A Stranger in a Strange Land
by the_purple_pen

Summary

An American student in London gets a job at a private club and he feels like a stranger in a strange land.

Notes

This story was previously posted on LJ. The work is complete and posted in chapters.
Chapter 1

Reid unfolds his 6'2" frame from the antique sports car and smooths his hand over his Tom Ford suit. The drive from Exton was uneventful and his stay at the country house was a quiet one. Too quiet. He's in the mood for something a bit more exciting. Lucky for him, he knows exactly where to go to find it. Opening the heavy and somewhat imposing door, Reid steps into the familiar surroundings.

"Hello, Rebecca," Reid says in greeting, speaking to the attractive brunette who's working the front desk tonight. "Mel around?"

"In the office, Sir," Rebecca answers brightly.

"Thank you," Reid replies with a nod of his head before he disappears down the hallway. The thick aubergine carpet muffles the sound of his expensive Italian shoes so when he opens the door to the office located at the end of the hall, it's a bit of a surprise for the woman sitting behind the huge executive desk.

Mel has been enjoying Reid's expensive office chair, the previous night's figures spread out on the desk, when the door opens. She jumps, but then sighs and settles back in the chair. "Welcome back. I was just finishing up last night's reports." She has to admit that she doesn't always mind when Reid's off in the country, she rather enjoys getting to sit behind the expansive desk and feel important.

"How's it look?" Reid asks with a knowing smile. He likes startling Mel; it's fun to see the usually composed blonde lose her cool now and again.

"Not a record night by any means," she reports, shuffling the papers into a stack and rising from the chair. "But respectable. How was Exton?" She can see the effects on her boss, he looks rested, the dark circles that sometimes creep under his eyes after too many late nights pouring over the club's receipts erased by the country air.

"Good. Quiet," Reid smiles and takes a seat in one of the chairs opposite his desk. "Stay put," he signals Mel to resume her seat. "I'm not here to work."

Mel sits back down, crossing one long leg over the other and tipping back in the chair. "That can only mean one thing. I have one on call for you," she says with a knowing smile.

"Am I that predictable?" Reid chuckles. "I'll need to work on that. The element of surprise really does come in handy." He leans back in his chair, unbuttoning his suit coat. "Do I know him?"

"He's new," Mel says, picking up her phone and punching out a quick text to set things in motion. "But trust me, he's your type."

"My type. I have a type?" Reid retorts, unable to refute anything Mel just said. "So he's new, but not inexperienced I hope? I'm not in the mood for an amateur tonight. I..."
have a lovely new leather riding crop that I would like to break in."

"He's gotten high praise so far," Mel says, "and his file looks very... compatible with your interests. He's in Room Eight when you're ready." She's pleased that she anticipated correctly and can once again seem completely on top of everything.

Reid gets to his feet and circles the desk. Leaning down, he bestows a soft, chaste kiss on Mel's cheek. "Thank you, love. What would I do without you?" he says softly.

"Let's not find out, shall we?" Mel smiles. "Now you need to scoot and leave me to this, or I'll be here all night balancing the books," she says, motioning him away with her hands.

"Room Eight," Reid gives Mel a wicked smile as he strolls toward the door.

Mel nods and gives a wave, turning back to the account sheets. "Don't do anything I wouldn't do," she calls after him.

"That leaves me open for just about everything..." Reid says over his shoulder before he makes his exit. A quick trip back to the parking lot to retrieve his new crop from the trunk of the car, then Reid takes the back stairs to the top floor. He changes out of his designer suit and into a comfortable pair of worn jeans and a black tee shirt. Riding crop in hand, he heads back downstairs to Room Eight.

Reid opens the door to find a young man, naked and kneeling in the center of the floor.

"Hello," he says with a smile. Mel, bless her, has got it right yet again. He must remember to return the favor soon.

"Hello, Sir," the boy says, keeping his eyes on the floor. He's not sure who his client is tonight, but he has the feeling that he's someone with some importance so he tries to be as perfect as he can possibly be.

Reid steps closer, his riding boots the only thing in the boy's line of vision. "What's your name?" he asks as he reaches out to ruffle the young's man soft, dark hair.

"Jason, Sir," he answers, studying the man's boots. He likes the tone of his voice, American by the sound of it, and the fact that he asked his name shows he at least cares a bit about the object on the other end of the implements.

"Look up, Jason," Reid bids, running his fingers along the boy's cheek and lifting his chin. He smiles again, pleased with what Mel has deemed to be "his type". "Are you ready to play?" he asks quietly.

Jason meets the Dom's eyes, finding the face as pleasing as the voice, the dark features and hair set off by the blue of his eyes. "I am, Sir. I'm looking forward to it."

"Eager," Reid murmurs as he brushes his thumb across Jason's lower lip. "I like eager," he says a bit louder. "I've been told you're experienced."

"Yes, Sir," Jason says softly, resisting the urge to dip his tongue out to touch the Dom's thumb. "I've had formal training, and quite a bit of... on the job training, for lack of a better phrase."

Reid releases Jason's chin and walks around to stand behind him. "Red and yellow are your safe words tonight. Yellow when you want me to take it easy or slow down. Red when you want me to stop all together. If you have any hard limits, you need to tell me what they are right now."
"I understand, Sir. No permanent damage or scars is my only hard limit." Jason keeps his posture perfectly straight, even though he wants to turn his head to follow the Dom's path.

"That's not even an issue," Reid tells him as he trails his fingers along the back of Jason's neck. "Who would want to damage someone as pretty as you?" he purrs.

Jason is sure that the other man's question is rhetorical so he stays silent and enjoys the soft touch along his neck.

Reid slides his hand into Jason's hair and slowly pulls his head back until the sub has no choice but to look up at him. "Do you want to hurt for me tonight?" he asks softly.

"I do, Sir. Very much so." Jason can feel the familiar tingle across his skin as his body anticipates what is to come. Even before they begin he can feel himself starting to sink into head space, the mere ritual of beginning a scene enough to send him there.

"Up on your feet," Reid orders, standing close to the boy as he rises. He takes a hold of Jason at the nape of his neck, his grip not tight enough to hurt, not yet. Reid leads him over to a chest of drawers and tells Jason to open the top drawer. "The leather one," he says, meaning the leather cock ring. "Put it on."

Jason admires the wide array of rings, but immediately follows the order. He's careful to touch himself only as much as necessary as he secures the device, not wanting to seem willful. The pressure of the ring is a double-edged sword, making his cock start to swell, yet pushing back on his arousal.

Reid moves closer to the boy and breathes in the sweet, clean scent of his hair. Still leading him by his hand at the back of his neck, Reid guides Jason over to a padded leather bench. "Knees here," he tells him as he points to the lower level with his new leather riding crop. "And lean over the top," Reid continues.

Using one hand on the upper level for balance, Jason positions his knees as instructed, making sure they are spread nicely before leaning forward and resting his chest against the upper pad. The leather is cool against his bare skin and he can feel the goosebumps rising on his arms and legs.

"Arms forward," Reid says, letting his fingers drag across the boy's back. Kneeling down, he cuffs both of Jason's ankles with the the black leather restraints that are chained to the bench. Reid walks around to where the sub's arms are now hanging and repeats the process to bind both of his wrists.

Jason shifts slightly, just enough to test the restraints. They are snug but not so tight as to bite into his skin, a sure sign the Dom knows what he's doing.

"How do those feel?" Reid asks when he hears the chains rattle from Jason pulling on them.

"Perfect, Sir," Jason murmurs, stilling his movements. He's not exactly sure what the other man will like most, utter compliance or feisty resistance, but he starts with the former.

Reid walks out of Jason's line of sight again, standing behind him. He rubs his hand along the delectable curve of the sub's ass, his own cock twitching with the thought of how it will look later. "You should feel privileged, boy. I have a brand new riding crop and you're the first one who will get to feel its sting."

