

MISSION:

X

A LOVE HAS NO BOUNDARIES STORY



KIM ALAN

MISSION: X

Xander liked things simple. He tried to keep up with the big boys, and failed disastrously. Now, he's sworn off the bad boys he's always been drawn to so irresistibly. But he's finally forced to admit that his determination to play it safe has resulted in nothing but a string of bad (read: boring) dates. Luckily, his friend Lara knows what he really needs. Losing to her strategically played bet sees Xander stepping into a whole new world.

Paul is on a mission: Make Xander his. After months spent quietly falling for him from a distance, Paul is a more-than-willing pawn in Lara's hands. He'll pull out all the stops—sexy kilt and all—to introduce Xander to the beauty of submission at a loving Dom's feet. But even if the sting of deceit is deemed forgivable, Xander can't imagine what a sexy powerhouse like Paul wants with a quiet, unassuming boy like Xander.

Love Has No Boundaries

An M/M Romance series

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By **Kim Alan**

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

The first photo is a profile view of a young, clean-cut, dark-haired man sitting framed in a sunlit bay window, wearing only a T-shirt and boxer shorts while he reads.

The second photo is faceless. Male hands—strong, with chipped black nail polish and leather-cuffed wrists—cupping himself over a black, studded, leather belt, and the fabric of his low-slung, red plaid kilt.

Story Letter

Dear Author,

This is X. As you can see from the image, he's a pretty bookish and calm fellow. He likes nothing better than cuddles and early morning sex and then some more cuddles.

It wasn't his choice to be dressed in dark jeans and a super tight tank top to go to a fetish club of all things. He doesn't even own leather! BDSM is the new thing, his best girlfriend said. Haven't you read that book? She asked.

Now, because he owed her one, he went. And then this guy walked into his view. The Dom doesn't seem to care about the newbies snickering at his "skirt" or his black nail polish and everyone else seems to respect him a lot.

X wasn't there to attract attention, but a little mishap and suddenly he's on his knees next to the guy and... he feels right at home? What the hell?

Where does the story go from there? And please, don't make it about pain as much as about submission and servitude. That's all I ask. Everything else is up to you, dear author.

Thanks in advance!

Sincerely,

Tia

Story Info

Genre: contemporary

Tags: BDSM, geeks/nerds, age gap, snarky humor, giant bears, brazen
twinks

Word count: 19,642

Author's Note

There is hot sex in this story, but the issue of protection is left somewhat ambiguous. In real life, be safe without question.

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“Why do you insist on doing that to yourself?”

Xander stumbled to a stop at the front step of his little house and threw a pained grin at Lara, his closest friend. Sweat dripped into his eyes and his shirt clung to him uncomfortably, cooling quickly now as his heart rate slowed in the early morning chill.

“You know why,” he rasped, falling clumsily to the step next to her with a grateful grunt, taking the offered bottle of water in one hand and coffee in the other. “I sit on my ass all day and I’m inherently lazy. If I don’t force myself to do something before I begin all that inactivity, I won’t do anything at all.”

“It’s exhausting looking at you.” Lara flipped her long blond bangs and made a show of examining her perfectly manicured nails. “And you kind of smell.”

“Yes, well, showering before running tends to be a waste of time.” He chuckled.

Lara poked him in the ribs with a bony elbow. “That’s a matter of opinion.”

“You could come over fifteen minutes later in the morning,” Xander pointed out, admiring, as usual, his lovely pint-sized friend. “You don’t have to be here to witness this part.”

“Eh.” She shrugged. “This is as close to real exercise as I’m going to get.” Her smile turned wicked. “Besides, today’s the big day.”

He groaned, his good mood evaporating faster than his sweat. “Oh, God. You’re really going to make me go through with it, aren’t you?” He shivered—from the chill, that is—and stood, leading the way into the house.

“You know it, big guy.”

Xander groaned again. There was no getting out of it.

“Quit whining,” Lara laughed. “It’s totally going to be worth it, I promise.”

“I don’t need to go to a leather club to find a boyfriend, Lara.

“Please.” Big blue eyes rolled exaggeratedly. “I’ve never seen such a string of boring dates. Besides, three strikes and you’re out. It’s my turn, now. You promised.”

Xander scoffed. “You don’t have to hold me to that, you know. And, what about Jonathan? He wasn’t boring.” At least not in the ways Lara should know about, but Xander was keeping *some* things to himself. Besides, even Jonathan had lost interest in him. What, exactly, did that say about Xander?

Lara snapped her head up as if waking suddenly. “Wha—? Oh, I’m sorry, honey. I fell asleep there, right after you said ‘Jonathan’, the most uninteresting gay man that ever lived. Did you say something else?”

He snorted. “You know the real problem is that I’m the boring one, don’t you?”

“That’s not true. Well, it’s not your fault.” They both quieted at the grim reminder of why Xander had sworn off bad boys. So maybe he’d gone a little too far and alienated anyone remotely interesting in the process.

“You could still let me set you up with my boss,” Lara offered for the eight millionth time.

“No,” he responded for the eight millionth time. There was no way in hell he would face the man who’d witnessed Xander’s most mortifying moment of his life.

“You’ve never even met him.” It was an old, exhausting argument.

“No. But he’s met me, hasn’t he?” He tried not to sound bitter, but he knew he’d failed.

“He doesn’t think any less of you because of—”

“But I do.” Xander sighed and dropped into a chair at his small kitchen table. “Lara, I can’t remember him being there, that’s how fucked up I was.”

“It’s not your fault!”

“It is.” He rubbed his eyes with the heels of his hands, still careful of his right eye, even after all these months. “I should never have been so stupid.”

“Honey.” Lara sat and pulled his hands away, clasping them tightly in her own. “You—”

“Walked into a strange bar, accepted a drink from someone I knew I shouldn’t trust, and fell for the oldest trick in the gay basher’s book.” The humiliation was almost—*almost*—as bad as the pain had been.

“And, you know something? It’s actually worse that I did most of the damage to myself.” It was sad, but true. His panicked attempt to flee in his impaired condition had only resulted in him clumsily slamming eyeball-first into the corner of a dumpster, knocking him to the ground, where he hit his head and passed out. The black eye and concussion were far worse than the injury from the single blow that had landed on him before he’d run. The still-pink scar on his forehead reminded him daily of how pathetic he’d been in that moment.

Humiliation coursed through him yet again. To learn later that he’d been found by none other than Lara’s boss, Mr. Forrest, the most perfect man alive, if Lara was any judge of character—and she was—only made the whole thing so much more nauseatingly mortifying.

“Aw, X,” Lara soothed, tugging on his hands to bring him back in the moment. “You were distraught, not thinking straight. You can’t keep blaming yourself!”

Xander turned his hands over and squeezed Lara’s. “I’m sorry. It’s... I don’t think I could look Mr. Forrest in the eye after that. I can only imagine what he thinks of me.”

“He doesn’t—”

“Please, just leave it, Lara.” Xander was tired of this argument. It only made him feel worse. On top of the horror of the night, he now had this shame of his irrational fear of meeting Mr. Forrest. A man he should be thanking, but instead was avoiding.

“All right, all right.” Lara gave in as usual. But then her wicked grin was back. “So that means you’re on for tonight, and you’ll be perfectly safe because the bartender and manager will know to watch out for you.”

“And you’re sure there’s no chance of Mr. Forrest showing up, there, right?” Xander had only agreed to go to the club when he could be assured the club owner was on one of his numerous business trips. He ignored the fact that he needed any reassurance that he’d be safe.

“Booked the tickets myself, didn’t I?”

“Fine. But I’m coming home early because I’m already sacrificing half of my Saturday, and I’m not losing my Sunday Smut day on top of it.” Xander narrowed his eyes threateningly, a look that was wasted because Lara was completely immune.

“God forbid,” she rolled her eyes. “I don’t want to interfere with your laying around reading gay porn—excuse me, *erotica*—all the live-long day.”

“You got that right.” Xander nodded as if he’d actually made some kind of point. But damn it, he’d given up enough of his *boring* days to Jonathan in order to keep the peace. His ex always had to be running. Constantly doing *something*. It had driven him crazy that Xander could and would spend an entire day in boxers and socks reading mindless romance novels. And napping.

“Yeah, yeah, Shakespeare.” Lara dragged him towards the shower and gave him that adoring smile that always reminded him of why he kept her around. “Get moving.”

Xander groaned again, but couldn’t help returning her smile with a small one of his own. He’d done a little research and had to acknowledge a certain amount of curiosity. Not that he’d ever in a million years admit it.

Paul Forrest disembarked the jet and moved efficiently—as he did everything—through the terminals. He had no luggage to stop for, and his ride should be waiting for him at the curb. He had barely enough time to get checked in, clean himself up, and get dressed in his club “uniform”. The sexy

kilt and boots fit him a far cry better than the monkey suit he still wore, even though his last meeting had been hours ago.

He stifled the rush of excitement that threatened to undermine his control. He hadn't been on the scene in over a year—since he'd stumbled upon Xander. Not literally, of course, having only met the man once in person, but the fact of the matter was that Paul couldn't help comparing everyone he met to Xander. It was weak and sentimental. Paul would never say those words out loud to anyone, but there they were. And vocalized or not, he couldn't deny the truth of them.

There had been a time, not so long ago, that Paul Forrest had been confident and correct in saying he was nobody's fool. He would love to say it now, except, he was, maybe, his own self-made fool, seeing as he had spent an ungodly amount of money to return from his business trip three days early so he and Lara could implement this undoubtedly foolish plan to bring Xander to him. His Mission: X.

If only the boy hadn't so stubbornly refused to meet with him after that night. Paul had stood beside Xander's hospital bed, overcome with a protectiveness and possessiveness he couldn't act on. He'd listened to Xander, bruised and bandaged and barely conscious, reassuring Lara, begging her not to cry, promising her everything would be all right. He couldn't really blame Xander for not wanting to see him afterwards, but he happened to fundamentally disagree.

Paul's chest did that suffocating thing it did every time he remembered. He ruthlessly shut it down, though, needing to focus on the plan, needing his head in the game. He'd hesitated when Lara set him up for tonight, not wanting to push the boy into something before he was ready, but Xander had gone and jumped back into the dating pool with both feet, and Paul wasn't about to let him walk into a BDSM club unattended and unprotected. Lara knew it; she'd banked on it.

Arriving at their predetermined pickup spot, Paul's attention was brought back to the present when he spotted Jay, his ride, right where he expected.

“Welcome back, Mr. Forrest.” Jay, Paul’s oldest and closest friend, greeted him with a knowing gleam in his eye. And well he knew, since he’d been the one to fetch Paul’s things and book his room in Denver.

“Don’t start, Jay,” Paul warned, stubbornly refusing to respond to the charmer’s infectious grin.

Jay took Paul’s carry-on and briefcase and threw them in the back seat, then held the passenger door open and bowed in exaggerated deference. Paul slid into the car, but not before he gave a playful smack to the back of Jay’s head.

“That’s no way to treat the help, Paul.”

“You’re not ‘help’, Jay. You’re freakishly and inexplicably invested in the outcome of my night.” Paul had made the sorry mistake of confiding in his best friend about the plan, trying to shrug it off as doing Lara a favor, which wasn’t exactly a lie. Unfortunately, Jay used his considerable skills as a Dom to get Paul to admit his confusing but undeniably strong attraction to Xander. Ever since, Jay had become a dog with a bone, voraciously devouring any tidbit of information fed to him.

Paul shot him a suspicious look. “You’re not going to rent the room next door and drill peep-holes in the walls while I’m gone, are you?”

“Well, I wasn’t going to, but now that you planted that seed...” He waggled perfectly arched eyebrows and Paul couldn’t help laughing.

