

A photograph of two men lying in a white hammock. The man on the left has short, spiky brown hair and is wearing a white t-shirt. The man on the right has dark hair and is wearing a light blue shirt. They are both smiling and looking towards each other, with the man on the left resting his head on the man on the right's shoulder. The background is bright and slightly out of focus, suggesting an outdoor setting.

CAM KENNEDY

To You I am
BOUND

DON'T READ IN THE CLOSET EVENT
LOVE'S LANDSCAPES 2014

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Love's Landscapes

An M/M Romance series

TO YOU I AM BOUND

By Cam Kennedy

Introduction

The story you are about to read celebrates love, sex and romance between men. It is a product of the *Love's Landscapes* promotion sponsored by the *Goodreads M/M Romance Group* and is published as a gift to you.

What Is Love's Landscapes?

The *Goodreads M/M Romance Group* invited members to choose a photo and pen a letter asking for a short M/M romance story inspired by the image; authors from the group were encouraged to select a letter and write an original tale. The result was an outpouring of creativity that shone a spotlight on the special bond between M/M romance writers and the people who love what these authors do.

A written description of the image that inspired this story is provided along with the original request letter. If you'd like to view the photo, please feel free to join the [Goodreads M/M Romance Group](#) and visit the discussion section: *Love's Landscapes*.

No matter if you are a long-time devotee to M/M Romance, just new to the genre or fall somewhere in between, you are in for a delicious treat.

Words of Caution

This story may contain sexually explicit content and is **intended for adult readers**. It may contain content that is disagreeable or distressing to some readers. The *M/M Romance Group* strongly recommends that each reader review the General Information section before each story for story tags as well as for content warnings.

This story is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents are the products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

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TO YOU I AM BOUND

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Photo Description

Photo One: Two men on rocks, in front of water, with their backs to the camera. One is sitting with his hands on his knees, and the other is standing with his hands interlaced on the back of his neck. Steam is coming off the water, and they are dressed in tight black shorts or possibly boxer briefs

Photo Two: Kissing, naked men, one dark-haired and the other lighter, rub intimately together.

Story Letter

Dear Author,

Please take inspiration from the song Bound by Julia & the Doogans. Just to pique your interest, follow the link for the lyrics:

[Bound](#)

For the most part, I'm open to whatever this song speaks to you. But to help, here are some things that I happen to enjoy:

** GFY/OFY, coming out, dirty dancing/clubbing, sports/athletes, soldiers, forbidden lovers, angst (oh please, don't give me something super fluffy, give me something with depth that makes me want to crawl in a hole and mourn for a while.), friends/enemies-to-lovers, one night stands/fuck buddies turning into something more.*

** I'm cool with brocest, lighter kinkness, dark stuff, but please give me a happy ending that makes the journey worth whatever comes between the start and the end.*

** No thanks to threesomes+, other than that, do what speaks to you (genre included, go to the world you want, just bring me back a piece of it).*

Sincerely,

Samantha

Story Info

Genre: science fiction, post-apocalyptic

Tags: dystopian, alternate universe, law enforcement/special agent, homophobia, men with children

Content Warnings: child abuse/abduction (off page)

Word Count: 21,943

Dedication

To Samantha who left me with a wide-open canvas on which to paint. To the Readers who wanted more of my world from “Carry On”. To Lou Sylvre and Jodi Pushkin, without you both I would be a mess. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

TO YOU I AM BOUND

By Cam Kennedy

Felix

It was his first day off in six weeks, and all Felix wanted to do was go to the gym, eat a huge meal, and sit on his ass in front of a vid-screen and watch entertainment vids. He should have known he'd be called up to the headquarters building before he was even ready to wake. He stabbed the End key, threw his com-device down on his desk, and cursed the thing. Felix should have turned it off before he settled into his rack for the night, but since he didn't, he headed for the shower, grumbling the entire time.

He ended his tirade when the hot water rushed over his body, leeching some of the tension from his shoulders. It had been far too long since he'd had a decent shower with good water pressure. He'd been too tired the night before to indulge himself. His bed's siren song had been too loud to ignore. He idly wondered if he had enough time to bring himself off in the shower, but quickly decided he didn't. With his luck, someone would come looking for him at a crucial moment. Easier not to get started. He made quick work of soaping up and rinsing off, barely bothering to dry himself thoroughly before dressing in the black tactical uniform, a routine which had defined the last several years of his life.

Felix had joined the organization generically named the Agency five years earlier, to try to make sense of the violence being waged against homosexuals. He'd needed to make a difference. When Felix joined the Agency, it was still considered a terrorist movement. It had recently been legitimized, and the agents' criminal records were wiped clean by the newly formed United Western Alliance. Overnight, the world had broken apart and re-ordered itself. The UWA versus the Eastern Religious Republic (ERR). The corporate machine that powered the UWA saw and met the demand for equal treatment of all its citizens. After all, the oppressed couldn't spend money. The ERR was exactly what it sounded like, a safe-haven for the religiously inclined who believed homosexuals and their like shouldn't be allowed to exist. Felix shuddered, thinking there was no place on the planet he'd hate living more. His inclinations favored men, and he'd never had an ounce of shame to spare for his preference.

He stayed lost in his own thoughts, and almost passed the command center. He quickly redirected himself and walked into the more formal setting. He squared his shoulders and straightened his back, walking up to the iris scanner and allowing it to scan his eyes.

Walker, Felix Zebediah. Time with the Agency five years, seven months. Access Granted. Report to the director's office, Mr. Walker.

The computer-generated voice made him want to grit his teeth. He found it annoying, but he kept his expression neutral, until the directions had been relayed. He stalked toward the director's office, not bothering to return the greetings of his co-workers. Irritated that his day off was being interrupted, he didn't care who knew it. He refused to allow himself to worry about the nature of the visit, even though he'd only met the director twice. The last time had been during his early years with the Agency. Felix stopped in front of the director's door, and had just raised his hand to knock when the door slid open, revealing the immaculately clad director sitting behind a sleek metal desk. Felix met the director's eye and tried in vain to discern the other man's age. *Older* was all he could come up with. He seemed ageless. Snowy white hair, maybe a bit too long to be considered professional in this business, much like a lion's mane. If Felix had to hazard a guess, he'd probably say the man was about as dangerous as any of the other operatives he worked with.

Felix stepped into the room and came to attention at the desk. "You requested my presence, sir?"

The director moved his fingers over the vid-screen built into the desk before him, obviously rapidly sorting through files. "Agent Walker, I've been told you have a background in law enforcement. Is this correct?"

"Yes, sir. That is correct. I worked as a detective before joining the Agency five years ago."

"We need you to go to the East as an inter-departmental transfer." The director's gaze was assessing, waiting for Felix to react.

Felix kept his face impassive, even though every fiber of his being was screaming, *what the fuck?* "Respectfully, sir, you want me to volunteer to go to the East?"

The well-dressed man, who held his life in his hands, grinned as if he could read Felix's thoughts. "We believe that you could provide us with very necessary information about the laws and the transition process. There is a two-

year period before the borders close. Your liaison assignment is to last eighteen months, so you will be out in plenty of time.”

Felix allowed his shoulders to sag just a little. He had no desire to spend the next year and a half surrounded by homophobic theists, when he'd fought so hard to gain the freedoms they'd just won. He'd hoped to find someone and settle down, now that the United Western Alliance had declared them fully equal citizens.

He was so lost in his own thoughts he didn't even notice the director cross the room. When the director's heavy hand landed on his shoulder, he nearly jumped out of his skin. Smith was dressed in the finest suit, with just a hint of silver pin-striping running through it. It made the man seem even more intimidating than his agile grace. It brought to Felix's mind his earlier assessment of a caged feline. His eyes though—they were kind and sad. “My apologies for having to ask this of you, Agent Walker. You are the only top agent with the credentials and the background we need for this mission. No one else has the police background that you do.”

Felix sighed and nodded. “I'll do it. I'm not happy, but I'll do it. My only question is, how do I get past the blood test?”

Mr. Smith flashed a brilliant smile, his eyes twinkling with excitement. “We have a liquid compound that you'll have to drink every day. This compound will trick the test into showing you to be heterosexual.”

Felix couldn't help but feel like he'd been sucker punched. “I'm not going to suddenly start liking women, am I?”

“No, Mr. Walker, this will simply trick the blood test. As we both know, there is no way to alter the way you were born. You can be homosexual or heterosexual, and some lucky individuals are bisexual, but there is no changing it. The compound is very safe, I assure you. I was the original test subject. I would never allow my operatives to take something I didn't think was safe enough for myself.”

Briefly, Felix wondered if he'd just received the coveted confirmation that Director Smith was indeed gay. He didn't allow himself to dwell on it, though, as the director's sexuality had no bearing on the mission he faced. His focus needed to center on this mission. At the end of the meeting, Felix's head was spinning. His whole life had been turned upside down in a matter of minutes. Eighteen months of acting straight in the East, where his particular preferences could get him jailed or even killed.

Fuck! What the hell did I get myself into?

Seamus

Seamus Breckenridge sat straight, his body almost rigid, and looked across the battered wood desk from his balding and slightly overweight supervisor. His jaw dropped, betraying his astonishment. "I have to what?"

"Look, Breckenridge, I understand that this isn't ideal, but you have to comply with the new laws."

"You are telling me that if I don't move back in with my parents, the child welfare division is going to seize my kids, and you want to spout words like ideal?" Seamus's voice had risen as he spoke, and by the time he finished, the veins in his temple were pounding, and he could feel that his normally fair skin was flushed scarlet.

"You damn well better get ahold of yourself. The new laws are the new laws, and I'm damn sorry that I have to be put in the position of having to tell you this. They don't give a shit that your wife... died. The new law states that children have to live with a married couple in the home to provide a stable environment. It's damn stupid if you ask me. Something about trying to curb the rise in deviant behavior." Supervisor Adams looked uncomfortable. Sweat was starting to trickle down the side of his portly face. Adams, Seamus was sure, didn't want to cross the Breckenridge family, but the pressure being put on him from above was leaving him with no choice in the matter.

Seamus's broad shoulders slumped, as he felt the weight of the world lay heavy across them. He pinched the bridge of his nose, trying to will himself not to break down in tears in front of his boss. He had just moved himself and his children into a new home the month before, because the memories of their mother's suicide made it hard for his little ones to sleep at night in the same place their mother had died.

Damn it, he'd lose the deposits, and he didn't want to think about the expense of moving. The tightened security, due to his father's prominent government position, meant a huge loss of privacy as well. Seamus squared his shoulders and nodded at Supervisor Adams. He knew if he tried to speak he'd probably break down sobbing, and it would be unacceptable for him to have a crying jag at work.

Adams clapped him on the shoulder and told him to take the rest of the week off to sort things out. Again, Seamus just nodded, still not trusting himself

to speak. He didn't speak to anyone at all on his way out of the station. In fact, with the scowl plastered across his face, everyone steered clear. As soon as he made it out to the personal transport lot, he used his com-device to contact his mother.

The com-device barely started to connect before Fiona Breckenridge, his mother, was answering. On the screen, her face creased in the same perpetual scowl she had always worn. He often wondered if her face hurt being stuck in the unpleasant position. Fiona Breckenridge was never happy. She didn't laugh. She was an unpleasant woman who seemed to do her best to make everyone else unhappy as well. She wore her hatred of the world wrapped tightly around her. She hated anyone different than her.

"Mother..." Seamus started to talk, but she cut him off, as usual.

"Seamus, would you like to explain to me why the National Department of Children's Services came to inspect our home?" His mother's voice sounded hard and angry. Seamus cringed inside. Her constant criticism grated on him, which was one of many reasons why he'd left home as soon as he was able.

"They passed a new law that children have to have a male and female married influence living with them, and since I no longer have a living spouse that puts me in violation of the law." He tried to keep all emotion out of his voice. His mother frowned on overly emotional men.

"So, that means you and your whelps will be moving back in here then. Good, we could use it in your father's next campaign. You can stay in the caretaker's cottage with them. It was already approved by those government officials that were here. Especially since you insisted on letting the officer from the West have use of the carriage house." Her voice sounded smug and self-satisfied. Seamus had to catch himself before he groaned out loud.

"Very well, Mother." He felt as if he were being told he had to lead himself and his children to their executioner, but he couldn't bear the thought of Bryan and Brynna being taken from him. The twins were the only bright spot in his life.