Jason exhales as Reid's hand skates along his skin. "I'm honored, Sir," he says softly, pleased that he's been chosen.
Dragging the tip of the crop along Jason's spine, Reid smiles when he makes the boy shiver. He rubs the new leather against Jason's ass then without further warning, he strikes, a red line appearing on the sub's smooth skin.

Even though he's expecting it, Jason still gasps when the crop lands, the sound almost more startling than the small bloom of pain.

"That's a lovely shade of red," Reid says matter-of-factly, pausing for a moment to see if Jason will say anything. When there is only the soft sound of the sub's accelerated breathing, Reid hits him again. Another stripe appears on the pale skin, only centimeters from the first.

Jason focuses on the heat of his skin, the pain further pushing him into sub-space. He closes his eyes, inhaling deeply, the scent of the leather filling his senses.

Reid strikes another blow, taking care not to hit him in the same place twice. He's not using his full strength, but the new leather is leaving quite the impression on the boy's skin.

Moaning softly Jason flexes his wrists against the cuffs, not trying to get away, just needing to move. "Thank you, Sir," he says softly, aching for more.

Reaching over to pet Jason's soft hair, Reid smiles and tells him that he knows how the boy can show his gratitude. He runs the end of the crop along the cleft of Jason's ass, pressing it between his reddened cheeks. "Would you like that, boy? To thank me for using my new crop on you?"

"Yes, Sir," Jason gasps out immediately. "Please, Sir," he adds more softly, the need to serve and to please making his voice tremble.

The boy's soft plea ignites something inside Reid and he grabs a fistful of Jason's hair and yanks his head back. "Bound and helpless and still so willing," he says softly. "Good boy." Reid releases him then using his hand, he spanks Jason's already abused ass, the hit igniting the marks already there.

Jason savors the praise, his cock aching as it strains against it's binding.

Reid continues to spank the boy until he is moaning and his ass is bright red. He drops the crop on the floor with a loud clatter then pulls a condom and a packet of lube from the pocket of his jeans. Reid's cock is hard and eager as he rolls on the condom, coating it with the lube. Without warning he presses the head of cock against the sub's ass. Grabbing Jason's hips, Reid growls softly. "Are you ready to thank me, boy?"

"Yes, Sir," Jason cries, his body straining against the cuffs as he tries to push back onto the Dom's cock. "Please let me thank you." His nerve endings are on fire, his entire body drawn as tight as a bowstring as he waits for the other man's next move.

Sliding his hands onto Jason's abused ass, Reid gives his red cheeks a firm squeeze then he pushes into the encompassing heat and begins to thrust.

Jason moans, the other man's fingers causing the stripes etched on his skin to flare and burn. The pull and drag of his cock soothes those fires, while stoking others and he finds himself having to concentrate on not coming, the ease that the Dom brought him to the edge giving him a bit of surprise.

"Awww, fuck... you feel good," Reid growls, moving faster, pushing harder. "You like me giving you my cock, boy?" he asks as he grabs another fistful of Jason's hair.
"Yes..." Jason says, the word cut short by a moan as the Dom thrusts forward. "Yes, Sir," he repeats, feeling utterly trapped and used, and loving every moment of it.

Reid lets out a low groan as he comes, his powerful thrusts easing to halt. He releases Jason's hair, petting his head. Easing out of Jason's body, Reid discards the condom and tucks his satisfied cock back into his jeans. "Now... what to do with you," he says lightly as he walks around in front of Jason who is still chained to the bench. Kneeling in front of him, Reid gives him a smile as he brushes the hair away from the boy's forehead.

Jason tries to focus on the Dom, but his body is screaming for release, his mind fuzzy with need. He wants to beg to come, but he knows better.

Holding the boy's gaze, Reid leans in, his hand unsnapping the leather cock ring binding Jason's cock. "Do you want to come, boy?" The whispered question holding the promise of release.

"Yes." The word tumbles out before Jason can even consciously think about it, the overwhelming rush from the release of the ring threatening to break him into pieces. "Sir," he adds belatedly, whimpering as he tries to hold back.

Reid begins to slowly stroke the hard length in his hand. "Like this?" he whispers, rubbing the pad of his thumb beneath the head of Jason's cock.

"Oh please," Jason begs, his body trembling as he clings to the last shred of his control.

"Please what?" asks Reid, his hand moving slower as he waits to hear from Jason again.

"Please let me come for you," Jason says, his voice strained. His hands and feet flex against the cuffs, needing something... anything for stimulation.

Reid runs his free hand through the sub's hair, winding a dark strand of it around is finger. "I think I'd like that," he says calmly as he begins to stroke Jason's cock again. "Come for me, boy. Let me see how much you've enjoyed what I gave you."

The Dom's words, the hand in his hair, and the fingers on his cock are plenty to send Jason right over the cliff and he cries out harshly as he comes, his body straining against the cuffs.

Lifting his cum-coated fingers to Jason's mouth, Reid rubs them gently against the boy's full lips. "You did good," he says with a small smile.

"Thank you, Sir," Jason murmurs, the praise more pleasurable than the orgasm. His body is limp, his muscles wrung out, but there's a smile on his face.

Reid unfastens the cuffs holding Jason's wrists then rubs the red rings on his skin to help get the circulation back. He moves around to where the sub's ankles are bound and releases those, too.

Jason stays put, even after he is freed, waiting for the Dom's permission. He's never entirely sure when the scene is complete and he won't risk displeasing him at this point after the night has gone so well.

Taking hold of Jason's arms, Reid helps him get to his feet. He continues to hold onto the sub to make sure he isn't too weak or dizzy. "Can you walk?" asks Reid, pointing toward a comfortable couch positioned against the wall.

"Yes, Sir," Jason says, taking a few tentative steps to be sure, but finding his balance fairly quickly. He enjoys the Dom's hands on him though, and leans in to him as they make their way to the
"Stand here," Reid tells him when Jason is next to the couch. The sub can hold onto the arm of the couch if he needs to support himself while Reid moves away to retrieve the jar of anesthetic cream he knows they stock in the cabinet over the sink in the corner of the room. He returns to the couch and takes a seat, looking up at Jason with a satisfied smirk on his face. "Over my lap," Reid says with a pat to his thigh.

Jason is pleasantly surprised by the care the other man is showing, and manages to hide his smile as he drapes himself over the Dom's lap. He braces himself, knowing the cream will be cold, but that the end result will be worth the shock.

Reid admires the boy's red ass striped with the hits from his crop. He takes his time applying the numbing cream, lingering in the afterglow of an enjoyable scene.

Practically humming with pleasure, Jason revels in the intimate touch. He very much hopes that he's pleased the other man and might have the opportunity to serve him again.

Resting his hand on Jason's lower back, Reid bends over and speaks softly next to the boy's ear. "Would you like something to drink?" he asks. "Water or juice?" he clarifies.

"Water would be lovely, Sir," Jason says, thinking he might just like to spend the rest of the evening just draped here in his lap.

"Your wish is my command," Reid says cheekily, finding humor in the role of an acquiescent dom. "On your feet then. Slow... slow," he warns when Jason begins to move from his position across his lap. "You can dress now. While I get your water."

Jason reluctantly starts to slip on his clothes, wincing as he bends and his skin stretches. He's happy that he wore loose, soft cotton pants, knowing his typical attire of jeans would have been unbearable against his welted backside.

"Sitting might not be in your agenda for the next day or two," Reid says without apology as he hands Jason a bottle of water.

"That's just fine, Sir. Something to remember you by," he says softly, hoping he hasn't overstepped his bounds.

Reid gives the boy a slow smile. "You should call the club if you need a reminder."

"Will do, Sir," Jason smiles, taking a sip of his water.

Reaching out, Reid slides his fingers into the hair at the back of Jason's neck and gives it an affectionate tug.

Jason can feel his cheeks flush at the affection and he dips his head, trying to hide his reaction.

"Holding up okay?" asks Reid, brushing a knuckle against a pink cheek.

