

# LOVE'S LANDSCAPES



Don't Read in the Closet 2014

## GUARDING DIZZY

Casey K. Cox

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# Love's Landscapes

*An M/M Romance series*

## GUARDING DIZZY

**By Casey K. Cox**

### 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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## Photo Description

Two young men lounge comfortably on a couch. One wears a collar and leash, has his shirt open and his jeans undone, the second smaller man leans against him with the leash in his hand. He wears a waistcoat and shirt with a silk bow at the neck and kisses the fingers of the first man.

## Story Letter

*Dear Author,*

*The picture above is of two younger guys; high school- or university-age. They are both smart. The one lying down is a delinquent (looks can be deceiving!). The only one who can keep him under control, and who he listens to, is the one sitting up with a collar on. They had heard of one another but never met until that fateful day... How did they meet? Did they get along at first or did they grow on each other? How did they end up on the couch with a leash and collar? Perhaps, it was a dare at first, but it blossomed and opened them both up to a new world... of fun...*

*I would like a HEA/HFN ending. No cheating either.*

*Sincerely,*

*Jeanne*

## Story Info

**Genre:** contemporary

**Tags:** university/college, virgin, sex-lite, sexual exploration

**Content Warnings:** very lite exploratory D/s scene (no full sex)

**Word Count:** 19,822

## GUARDING DIZZY

**By Casey K. Cox**

Miro Kahn lounged in his chair letting the words from the book in his hand wash through his brain. He'd often sit in the student union bar with his friend, Will, and just while away the hours, still working, but having the buzz of life around him. He was in his third year of a four-year Master's degree in Sports and Exercise Science. The course was full-on, and his dedication was legendary. The only time Miro left the comfort of his books was to row. Rowing was his passion. Slipping through the water like a hot knife through butter gave him an immense feeling of power and grace. The stillness in speed as he cut a pace was meditative. His focus for rowing was renowned, and many of the younger students asked to train with him, but he preferred to keep to himself whether on the water or in the gym. Except for Will. And Jerry. Miro glanced up at the door just as Jerry burst through it.

"That annoying little ponce did it again." Jerry slammed his backpack on the table and dropped into an empty chair. The insult reverberated around the student union and several people turned to look.

"Oi," Miro said, throwing a beer mat at him. "Watch your language." So much for a quiet five minutes in the bar with Will before class. Will looked at Miro and rolled his eyes, and they smirked at each other. The three of them had been friends for almost three years, but Miro and Will had been through high school together too. They'd adopted Jerry during Fresher's and were amused he was still around. He was becoming a good friend and part of the furniture. Unfortunately, his moods were becoming notorious. Jerry spit forth some more gay vitriol, and Miro kicked Jerry's chair. "Quit it."

"Eh?" Jerry looked up; the black thundercloud over his head seemed to disappear for a moment before he replaced it with a scowl. Miro raised an eyebrow in his direction, a trademark move to suggest Jerry should rethink what he'd just said. "Oh, well he is. Always twirling and flouncing around. He's like a snappy little terrier. Every time I get within a few feet of Jenna he starts with that bloody mouth of his."

Jenna. Of course, it was about a girl. With Jerry, it was always about a girl. And, in this instance, the snappy little terrier who seemed to be plaguing Jerry's

every move on said girl. Miro had to admire the terrier's tenacity even if he was obviously a few planks short of a load to mess with Jerry. "No excuse," Miro said, throwing another beer mat that bounced off Jerry's head. "Perhaps if you had a bit more respect for her friends she'd be a little more responsive."

The tension puffed out of Jerry's chest, and he deflated in resignation. "He just drives me insane."

"You should look at that." Miro threw the last beer mat from the table and Jerry caught it as it flew past his shoulder.

Jerry looked over at Will. "What's that supposed to mean?"

Will chuckled. "Be careful. He's about to give you one of his 'people are mirrors for your own issues' speeches."

"It's true." Miro straightened in his chair. "Whatever pisses you off about him is what you need to address in yourself."

"That he's gay? I'm not gay."

Miro's eyes widened. "So you're a homophobe now?"

"No, of course not. I just... he's snappy."

"And you're not?" Will leaned over and patted Jerry on the back. "Miro may have a point after all, mate. You're not the most approachable guy in the world yourself."

Jerry looked crestfallen. "I don't snap at strangers. I don't." He was quiet for a few minutes. "I do, don't I? Fine. He gets up my nose because he reminds me of me. If that's the case, why isn't Jenna interested? They're practically joined at the hip. If he's so much like me, she should like me too."

"Perhaps she does," Will suggested. "You just have to get near enough to find out."

"Yeah, well, that's easier said than done with twat face always on the scene."

"What you notice in others..." Will and Miro said in unison and then burst out laughing, drawing the attention of the other students dotted around the bar.

"Sod off." Jerry stood sharply and grabbed his bag. "I've had enough of the life philosophies; I'll be in the gym."

"He really likes this girl," Will said, as he watched Jerry stomp across the room. "Perhaps we should help him out."

Miro dismissed the comment with a wave of his hand. "If he can't respect her friends, he's got no chance. Best to let him crash and burn on his own." He paused for thought. The idea of a little guy snapping at Jerry's heels was intriguing. "Who's the kid he's slating all the time?"

"He's in her dance class, and a few music and drama groups."

"Ah, that explains the twirling."

"And the flouncing." Will grinned. "But I think he's studying Architecture. Bit of a wild card though, apparently. Kate knows a few of the guys in one of his modules. He's on the verge of being kicked out because of his attitude. Jerry isn't the only one who finds him... difficult."

Even more intriguing. And fiery. And fascinating. "Can they kick you out just for attitude? It isn't high school."

"If you get kicked out of enough classes and lose your attendance, I guess they can. Why are you interested?"

Miro disconnected the fantasy train preparing to leave the station in his mind. "Anyone who pisses off Jerry to the point he willingly accepts he's not perfect gets my vote. I should find the kid and shake his hand."

Will kicked against Miro's foot under the table. "Is that all you want to do to him?"

"Not listening anymore. Need to focus." Miro raised the book in his hand so it covered his face.

"Yeah, right. Need to get laid, more like. You should go and find the hotshot. Get some R&R."

The book flopped back onto his lap and he glared at Will. "Just to satisfy your curiosity? I don't think so."

"Miro, it's me, Will. I know you're gay. It's nothing to be ashamed of."

"I'm not ashamed of who I am, Will. Besides, just because he flounces and twirls, it doesn't make him gay or likely to bend over for every guy who propositions him. *And...* I'm here with a purpose, and that purpose doesn't involve... getting involved."

"Not even with hot little architects who can do the splits and bend in all sorts of interesting ways?"

Pictures danced across Miro's mind before he could stop them, and he shifted in his seat. "Not even with one of those." He smirked but he hadn't been



able to hide the throatiness of his voice or the slight parting of his lips before he spoke. He kicked himself inwardly for being so readable. "If I was so inclined, of course," he added in an attempt to recover his position of asexual robotic study fiend.

Will sighed. "Of course. You know, you're as bad as Jerry."

Miro focused on the text in front of him. "I don't deny it," he said, refusing to look at Will even though he could feel Will's gaze boring into him. He focused on the text but he didn't see the words. His mind had hopped aboard the previously abandoned fantasy train and was busy inventing a flouncing, twirling, fiery little terrier with a perfect body that flexed and twisted in interesting ways. With tight dance shorts that left nothing at all to the imagination. Miro shifted in his seat again and the image dispersed. He sighed and let the text of his book wash the last of the colour from his mind... *'effect the stimulation of the T-cells to open and close 'the gate' so that the pain signals cannot be passed on, they do this by inhibiting the a-delta and c fibres in the substantia gelatinosa.'* And he was back on track.

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It had been a hard rehearsal and Derick Harris, Dale to his friends and Dizzy to his nearest and dearest, was shattered. Every muscle in his body, and a few he was sure he hadn't been aware of previously, were screaming at him for a hot shower, but the girls, his best buddies Amy and Jenna, were still buzzing and wanted to stop off at the juice bar on the way home.

"I am way too stinky for a public place," Dizzy protested. "It's okay for you two, you still smell all flowery even if you are a bit damp around the edges. I reek of musky maleness. It's nasty."

"Oh, stop it," Amy said, drawing him into a hug. "You smell sexy. Ripe sexy, admittedly, but a public place is perfect for those pheromones, sweetie. We need to unleash you on the unsuspecting male population."

"Of a juice bar?"

The girls giggled. "Of any bar," Amy said linking her arm through his and dragging him away from the path that led to his room, his shower, and his bed.

"Fine," he mumbled. "But don't complain when we get kicked out because of my stench."

"You're such a clean freak." Jenna linked his other arm and patted his shoulder. "So your hair is stuck to your face, so what? You still look awesome."

“Yeah, well you don’t have sweat running down your balls and seeping along the crevices of your manhood.”

“Granted, but I do have it chafing under my boobs and between the creases you’d rather not think about. So we’re even.”

“I still smell like a skunk.”

“You’ve never been near a skunk. Stop being so melodramatic.”

“But I’m a Queen, darling,” Dizzy said, spinning out of their grip and twirling off in front of them. “I simply *must* have drama to breathe.” The girls giggled and Dizzy pirouetted around them to end with a curtsy.

“Uh oh,” Amy said, nodding over his shoulder. Dizzy turned to see what she was looking at. “Neanderthal at fifty paces.”

Dizzy seethed. He grabbed Jenna’s arm and marched her off in the opposite direction. “Dizzy,” she complained, “I want a juice.”

“Not if he’s there. He’s a bully, Jenna. You stay well clear.” The guy heading in their direction was bad news. Dizzy could feel it with every cell of his body. They’d had numerous run-ins already and all because Jenna wouldn’t bow and scrape at his feet or worship his mightiness. Dizzy had made sure he was always between them and the guy really didn’t like it. He shouted, gesticulated, and generally made a nuisance of himself, which made Dizzy even more determined to keep Jenna entertained elsewhere.

Amy caught up with them and joined Jenna’s other side. “I don’t think he’s as bad as you make out, Dizzy. He’s friends with Miro Kahn.”

“Who’s that when he’s at home?”

“Only the most gorgeous creature to ever grace the halls of Bath Uni. How could you not know who he is?”

“Oh, he’s awesome,” agreed Jenna. “He rows and everything. You should see the crowd that gathers when he’s in the gym.”

“How is it possible I have never heard of this god?” Dizzy stopped and turned to stare at his friends. “Since when have you been ogling without me?”

“He trains when you’re in class.”

They took up a slow meander towards the dorm rooms. “So Neanderthal and gym god are friends, that doesn’t make either of them good people.”

Amy smiled. “Miro Kahn is perfection itself. Fit, unbelievably focused. The girls swoon, the boys are desperate to get his attention, and he blazes right

through it all with the workout from hell then waltzes out as though nobody has given him a second glance. He trains with the Olympic Team too. They say he'll make the grade this year. He walks around in those cool Crew Bath tight shorts when he's down on the water."

"A rower, you say?" Dizzy pictured long, lean limbs, reaching and stretching and bunching, and had to clear his throat. "Well, I've never heard of him so he can't be that special."

Amy scoffed. "You'll be drooling with the rest of us once you see him."

"Wait." Jenna pulled them all to a stop. "There he is."

Dizzy looked towards the student union. As he paused, his bag dropped to the floor, along with his jaw. Tumbleweed skittered through his mind as his eyes took in the sight. Tall, surprisingly slender, wrapped in creamy skin and topped off with a mop of jet black hair. A god, indeed. Dizzy watched him hold the door open for another guy and his heart dropped as he threw his arm around the shorter, stockier guy's shoulder and hugged him. The other guy was blond, and tanned, and gorgeous in his own way. Together they were breath-taking.

"Which one is he?" Dizzy spluttered.

