook his head. “You just said you love me.”

Knox paused and flashed him a smile. “It’s the truth.”

Silver swallowed hard, and closed the distance between them. “I love you too,” he said, quietly hugging Knox. “I love you so much.”

Knox laughed, burying his face into Silver’s neck. “I’ve been hoping to hear that from you for a while now. I was kind of hoping to hear it before graduation.”

“Why?” Silver pulled back to look at him.

Knox took his hand and led him to the small table, pushing him into a seat. Silver took the hamburger and fries Knox held out and took a bite.

“I accepted the job in Manhattan.” Knox told him quietly.

Silver stared at his hamburger, thinking about the interviews he’d done a few weeks ago. He and Knox had thrown a celebration party when an architecture firm in New York had called him. With Knox accepting the job in Manhattan, they were definitely going to see each other often.

“Silver, say something,” Knox urged.

“Is it what you want?” Silver asked him, worried that Knox might have chosen the investment bank in Manhattan only because he would also be going to New York.

“Yes,” Knox said quietly. “It’s a great offer, and it comes with a few perks. I couldn’t have asked for a better first job.”

Silver smiled and picked up his hamburger. “So what is it you haven’t told me?”

Knox pulled his chair closer to him and took his hand. “We haven’t talked about life after graduation. Silver, I don’t want to lose what we have together. I don’t want to spend a minute away from you.”

“Knox—”

“Will you move in with me?” Knox asked quickly. “Come live with me in Manhattan? I checked out my apartment and your new job. It’s an easy commute with the subway and—”

Silver put his hamburger down and tangled his fingers with Knox’s. “You drive me crazy. All these roundabout stories—you should have just asked me. I’d love to move in with you.”

“Are you sure?”

Silver cupped Knox’s jaw. “I’ve wanted you since sophomore year—three years and a couple months. The past month has been amazing, being with you.” He shook his head in awe. “I don’t want to lose this either. So, yes, I’m sure, Knox.”

Knox laughed and smiled. “This is the best graduation gift.”

Silver managed to finish his thesis project. He presented it before a panel of his professors, nervous and animated about the restoration topic he’d chosen. His five years condensed down to two hours answering intense questions.

When he finally left the review room, he found Knox waiting in the hallway for him. Knox didn’t talk; he opened his arms and held him tight, giving him courage. When Silver could breathe without panicking, he pulled away and paced the hallway as the review board discussed his project.

Jude, Tina and Rex arrived a few minutes later, to wait with him. When one of the professors came to get him, Knox squeezed his shoulder and he went in to get the decision of his life.

It didn’t take long; he left the review room ten minutes later with a nervous grin.

“Well,” Knox demanded when he finally reached their group.

“I passed,” Silver said his voice shaky. “I’m graduating.”

Knox pulled him into a tight hug, with a loud shout of excitement. He was twirled around and passed to Tina and Rex, even to Jude. Silver finally found himself back in Knox's arms and he couldn't help the tears in his eyes.

He was officially a qualified architect. He had a job, the greatest friends, and best of all, the man of his dreams. He hoped their future would remain this bright forever, but for now...Knox kissed him sweetly. This was the best graduation gift in the world.

A perfect happy ending for now, he decided when Knox twirled him around.

THE END

Author Bio

Suilan Lee is a budding author. Her recent novel is Kiss Me to Spring Time, a romantic Asian-themed tale. Suilan loves traveling and learning about new cultures, she's constantly meeting new friends and loves keeping in touch with old ones. When she's not writing, she gardens, reads, and works for her family's business.

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