His mother didn't even bother to reply before she disconnected, leaving Seamus feeling like he needed to spill his stomach right there in the lot. He trudged the rest of the way to his transport and resigned himself to having to figure out how to arrange his move back to the one place he swore he'd never return.

Felix

He'd been traveling for about forty-eight hours; his transport had mechanical issues the entire distance; and the person he'd been seated next to kept a running commentary on the sins of the sexual deviants of the West and was a prime example of the reason he worked for the Agency. His nerves were worn thin, and there was only his undercover status to keep him from fishing his blade out of his luggage and cutting the idiot's tongue out. He used the gruesome images to calm his rage, as he departed the rickety transport. He followed the deluge of other passengers as they all went to retrieve their checked baggage. He saw his black duffel almost immediately and snagged it in an effort to try to escape the close press of bodies.

Felix scanned the area, watching families reunite, which made him a little bit sad. He was surprised to turn and see his name on a sign held by a sexy blond man in a police uniform. He allowed himself to observe the man for several minutes without revealing his presence. The man's blond hair was cut in an edgy style, spiked-up but still soft looking. His face was covered in blond stubble, and he looked as if he hadn't slept in a while. His body language was stiff, but his uniform was stretched over his muscular physique perfectly. He obviously didn't want to be there and likely felt stupid holding up the plastic sign. Felix decided to have mercy on the man, and he started moving forward, delighting when the man's eyes caught his own and lit up with some unnamable emotion. Relief, maybe.

Shifting all his baggage to his left hand, he extended his right in greeting. "Felix Walker." He also gave the sexy officer a bright smile, trying not to come across as flirty. The sexy officer shoved the plastic sign under his arm and engulfed Felix's hand in his own. His voice was a rumbly baritone, causing shivers to course up Felix's spine.

"Seamus Breckenridge. I'll be your partner."

Felix's body clenched tight. *Oh shit, this was bad.* Having to work next to a sexy guy and not be gay for over a year was pretty much his idea of hell. He pulled out of the handshake and faced towards the exit. "Awesome. Let's get out of this airport."

Felix let Seamus lead the way out of the crowded airport and through a busy transport lot. He stopped at an older police transport. Seamus caught Felix's look of disdain at the transport and he shrugged. "Budget cuts, man. We get what we get." Felix just climbed silently into the dubious ride, wondering how bad this year was going to be.

Both men seemed content to let silence surround them, however, Felix started getting nervous when, instead of heading toward the city proper, Seamus drove them outside the city into more sparsely populated areas. He must have made a sound of alarm or protest because a flush stole over Seamus's features. "Shit, I mean damn, I mean shoot. Felix, the department decided that it would foster your sense of community values if you stayed with a local family during your time with us."

Felix wasn't really sure how to respond to the statement without coming across as a complete jerk. *Community values? What the hell was this crazy government playing at? Did they suspect him of being a spy?* "How... quaint." Felix said, his voice flat.

Seamus cleared his throat. "Look, I know that it isn't ideal. I pulled some strings though, and since my family's estate has an extra living space, you'll be staying with us. You'll be afforded much more privacy in our carriage house than you would staying elsewhere. Things have just been difficult since the reorder. Laws are becoming tighter all the time."

Felix stared hard at the blond, as if trying to read his thoughts. He spoke carefully. "Thank you, Seamus. I admit that sounds like a much better prospect than sleeping in someone's guest room like a foreign exchange student." Both men laughed, breaking the tension.

More relaxed, Felix couldn't help but feel the last forty-eight hours of traveling start to catch up with him. He nodded off at some point, only jerking awake when Seamus turned onto a long drive winding beyond a wrought iron gate. Massive stone walls flanked the gate on either side, and Felix assumed they surrounded the estate. He would have felt like they'd stepped back in time, if it had not been for the high tech security, complete with iris scan, in order for the heavy gates to swing open.

Tension filled Felix again, and he rotated his shoulders in a futile attempt to relieve it. No wonder the department had agreed so readily to Seamus's request. This was a fortress, and where better to keep a foreign police detective from getting into trouble than by having him live in a veritable prison. Dread pooled in his stomach. Would he even be able to complete his mission? Already, he was virtually cut off from his team—from everything he knew. Now, securing information and making his scheduled updates was going to be close to impossible. He sure hoped he'd be able to come and go a little more than the high tech security and stone walls seemed to suggest.

Seamus must have picked up on his discomfort, because he smiled reassuringly. “My father is in government. We must have impeccable security. My parents and younger brother live at the main house, when my younger brother isn’t away at boarding school, and my father isn’t at the capitol.” He pointed toward a massive, almost castle-like building. It did not look inviting at all. It appeared intimidating. “My children and I occupy the caretaker’s cottage.” Seamus gestured toward a quaint stone house that looked much more like a home. “And you will be staying in the carriage house.” He gestured towards what looked more like a small stone barn, almost the same size as the cottage. “We’ll be neighbors, but I’ll try to keep the children from bothering you too much.”

Felix relaxed a little when he realized he’d have his own space. In truth, after living in the barracks for the past several years, it would be a little odd to be rattling around such a large place alone. “It looks fine, Seamus. You said you have children? Do you have a wife as well?”

Seamus looked sad, and his voice was quiet. “No, she committed suicide right after the reorder.”

Felix had no idea what to say, but he was saved from having to think of something, when two ginger-haired children came tumbling out of the cottage door followed by a sour-faced woman who looked on with disapproval. Felix feared the woman’s reaction would set the tone of his stay.

Seamus

Seamus was nervous as he drove Felix from the airport. He wasn’t sure why, but something about the other man commanded his attention. Maybe it was the bit of rebel spirit which seemed to lurk in his eyes. Like he was going along with the program to humor everyone, but it was all down to his choice. Seamus had never been a rebel. He’d always towed the line as the eldest child and heir to the family estate. His only rebellion had been to enter the police service rather than go to school to be a lawyer like his father. Otherwise, Seamus Breckenridge’s rebellions existed in only one place. His mind.

Driving gave Seamus a chance to study Felix out of the corner of his eye. The man looked apprehensive of the living arrangements. It couldn’t be helped though. There was no way his father or other government officials would allow a police detective from the West to run about the country unaccompanied. No doubt, the eastern counterpart sent to Felix’s part of the world was experiencing

similar restrictions. Seamus only hoped in time Felix would understand he was trying to make it easier on him, not play spy. He'd never been any good at lying, which was one of many reasons he didn't follow in his father's footsteps.

Pulling up to the heavy wrought iron gates and going through the security protocol was tedious, but his father insisted. When he turned to look at his companion, he couldn't help but wince at the cold stare Felix shot his way. Felix had obviously come to the correct conclusion. His stay here was merely that of a caged bird.

Seamus tried to reassure the other man, but he knew only time would prove him an ally. Instead of trying to convince Felix, he pointed out the buildings of the estate. He grinned when his two ginger-haired children raced toward the transport; his face relaxed, and his stomach unclenched. Nothing matched the joy of his twins. He and Felix hadn't even made it out of the transport before their cries of "Daddy", and their longwinded stories of the day were soothing him. He waited for them to quiet before introducing them to Felix.

"Bryan, Brynna, come meet Mr. Walker. He'll be staying in the carriage house for a bit and working with Daddy."

It was an almost solemn moment to watch Felix Walker, with his dark cap of curls, kneel on the ground to shake each child's hand in turn. "You can call me Felix, or Mr. Felix if your dad prefers. And if it's okay with him, I think I may have some candy in my bag."

Crystalline blue eyes turned on him, pleading, and Seamus almost couldn't keep from laughing. He kept his countenance serious though, as he regarded the twins thoughtfully. "I don't know. I'll have to ask the nanny if you had good behavior today." He knit his brow when the twins' happy faces fell, and they looked at the ground. He glanced toward Felix who had his gaze set on the doorway to the cottage. Instead of the nanny like he expected, there stood the unpleasant woman who'd birthed him. Seamus grimaced at the twins and shooed them toward the backyard.

Turning toward his mother, he lifted an eyebrow at her scowl. "Where is Ms. Randall?"

Fiona Breckenridge drew herself up, as if she were a queen and expected to be afforded that type of deference. She was dressed in a smart pantsuit, and her artificially-blonde hair was pulled so tight against her head, Seamus was sure it was pulling her face taut. "I sent her home. She allowed the children to get muddy and track it through the main house."

It took everything Seamus had not to completely fly off the handle. Only knowing Felix would be there to witness his meltdown had him tempering his words. "They are children. They are supposed to get dirty and track mud. Why else do you have an army of servants to clean the floors?" He spoke through gritted teeth, with a feral smile fixed upon his face.

His mother merely sniffed, looked at Felix, and nodded. "Mr. Walker. I hope you enjoy our hospitality. Perhaps you can convince my son that he would do well to be more... disciplined." After her high-handed pronouncement, she swept past them to walk the distance to the house. As the two men watched her, her rigid posture never slipped. Seamus always wondered if she'd been born with a steel rod instead of a spine.

When Seamus looked back, he saw an odd smile on Felix's face. "So, is your father more pleasant than your mother?"

Seamus snorted. "Not really. He's just as cold, but not as rude. I doubt you'll have many occasions to meet him. He stays in the capitol most of the year." He was surprised when Felix lay a comforting hand on his shoulder.

"So, what's for dinner? I'm starving."

Seamus laughed at the way Felix had changed the subject. They quickly herded the dirty children inside and began to talk about dinner. For the first time since the day he found out his wife had committed suicide, Seamus thought things might be okay. Something about the other man put him at ease the way he'd never been with any other person, and if some of his thoughts were inappropriate, he'd never tell.

Felix

In the eight months he'd been a "guest" of the Eastern Religious Republic, Felix had been amazed at how seamlessly the partnership with Seamus Breckenridge had fallen into place. Their bosses were amazed at their closure rate. They'd become fast friends, and they worked together as if they'd always been together. Felix would be the first to admit he was falling head over heels for the far-too-serious Seamus Breckenridge, and he'd already fallen hard for the man's four-year-old twins.

Unfortunately, as seamlessly as the partnership had evolved, the unrest in the East was growing, and the communications from the West were talking of pulling him out early. The East was letting fewer and fewer people through the

“open” borders, and reports of suspected homosexuals going missing were rising. What Felix couldn't figure out was whether they were being smuggled out, or whether the government had something to do with the disappearances. If it was the government, they weren't using the police to round them up. For Felix, the scariest aspect was how many of the missing were children.

Now, Felix bent over his battered metal desk in the corner of the squad room, where he and Seamus had been assigned to fill out paperwork. He was poring over the file he was putting together of all the missing children, when his field of vision was filled with a coffee mug. He looked up and smiled at Seamus. Grabbing the coffee, he thanked his friend.

“What has you looking so serious?”

Felix leaned close and said quietly, so as not to be overheard, “Two more twelve-year-old boys have gone missing from the next town over. Someone said the tests came back Homo-positive.”

Seamus sat down hard and held his hand out for the file they'd been secretly working on for the last couple of months. “We shouldn't work on this here. People are starting to get suspicious of us pulling those files. Adams called me in the office earlier and requested I keep you under closer observation.”

Felix sighed. Working in secret was a pain in the ass. They'd stumbled upon the missing persons cases several months before, and Seamus had brought it to their supervisor's attention because the victims were just children. They were quickly shut down. Adams didn't want any attention being brought to homo-positive kids, and neither did those who outranked him. At first, Felix was surprised that Seamus continued to doggedly pursue the cases. He had proven himself to Felix in a way that Felix hadn't expected. Felix knew now that he could trust Seamus. Part of him wanted to tell Seamus his true purpose here in the East, but he didn't want to put his friend in jeopardy. He tore his thoughts away from the inner workings of his mind and focused back to the task at hand. “We need to figure this out soon, Shay. I have a feeling this isn't people helping these kids to get to the West where they'll be safe.”

His partner scowled, “I am aware, Felix. I just don't know what we're supposed to do about it when or if we do find out. Going against the government is a death sentence, even if I am a Breckenridge.”

“We'll worry about it when we get there, Shay. Now let's pack up and head home. I promised Brynna, I'd play tea party with her.” Felix smacked Seamus on his shoulder as he started towards the exit.