“Besides,” Jay added. “It’s your fault. You never should have dragged me into your nefarious plot.” Jay grinned wolfishly, his green eyes glittering in the car’s sunlit interior. Damn, but he was a good-looking man. Unfortunately, they had matching dominant personalities, and they’d concluded long ago that anything more than friendship would be disastrous.

Paul rolled his eyes. “Unwillingly spilled my guts under the threat of water-boarding, you mean.”

“You say tomato...” Jay shrugged and looked Paul up and down critically. “You ready for this?”

“Of course. What’s to be ready for?” Paul put as much flippancy as he could muster into his answer. This fooled no one.

“Right,” Jay drawled, with that infuriatingly knowing smirk.

“Just watch the road, would ya, ace?” They both put their sunglasses on as they hit the highway. “How’d everything go while I was gone?”

Jay shot him an exasperated look. “The same as when you called this morning. And yesterday. And the day before—”

“Okay, I get it,” Paul grunted, refusing to be embarrassed about his lack of focus the last few days. “And I appreciate you covering my ass.”

“That’s more like it,” Jay agreed, with a cocky flip of his stylish hair. The auburn color drew men and women to him from miles around, like a beacon.

Paul sighed, finally relaxing now that he was on the ground and he could put threats of flight delays or cancellations out of his mind. “You can drop me at the hotel, if you don’t mind. Thanks for picking me up, by the way.”

“Please,” Jay scoffed. “You’re not getting rid of me that easily. I’m totally coming with you and helping you with your make-up, girlfriend.”

He should have known. “Fine. I could use some help with my black nail polish. I can never do my right hand without making a mess.”

“You got it, babe.”

Paul snorted. “Don’t call me babe, asshole.”

“Sure thing, lover.”

Twelve hours later, Xander was no longer smiling. “You’ve got to be kidding me.”

“What?” The innocent baby blues weren’t fooling him for a second. “You look hot!”

Xander rolled his eyes and stared at the freakish facsimile of himself in the full mirror that was the hotel closet door. They’d driven the hour into Denver where she’d booked him a room, because, according to his pimp, er, Lara,

there was no way he'd be up for driving all the way back to Loveland after the night he was about to have.

He—wisely, he thought—refused to comment.

She had crunched up his hair with something that made it look like it usually did *before* he showered in the morning. His brown eyes were lined with makeup, Lara claiming it made him look intense and mysterious. In his mind, it only accentuated the deer in the headlights look he was sporting.

But worse, his body was covered completely in black. Sort of. Tight jeans encased his ass and squeezed his package obscenely. The impossibly tighter black tank top was almost transparent, accentuating his notable lack of chest hair, and his nipples were clearly visible, which, naturally, caused Lara to wonder—out loud—if it was too late to go get his nipples pierced first. He could barely stop himself from crossing his arms over his pecs in self-defense.

“No.” Xander shook his head, not even bothering to acknowledge the nipple ring comment. “I can't wear this.”

“Mm. Sorry, Xan.” She looked nothing close to sorry. “Part of the deal.”

He slipped his thumbs under the waistband of his jeans. “I'm going to be impacted by the time these come off.”

Lara guffawed the most unladylike laugh he'd ever heard. “You'll be fine. You did all the cleansing—”

He rushed to cut her off, waving his hands in front of her face. “Oh my God! Stop talking right now.”

Xander felt his cheeks burn. Again. He was still scarred from the conversation they'd had earlier. He'd been trapped in the car with no escape when Lara had so casually started with the “helpful” advice, including boldly suggesting he douche his ass so he'd be ready for anything. He'd spent the next sixty seconds speechless and contemplating how much damage rolling out of a vehicle moving at sixty-five miles per hour could possibly do, really.

He rubbed his cheeks against the embarrassment, checking for missed stubble while he was at it. “I don't know that I should have shaved.” He stared

in the mirror again, blatantly ignoring the panicked kohl-rimmed eyes. “I look seventeen instead of twenty-four.” Xander shaved every day for work, but nobody in a business office was going to card him—or try to pick him up because he looked underage.

“You’re fine.” Lara considered him with narrowed eyes. “You look at least twenty-one.”

Xander snorted. “Well, then.”

She laughed. “Did you shave your—”

“Seriously, you need to stop talking.” Xander held up a warning hand to her face. There was no way in hell he was going to explain the horror of his single, misguided attempt at getting waxed. The embarrassment was only slightly over-shadowed by the itch and irritation he’d suffered for days afterward. And he hadn’t even had anyone to appreciate it at the time. He’d done it on a whim, the shiny smooth asses he saw on the Internet making him think he should try it out.

“But—”

“I am not having this conversation with you.” Xander turned away and searched the floor for his shoes. He stopped when Lara held up a pair of black lace-up boots.

Rolling his eyes, he took the boots and sat on the bed to put them on.

“What are you going to do the rest of the night?” He changed the subject, desperately clinging to the last of his questionable dignity. He knew he wasn’t fooling Lara, but she kindly pretended like he was.

“I’m going to sit in the bar across the street for a while to make sure you don’t bolt the minute I turn my back, then I’ll drive home,” she answered, with what Xander unfortunately knew was complete honesty.

“I told you I’d go, and I’m going,” he grumbled. “I promised to give it a fair shot.”

“You did at that,” she agreed, rubbing his shoulder with her cool, soft fingers. Not for the first time, Xander wished the two of them were what did it

for each other. He touched her hand with his own, accepting the unspoken comfort.

It was short lived.

“Did you read that book I left for you last week?” Her breezy tone was not to be trusted.

Xander curled his lip. “The ‘fifty ways to make a gay man cry’ book?” He shuddered. “I skimmed it. Got to this one part that involved a riding crop and girl parts and—” he made badly faked gagging noises. “I couldn’t finish.”

Lara hooted. “Really?”

He stared at her, mouth agape. “Didn’t you read it?”

“Hell, no! Are you kidding me?” She balked as if he’d called her fat. “I don’t read that trash.”

“You—” Xander stammered, lunging for her just as she ran. “You are such a—”

“Careful, now,” Lara teased as she dodged him. “You wouldn’t hit a girl, would you?”

Xander was pacing steadily closer, eyes narrowed with criminal intent. “You’re not a girl. You are an evil demon spawn sent to destroy my innocence.”

“Ha! And I’ve succeeded, haven’t I?” Her smile was infectious.

He caved and grinned, pulling her into a hug. Her head fit perfectly under his chin. “You have, indeed, wench.”

Her laugh was muffled against his chest, but her arms gripped him and squeezed the air out of him. “Yay! I’ll finally earn my pitchfork!”

Xander chuckled. “I am so going to get you for this.”

“You can try!” She sang, stepping out of his arms. She grabbed her purse off the sofa and rummaged through it. “C’mere.”

He stayed where he was, proud of himself for not running, but he still remained wary and poised for flight. “Why?”

“So distrusting.”

“With good reason.” Xander watched her suspiciously, not at all surprised when she advanced on him with a tube of lip gloss. “No.”

“Oh, yes.” She nodded, reaching for him with the offending tube in her hand. Knowing that fighting her was futile, he stood still, telling himself he could wipe it off when she dropped him at the club.

Still, he felt it was only right that he give a token denial. “Wait.” He sniffed. “Hey, is that strawberry?” Xander leaned in for a better smell.

“Mm,” Lara hummed, concentrating on painting his lips. “Okay. Done.” She stood back for a final examination of her work. Xander slouched and looked off in the distance in his brooding vampire imitation, eliciting a girlish giggle from her. “Perfect.”

Paul stood tall at the door, fighting his impatience for the night to get under way. He checked his watch, then tipped his chin at the bouncer. “I’ll cover here for a while. You head in for a break.”

“I don’t need a break.” The muscle-bound bouncer—standing many pounds and several inches over Paul—trailed off, softening visibly when he met Paul’s steely blue eyes. The bouncer’s countenance turned passive—and maybe a little wistful—as he took in the thick, bare chest crossed with leather and the low-slung kilt at Paul’s hips. “Oh. Yes, sir, Mr. Forrest.”

“Very good.” Paul patted his shoulder and took encouragement from Seth’s reaction. Sure, he’d gotten the wolf-whistle from Jay, but Jay wasn’t exactly objective. It was always good to be assured one still “had it” by someone who actually wanted it. “I’ll see you back here in thirty, Seth.”

“Oh.” Seth looked surprised that Paul knew his name. “Okay, then.”

Paul cocked an eyebrow and gave the man a look that stopped him in his tracks.

Seth swallowed. “Okay, sir.”

Paul smiled his approval and preened a little on the inside when Seth's whole face lit up in response. He noted the reluctance in Seth's movements when he finally turned towards the bar to take his break. Paul felt him stop and look back at him when he reached the door, but Paul concentrated on the group of men approaching the club entrance.

"ID's please, gentlemen." He nodded to a couple of Doms he recognized to go on in and carefully studied the identification of the three younger men he'd never seen before. They were eyeballing his outfit and snickering at each other. He couldn't allow that, now, could he. He crossed his arms over his chest and stared them down until they quieted. "New here, boys?"

"Yes, sir." A chorus of breathy voices answered him and he only narrowly avoided rolling his eyes. There had been a day when he'd have been all over these nubile young men, their submission rolling off them in waves. One was now eyeballing his kilt like he could see through it, and Paul was pretty sure he heard somebody whimper. They'd have no trouble finding action tonight, he was sure, but it wasn't going to be at his hand.

Paul watched the group enter, wondering exactly when he'd gotten so particular in his tastes. But then he knew; because he spotted the couple across the street, his lips quirking a little when Lara stood on her tiptoes to reach Xander's face so she could kiss his cheek. Paul shook his head when Lara turned and saw him and threw him a saucy wink.

Paul was far more intrigued by the dark-haired boy with her, though. He watched with interest as Xander made his way towards him. Even as distracted as he was by the unconscious swish of denim clad hips, Paul would have marked Xander as a first-timer long before he made it across the street.

"ID, please." Paul didn't wince at the gruffness of his voice, but he wanted to. He kept his eyes pinned on the startled brown gaze staring back at him and waited, uncertain if he wanted to see a sign of recognition or not. The second Xander's eyes dropped Paul scoped out the rest of him, appreciating his lean length, showcased perfectly in skin-tight black.

Paul's attention returned to Xander's face, only Xander was checking out every individual piece of Paul's club attire. He could practically feel the scorch

marks as Xander's gaze fell from the studded leather strapped across Paul's chest, to the matching cuffs at his wrists, the belt at his waist, and to the kilt clinging to his hips.

Paul forced himself to wait silently, letting the boy look his fill, but it was getting more and more difficult. When Xander finally met his eyes, Paul calmly raised an eyebrow. "Would you like to touch?"

Xander's cheeks flamed in a most alluring way. But Paul saw him fist his hands as if resisting the temptation to touch.

"Um..." Xander coughed lightly. "Sorry." He looked around, as if hoping a topic of conversation would fly at him through the air. "So, are you Scottish, then?" He nodded towards Paul's kilt, his eyes glued to Paul's, apparently determined to not be caught looking again.

"Nope."

"Oh." Xander blinked and took a few seconds to think it through. Paul couldn't stop the quirk of his lips, even before Xander said, "Irish?"

"Nope."

"So the kilt isn't because of your heritage?" He looked confused, charmingly so.

"Nope."

Xander must have finally caught the humor in Paul's eyes because he smiled, nearly stopping Paul's heart. "Skirt fetish?"

The laugh was out before he could even consider containing it. But it was completely worth it, because watching Xander light up in delight in response to it was worth every potential chip in his image.

"Not that there'd be anything wrong with that," Xander added, eyes twinkling.

"Of course not," Paul concurred.

Sobering reluctantly, Paul remembered he had a role to play here. He held out his hand. “You got that ID, boy?” He knew he wasn’t imagining the heat in Xander’s eyes at his choice of words.