"Very well, Sir. If I may..." he says haltingly, but then rushing forward before he loses his nerve, "you have quite a talent for this."

Reid appreciates the sub's shy compliment. "Thank you," he bows his head slightly. "I can't think of a better way to break in my new riding crop," Reid adds with a smile.
"Keep me in mind whenever you have new toys to try out, Sir," Jason says, taking another sip of the water.

"How are you getting home?" Reid asks, his sharp blue eyes watching Jason's every move to make sure he is stable after their scene.

"The front desk usually calls me a cab," Jason says. As much as he's enthralled with this handsome man, he knows it's not a good idea to get in a car with someone he's just met.

"Good," Reid says with a nod of his head. "Let me walk you to the front," he offers.

"Thank you, Sir," Jason says, collecting his things. He makes a mental note to give an extra thanks to the front desk for scheduling him for this session.

"My pleasure," is Reid's smooth reply as he escorts Jason out of the playroom and down the hallway. He might just have to give Mel a bonus for her find tonight.
Chapter 2

Reid is in office, long legs crossed and feet propped up on the corner of his large desk. He's actually whistling a cheerful melody as he rifles lazily through one of the stacks of papers on his desk. The messages and the numbers in front of him aren't even registering, his mind on the pretty boy that he had last night.

Mel strides down the hall, her super high heels muffled in the carpet. She's eager to get a report from Reid about the sub last night, hoping she can move him into heavy rotation. "Knock-knock," she calls, rapping on the doorjamb before stepping into Reid's office.

"Come," Reid says without looking up. When he finally does glance away from the papers, a wide smile spreads across his face. "Mel. Just the lady I wanted to see."

"The only lady you like to see," Mel teases, relaxing into the chair across the desk from Reid. "Double checking my work?" she asks, noting the stack of papers resting idly in her boss's hand.

Reid chuckles and tosses the stack back onto the desk. "Hardly. I was just trying to look busy," he says with a smirk.

"Busy daydreaming?" Mel asks, crossing one long leg over the other. She wants to give Reid an opening to talk about the new boy before she has to start prying.

"Maybe." Reid's smirk turns into a genuine grin. "Did I tell you that I bought a new riding crop while I was in Exton?"

"You may have mentioned that," Mel grins back. "It must have been a good night if it made you forget our conversation about it."

"It was a good night." Reid nods his head. "I liked the boy that you arranged for me. Jason."

Mel does a silent victory dance. "I'd heard good things, I'm glad to have a confirmation from someone I trust. I think he'll be a valuable asset for us."

"Did he complete a profile form with his experience and limits?" asks Reid.

"Of course," Mel says, "he's in the database if you'd like to peruse it." She knows that Reid doesn't often use his computer, but she didn't think to bring a paper copy file with her. "Or I can send up his file later for you."

"I'll pull it up on my laptop. I thin I might want to play with him again." Reid gives Mel a sly smile. "So how smug are you feeling about picking out the type of boy that I like?"

"On a scale of one to ten?" Mel laughs. "Probably an eight. The physical is not a problem, I've got you clocked there, but the scene chemistry? That's more art than science."

Reid laughs loudly, tipping his head back against his leather chair. "How'd you get to be so damn good at all this?"

"That's my little secret," Mel smirks. "And why you pay me so damn well." It's actually Mel's favorite part of the job, the "matchmaking" for lack of a better word. If she didn't have to deal with all the other crap of managing the staff she'd be a very happy camper.
"Well, I owe you one now. However shall you collect?" Reid asks lightly, one dark eyebrow raising suspiciously.

"Oh, you know me, I keep my chits in my back pocket until I need something really big," she says with a sly smile. "Having everyone 'owe me one' is how I manage to accomplish my job pretty much every day."

"I suspect you've collected quite a few of those. Mostly from me." Reid lowers his legs and swivels forward in his chair.

"I'm always happy to do a favor for you," she says sincerely. "And speaking of favors..." Mel says sweetly.

Reid's eyes narrow, but his smile stays in place.

"We need to hire a new bartender. The newest one we have is crap, but I don't have enough dirt on him to fire him just yet. I want to get a new one in here now so I'm not left in the lurch when I finally lower the hatchet."

"Hire whoever you need, Mel. You know that's no problem?" His manager has always been very capable of hiring and handling the staff they have at the club.

"I know. Just wanted to run it by you for the financial side of things." Mel knows that Reid would always trust her with those decisions, but keeping him in the loop does wonders for their working relationship. "I'll get the ad out."

"Ad? Is that how you usually do it?" asks Reid, never having thought about the process that Mel goes through to hire someone.

"Yes," Mel laughs. She forgets sometimes just how hands-off Reid really is. "Word of mouth works occasionally, but typically advertisements in the newspapers is how it works."

"I'd like to see that ad actually," Reid chuckles. "Expert cocktail maker for exclusive cock and tail club."

"Let me make a note of that turn of phrase," Mel teases, pretending to reach for a pen. "Maybe I've discovered the root of my hiring problems... not enough bad puns."

Reid shrugs, his smirking smile in place. "Speaking of clubs. Robby's new place is open. I'm going over there tonight. Wanna come with?"

"I'll have to take a pass tonight," Mel sighs. "Rebecca called in sick and I don't have the desk covered. Next time though. It's been too long since we've had a chance to kick back with a drink."

"And we can't do it here. I've heard the bartender really sucks." Reid gets to his feet and walks around the desk.

"That he does. Or so I've heard," Mel laughs. She takes Reid's outstretched hand and unfolds from the chair. "Have a drink for me."

"One of those fruity kind? With an umbrella?" he teases, knowing full well that Mel drinks scotch when she drinks.

"Whatever floats your boat, sailor," Mel says, leaning in a giving Reid a quick peck on the cheek.
Reid looks down at Mel's high heels. "I hope you never find a guy with a major shoe fetish and decide to settle down. What would I do without you?"

"Let's hope you never have to find out," Mel grins.

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Reid looks around the club, the men and women on the dance floor moving to the beat of the extremely loud music. I must be getting old. The people all look very young and this music sounds like noise to me. Reid turns to Robert, his mate from their days at Oxford, and smiles. "It's packed. And there are more outside waiting to be let in if that line I saw is any indication."

Robby smiles, knowing that Reid's place has no troubles of it's own making ends meet. "I'm blessed, that's for sure." He ushers them over to a private table in the VIP area where the music is more muted. "So how are things with you?"

"Good, good. I can't complain. Oh, and Mel sends her regards," Reid tells him as he unbuttons the coat of his FRENCHYE double breasted suit.

"Tell her I said hello," Robby says. He'd love to say more than "hello" to Mel, but he's never been successful on that front. "Been out to the country lately?"

"Yes, as a matter of fact. Last weekend," replies Reid. "It really is beautiful there. A fantastic place to go to decompress."

"Now me, I prefer to relax and unwind right here in the city. None of that fresh country air for me," Robby laughs. "Give me dinner at a great restaurant and some nice drinks after, and that's all I need."

"No clubbing after hours? And here you are... the owner of the hottest new nightclub in London. What's wrong with this picture?"

"Clubbing is work!" Robby laughs. "I can't go here obviously, they put me to work, and if I try to go out somewhere else all I do is try to see what they have that I don't and try to figure out if they are luring away part of my clientele."

Reid gives his friend a confident smirk. "I don't go to other clubs like mine. I know R.A.C.K. is the best, so why bother?"

"Because your arse isn't on the line if it fails," Robby points out. "You've got enough cash to walk away if you go under."

"It won't fail. And neither will this place. So stop your over-analyzing and excessive worrying." Reid's smile changes from cocky arrogance to reassuring. "If you actually read any of those self help books you seem to always have around, then you'd know that worrying is counter productive."

"Yeah, yeah," Robby says ruefully, looking over Reid's shoulder as a young man approaches their table.