"I swear Felix, I don't know what I'm going to do with the kids when you go back to the West. You've spoiled them." Seamus started looking a little sad when he thought of his friend leaving.

"Oh now, none of that." Felix flashed a smile and waited for Seamus to catch up.

They were almost to the exit when Adams stuck his head out of his office and bellowed at the two men, "Mandatory blood tests for the whole department tomorrow. Don't be late."

The men nodded but Seamus looked nervous. "What's the matter, Shay? Just a blood test, no big deal."

Seamus mumbled, "Being Fergus Breckenridge's son means I never had my sexuality come into question. It's never been required I take the blood test. Plus, I hate needles."

Felix looked at him oddly, his mind racing a million miles an hour. How in the hell had Seamus never been tested, and why the hell would he be nervous about it? Unless he had some reason to be nervous. "Shay, you had a wife and two kids. It's not like the test is going to come out positive."

Seamus swallowed hard. Felix could see his throat working like he wanted to say something but couldn't find the words. When he finally spoke, after they were safely inside the transport, the words were choked out. "You see that's the thing Felix. The kids. They aren't mine."

"Why do you say that, Seamus? They look just like you." Felix spoke carefully, trying to puzzle out what Seamus was telling him.

"The twins are my father's children. He was having an affair with my best friend, Myra, and when she took pregnant, he forced me to marry her. My mother, Fiona, had already adopted one of his 'illegitimate whelps,' and had no intention of doing it again, especially at her age." Seamus used air quotes when he said illegitimate whelps to illustrate those were Fiona's words, not his own.

"Wait, so you're adopted too?" Felix's mind was struggling to catch up.

"No, my brother, Ian, is adopted. He's thirteen, and lives away at school."

"Holy shit, Shay. How have I lived next door to you for eight months and been your partner this whole time and not remember you had a brother? I can recall you mentioning him only once when I first arrived."

"Really, Felix? Why are you only taking unimportant facts away from this conversation?"

“I get it, Shay. Your dad is a world-class asshole. But my question is why? Why hide his lies?”

“Easy, because it’s the only thing I’ve ever done that’s pleased him. I know it sounds stupid, but it’s the truth. But my helping him lie killed Myra in the end. She couldn’t live with him not wanting her, and she couldn’t bear for me to look at her. I love the twins. I would do anything for them, including keep them safe from my parents. I wish I could have done more for Ian, but I figure him being away at school is enough to buffer him from them.”

Felix was quiet for a long time, and both of them watched the scenery pass them by on their way home. They were almost to the estate when Felix asked, “Seamus, are you gay?”

Seamus almost didn’t answer. “Bisexual, I think. I just hope enough to pass the test.”

Felix was going to answer, but they were passed by several other police transports. Seamus worried, and thinking they could be of assistance followed them, surprised when they all bottlenecked at the gate of the Breckenridge estate. Flashing the lights of their transport, they were able to weave through so they could access the controls of the gate. The procession then sped around them once again, all of them ending up in front of the main house.

Seamus’s mother stood on the steps looking far more grim than usual, which should have been impossible. Even more surprising, his father exited the door of the house as well. This was the first time since Felix had been there that the elder Breckenridge had darkened the doors of the estate.

Seamus immediately bolted for the main house, gesturing for Felix to find the twins. Felix was reluctant to leave Seamus amid all the chaos, but he knew the twins would need someone to keep them busy and calm. Besides, Seamus would come to him when it was time. When he was ready.

Seamus

His mother’s face was closed down cold, and his father seemed far too at ease. Seamus looked at each of them trying to read the situation. “Would someone inform me what is going on?”

Ice dripped from his mother’s words, and she pointedly didn’t look towards his father, “Apparently Ian tested homo-positive yesterday. Today, he was abducted from his boarding school.”

Seamus felt his heart stop in his chest, and then begin to beat painfully hard. "Ian was abducted?"

His father started muttering about God's law under his breath, and Seamus cut his words off with a sharp look.

The hours of interrogation by the police were tiresome, and no one in the family or staff claimed to know anything. Hell, the kid was thirteen years old; he may not even realize he was gay. Seamus, refusing to trust the other officers to follow through, tried to collect as much information as he could without drawing any attention to himself. Most of the other officers were only taking interest because this was a government official's son, and the brother of a fellow officer. Otherwise, Seamus doubted they'd give fuck-all about some homo kid being snatched.

The explosions came when all the officers had left, and the heavy wrought iron clanged behind them.

Fiona Breckenridge stood staring into the fireplace watching the gas flame. Her eyes were a little vacant, but she was still dressed impeccably in her green linen pantsuit. There wasn't a wrinkle in it. There wasn't a hair out of place on her perfect head. Her voice was quiet and deadly when it whipped through the room. "Fergus Breckenridge, not on my watch. You'll not throw away another child. I never wanted Ian. I never wanted him in my home. You begat him on some whore, betraying your faith and your vows. You will locate the son you forced me to adopt. The one we paid millions to keep his origin a secret. If you don't do everything in your power to ensure this child is found..." She trailed off, finally turning to face them. She stared into Fergus's eyes, her own filled with tears Seamus would have sworn she wasn't capable of producing. "I'll ruin you. I will spare no dirty laundry. Not even the secrets you thought you hid so well by forcing your oldest son into a false marriage." She never raised her voice, and by the time she was finished speaking, any trace of tears was long gone. Replacing it was a cold hatred which made Seamus shiver.

Fiona Breckenridge had been born to money and power. Whatever station Fergus enjoyed now, it had come to him because Fiona had the connections to make it happen. Although Fergus occupied the government seat, it was widely known Fiona's word was law. She didn't make threats lightly, and a smart person never took them as such.

Fergus Breckenridge paled. His hands shook. "I'm not certain I can un-ring this bell, Fiona."

Fiona took a step towards him. “You had our daughter taken when she was an infant because she had the misfortune to be born a girl, and you had no use for a girl. Not ever again Fergus. You made a promise to me, and I’m holding you to it. You’ve broken every other oath you’ve taken, but it will be over my corpse, you’ll break this one.” She turned to look at Seamus. “She was your twin. It pains me to see Brynna because I imagine that is what Soarcha would have looked like. Seamus, I’m charging you with not letting your father get away with this.”

Fergus practically ran from the room after Fiona swept past them. She held herself so stiffly, Seamus felt the first bit of compassion he’d ever felt for her. It was foreign, because Fiona had let him know at an early age she needed nothing and no one. It was heartbreaking to think Fergus had broken her so thoroughly.

Seamus lingered, looking around the formal parlor in all its decadence and wondering where the debris was, because it felt as if his entire life had just detonated around him. Soon everything started to blur together, and he made his way home, hoping for a hot meal and the comfort of his friend. He felt as if he were barely holding it together at the seams, sure that if he stepped too hard or moved too quickly his insides would come spilling out at his feet.

Felix

He’d become bored waiting for Seamus to return. Felix had already played with the twins and fed them dinner, and they’d been full of questions about all the cars and where their daddy was. He’d tried to keep them busy by telling silly stories until they’d both fallen asleep. Felix had tucked their blankets around them, content to look at their angelic faces. Somehow this little family had gotten under his skin. There was such a pain in his heart over the thought of leaving them soon to go back home. Back to barracks living and working all the time. Back to a life filled with lonely nights lacking laughter and... family.

He was sitting at Seamus’s dining room table, the remains of dinner pushed to the side and case files piled all around him, when Seamus came through the front door. Each step was slow and measured. Felix looked up, a pen dangling out of his mouth, when Seamus came to the entranceway between the living room and dining room. Seamus looked waxy-pale, and he shook. Without a thought, Felix stood up, letting the case files scatter, and wrapped Seamus in a tight hug. It was the first time their bodies had been so close, and despite being

worried about his friend, he couldn't help but notice how good the other man felt against him.

As soon as Felix's arms closed about him, it was as if Seamus split wide open. He was wracked with harsh, broken sobs, which shook his whole body. Both men sank to their knees, Felix guiding Seamus to the floor so he wouldn't fall, and then held on and rode out the storm. What seemed like hours later, their knees numb from kneeling on the hardwood floor, finally Seamus went limp, just resting against Felix. "Shay, are you ready to talk to me now?"

Seamus shook his head. When he spoke, his voice was hoarse, "Not tonight. Help me up?"

Felix pulled away and got to his feet, then helped Seamus. Seamus took a step toward his bedroom, but almost fell back to his knees. Felix caught him under his arm and slung him over his shoulder. Seamus started to protest, but he just didn't seem to have the energy. He was wrung out. Something was wrong, and it was killing Felix not to know. Felix wanted to fix it. He didn't like seeing Seamus so defeated.

Felix dropped Seamus on his wide king-sized bed. The man bounced but remained unmoving otherwise. "Shay, can you undress yourself?"

Seamus grunted. Taking that as a no, Felix bent and untied the man's police-issue boots. He pulled them off, followed by the socks. He took the time to place the boots neatly next to the bed. When he moved up to Seamus's belt he hesitated. It was everything he'd dreamed of doing, but in the worst situation. His hands shook as he wrestled the pants off Seamus's limp form. Unfortunately, Seamus had decided to forgo underwear, and Felix groaned when he saw that. He tugged Seamus by his hands, causing him to sit up, with a dazed look on his face. Frustrated, Felix snapped. "Dammit, Shay, help with your shirt at least." After several minutes of fumbling, he finally got the other man settled under the covers. He was almost to the door, planning on going for a run or something to relieve the tension, when he heard Seamus's quiet voice, "Don't go. Just stay tonight."

Felix closed his eyes. He didn't *even* want to torture himself this way. He cleared his throat. "Sure, Shay. Let me just put dinner away."

"No! Just leave it, Felix. Please. I know I'm asking for a lot. More than a man should ask another man. But can you just stay with me for a while. There is plenty of room here. I just want to not be alone for a little while." A shiver racked Seamus's body, even though he was buried under layers of blankets.

Felix sighed, knowing he couldn't leave his friend, but not looking forward to being so close to everything he couldn't have. "Let me at least lock the doors and turn out the lights, Shay. I'll be right back."

Felix walked through the house turning off lights and scanning his thumb to lock the door. When he got back to Seamus's doorway, he felt like his world was being upended. If he walked through the door, nothing would be the same ever again. He shook his head, unwilling to let his friend suffer alone with whatever burden he was carrying. He quietly undressed down to his shorts, and slid into the large bed, making sure to keep distance between himself and the other man. He stared at the ceiling for a long time before sleep came.

Seamus

Seamus startled, suddenly awake. He felt too warm, like he was in bed with a furnace. He tried to move, but arms tightened around him. He stilled, trying to figure out who might be in bed with him, and then the previous day's events came crashing back. He sagged back against Felix. He shivered at feeling the other man's warm breath upon his neck. How long had it been since someone had held him? Had anyone ever? It felt good to have another human being care about him. He would bet money, though, Felix hadn't intended to get this close. After all, Felix was straight. This could get awkward quickly. He struggled a little bit, his naked ass pressing into Felix's boxer-covered erection. Felix groaned and Seamus froze, only to wiggle a little more to try and get loose.

Felix's arms tightened, and a hand moved onto his hip to still him. Felix's voice was deeper than Seamus had ever heard it, making Seamus think of every dirty, secret thought he'd harbored in his heart. "Shay, if you wiggle much more, I'm going to cum all over you."

It was Seamus's turn to groan. The thought that he could cause Felix to spill all over them was enough to have him harder than steel, a state he hadn't reached in quite some time. Felix's arms relaxed, and Seamus turned over. Looking the other man in the eye before taking a risk that could have them both in prison. He leaned forward and captured Felix's lips with his own. At first there was no reaction, but then Felix kissed him back. They both gasped, their erections pressing together through the thin material of Felix's boxers. Seamus had just rolled on top of Felix, settling his knees on either side of the dark-haired man's hips when the front doorbell chimed. They looked at each other and cursed.

Seamus scrambled to get out of bed and yank open the dresser drawer to fling sweats at Felix. Grabbing a pair for himself, along with briefs, he tried to struggle into them. He glared when a dressed Felix laughed at him and walked past him to let the nanny in.