“Oh,” Xander’s hand reached for his smooth chin while the other dug in his back pocket. Smooth muscles shifted and bunched, just enough to show that he took care of his body, but without obsession. “I knew I shouldn’t have shaved,” he blurted, looking surprised and uncomfortable once he’d said it. “I always get carded when I’ve shaved,” he added unnecessarily.

“We card everyone we don’t know,” Paul assured him, definitely *not* smiling. He studied the ID: Alexander Sherman Wallace. Yikes. He bit his tongue, though. “Are you a member, Alexander?”

“Um, no. It’s... it’s Xander.” He ducked his head and rooted into his back pocket again. “Here it is. I have a guest pass.”

Paul took the pass, heart pounding, but managed to only lift an eyebrow. “A guest of Mr. Forrest? Ah, yes. We’ve been expecting you.”

Xander stuffed his ID back into his jeans and shrugged. “I guess.”

“You guess?” Paul couldn’t help digging a little. “Do you know him?” He suddenly wanted desperately for Xander to know who he was. But he realized Xander’s stubborn refusal to meet him was rooted in a deep sense of pride, and Paul had decided ahead of time that this was how he was going to play it, not willing to risk sending Xander running.

“Not directly. I know he owns this property. His assistant is a friend of mine.” For the first time Xander looked uncomfortable, as if he might be doing something wrong, but then he straightened his shoulders and spoke firmly, like a man used to having to project more self-assurance than he might have felt in order to be heard. “She assured me he’d given the pass to her—for me—personally.”

Paul didn’t react right way, and he had to admire the steady gaze staring back at him. He dipped his head and asked, “Did it seem unusual to you that he’d do that even though he was planning on being a thousand miles away at the time?” It wasn’t technically a lie. Paul had planned on being gone,

especially since Xander threw them for a loop by refusing to consider entering the club until Lara could guarantee that Paul wouldn't be there.

Xander cocked his head, mimicking Paul's movements, and stared, uncertainty only a tiny shadow buried under confident eye contact. "I wouldn't know." The slightest tremble of Xander's glossy lips distracted Paul enough that he couldn't answer. "Am I allowed to go in, or not?"

Shrugging, Paul reached for the door. "Please." He gestured for Xander to enter. "Be my guest."

Paul watched until Xander was inside, swallowed by the dim interior of the club, then finally let out a loud breath. Xander hadn't recognized him. Paul should have been relieved; because he didn't really have a back up plan, if seeing him had triggered Xander's memory. Still, the sting of disappointment was there, but Paul shrugged it off. What had he expected? That Xander would take one look at him, declare them to be soul mates and pledge his undying devotion to... the bouncer?

Paul had noticed Xander was slimmer, and appeared slightly more jaded around the eyes than the sunny, smiling pictures of the boy Lara was always showing him. At first, Lara had only shared her concerns and frustrations over her friend's relationship choices. She'd detested Xander's ex, and the more Paul had heard about him, the more he'd agreed with her.

But it didn't take Lara long to figure Paul out, and once that happened, she became a relentless sales rep for the unknowing boy. She was smart about it, too. Telling Paul story after story that revealed the kind of man Xander was. She never said, "Xander is so kind and patient and generous." No. She would drop into a conversation how she had been kept waiting for dinner the other night because Xander had stopped to chat with his elderly neighbor and had ended up running to the grocery to get Mrs. Watts the walnuts she desperately needed in order to make the recipe that she'd no doubt have forgotten about by the time he returned.

Lara kept pictures of Xander on her desk, on her phone, on her computer. Silly little snapshots that she'd taken or that Xander would take of himself—like when he was stuck in traffic that time and his air conditioning had gone

out and he'd stripped off his shirt and wrapped his tie around his forehead like a sweatband. He'd taken a picture and sent it to Lara just to make her laugh. Paul, however, had had trouble focusing on the humor of the photo. He'd been too struck by the smooth skin of Xander's neck and collarbones, shining with sweat and begging to be licked.

He'd heard her talking to him on the phone at least once every day, and knew for a fact that Xander always called her between three and four, which happened to be a known down time for Lara. She'd relax and eat a light snack while they chatted. Inevitably, Lara would end up laughing and would hang up ready to jump back into work.

But the best part, in Paul's mind, was when he occasionally caught her chatting with Xander on speakerphone while she worked, and obviously thought she was alone. So maybe he'd hovered in the hall wanting to listen to Xander's smoky voice tease and laugh, longing like a lovesick school girl for the chance to get one of those laughs for himself.

Paul was struck with another of those increasingly frequent—and annoying—waves of disconcerting uncertainty. He'd been half taken by Xander before he'd ever met him. Then Xander had run off to that damn bar to prove some kind of point and had barely escaped with his life. Paul had started to go after Xander, but he'd been delayed by what, at the time, had seemed like a crisis. He would never forgive himself for letting work interfere even that little bit in what turned out to be all the time needed to change a boy's life forever.

Seeing Seth work his way back towards his post at the door, Paul tugged at his leather cuffs as if straightening his shirt sleeves, and settled himself firmly into dominant mode, ready to make Alexander Sherman Wallace his own.

Xander was still shaken and more than half hard—made worse by the sights and smells of leather and male skin spewing pheromones everywhere by the time he reached the far end of the bar. He slid onto the only vacant seat, which was thankfully as far as he could get from the door without cowering in

the corner, or slipping down that dark hallway. He didn't even want to know about that.

Seated, arms crossed on the bar top in front of him, Xander allowed himself a moment to curse Lara and her cock-smothering jeans before he looked around casually, taking deep, but surreptitious breaths. He tried to appear unaffected and nonchalant as though he frequented BDSM clubs on a regular basis. Meanwhile, he was pretty sure that on the inside he was having a mild coronary, and prayed to the gods of bondage that he could manage to keep his face a mask of indifference. Or at least not show blatant hysteria.

He was lucky he was sitting in relative obscurity, since he knew he wasn't doing a very good job of hiding his reactions to the men surrounding him. From the leather-clad bear on the far side of the room, to the tiny, scantily clad twink scooting up next to him at the bar, and every variation in between; it was all new and exciting, he reluctantly admitted to himself. Not that he was that surprised; he did own a computer and was exceedingly proficient with it, after all. What did surprise him, though, was that he found the whole place welcoming and comfortable in a "free to be yourself" kind of way. Apparently, to these particular patrons, "yourself" meant almost naked and/or outfitted in the skins of other mammals.

Xander couldn't help returning the brilliant smile of the slight man—the aforementioned scantily-clad twink—who was bouncing on the balls of his feet next to him.

"Hi. You're new here." The sweet-looking stranger said, peeking at Xander over his shoulder while leaning over the bar to catch the bartender's attention. Half of his ass was hanging out of the white go-go-boy shorts he wore. Half of his torso was visible under the barely-there, white spaghetti strapped top that was only meant to cover small parts of him. "I'm Wren."

His smile was adorable, the deep dimples scoring his cheeks, flirting with Xander all on their own. Xander liked them—and Wren—immediately. "Xander." He followed Wren's lead and didn't offer his hand, but by then, he was already plastered over the bar waving at the bartender again.

Finally, the bartender—looking both exasperated and amused—headed in their direction and Wren relaxed, which meant Xander could stop staring at his smooth, hard ass. Not that he was interested, really, but he could appreciate a nice ass when he saw one. He wasn't dead, after all.

Wren ordered something that sounded like it was sure to come with an umbrella and a cherry while Xander asked for a vodka cranberry with extra ice. At Wren's raised eyebrows, he shrugged. "It gets too warm before I finish it if I don't add ice." He grinned sheepishly. "I'm not much of a drinker."

Wren stared at him, his head tipped, ironically bird-like. "You're cute." He ignored the drinks that were placed on the bar in front of them, but Xander dug—with difficulty—into his jeans for money.

"How much?" he asked, waving at Wren's drink, which was, indeed, brilliant red and sporting fruit on the rim.

"He's covered. He's on a tab." The bartender gave him a flirty wink. "You, too, handsome. Boss's orders."

"Oh." Xander blinked. "Okay, thanks." He left some bills on the bar top for a tip and turned to find Wren waiting patiently. Wren was eyeing him like a discerning connoisseur of man flesh, making it a struggle for Xander to remember what they were talking about. Oh yeah. Cute.

"You know, cute in that ordinary, boy next door kind of way." Wren continued.

Xander choked on his drink. "Uh. Thanks?" Then he smiled and looked down at himself. "I don't know about you, but my next door neighbor doesn't wear see-through shirts."

"Ha! Bet you wished he did!" Wren exclaimed with delight.

"You got that right," Xander laughed, picturing the boy across the street from him growing up, all tough guy leather jackets and a Harley for his seventeenth birthday. "I'd have embarrassed myself for sure, I can tell you that."

“Totally worth it though, right?” Wren looked like he was remembering his own teen-aged fantasy. Which Xander figured must have been when he was maybe, three years old.

Chuckling, Xander nodded and tried another sip of his drink. It was good. Crisp and cold. “Are you here alone?” He held his hand up when Wren gave him the bird look again. “Not trying to pick you up. I’m making sure you’re safe.”

“Aw, that’s sweet of you.” Wren’s smile returned full force. “But no, I’m not alone.” He reached for a necklace, holding an intricately woven pendant so Xander could see it. Xander brilliantly deduced that it must have been his collar. *Thank you World Wide Web.*

“That’s beautiful.” Xander leaned closer, trying to make out the design. “What is it?”

Wren was glowing like a new bride. “It’s our initials locked together. You need a special key to open it. He designed it himself.”

It really was unique. Xander reached out to turn it so he could see the whole design. “It’s—ow!”

His words cut off when his hand was slapped away. Hard. Xander gasped and rubbed his wrist. “What the hell!”

Turning, he found himself nose to chest with a mountain of muscle. “What the hell’ is right, boy. You don’t go around touching another man’s collar!”

Xander’s mouth worked and his wrist smarted. He felt the heat rise to his cheeks, “I—I’m sorry, man. I didn’t know.” So, maybe in his research he’d gotten somewhat distracted by the pictures and ended up actually reading very little.

“Bullshit.” The hulking beast loomed closer, nostrils flared in temper. Xander held his breath, mostly to hold in the squeak that was lodged in his throat. But he stood his ground, trying desperately to ignore the pounding of his heart in his chest, which should have been visible, by the feel of it.

“I said I didn’t know, and I apologized,” Xander responded as calmly as he could. “What else do you want from me?”

That seemed to stump the big guy. At least long enough for Wren to wriggle his way between them. “Daddy, please don’t. He was very politely admiring the collar you made for me.”

Daddy reluctantly dropped his fuming eyes from Xander to Wren. Immediately, he softened, lifting a hand to swallow the entire back of Wren’s head in his grasp before consuming his mouth in a seriously R-rated kind of way. Xander squirmed, trying not to watch, but finding it impossible not to, especially when Wren started whimpering and humping at the thick thigh that slid between his legs.

Xander swallowed and forced himself to look away, searching for something—anything—to focus his attention on. He found it when, across the room he spotted the bouncer who’d carded him wending his way through the mass of bodies. Xander couldn’t help but notice how the seas simply parted for the Dom. That the man was a Dom, Xander knew without needing to be told. It didn’t take a degree in Sadomasochism to figure out what he was.

All Xander knew at that moment was that the sight of the man made all the spit in his mouth dry up. It initiated the tightening of his balls that warned him that a full-fledged erection was on the very near horizon if he didn’t do something to stop it. He shook his head. Surely he was too old to be popping uncontrollable wood in public. Wasn’t he? The sound of Wren working himself into a frenzy next to him wasn’t exactly helping matters.

Xander had to look away from the half-naked, kilt-clad temptation and was relieved to find Wren tucked safely under his daddy’s beefy arm, apparently in a time-out from their mutual masturbation session. With supreme discipline, Xander managed to *not* check out the bulging rods in the couple’s pants.

He raised his eyebrows when he saw the contemplative look on Wren’s face. “I like him.” Wren chirped.