"Tall, dark, and handsome," said Amy. "The other guy is Will Pritchard."

"They look good together."

"Oh, they don't swing your way, petal. Sorry to disappoint." Amy picked up his bag and pushed it against his chest. "Will has a reputation. One I'm hoping to test for myself." She flicked her hair over her shoulder and grinned. "I'll let you know how I get on."

Jenna tsked. "He doesn't know you're alive, honey." She took Dizzy's arm and started walking him back in the direction of the juice bar. "There's a really long queue," she said. "For both of them."

"Not that Kahn ever samples the goodies," Amy added.

"Then how do you know he doesn't swing my way?" Dizzy cringed at the hopeful tone in his voice. Amy considered his words, thoughtfully.

"It's true, there is no direct evidence to either confirm or deny the persuasion of our rowing god. In which case," she said, holding out her hand, "may the best girl win." Dizzy shook on it, without really taking in the words. He was still mesmerised by the way Miro Kahn's trackies hugged the curve of his arse, and his T-shirt stretched over well-developed traps and delts.

“Dizzy?” Dizzy looked at Jenna. “Are you okay?”

“I think I need a shower.”

“Not that again.”

“I think I need a *cold* shower.”

Both girls grabbed an arm and dragged him away to a chorus of giggles.

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The sun blazed overhead, and Miro stretched his arms, complete with the book he was holding, over his head. Good weather always made it difficult for him to study as he'd much rather be on the water. He sighed, stretched out in front, twisted to the side, to the front again, to the other side. Light bounced off the pond, and Miro shaded his eyes from the sun as he was momentarily blinded. When his focus came to again, he blinked a few times to clear his vision, but the lithe body twirling before him stayed put. Miro stared at the stretch and flex of the muscles, the flick of overly long hair which each twist, a dip to the floor with the hands and a leg extended into the air. Miro flushed and looked around to see whether anyone else was staring or had noticed him gawping like an idiot. Nobody else was paying attention. Miro caught the end of a flick-flack tumble and found himself blinded again, this time by the guy's smile as the girls with him cheered and applauded his display.

A group hug followed, and Miro cursed himself for how much he wanted to be part of it. The guy was little; shorter than the two girls he was with but after seeing him move, Miro imagined those arms were firm and strong. The girls blew kisses and waved as they wandered away, and Miro watched the guy collect his bag, which was almost as big as he was, and walk in the opposite direction. His hips swayed hypnotically and highlighted his killer arse sheathed in tight Lycra. Miro let his mind wander a little, savouring the fantasy. It ended abruptly with a ripple of danger in the air. The mood changed, the guy's hackles rose, and he stalled, fixed to the spot staring off into the distance. Miro was already on his feet, making his way towards him with an overwhelming urge to protect. He scanned the area and paused when he saw Jerry stomping towards the guy, who now looked ready to pounce. Shit. Miro broke into a trot and arrived just in time to jump in front of Jerry, without having tuned into the heated exchange of words.

“Jerry, mate, what are you playing at?”

“Step out of the way. This doesn't concern you.”

"It doesn't concern you, either," the guy said over Miro's shoulder. His voice was surprisingly deep and resonant for such a little guy. It rippled through Miro's body, and he shuddered involuntarily. It was long enough for Jerry to step around him and reach for the guy. Miro caught his arm and flipped him around.

"Jerry, for fuck's sake, are you trying to get kicked out?"

Jerry struggled against Miro's grip. "He needs teaching a lesson."

"Think about it."

Soft hands tugged on Miro's arms. "Let him go. I can look after myself. Let him try it. He thinks he can push me around because he's all tall and muscly. I'll put him down before he can—"

"Quit it!" Miro turned on his assailant, still holding Jerry in an armlock. Snappy terrier Jerry had called him. He was right about that. There was a moment's silence while the guy stared at Miro, his lips slightly parted, his face flushed, his eyes widened and then thunderclouds rolled in.

"I don't need you to fight my battles. I don't even know you. I don't need defending like some delicate flower. I—"

"I told you, be quiet." There was a pause again. "It's Jerry I'm protecting. From his own stupidity. Now run along with your little friends and leave us be."

"I don't have to go anywhere. He's the one who got up in my face. Who the hell—"

"Enough!" This time the guy stepped back and dropped his head. Miro turned his attention to Jerry. "Can I let you go without you doing something stupid?"

Jerry nodded once, and Miro released the hold. "I told you what he was like. Derrick Harris, troubled terrier at large." Jerry spat on the ground, and Miro rolled his eyes.

"You didn't tell me you were playing schoolyard bully boy. What do you expect?"

The yapping from behind started again and Miro turned just in time to see the guy launch himself towards Jerry. Miro caught him around the waist. "Time to leave, Jerry. I'll catch you later."

Miro shielded himself as best he could from the flailing.

"I don't need a guard dog," Jerry said, and turned to stomp off towards the bar.

As Jerry walked away, the flailing stopped leaving Miro with the guy in his arms, feet dangling a good six inches off the ground. Miro didn't want to let go. It felt oddly comfortable just holding him. *Derrick Harris*.

"I'd like it if you'd put me down now, please."

"Oh, sorry." Miro placed Derrick on his feet. "I, uh... I'm sorry about that. It was instinct. Jerry's a big guy."

"And I told you, I can take care of myself." Derrick pulled his T-shirt down from where it had ridden up with his wriggling and started to walk towards the bag he'd dropped a moment before.

"Derrick, wait."

Derrick spun on his heels. "Only my mother calls me Derrick. *You*," he jabbed a finger in Miro's direction and it felt like a dagger in Miro's chest. "You don't get to call me anything, Mr Manhandler."

"Hey, come on. I was just trying to help."

This time the jabby finger actually touched Miro, right in the sternum. "Just because I'm little doesn't mean I need some beefcake to jump in and save me. I'm stronger than I look and I don't need..." He looked up into Miro's eyes and his words fizzled out along with the anger. They stared at each other for what seemed like an age. Miro felt the heat pooling in his guts, fought the urge to sweep Derrick into his arms. Derrick broke the contact and turned to walk away. "Stay out of it next time."

"Wait," Miro trotted to catch up with him. "I feel bad... about picking you up. I shouldn't have, it was instinct." Derrick ignored him and kept walking, his head down. Miro needed more, wanted a reaction. "Derrick, I'm trying to apologise."

Derrick stopped and turned, face like thunder. "I said, *nobody* calls me Derrick. Now quit following me or I'll kick your—"

Miro crushed his lips over Derrick's, slipping an arm around his waist to pull him closer. Derrick stiffened and Miro started to pull back, realising his mistake, but before their lips parted, Derrick reengaged, pressing closer against Miro's body, wrapping his arms around Miro's neck.

Miro's head swam. It'd been too long. He groaned at the feel of Derrick's tongue searching for his. He reached to cup an arse cheek trying to get closer, lifting Derrick slightly off the ground.

"Get a room," someone shouted, to a chorus of cheers and laughter.

They jumped apart and Miro found an interesting patch of grass next to his foot to stare at. He didn't know what to say and he couldn't look up. What the hell was he thinking? *Let him walk away. Let him walk away. You don't have time for this. You don't have time for him.*

"So, uhm... My name's Dizzy."

Miro looked up and a sunshine smile greeted him that chased the words out of his brain and left him staring.

"Amy said you don't usually... I mean, she didn't think... well, what I'm trying to say is..."

Miro grabbed Dizzy's hand and dragged him towards where he'd abandoned his books.

"Where are we going? I have to get ready for class." Miro ignored the babbling. He had to get out of sight, they had to talk, and he had to get this kid to leave him alone. Focus was what he needed. Focus, and a few minutes behind a closed door to get those super sweet lips out of his system and get back to work. "Hey." Dizzy tugged and slipped free with a self-defence move. So he could look after himself, after all. Miro stopped and turned towards him. "I'm not a toy," Dizzy spluttered. "You can't just pick me up and take me wherever you want." Dizzy rubbed at his wrist.

Miro grabbed it again. "You're coming with me."

Dizzy squeaked as Miro pulled again. "Where? Why can't you just ask me out like a normal person?"

Miro let him go and gathered up his things. He shoved and pushed until everything was in his bag before throwing it over his shoulder and grabbing Dizzy's wrist again.

"I can walk on my own," Dizzy protested, tugging against the grip. "Don't make me drop you on your arse. Let go."

Miro stopped, still holding tight. "I don't trust you not to run off."

"Tell me where you're taking me."

The tone of the voice was authoritative, commanding, and Miro shuddered lightly. "To my place. I have to prepare lunch but we need to..." What did they need to do? "I want to..." Even worse. "You're coming with me." He avoided the questioning look and started walking, pulling Dizzy behind him.

"We're going to your place and you're going to cook lunch?"

"Yes," Miro snapped. "Now keep up."

"Your legs are longer than mine," Dizzy grumbled. "Slow down a bit."

"I'm in a hurry."

"You don't say. Most people would say, 'hey, Dizzy, do you fancy joining me for lunch so I can eat your face off again?' But not you—you just drag me off like some kind of caveman."

Miro glared behind him as Dizzy jabbered on to himself. Dizzy looked up and paused mid-sentence. "You do want to eat my face off, don't you? I mean, you like me, right? You want us to go somewhere private. You're not going to beat me up, are you?" Miro sighed and walked faster. "'Cause you won't be able to is all I'm saying. I can defend myself. Just so you know. I don't want any funny business." Miro stopped outside his apartment to open the door. "Wow, you have one of the single units. How did you swing that?"

"Do you ever stop talking?" Dizzy flushed, and Miro immediately felt guilty. "Sorry. I'm stressed. You've stressed me out."

"What did I do? You're the one who came bounding over and swept me off my feet."

"You're not good for my focus. I have to work. You shouldn't be here."

Dizzy scowled. "I tried to walk away. You're the one who abducted *me*."

Miro kicked at the door and it flew open. "Get in there, now."

"No." Dizzy folded his arms against his chest.

Miro grabbed him around the waist, bag and all, and placed him inside the door before pushing him further into the apartment and slamming the door behind him. They stared at each other. Miro hadn't realised how heavily he was breathing, or how tight his pants were around his groin. No sooner than he'd acknowledged it in his mind, Dizzy looked down. His eyes widened. "Oh, my."

Miro cursed under his breath and bundled Dizzy along the corridor into the kitchen. "Sit there." He pointed to the kitchen table. Rather than take a chair,



Dizzy dropped his bag and jumped up to sit on the kitchen counter, letting his feet dangle over the edge.

"Fine, so now you have me here, what are you going to do with me?"

"I'm going to fix lunch. Stir fry beef. You want some?"

"Nah, I don't eat lunch on a Saturday." Miro glanced over at him. "Not enough time between classes. I'll eat later."

"You have classes on a Saturday? What time?"

"Two-thirty. It's an extra-curricular."

A quick look at the clock told Miro they had almost two hours together. "You've time for a snack."

Dizzy shook his head. "It's a really strenuous class this afternoon. I daren't risk it. You carry on."

"What class?"

"Dance. We're rehearsing for a show." Miro busied himself getting out the ingredients and starting to chop. "So, why am I here, exactly? You haven't even introduced yourself."

Miro's shoulders slumped, and he shook his head. "Everything is messed up with you already. Miro. My name is Miro. I just, I need you to know I don't have time for this. You're a distraction. I can't afford to get caught up in something right now. You need to stay away from me."

"I need to stay away from you?"

Miro carried on chopping, focusing all his energy into slicing his beans. "Which means you need to stay away from Jerry."

"He needs to stay away from me, you mean."

"I don't know what's going on between you two, but it has to stop."

"Now you hang on just one cotton-picking minute."

"No!" Miro spun round, pointing the knife in his hand. "*You* need to realise I'm here to work. I cannot afford to lose my focus. I've worked too hard to have you come in and trash everything."