Seamus was close behind him. Close enough he had seen the look of disapproval on the nanny's face. He sighed inwardly. Sometimes he wondered why he hadn't fled for the West when the borders opened. He glanced toward Felix, who was standing behind the nanny. He winked at Seamus, a twinkle in his amber eyes. Seamus glanced away quickly, sure his erection was going to make a reappearance. He ran a hand through his hair, causing it to stand on end.

"Sorry, Ms. Randall." He gestured toward the piles of case files. "As you can see, we've spent much of the night working. We are trying to find leads on who might have abducted my brother." Seamus kept his voice just on the edge of being harsh. He saw Felix raise an eyebrow, and he knew he owed the other man an explanation.

Her cheeks got a little pink with, what Seamus assumed, was embarrassment for thinking the worst. "Of course, Mr. Breckenridge. I just came to ready the children for the day."

Seamus nodded at the plainly dressed woman and gestured for her to do her job.

He felt the warmth of his ebony-haired partner before the other man spoke softly behind him. "You play Lord of the Manor quite convincingly, Mr. Breckenridge." And before Seamus could get offended, he added, "It's sexy as hell."

Seamus shot forward, putting space between them, and he glared at Felix, but quickly grinned when he realized his glare had no effect on the easy-going westerner.

Felix cleared his throat, and said, "I guess we need to get to work and take our blood test."

Seamus was worried, and he didn't even try to hide it from Felix. He really wasn't sure that he'd be a free man after the test.

Felix patted him on the shoulder and said quietly, "Don't worry. I have a plan. I need to run over to the carriage house and get dressed for work."

For a moment, Seamus thought the other man was going to kiss him, but he just smiled and slipped out the door. Seamus was left staring after Felix's

flexing ass in those too-tight sweats. Seamus had Felix beat in height, but Felix had a broader physique. He heard the kids stirring and set himself towards the task of making breakfast.

Once breakfast was ready, Seamus started cleaning the dinner mess they'd left from the night before. The monotonous tasks calmed him, and by the time Felix returned, he was hand washing the few dishes. He turned and smiled at the dark-haired man leaning on the doorway, arms crossed. Pink stole into his cheeks as he thought back to how they'd awakened. As if Felix could read his mind, a devilish smile stole over his face. Seamus hurried to finish the dishes and dry his hands on the towel Felix suddenly had waiting for him. Feeling shy, he edged around the other man and took off for his bedroom with Felix laughing softly behind him.

Inside his room, Seamus dressed quickly in his uniform. If he didn't get a move on, Adams would have their heads on pikes in front of the station. When he stepped back into the living room, his heart stopped in his chest. His father sat on his couch, with the twins eating breakfast only a room away. Felix stood glaring at the man, with his arms crossed over his chest. His father was looking at Felix as if he were less than the dirt under his shoe.

Seamus cleared his throat, and both men looked at him. "Felix, could you go in the dining room and help Ms. Randall with Bryan and Brynna, please." Even though his voice was quiet, there was steel in it.

Felix nodded reluctantly, shooting Fergus one last glare.

"Well, to what do I owe the... honor of a visit, sir?" Seamus spat out the last word, feeling as though he'd swallowed something bad. He still couldn't believe what a cold-hearted monster this man was. A murderer.

Fergus looked old all of a sudden, and sad. His voice went quiet, and Seamus had to lean forward to hear him. "Seamus, I've made mistakes. More than my fair share, but there are much bigger powers out there than me, or even your mother. Bigger and more deeply entrenched than you can imagine. You cannot fathom what will happen to all of us if you cross them with this missing kids thing."

Seamus started to open his mouth, but Fergus waved it closed.

"I know about the files you and Walker have had access to. I know a lot about your boy, there," he said, gesturing towards the kitchen. "Hopefully he'll trust you enough to tell you soon. Your lives could depend on it. I'm so closely watched these days. I will try to get information to you about Ian. But Seamus,

go into this with your eyes open.” Fergus got choked up, tears in his eyes. “I know you’re confused right now, but don’t trust anyone. No one, except for Walker. Do you understand?”

Seamus nodded slowly, unsure what his father was rambling on about. Fergus stood, and stepped close, his body almost touching his son’s. He held out his hand as if to shake, and Seamus, acting on instinct, clasped it in his own. There was a small vial in between their hands. “You won’t pass the test today, Seamus. Take this as soon as you can, and you should test clear. Watch your back, kid.”

Seamus watched dumbly as his father left. *What the fuck was that about? Maybe Felix could help figure it out.* He quickly shoved the vial in his pocket and hollered for Felix to get into the transport so they wouldn’t be late.

Felix

Felix walked to the transport feeling confused as hell. He’d been surprised when Fergus had come in, and had desperately wanted to rip the man a new asshole, just because of the position he’d put Seamus in over the twins. Felix knew more had occurred the night before, and he could barely contain himself with wanting to know every single detail. He was a “fixer” by nature, and wanted to eliminate all obstacles for those he cared about. By this point, there was no doubt in his mind he’d fallen in love with his adorably sexy partner, not that he planned on sharing that conclusion out loud anytime soon.

The silence in the transport became tense after they passed through the gates of the estate. “Seamus,” Felix growled, to warn Seamus his patience was wearing thin.

Seamus looked over, feeling guilty. “My brother, Ian, was abducted from his school yesterday. Same as the others. For the same reason. My mother thinks my father is behind it. My father is... Hell, Felix, I’m not even sure what side he’s on. But apparently he either killed or shipped off my twin sister when we were babies. I just don’t fucking know what to think.”

Felix lay a comforting hand on the back of the other man’s neck. “It’s going to be okay. We’ll find Ian, Shay. I promise we’ll find him.”

Seamus nodded sharply. “My fath... Fergus said I shouldn’t trust anyone except for you. I do trust you Felix, but he also said he hoped you’d trust me soon because our lives might depend on it. Any clue what the hell that’s all about?”

Felix froze. How did Fergus get that information? “Shay, I do trust you. More than you can believe, but I’m a little nervous about how your father came across the information.”

“What information, Felix? It’s not like you are a spy for the West or something.” Seamus’s snapping voice sounded impatient.

Felix silently counted to ten, giving Seamus time to put it together. He only got to five before it clicked. “Shit! Are you kidding me? You’re a spy? For the West? Really?”

Felix nodded, afraid the man who had become the center of his universe would reject him.

Seamus stared out of the transport for several minutes before smiling. “Spies are sorta hot Felix. Besides, I think maybe your skill set might be the only thing to help get my brother back. My father said the powers that be are bigger than we can imagine, and once we cross this line there would be no going back. He also said I wouldn’t pass the test today, and he gave me this.”

Felix watched nervously as Seamus dug the black vial out of his pocket and tossed it to him. Felix turned it over and saw the mark on the bottom that looked a lot like the mark on the bottles he’d brought with him. This was from the Agency lab. He’d almost bet his life on it. He reached into his own pocket and pulled out an identical vial. “This came from my lab in the West, Seamus. It’s a compound to make Homo-positives come up negative.”

Seamus swallowed past the lump in his throat. “So does this mean my dad is on *your* side?”

“I’m not sure, Shay, I’ll have to try my contact later, when it’s safe. For now, just take the liquid compound, and let’s get this test over with. Then we’ll try to make some sort of excuse to Adams so we can work out of the house for the rest of the day. We have to start thinking about the next step, though. What happens when we find these teens? We’re going to have to figure something out.”

Seamus looked out the window again. “If I can secure us passage on a sea transport ship, do you think you could get all of us out of the country before the government comes crashing down on our heads? Including the twins?”

“Are you sure that’s what you want? Starting in the West with almost nothing? Don’t get me wrong, Shay, I want you to come with me. I want to explore this thing between us, but I don’t want to be something you regret. If

you can get us on a ship, I can make sure the teens get to the West. If you don't want to come, then you don't have to."

Seamus was pulling the transport into the lot at work. "Felix, I want this. Besides, how am I going to live here if they keep testing for this gene, and what the hell happens if one of the twins tests positive? No, we need to get out of the East. All of us."

Felix knew he needed to make contact with Director Smith and make him aware of the new situation. His heart was soaring, though. He was going to take Seamus home to the West. Now he just had to find the missing kids and avoid being detected by the government. Simple. Right?

"If this is what you want, Shay, then I want you with me. Now take your meds." Felix tossed a vial in Seamus's lap and watched him as he took it. He hoped that the line was long enough for it to kick in before the test.

Seamus

He almost couldn't believe the words that had spilled out of his own mouth, but after he spoke them, Seamus knew deep in his soul he was doing the right thing. Whatever life he'd tried to make here in the East, it had all been built on a lie. He could take the kids to the West and make a real life. One, which he hoped, included the man next to him.

He and Felix didn't speak as they walked into the precinct and joined the line of men and women waiting to have the blood test administered. All his fellow officers were joking around. None of them were nervous about it, most of them having passed it multiple times since it came out a few years ago. Seamus couldn't help but feel a cold ball of dread settle in the pit of his stomach. He wished he could latch onto Felix's hand for support, but obviously the option was out of the question. They wouldn't even need to give him the test.

He tried to pass his nervousness off as a fear of needles, which had the other guys snickering at him. It's amazing how something that could change your life so drastically, took only a few seconds. Just a small prick, and it was over. Felix was waiting for him when he exited the room. They looked at each other and nodded. No words needed to be spoken. They had barely made it to their desks when Adams bellowed for them to get in his office.

"He wouldn't have the results yet, would he?" Seamus hissed.

Felix shook his head slightly. "Probably about your brother."

When they reached Adams's office, they took a seat in the wooden chairs in front of his desk. Adams didn't give them even a few seconds before he started in on them. "Breckenridge, why the hell are you here? Shouldn't you be home with your mother? And Walker, why did you let him come to work today? He's going to be useless. I also called you both in here to remind you that this is not your case. You need to let the assigned officers work the case. Is that clear?"

Seamus, relieved it wasn't about the blood test results, gave a rather enthusiastic, "Yes, sir!" which had the other two men looking at him like he'd lost his mind.

Felix quietly said something to Adams he couldn't quite make out, and shook the man's hand. Then he smacked Seamus on the shoulder. "C'mon, lost boy. He's right, you are worthless today. Let's head back to the estate."

They'd almost cleared the office door, when Adams said, "I hope you get your brother back, Breckenridge. Send him to one of those camps sponsored by the church. He'll be right as rain then. Won't ever test negative but maybe keep him out of prison."

Seamus clenched his jaw and forced himself to say something that sounded polite. He was never more grateful for Felix being there to pull him away from the situation. Now they just needed to find out what happened to the kids, so they could help them escape people like Adams.

They hadn't had time to do more than shed their jackets, so it only took a moment to gather them before they were back in the transport and headed back to the Breckenridge Estate.

Felix rubbed a hand down his arm. His voice was quiet but serious. "Shay, you have to keep your cool better than that. It's the same shit you've been told your whole life. Don't let it bother you."

"I know, but he's talking about a thirteen-year-old kid."

"It's always been about a thirteen-year-old kid, or a twelve-year-old. Hell there've been cases of parents giving up their kids at birth, if they test positive."

"That's just sick."

"Yeah, that's why I started working for the Agency. I couldn't stomach all the atrocities being waged against innocent people who had the misfortune to be born a certain way. Who I have the potential to love shouldn't make me less of a person in the eyes of the law."

Seamus nodded, agreeing. "It's sad how it's easy to turn a blind eye to things that you think don't affect you."

"Yes it is. Shay, can you pull over in a wooded area so I can make contact with my boss in the West?"

Seamus complied, pulling into a heavily-wooded area, so that Felix could get out of the transport. He watched Felix pace back and forth. Felix was obviously arguing with his handler, and Seamus couldn't help but feel guilty for causing trouble.

Felix got back in the transport, seething. "They want me to pull out now. They say the situation's getting too unstable."

Seamus thought his heart was going to break. His voice wavered and cracked, but he had to make himself ask. "And what are you going to do?"

Felix raised his eyebrows and opened his mouth, then launched himself towards Seamus. Seamus gasped and moaned under the heated assault of Felix's lips. The kiss ended as abruptly as it started. "I'm not going without you and Ian and the twins. Okay?"

Seamus liked the ferocity he saw in Felix's eyes. He wasn't sure that he loved Felix, but he sure as hell liked him. That the other man wouldn't leave without them was something Seamus clutched to his heart like a security blanket. Seamus needed to believe that Felix wouldn't let him down.