"Excuse me. Hello," the man says, with a slight forward bow, clearly nervous. "I was here inquiring about the opening for a bartender you had posted and I was directed to speak to you."

"Hold for just a minute Reid? Duty calls." Robby gestures the young man closer, not wanting to shout over the music. "Unfortunately, we filled that position last night," he says, noticing Reid out of the corner of his eye, craning his neck around to get a look at the visitor. "I'm sorry you've
Reid notices the young man right away. As Mel would say, he is just "his type", at least physically. Slender build, beautiful face. And that mouth, it fills Reid's mind with wicked thoughts immediately.

"I understand, Sir," the young man says. "I'm sorry to have bothered you." He bows his head slightly again and starts to back away from the table.

"Wait a minute!" Reid calls to him as he begins to walk away. "You're looking for a job as a bartender?" he asks, leaning forward so he can hear the young man's response over the music.

The boy stops short, and turns his head, questioning whether he really heard what he thought he heard over the music. "Pardon me, Sir?" he asks, holding his hand to his ear. "Me?" he asks? "Yes, I'm looking for work."

"Sit down!" Reid gestures to the seat in the booth across from him, throwing a look at Robby who is already smiling.

Sliding into the booth, the young man looks back and forth between the two men. "I thought the position was filled?"

"His position is. Mine isn't," replies Reid. "Do you have experience as a bartender?" he continues.

"I do," he says, turning his attention to the other man. "I apologize, Sir, but I'm a bit confused. Do you work here as well?"

Robby is fairly sure what is going on, and he shoots Reid a look, silently telling him to watch his step. While they are both comfortable with the type of establishment Reid runs, Robby knows that not everyone is so open.

"No. You're American, aren't you?" Reid asks as he fishes one of his business cards out of his pocket and slides it across the table to the young man. "R.A.C.K. That's my club."

"Yes," he says, reading the name off the card. "And you seem to have a bit of American in your accent as well, Mr. Reid."

"Well spotted..." Reid pauses, leaning forward with a smile. "And your name?"

"Matt," he says, pocketing the card. "I haven't seen an advertisement for an opening at your club. And I've been scouring the ads every day."

"It's a new position. My manager is in the process of placing the ad. Maybe you can save her the trouble," Reid smiles. He can tell that Matt is suspicious. He likes that.

Matt glances back and forth between the two men, trying to gauge the situation. "When would be a good time to speak to your manager about the opening?"

"Tomorrow. We need someone who can start fairly quickly," Reid tells him.

"I'd start today if possible, Sir," Matt says with a smile. "I'm starting to get a bit desperate."

"Desperate?" asks Reid, his eyes dropping to Matt's mouth as he smiles.

"My flat-mates are ready to kick me to the curb if I don't come up with my share of the rent by Friday," Matt admits with a slight blush.
"Where are you from? In America?" Reid asks, the boy's blush doing marvelous things to his libido.

"Um, New Orleans," Matt says, a sideways glance at their companion. He's not sure what that has to do with things, and there's a tiny worry at the back of his brain that the handsome man is just toying with him, and that there really isn't a job to be had. However, he forces himself to stick it through, knowing how much he needs work.

"Beautiful," Reid says, his piercing blue eyes never leaving Matt's face. "Beautiful city. Tell me, Matt. How do you make a Sazerac?"

Matt is surprised by the question, but also intrigued. The Sazerac is a drink not well known outside of New Orleans, so to be asked about it tells him that Mr. Reid has at least visited his hometown. "Peychaud's bitters and sugar, muddled in a rocks glass with cognac on top. Pour the whole thing in a glass that's been swirled with Herbsaint," he says automatically. "But I doubt Peychaud's or Herbsaint are on your standard bar around here," he adds after a moment of thought.

"They are at my bar," Reid smiles. "So come by around one tomorrow. I'll tell Ms. Davies to expect you. Ask for her at the front desk."

Matt itches to probe further about Reid's choice of "interview question" but he doesn't, not wanting to push his luck. "Thank you, Sir. I appreciate the opportunity."

"You're welcome," replies Reid. "Don't be late. Ms. Davies hates it when you're late."

"I'll be prompt," Matt assures him, making a mental note to be sure he knows his way exactly so he'll be on time. "If you'll excuse me," he says, sliding out of the booth. "Again, I apologize for interrupting your evening," he says, nodding to both men.

Reid nods back, smile firmly in place. He watches Matt as he leaves, turning his attention back to Robby only when the young man is out of sight. Reid sees his friend smiling at him. "What?" he asks as he leans back in his seat.

Robby raises his hands in a playfully defensive gesture. "I said nothing," he laughs. "But you were looking at that poor boy like you wanted to eat him for dessert."

"Can I help it if I have a sweet tooth?" Reid smiles. "A bartender from New Orleans who knows how to make my favorite drink. How fortuitous is that?"

"It's like fate dropped him right in your lap," Robby says with a roll of his eyes, having watched from the sidelines as Reid mows through a constant stream of young men, all of them promising to be "the one".

"Exactly. Fate. So it's meant to be." Reid looks across the dance floor again, remembering the soft blush on Matt's cheeks.

"If you say so," Robby says, motioning for another round of drinks. "Best not tell Mel that you've hired her a bartender based on fate."

"It will be our little secret," Reid agrees. What Mel doesn't know, won't hurt him.
Chapter 3

Matt double checks the address on the card. The door in front of him isn't labeled, but the numbers are right so he pushes inside, letting his eyes adjust to the dark room. There's low music on, and a few patrons scattered at tables around the bar, but overall it's a very quiet scene. He makes his way over to the bar and gives his name, asking for Ms. Davies.

Mel makes her way to the front desk when she gets the call that the applicant for the bartender's position has arrived. As she gets closer and she sees the young man waiting for her, she begins to curse Reid in her mind. *Damn you, Reid. I need a bartender. Not another play toy for you!*

"Hello, I am Melanie Davies," she says politely as she extends her hand to the young man.

"Nice to meet you, ma'am," Matt says, shaking her hand. She's not at all what he'd expected, all long legs and blonde hair. "I'm here about the open bartender position. Mr. Reid referred me."

"Mister Reid?" Mel says out loud before she can stop herself. "Yes. He told me that you would be stopping by. Would you follow me to my office?" she says with a polite smile, still thinking of ways to torture her boss the very next opportunity she has.

Matt follows Melanie down the hall, wondering what she meant by the comment about Mr. Reid. The club is unlike others he's been in. Normally the bar area itself comprises virtually the entire space, the offices and storerooms crammed into the back like an afterthought, but R.A.C.K. appears to have as much behind the scenes as in front and he tries not to gawk as they walk.

"Please, have a seat." Mel motions toward a chair as she closes the door to the office then walks around the desk. "So... you have experience as a bartender?" she begins as she sits down.

"Yes, ma'am," Matt says, sitting up very straight on the edge of the chair. "I started in college, the hours worked well around my classes. And I can see the look in your eyes already," he says, heading off what he's sure will be her next question. "It wasn't a college bar, so I know how to do more than just sling Bud Light and Jello shots."

Mel blinks. "Good to know," she says with a smile. "Did Mister Reid tell you anything about our club?"

"No ma'am," Matt says, thinking it an odd question.

*Oh hell no! I am not the one who is going to explain it to this boy!* Mel's smile doesn't betray the evil thoughts she is having about her employer. "Tell me more about the bar where you worked. Why aren't you still working there?"

"Well, it's in New Orleans, and I'm in London," Matt says with a smile. "Otherwise I probably would still be there." He's having trouble reading Melanie, and that's unusual for him, he's typically quite good at that.

"New Orleans..." Melanie says, surprised. "And you're in London because you are a student?" she asks, encouraging Matt to continue.

"Not currently," Matt says, relaxing slightly as he talks about himself. "I studied abroad for a semester here in London and fell in love with the city. Cliche, I know. But after graduation I didn't have any immediate plans and so I decided to return. The irresponsibility of youth I suppose."
Mel smiles and nods, appreciating the fact that Matt is expressive as he replies to her questions. "What did you study?"