"And I'm telling *you*, that I've done nothing but stroll across campus on a Saturday afternoon. Anything that came after is down to you, not me, so you'll

damn well be civil to me or I'm leaving, gym god or not." Miro blinked. "Do you understand?"

"There's no need to get grouchy." Miro went back to chopping. "Gym god?" Miro smirked and gave Dizzy a sideways glance.

Dizzy jumped down. "You're impossible. I'm going home."

Miro picked up the wok and waved it in the air. "You will sit there, and wait."

"For what, exactly, you to find some manners? And quit waving kitchen paraphernalia at me."

Miro put the wok down. "I'm sorry, again. Please," he said taking hold of Dizzy's shoulders. "Just sit and talk to me for a bit. I'll be finished cooking in a flash and then we can sort out this mess."

"There is no mess on my side, other than being dragged off against my will."

"I know, and I'm sorry about that. I'm making no sense at all. I don't know what the hell is going on with me right now. I've never done that before."

"Fine, I'll stay. But you need to show me you can be at least half-normal. I don't like your friend Jerry because he's a bully. To be frank, so far you seem the same."

Miro turned on the heat and poured some oil into the pan. He knew he deserved that comment, but it didn't stop it hurting. He threw in the beef and started to brown it, swishing it around with the spatula. "Jerry isn't a bully usually. I don't know why he's being that way with you."

"I guess that's my fault too? You're not normally like this; he's not normally like that. I'm the common denominator."

"I didn't mean it that way." Miro tossed the beef and shook it around.

"Wow, you can really cook."

Miro chuckled. "It's just stir fry. Anyone can throw a stir fry together."

"So *you* say."

Miro glanced over to where Dizzy had taken up his seat again on the kitchen counter. "You want me to teach you?"

"Maybe." Dizzy grinned, and Miro swallowed hard. He turned his attention back to the beef. "Depends what you want in return."

Miro tried to ignore the comment. He slipped the beef into a waiting dish and tipped the sliced veg into the wok and started to stir. The silence stretched on, and Miro added bean sprouts. He could feel the tension between them and knew Dizzy would walk if he didn't do something soon. "Will says you're about to be kicked out of school. What's up with that?" Anger flared from Dizzy's direction, and Miro regretted his words.

"Who the hell is Will, and why is he gossiping about me?" Dizzy jumped down. "You lot think you own the world just because you're third years."

"That's not fair."

"Well, I don't need to sit around wasting my—"

It was a smooth move as Miro put the pan aside and swept Dizzy into a long, hard kiss that left both of them breathless. Miro held on to Dizzy as the kiss ended and they stared at each other.

"You need to stop doing that."

"Then stop shouting at me."

This time Dizzy initiated the kiss and Miro lifted him back onto the kitchen counter and pressed himself between Dizzy's legs.

"You like picking me up, don't you?" Dizzy smiled shyly and Miro kissed him again. He tasted so good, and his lips were the perfect shape to fit his own. Miro wondered if he'd ever have enough. They paused, heads together, breathing settling.

"I have to finish cooking. Stay?" Dizzy nodded, and Miro moved back to the stove. "I didn't mean to upset you. Will doesn't gossip. I asked him who you were after Jerry had a hissy fit. If there's anything I can do to help... with your classes, I mean. Why aren't you studying dance?"

"I'm good at what I do." Miro caught his eye and Dizzy smiled. "I mean with my classes. I'm studying Architecture, and I'm good at it."

"So what's the problem?"

Dizzy shrugged. "I'm outspoken. The tutors don't like that I question them, or their methods. My grades are phenomenal but they are forever sending me out of lectures like I'm some kind of delinquent."

"And are you?"

Dizzy sighed heavily. "I guess. But they just rub me the wrong way with their righteous attitude. They think I can't possibly know anything about

anything. My father is an award-winning architect, and he studied with the best, all over the world. I know what I'm talking about."

"Sometimes, you have to let the other person win one."

"I know. I just... I'll try harder. To do that." There was a brief pause for thought. "So why couldn't we talk outside?"

"I needed to get lunch. I have to eat regularly."

"Okay, and what's the real reason?"

A glance in Dizzy's direction told Miro he needed to step up and be honest. "Fine, I didn't want an audience."

There was another pause for thought. Dizzy lifted his legs and sat on his hands. "You're not out to your friends then?"

"I'm not *not* out to my friends. I just haven't dated since I've been here so they don't know one way or the other for sure." Except for Will, but he didn't count.

"You're in year three, right?" Miro nodded, hoping to avoid the next inevitable question. "So what, you've been celibate for three years?"

"Pretty much."

"I'm your first kiss in three years?" The disbelief was heavy in Dizzy's voice, weighing it down with the threat of walking out.

"I've had my moments. During the holidays. Nothing serious."

"One-night stands?"

"Not really. A bit of groping, some heavy petting." Miro looked Dizzy straight in the eye. "No exchange of bodily fluids, if that's what you're asking."

"Except from the kiss."

The taste of Dizzy's lips, tongue, and teeth washed over Miro and he took a deep breath. "Except from kissing."

"But you have... before now." Dizzy tilted his head to the side as though trying to gauge the truth of his statement for himself. "Shared bodily fluids?"

"I'm almost twenty-four. I took a couple of years out to travel—and train—before uni. I'm not a virgin, if that's what you're really asking."

Dizzy's shoulders hunched. "Oh. Just checking." He fidgeted a little, pulling his hands from under his legs and staring at his fingernails. Miro turned back to the stove and tossed the wok. "I am," he blurted out. Miro stopped but

didn't turn around. What did you say to that? "Just so you know. Don't want you thinking I'm some superhot sex-kitten just because I'm a dancer."

Miro smiled, still not looking round. "All dancers are superhot sex-kittens, are they? I'll have to remember that."

"People seem to think so. But I'm not."

"Is there a particular reason for that? I mean, you're what, nineteen? Are you... saving yourself or something?" Miro poured the beef back into the wok and mixed it with the overcooked vegetables and wilting bean sprouts. It wouldn't be the best meal he'd ever cooked, that was for sure.

"Not really." Dizzy sighed, a deep chest rattling sigh. "I guess. My parents are kind of religious. They're okay with the whole gay thing though," he added quickly. "But they're heavily into chastity and virtue. I've lost count of the number of times I've had the 'gay doesn't mean promiscuous' lecture."

Miro chuckled at the intonation he'd added, imitating what Miro guessed was Dizzy's father. "And you agree with them, or just go along with it?"

"A bit of both. I do think it should be something special, or with someone special, but I'm not waiting till I get married or anything. Just want it to be right, you know?"

"I do." Miro smiled at his choice of words, not that marriage was on his mind. *I do, indeed. I certainly would do him given half the chance.*

"But you still like me, right? Well, I didn't let you answer the question before. I chat a lot when I'm nervous or just kind of all the time actually. But you kissed me, broke your focus or whatever it is, so you must like me."

Miro paused his stirring. "Uh, you kissed me."

"I kissed you back, but you definitely initiated it."

"Not from where I was standing."

"You most certainly did. How could I even reach you? You're about a foot taller than me. I'd have never managed it on my own. I didn't climb up you."

Miro turned off the stove and turned around to look at Dizzy. He still sat on the counter, legs swinging, with a supernova grin and a mischievous twinkle in his eye. "You know I'm right."

Miro sighed. He was in deep already, could feel it from his fingertips to his toes. "I know you're trouble."

The dance hall was busy as usual. Dizzy felt oddly self-conscious escorted by his buff new friend. Was he a friend, or a boyfriend? The boundaries weren't really established and it gave him an uneasy rumble in his gut. They'd talked a bit, about embarrassing stuff. Dizzy was still kicking himself for admitting he hadn't had sex yet, and in the first conversation to boot. Damn and blast his chatty mouth. They'd kissed some more. A lot more. And Miro had decided they should spend the rest of the day together to... well, he hadn't really said but after all the kissing and the feeling of being close to such a hot guy, Dizzy was ready to agree to anything. What would he say if somebody asked who Miro was and why he was there? Dizzy stopped and Miro, who was following a little too closely, walked into his back.

"Sorry," Miro whispered in Dizzy's ear. He slipped a hand around Dizzy's waist and squeezed—just enough to make Dizzy, well, dizzy.

"You can sit over there," Dizzy said, pointing at the benches on the far side of the studio. "I have to warm up over here."

"Okay. Be good." Miro kissed him on the cheek and Dizzy felt himself flush. He watched as Miro walked across the dance floor and settled himself right in the centre of the longest bench. Dizzy would be able to see him in the mirrors that lined the walls of the studio from every angle. How the hell was he supposed to concentrate on work with such potential on show? It was there. He could feel it. Miro was special. Miro could well be his first lover and, dear lord, he wanted it. All the wet dreams and endless fantasies of romance and love and superhot sex, rolled into one and Dizzy's body ached for Miro's touch. The kiss seemed to linger on his cheek, teasing him into a puddle of helplessness. If Miro wanted him, even if he wanted him tonight, Dizzy knew he wouldn't be able to resist. He didn't want to. He wanted Miro to want him, to take all of him. Dizzy shuddered, and then blushed as he realised he had distinct cockswell going on. Luckily, he'd worn tight shorts under his loose pants or he'd have a tent situation.

He dropped his bag against the wall and kicked off his outdoor shoes. Did he need bare feet? He scoffed at himself as he realised he had no idea what they were rehearsing. He'd never forgotten anything in his life until today.

"Dizzzzzzzz," came the screech from the door and Dizzy turned just in time to be enveloped in girly hugs from his nearest and dearest, Jenna and Amy. "Sweetie, you look peaky." Amy pinched his cheek. "Are you okay?"

"Yeah, just had a weird day after I left you, is all."

"That bully didn't get hold of you did he?"

"Uh, kind of, but not really. Weird, like I said."

"Ooo, what's *he* doing here? Diz, did you see who he came in with?" Amy scouted the room, scowling at the prospective man stealers and Dizzy gulped.

"Um, he's with me."

"Don't lie." She pushed him playfully and as he stumbled against the wall, he saw Miro's reflection and the involuntary move towards him that Miro caught at the last minute before settling back into his seat. *Wow. So cool.*

"He really is with me. We met a few hours ago. He, uh, saved me when the Neanderthal tried to crush my skull in his hand."

"Holy crap." Jenna giggled. "I knew you had it in you, pumpkin, but Miro Kahn? Damn, girl, you are on fire."

"We'll see about this," Amy said, and marched off towards Miro.

"Amy, don't," Dizzy called, too quietly for her to hear.

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"Hello, handsome." The girl smiled and Miro sighed. He would have preferred to skip the friends' interviews altogether, but if he had to go through it, a more private setting would have been better. "So, Dizzy tells me you're an item."

"Does he?"

"So, are you? I'm his best friend, Amy. I have to check you out, make sure your intentions are totally dishonourable." She chuckled at her own joke, and Miro stifled another sigh.

"Let's say I'm still undecided. I'm here to check out his superhot sex-kitten status. Find out if he's as flexible as I've heard."

She turned on her heel and marched back to Dizzy, and Miro wished he could take back his stupid words. *What an idiot.* He groaned inwardly as he watched the colour drain from Dizzy's face and his hackles rise. In a flash of movement, he was an inch away poking Miro in the shoulder with every word. "Undecided? You weren't undecided when you had your tongue down my throat an hour ago. And what the hell are you doing hanging around here if you aren't really intere—"

Miro reached up and crushed his mouth over the words to stop them and Dizzy melted against him. His hands tangled in Miro's hair and he pulled.

Hard. It spurred Miro on to kiss him deeper, squeeze him tighter. He pulled Dizzy down onto his lap and cupped a butt cheek in each hand. Firm. Amazingly firm. As Dizzy tried to break the kiss, Miro followed to prolong it. Just a little more before the poking and the telling off started again. Just to say 'sorry', and 'I was stupid', and 'forgive me for being a twat'.