“Yeah?” That was Daddy. And now he was looking at Xander with that same intense contemplation on his face, which, now that it was void of the

hostility, was really rather nice to look at. But the scrutiny he was under was unnerving, to say the least. Xander's skin crawled with a confusing mix of unease and arousal.

"Um, name's Xander," he offered, needing to break the weird silence that had descended on them.

"Oh, I'm sorry, Xander!" Wren bounced a little—very little, actually—with the weight of his daddy's arm holding him moderately still. "This is Charlie. He's my daddy."

Xander laughed, and if the sound bordered on hysteria, he surely wasn't going to be the one to point it out. "I gathered that, what with the whole climbing his leg business."

It didn't faze Wren, who shrugged and smiled unabashedly. He turned in Charlie's arms, murmuring something Xander couldn't hear, not that he was trying to listen. He was too relieved at having a name for Charlie that wasn't "Daddy".

"Oh yeah, baby bird?" Charlie straightened and pinned Xander with that look again. "You wanna keep him?"

And he was choking on his drink for the second time. Xander's throat was going to be raw if he kept this up. "What?" he yelped.

"Can we?" Wren was bouncing again, or attempting to. "Let's take him home! He's so cute with his big brown eyes and would you look at those lips? Can't you just see those lips wrapped around my cock, Daddy?"

Charlie groaned, and twisted so he could grind his giant erection against Wren's belly. Xander was hopelessly stunned stupid, his brain having locked horns in battle with his penis.

"Maybe around *your* cock? Would you like those full, shiny lips to suck you while I watch, Daddy?" Wren purred his seduction, practically vibrating visibly. "Check out his package, Daddy. Looks like he could stretch me out good. You know how much you love watching those big ones sink into me." He was crooning and rubbing sinuously against Charlie now, and Charlie was eating it up.

Xander held his hands up, sweat breaking out down his back, his heart palpitating dangerously, and he'd be damned if he could figure out whether it was his brain or cock causing it. "Um. That's really flattering, Wren. You're hot as hell, and all, but—"

Wren pouted. "You don't wanna come home with us?"

Damn. For a second, staring at that lusciously pouting face, he waffled. What the hell, right? He was single, Wren was hot, Charlie was a big ol' yummy bear who'd probably fuck him right into the ground, and he couldn't, at the moment, think of a single thing wrong with that. After all, wasn't this what he was here for?

But then he remembered. Comfortable as he was—or had been—in the relatively tame bar area of the club, this was a different scene, and he had no idea what these two were into. Unbidden images of a riding crop slapping him in unmentionable places made him shudder and he opened his mouth to let Wren down gently.

"He's with me." The words hit him a second before the heaviness of an arm—a solid, warm, bare arm—fell over his shoulders. Xander didn't even jump, his relief came so swiftly. He knew who it was without needing to look, so he simply smiled apologetically at Wren.

"Sorry, Wren," he shrugged and lifted a hand tentatively to the one on his shoulder. His bouncer's hand was hard, possessive, if that was possible merely by the placement of one's hand on another's shoulder. Xander decided it was because he was feeling very much as if he'd been claimed. More amazingly, Xander realized, he liked it.

"Paulie!" Wren flung himself against Paul's chest. "It's been so long, where have you been?"

"Paul." Charlie clapped a hand on Paul's shoulder and gave it a good shake. Even the sturdy Paul wobbled under the force of that massive paw.

Paul nodded at Charlie before chuckling at Wren. "Hey, little bird." He squeezed Wren in a one-handed hug. "Still flitting around the joint, I see."

“Yep.” Wren situated himself again under Charlie’s arm and pouted again. “But you just took away our fun for the night.”

Xander might have emitted a tiny little noise, because Paul’s arm tightened protectively around him. His whole body vibrated with Paul’s deep voice when he spoke. “Sorry. But we don’t share.”

“You used to share, Paulie.” Wren sulked for another second before delight filled his face. “Oh! This one must be special! Is he *the one*, sir?”

Xander was lost. He really wanted to burrow against Paul’s hard body and bury his face in his neck, but that only confused the hell out of him, so he stood there helplessly, no longer able to follow the conversation.

Paul was a few inches taller than Xander, putting his neck at the perfect height for nuzzling. Paul wasn’t perfect, but for some reason it made him that much more appealing. There was no shiny six pack and dancing pecs here, instead, there was a thick, solid chest and taut abdomen that seemed stronger to Xander than any gym-built body.

He’d noticed all of this before he’d entered the bar. Right now he still hadn’t worked up the nerve to take a good look. He was still weighing his options when Paul leaned over and whispered in his ear, “Put your arm around me, Xander.” His words may have seemed casual, but it was nothing less than an order. Xander’s skin prickled into goosebumps from the warm breath in his ear. It was only the breath, he was sure of it. It had nothing to do with that commanding, rumbling voice.

It seemed that Paul had arrived just in time, judging by the play of emotions crossing Xander’s face. Paul didn’t laugh, but he was tempted. Xander’s eyes hid nothing, and Paul couldn’t help imagining them staring up from beneath him, glazed with lust.

He could feel Xander resisting his inclination to lean against him, to accept the haven Paul offered, but he did as he was told and wrapped a smooth, cool arm around Paul’s waist. Paul frowned a bit at Xander’s resistance, but he

understood it, even if he didn't like it. As he watched, Xander seemed to drift off, like a kid waiting for the grown-ups to be done talking.

"We have seats downstairs," Charlie was saying, all traces of his previous ire nothing but memory. "Why don't you two join us?"

Paul agreed and sent them on their way. When they'd gone, he turned to lean against the bar, trailing his hand over Xander's shoulders and down his arm to catch his fingers. Paul's heart stuttered in his chest when Xander met his eyes. He wasn't sure what those fathomless brown eyes were looking for, but Paul didn't hide his desire, wanting to be sure Xander understood exactly what was happening.

"You shouldn't have come here alone," Paul chastised, dismissing the fact that he'd known Xander wouldn't be alone. *Xander* hadn't known it. "You're fresh, vulnerable meat in a place like this."

Xander swallowed visibly, and his gaze continued searching Paul's, but his lips quirked in a wry smile. "A little late, now, but duly noted."

He seemed to finally notice that Paul hadn't let go of him. He gave a tug as if to free his fingers from Paul's grasp. But Paul only tightened his grip, appreciating the surprised, but pleased look that passed over Xander's face right before an eyebrow quirked over a kohl-lined eye.

"Are you trying to tell me something else, um... Paul?" He tipped his head and his eyes twinkled. "Or is it Paulie?"

"It is *not* Paulie," Paul growled, hiding his smile. "It's Paul... or you could call me sir." He ignored the flutter of his pulse while he waited for Xander's response.

"Oh?" Xander narrowed his eyes, but Paul had seen the flash in them, and he could actually see the boy's heartbeat pulsing in his neck. He ran his thumb over the inside of Xander's wrist, damn near going hard when he saw the goose bumps spread over his skin.

But he wasn't going to make it easy, Paul could see that before Xander spoke. "Sir, as in, the same thing the rest of the subs in the joint call you?"

Paul was *not* going to point out that Xander had more or less included himself in that classification. “Or, *sir* as in the Dom you’re with tonight.”

Xander’s eyes were wide, assessing, clearly wanting, but still slightly hesitant. With his free hand, Paul reached into the waistband of his kilt where a hidden pocket held a simple silver chain. He watched as Xander’s gaze dropped when Paul’s movements caused the kilt to slide down slightly below his hip. Hearing Xander’s breath catch was music to his ears and as effective a seduction as a lick to his cock.

He held up the chain. “I’m going to put this on you, and you’ll officially be mine for the night.”

“J—Just for the night?” Xander’s voice expressed a need that he probably didn’t even understand. But Paul did, and he was immediately filled with the inherent urge to protect and serve.

“For the night,” Paul affirmed, against his own screaming instincts. “This is a... placeholder of sorts, to take you off the market. Everyone here will know you’re with someone and they’ll leave you alone.”

Something flashed in Xander’s eyes, but Paul still wasn’t prepared for his response. “What if I don’t want to be ‘off the market’? What if that’s the complete opposite of the reason I came here tonight?”

“What is your reason for coming here tonight?” Paul asked.

“Why do you wear a kilt?” was Xander’s retort, complete with a cocky lift of his chin.

Paul allowed a half smile. “Maybe we’ll share those stories with each other in the morning.”

“Oh?” Xander laughed, sounding a little nervous and a lot interested. “So, is this where I swoon like a maiden and fall to my knees, offering you my body and my submission because I am *that* overcome by the sheer force of your masculinity?” The cocky tilt was still there, but Paul had the pleasure of witnessing Xander become a bit breathless by the time he’d said his piece.

Paul was completely enamored. “That would be the preferred reaction, yes.”

Xander’s laugh was hoarse and sexy as hell. And Paul knew he’d failed to hide his response to it from the way Xander’s eyes heated. He took a deep calming breath, remembering that he was way ahead of Xander in this game. “I can guarantee you’ll still enjoy the full experience while you’re under my protection.”

“Wait.” Xander pulled his fingers from Paul’s grasp. “Let me get this straight. You want me to wear your *temporary* collar, which has no doubt graced the neck of God only knows how many of these other subs practically swooning at your feet, and you expect me to call you Sir while I’m wearing it? Because I’m in need of your protection?”

“No.” Damn. The smart-ass had knocked Paul off his game, which was practically unheard of. “I purchased this chain this afternoon. I’ve never put a collar on anyone before—”

Too late, he realized what he’d said. He quickly changed direction. “When a Dom takes on a sub, it’s often referred to as ‘taking him under their protection.’ It’s many other things, of course. And it doesn’t mean we think you’re weak, or—”

“Okay.”

“What?” Paul blinked. This was not going at all like he’d expected.

“I said okay.” Xander’s face softened, and he looked... amused, of all things. “I’ll wear it, and I’ll be yours for the night.”

Paul stared so intently at him for such a long time he could see Xander trying not to squirm. “Do you have any idea what that might entail?” Now Paul was concerned that Xander had capitulated too quickly. Would he have bought this line from any ol’ Dom in the joint?

Xander smiled, tipping his head to peer up through his lashes. “Now you want to talk me out of it?”

“No.” His voice was too rough, but he was fighting to regain control of the situation.

“Then let’s do this, Highlander.” Xander’s smile grew, but Paul finally got enough of a grip on himself to see that last-second flare of uncertainty. Xander was into it, but he was nervous, and his cockiness was a bluff, Paul was sure of it. The balance of power shifted back to him, more strongly than before, and Paul relaxed upon feeling his center return.

Paul didn’t hesitate when Xander turned his back to him so he could loop the chain around Xander’s neck. It was only a little like the collar Paul had imagined crafting for Xander, but seeing this temporary chain was enough to make his chest swell with pride.

Resting his hands possessively on Xander’s shoulders, Paul leaned in, deliberately teasing his boy’s ear with his breath.

“Let’s go downstairs.”

“Um. Don’t you have to go back to work?” Xander waved towards the front door, remembering where he’d seen Paul in the first place. He turned back to face Paul, trying not to panic. He couldn’t believe he’d basically given himself to this stranger based on nothing more than a gut reaction to the look in Paul’s eyes. The look that made Xander feel seductive, like tempting, vulnerable prey *and* like he was the most precious gift Paul had ever been given.

“No. I was covering so Seth could take a break.” Paul pointed towards the entrance, where his position had been filled by a man Xander might have thought of as “big” if he hadn’t been so recently introduced to Charlie. Xander nodded absently, too distracted by his thoughts and Paul’s sheer potency to really care about who was working the door.

“So, what’s downstairs?” Xander’s mouth went dry when he was suddenly bombarded with flashes of the more alarming images of hard core BDSM scenes he’d stumbled upon on the internet. Not the enticing ones that gave him

the sexy tingles. The ones that made his balls shrivel and his adrenaline spike in an urgent “fight or flight” response. “Flight” being the undisputed winner.