Felix

The phone call with Director Smith left Felix feeling cold and not a little uncertain. He had just told his boss, more or less, to fuck off. The director wanted to pull him out. He'd refused to listen to what Felix had to say until Felix had told him he was refusing a direct order. He'd never heard his boss that angry. Director Smith had threatened to rescind the program and force him home early. Felix had countered with a threat to go underground. Eventually, the director saw reason and agreed to let him ride the situation out. He did insist that if anything felt off, Felix was to pull out, extra cargo or not. Felix had reluctantly agreed to play it the director's way as much as possible. However, there was no way he'd be leaving Seamus and his family behind, even if he hadn't been head over heels for the man.

He was aware that Seamus's feelings weren't quite there yet, and that he may be sticking his neck out only to have Seamus go his separate way once he

got them to safety. Felix sure hoped not. When he looked at Seamus, he saw his own past and his future rolled into one. There wasn't anything he wouldn't be willing to do to keep the man safe and happy.

Felix had become so lost in his thoughts that he didn't notice Seamus had entered the Breckenridge Estate until he was parking the transport in front of the cottage. Felix smiled at the twins when they came barreling out of the cottage door and into Seamus's arms, like they did every day. It amazed him that they were always so excited to see their daddy, even when they weren't happy with him. He loved watching the way Seamus's eyes lit up when he saw their faces, as if in that moment, no matter how trying their day had been, all was right in the world. Felix felt lucky that for the last eight months he'd gotten to share in their lives.

Ready to stop dwelling in his own head, Felix slid out of the transport and snuck around the other side, growling like a bear, and rushing the twins to scoop Brynna up and start tickling her. She erupted into giggles, and her brother was soon tugging on him for his turn. Soon, he and Seamus were chasing them about the yard, under the swing set and over the back porch. It was one of those idyllic afternoons filled with sunlight and laughter that freezes in your mind for eternity, a prized memory to pull out on days when hope was needed.

Throughout dinner and the bedtime ritual, he and Seamus couldn't stop looking at each other. They couldn't stop smiling and enjoying the casual touching that had become part of the routine. Something they hadn't, before the last few days, given themselves the chance to fully enjoy. Despite their aborted attempt at sex that morning, Felix felt no real sense of urgency, and that surprised him. He was content to let the attraction build. He was afraid that if he rushed it would ruin the possibility of a future he wanted more than anything, so for the first time in his experience, he looked forward to taking things slow.

When they were finally alone in a quiet house, they turned their attention once again to work. They had put everything on hold to snatch happy moments out of the dark, but now they had to focus on finding Ian and the other missing children. He knew that their best bet was in waiting for the other officers to work the case. He hated the thought of getting secondary information, but he knew that they wouldn't be allowed anywhere near the crime scene.

The thought of the vastness of the task that they were undertaking was enough to make Felix a little queasy, so he didn't allow himself to dwell on it.

He was a soldier, he could adapt and overcome. He'd do the job in front of him to the best of his ability, and no one could ask more of him than that. He also counted on Fergus Breckenridge to help aid their escape. Felix didn't share that last part with Seamus, who was still caught between hating and resenting his father—sentiments that had no place in their investigation. As much as possible, they had to put personal feelings to the side so they could ensure everyone's safety.

Felix had been going over the files extensively for the past few months. Some of the earlier cases he knew front-to-back without needing to look through the files. He'd been secreting away copies of the information, scanning it, and sending it to Director Smith via his communicator, because Felix knew that Adams would soon cave to pressure and kick them completely off the case. No one here really wanted the kids found, because then they would have to deal with all the implications of the fact that people who tested positive were indeed born that way, not created by a debauched society. Scientists with their blood-tests and procedures had proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that sexuality was a genetic trait, and no amount of social or religious teachings could change that. It didn't matter how puritan the East became, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people, and all those in between, would not go away—in spite of how much the religious zealots clung to their faith.

They sat side by side at the kitchen table going over the newest information from Ian's case file, and then looking at security footage of the last three abductions. The same man appeared in the footage of all three abduction sites approximately twenty-four hours before the abductions. Felix grinned at Seamus, relieved to finally have some sort of lead to go on.

“Now we only have to figure out who this man is, Shay, and it will be the first solid lead we've gotten.”

Seamus

Seamus looked closer at the man in the footage. He was abnormally tall, with steel-grey hair, slicked back. His suit was immaculate, and he carried himself like one of the socially elite that Seamus had spent his entire life rubbing elbows with. When the man turned, and Seamus got a clear look at the man's face, his stomach clenched, and he felt sure he was about to lose the contents of his stomach. What he saw wasn't possible. That man was supposed to be dead.

Seamus looked at Felix, and said softly, "That man is a ghost. We've got three crime scenes with images of a ghost on them."

Felix scoffed. "He looks real enough to me, Shay. I don't think we are dealing with anything of the supernatural variety."

Seamus shook his head when Felix missed his point entirely. "Not what I meant. He was presumed dead about five years ago after a horrible incident involving him experimenting on homosexuals. He was supposed to be leading a study to try and eradicate homosexual genes altogether, but all he ended up doing was disfiguring his own son, who he'd kept in captivity for years. It was a nasty business, and quite obviously, he faked his own death and is still working. His name is Doctor Christopher Anton. He is evil."

Seamus stopped talking and sat staring into space, horrible thoughts going through his head about what his little brother might be enduring at the hands of that madman. It made him want to leap from his chair and run to his rescue, in superhero fashion. He knew they didn't yet have enough information to act, though. He feared tracking down Anton may be more difficult than he hoped.

Felix

He wasn't sure what he could say that might make the situation any better, so he opted not to say anything at all. Instead, Felix wrapped his arms around Seamus and pulled him close, burying his nose in sweet-smelling blond hair. At first Seamus stiffened, but soon he relaxed into the embrace. Felix reveled in the feel of Seamus's arms wrapping around him.

Seamus soon tipped up his head, and he sought Felix's lips. Felix loved the slick slide of Seamus's lips against his own. He licked into Seamus's mouth, groaning low, as the other man tried to climb into his lap.

"Seamus, we need to move out of the kitchen."

Fumbling, stumbling, they stood. Still kissing, they bumped their way out of the kitchen and down the hallway to Seamus's room. They paused in their hunger for only a moment, to shut and lock the door, and then Felix was pushing Seamus down onto the firm mattress. He bounced once before scrambling back to settle in the middle. Felix stood at the side of the bed, looking at the man he'd been admiring for so long. He started undressing, and his voice dropped to a low growl when he spoke to Seamus.

"Strip. Now."

Both men scrambled to divest themselves of their clothes, not caring where the pieces landed. Seamus took the time, though, to push the bed coverings to the foot of the bed where they wouldn't be in the way.

Felix couldn't believe the perfection that was Seamus's body. He wasn't ripped, but he was solid, with a flat stomach and toned chest and arms. He could see in Seamus's eyes, as Seamus knelt on the bed looking at him, that he was self-conscious or uncertain. He caught Seamus's face between his hands, knelt in front of him on the bed, and whispered, "You are beautiful."

Seamus's smile was slight. "I'm nowhere near as ripped as you."

"Does it really matter? I like you the way you are. You are one of the most confident men I know, Shay. Why this attack of nerves?" Felix moved his hands to caress down Seamus's shoulders, their fully aroused cocks kissing between them. Seamus bit his lip and moaned low, flexing his hips involuntarily, trying to increase the friction.

"I've never..." Seamus looked at Felix, expecting him to fill in the blanks.

"Never?"

Seamus huffed out a breath. "I've never had sex with a man, but I want this, Felix. With you."

Felix sucked in a breath, that proverbial light bulb flickering on. He leaned in, capturing Seamus's lips with his own in a slow, lingering kiss. "We'll take it slow. I can't wait to feel you inside me."

Seamus looked at Felix in surprise. "You'd let me?"

Felix's face stretched wide in a grin, and he nodded. "We can switch when, and if, you are ready. Someday. We have all the time in the world, Shay."

Seamus seemed to swell with confidence as he watched. Felix took the opportunity to force him from his knees to his back. Seamus landed with a huffing laugh which quickly died when Felix's body pressed him down into the mattress, their weeping cocks sliding together, eliciting groans from both men. Felix straddled Seamus to gain greater friction, working their cocks together until Seamus gripped his hips hard and rolled them. Seamus's tongue swiped along the shell of Felix's ear, causing him to shiver and buck up against Seamus. Then, Seamus nipped along his neck, pausing to suck up a mark on his collarbone. "Fuck, Seamus. I need you in me soon, or I'm not going to last. Do you have lube or something?"

Seamus grinned. He stretched across Felix to fumble in the nightstand drawer for what Felix assumed was lube or possibly lotion. Felix couldn't resist latching onto Seamus's nipple when it hovered over his face. Tossing the tube of lotion on the bed, Seamus swore, still fumbling in the drawer. After a moment, Felix twisted, trying to peer into the drawer as well. "Seamus, what are you looking for?"

"Condoms, I don't think I have any." Seamus sounded so sad, it was all Felix could do not to laugh and make the situation even worse.

"Shay, I trust you. I know you're clean, and I'm clean. We've both been tested, and we've both been alone for the entire eight months we've known each other. I trust you." Felix's eyes bored into his lover's, full of the trust and love he couldn't put into words. Not yet. Seamus's eyes were wide, but they filled with something Felix chose to believe was at least affection.

With a reverence markedly different from their earlier pace, Seamus ran his fingers through the hair on Felix's chest, taking the time to pluck at the raspberry-colored nubs hidden in the crisp, ebony curls. He traced the muscles and lines of Felix's stomach with his tongue, as if he could learn to read the ridges. Felix tried to hold himself still, both enjoying and agonizing over the suddenly slow pace. Time no longer held any meaning.

Seamus continued worshipping Felix's body until one sensation seemed to bleed into the next, and he was whimpering with need. He did well keeping relatively still, until Seamus's mouth bypassed his weeping cock and was lapping at his entrance. He couldn't help but jerk then, surprised at the expert move from his novice lover. And then he began begging. "Please, Shay, I need you."

Seamus sat up and fumbled with the lotion, ending up with far too much on his hand. He smoothed some down his own cock then used his fingers on Felix's already soft hole. Felix and Seamus locked eyes as Seamus's wide head was pushing gently against his entrance. With far more care than Felix himself would have been able to use in the moment, Seamus entered him. Felix loved the burn which quickly morphed into pleasure. It felt different, as he'd never let anyone inside him bare, but nothing had ever felt more right.

When Seamus began to move, Felix rose to meet him, and together they glided into a dance older than time, both of them racing towards the finish. Felix felt as if all of his reserves of patience had been used up. The pace was hard and fast, with Felix whispering hoarse encouragement for Seamus to fuck

him harder and faster. Seamus's rhythm began to falter when Felix spilled hot between them. Seamus followed suit, emptying his seed deep inside Felix. For several long moments neither man moved, until Seamus captured Felix's lips in a sweet kiss. Reluctantly, the men separated, both groaning in disappointment when Seamus slipped out of Felix's body.

Seamus stood and smiled down at his lover before he went to the bathroom. Felix lay there, drifting in a post-coital haze, unable to form coherent thought yet, until he felt Seamus's cum trickling out of his ass. Grimacing, he was preparing to make himself rise, when Seamus returned with a wet cloth and began the process of cleaning him. He seemed to take particular care with his ass.

Seamus's face was a study of concentration, and Felix couldn't help but grin. "You didn't hurt me, Shay."

Seamus looked up and smiled softly. "I just feel honored you trust me that much."

Felix grabbed Seamus's hand and took the cloth, tossing it toward the bathroom. "The truth is Seamus, I'm falling in love with you."

Seamus never answered, but he captured Felix's lips and then reached down to pull the forgotten blankets over them. He settled behind Felix and wrapped his body around him. His hand ended up buried in Felix's chest hair. Felix had never been happier. In this moment, everything was perfect, but he knew in the back of his mind they couldn't stay in this blissful state. Hell, if anyone caught them now, they'd probably be carted off to prison. It was with these thoughts that Felix drifted off to sleep.

Seamus

One moment he was asleep, dreaming dreams of hot, sweaty lovemaking with Felix, and the next there was a hand clamped over his mouth. Seamus's eyes flew open, and he was about to struggle when a voice whispered in his ear.