Dizzy finally got away from him and stared, his soft lips slightly parted.

"You're not going to shout at me again?"

Dizzy shook his head, and wriggled deeper onto Miro's lap.

"Nothing to say at all?"

Dizzy grinned—a momentary flash of sunshine—before kissing the end of Miro's nose. "Undecided, my arse," he said, standing up.

"Definitely not undecided about your arse," Miro mumbled. But Dizzy didn't hear it; if he did, he didn't acknowledge it. He strutted back to his friends and threw a final, sultry look over his shoulder that set Miro's guts on fire. "You are going to be a whole heap of trouble." Miro pressed his head back against the wall and closed his eyes to get a grip on himself.

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"I think it's safe to say he's made up his mind." Dizzy put a finger to Amy's chin to close her jaw. "Any doubts from you two?"

"I think all you need is a collar and leash, and he'd follow you anywhere." Jenna pulled Dizzy into a hug. "Well done, sweetie. He's a real big fish."

*Leash?* Dizzy threw a look over his shoulder to where Miro was leaning back against the wall, baring his throat. *Oh, that would work in so many ways.* He shuddered, surprised by how powerful the mental picture of a thick leather collar around that creamy skin could be, and was thankful again for the tight shorts.

"You rock," Amy said, joining the hug. "Get him to introduce us to his friends. I want a year three boyfriend too. O.M.G... I'll get to meet Will Pritchard."

"And me." Jenna grinned, and they bounced and squealed together.

"Mr Harris, ladies." The dance teacher, Janet, swept into the room and deposited her things in one graceful movement that ended with her at the front of the group. "I don't see much stretching going on. We have a full program this afternoon. I need your best game."



"No chance," Dizzy said to the girls. "Not with him watching me."

"Show him what you've got," Amy said. "Shake your tail feathers, make him sweat."

"What about what he's doing to me just by sitting there?" Dizzy bent forward and hugged his knees as he started his warm up routine.

"Believe me, the way he went at you with that kiss, the man is hungry for you. Whatever the damage he's inflicting on you, he has it ten times as bad."

"You really think so?"

"Hell, yes. He's got it bad for you, Diz. Whether he knows it yet or not."

"Oh, he knows," Jenna piped up, stretching an arm high over her head and arching sideways. "And he's going to fight it every step of the way. Janet's right. You need to bring your best game to make sure he doesn't run in the opposite direction."

"Maybe I need that collar and leash after all." Dizzy stole another look at Miro who was now watching his every move, and slipped smoothly into the splits. "Because he's not going anywhere, unless *I* say so."

"Ooo," Amy chuckled, sliding into place next to him, "we'll have to start calling you Dizzy, the little Dom." And the three of them collapsed into a heap of giggles.

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Within moments of the class finishing, Miro slipped his arms around Dizzy's waist and pulled him back against him. "You're amazing," he whispered.

"Get off." Dizzy slapped his hands away. "I'm all sweaty."

Miro grabbed him again, tighter. "I don't care. I need to touch you. You drive me crazy."

Dizzy revelled in the hot breath against his neck for a short moment, trying to control the grin threatening to break out across his face, and then slapped the hands away again. "You'll have to wait. Touching me like that, I'll get a boner, and I am not gonna let everyone see my dick peeking over the top of my pants."

Miro spun him around and looked at his crotch. "It would do that?"

"Let me cover up. You should know how important it is to keep warm after exercise."

Miro backed off just enough so that Dizzy could pull his hoody over his head and push his arms through before he was back with wandering hands. "Quit it." Dizzy slapped him away again. "We'll never get out of here. And I really want to get you alone right now, so help me out and sit." Dizzy pointed to a nearby chair and was surprised when Miro plopped on to it.

"Good boy." Amy snickered, and patted Miro's hair. "You are going to be so much fun to have around."

Dizzy gathered up his workout gear and stuffed it into his oversized holdall. He hefted it over his shoulder and Miro jumped up from his seat. "I'll carry that."

"I'm perfectly capable of carrying my own bag. I've been doing it for years."

"I want to." Miro wrestled with the strap. "I said, I *want* to. Let. Go."

"Fine. But just know I'm not the girl in this relationship." He flushed as his own words sunk in. Talk about freaking the guy out. Why the hell had he said relationship? Dizzy let Miro take the bag and watched as he threw it over his shoulder as though it weighed nothing. A ripple of excitement fluttered through Dizzy's body. *I bet he could throw me over his shoulder too, if he wanted.*

"I'll follow you." Dizzy looked up, confused. "You're heading back for a shower, right?"

"Oh, yeah. Um. You want to come with me?" *After the relationship remark?*

"That's why I've been sitting here for the past two hours, missing my swimming session and fighting the boner from hell with all your twirling and gyrating."

"Right. Let's go then."

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They walked in silence. Miro wasn't sure what to say. Should he hold Dizzy's hand, put an arm around his waist? It'd been a long time since he'd had to think about such things. He walked slower this time, letting Dizzy lead the way when really he wanted to drag him along at a much faster pace to get him behind closed doors.

Dizzy opened the door to the building and then his shared flat. He paused at a door in the hall. "This is me. Do you want to wait in the kitchen while I change?"

"No. I'll wait in your room."

"But it's tiny."

"Good. We'll be nice and cosy." Miro noticed the hesitation and placed a hand on Dizzy's shoulder. "I'm not going to jump you, or make you do anything you don't want."

"That's not what I'm afraid of."

"Then what is it?"

"It's what I *want* to do that's the problem."

Miro reached down and placed a chaste kiss on Dizzy's lips. "Your virtue is safe with me." He grinned. "For this evening, at least."

Dizzy flushed scarlet and put all his focus into unlocking his bedroom door. "It's probably a mess."

"I don't care." Miro pushed him through the door and closed it behind them. Before Dizzy had a chance to say anything else he swept him up and planted another kiss, this one deep and lingering. His body was boneless and pliant in Miro's arms and Miro lifted him off the floor and pinned him against the wall. Dizzy wrapped his legs around Miro's waist and whimpered. The sound hit Miro right in the balls and awakened the need to bury himself deep in the lithe little body wrapped around him. *Slow it down. Slow it right down.* He found the strength to pull back, breathy and unfocused, for long enough to see the need mirrored in Dizzy's eyes. "We take it slow," Miro said, placing Dizzy back on his feet. "For both of us, okay?"

Dizzy nodded, a delicious little pout forming on his lips. "I don't want to though." He pushed past Miro and disappeared through another door. "Just so you know," he called back.

Miro glanced around the room. Most of it was a mess. Clothes hung from practically every surface, books and papers littered the bed and floor. In the far corner was an oasis of calm around a small angled desk with a half-finished plan of something. Pens stood neatly to attention, the books on the shelf above the desk stood ordered by size, and a set of trays held folders and paper. Miro shuddered. There was something eerie yet commanding about the two distinct personalities inhabiting the space. He turned to follow through the other door. "Dizzy, we should tal—"

"Get out," Dizzy bellowed. "I'm—"

“*Stop with the shouting.*” Miro grabbed his arm and pulled him around to face him. “You’re not naked.” *Thank goodness, because I wouldn’t be able to control myself.* “Not yet, anyway. Your flat mates will think I’m trying to kill you.”

“Sorry.” Dizzy bit his lip. His cheeks had flushed slightly and Miro couldn’t help but stare. “I’m a bit melodramatic sometimes. It runs away from me.”

“A bit?”

Dizzy had already stripped off his hoody and vest. Perfectly defined abs without an ounce of fat. Nicely developed biceps, quads and pecs. Pleasingly formed obliques. A very nice little package indeed.

“What are you staring at?”

“You.” Miro ran his hand over Dizzy’s chest. “You’re beautiful.”

“Okay, and I suppose you’re not?”

“I didn’t say anything about me. I’m looking at you.” Miro touched a hand to Dizzy’s cheek. “You blush really easy. It’s kind of cute.”

“Yay for me.”

“What’s wrong now, I can’t pay you a compliment?”

“I’m not used to it. Not used to any of it.”

Miro stepped back, letting go of Dizzy’s arms and smiled. “Show me your trick then. Break the ice.”

“What trick?”

“Where your cock pokes over those stupidly high-waisted trackies when it’s hard.”

“I will *not*.” Dizzy flushed harder, and Miro laughed. He pulled at the waistband of Dizzy’s pants and looked in.

“Flipping heck. How’d a little guy like you get all that? No wonder it pops over the top when you’re horny.”

Dizzy slapped Miro’s hand away and then slapped his cheek.

“What the f—”

Dizzy shoved a hand over his mouth. “No swearing. I don’t like it. And who said you could look?”

Miro dropped to his knees and grinned. "I'll do more than look if you let me."

Dizzy spun away from him. "That's disgusting. I'm all sweaty." He pushed down his pants and shorts, his bare arse just inches from Miro's face, and stepped out of them. "I'm getting in the shower. Watch if you want. But no touching. Not until I'm clean."

"Can I help?" Miro's voice was hoarse and croaky. Dizzy was taut and surprisingly muscular all over. And completely smooth. Even his legs were free of hair. The water started running and Dizzy stepped in. He hadn't said no. Miro got to his feet and stripped out of his own clothes, his cock already at half-mast. He stepped into the small cubicle behind Dizzy and took a deep, laboured breath at the feel of skin on skin all the way down. His cock nestled into the very top of Dizzy's buttocks and over the small of his back. "Can I touch now?"

Dizzy leaned back against him and sighed contentedly. "Touch all you want." He guided Miro's hand over his chest and down to his crotch where there was a definite reaction happening. He had an impressive body, sure, but his cock was even better. Long and fat, it grew steadily in Miro's hand and for the first time in his admittedly limited sex life so far, Miro felt the need, not to bury himself balls deep, but to be well and truly ploughed by the cock in his hand. He nestled into the crook of Dizzy's neck and kissed a line along to his ear. Was it too soon to ask him? To make plans for when they finally got around to it? "I want—"

Dizzy turned slowly in his arms and pressed himself against Miro's body. "I want you too. I don't want to wait. It feels right. I don't want to lose this moment."

"Dizzy, I didn't mean..."

"It's okay. It's my choice. You're not rushing me into anything, Miro. I promise." And he kissed Miro long, and hard, and needy, and it rattled Miro's cool and stole his words and his thoughts until he found himself wrapped up again with Dizzy's legs tight around his waist, and his cock gliding over Dizzy's virgin pucker.

"Stop." It was more of a squeak, but Dizzy stopped wriggling and looked at him. The water was losing heat, but Dizzy's face looked flushed, and his wet hair trailed over his face. "We can't do this yet." Miro hated his own words, his own prim attitude. Dizzy's father would be proud.

“Why?” The longing in Dizzy’s tone threatened Miro’s resolve.

“We don’t have lube, or condoms, and...”

“And?”

“I was trying to tell you something. You distracted me.”

A sunshine smile, a wicked chuckle, and Miro couldn’t resist kissing him again, relishing the feel of Dizzy’s hard cock against his stomach. He wanted it so badly. Wanted him. Just him. He’d let other guys— two other guys— but he hadn’t wanted it, just wanted to keep them happy. He hadn’t really enjoyed it, not the same as topping, but this time he needed it, wanted to be prised open and laid good and proper by his little firecracker of a dancer.

Dizzy broke away and nuzzled into Miro’s cheek. “What do you need to tell me?”

“The water’s getting cold.”

Dizzy’s body stiffened. “Seriously? You interrupt my moment to tell me the bloody water is getting cold? What kind of pansy-arsed attitude is that?”

“Don’t get all prickly on me. I’m having a moment of my own okay, and I’m feeling a bit... Just, can we get out now?” Miro placed Dizzy on his feet and pushed past him out of the shower. “Where’s a towel?”