“It’s what some would refer to as a dungeon.” Paul was still staring at him in that way that made Xander want to slide down the Dom’s half-naked body and stuff his face under that damn kilt. He was pretty sure he’d been hard for about ninety percent of the time he’d been in Paul’s dominating presence.

“Is it going to make me run screaming from the building?” He was only sort of teasing, even if he was damn near swooning at Paul’s feet and willing to follow him anywhere with a frightening lack of self-preservation.

Paul’s lips twitched, and Xander very much liked the way a gleam of humor looked in those gorgeous steely eyes. “I think you’re tough enough.”

Xander hesitated for only a second before he nodded. A strange flutter went through his abdomen. He was surprisingly excited by the idea of exploring this bold new world, especially now that he was feeling completely safe with his new... um, Dom. He almost snorted out loud. “Safe” obviously being a relative term. He wasn’t fooling himself that Paul had anything other than naughty intentions.

Paul was staring at him, a knowing smile on his face. But thankfully, he didn’t say anything, simply turned and walked away, leaving Xander to follow. He did so dutifully, and not without pleasure. Watching Paul’s back flex and his ass shift under his kilt was sexy as hell. Xander found that he really, really wanted to lick the hollow of Paul’s spine from his ass to his neck. Xander was positive he’d never before felt such a compulsion to taste another man.

They reached the entrance to the basement quickly, and Xander came to an abrupt stop. Staring at the leather-clad man at the entrance who was checking membership passes, Xander slowly put the pieces together.

“I didn’t have to give you my guest pass at the door, did I?” Xander demanded.

Paul didn't bother attempting to look sheepish. Or guilty. He lifted a shoulder and held Xander's gaze steadily. "The bar is public. This is not. And, I didn't ask for your pass. I just didn't stop you when you offered it."

"After you asked if I was a member."

"An innocent enough question." Paul's face gave away nothing.

"So, it had nothing to do with you checking out who I was with, then, huh?" Xander fought to keep his expression stern, but pleasure bloomed at the thought, even as he knew it probably shouldn't have.

"It had everything to do with it." The predatory look was back in Paul's eyes when he leaned close into Xander's space. "Be glad I contained my caveman urges to club you over the head and drag you back to my lair."

It shouldn't have made Xander's cock ache. It shouldn't have made him tremble. And it shouldn't have made him want more of it, but damn. It did all of those things.

There wasn't much time for daydreaming though, because they were entering the basement, which was almost hushed compared to the busy, music-filled noise of the upper floor.

"They're between shows," Paul explained, waving an arm to encompass the partially seated, partially milling crowd that chatted quietly as they waited for the next demonstration.

"What kind of, um, show will we be seeing?" Xander asked, acutely aware that his wide eyes were exposing how naive he was as he took in the stage area, where spotlights were trained on the various pieces of equipment set up. Most of it looked fairly innocent until Xander started picturing bodies attached to them.

"Not sure what's up next." Paul answered casually. But Xander could tell that he was being observed very carefully and he realized that it didn't make him uncomfortable being watched over like that. In fact, the more he thought about it, the more he decided he liked it, somehow knowing Paul would be the first one to whisk him away if it became too much for him. It actually made

Xander relax and experience the moment. *Safe*. It was a feeling he hadn't felt for far too long.

“There's usually a little something for everyone.” Paul continued, apparently completely unaware of the impact he was having on his temporary sub.

Xander was definitely catching the feeling of expectation in the air. He spotted Wren and Charlie across the room. Heading in that direction, Xander noted the marked difference in Wren. Where he'd been flamboyant and almost hyper upstairs, he now sat serenely at Charlie's feet, a shoulder resting gently on the Dom's thick shin. Wren's eyes drifted closed as he leaned into the touch of Charlie's fingers combing through his hair. The sight actually brought a lump to Xander's throat.

Xander coughed in an effort to dislodge the emotion before he got all ridiculous. “Is this, I don't know, the norm in, um, these clubs?” Xander couldn't take enough of it in. There were singles and couples, a threesome doing something in the corner that he'd really like to get a closer look at, and everyone—excepting himself—appeared perfectly comfortable in their skin. And there was a lot of skin to see.

Paul shrugged. “This is pretty tame, actually. It's fairly small, with the bar upstairs and a few private rooms, and the equipment is pretty standard fare.” Xander stifled a shudder, thinking again of some of the more extreme and frightening images he'd seen. He really should have been far more careful than thoughtlessly typing “BDSM” in the Google search bar.

When they reached Charlie and Wren, Paul moved to take the seat next to Charlie, but he didn't sit. He waited. Before Xander knew what was happening, Wren had him by the hand and was dragging him down to the floor with him. Wren knelt to the side of Charlie's feet, turning his attention towards Xander, simply smiling a bright welcome, but saying nothing.

Xander wasn't sure what he should do. But that wasn't entirely true, he realized. Though he hesitated, every cell in his body screamed that he knew exactly what to do. On his knees, he looked up at Paul, who was watching patiently. Xander felt the significance of this moment, both in the sense that

Paul really appeared to need him to react in a certain way, and in the instinctive understanding that this was going to change something in him. Something irreversible.

Holding Paul's intense look, Xander slid awkwardly the rest of the way to the floor. Paul sat, and Xander was momentarily absorbed in the feeling of his shoulder pressed against Paul's leg in a mirror image of Wren's posture. And the approval and flash of desire in Paul's eyes told him he'd done it exactly right. His cheeks flushed with pleasure and he dropped his eyes, embarrassed by the strength of the joy he felt from earning Paul's approval.

"Don't." Paul spoke quietly, but firmly. Xander raised his head in confusion as Paul leaned close. "Don't hide yourself from me."

"It's hard not to," Xander confessed.

"I know," Paul gave him an understanding smile. "That's part of it. It's your natural inclination to drop your eyes. I'm telling you not to." Understanding he might be. Willing to buckle, he wasn't.

Xander blinked and tried to gather his thoughts. "I'm—" He swallowed and moved closer, whispering, "I'm so confused." He blurted it out, certain that Paul would know if he tried bluffing. "I don't know how to do this, and until about thirty seconds ago, I didn't even know I wanted to."

Paul's eyes softened and he reached out, sliding his knuckles over Xander's cheekbone. "Does it help if I tell you that I knew? That I could see the submissive in you calling out for me?"

Xander's breath caught. "Not really." But did it?

"I'll take care of you," Paul assured him. "If you'll let me."

"I don't need taking care of," Xander automatically denied.

"This is a different kind of care." Paul's eyes were entirely too knowing. Entirely too wanting for Xander to withstand. "You'll see."

Xander studied him for the longest time, looking for deceit, manipulation, anything at all besides the steady, confident, strength and desire he saw. And

he did finally find something. Something that surprised him. A flash of hope that was there and gone in an instant, but it was enough.

He glanced towards Wren and Charlie, watching them moon over each other. Conceding, he nodded, accepting how perfectly right this felt. Still, with a last glance over his shoulder, he said, “But I am *not* calling you Daddy.”

Paul’s loud, sudden laugh burrowed deep into Xander’s core. He smiled, blushing at the attention they drew, but so elated that he’d brought his Dom laughter. He’d explore the how and the why of this newly discovered side of himself later. For now, he decided to follow where it led him.

Paul combed his fingers through the back of Xander’s hair, loving how the boy relaxed into his touch. Feeling Xander’s bare arm pressed against his bare leg was ridiculously arousing. Paul was as equally fascinated by his body’s immediate reactions as he was chagrined by the fact that he’d responded so viscerally to a simple, innocent touch. Neither changed the fact that he was battling his own body for control like he hadn’t since his teens.

He smiled when he saw the couple that was approaching the stage. He knew the men; they were a long-time couple who had graced the club with their demonstrations for years. They drew a crowd because Lars wore his dominance with quiet confidence, and was a master of almost any type of whip, while Eli was a strong, eager sub who gave himself over so completely that he slipped into his sub-space faster than any other man Paul had ever seen. The pair was truly a beautiful sight to see.

Paul leaned closer to Xander. “Are you going to be okay with a whipping?” He hoped so, not because of the act, but because watching this particular couple was such a moving experience he wanted badly for Xander to see it.

Xander had noticeably tensed when the men had reached the stage, but he nodded. “That’s not a question I ever expected to hear, but yeah, I’ll be fine.” Xander turned his face towards Paul, but he was obviously reluctant to lose

sight of the stage, where Lars was cuffing Eli—already erect and shining with the sweat of pleasure—to the cross.

“That’s Lars with the whip, and Eli, his sub. They’ve been together for about ten years now,” Paul explained, knowing an established, committed couple would appeal to Xander far more than a pair of strangers.

“They look so in love,” Xander breathed, then shot a quick, sheepish glance over his shoulder. “Sorry. That was stupid.”

But Paul saw what Xander saw. Lars stroked gentle hands over Eli’s limbs as he leaned in close to whisper to him; the men visibly shared a connection, and it was touching to see. “No, it’s not stupid. It’s part of why they’re one of the most popular couples to perform here.”

Xander was no longer listening, Paul realized. Like everyone else in the room, he had gone tight with anticipation. Unlike everyone else in the room, though, Xander jumped when the whip made its first contact, the sound loud and sharp in the hushed room.

Paul settled his hand heavily on the back of Xander’s neck, so he’d feel his presence. It seemed to work, because Xander, while not exactly relaxed, did settle some. He only jumped a couple more times, which made Paul smile, because really, what was coming shouldn’t have been a surprise.

The atmosphere of the room went from anticipation to relief when Eli visibly succumbed to his master. But it was quickly overrun by the thick, cloying sensation of arousal permeating the room. The whipping went on, frequently interrupted by Lars as he stopped to sooth and check the condition of his sub. The end, when it inevitably arrived, culminated with a hoarse cry from Eli as he was given the command to come. Lars petted him through it, speaking in his ear words only they could hear, but that Paul could easily imagine.

Xander’s attention remained fixed on the couple, watching as Eli was released and gently escorted to a room in the back where he would be tended to. The whole time, Paul had divided his attention between Xander and the

actions on the stage, which is how he almost missed the hitch in Xander's breath.

Alarmed, Paul grabbed Xander's chin and swung him around to see his face. "Baby, are you okay?"

"I'm fine," Xander hastily responded, blushing. He was mortified at being so moved by what he knew many would have considered abusive. He felt an immediate defensive reaction to the thought of anyone blindly making that assumption. Because it had been beautiful. The care Lars had taken with his sub, the trust Eli had given his Dom, the two had moved in such loving synchronicity that Xander had found himself overwhelmed.

While he was less certain about the pain aspect, not sure that he could go that far, himself, Xander was undoubtedly turned on by the whole experience. He wondered what it would feel like to have that kind of desire and devotion from someone he felt so strongly for. To be so secure in another man's control that he'd offer himself body and soul to him, and be embraced and... worshiped in response.

Xander couldn't look at Paul. He knew his every thought must be broadcast on his face, because he was out of his element and knew there was no way he had his control in place. He glanced at Wren, instead. The sweet-faced boy was watching him with a bit of moisture in his own eyes. He gave Xander a soft, understanding smile, reaching over to give his knee a quick squeeze. Xander returned the smile, feeling better that he wasn't the only one who'd been touched by the demonstration.

A light cough came from Paul, and Xander, remembering the order not to hide himself, finally chanced meeting his eyes. He offered an apologetic smile, but Paul didn't return it. He simply stared, eyes unfathomable, and reached out to brush his knuckles over Xander's cheek. It might have made Xander blush more, but he was caught in that look, wanting what it promised so badly that his already aching cock fought against the constraint of his damnably tight jeans.