"Don't move. Don't struggle. Let's face it. You have a lot more to lose than I do, man."

Seamus froze, fear shooting through his entire body. Frantically, his mind went over the evening. He was sure he and Felix had triple-checked to make sure the doors were secured and the security system was engaged. Those facts

left a very short list of people who could get in here undetected. The number one suspect was his father.

"I'm letting go of you. Don't make a sound." The hand unclamped from his mouth, and he worked his jaw. He slowly turned over to look at his late night intruder, feeling very vulnerable in his naked state. He felt Felix stiffen next to him. Knowing his lover was awake, Seamus smoothed a comforting hand down his side. He was trying to warn Felix to stay still. When Seamus turned over, he was fully expecting to see his father. He was shocked to see a stranger dressed in a black tactical uniform. His skin was pale, and he had hard, piercing eyes which looked like shards of green glass. The intruder had auburn hair, the color of an old penny. He was tall too, although if he were taller than Seamus, it wasn't by much. Seamus couldn't help but catalogue these details as if he were going to file a police report, trying to find identifying traits. Seamus sat up and swung his legs over the side of his bed, reaching down to grab a discarded throw blanket to wrap around his hips. He kept his voice low. "Would you like to tell me who the fuck you are, and what the hell you are doing in my home?" Now he was more awake, and rage simmered below the surface, ready to erupt. This man had invaded his home, where his children were.

Seamus also noticed he didn't see a weapon in sight. *What was this man after?*

The man leveled an amused look at Seamus, complete with raised eyebrow, as if to say what are you going to do about it? "You've caused quite an uproar, Mr. Breckenridge. My... employer, suspected the nature of your relationship with your partner, but needed confirmation before he was willing to help you."

"Help me how?" Seamus clutched the throw blanket around his waist awkwardly. He didn't for one second trust this stranger. Hadn't his father warned him to trust no one? Seamus hated feeling trapped and vulnerable. He felt the bed shifting behind him, and then Felix's hand grazed his back, distracting him from the nameless man in front of him.

Felix snorted and sat up, not bothering to worry about the sheet or covering himself. "Well, well, well, if it isn't the Boy Scout. I didn't expect to see you here, Agent Donovan. Are you playing babysitter since I decided not to follow protocol?"

The agent gave up any pretense of threatening Felix and Seamus by plopping down in the wingback chair that was part of Seamus's reading nook. The man, much to Seamus's annoyance, picked up the book that had been lying on the arm of the chair and thumbed through it, then tossed it to the side.

Seamus ground his teeth together. "What is going on? Who are you? And can I put some damn pants on?" He directed the questions just as much at Felix as he did at the mysterious Agent Donovan.

Donovan laughed. "I am Skylar Donovan. I work for the Agency. I am not playing babysitter. I'm more deciding whether or not to help you obtain the information you need. The director was a little concerned about your situation, and whether or not Sparky here was going to double-cross you. Suffice it to say, I'm convinced enough to pass on the location of one Dr. Christopher Anton."

Felix swore and stood up, stalking over to Seamus's dresser where he yanked the drawer open to grab two pair of what seemed like an endless supply of sweatpants. Seamus had to stretch to catch the pair that was flung at him, causing him to lose his blanket. He glared at Skylar. "Do you mind?"

"No, not at all. Please continue."

Seamus had a feeling he wouldn't be winning a verbal battle with the agent, no matter how angry he was. Rather than spar with Donovan, he pulled his sweats on, and turned to find Felix sliding his pair over his round, perfect ass. He might have whimpered a little. Felix turned to grin and wink at him. Both men settled side by side on the edge of the bed facing Skylar. They couldn't be too careful about alerting anyone on the estate they were up, or about Felix still being there in the cottage.

Felix pointed a glare at his co-worker. "Keep talking, Skylar."

"Well, my impatient friend. It seems that Dr. Anton recently applied to enter the West under an alias. We found it a little strange, since he'd been declared dead by the Eastern government. Things are about to start getting really bad over here, Felix. Director Smith recommends that you abort the mission and return to the West."

Seamus couldn't believe the change that came over Felix's face. It became cold and hard, almost scary. Gone was the warm, sweet man that he had made love with only hours before. His voice was even colder than his face, and Seamus couldn't suppress a shiver. "Not without Seamus. Not without his brother. Do not push me on this, Donovan. Do not think for one second that I don't have my own resources and people I trust."

It both warmed and terrified Seamus that Felix so rabidly defended him and his family. The terror came from having that veil of denial he'd been looking

through for so long ripped away from his eyes. That emotion that both men could see and neither would name out loud was love. Seamus was sure of it, and he was sure, finally, of his own feelings as well. He slipped a hand into Felix's, presenting Skylar with a united front. "I have resources as well. Not everyone over here in the East is our enemy."

Felix

He knew Director Smith had sent Skylar to needle him, and it was working. Part of him wanted to get up off the bed and plant his fist in the other man's smug face. Felix had meant everything he'd said. He wasn't going to give up Seamus so that he could get back to "safety". Sometimes he wondered if the world would ever be safe for people like them. Seamus slipping his hand into his only cemented what he already knew. He'd die to protect this man.

"If you are going to give us the information we need to find this bastard, then do it. If not, slip back into the dark and stay out of our way." Felix's voice had dropped into a deep growl. He had to stifle a smile, though, when he saw the way Seamus shivered.

Skylar laughed. "Felix, we never intended to hang you out to dry, we just needed to know that this was serious. You are one of our most valued agents. You can't go getting yourself killed. What you two are undertaking is undeniably dangerous. You may want to think of sending the twins on a holiday with their long lost uncle so they will be out of harm's way, and they can't be used as leverage against you two."

Felix looked at Seamus and could see the internal war being waged. He squeezed his hand, leaned in, and spoke softly enough that Skylar wouldn't be able to hear. "I hate to admit that he's right, Shay, but the kids could be in real danger here."

Seamus paled and looked a little like he was going to show them what the contents of his stomach held. Felix untangled their hands and rubbed circles on his back until Seamus's face firmed, and resolve entered his eyes. Felix couldn't help but be proud when Seamus nodded in Skylar's direction. "That's probably best. I hate the idea. I don't want the twins away from me, but I don't want them caught up in all this either. Besides, if they are already safe in the West, it will make running easier, if it comes to that."

Felix couldn't help but blurt out, "But you don't have to make a decision right now!"

Seamus was visibly relieved. “Let’s keep it open as an option, but wait to make a decision until things are clearer.”

It was disheartening when, a few days later, they got a message from Skylar saying Anton had changed locations—again. For the next several months, Felix and Seamus tracked the movement of Anton and his facilities.

Felix was thrilled when Skylar appeared in the living room late one night with the information that they needed about Anton’s true location, finally. They lost track of time talking about logistics. They were at the kitchen table, deeply engrossed in maps and diagrams, when there was a sharp knock at the front door. All three men froze.

Then, Seamus eased out of the chair and went to the front door. Felix stayed rooted to his chair, terrified of yet another surprise this evening. Skylar had slipped away to melt into the shadows of the unlit living room.

Seamus

Seamus opened the door to find his mother looking back at him. For once, she wasn’t dressed in one of her expensive suits, instead wearing a fluffy robe and hard-soled slippers; her hair was loose around her shoulders. He hadn’t even realized she owned a robe. For the first time in Seamus’s life, Fiona looked like a mother, instead of the cold, society wife that she had always been.

“Mother, what are you doing here at—” he looked at his watch “—three thirty in the morning?”

She looked at him sternly. “Are you going to invite me in?”

Seamus automatically moved back to let her in, glancing at Felix in a panic.

Fiona brushed him aside, and walked imperiously to the middle of his living room. “Hello, Mr. Walker. We need to talk. You may tell your guest he can stop hiding in the corner. Seamus, do get me some tea if you will.”

Still looking panicked, Seamus scrambled into the kitchen to put on a kettle for tea. Felix was gaping a bit like a fish, and Skylar, wary and uncertain, came out of the shadows to seat himself at the table with Felix. Felix was trying to casually gather their plans and maps together into a pile so that Fiona didn’t see them.

Waving her hand in a shooing motion, Fiona grabbed the stack of papers from Felix. She gave them a brief glance and tossed them back on the table.

“Your plans are admirable, but they have holes. There is very little likelihood that a group of two or three men is going to successfully infiltrate a government facility and rescue an untold number of children. You have no idea what you are walking into. Absolutely none. These men are armed with some of the most advanced security technology available. They are ruthless and have killed before. Honestly, the idiots kidnapping Ian have just about demolished several years of undercover work. Not to mention that somehow Dr. Anton got resurrected from the proverbial dead. I was fairly certain he was actually dead until the last six months or so.” Fiona ran a hand through her platinum hair, mussing it. “Now before I go any further, please introduce me to your friend.”

Seamus stood with his mouth open, and Felix looked much the same. The Fiona here at the kitchen table was completely unlike any version of her that Seamus had encountered in his entire life. He looked to Felix, hoping he would say something, but when Felix wasn't forthcoming, Skylar stuck out his hand to the older woman. “Skylar Donovan. I represent an interest in the West.”

Fiona let out a full-bodied laugh, sending unease sliding down Seamus's spine. “Cut the bullshit, Agent Donovan,” Fiona said. “You work for the Agency, helmed by one Mr. Smith, as does Mr. Walker here.” When both men tried to speak at once, she silenced them with a look. “I've always known your background, Mr. Walker. You were not placed here by accident, but by design. You were here under the guise of having an eye kept on you, but it was also for your protection. There are those of us here in the East who do not completely agree with the new religious order. Rather than escape to the West, when the reorder took place, some of us banded together to fight things from the inside. Your father thinks he's a double agent, working for both the West and the East. Truthfully, he's a carefully placed figurehead with no real power. We've attempted to keep most of the more heinous acts from being perpetrated, trying to remind these bigots that it would be as much against their religion as whatever nonsense they are trying to stop.”

Fiona paused while Seamus served her tea. “I was not a good mother, not to you, Seamus, and not to Ian. We had you both tested young and are not surprised by your... proclivities, however we hid the results, thinking that we were somewhat untouchable. Obviously, that has been proved wrong. It's time to start talking about exit strategies. First and foremost, we must get the children out of the country. They are no longer safe here. War is on the verge of breaking out.”

Seamus finally broke in, “We were planning on sending Bryan and Brynna with Skylar. He's tasked with getting them out of the country.”

Fiona shook her head. "You are being far too obvious. Their nanny is a spy. She will be suspicious of a sudden holiday with some person that we don't know."

"Ms. Randall is a spy? But how, and why?" Seamus was coming undone. There was just too much. His whole life had unraveled in the last few days. Without thinking, he reached out and twined his fingers with Felix's. He just felt better with Felix's wider hand around his own.

Fiona pursed her lips but didn't say anything about their open display of affection. "We are one of the most powerful and wealthy families involved in government. Do you really think they trust us? Of course they don't. They want to know our every move. Why else do you think I made you move out here to the cottage? I don't want them to know what occurs in the main house."

Seamus had always kept himself removed from the power games and intrigue that seemed to dog his family's footsteps. He couldn't care less about power or money, and often found himself the outcast growing up. It was difficult for him to wrap his mind around why someone would want to be involved with all of that stuff, but he was a much simpler man.

Fiona broke the silence by outlining an intricate plan, which involved faking her own death and those of Bryan and Brynna. By the time she finished, the sun was coming up, and Seamus's head pounded like he'd stayed up all night knocking back shots. Skylar had slipped out just before dawn while the estate was still bathed in darkness. Even knowing he was there, it had been almost impossible to see him as he bled into the shadows. And then Felix left to slip back to the carriage house, and Seamus and Fiona were left alone.

Seamus felt awkward. He sensed that he was in the midst of a pivotal moment and he feared screwing it up. He worried at his bottom lip with his teeth, a habit from his teen years which—to Fiona's disgust—he hadn't broken. Her eyes were luminous with what he thought were unshed tears as she looked at him. It seemed she was trying to catalogue all of Seamus's features. Suddenly, as much as he'd always thought he hated her, he feared to the depths of his soul he would never see her again.

Over the last few months, he'd gained an understanding that while she wasn't the best mother, she was a strong woman who'd been asked to carry far more than her fair share. She wasn't the perfect society wife. She was broken just as much as any of the rest of them.