“Top cupboard.” Dizzy stepped out behind him, grabbed a spare towel and wrapped it around Miro’s waist. “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to snap. Are you okay? It’s just that I forget sometimes, to... I don’t know.” Silence hung in the air. “Miro?”

Miro ignored him and dried quickly, pulling on his clothes as soon as was possible. He fought with his jeans as they stuck to his damp legs and refused to budge over his thighs.

“Hey.” Dizzy touched a hand gently to his arm. “Come on. What’s up?”

Miro grabbed his shoes off the floor. “I should go.” *I need to get away from you before it’s too late.*

“Oh, no you don’t.” Dizzy jumped in front of the door, almost slipping. Miro grabbed him just before his head hit the wall.

“Jeez, be careful will you?”

Dizzy placed a hand flat against Miro’s chest. There was a power behind it, an unspoken command that rooted Miro to the spot. “I’m not letting you out of

here until you tell me what's going on. We can sit in the other room, but you aren't going anywhere." Dizzy stared hard and Miro looked at the floor. "Do you understand?"

Miro fought the urge to run. He wanted out of the room and out of Dizzy's presence so badly, but he couldn't push past the authority in the hand and voice that held him spellbound, and the cruel tease of hidden possibilities. "Fine, whatever. Just put some bloody clothes on. I'll wait out there."

"You'll stay where I can see you." Dizzy flipped down the toilet seat. "Sit."

Miro plopped himself down and Dizzy took a deep breath. "Now stay there while I get dry."

Miro couldn't watch. He felt like such an idiot. Dizzy was supposed to be the blushing virgin and yet he'd been the one to have a meltdown. "Derrick, I..."

Dizzy spun round, nearly losing his pants around his ankles. "I told you, only my mother calls me Derrick."

"Well, I'm not going to call you Dizzy anymore, and that's the end of it."

"How about honey?" Dizzy grinned, but Miro wasn't feeling it. There was a sick feeling in the pit of his stomach, and he had a headache. "Too soon. Okay, before I stepped into my fabulousness as a raving Queen," he flicked imaginary hair over his shoulder and Miro chuckled, "my friends called me Dale."

"Dale." Miro was still grinning, despite the turmoil going on inside. "I can live with that."

"But can you live with me?" Dale flushed. "Not literally, I mean, you're not having second thoughts already are you?"

Second thoughts, third thoughts, and fourth thoughts. Miro's mind was flip-flopping all over the place. He wanted, and yet it was too much to risk everything he'd worked so hard for. The room started to spin and he could feel acid churning in his stomach. He looked up to meet Dale's quiet gaze. "Can I have a glass of water? I don't feel so good."

Dale pressed a hand to Miro's forehead. "You're really clammy." With that, Miro heaved from the bottom of his guts. He stood and flipped up the toilet seat just in time to hurl his lunch into the bowl. "Holy crap," Dale spluttered. He rubbed a comforting hand over Miro's back as he heaved until there was nothing left and then heaved a few more times for good measure. "I'll get that

glass of water,” he said once Miro was able to sit back on his heels without retching.

Miro flopped onto the floor next to the toilet and put his head in his hands. He was definitely having a moment, that was for sure. Dale returned a minute later and held the glass for him to drink out of.

“I’m okay now. I just need to go home.”

“I meant what I said. You’re not leaving until you tell me what’s wrong and don’t try and fob it off with you being sick. You can’t get me naked and then bugger off. Either sleep here tonight, or I’ll come back to yours to look after you.”

“I don’t need looking after.”

“And I say you do. It’s not optional. My place or yours?”

Damn and blast. The tone in Dale’s voice had a finality to it Miro couldn’t argue against. “Mine. I have a king-size bed and your friends won’t have to listen to me hurling every hour on the hour.”

“I thought you said you were okay now?”

“Just help me up. I need to call Will.”

“What is it? What’s wrong with you?”

Miro struggled to his feet with Dale’s help, pulled his phone out of his pocket, and speed dialled Will. “Hey, mate. I’ve just had a funny turn. Any chance you could pop out and get me some electrolyte sachets? Nah, I’m fine. It’s already passing. I just know I’m out at home. Not at the moment. I’ll be there in about twenty minutes. Okay. See you there.” He put his phone away. “Come on then, Florence Nightingale. Pack an overnight bag. Something tells me you have a ton of products you’re going to need in the morning.”

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Dizzy wasn’t sure what to do with himself. A surreal silence hung between them as they headed back to Miro’s apartment. There he’d been, ready to get down and dirty with the hottest guy he’d laid his hands on to date, which was only the second guy period, and it had all gone down the pan—literally—with a very unpleasantly smelling regurgitated beef stir-fry. Was there even a way to come back from that? And there was the whole ‘Will as a knight in shining armour’ thing that was pissing him off. If there was something wrong, why couldn’t Miro just say so, why did he have to call backup?



Dizzy stood aside as Miro unlocked his door. There was movement inside, and Miro called out, "Hey, Will, just me."

"And me," Dizzy said, poking him in the side. Miro glanced round. "He has a key to your place?"

"Of course he does." Before Dizzy could protest, Will appeared in the hall.

"Oh, you brought a friend." His smile was warm and open and Dizzy hated him instantly.

"Bit more than a friend, actually," Dizzy snapped.

Will grinned but Miro pulled Dizzy to one side. "What the hell was that?"

"What?"

"Will is my oldest friend. He looks out for me, and I look out for him. You have a problem with that, you can walk out of here right now and don't bother coming back."

"But—"

"Not up for discussion."

Dizzy felt heat pool in his cheeks. "Fine. I'm off. I hope the two of you are very happy together." He flounced from the apartment and slammed the door behind him, regretting it immediately when the evening air hit his skin. *You total pillock. You've just thrown away the best thing ever because of your stupid gob.* He walked a few feet and then leaned against the wall. Shit. He couldn't go back, could he? He slipped down the wall and sat staring at his knees. He jumped a mile when the door opened again. He looked up to see Will grinning like a Cheshire cat.

"I don't think you wanted to do that," he said, taking a seat on the floor next to Dizzy.

"And what do you know about it?"

"Would it help if I told you I'm straight?" Will bumped his shoulder. "Come on, you know Miro's the hottest thing since sliced bread. Surely you're not going to give that up for nothing?"

"Too late." Dizzy knew he sounded like a petulant kid but he couldn't help it. He felt stupid, and like he had a neon 'virgin' sign flashing over his head.

"Let me tell you something about Miro." Will hunched closer in conspirator's fashion. "He's as nervous and half-brained as you are about whatever it is going on with the two of you."

"There's nothing going on."

"Yeah, go tell some other dumb chump, Cinderella. I'm not daft. Miro's rattled because he likes you. He never likes anyone. And you just flew off the handle and stomped out in a jealous fit after meeting one friend. And I'm just a friend."

"What's wrong with him? Why did he need you to bring that stuff?"

"That's for him to tell you when he's ready. Now I want to like you, I really do, but you flip him off like that again and we're going to have a serious falling out and I'm not a Jerry. I won't shout first, I'll just pummel you into the ground. Do we understand each other?"

Dizzy nodded glumly. "Do you really think he likes me?"

"Oh yeah."

"But how can you be sure?"

"Okay, I'll let you in on another little Miro secret. He's shy. Really shy." Dizzy started to protest but Will held up his hand to silence him and continued his story. "Everyone thinks he has this cool, calm confidence going on, but that honed focus he has with everything is to protect himself. If you knew him in High School... well, different story altogether."

"Was he bullied?"

"Mercilessly, for anything and everything. It's why we took two years out before coming to uni. He needed to hunker down and recuperate."

"But he's so outgoing."

"No, he isn't. Sure, he'll stand in between a fight, shake hands and smile at the right people, but if it wasn't for me... and Jerry, he'd never leave the comfort of his books other than to row."

Dizzy let the information sink in. He felt even more stupid for the way he'd behaved and stormed out. Will got to his feet and held out his hand. "Now get back in there and say sorry before I kick your arse to Timbuktu."

Dizzy took Will's hand and let himself be pulled to his feet. "But I feel stupid."

"And so does he, for throwing up all over you just because he got spooked."

"Spooked?"

"Miro's deep. It's why he usually keeps to himself. But he's putting himself out there if you're man enough to take him on."

“Right.” *I’m not man enough for anything at the moment.* “Guess I’ll go back in then.”

“Atta boy.” Will slapped Dizzy’s shoulder and sent him flying a few steps towards the door. “And a few more.”

Dizzy took a deep breath, opened the door and walked in.

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“What did he say?” Miro came bounding into the hall and his face dropped. “Oh, it’s you.”

“Yes, it’s me. Sorry to disappoint, but I’ve decided not to take no for an answer.”

“I told you. If you can’t accept Will...”

“Will and I made up, so that excuse is out of the window. You’ll need to find another one to get rid of me.”

Miro huffed. “What if I don’t want to get rid of you?”

Dizzy relaxed a little, but didn’t dare let go of the smile threatening to break out across his face. “Well, that would suite me just fine.” They stood eying each other warily. Dizzy took another breath and decided it was his turn to eat humble pie. “I’m sorry. For being stupid. I just got it into my head that Will was some kind of boyfriend and I don’t like to share.” Miro’s jaw dropped. “I mean it. I don’t like to share anything. Not clothes, not pens, definitely not boyfriends.”

“Not pens?”

“I’m an architect. And I’m old school. Pens are important to me. I have favourites and I don’t like people pawing them. I’m the same with my men.”

“You have favourites?”

“Stop being a smart ass, you know what I mean. I don’t like the thought of people touching what’s mine.”

“What’s yours?”

“Fine, I’ll spell it out for you. I am not interested in casual. You are either my boyfriend... in which case you’re mine and nobody else gets to touch you, or you aren’t, in which case I walk. No more kissing, no more naked—”

Dizzy melted into the kiss, hot and claiming and everything he wanted. Everything he’d dreamed of for so long and he didn’t want it to end. He

reached up to stroke through Miro's hair, realised he still felt clammy to the touch, and pulled away. "We shouldn't... are you sure you're okay to be doing this?"

But Miro grinned, and lifted him off his feet. "I'm just peachy."

"But you were so sick."

"I cleaned my teeth."

"No, are you sure you don't need to lie down or something?"

"I should probably take it easy for a while, but you can stay. If you want."

"I do want." And the magic was broken. Miro tensed and placed Dizzy back on his feet. "Now what did I do?"

"We should talk."

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They sat awkwardly on the sofa. Two cups of herbal tea stared at them from the coffee table and Dizzy stared back. After another moment he started to chuckle.

"What is it?" Miro poked Dizzy's leg when the response was only louder giggles.

"It's Saturday night." Dizzy flopped back into the comfort of the couch and held his ribs.

"And?"

"And we're sitting here like some little old couple with herbal tea. What happened to drunken parties and all night revelling during the uni years?"

Miro stiffened. "I don't drink. I prefer to take care of my body."

"Same here." Dizzy roared with laughter, curling into a ball and leaning against Miro's shoulder.

"You're mad," he scoffed, pushing Dizzy back to his side of the sofa.

Dizzy sobered a little and shook himself out. "You have to admit it's funny." But Miro wasn't laughing. He looked as though he was about to implode with stress. "Hey, come on. There's nobody else around, you can loosen up a bit." Miro glared at him. "It's just me." Dizzy snuggled against Miro's side. "Isn't this like a date or something?"

Miro stood up quickly, and Dizzy fell into the space he left behind. "I can't do this." He started pacing the room. Dizzy couldn't stop the tears suddenly welling into his eyes. "You don't understand. I'm not..." He looked down at Dizzy. "Oh, shit... don't cry on me. I really don't do crying."

"I'm not." Dizzy sniffed. He wadded his sleeve and rubbed furiously at his face. "I've got something in my eye."

Miro sat down and pulled Dizzy against his chest. "I'm not good with intimate. I have my moments."

"Like earlier in the shower? Before..."