“It can get pretty intense,” Paul finally acknowledged, still caressing Xander’s cheek. Paul was practically growling when he leaned forward and added, “You have no idea how fucking hot it is to see you react so strongly.”

God. Now he couldn’t look away. He was trapped in the moment, eyes locked on Paul, the bold possessiveness in Paul’s eyes enough to make him choke back a whimper.

Xander licked his lips. “I wasn’t expecting the... intimacy of it, you know?” His voice sounded thick and rough in his own ears. He could tell by the flash of heat in Paul’s eyes that he was also affected. Paul stood and pulled Xander to his feet so fast his head spun. They were on their way to the exit, his hand gripped in Paul’s warm, hard hand, before his brain caught up with the fact that his feet were moving.

At the top of the stairs, Xander realized the stairway had led them to the dark hallway he’d avoided earlier. But he didn’t get much of a look around, because Paul stopped and pulled him close to his body. He could feel Paul’s erection against his hip and he was certain he could have come in about two seconds if he barely rubbed up against Paul once or twice.

Then he was against the wall, every inch of Xander’s body was pinned motionless by Paul’s weight. Xander tried to reach for Paul, but found his arms caught by the wrists and held over his head. Panting now, he tried thrusting his hips but they were trapped, too. He could feel the steel rod of Paul’s shaft pushing almost painfully against his own.

Paul’s cheek was against his, lips so close to Xander’s ear. “Tell me now that you want this, because I...”

“I want this,” Xander didn’t let him finish, squirming and striving to press himself closer, but he couldn’t move. “Please.” He didn’t recognize his own voice, it was so filled with a need he knew he’d never voiced before.

“Xander...”

“No.” Xander stopped him. “I don’t want to know. I just want to feel this and be yours for tonight like you said.” He writhed against the restraints, desperate for more friction. “You promised, Highlander.”

Paul groaned and dropped his face into Xander's neck, breathing hard. Xander's heart sank. "I thought you wanted this, too."

Paul raised his head, disbelief on his face. "I've been hard since I saw you across the street."

"Oh! Thank God!" Xander breathed, relief and arousal warring for dominance for about a second before arousal won. "I mean, me too. I don't think I've ever been this hard for this long in my life."

Paul tipped his head back and laughed. "Well, I'll take that as a compliment." He caressed Xander's face, his own softening when Xander sought his touch. "And you should too, because it's all for you, my boy."

Again, Xander grasped onto the term, knowing it was foolish, but unaccountably proud to be Paul's boy, even if it was only temporary.

Then Paul kissed him and every lucid thought flew from his mind. This was no delicate, hesitant first kiss. Paul's mouth took his, claiming him, demanding nothing short of complete surrender. Xander opened up and took him in, welcoming the plundering tongue, encouraging more, taking, sucking, biting, and, oh, God, he was going to come from a single kiss.

A whimper left him and he stiffened, struggling to hold back, but Paul was ruthless. He ground his groin into Xander's, thrusting their lengths together, all the while overwhelming Xander's senses with his demanding mouth.

Pinning Xander's wrists together, Paul held them with one hand so he could free the other. With a strength that took Xander's breath away, Paul hiked him up against the wall, wrapping Xander's thighs around his waist. Xander was overcome; it was too much. His hips bucked, seeking more and more friction, their cocks slamming together harder and harder.

Paul's hand slid under Xander's thigh to his ass, rubbing through his tight jeans against his tightened sac, pressing against his perineum, digging into his crevice, before slipping under his shirt to reach his hot skin. Xander arched into the pressure, his surrender to this powerful man a freeing and heady experience that had him aching for more before they'd barely started.

Paul's hot touch seemed to be everywhere at once. Xander might have panicked if he'd seen it coming, but he was so lost in the moment that when Paul's thumb finally rubbed roughly over his nipple, one of Xander's hottest hot spots, there was no stopping.

Barely aware of the sounds emitting from his throat, Xander bucked and shook through an unbelievably powerful orgasm. His cries were caught in Paul's mouth and swallowed as if they were the sweetest wine.

Shaken, Xander sagged, held up solely by Paul's body pinned against him. Xander's head fell back against the wall with a thump, and he squeezed his eyes closed, reality cruelly returning in shards that punctured his serenity. He was horrified to find himself alarmingly close to tears for the second time tonight.

"Oh, my God. I'm so sorry." He'd ruined everything, he was sure of it.

"Sorry for what, baby?" Paul was still breathing hard, but he released Xander's wrists and cupped his chin, forcing Xander to look at him. "Wasn't that what we were going for?" His smile was so kind, so patient, Xander felt that much worse.

"I'm sorry for..."

Paul kissed him hard, stopping him. "We're not done, my boy. We're only taking a bit of the edge off before we get to the main event."

"Really?" Xander knew he sounded pathetic, but he couldn't stop the hopeful sound.

"Of course." Paul kissed his neck and Xander tipped his head to give him better access. "Did you think you were allowed one orgasm a day, or something?"

"Or something." Xander shrugged as if it was inconsequential, but of course Paul caught on to his discomfort.

"Why would you think that?"

Xander opened his mouth. Closed it. Tried again. "I guess my ex and I were, um, a 'before bed and go to sleep' kind of couple, you know?" He didn't

mention that what they'd usually done before bed almost always consisted of Xander sucking Jonathan off while jacking himself to completion. It was the kind of efficient and mess-free sex that appealed to Jonathan most.

Paul studied him, but he didn't laugh or look at him as if he were a pitiful lost puppy, so Xander didn't feel as awkward as he might have.

"That's too bad." Paul rubbed against Xander's spent cock, making him gasp and feel the beginnings of recovery already. "I had you marked as a multiple comer right from the start."

"A what?" It was sadly very close to a squeak, which made Paul chuckle.

"Oh, yeah." Paul thrust against him, slowly, smoothly, methodically, making Xander pant. "I have a nose for these things."

Xander laughed breathlessly. "Oh." Stunned at how fast his body was responding, he moaned. "Please tell me you're one, too."

"Hell, yeah," Paul rasped, grinding again.

"Oh, God." Xander's eyes rolled back and he trembled, working his hips against Paul's as much as his limited space would allow.

"I have a room in town, but if you're more comfortable with your own place, we can go there," Paul offered, and Xander was relieved to hear the rough breathing of a man close to climax. "Let's take this out of here."

Xander struggled to think. "I'm right over there." He waved his hand in the general direction of the hotel where Lara had so brilliantly booked a room for him. "Couple blocks walk."

Paul was already moving towards the door. "Let's go."

"But—" Xander stood on wobbly legs, Paul's erection still pressed against him. "Um... what about you?" He reached for Paul's cock but was denied.

"I'm okay." Paul didn't look okay, but he gave Xander a wicked smile. "I'll hold off until I can come inside you."

The words were a slap of heat right to Xander's groin. "Oh. Yeah. That sounds good. More than good, but..." He trailed off, suddenly nervous.

“But what?” Paul held him close. “There are plenty of other things we can do, baby, if that’s too much.”

“No!” Xander almost shouted. “No. I want to, it’s that... I’ve never, uh...”

Paul went completely still. “You’re not a virgin.”

“No! Of course not.” Xander could feel his cheeks burning, even as his cock grew harder against Paul’s. “But I’ve never bottomed.” He rushed the words out so fast he doubted Paul caught them.

But he did. “You...” Paul stared hard into Xander’s eyes. “Why?”

Xander tried to squirm away but Paul held him tight, holding eye contact in a way that made him obey. “I... God. I’ve only had one serious relationship, okay? Before that was maybe a couple guys in college that I fooled around with. We never went that far. And Jonathan...” He paused, sure he was imagining the *growl* in Paul’s chest. “Um, he wasn’t really into that kind of sex.” He shrugged as if it didn’t matter, but he was burning up under the intensity of Paul’s stare.

“But you were into it, weren’t you, boy?” Paul’s voice changed. It had been powerful before. Now it invaded Xander’s body and made it quiver with need as he was once again pinned to the wall.

“Yes,” he whispered in response, blood singing in his veins.

“You didn’t want to be the one in control all the time, did you?”

Xander shook his head. “No.”

“The whole time you were aching for it, weren’t you. You were dying to be taken.” Paul thrust hard into Xander’s hips, and his voice dropped more, so deep he barely sounded like himself. “To be *owned* by someone strong enough to control you.”

Clutching Paul’s shoulders, Xander arched into him. “Someone like you.”

“Someone like me.”

“Yes.” Another whispered response. Xander couldn’t stop trembling. It was only getting worse.

“You want to give up that control, don’t you, boy?”

“Yes,” he hissed. Xander’s eyes closed, and his head lolled against the wall.

“You want to be held down and pounded into until you can’t move. Can’t breathe. Can’t do anything but feel and hang on for the ride.” Paul was working them together with every statement, his breath hot on Xander’s neck.

“God, yes.” Xander’s eyes met Paul’s but he couldn’t focus, swept unresisting into Paul’s seduction.

Another kiss of possession landed on his mouth, and Xander’s whole body shuddered its surrender until Paul finally raised his head, eyes scorching with unchecked need. No one had ever looked at Xander like that.

“Please, can we go?” Xander wasn’t above begging, apparently.

On the way out, Paul stopped by the bar, slipping through a staff door and returning with a button-down shirt. Xander must not have hidden his disappointment at his covering himself because Paul grinned and pressed a hard kiss to his lips. Xander’s cock flexed in its trappings, the slightest movement making him acutely aware of the cooling wetness sliding over it.

At the door, Xander stumbled to a stop, mind still hazy with Paul’s kisses, body lethargic from the recent orgasm. It was fortunate Paul was there—solid and strong—to hold him up. Still, it didn’t take brilliant powers of observation to spot the longing on poor Seth’s face. The bouncer straightened as soon as he spotted Paul, and Xander tucked himself closer, just to make sure it was clear who was going home with whom.

Paul nodded at the bouncer. “Have a good night, Seth.”

“You too, Mr. Forrest.” Seth answered, then froze. At first Xander didn’t know what the big dramatic pause was all about, but then he glanced over at Paul to see him staring stonily at the bouncer. Xander, made alert by the tension of the moment, finally realized what Seth had said.

“M—Mr. Forrest?” Xander could actually feel the blood draining from his face. He couldn’t be hearing what he—“Did you say Mr. Forrest?”

Now Seth was staring wide-eyed and speechless at the icy Paul... Mr. Forrest.

Xander pulled away from Paul and almost stumbled, light-headed and getting worse. "You're... You knew who I was this whole time, didn't you?" Shame, humiliation, and worse, betrayal swept through him, blinding him to reason immediately.

"Xander." Paul reached for him, but Xander stepped back, stopping Paul from coming closer. "Xander, baby, please listen."

But Xander was shaking his head, the pain in his chest making it hard to pull in air. "I can't believe you did this." It was barely a whisper, but he could see by the flash of regret in Paul's eyes that he'd heard him. Without another word, Xander turned and walked away.

The walk to the hotel was made hurriedly and gracelessly. Xander was rarely smooth on his feet on an ordinary day; today was so far from ordinary there wasn't the slightest glimmer of grace to be seen.

Reaching his hotel door without any recollection of how he'd gotten there, Xander's hand shook so badly it took him several tries to get the key card into the slot and then it still wouldn't work. Finally, using one hand to steady the other, he slowed himself down enough to unlock and open the door.

Xander stumbled through the door, clumsily making his way through the suite to the bedroom. He started stripping, suddenly claustrophobic in the body squeezing, semen-fused clothing. He released a heartfelt groan when he finally slid the zipper of his jeans open and his cock could breathe again.

He pushed his jeans down around his thighs when he realized he still had his boots on. Xander shook his head, trying to think clearly. Sitting on the side of the bed to pull off his boots, Xander numbly assessed the condition of his genitals. Having a raging erection trapped behind unforgiving denim for hours was no way to treat one's man flesh. He gingerly peeled his cock away from his body, grimacing at the drying mess. Somewhere in his brain he wondered if, after its night of trapped debauchery, it could end up permanently swinging

to the left. In that same, faraway place he heard himself laugh in a decidedly unhinged way.