"So plans for more schooling then?" Mel relaxes more as they continue to talk, finding Reid's choice in applicants not nearly as lacking as she first surmised.

"Probably not," Matt says, giving it some thought. "I'm not ruling it out, but it's not on the immediate horizon." He can feel that the other woman has warmed to him somewhat, and he considers that a victory.

"And the hours that you would be expected to work? We don't really get rolling 'til early evening and we don't close until the wee hours, so to speak. Any problems there?" Mel actually begins to interview Matt with the intention of hiring him.

"I've always been a night owl," Matt says. "Probably why I was drawn to this type of job in the first place. I'd never last at a nine-to-five gig."

"We have exclusive clientele here. And they have specific tastes. And specific expectations." Mel is still determined not to break the news to Matt that this is a fetish club. "How do you feel about that? In regards to customer service?"

"Well, as I mentioned earlier, I worked in New Orleans. More specifically I worked at a bar in one of the older, and by that I mean old money, hotels. So I'm used to clientele that have high expectations and short tempers, and I know better than to run my mouth about anyone or anything I've seen after a long night of cocktails." Matt hopes it's the answer she's looking for, and that she can see that it's the truth.

Mel finds herself nodding again. "Discretion is a very important part of our jobs here as well. The customer is always right. And you never talk about what you've seen or heard at the club." She gives Matt a long, appraising look. "Do you have any questions for me?"

Matt has an odd feeling about this whole situation but he tries to push that aside in favor of the idea of a steady paycheck. "How many hours a week would I be looking at?"

"This position is actually full-time. 36-40 hours a week. An average shift is 9-10 hours a night."

"That's great," Matt says enthusiastically. "I don't mind the long shifts, and I can definitely use the money." He pauses for a moment, not wanting to overstep, but needing to ask the question. "Are there any benefits associated with the position?" he asks, the words sounding formal and stilted but there's nothing he can do about it now.

"Yes. We offer a competitive benefits package. I think you'll be pleased," Mel smiles. "That is, if you decide to accept the position?"

"So far I like what I'm hearing. Would I be the only bartender during my shift or would I be working with a team?" There's been only one guy on duty when Matt had arrived, but it was also the middle of the afternoon, not exactly prime time. He couldn't tell from that limited data what a typical night might be like here at R.A.C.K.

"Usually, there's only one. Occasionally though, because of private parties or similar events, we will need two bartenders to work the same shift. The flow is not usually anything too difficult to manage by yourself though." Mel gives him a smile of assurance and adds, "I promise."
"Would I need to do my own restocking and that type of thing or do you have a dedicated person for that?" He hopes he isn't asking too many questions, he's just trying to get a feel for what's expected.

"Some, yes. But it wouldn't be your responsibility entirely, no. We have people on staff who help restock." The playrooms don't refill themselves either.

"I guess that's it really," Matt says, trying to think things through. "When would you want me to start?" he asks, adding quickly, "assuming you offer me the position."

"As soon as possible. Is tomorrow too soon for you?" asks Mel. "And that would be me offering you the position," she says with a soft laugh.

"Tomorrow would be fine. Is there a dress code? Uniform?" Matt can't help but smile, he can't wait to get home and tell his roommates they can finally get off his case.

"Yes, long-sleeved shirt, tie and trousers. All black. And black shoes as well. I actually had someone come in wearing trainers!" Mel recalls the current bartender's first day on the job.

Matt has to bite his lip to keep from laughing at Melanie's distaste. "I'll be sure and dress appropriately."

"Excellent. Can you come in at four tomorrow afternoon? We'll need the first hour to fill out your forms and take your picture for the ID card. Every employee has one." Mel points to hers which is clipped discreetly to the belt of her tailored skirt.

"Of course." It's yet another subtle difference that should raise questions about R.A.C.K., but Matt again pushes those aside. "Will I report to you in this position? Mr. Reid referred to you as the manager."

"Yes. I am the manager. He is the owner." Mel knows that she should explain more, but a part of her just won't let Reid off the hook entirely for this one. Even if it does appear that Matt will be a good addition.

"Great," Matt says, thinking he can definitely learn to work with her. "I look forward to working with you, Melanie."

"Wonderful. We're all set then," she says as she stands up. "I'll tell Reid... Mr. Reid, that you've been hired."

Matt tilts his head, storing away the fact that she called him Reid in his brain. "Excellent." He rises to his feet and extends his hand. "Pleasure to meet you."

"And you," Mel says reciprocally. "I'll see you tomorrow afternoon."

"Four o'clock," Matt confirms. "Shall I see myself out?"

"I'll walk you out." Rounding the desk, Mel smiles again when Matt holds the door open for her. Nice, polite. I wonder if he'll stay when he learns the truth.

Matt follows Melanie through the door, resisting the urge to look down the various hallways they pass.

Mel pauses at the front door. "Have a good afternoon, Matt," she tells him politely.
"You too," Matt says, giving a wave before stepping out into the bright sunlight. The door closes behind him and he practically skips down the street, a broad smile on his face.

Mel hurries back to the office and digs her cell phone out of her Gucci handbag. She sends Reid a text.


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*Just you wait.*

Those words from Mel's text don't bode well for Reid as he takes the back stairs down to the office the next afternoon after receiving them. He opens the door to his office to find his manager waiting for him. Reid puts on his best smile as he closes the door behind him.

"Good afternoon, Mel. Looking lovely as always," Reid says smoothly.

"Charm and flattery get you nowhere with me," Mel says, a hand on her hip. "You should know that by now." Her tone is teasing, but there's a hint of seriousness there, too.

"Is it really charm and flattery if it's the truth?" muses Reid, his smile turning into a pondering smirk.

"Even when you tell the truth you break out the charm and flattery," Mel points out. "It's your default setting."

"You make me sound so... shallow." Reid settles easily into one of the comfortable chairs facing his desk.

"Hmmm, shallow," Mel says, pressing a finger to her lip and pretending to think. "Let's think of a good example... Oh! I know!" she exclaims. "How about our new friend Matt the bartender?"

"Who?" asks Reid. "I thought the bartender's name was Alan. Or Alec. Or something." He looks at the displeased expression on Mel's face. "Did he wear white trainers to work again?"

"Not him," Mel says with a shake of her head. "I'm referring to 'Mr. Just Your Type' that you sent my way like a lamb to the lions."

"I don't like lamb, love. You know that." Reid glances away, wondering if looks really can kill. "Your text said you hired him. It's not like you to do something that extreme just to indulge me."

"What can I say, I'm hard up for a bartender. One who doesn't suck, that is." Mel crosses her arms and shoots Reid a look. "However, I am not going to be the one who explains to him exactly what this place is all about. I can't believe you sent him here unaware."

Reid turns his gaze back to Mel, a soft smile on his lips. "When does he start?"

Mel checks her watch. "In about ten minutes," she says, and this time it's her turn to smirk.

"I don't see why there would be a problem. His job is tending bar. It's not like we're asking him to do anything else," Reid shrugs. "I'll explain it to him. No worries."

Stifling a laugh, Mel just nods, wishing she could be a fly on the wall for that conversation. "Great. Well then you just get back to me on whether he runs screaming out the door in which case I'll have to start over at square one on the bartender front."
Reid remembers Matt saying that he was "desperate" for a job. He wonders if that will be enough reason for the young man to stay and give it a try. The buzzer from the front desk sounds and Mel answers it. Their new bartender has arrived.

"Showtime," Mel grins as she hangs up the phone. "He's up front. If he's still around after you give him 'the talk', bring him on back and I'll get his paperwork started."

"Really Mel," Reid says with a shake of his head. "You make it sound like I am getting ready to tell him about the birds and the bees." He gets to his feet and moves around to the other side of the desk. "Now scoot. Unless you'd like to stay and watch?"