Miro sighed. "Yeah, exactly. Before it sunk in what was going on."

"And what was going on?"

Miro's body was a tight ball of stress and Dizzy held tight hoping to disperse some of it with sheer willpower. He could offer a massage, but somehow he thought that would make the situation worse. He'd always been good with his hands, and getting to stroke and half-moon over Miro's tight muscles sounded like a whole lot of fun. Particularly with warm oils and bare skin. The ongoing silence brought Dizzy back from his little fantasy. "What were you trying to tell me before I flipped out on you?" Dizzy kissed Miro's shoulder. "You can tell me, I promise it's going to be okay."

"It's not even really about you," Miro snapped. Dizzy stroked and soothed, refusing to react to the tension and Miro relaxed a millimetre. "Well, it is, obviously." Miro cursed under his breath. "Sod it, I'm just going to say it." Silence. Dizzy kept up the stroking and kissed Miro's shoulder again. "I wanted you to..." Silence again, and Dizzy noticed the colour flush over Miro's cheeks.

"It's very likely I'll be happy to do whatever you want me to," Dizzy purred. "I know I'm new at this, but I want to learn, and I'm certainly not a prude."

"Yeah, okay. What was all that, 'get off me till I'm clean', then?"

"You want me sweaty and stinking, I'm yours. Is that the problem, you didn't want me to shower?"

"Don't be ridiculous." Miro shook Dizzy off his arm.

"Look, I'm trying here, but you're not exactly making it easy for me." Miro tapped the arm of the couch and Dizzy snapped. "Oi! I'm talking to you. Have

enough damn courtesy to respond and have half a sense to realise this is difficult for me too. You're the one with all the experience. Help me out here."

Miro started bouncing his leg. He angled his body away from Dizzy, and Dizzy sighed. He was about to just get up and leave when Miro grabbed his arm and held him in place. "I wanted you to do me. In the shower. I wanted to bend over and let you pound me till I couldn't walk straight." He let out a breath. "There, I said it."

"What's so wrong with that?"

"You were all sweetness and romance and wanting your first time to be all gentle and fluffy. I just wanted you to ram me." Miro gripped the arm of the sofa. "And I'm not ready for that... with you. I'm not used to wanting *that*, and you wanted something else and... it just freaked me out." Miro looked briefly in Dizzy's direction but didn't hold the eye contact. "I can't do casual. I'm all or nothing."

Dizzy stared for a moment. "Well that's good, I don't want casu... wait, you'd want me to... *do* you?" Dizzy blushed at the thought of spearing Miro's firm, muscular body, of having it laid out before him, waiting and eager for his attentions. He hadn't got much of a look in the shower, but he'd felt it, warm and solid, caught a glimpse of Miro's arse, perfectly sculpted, as he'd tried to escape.

"Is that so strange? I mean, I am gay, just like you. You want me to do you. What's the difference?"

"Dunno. Just didn't think you'd want a guy like me... never mind. I'm a virgin, what do I know about anything?"

"You don't want to."

Miro looked so dejected but Dizzy couldn't hold in his chuckle. "Oh, I want to. Now you've suggested it I won't be thinking of much else for the foreseeable future. I'd just never really thought about topping before. Is that weird?"

Miro shrugged. He looked so deflated. Where was the happy? Why weren't they both excited? It would be normal for them to be a little nervous maybe, but not depressed.

"Hey?" Dizzy rubbed his hand over Miro's knee. "Look at us; I've barely known you a day and we're already thinking of breaking up because things are too serious." Dizzy slipped along the sofa and settled against Miro's side again.

Miro's whole body went rigid. "Relax," Dizzy said, leaning his head on Miro's shoulder. "I'm not going to jump you." He smiled to himself at the repeat of Miro's own words from earlier. It seemed like a lifetime ago, but only a few hours had passed.

"But you want to, and that makes me nervous."

Dizzy wriggled closer against Miro's unrelenting body. "Sure I do, but that's part of the fun, isn't it?" Miro still didn't relax and Dizzy sat back a little. "Tell you what, why don't we go old school?"

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"We've just met. There's nothing to say we should be having sex straight away. I'm from a religious family and you don't do casual. Why don't we just take sex off the table altogether?"

Miro turned in his seat to face Dizzy. His eyes looked brighter. "So we see each other regularly, get to make out but no grabby hands or bodily fluids?"

"Yeah, until we know each other better."

"I can do that."

Dizzy snuggled back in and slipped his arm around Miro's waist. "Maybe some grabby hands," he said, brushing his lips over Miro's neck and along the line of his jaw. "I might grope your arse, just a little, but no frontsies."

This time Miro moulded into the touch and made a grab of his own to pull Dizzy across onto his lap. "I don't mind a little frontal action." Miro's voice was hoarse, and he pulled Dizzy close to his chest. "Dry humping is good for the soul."

"Over clothes only then?" Dizzy bared his throat so Miro could nibble and lick over it and rocked over Miro's hard cock beneath him. His own erection strained against his jeans and he really wished he hadn't just negotiated a term of chastity.

"Have you ever had anyone suck your cock?"

Dizzy groaned at the words, shook his head, and held on tighter to Miro's shoulders. Miro shifted his position and laid Dizzy back on the sofa. He crawled between his legs and continued the dry humping, kissing over Dizzy's neck and cheeks and grinding his hips against Dizzy's body.

"I think I should do it for you," Miro whispered against Dizzy's ear. "Just so you have an idea of the treat waiting for you after some time passes." More

kisses and Miro pulled up Dizzy's shirt to expose his chest and kissed a line down to his stomach. "Just a one-off, you understand." Miro's tongue snaked over Dizzy's skin making his blood run first hot, then cold, then hot, the promise of what was to come almost pushing him over the edge. Miro stopped. Dizzy waited. Nothing. He looked down at Miro, who was grinning from ear to ear. "You're supposed to stop me. Say it's too soon. Wriggle away."

Dizzy pushed himself onto his elbows. "Are you freaking serious?" Miro rubbed his face over Dizzy's erection and mouthed his cock through his jeans, but then stopped again.

"Over clothes only. It's the rule. It's *your* rule." Miro sounded serious but he was still grinning. Dizzy was losing all reason. He grabbed hold of Miro's hair. "Ow, why so rough?"

"It's punishment for teasing."

Miro glanced up at Dizzy, his pupils completely blown as though he'd been smoking weed for days, and it sent a thrill through Dizzy's body. A little door in his mind swung open and Dizzy felt a rush of power. They both wanted, but couldn't quite close the deal, but an opportunity had presented itself that would overcome their issues. Dizzy wasn't sure whether he had it in him to follow through but the look in Miro's eyes spurred him on. "I'm going to give you one opportunity to tell me whether you want to stop. Do you understand?" Dizzy gripped Miro's hair tighter, and he whimpered, his body spasming out of his control. "If I do something you don't want, or you're not comfortable with I want you to tap my leg three times." Miro nodded. "Do it now, so I know you understand." Miro tapped Dizzy's knee firmly three times. "Good. Now, you don't get to tease without being punished." Dizzy had no idea where the words were coming from, but damn it was hot, and powerful, and oh, so sexy seeing Miro so open and needy before him.

"I'm going to take out my cock, and you're going to suck it like a good boy. Do we understand each other?" Miro swallowed hard, but nodded. "It's a one-off, just like you said." Dizzy opened his zip, still not quite believing what he was doing or where it had come from, and wriggled his jeans and shorts down past his thighs with one hand still in Miro's hair. He didn't want to break the spell they were both under, like they were somewhere else, somewhere outside of themselves and the stress that had held them prisoner ten minutes before. Miro's lips parted automatically as Dizzy's cock bounced free, and he licked his lips. Dizzy had to steady himself, and breathe deeply. He was so close already, just seeing those perfect lips waiting to suck him in. Miro moved



towards his cock and Dizzy pulled him up short. "Wait until I tell you. I'm the one in control, remember?"

Dizzy could see a spreading damp patch in Miro's jeans and wondered if he'd blown a full load or was just really, really getting off on the little scene they had going on. "Open wide." Miro looked up into Dizzy's eyes and opened his mouth. Dizzy started shaking as he fed the head of his cock between Miro's lips; he couldn't believe it was really happening, that Miro hadn't just slapped him. "Now you can suck it." Miro closed his mouth and slipped over the shaft of Dizzy's cock. "Holy freaking—" Miro suctioned himself on. "Ugh..." And it was all over. Dizzy shuddered as he shot into the back of Miro's throat and everything else slipped away.

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Dizzy wasn't sure how long had passed when he finally opened his eyes. Miro had wrapped himself around him, and it was getting dark outside.

"Hey." Miro grinned at him and nuzzled against his shoulder.

"Oh, hey." Dizzy tried to sit up but Miro held him down. He fought the panic threatening to well up in his gut. "I, uh, are we okay?"

"We're great," Miro said, squeezing him. "You made me come in my pants. I haven't done that in years. And you didn't even touch me."

"And that's okay?"

"It's more than okay, it's amazing."

Dizzy relaxed a little. "I didn't overstep boundaries after we'd decided to wait?"

"You read the situation perfectly. Just what I needed to chill out about it all. Besides, you gave me a get out if I wanted it." Miro grinned again and kissed the end of Dizzy's nose. "I didn't want it."

"And I didn't embarrass myself by coming too soon?"

"You lasted longer than me and I didn't have my cock down your throat."

Dizzy wondered whether they should talk more about what had happened. Before he could think it through the words tumbled out of his mouth. "You get off on being told what to do." It was a statement, not a question.

"You didn't enjoy it?" Miro stilled against Dizzy's side. It seemed as though he was barely breathing.

"I think the answer to that is pretty obvious." Dizzy knew he was blushing. "I didn't know I had it in me."

"I'm glad you found it." Miro relaxed against him and nuzzled gently sending shivers through Dizzy's body. "I was worried you might not have liked having to do that."

"*You* found it. Up until this morning I'd always thought of myself as a sparkly bottom waiting to be ploughed into the mattress by his Prince Charming."

"And now?"

"Now I find myself wanting to slap a collar on you and ride you into the sunset."

Miro sighed contentedly. "That's the picture I have too."

*OMG, I'm gonna come all over again.* "We should still wait, though." Dizzy realised his fingers were threading through Miro's hair. "Before we have sex."

"I know." Miro traced patterns over Dizzy's stomach and kissed his chest lightly. "I've always known," he said. "I think that's why I can't do casual. It's too easy for me to fall into line, even when I shouldn't."

"When we do it, I want it to be on equal terms." He shuffled to look directly into Miro's eyes; he didn't want any misunderstandings between them. "I love the idea of playing games but the first time..."

"It's okay." Miro settled back onto Dizzy's chest. "I don't want that all the time. I still want to bang you senseless, and put you over my knee to spank that attitude out of you."

Dizzy shifted as his cock perked up at the thought of being over Miro's knee, his naked, vulnerable arse stuck in the air at the mercy of his beefcake lover. He swallowed hard. Oh, were they in trouble. *Big* kinky trouble.

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Miro sighed contentedly. He hadn't felt so relaxed since... well, ever. Not even on the water. Dale was sex on legs and man, did he have magic in his hands. And his lips. And his voice. Lord, that voice drove Miro to so many interesting places. He flicked back a page of the book on his lap and realised he hadn't taken in a single word he'd read. So much for laser focus. He sighed again and looked up to see Will grinning at him. "What?"

"You," he said, the grin getting wider. "You're all fluffy around the edges. I swear you'll start purring in a minute."

"Get lost." Miro hurled a wad of paper he grabbed off the table in Will's direction.

"He's good for you."

"Not if I can't get my brain back into gear."

Will opened his mouth to say something but groaned instead as the door to the bar crashed open. Miro looked round to see Jerry making a beeline for them. He hadn't seen him around for a few days and his face was a funny shade of purple.