Of course, he thought, not yet willing to give the subject up, *rutting like a dog against a relative stranger in a dark hallway probably wasn't the ideal treatment for said man flesh, either*. But Paul hadn't really been so much a stranger, had he? Xander scrubbed his clean hand over his head. He was already regretting running, already realizing he'd had no small part in this himself.

Making his way to the shower, Xander's eye caught a glimmer of silver and he stopped, surprised to see the chain still around his neck. How he could have forgotten it, he had no idea, because he was now acutely aware of the heavy, welcomed weight that Paul had used to mark him.

Xander longed for Paul. Paul who made him feel sexy—actually *sexy*—and wanted. That was another first for Xander. To know, to really *know* that Paul had wanted him as badly as he had wanted Paul was an incredible feeling.

He touched the chain where it dipped between his collarbones, and in that moment his future lay before him with perfect clarity.

Paul stared helplessly after Xander, uncharacteristically indecisive. Paul Forrest was not an indecisive man. There was no waffling about once he'd made up his mind. He stood in the middle of the sidewalk, guilt ridden and unsure of himself, and pissed off at feeling vulnerable.

“Mr. Forrest.” Seth came hesitantly into view, real regret in his eyes. “I'm so sorry! I didn't know...” Paul knew he'd scared him with his stony silence, and he knew it wasn't acceptable to leave a sub scared and uncertain—whether he was his own or not.

Paul sighed. “It's alright, Seth,” he reassured him, laying a comforting hand on Seth's arm. “You didn't know. I've got no one to blame but myself.”

“I really am sorry, sir.” Seth ducked his head. “He looked pretty mad.”

“That he did, buddy.”

“I could call you a cab, sir?”

Paul shook his head, making a point to catch Seth’s eye, to let him know they were okay. “Thanks, Seth, but I’ll walk.” He turned and started towards the hotel, still unsure what his plan was.

Slipping his phone from his shirt pocket, Paul hit the speed dial.

Jay answered without bothering with a greeting. “What did you do?” He didn’t sound the least bit surprised to be receiving this call.

“Nothing.” He blew out an exhausted breath. “I was outed before I had a chance to explain the situation.”

“Oh.” Jay paused. Paul could see him clearly in his mind, having witnessed his “thinking face” many times before. “What are you going to do?”

“Fuck if I know.” If there’d been a rock in his path, he’d have kicked it.

Jay exhaled impatiently. “Look, man. This kid has you in knots. Why do you let him get to you like this?”

Paul grunted. “I don’t know. I’m on unfamiliar ground. He’s not part of the scene. It’s like I’m dealing with a virgin who’s going to run screaming the minute he sees my hard cock.”

Jay snorted. “Wow. You are so egotistical.”

“Not helping, Jay,” Paul snarled.

An uncharitable laugh filled Paul’s ear and he ground his teeth together, cursing himself for calling in the first place.

Jay, never terribly concerned with being considerate, went on, “He’s a grown man, for chrissake, Paul. Why don’t you try treating him like one?”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

Jay snorted. “Dude, you are the Dom. He is the sub. What’s your role, here? And why the hesitation?”

Paul stopped in the middle of the sidewalk, but didn’t respond.

“Okay.” Jay changed tactics. “Was he into you, too, before...”

“Hell, yeah, he was.” Paul barely resisted groaning at the memory of Xander’s hot, tight body quivering through his orgasm in Paul’s arms. Hell, his entire groin still throbbed with unfulfilled need. “We were on our way to his hotel room.”

“So...” Jay dragged the word out like a teacher expecting his student to fill in the blanks, finally letting out a hiss of derision when Paul said nothing. “What do you *want*, Paul?”

“I want Xander.” The answer was immediate and as heartfelt as anything he’d ever said.

“And what have you always done when you wanted something?” If Paul had been in more of his right mind, he’d be far more than irritated with the tone of Jay’s voice about now.

Instead, he reluctantly answered like that recalcitrant student finally figuring out the game. “I’ve gotten it.”

“Good. Now, pull up your panties and go get him,” Jay commanded. “And quit second-guessing yourself like you’re fucking new at this or something. Your instincts have never failed you before. Trust them now.”

Paul was thoughtful for a long time. “You’re right.”

“Of course I’m right.”

“You’re also an arrogant ass.” But Jay was right, and Paul was relieved to have a plan of action taking place in his mind.

“Stop, now. You’re making me blush.”

Paul laughed at the cocky bastard. Then he had an inspiration. “By the way, man, I think it would behoove you to get off your lazy ass and head on down to the club.”

“Please.” Jay was not amused. “You know I don’t like that place.”

“I do know that. But trust me when I say it would be in your best interest.”

“I don’t think—”

“You won’t even have to walk through the door,” Paul coaxed. “C’mon, man. Live a little.”

“I’ll have you know I’m living a *lot*, Paul. In fact, as we speak I am relaxing in the ambiance of a bachelor’s condo by moonlight, from the comfort of my sofa, ice-cold beer in hand and naked as the day I was born.”

Paul chuckled. “Beer in one hand, lube in the other, huh?”

“Well, not now, genius,” Jay complained. “I had to put the slick down to answer my damn phone.”

“Fine, stay in with your lube,” Paul teased. “Don’t tell me I never give you anything, though.”

Jay grunted. “Whatever. Fine. I’ll go.”

“Now you’re talkin’.”

“Piss off.”

Paul laughed at Jay’s indelicate response and disconnected the call. He stared at the building across the street. He’d known, of course, where Xander was staying, thanks to Lara. Paul had only to enter to get to him. He shot a quick text to Lara, requesting Xander’s room number with a patience he didn’t feel. Why hadn’t he thought to get that ahead of time? Oh yeah. Because he’d been *that* certain he wouldn’t need it.

Paul went to his own room while he waited. He had to text Lara two more times and wait another hour before she responded. Paul figured she was doing her duty as Xander’s friend by holding him off as long as she deemed necessary, but he sure as hell didn’t like it.

Finally, the text came with Xander’s room number and a “don’t mess this up—again” message.

Now, Paul stood in front of room 314, game face on and ready to fight for his boy. He sucked in a deep breath, knocked on the door, and waited. And waited, only relaxing when he eventually sensed, more than heard, movement on the other side of the door.

“I can hear you thinking from here, Xander.”

Xander had been fresh from a scalding hot shower when the knock came. Now he stood, staring blindly at the door, barely able to hear anything above the thundering in his chest, which he was sure was echoing off the walls it was so loud. He was surprised Paul hadn't said he could hear *that* from the hall.

“Open the door, my boy. We're going to talk.”

Dammit! Even through a solid-core door, the timbre of Paul's voice penetrated Xander's chest and wound itself right on down to suck on his testicles.

He could feel the heat spreading from his chest to his cheeks. He'd been played as the fool, but he'd also been foolish enough all on his own. He'd been manipulated by two of the most important people in his life. But it was the second half of that realization that had stunned him into admitting that because of his own stubbornness and insecurities, he would never have willingly met Paul. Which meant he'd have *never known Paul*. And the thought of that was as effective as a sucker punch to the gut.

“Xander. I know you're there. I can feel you.” Paul's voice dropped, and Xander's body reacted so predictably he couldn't help pressing the heel of his hand to the base of his cock. He swallowed a pained moan as he grew harder.

Still, he hesitated, and he didn't know why. He'd been more than half hoping Paul would do this very thing. That Paul would come after him, push him until he abandoned his inhibitions, force his doubts away, stretch his boundaries, demand his submission. Xander wanted—needed—Paul to take his body, and his fear, and his shame and destroy it all until there was nothing ugly left.

He took a shaky breath, having no idea where those thoughts had come from. They shocked him, and scared him. But he knew the unquestionable truth to them, too.

All he had to do was open the door. Paul was here. He'd come for him. That meant he still wanted Xander, right? So, he had to swallow his useless pride and open the damn door.

But... “You lied to me, *Mr. Forrest*,” Xander heard himself say. He hadn’t meant to, but now that it was out, he held his breath in anticipation of the answer.

He could hear Paul’s sigh through the door. “I know, baby. It was not my finest hour.”

Xander didn’t answer.

“I’m sorry.” Even muffled by the door, Xander could hear the sincerity in Paul’s voice. “I will make it up to you in every way I know how, Xander... let me in.”

Thinking those three words, *let me in* could mean so many different things, especially when delivered with the intensity of Paul’s powerful voice, Xander finally reached for the door. He was already so close to it, an arm-length away. When had that happened?

Xander tried to control his shaking hand when he turned the lock, but it didn’t help. It also didn’t matter, because the second it clicked free, the door was pushing in and Xander was moving aside to let Paul in. He closed the door quickly and stood with his back to it.

He didn’t have the courage to look up, but the quick intake he heard from Paul sent a flush of gratification through him. Xander’s cock flexed in response and could tell by Paul’s breathing that he’d seen it, too. It had to be hard to miss, since Xander stood before Paul completely naked, save for the silver collar around his neck. Silence stretched between them while Xander waited for Paul’s command.

“Look at me, boy.” Paul’s voice was so hoarse with need that Xander almost came on the spot.

“Yes, sir.” Xander took a bracing breath and lifted his head, meeting Paul’s very hot, very appreciative gaze.

“Is there anything you need to say before I take you?”

Xander's mind shorted out at the question. There was so much he wanted to say, but how much *needed* to be said right at this very moment, *really*? Only one thing, as far as he could figure. "I'm sorry, sir."

"Good enough." And that was that. Paul's demeanor became sex and dominance the second those two words were gone from the air. "Remove my boots, Xander."

Xander dropped before him, reaching for the laces. He glanced up once to see Paul watching with hooded eyes. He fumbled with the boots, anticipation and a driving need to please making him clumsy.

Then Paul made it worse. "Tell me what you want, Xander."

He blinked, raising his head again. "Um... aren't you supposed to tell *me* what *you* want?"

Paul quirked an eyebrow. "What I want is for you to answer my question. I wouldn't have asked, otherwise."

"Sorry, sir." Xander took a shaky breath. He'd just been chastised, yet he was more turned on than ever.

"I don't like to be second guessed, boy."

Xander nodded his understanding. He focused on pulling Paul's boots off while he contemplated the answer. What did he want? He lifted his eyes, the look in Paul's hot enough to make his cock leak. *I want to bury my face under your kilt and taste you. I want your come in my mouth. I want to feel you buried in my ass so deep it hurts. I want your mark on me. I want my mark on you. I want to be your boy.*

But could he *really* say all that?

"Having a hard time deciding, baby?" Paul felt the familiar rush that filled him when a submissive was at his feet. To be handed complete control over a man was a powerful position that he didn't take lightly. It was that much bigger because it was Xander, this time.

Xander was staring at him and Paul could almost read his every thought without a word spoken. He suppressed his smile, not wanting Xander to think he was being laughed at.

“Tell me,” Paul commanded. “All of it.”

“All of it?” Xander squeaked, and Paul nodded solemnly, despite the fact that Xander was making it harder and harder for him to stand there, seeing Xander at his feet, without tackling him to the ground and plundering.

Xander sucked in a breath, and let it all out in one shot. “I want to bury my face under your kilt and taste you. I want your come in my mouth. I want to feel you buried in my ass so deep it hurts. I want your mark on me. I want my mark on you. I want to be your boy.”

He stopped to inhale. “There’s a lot more I could probably think of,” he admitted, as if he were in confession and if he tried hard enough he could list sin after sin.

Paul felt his lips twitch and his cock reach maximum capacity, his mind filled with the images Xander was creating. “That’ll do.” He wiggled his now bare feet and held a hand out to help Xander up. “Let’s go to bed.”