"No thank you," Mel laughs. "I'm not a masochist." She pauses in the door way, looking back for just a moment. "I know you like the way he looks," she says softly, these words meant truthfully for someone she considers one of her closest friends. "But think with your business head, not your other head on this one, okay?"

"Point taken," Reid says quietly, lifting his hand to shoo Mel away. Mel pulls her phone out as she steps away, already moving on to the next bit of business that needs attention.

Reid leans back in his chair, thinking about the best way to go about this business, this revelation. His thoughts quickly drift to other things as he tries to recall more about the young man who Mel has hired.

Matt wanders down the hallway, trying to remember exactly which way he'd come the day before. The man behind the bar hadn't given the best directions. He sees only one open door with light spilling out and he hopes it's the right one. "Mr. Reid?" he says tentatively, rapping his knuckles on the doorjamb.

"Yes. Come in," Reid straightens in his seat as Matt enters the office. "Close the door behind you," he orders.

Matt glances at the deserted hallway before pulling the door shut. He's mildly uncomfortable but he's seen no real warning signs yet so he decides to go ahead. "I'm glad to see you, Sir," he says as an opening. "I was hoping I'd get a chance to thank you for the referral. It seems to have gone a long way with your hiring manager."

Reid smiles when he hears Matt use one of his favorite words. He wonders if it would sound as sweet in another context... He coughs, as if clearing his throat. "You're welcome," he replies, gesturing toward one of the chairs. "Have a seat."

Sinking into one of the chairs across the desk, Matt folds his hands in his lap awkwardly. He never knows what to do with them during times like these. He wishes he had the easy confidence that Mr. Reid seems to come by effortlessly.

Where to begin... Reid looks across the large desk. Matt is just as attractive as he was the other night at Robby's club. "You look good in black," Reid murmurs appreciatively.

"Thank you, Sir," Matt says, glancing down at his attire, done up exactly as had been requested. "Ms. Melanie was quite specific about the requirements."

"Yes," Reid nods. "She's quite the stickler for details. That's why she's a great manager. Me, on the other hand, well... that's why I have her. So I don't have to be concerned with the details." He looks at Matt who is staring back at him with his full attention. "But perhaps I should have been more
detailed the other night when I told you about the job."

Matt's face falls. He knew lucking into a job like this was too much to ask for.

The young man's disappointment is evident. Reid frowns, "We still want to hire you as a bartender," he begins. "The issue lies with the club. Not you."

"Oh," Matt says, thinking he understands the issue. "The first place I had a job went under just a few weeks after I started," he nods knowingly. "I know how bad the economy is right now."

Reid sighs, smiling at Matt's misinterpretation of what he means. "The club is fine. Business is better than ever." He stares straight at Matt. "Do you know what R.A.C.K. stands for, Matt?"

Matt stares back into the light blue eyes, their fair color such a contrast to the darkness of the other man's hair. "No, Sir," Matt says, figuring the truth is better than trying to stammer out a lie. "The accelerated timeline of all this didn't leave me much room to do any research."

Reid's smile stays in place as he speaks slowly. "It's an acronym for Risk Aware Consensual Kink. R.A.C.K. isn't an ordinary nightclub. It's a private fetish club."

Matt takes a moment, knowing all the words that have been spoken, but never hearing them combined in that way before. "Fetish?" he asks, his voice cracking. He clears his throat, aware of the flush in his cheeks. "Is that um... legal here?"

"Quite legal," replies Reid, relaxing in his chair as he enjoys the attractive hue of Matt's blush. "We have an exclusive clientele who make use of our facilities. Rather like a luxury hotel. We do not employ people who... participate."

"Oh," Matt says, finding himself quite speechless. "I see," he says, even though he really doesn't.

"The customer's activities are private, so discretion is a must," Reid says quietly, allowing Matt the time for it all to sink in. "Are you still interested in being a bartender here?"

Matt's mind spins, trying to sort everything out. He knows zero about all this... well, maybe not zero, he thinks. *I am a healthy male with access to the internet after all.* "Discretion wouldn't be a problem," he says finally. "But I'm not 100% sure about all this."

"I'd be highly doubtful if you told me you were 100% sure," Reid smiles. "What are your concerns?"

"I don't know that I'm comfortable with that all happening right there in the bar. I mean, I am used to looking the other way regarding other people's business, but this seems to be taking that to the extreme." There are a lot of other issues he has, but they aren't things that Matt can seem to articulate at the moment.

"It won't be happening in the bar. The action takes place in the playrooms. Behind closed doors," explains Reid. "You might see some scantily clad people in the bar at times, but nothing more scandalous than what you would see on the dance floor of any other club."

"Oh," Matt says, his mind still churning. *Does Mr. Reid like to do that sort of thing?* he wonders fleetingly. "Okay, I guess I can manage it then."

Reid stares at Matt for a long moment before he speaks again. "Shall we agree on a 90-day trial basis then? If you should decide that you are not comfortable with the job, for whatever reason, you can leave without concern. A glowing recommendation letter in hand to help you secure your
Matt is slightly taken aback by the generous offer but he finds himself nodding. "I understand, Sir."

"Good," Reid smiles again, rather pleased with himself that he hasn't scared their new bartender away. "I think Mel needs you to fill out some forms. Wait here and I'll go get her." Reid stands and walks toward the door.

Matt agrees, welcoming the chance to be alone for a few moments. He wonders what he's getting himself into, but the pressure of his rent coming due is enough to keep him here. "Ninety days," he says softly to himself. "You can do anything for ninety days."

Reid strolls down the hallway, a satisfied smirk on his face. He sees Mel at the front desk and stops right in front of her, his height towering over her despite her high heels. "Matt is waiting for you. He's ready to start," Reid tells her.

Mel raises an eyebrow, but doesn't say a word, just reaching over and pulling out Matt's file.

"What? No 'thank you'?" Reid leans against the desk and gives her a smug look.

"I'm saving my 'I told you so' to use when the poor thing quits after a week," Mel says with a sweetly sarcastic smile. "Is he waiting in your office?"

"Yeah," replies Reid, feeling suddenly deflated. Poor thing? He frowns as he watches Mel walk down the hall to his office. What did she mean by that?

Mel strides back down the hall, somewhat surprised that Reid was successful in convincing Matt to stay. "Hope to hell he's as good of a bartender as he sounds," she mutters. Clearing her throat as she reaches the office so as not to startle the young man she takes a seat back behind Reid's desk. "So with that bit of business taken care of," she says, flipping open the folder, "I've got the usual pre-employment papers here." She pushes them across the desk and tosses a pen on the desk.

Matt looks at her for a moment and then reaches for the pen. "You made him come in here and do the dirty work?" Matt asks, hoping Melanie can take a joke.


"I'm sure he agrees," Matt laughs, turning his attention to the paperwork. He fills it out quickly but carefully, the pen flying across the page.

"I am glad you decided to stay," Mel says when Matt passes his completed forms back to her. "Usually, you will be on shift alone at the bar, however tonight, you'll be working with Alec. Let me just say this..." Mel pauses, unconsciously biting her lip as she tries to be as diplomatic as possible. "Alec's skills do not include bartending."

"Or dressing well, right?" Matt laughs. "I can handle the bartending as long as someone can show me the ropes of the register and where to find supplies."

"Super," Mel smiles. "Well, let me show you where things are and I will introduce you to Alec when he comes in."

Matt stands up and lets Melanie pass, following her out into the hall. "I guess I should have asked Mr. Reid this," he says, "but is the club a members only type of place or open to the public?"

"It's a private club. Member only," Mel replies with a smile. "Our clients' fee for membership is
quite substantial so they expect the best." She looks at Matt. "And we give them the best."

"I like that. My bar before had a very regular clientele so I got to know them and their drinks. I like being able to give that kind of service rather than a constant parade of strangers."

"That's good." Mel stops walking and turns to Matt. "Which reminds me of something else..." She pauses to carefully select her words again. "It's a fine line though. I'm sure you realize when someone is trying to cross it?"