"You two-faced wanker," he spat at Miro. "You've sat by and listened to me moan about the fru-fru fairy and all the time you've been fucking him. I thought we were friends."

Miro blinked a few times trying to process the words Jerry had hurled at him but he came up blank. He looked at Will who just stared open mouthed.

"Well, say something! Are you fucking him or not?"

Interest picked up around the Union and people appeared out of the woodwork, sensing trouble. "I don't think this is the place," Will said, standing to confront Jerry. "Let's take it back to mine."

"I'm not taking anything anywhere until he tells me, face-to-face, has he been shagging the kid all this time behind my back or not?"

The cool bliss of ignorance vanished and Miro saw red. He jumped up from his seat and dived on Jerry, knocking him to the ground. "What the fuck?" Jerry just managed to cover his face as Miro landed the first blow. "Get him off me!"

Miro felt Will's arms under his, but he threw a few more punches before he let Will drag him off. Jerry lay huddled on the floor. He peered out from under his arm. When he realised it was safe, he sat up. "You fucking psycho. What the hell?"

"You mind your mouth when you talk about Dale. He's not some cheap tart you can slag off every time you're in a bad mood."

"Obviously not," Jerry said, rubbing his arm where a punch had landed. "I can't believe you'd lie to me. I thought we were close."

"Lie? I haven't lied to you and unless I've missed something, it's not as if we're dating. If I want to see someone I shouldn't have to okay it with you first."

"But it's *him*. Of all the guys, Miro. How could you go for him?"

"We should take this somewhere more private," Will said, nodding towards the crowd forming around them.

"No need." Jerry stood up and brushed himself off. "I know when I'm not wanted. I trusted you." He glared directly at Miro. "And all the time you were playing guard dog to your little Princess." Miro dived at Jerry again but this time Will caught him. "If he's the snappy terrier I guess you must be a Doberman. I'm sure your puppies will be really cute and leave a trail of bloody corpses in their wake." Jerry was still muttering under his breath as he walked away, pushing through the circle that had formed around them.

Miro flexed his hand. It was sore and the knuckles looked bruised. The crowd started to disperse and he looked at Will. "I don't know what happened. I'm sorry you had to step in."

"I should have let you finish him off, the twat. I don't know what's got into him lately."

But Miro had figured out exactly what was really going on with Jerry. "It's the girl."

"What is?"

"Jerry. He's acting just as I would with Dale, how I did with Dale. You're right, we should have helped him and now he's hurting because he can't have her, and because he's lost us. Well, me. In his mind at least."

"Are you sure that's it?"

"What else would it be?"

Will stared at him for a minute. He had the look he usually wore when he couldn't believe he was the only one who knew what was going on. "You don't think he's gutted he didn't realise you were gay because he fancies you?"

"What, Jerry? Nah." Will raised an eyebrow and it caused Miro to go through what Will had said again. "You think?"

"After that little episode, I definitely think."

Miro settled back into his chair and picked up a book, smarting slightly at the pinch in his knuckles. "Well, bugger me. I'd never have come up with that one." Miro pondered the idea that Jerry might be gay. It was something he'd never considered. He'd wondered about Will before now, they'd always been touchy-feely together, lots of hugs, cuddles and kisses on the cheek but there had been no evidence of real interest. Miro thought Will was just being

supportive. But Jerry? It just didn't compute. He'd always had girls hovering around him, and—much like Will—had taken full advantage of that fact. Miro couldn't recall half of the girls he'd seen either of them with over the last few years. "You think the girl is just a cover?"

"You really are the most naïve plonker in the history of the world." Will gave an exasperated snort.

"Now you've really lost me."

"Who is Jerry always talking about?"

"That girl, Jenna, or whatever her name is."

"He mentions her name now and then, sure, but who is he always describing in great detail and relaying every word, and encounter?"

"I don't..." And the penny dropped. "Dale. You think Jerry fancies Dale." Miro bristled. "You think Jerry fancies Dale and you didn't tell me?"

"Keep your knickers on, it's news to me too. I think Jerry dislikes Dale because he makes Jerry feel things he doesn't understand. I'm not sure Jerry's quite figured it out himself yet. But after the way he just kicked off at you, like some jilted boyfriend, or a friend you've just stolen a potential date from, I'd say that pretty much sums it up."

"Great. Now I not only want to rip his head off, I want to tear him limb from limb."

Will patted Miro on the shoulder. "That's love, buddy. And love triangles. At least you know Dale is only interested in you."

"He bloody well better be after his 'I'm not sharing' speech." *And pulling that sexy Dom crap on me that makes me melt.*

"Would you share?" Miro glowered at Will. "If he changed his mind, I mean?"

"Not even if hell froze over."

Will smiled. "Then I think you'll both be okay."

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Dale or Dizzy? Dizzy Dale seemed appropriate for the moment as Dale watched Miro put the rowing machine at the gym through its paces. They were five days and two blowjobs into the relationship, and Dale was ready to reciprocate. Why should Miro get all the fun of seeing him squirm? He was

feeling mature, responsible, and unbelievably horny. He'd even started to think of himself as Dale instead of Dizzy and had introduced himself to Amy's brother as Dale before she had the chance to forever brand him with his Dizzy nickname yet again. The look on Amy's face had been memorable to say the least.

He glanced down and straightened the bow on his shirt. Reverting to Dale was one thing, but there was no way he was ditching his sense of well-honed style even if it was a little flamboyant. Not that Miro had even raised an eyebrow when he'd put the shirt on that morning. That morning after yet another night of sleeping curled around each other. Miro had ravaged him without a mention of his choice of attire, and they'd dry humped almost to the point of no return. Oh, how Dale wanted to take Miro past that point, and he had an idea how to go about it, it was just whether he had the confidence with his virgin skills to pull it off. He'd been thinking about it since the first blowjob where he'd taken control. The new fantasy consisted of Dale pinning or tying... Dale swallowed hard... definitely tying Miro down before teasing him slowly and thoroughly whilst testing out various blowjob techniques. Miro was certainly more than competent in his cock-sucking skills. So competent, Dale really didn't want to think about what that meant. It was too soon to have the ex-boyfriend talk anyway, but part of him really didn't want to know the details. He wanted to think of Miro as just his— past, present and future.

As Dale looked over to Miro, he caught him flinching at a particularly hard pull on the machine. He let go of the handle and slowed to a stop before flexing his right hand. Dale made his way through the machines and leaned over Miro's rower.

“What happened to your hand?”

Miro didn't look up. “I punched Jerry.”

A thrill ran through Dale's body, but he was pissed off at the same time. “You're done for the day. You can't train with bruised knuckles, it'll make them worse.” Miro was about to protest. “And we need to talk. Now.”

Miro sighed. His shoulders slumped, but he grabbed his towel and water bottle and made his way to the lockers. He stopped to collect his bag and turned to face Dale. “Say what you have to say. Just know I won't be apologising for it anytime soon.”

“Attitude?”

“It's not attitude. Perhaps I just don't want to talk about it.”

Dale smiled coyly and slipped his arms around Miro's waist. "What about if I ask really nicely?" He slipped his hands over Miro's butt cheeks and squeezed.

Miro huffed. "Fine. What do you want to know?"

"I want to get you into the shower first. Get comfy."

"Dale, I'm not ready for..."

"I know. It's okay." It would have to be okay. For now. Miro was still skittish and a definite flight risk, so it would have to be one thing at a time. For the moment, that was laying boundaries about fighting and protection and finding out exactly what Miro thought he was doing punching anyone, let alone someone who'd been classed as a friend a week before. Dale didn't want to be the reason for Miro losing one of the few close friends he had, and however much of an idiot Jerry seemed to be, if Miro needed him around, Dale would have to live with it.

Dale guided Miro out of the gym and across campus to his apartment. He backed off and gave Miro some space to shower, change, and throw some leftovers in the oven to heat through. There hadn't been any evidence of ill health or funny turns since that first night, but Dale was mindful not to come between Miro and his food, just in case. After they'd eaten, and Dale had cleared the plates, he settled astride Miro's lap on the sofa and nuzzled into his neck. "So, tell me what happened to make you punch your friend."

"Jerry isn't my friend anymore."

Dale rocked forward and Miro hissed. "And why is that?"

"He needed putting in his place." Miro groaned as Dale kissed along his jawline. "I wanted to make sure he left you alone."

"Why would you do that?" Dale kissed each of Miro's cheeks. Keeping it calm and a little sexy was working. Dale could see Miro was slipping into a space where he could talk without thinking. "I've told you I don't need protecting," Dale said, moving round to nibble Miro's earlobe.

"He was saying stuff. Shouting in the Union, in front of everyone. Making you out to be some kind of..." Miro straightened out of his daze and Dale nearly fell off his lap. "I didn't like it, so I hit him."

Dale held up Miro's hand and kissed his bruised knuckles. "Aw, defending my honour? That's so sweet, but really, I'd have laid him out cold without a single bruise." Another gentle kiss on the cheek. "Let me handle it next time."

“You say that, but Jerry is a big guy and solid. I know this now.”

Dale nuzzled again, trying to get Miro to relax and let go of the tension. “And I have a black belt in karate and took kickboxing for seven years. No punches required.”

Miro sighed and shifted Dale on his lap. “It’s my job to protect you.”

Dale clenched his teeth. He didn’t want to lose his temper, he didn’t want to upset Miro any more than he already was but lord, he was difficult. “I’ve already told you,” Dale tried to keep his tone in check, “I am not the girl in this relationship. We look out for each other.”

“I *want* to protect you.” Miro pouted and Dale’s stomach flipped over with how cute he looked.

“And I love that you do.” Dale cupped Miro’s cheek in his hand. “But not if you’re going to get hurt in the process. No more fisticuffs. Understood?” Miro looked away and Dale guided his chin back so he could look him in the eye. “I mean it, Miro. Promise me.”

Miro nodded. He wore the same compliant look he had when Dale stepped up their petting, and he knew that would be the end of the matter. It was cool how they were able to read each other so easily after such a short time. Dale figured they had an hour or so to play before he needed to think about meeting the girls. Heavy petting was out with Miro feeling chastised and delicate, so he’d have to make do with long lingering kisses and some light stroking. But soon they’d both be ready for a whole lot more.

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“Are you sure you want to brave meeting the girls for coffee?” Dale asked, straightening the bow on his shirt and checking his hair in the mirror. He slipped a small hair clip just above his ear and snapped it shut. Perfect.

“I’m going to have to get used to them babying me eventually, though why they think they can pinch my cheeks and pat my head, I’d love to know.” Miro stared at Dale and Dale felt the colour flush his cheeks.

“I haven’t said anything, Brownie’s honour. I told you, it’s from that first day in the studio when you sat after I told you to. They remember shit like that. Forever.” Miro groaned, and Dale turned to pinch his cheek. “Don’t worry, pumpkin, I’ll look out for you.” Miro dived for him and Dale jumped out of the way with a screech of giggles.



"It's lucky you're quick. One of these days, I'll put you over my knee, and spank you till you can't sit down."

"Oh, how I wish you would." Dale wiggled his arse to tease and Miro swiped for him. "Not fast enough, muscle boy."

"You little..."

Dale hightailed it out of the door, leaving Miro cursing behind him.

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Hand in hand. Dale's chest swelled as they walked across campus hand in hand. It was a dream... it had to be. He glanced up at Miro who smiled and pulled Dale's hand to his lips for a quick kiss. Dale swooned and his heart started racing. Dale insisted he wasn't the girl in the relationship, but crikey, did he feel like a ditzzy daisy when Miro pulled romantic crap like that. Miro chuckled to himself and Dale squeezed his hand. "What is it?"

"You, looking at me all doe-eyed. I'm nothing special."

"You are to me." Dale caught Miro's small smile and his heart skipped. *If only you knew how special.* Dale opened his mouth to say something but caught it just in time. No need to spoil it, not with Miro so relaxed. Dale was already so much better at minding his mouth and thinking before blurting out whatever was on his mind. If only Miro could realise how good he'd been for him already.