"Mother..." Seamus couldn't say anything more. He tried to express his feelings with his eyes, and he fancied that Fiona's eyes said everything she

feared to voice out loud, too. There was just too much to say, and he had none of the words to tell her. She put her hand on his face for only a moment, and then she gathered her dressing gown around her and walked out his front door, her posture as rigid as it had ever been. The moment of softness had passed.

She called back over her shoulder. "Have the children ready to travel in one hour, Seamus. All of our lives depend on it."

They had so much to prepare before they'd be ready to take on Anton's compound, but Seamus had to get the children ready first. His heart ached at the thought of what was to come. They would be so confused, but in the end it would all be worth it. They'd all make it safe to the West, and they could finally have a life together. All of them.

Felix

Walking out and leaving Seamus alone with Fiona felt to Felix almost as if he were throwing his man to the wolves, but he knew it was necessary for them to have these last moments to bond or say goodbye or yell and cry. There were no guarantees any of them would make it through this. Their plan was risky and crazy as hell. Felix wasn't even sure they could pull it off. They could all end up dead, or worse, captured.

Felix looked around his bedroom back at the carriage house. It was the only room bearing evidence that he'd been there. He'd slowly been sending items back to the West ever since the unrest had started growing. Felix knew that when they left they'd probably be able to take very little with them. He'd never before been this scared going in to a mission, and he wished he could send Seamus ahead with the twins. Too much of him was caught up in the sexy, blond cop with a heart bigger than the ocean that separated their two continents.

No one had been more surprised than Felix when he'd found Fiona on their side the night before. He'd fully expected to have to battle her too, and there was no doubt she would have been a formidable obstacle. To know she was backing them eased some of his tension. She was an amazing strategist, something that wasn't a strong suit for either him or Seamus. Skylar could hold his own, but watching her obliterate their plan and rebuild it had been mesmerizing.

He checked the time, and then packed up the last of his belongings in a small duffle bag. Skylar would be meeting them that night so they could load up on weaponry. Making his way over to the cottage, Felix could see Seamus

through the window feeding the children breakfast. The twins were squabbling over something insignificant, but rather than get irritated, Seamus just smoothed his hand over their ginger heads and pressed kisses into the silky locks. Almost like they were bound together, Seamus looked up as Felix walked through the door.

He pasted a smile on his face and made his voice sunshine bright. "So I hear my favorite little terrors are going on holiday with Grandma Fiona. Is this true? Are you leaving me?" Felix threw an arm over his forehead in a classic, dramatic heroine pose, and the twins erupted into giggles.

"Yes, yes, Felix! Grandma is taking us to the beach." The twins were jumping up and down, their breakfast and argument forgotten. Felix dropped his bag at his feet and knelt down to rummage in a pocket. He came up with shell necklaces, one pink and one blue. He fastened them around the twins' necks, kissing each one on their foreheads and extracting a promise that they wouldn't take them off "no matter what." Felix glanced up to see Seamus leaning against the doorway, a small smile on his face and fear in his eyes. Felix winked, and Seamus broke into a real smile.

They hurried to pack the children's bags, making sure to include anything deemed important. Seamus didn't argue as he would have at another time. Both men knew what the children took would be the only remnants of their previous life. All too soon, Fiona was at the door to gather them into an unmarked transport. Felix had never been prouder of Seamus as he held it together until the door closed, and the transport exited the estate. Then his man dissolved into a big sobbing mess; all Felix could think is that he wanted to cry too, but he stayed strong for his lover.

Felix then pulled out his com-device and, after tapping at the screen for a few moments, brought up a screen that had two dots, one pink and one blue, moving along the roadway side-by-side. Seamus smiled. "The necklaces?"

Felix smiled back and nodded. "Now we need to get our own shit together. We have a lot to do before we catch up with Skylar and the team your mother put in play. Seamus' smile dimmed, and he looked around his home.

He took a few moments to walk through and touch things, as if he could take the memories with him. Felix looked on, with a feeling of sadness for him. He knew what it was like to walk away from everything he'd ever known for the hope of something better. When he felt that Seamus had spent enough time brooding, he bullied him into packing his own duffle bag. They would be

handing their own luggage off to Skylar's men and trusting that it would be waiting for them on the other side.

Felix started to get restless as the day went on. While Seamus took his trips down memory lane, Felix was uploading all the information off their tablets and wiping the drives, then loading ordinary police files on them. He doubted anyone would look too much harder at the devices, but even if they did, he left nothing for them to find. He also took the time to wash their soiled sheets from the night before. It didn't really matter, but it gave him something to pass the time.

The day passed slowly with both men avoiding one another.

Seamus

No sooner had the sun set than Skylar appeared in the living room. "How the hell do you do that?" Seamus demanded, one hand pressed on his chest, as if it would keep his heart from beating out of his skin.

Skylar just grinned and winked. Seamus was almost certain the man was part ghost or something. It was creepy how he just appeared places. Felix didn't seem fazed at all, which irritated Seamus more than Skylar's ninja behavior.

Once Felix entered the room, Skylar ducked out the back door for a moment and came back in with the rest of the team, all of them dressed in the same black tactical gear that Skylar wore. Seamus was sure that he'd never seen that many people packed into his living room.

Skylar introduced them to all but two people in the room. All of the men introduced were the ones that his mother provided. They were all grim-faced, and had a battle-hardened look about them that made Seamus want to stay far away from them. Skylar turned to the man and woman who were left. "This is Robbie and Rose. They are two of what is usually a five person tactical team, including myself. Katie, another member of our team, will be handling any technical aspects of this endeavor. Our fifth member is with Director Smith, trying to coordinate our exit plan. I'm not going to lie, Seamus, this plan is damned complicated and even more risky. You and Felix are going to have to be where you're supposed to be when you're supposed to be there, or we all may be up shit creek without a paddle. I'm not too worried about Felix. He's gone on missions with us before, and he's a good operative. You are used to going in places backed up by a badge. This isn't going to be like that, at all. For one thing, we have no real idea, other than layout and location of the building,

what we are walking into. We don't know where or how these kids are being kept, or what kind of security they're going to have.”

Seamus felt a little dazed, but he firmed up his spine and blasted Skylar with the voice that Felix liked to call his “high society” voice. “I will do what needs to be done. I have more at stake here than anyone else. My brother is in there. My kids are on their way to some unknown location where my mother is going to fake all of their deaths and smuggle them out of the country. I'm pretty fucking sure that I can handle following orders. I've been doing it my whole life; this just has more guns. I've met Anton. It was years ago, but I remember the man as being a complete control freak. He's also more than a little crazy, but he's not stupid. We're going to encounter a damn good security system but probably minimal guards, because he's going to be relying on the tech to keep people out. He's also got a huge ego, so I doubt that he believes anyone can or will track him, especially if he believes he has government backing.” For the first time since the whole thing began, Seamus didn't feel like a useless ball of emotions.

Skylar nodded in approval. “That's good intel, Seamus, and should help us. It says that our biggest obstacle is going to be the tech, and with Katie behind the scenes, we should be able to handle that.”

With nothing else to discuss, Skylar tossed Felix and Seamus black gear that matched what the others wore. Soon, Seamus stood in the doorway and said goodbye to everything, before heading out with the others to the large transport Skylar had somehow gotten onto the property through a seldom-used rear gate. They were packed into the transport like sardines, and Seamus ended up having to sit on Felix's lap. Felix's arms wrapped around him, like an anchor steadying him. He had never felt more bound to a person. Felix was risking everything for him. Seamus turned to look at his lover. He had a need to make sure Felix knew how he felt, at this moment. Heart thumping and palms sweating he opened his mouth to speak, but Felix placed a finger over his lips.

“Shhh. I know. Me too, Shay.” Felix pulled him down by his vest and pressed a swift kiss to his lips.

Groans sounded around them, with some of the team calling “Get a room!” It lightened the tension when they all burst into laughter. The good-natured ribbing eased something inside Seamus. Like maybe he could hope for a life where being with a man wouldn't be something that was wrong. It was something that he'd never before allowed himself to actively hope for.

Felix

He would have had to be blind to not see how wound-up Seamus was. They had avoided each other much of the day. The mood was too fragile for much interaction. Felix had been half-afraid that Seamus would call everything off when it all sank in, and the day seemed both too long and too short.

Seamus never backed down, though. He was the type of guy that would throw his all into everything he did. He was the type of guy Felix had been looking for his entire life, and he'd only had to go halfway around the world to find it.

Later, sitting in the transport when Seamus looked at him, his heart in his eyes, and appeared about to spill its contents in front of a bunch of strangers, Felix lay a finger on his lips and silenced him. He didn't want the first time they said "I love you" to be in front of others. He'd rather it be whispered in the dark, skin upon skin. He stole a swift kiss and laughed with joy when the others gave them shit, and Seamus relaxed against him. Headed into danger, they still had each other.

It was a strange, moonless night, the cloud cover too thick for stars to penetrate. The location where they expected to find Dr. Anton turned out to be a three-story, brick warehouse. There were a few security lights, though not many. It looked deserted, but thermal scans proved that there were at least twenty-five occupants, ten of whom were moving around.

Katie came over the coms. "You should be able to waltz through the back entrance. Take everything slow and easy."

They split into two teams, Skylar leading his team along with a few of the men Fiona provided. Felix took the rest of them. Skylar's team would breach from the front, Felix and Seamus from the rear. The two men had no more time to talk or think. They had to focus on the task at hand.

The initial breach was a flurry of activity. They breezed through the back door. No alarms sounded. At the front of the building, they could hear suppressed gun fire. Felix pursed his lips, hoping that none of their own were among the dead. The first occupied room was almost dungeon-like in appearance, as if someone had a medical fetish. Beds with scary leather straps hanging off them—some appeared to be tinged with blood. A man in a lab coat hunched over a desk. He looked up in annoyance when he saw the group of armed men enter the room. When he stood, his slender spider-like frame stood several inches over Seamus's six feet three inches.

Seamus briefly tightened his grip on his weapon, holding it steady on the other man. "Dr. Anton. We're here to shut you down for good. Where is my brother?"

Dr. Anton straightened his lab coat, appearing unaffected by the guns pointed at him. He laughed. "Young Seamus Breckenridge. I had always hoped that you would end up in my labs, but instead, I got your younger brother. He has made quite a specimen to begin tests on. I have not had him nearly long enough to complete them, though."

Felix had never wanted to kill someone more than he did Anton; his hand shook with rage. He took a deep breath and let the cool air calm him. Having regained his focus, he growled.

"Where is his brother, you sick fuck?"

Anton stared off into space. "He screams so pretty." He turned wide, crazed eyes back to the men. "I like to hear them scream. I only give the abominations what they crave. Pain and degradation. I'm trying to cure them of their sins." He laughed, and the sound sent a shiver through Felix. The man was obviously insane. Seamus looked as though he was going to puke, and it was everything Felix could do to not put a bullet into Anton's demented head.

Felix waved to one of the other men, who seized the crazy doctor. Anton didn't fight as they strapped him to one of the beds. "We'll grab him on the way out. This way, we know where he is." Felix told Seamus.

Seamus nodded. Felix led the team to the next room, and the next. They were finding boys and girls, filthy with urine and feces, chained to metal beds. The smell was overwhelming, leaving many men gagging and retching. Felix assumed the guards had physically abused their charges, since most of the children had deep bruising. All of the children had haunted eyes. They cleared the entire bottom floor, but still found no sign of Ian. They could only hope Skylar had retrieved him. They were waiting for Skylar's team to come down and join them when the alarm blared.

It sounded like an air raid siren and was accompanied by the sharp staccato of boots running down the stairs. Each of the booted figures carried blanket-wrapped bundles. Skylar yelled at Felix and his team to get out, and ordered one of his own team to hand over his blanket-wrapped bundle to Felix. He then gave orders for them to get as much information out of the computers as possible.

Rose dumped her armful of preteen into Felix's arms, and he grunted under the sudden weight. He took a moment to flip back the blanket and stare at a face that looked far too similar to Seamus not to be his brother. This boy had dried tears on his face, but his eyes were closed as if he were sleeping peacefully. He held the boy to his chest, allowing the weapon he'd been clutching to bang uselessly against his thigh. He ran for the second transport, which had shown up while they'd been inside. He was unsure what to do with the kid, and somehow he and Seamus had been separated in the scramble to get out of the building.