Matt stops short as well and tries to process what Melanie is telling him. There's the actual words of course but he gets the sense that there's some deeper meaning there. "I do," he says finally, forcing himself to nod his head more for his own good than to emphasize his point.

Mel tries to smile reassuringly. "You're an attractive young man. It's only natural that someone might misinterpret good customer service for something more. Just be as polite as possible, but if it becomes a concern, please be sure to let me know, all right?"

"Will do." Matt has no worries that Melanie can kick ass and take names. "Are the women members typically pushy like that?" he asks, having dealt with some of those before.

Women? He only mentioned women... maybe I won't have to worry about him and Reid after all?

"Oh sure," she smiles. "There is no short supply of aggressiveness when you're dealing with the dominant types."

"Oh," Matt says, thinking that through. So much to learn about all this.

"Don't worry. You're going to be just fine. I have a good feeling about you," she says as she starts walking again.

Glad one of us does, Matt thinks.
Matt passes the charge slip across the bar, smiling as he makes small talk with the older man. He thanks him for the generous tip he's added to his tab and then pushes the Manhattan across the polished wood towards him. He files the slip away and then seeing no one else waiting, busies himself by washing up some of the dirty glasses.

So far the job has turned out to be pretty much like any other. Yes he's seen some strange fashion choices, and people seem to use a lot of formal language, but basically it is nothing weirder than any other bar. People regularly disappear into the depths of the club, a part of the building Matt has studiously ignored. He knows now that there is a check-in desk and he assumes you have to go through there to get a room but he stays happily over in his own little world, enjoying the steady pay and nice tips that come his way.

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Reid looks up as Mel slips into his office. He admires her red tailored suit and her black patent Christian Louboutin pumps. "You look hot tonight, Mel. Something I should know?" he asks with a wide smile.

"I may or may not have a date tonight," Mel says slyly. "Are you saying I don't look hot on a regular basis?"

Reid shakes his head and leans back in his chair. "Leave it to you to turn my compliment into a slight. And I was just about to offer to let you leave early this evening for your date."

"You'll let me leave early?" Mel teases. "I seem to recall being the one who makes the schedule around here."

"Yes, and you never leave early whenever I'm not here to take care of things. You see, I know a few of your secrets, too, love," counters Reid.

"Now that I've got things running smoothly again I'm comfortable leaving you in charge again," Mel says.

"Thanks for the vote of confidence." Reid sighs and looks back down at one of the reports on his desk.

"Now, now," Mel teases. "You know I love you."

"At least give me credit for being smart enough to hire you," he says as he looks up and smiles again. "And our new bartender. He's working out fine, isn't he?"

"Yes, I do have to give you credit for that. He knows his stuff. Looks a bit like a deer in the headlights on occasion with some of the things that go on but I'm happy with him. And you've managed to keep your hands off, which is utterly surprising. Not that I think he'd go for that. Boy's straight if you ask me."

Reid's head jerks up and he looks at Mel as if she has just grown another head. "What?"

"Really? You can't see it?" she asks.

"See what?" he sputters, needing to know what Mel thinks she knows.
"The way he winks and flirts with the women. He is polite and steady with the men. I know you picked him because he's your type, I just don't think you are his type." Mel loves seeing Reid back on his heels like this and she can't resist poking just a bit. "Maybe I'm more his type."

Reid shakes his head vehemently, unable to form a cohesive sentence. "No. You're wrong. No. Just... no."

Mel just smiles. "Am I going to have to find you another plaything to distract you from that one? I assumed the last one would keep you interested longer than he did."

"Mel..." Reid practically growls. "Can't you like more than one pair of your shoes at the same time?"

"Of course I can. But I can only wear one at a time," she says. "And anyway, you need to keep your hands off him. That's sexual harassment."

"Only if he doesn't like it," Reid replies too quickly.

Mel shakes her head. "I really don't want to have to find another bartender. Please don't make him quit, okay?" She pulls out her phone, intending to check the time.

"It's time for you to go," Reid says as he gets to his feet. "And I need a drink so I think I'll just check in on our newest employee."

"Look. Don't touch," Mel says, shaking her finger at Reid. "Or you'll be in charge of the bar until I get someone hired."

"Yeah, yeah." Reid gives her a dismissive wave as he walks by her. "Have fun tonight!" he says over his shoulder before he disappears out the door.

Mel sighs and watches him go, already mentally composing a new wanted ad for a bartender.

Reid walks into the bar and smiles when he sees Matt. His newest employee has his back turned at the moment while he washes some glasses. There are only two clients at a table in the corner, apparently deep in their private conversation. Reid approaches quietly, taking advantage of this opportunity to admire Matt's slim build from a different vantage point.

Matt turns the glasses out onto a clean towel and then wipes his hands on the one tucked into his black half-apron. He can feel a pair of eyes on the back of his neck, a trait learned through years of customers wandering up to the bar and he spins around, only to find Mr. Reid standing there. "Hello," he stammers.

"Hello, Matt," Reid says softly, secretly loving the fact that he's startled his new bartender.

"Can I get you a drink Mr. Reid?" Matt asks. It's the first time he's seen the owner in the bar and he wonders what's brought him here tonight.

"Yes. A Sazerac," Reid replies as he takes a seat on one of the tall stools at the bar.

"Of course, Sir." Matt mentally kicks himself, realizing he should have known what he'd ask for. He turns his back, reaching up on the shelf that sits atop the mirror that runs the length of the bar, pulling down the bottles he'll need. Most of the typical stuff he's got out at his station but this is the first call he's had for these.

"So..." Reid's head tilts as he watches Matt reaching for what he needs to make his drink. "How's
the new job treating you?” he asks as he continues to observe Matt's every move while the young man makes his drink.

"So far so good," Matt says, concentrating on what he's doing, but still able to make small talk. "I appreciate the opportunity, and my roommates thank you as I'm no longer the deadbeat who can't pay his share of the rent."

"Your roommates, you say?" he asks casually, wanting to know more about this young man who has caught his eye. Needing to know that Mel is wrong in her suspicions.

"Yes. Or flatmates I guess as you'd say here. I have two of them actually, blokes I met while I was here studying abroad." Matt's hands move deftly across the glasses and bottles as the drink comes together.

"Blokes. That's sounds very British," Reid smiles. "So your roommates are..." he hesitates, hearing Mel's warning about sexual harassment ringing in his ear. "Just friends of yours?"

"Yeah," Matt says, not picking up on Reid's meaning. "We got along so well when I was here that they were happy to take me in when I first arrived back. But friendship only goes so far when you aren't pulling your weight on the bills." He hands the drink across the bar and holds his breath, hoping it meets the other man's approval.

Reid takes a slow sip of the drink, letting the whiskey coat his palate as it's chased by the hint of bitters and herbsaint. He lowers his glass and gives Matt a wide smile. "Excellent."

"Thank you, Sir," Matt says, biting his lip to keep from grinning.

Reid's eyes go immediately to Matt's mouth, wishing he was the one biting that beautiful lip. The thought to tell the young bartender to just call him "Reid" flashes through his brain, but he loves the sound of "Sir" when Matt says it, so he doesn't make that offer.

Matt returns the bottles to the top shelf, leaving them together in a group near the front in case he needs to make another. He's not sure whether he's happy that the bar is quiet at the moment, leaving him time to spend with the handsome owner, or whether he wishes it was busy so he didn't have to stand here and try to figure out what to say.

"You really are from New Orleans," Reid says, tilting his head and waiting for Matt to turn back around. He can sense that he is making the young man slightly nervous and it only adds fuel to the inner fire that's been burning since he first saw him at Robby's club.

"That I am," Matt smiles, feeling more at ease with a comfortable topic. "And I would assume you've at least visited, given your choice of drink."

"Yes," Reid nods, "I've spent some time there." He doesn't elaborate. He doesn't want to talk about himself. He wants to know more about Matt. "London is a long way from Louisiana. Do you get back home often?"