Xander stood, stumbling drunkenly, which stroked Paul’s ego right along with the engorged member arcing up from Xander’s groin. It looked achy and needy, both of which suited Paul’s plans perfectly.

He brushed a single fingertip down the length of Xander’s cock, both because he wanted to touch so badly, and because he hoped to elicit a delicious response from the boy. Which he did, and it was exquisite.

Paul had Xander sit on the edge of the bed while he stood close in front of him. But damn. The sensual way Xander stared up at him was going to end him before they’d barely begun.

“Help me off with these things, would you?” He asked as he reached for the fastening at the side of his kilt. Xander scrambled to help, shaky hands creating more interference than assistance, but Paul said nothing. How could he, when he was the cause?

Finally, Paul stood in nothing but his leather wrist bands and a simple white jock-strap. He couldn't stop the smile when Xander blinked up at him, adorably confused.

"I thought you Highlanders went naked under those things." Xander's voice was raspy, not that Paul needed to hear it when the proof of his arousal was jutting right at him.

"I might have, but I knew I'd be seeing you, and I suspected I might need a little support so I wouldn't walk around tenting my kilt all night." His confession brought more heat to Xander's eyes. He held his breath when Xander reached out to touch, laying his hand over the bulging jock.

"Are you done, boy? I've been strapped in and hard for a long time," Paul chuckled.

Xander smiled and reached for the straps, and again, his reaction to the baring of Paul's manhood did not disappoint. The flush to Xander's cheeks and the way he licked his lips made Paul groan.

"A quick taste, baby." He cupped the back of Xander's head, burying his fingers in the short, silky hair. "I'm too impatient to be in you."

A beautiful whimper escaped Xander's throat as he leaned in to taste. One gentle swipe of the tongue was the only warning Paul received before Xander was taking him as fully into his mouth as he could manage. The surprise combined with the feel of Xander's hot tongue and tight lips and throat closing on him was almost too much, but Paul pulled back a bit and controlled their movements with pressure on Xander's head.

After having a few moments to revel in the way his cock stretched Xander's lips and the fact that he was so far down Xander's throat that he'd hear it in Xander's voice for days, Paul actually thought for the first time ever that he might be too big. He'd always been with experienced subs, most of whom had taken cocks his size and then some, and if they hadn't, they'd wanted to. But Xander was... different.

Paul reluctantly pulled himself from Xander's lips, smirking when the boy tried following, obviously also reluctant to let go. He lifted Xander up to him

for a deep, demanding kiss. Paul had never tasted anything so sweet as the salt of his own pre-come slicking Xander's tongue. Xander moaned his desire into Paul's mouth and he agreed whole-heartedly.

“On the bed, Xander.” Paul took a couple calming breaths as he moved to the bedside table, where the supplies were prominently laid out. “Face down, I want your ass in the air and your arms open wide.”

Xander moved to the center of the huge bed, a heated blush covering his face and neck. Paul loved it. “Up on your knees, spread 'em as wide as you can, because the only friction you'll be getting on your cock is what reaches the bed.”

There was that whimper, again. Paul could really get used to the sound of that. But for now, he grabbed the base of his cock, hard, to get his control back in place. He had to do something as he took in the vision that was Xander, spread out like a sacrifice with his pink, virgin ass offered up. For Paul. It was enough to drive all thoughts of gentleness right out of Paul's mind if he wasn't careful.

He knelt on the bed at Xander's side, close to his hip. “Okay, baby. I'm going to get you ready, all right?” A muffled sound and a nod was all he got. Sternly, he spoke again. “Xander. Turn your head this way so I can see your face.”

That was more like it. Dazed eyes met his as Paul slid a soothing hand over Xander's smooth flank, up his back, and back down. Xander was panting like he'd been running, which did nothing to cool Paul's ardor. He was getting pushed to the edge by Xander's responsiveness. It was simultaneously humbling, and arousing as hell.

He fumbled a bit with the brand new bottle of lube, but he finally got it opened. Positioned so he could see as much of Xander as possible, Paul leaned in close and swiped his flattened tongue from Xander's perineum to the top of his crack. The noise let out by Xander perfectly accompanied the rash of goosebumps that spread over his back. Paul smirked and did it again.

Xander trembled beneath him, obviously struggling to remain still under Paul's ministrations. But his hips writhed and his chest heaved, and that was before Paul even touched Xander's entrance with his slick fingers.

Keep it slow. Paul ground his teeth, chanting the words in his head, and watched his first finger disappear into Xander's body. He had to close his eyes, but he could still feel the gripping heat clenching around him. It was almost too much, especially when Xander bucked against his hand.

"Take it easy, baby," Paul rasped. "I've got you." His finger slid in and out, unfettered, loosening Xander quickly. Xander wanted this. His body wasn't going to fight him.

Paul added a second finger and pressed them in deep, aiming right for Xander's prostate. He held there, relishing the squirming of Xander's body, and the desperate noises Xander probably didn't realize he was making.

It didn't take long for Xander to be ready for a third finger. Paul bit back his impatience. It had been a long time, if ever, that he'd had to be so careful. He'd practically forgotten the whole 1-2-3 prep, it had been so long. But here he was, and he wasn't going to cut corners and end up hurting Xander. More than anything, Paul wanted Xander to fly tonight.

Xander stared blindly at the gorgeous, naked man who knelt so easily at his hip, face mere inches away from the hand buried three fingers deep inside him. If he hadn't been so mindless with need, he'd have been horribly embarrassed by his position. But looking at Paul, who was watching while he stretched and prepared Xander for his cock, he couldn't have cared if rainbows had started shooting out of his ass.

He tried desperately to contain his movements, having not been given permission to move, but he wasn't doing a very good job. Xander's back arched, his cock flexed and leaked steadily onto the sheet beneath him, and he pressed back against every thrust of Paul's fingers. He had no idea it could feel like this. He couldn't get enough.

Panting, Xander gripped the sheets hard, his arms outstretched for balance. “Please, Paul... sir.” He closed his eyes and moaned at the brush across his prostate. “God.”

Paul was apparently susceptible to begging, because he was on his knees with the firm head of his cock against Xander’s opening before Xander could gather enough air to plead again. Xander went perfectly still, waiting for an eternity for Paul to push into him. His muscles quivered uncontrollably, and Paul soothed him with wide, warm hands over his back.

“Are you ready for me, boy?” Paul rasped, making Xander jump and his skin tingle.

“Yes!” Xander twisted his hips. “Yes! Please, sir!” The words came naturally, as if he’d been waiting for Paul to come along and be his Sir. But before he could think any more about that, Paul was entering him. Stretching, filling, rocking his way slowly, deeply, inside.

Xander let out a moan—pain, pleasure, it all mixed together—that didn’t stop until Paul had seated himself deep inside him. The only sound in the room was their labored breathing. Xander tried not to clench down on the intruder in his hole, but he couldn’t stop completely. It burned, but the action elicited a pained groan from Paul, so it was worth it.

He curled his hips back, ready for more. Paul’s hands gripped his hips. Xander could feel the tight restraint in them, and the realization that Paul was as close to the edge as he was shocked him. Thrilled him.

Paul slid slowly out, just a little, then thrust back in. The movements played out right over Xander’s prostate, and he shook with the intensity.

“I’m not going to last, sir.” His tone was apologetic as he gasped and met Paul’s next thrust, and the ones that followed, each stronger than the last. Xander was crying out with every push of Paul’s hips, struggling against the restraining hands.

Paul stopped, but only long enough to spread his arms out over Xander’s, locking their fingers together. His legs slid over Xander’s too, until they were

stacked one upon the other in what Xander would later dub “the sexiest frog position, ever”. Paul’s mouth was on his neck, every breath hot on his skin.

Xander turned his head, begging a kiss, and was granted one. A messy, awkward kiss that was more arousing than the most smoothly delivered kisses Xander had experienced. It was too hard to maintain, though, once Paul gave up on the graceful, grinding movements for hard, demanding thrusts that pounded into Xander with the force of a machine.

With the gentlest of motions, Paul had pressed against Xander’s prostate. Now, heavily draped over every inch of Xander’s body, Paul was merciless, keeping constant friction on Xander’s gland, slamming into him time and again until he couldn’t do anything but ride it out.

If Paul was trying to cause Xander to come hands-free, he was doing a damn good job of it. Xander’s cock was so painfully rigid it was arced up against his belly, defying gravity in its demand for release. With every thrust he was closer and closer, sensations overwhelming him, until Paul suddenly nailed him in a hard, rapid onslaught that forced the orgasm right out of him.

Xander wailed—a sound that had never come from him before—shaking and convulsing through waves and waves of a climax that wouldn’t stop. Paul stilled and bucked a final few times behind him, and Xander vaguely realized he’d come, too. Satisfaction filled him right before he collapsed, boneless and wrecked.

It took ages for Paul’s breathing to return to normal, and function to return to his limbs. He was barely managing to keep his weight on his elbows so he wouldn’t crush Xander completely. Paul pressed open-mouthed kisses across Xander’s shoulders, feeling more than a little smug that his boy was completely gone at the moment.

Paul sighed and stared at Xander’s flushed and sweaty face, the satisfaction on it curling Xander’s lips so sweetly. So lovely. So complete in his submission. Paul’s chest swelled with dangerous emotion that wasn’t to be voiced at a time like this.

With a wince, Paul pulled out of Xander and set about the task of cleaning them up. Xander barely moved, the slightest sounds coming from him indicating he was still conscious. When Paul finally eased into bed with him, Xander blinked open blurry eyes and gave Paul the sweetest smile he'd ever seen. Paul kissed him on the forehead and tucked him against his side before slipping into his own deep sleep.

Paul wasn't at all surprised that they woke in exactly the same position. He also wasn't surprised that his entire arm had fallen numb, because Xander's head resting on his shoulder had cut off all circulation. Easing his arm from under Xander, Paul turned towards him to find that he was awake. He decided he could easily drown in those deep brown eyes.

"Morning." Xander gave him a small, shy smile.

"Good morning," Paul purred with enough sex in his voice to make Xander blush.

"Well, you did it." His shyness turned playful.

"Did what, baby?" Paul ignored his tingling arm and used the other to lift a hand to Xander's cheek, scraping his knuckles over the beard stubble.

"You know." His eyes twinkled and his cheeks flushed redder. "Pounded into me until I couldn't do anything but hang on for the ride."

Paul's hardening cock perked up more quickly at the words. "I guess I did, didn't I?"

Xander's laugh was light and free. "You don't have to be so smug about it."

"Oh, I think I should be quite smug about it. In fact," he pulled Xander into a possessive kiss, dragging him flush with his body, "I think I'm going to do it again." He smiled knowingly when Xander's breath caught and his hips curled against him.

"Hm. You might be right," Xander gasped. "Carry on."

"Yes, sir."

Finally stepping out from the second shower of the day, and pushing check-out time, Xander watched Paul dress without bothering to conceal his affections. Xander needed to know, though. Was he going to be enough? Would he bore the man to tears before their first weekend was even over? Was he correct to assume there would be a weekend beyond the one night?

He'd thought so. It would be really crushing to find out now that he'd misread Paul's intentions. What if this wasn't really it? What if none of this was the real deal?

He blurted it out before he could rethink it, "What are your plans for the day?"

Paul raised his head. "Well, first, I'm going to my own room for my regular clothes. Then I'm driving us home. But then..." He smiled and walked his sexy walk to stand before Xander.

Xander was returning his smile, heart all aflutter, before he realized it. "And then?"

"Then... it's Sunday Smut day."

Yep. It was the real deal.

THE END

Author Bio

Kim Alan began writing for publication approximately thirty years after first making the declaration, “I’m going to be a writer when I grow up.” It’s fairly representative of the severity of her procrastination disorder. This is her second contribution to the M/M Romance Group’s annual writing event. She released Yours in May, 2013, through Torquere Press, hopefully with more to follow soon.

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