"Shay!" He hollered. Seamus looked up from ushering the wounded children into the back of the transport. "Ian." Felix lifted his bundle a little.

Seamus's shoulders shook; he was openly sobbing. Felix rushed as fast as he could with the kid held against his chest. He pressed the boy into his brother's arms. Seamus held both of them for a moment before grabbing onto his brother and crying into his hair.

A female voice yelled from the front of the transport, "Let's get a move on guys, there are government operatives headed our way!" Felix pushed his lover up and into the back of the transport—the last to board—before slamming the double doors shut.

Running around the side of the transport, he climbed in and slipped into the co-pilot's seat. He looked over to say thanks, and the words froze in his throat. The woman driving had bright pink streaks running through sun-blond hair. She looked exactly like Fiona Breckenridge. There is no way that could be a coincidence. "Hey, I'm Katie, the tech girl from the Agency. We've never met in person, Agent Walker, but I've heard good things. You think you could press that button for me?" She pointed to a button on the transport's console, and Felix did as she asked, while the transports were pulling away. An explosion rocked the transport side to side as the facility went up in a cloud of fire and smoke—small debris rained down around them. Eyes wide, Felix looked up and grinned.

Seamus

The mission still had Seamus's heart thumping, even as he sat in the back of the transport cradling his brother's fragile, damaged body. He appeared to be drugged, and judging by the cuts and abrasions he'd seen when he pulled back the blanket, that was probably a good thing. He blinked back tears, and looked

around at the dazed and confused faces of all the children who had the misfortune to have tested homo-positive. Children, just like he had been. Many of them were just barely entering puberty, and some probably hadn't even figured out that they were different. How could the government, the very people he worked for, and his father worked for, think abusing children could make a difference in their sexuality? Seamus held onto the anger burning in his gut, knowing that he'd need it as fuel for what was to come. His com-device buzzed frantically. It was his supervisor, Adams. Each message was more frantic than the last. His mother and children were on the news as casualties in a boating accident. Seamus found a reason to smile. Fiona's plan seemed to be going well. He'd started to send a message back to Adams when the transport was rocked. The kids awoke from their stupors enough to cheer at the great cloud of fire and smoke that shattered the building where they had been tortured.

Seamus looked down to see his brother's blue eyes gazing up into his own. Ian smiled a sleepy smile. "I knew you'd come for me, Seamus. I knew, and I told them." Seamus felt his eyes fill again. He was leaking tears all down his face. "You've always been my hero, Seamus, I knew you wouldn't let me down."

Seamus clutched Ian close until the boy feebly pushed him back. "Love you, little brother." When Ian's eyes closed, it truly was a peaceful sleep, despite the discomfort he must have been feeling. He wished that Felix could be sitting back there with them, but the larger transports really needed two people up front. After they'd passed through the hail of debris, things quickly quieted. Most of the children fell asleep, obviously exhausted. Seamus's eyes fluttered, and then closed.

When Seamus awoke, hours later, the driver had parked near an empty pier. The kids had been taken to a nearby building which had restrooms and showers for swimmers who frequented the beaches. Felix came and led a shaky Ian over to a blonde with bright pink streaks in her hair. Seamus could barely see her in the distance. Everyone was safe, now they just had to make it to the West. Still, Seamus couldn't believe how much lighter his world was, all because Felix was a part of it.

He slipped off from the group, needing some time alone and maybe to cry again. He walked down the beach and out onto an outcropping of rocks. He stripped down to his skivvies and jumped off, plunging into the frigid water. *Shit that was cold!* He sucked in a deep breath, his teeth chattering. He swam

for the rocks, only to be pushed back under by Felix, who was jumping in. Sputtering, he pushed the other man away from him and scrambled back up on the rocks. Felix laughed and followed him. They stood there, the air steaming around them, watching the sun peek up over the horizon.

Seamus reached out for Felix's larger hand and held tight. His whisper was rough and low. "I love you, Felix Walker. Take us home."

Felix

He'd thought he wanted skin to skin when their love was spoken aloud, but to have Seamus tell him when they were looking at the sunrise over the water was perfect. "I love you, too, Seamus Breckenridge."

Felix only wished that they had more time to bask in the moment, but the kids hollering down the beach interrupted them. They grabbed their clothing and shoes and took off up the beach. Katie had disappeared with the transport, leaving only the message their ride would be arriving shortly. Felix released a curse. He knew that Katie was Seamus's twin—he was positive of it. He wondered if she knew, and he found it damned inconvenient she'd disappeared.

Seamus had pulled his gear on over soggy underwear, and then got busy rounding up the twenty children who had survived the horror of Anton's facility. A care package had been left in the shower building with clothing and shoes for all the kids. Some of it was ill-fitting on their too-thin frames, but at least it was all clean. They were beginning to complain about being tired and hungry and wanting to go home.

Felix stepped in and raised his hand to get their attention. "There is no home, guys. I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but you can't go home. It's not safe. We just rescued you from a government-sanctioned facility. We are all wanted fugitives."

Kids calling out questions interrupted him. "Where are we going?" "What about our families?" Several of them just cried. Ian held onto his older brother.

"Hold on! One at a time. We're going to the Agency headquarters, and we'll go from there. Director Smith, my boss, will make sure that you all find a safe place. I promise. As far as your families, we will try to track them down when we get to the West, and we'll offer them passage if they wish to immigrate to be with you. But you are not safe here."

All of the children became quiet then, subdued. Many began to cry again. Felix felt as if he'd crushed the last of their hope. In turn, he wished that he could make it better, but he knew he was doing all he could.

A strange noise alerted them to the end of the pier where a black ship arose, water sheeting down the sides. They all huddled together, with nowhere to go and no way to get there. Felix was pretty sure they had been found out, until a hatch popped open, and there was Skylar. "So I heard you guys needed a ride? No? Okay I'll just..."

Felix flipped him off and herded the fearful teens toward the submersible. He clasped arms with the man as they boarded, no words needing to be said. They were on the same team, and they were fighting the same fight. When Felix chose Seamus as his family, Skylar jumped in with both feet, willing to sacrifice his life to protect them. There were no words of thanks big enough to express his feelings.

Felix was exhausted, and it didn't take long for him to find an office chair to collapse in and sleep once they'd handed the kids off to Rose and Robbie. Felix meant to ask where Katie was, but sleep crept up on him too quickly. He felt like Rip Van Winkle when he awoke in a different place, still in the same chair he'd fallen asleep in. In fact, once he started moving around, he realized that he wasn't even on the same vessel. He stood in a hatchway, confused. Seamus's voice had him spinning around and narrowly missing shaving off the top of his head on the hatch.

Seamus laughed. "You were so passed out, that we just carried the chair aboard when we moved from the submersible to the big ship. I tried to hurry to the galley to get you something to eat, but I guess you woke before I could get back."

Felix then noticed that Seamus held two trays in his hands. He grabbed one, and they went back into the compartment that Seamus had come from. Felix couldn't even say what was on the tray. All he knew was that it was hot and it tasted good. He made quick work of it, and was already wiping his face when Seamus finished eating as well. "Where's Ian? Have you heard anything from Fiona? Did Anton get killed in the explosion?"

Seamus held his hands up in surrender. "Ian is with the other kids. Fiona and the twins are safely in the West. Anton escaped, but not unaided or uninjured. They're tracking him now."

Seamus moved until he was able to twist Felix's chair around, then proceeded to straddle him. Felix felt all the intensity and emotion between them

in the kiss Seamus laid on him. It wasn't really meant to be arousing, he thought. Just a confirmation that they were there and together. That they'd made it through and remained on solid ground. Of course, that only lasted a few moments before the men were grinding against each other, chasing release. It was quick, rough, and dirty.

They fumbled open the button flies of the tactical pants, and shoved down their boxer briefs. Felix thrilled at the sensation of their cocks rubbing together. Seamus's hand closed, mostly, around both of them as he jacked them together. There was no finesse, only the roughness of his hand over them. Felix groaned when Seamus's thumb swiped over the head. It didn't take long before both men were spilling over Seamus's hand. Felix couldn't help but shiver when Seamus brought his hand up to his mouth and licked their cum from it. He leaned forward and kissed him, tasting himself on his lover's tongue.

Seamus and Felix spent much of the next day or so in the compartment, only breaking to debrief with Skylar, eat, and spend time with Ian.

Seamus

The days aboard the ship were idyllic, and everyone decompressed a bit. The children had started to manifest nightmares, though, and their screams were chilling. Seamus had a feeling that the captain and crew would be glad to see them disembark. Seamus himself was anxious to see his children. He loved the time he had to bond with Ian and Felix, but he was more than ready to begin their new lives together.

He stood on the deck of the ship watching the shoreline get closer and closer. Apprehension shot through his limbs, forcing his knees to knock together just a little bit. Felix was in front of him, with one supporting arm around Ian, who was still a little weak. Seamus stretched his arms around both of them. He rested his chin on Felix's shoulder. There were people waiting for them on the dock. Seamus straightened when he realized that he could see the twins, holding a "Welcome Home Daddy, Felix, and Ian" sign. They were standing with an older gentleman with white hair.

Felix's voice was choked up when he said, "Director Smith. They're with my boss."

None of them had dry eyes as they disembarked where their future waited for them. Seamus had never been more certain everything was going to be okay

than when he saw his family united. Felix was the anchor binding them all together.

Epilogue

Two years later

Felix sat at his overly large desk looking at the photo screen of his family. Pictures of his wedding to Seamus scrolled past. His favorite was the one where a ribbon wrapped about their hands, binding them together. Ian stood up for them as their best man, and the twins were in matching outfits. He could not believe Ian was fifteen already. *Where had the time gone?* The one person noticeably absent in all the photos was Fiona. She hadn't stayed with them long. She felt it was her duty to go back to the East and try to do what good she could.

She had stayed long enough to change tremendously, though, and Felix was sure Katie had something to do with that. The younger woman had become such an integral part of their lives, and she helped to soften their rough edges. Sadly, her relationship with Seamus was more tumultuous than with the rest of them, maybe because they were trying so hard to force a connection, or maybe because they were so much alike.

Felix got lost in his own little world, replaying the last two magic-imbued years of their lives. When the terminal on his desk squawked, he almost jumped out of his chair. "Director Walker, Agent Donovan and Mr. Smith are here to see you, as you requested."

Felix straightened his suit and stood as the men entered the room. Six months ago, Mr. Smith had stepped down as director of the Agency, and Felix had taken his place. Mr. Smith took over all the covert-operation teams, which included Skylar Donovan's team. Now, Felix broke the tension by coming out from around the desk and hugging both men.

"Take a seat guys. We've been chasing the ghost of Anton for years now, none of us certain that he actually lived through the explosion. At this time, I think we have confirmation that he is alive. After talking to Kelsey Sterling, the description of the man who took him from his home is too spot-on not to be Anton."

Skylar nodded, "I thought so too, but I was afraid to hope we'd gotten a line on him. Now that we know he is working in the West, we have to find him."

"I heard that Kelsey's going to start working towards his educational goals soon?" Felix directed the question towards Mr. Smith.

"Yes. He's eager to get back to school, despite his trauma. He's also working closely with counselors to get him mentally ready to rejoin the world. Besides, young Skylar has been keeping Kelsey company. I'm very proud of how he's taken the young man under his wing."

Skylar glowered at Mr. Smith, mumbling something about feeling protective, while Felix fought off a grin. He'd seen how infatuated the young blond waif was with Skylar, and he had a feeling it was mutual. "Protective? Maybe, but I think there is a lot more to it than that. He *is* an adult, Skylar. He can make his own choices."

Skylar ran a frustrated hand through his artfully-styled tresses. "Legally, he's an adult, but he's been through so much. I want to give him time to grow up a little bit."

"Don't wait too long Skylar, or he might not be waiting for you."

The End

Author Bio

Cam Kennedy is an award-winning poet who stumbled onto m/m romance accidentally in 2010. As a member of the LGBTQIA community herself, she had never realized that m/m existed outside her favorite fandoms, which she had been involved in since the late 90's. Impressed with the quality of writing in the m/m genre she began writing reviews, and never intended to share any of her own work. In her spare time, she is the mother of three, a dutiful (kinda) daughter and a rabid advocate on behalf of what she believes.

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