Dale spotted the girls waiting outside the juice bar and waved. He felt Miro tense and squeezed his hand for moral support. "It'll be okay, they're great once you get to know them."

"It's not them I'm worried about." Miro motioned to his right. "Jerry's heading this way."

"Let me deal with him."

"Dale, I'm not going to let you slug it out with Jerry any more than you would let me. Just ignore him."

"I won't let him hit you."

"He's not that stupid. He's going to spout his mouth off and leave. Just don't give him the satisfaction of answering back, okay?" Dale gritted his teeth. "I mean it." Miro wasn't messing around so Dale nodded and gave a grim smile. They arrived at the juice bar just as Jerry intercepted them. The girls looked worried and Dale bristled with anger.

"Nice to see the lovebirds out walking," Jerry spat. He pulled something out of his pocket but Miro clenched Dale's hand so he wouldn't react. "Not sure who's taking who for walkies but this might come in handy." Jerry threw something at Miro's feet and started to walk away. Dale lost focus for a split second as he saw the dog collar and lead Jerry had thrown at them. It was all Miro needed to grab Jerry's T-shirt and throw him to the ground.

"Miro!" Dale grabbed Miro's arm, just as he swung it back to land a punch. "Don't you dare, not after what you said to me just now." Miro relaxed his arm and stepped back. Dale pulled him to one side. "We ignore it, just like you said, okay?"

"Okay."

Jerry was on his feet by the time Dale turned around again. "See what you've done? Three years I've known him. You've been here all of five minutes and all of a sudden he wants to rip my head off."

"I think you caused that on your own," Dale said. "I only met him because you were stalking my every move trying to intimidate me."

"You're the one who was always in my way! Don't forget that, numbnuts. I only wanted to chat to the girl, but would you let me get anywhere near her? Oh, no, I'm not good enough for you and your friends."

"Excuse me," Jenna said, pushing Jerry on the shoulder from behind him. Dale stepped back. Jenna looked mad. He'd never known her as much as raise her voice, but with the look on her face he certainly wasn't going to get in the way. "If you wanted to come and speak to me so badly, why didn't you do it when Dizzy wasn't around?"

Jerry turned, his face flushed. "But he's *always* around. That's my point."

"You are so full of shit." Jerry's jaw dropped. "I've been in the gym a hundred times or more with you when Dizzy's been in class and you haven't even noticed me." Jenna prodded Jerry's chest, hard. "*You* need to own up to the fact you notice Dizzy first and me second. That's the only reason he's always around."

The noise around them stilled as the revelation sunk in. Jerry looked at Dizzy, then back to Jenna. "But I..." His head dropped.

"What? You're just going to clam up, now? I'm right here, you have my full attention, and all you can do is stare at your feet?"

"I don't know what to say." Jerry didn't look up. He reminded Dale of a scolded puppy— perhaps it was Jenna who should take the dog collar.

"Sorry, might be a good start."

"I am sorry, I..."

"Not to me, idiot. To Dizzy. You've made all of this his fault when really you've been looking to pick on him from the start."

"That's not true. It's not." Poor Jerry, he looked exasperatedly at Jenna but she just glared at him. Jerry turned to Dale. "Derrick, I wasn't out to get you. I really thought you were going out of your way to make my life difficult."

"Only my—" Miro pinched Dale's arm. He'd been so quiet Dale had almost forgotten he was there. "I'd rather you call me Dale, if that's okay?"

"Dale, I didn't mean to pick on you." Jerry smirked. "Well, I kind of did, but not for no reason, if you see what I mean?"

"Not really," he said to Jerry. Jenna glared hard at Dale and he realised he didn't want to get on her bad side. "But I accept your apology."

Jerry offered his hand and Dale shook it. Jerry reached out his other hand towards him and Miro intercepted it. "I was just going to..."

"You don't touch him. Ever." The venom in his words made Dale shudder.

"Oh for goodness sake, down boy," Dale said, pushing Miro's hand away.

Jerry chuckled and carried through with his action to sweep Dale's hair out of his eyes. "You're kind of okay when you aren't trying to bite my hand off."

Dale felt Miro ripple with anger behind him and reached back to make contact, a small comfort and confirmation that he knew how hard it was for Miro, and that he was there for him.

"I'm sorry to you, too," Jerry said to Miro. "You kept telling me I was being an idiot, and you're usually right. Forgive me?" Miro nodded once but his mood didn't lighten even a shade. "I'm actually glad he's got you," Jerry said to Dale. "It's about time he had someone to remind him what his dick is for."

"I have that covered," Dale forced a grin to seem friendly and leaned back against Miro, noting the tension still radiating through his body. "I suggest you deal with your new lady friend before she brains you." *And stop worrying yourself about Miro's dick, and what it is or isn't getting up to before I brain you instead, just for thinking about it.*

Jerry turned back to Jenna. "I really don't know what to say."

"Well, you can start by taking me for a coffee, and we'll discuss all the things you should be saying and plenty of things you're not. And while we're at it, flirt like that with Dizzy again and I'll rip your hand off."

"I wasn't, I was just trying... okay. You're always right, I'm always wrong, I get it."

"It's the law," Jenna said. She linked his arm and pressed against him, reaching up to kiss his cheek. "I can't believe it took you so long. All you had to do was ask me, instead of fighting with Dizzy all the time."

"You could have asked me," Jerry grumbled. "You didn't have to stand back and let me make such a mess of it."

"Oh, I did."

Dale and Miro watched them walk away and Amy followed them with a shrug. "You're still mad," Dale said, turning in Miro's arms. "What's up?"

"I don't like the way he touched you."

"The way he touched me, or the fact I let him?"

"Both."

"Thought so." Dale grinned. "I should make something very clear to you, just in case I wasn't clear enough the last time." He nestled against Miro's strong chest. "I am not interested in anyone else. Not that I'd be interested in Jerry the Neanderthal anyway. But seriously, I'm all yours, for as long as you're willing to give me a little of your focus." The feel of Miro relaxing into his touch gave Dale a power rush. "What say you to a little private time, so I can prove my point?"

"I'd like that very much. But, Dale, I really won't be able to cope with you letting other men touch you, however innocent, and however loyal and faithful you are to me. I trust you; I know you aren't going to play around. I just..."

"It's okay, I get it. I was interested to see what he was going to do. I didn't mean to upset you." Dale slipped his hand into Miro's. "Come on. Let me show you how sorry I am."

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The butterflies in Miro's stomach were running wild. He couldn't get a grip on anything as Dale took his hand and led him into the bedroom. Dale had a

plan. Miro could see it on his face. What Dale didn't realise, was that Miro had a plan of his own, and it involved a small prop Dale hadn't seen him salvage from their latest, and hopefully last, Jerry-disaster.

Dale pushed Miro down onto the bed and sat astride him. "I think you ought to let me show you how very sorry I am, and how much I appreciate you," Dale whispered in his ear.

"Dale, I know what you're up to."

"Shhh, it's okay. I'll go slow."

"What if I don't want you to go slow?"

Dale sat back and looked Miro in the eye. "Be very clear with me about what you're saying, Miro. I've said I'm sorry. I thought you were up for this."

Miro smirked and he saw Dale's cool exterior ruffle. "I'm not very good with my words, you know that." He raised a hand to prevent Dale interrupting. "Perhaps," he reached into his pocket, pulled out the dog collar and dangled it next to Dale's face, "perhaps this might help communicate what I mean."

Dale's eyes widened and he swallowed deeply. "You want me to?"

Miro nodded.

"Me or you?"

It was Miro's turn to swallow hard. He hadn't considered putting the collar on Dale, but actually, that would work too. Not this time. But soon. But then, it was Dale's show, he should be the one to choose. "Whatever you want, Dale." He touched his lips gently to Dale's. "I'm yours." He smiled as Dale's breath hitched. "Completely."

Dale's hands shook as he placed the collar around Miro's throat, but it was nothing compared to Miro's insides. "It's not too tight?" Dale asked, running his fingers around the length of it.

"It feels perfect."

Dale pulled on the leash and Miro dipped towards him. "Holy cow, I'm going to come in my pants," Dale spluttered. "You have no idea what this is doing to me."

Miro stroked a firm hand along Dale's erection and smiled. "I think I do, and I can match it." They drank each other in, flushed skin, full lips, breath coming fast. "What's your plan, Casanova?" Miro smiled. It was interesting to see Dale lost for words.

"I'm going to ravage you."

"Mmm, yes please."

"You're not going to stop me?"

"You're fully in control." Miro wrapped the leash once more around Dale's hand. "This proves it, right here. I know I still have a get out if I need it."

Dale slipped off Miro's lap and onto his knees before him. He reached up and unzipped Miro's jeans, and Miro helped him push them down past his hips until his cock broke for freedom. He looked up and met Miro's gaze. "I'm going to practise my cocksucking skills, and you are just going to sit there and take it."

"Yes, sir."

"If you move, I'll be very cross."

"I'll try very hard not to, but I might move."

Dale pulled firmly on the leash. "You will not move."

Miro's cock was already painfully hard. He wasn't sure how much practise Dale would get. If he didn't start sucking soon it would all be over and the game would be wasted. Miro was just wondering whether he should tell Dale to get a move on when the flat of Dale's tongue swept over Miro's cock to the head and he groaned. Dale's lips slipped over Miro's cock and suckled gently on the head, his hands pressed hard against Miro's thighs. Miro knew he wouldn't last long and yet there wasn't quite enough pressure to push him over. Dale teased and tasted, licked, sucked and nibbled Miro to the edge of distraction and back until he was incoherent with need and still Dale played without really trying to finish him.

"Please," Miro begged. "Dale, please finish it."

Dale put in a concentrated effort, with speed and suction, and Miro shuddered with his release, gripping Dale's shoulder and biting back the cry in his throat. Dale kissed over Miro's stomach and climbed onto the bed. His hand still fisted the leash. "Thank you," he said shyly, and snuggled into Miro's side. "I hope it was okay."

"It was perfect. Just like you." Miro kissed Dale's forehead and sighed contentedly. "Do you want me to finish you?"

"I'll wait."

“Is everything okay?” Miro shifted so he could see Dale’s face.

Dale gave a supernova grin. “It’s great. I’m just a little overwhelmed by how good it feels to hold this in my hand and see that collar around your neck.”

“It does feel good.” Miro felt Dale’s energy shift. “Hey, what is it?”

“Do you think Jerry fancies you?”

“What would it matter if he did?”

Dale wriggled around and curled over Miro’s chest. “If he’s going to be dating Jenna, we might see more of him.”

“And?”

“What if you decide you like him more than me?”

Miro chuckled. He sat up, plumped the pillows and leaned against the headboard of the bed. He pulled Dale onto his lap and touched the butterfly clip in his hair, smoothed the bow at his neck, and kissed the tip of his nose. “And do you really think Jerry is my type?”

Dale threw his arms around Miro’s neck. “You don’t mind that I’m... quirky?”

“I love that you’re you, and everything that is you. Remember, you’re the only one who broke through my focus.”

Dale grinned. “And you’re the only one who broke through my inner queen.”

“Well, don’t let her float too far away; I’ll be needing her later.”

“Yeah?”

“When it’s your turn to wear the collar.”

Dale tugged on the leash until their lips met and Miro relaxed into the kiss knowing everything was going to be okay.

**The End**

## Author Bio

*Casey K. Cox hails from the West of England and dabbled in several genres before settling into m/m romance and erotica. Casey sees fiction as an adventure and a form of escape and has a wish to bring a touch of fantasy and a taste of the forbidden from the depths of the mind onto the page through the written word. You can contact Casey via email.*

*Other titles by Casey are available from Amazon and a selection of Free Reads can be downloaded from Goodreads. You can follow Casey's work at Casey's blog.*

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