"I've been here about six months now... haven't had a chance to go home. Flights are expensive, I didn't have a job... you know how it goes. I'm not opposed to visiting home, it just hasn't worked out so far." Matt hopes that now that he has a steady income he might be able to swing it, which reminds him he needs to ask Melanie about how time off works around here.

"Anyone left behind who is missing you right now?" asks Reid, the question falls out of his mouth, unbidden.
"My family," Matt says, his heart aching when he thinks about it. But family dynamics and sad stories are not something he plans to get into with this man. "Some friends. But I'm slowly making new ones here."

"No girlfriend?" Reid prods; he has to know.

"No," Matt laughs with a shake of his head, again surprised by how Mr. Reid can zoom right in on things he prefers not to talk about. "Single and happy," he says.

"Not for long maybe." Reid smiles at the sound of Matt's laugh. "No short supply of beautiful women here in London."

"Many of them members of your club," Matt says, noncommittally. "I'm sure you have your choice of them all." Needing something to do with his hands he grabs his rag and starts to wipe down the already spotless bar.

"Women are not my preference," Reid says slowly, hoping the boy will look up at him again.

Matt is glad that he's looking down at the bar, he's not sure he could have hidden his surprise if he'd been looking Mr. Reid in the eye. "I apologize for the assumption, Sir."

Disappointed, Reid picks up his drink. "No need to apologize. Fortunately for me, there is no shortage of beautiful men in London either."

Breathing a sigh of relief that he doesn't seem to be offended, Matt mentally reprimands himself. "And again, no shortage of them in your club," he says, trying to smooth things over.

"Lucky me," Reid murmurs before taking the last sip of his drink. Realizing that he's getting nowhere fast with his latest objet du désir, Reid gives the young man a polite "Have a good evening" before leaving the bar.

Matt is surprised by Mr. Reid's quick departure. I bet I did offend him, he thinks with a sigh, clearing away the glass. He hopes that he'll get a chance to make amends.

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Mel hands over the room key with a smile, and then clacks away on the keyboard, entering all the pertinent details. She doesn't mind working the check-in desk, but she does have her shoes kicked off, not used to standing in her heels all day. There's no one waiting so she takes advantage of the lull to pull out some of her regular paperwork that has to be done, things that tend to fall by the wayside when she's pulling double duty.

"What are you doing up here?" Reid asks as he leans over the tall counter that surrounds the desk area, being nosy and looking at the papers that Mel has spread out.

"Rebecca is out. She's on her honeymoon, remember?" Mel knows that Reid isn't quite as in tune with the rhythms of the staff, but she thinks he should at least remember that much. "So I'm multitasking. Unless you want to generously volunteer to take on some of my work."

"Oh yeah," smiles Reid. "Did she like my gift? I hope she remembered to take it on the honeymoon," he ponders aloud, conveniently ignoring the remainder of what Mel said.

"I doubt she'd get that through airport security," Mel laughs, stacking her papers back up in their file, knowing that she won't get anything done as long as Reid is around.
"There's no one else to work the front then?" Reid asks, actually giving Mel a look of genuine interest in their workplace woes.

"It was easier to just do it myself for a week rather than trying to cross train someone else to work up here as well. And then we'd just end up short handed somewhere else." Mel cocks her head and looks sideways at Reid. "Not that you usually care when I'm running around like a maniac trying to keep this place under control."

Reid's expression morphs into a frowning pout as he covers his heart with his hand. "You wound me, Mel. Deeply. You know I care about this club. It's my baby."

"I know you do," Mel says. "And you know I do everything I can to take care of your baby, right?"

"Yes you do. You do an excellent job. I couldn't do it without you. But then, you know that too, don't you?"

"I do," Mel says sweetly. "Right down to making sure a steady stream of boys is at your fingertips whenever you get the urge."

Reid chuckles softly, remembering the way Mel had a boy ready and waiting for him when he returned from his last trip to the country. He remembers the dark-haired boy and smiles. He was a pleasant way to return home. "How long ago was that?" Reid asks in the midst of his pondering.

"Jason?" Mel says, making an intuitive guess about where Reid's thoughts have gone. "Almost a month ago now. I must say I thought he might be one you kept around. Evidently my instincts were off."

"No..." Reid shakes his head. "You're instincts are spot on. He... Jason. Was great. I've just been a little distracted lately."

"Really?" Mel says with a laugh. "I hadn't noticed," she says sarcastically. "What's odd though is that it's not a new boy you're distracted with. Usually I can peg these episodes to the arrival of a new toy for you, but not this time."

Reid gives his manager a smirk. "Maybe I'm maturing. Given my advanced age and all. It was bound to happen some time."

Mel snorts and shakes her head. "Careful who you call old. If you're old then I'm old too so you better watch it."

"How old are you, Mel?" Reid smiles. "I am 32," he grins, fully understanding the dangers of asking a women her age.

"I'm of the same era," Mel says, unwilling to give up the exact number. "Don't you know there are two things you never ask a lady?"

"Yeah," Reid's grin widens. "What's the other thing?"

"Who's on top in bed," she teases.

"Oh, I know that one!" he says assuredly. "My girl doesn't bottom for anyone!"

Mel laughs but then schools her features as a member approaches the desk. She waits on him quickly and professionally, getting everything set up. Once he's on his way she turns back to Reid. "So why don't you go find a boy to blow off steam with and leave me here in peace to get some
work done."

"Not in the mood," Reid says with a wave of his hand. "Want me to watch the front desk for you?" he asks as he looks over his shoulder and angles his head just right to be able to see inside the bar that is across the way.

"Not on your life," Mel says, knowing what the computer system would look like after Reid got his hands on it. "You go," she says, shooing him toward the bar.

Ignoring Mel's attempt to get rid of him, Reid turns back to her, his expression serious. "How's he doing? The new bartender?"

"Matt? Considering how you hired him, he's doing well. Took him a few days to stop looking scared that every person that came into the bar might pounce on him and do something kinky right then and there, but he's seemed to settle in. He's very technically proficient and so far I've had no complaints about his customer service."

The smile returns to Reid's face. "So not only is he doing a good job. You like him."

"I tolerate him," Mel says. Truth be told she does have a soft spot for Matt, she's just not willing to admit it out loud. "He has potential."

"My thoughts exactly..." Reid murmurs as he turns to look back toward the bar. He hasn't seen Matt in over a week and the lure of the temptation is getting stronger by the moment.

Mel cocks her head, trying to decide if she heard what she thinks she just did. She doesn't comment, keeping her thoughts to herself for now. Maybe Reid's distraction makes more sense than she initially thought. "Seriously. Go now," she says, shooing him away once more. "I need to work."

"Okay, okay," grumbles Reid as he looks back at her. "But give me Jason's number first. I think I will give him a call."

Mel arches her eyebrow but turns to the computer and taps a few keys. "Here you go," she says, jotting the number down on a post-it. "Anything else?" she asks, wondering if he'll ask for Matt's number too.

"No." Reid says the word firmly, more as an affirmation to himself than to Melanie.

"Okay. I'll see you later," she says, her smile just a bit softer than normal. Reid is not himself, and she hopes for both their sake that he gets things figured out soon.
Chapter 5

Reid exits his office and walks down the hallway toward the front of the club. He rolls his shoulders as he walks. He's holding tension there; he can feel it. Odd. Maybe he should have called Jason instead of changing his mind. A workout with a talented boy would take care of that tension in no time.

Who are you trying to fool?

His own sarcastic voice is loud in his head. Reid is tense because he is constantly distracted with thoughts of a beautiful boy with dark blond hair and blue/green eyes. No matter what he does to distract himself, thoughts of Matt seem to creep back into his mind. The other boy, Jason, had been great. An excellent sub. So willing and so sexy. So why didn't he call him?

So why do you keep thinking of Matt?

Reid stops in his tracks, standing in the middle of the long hallway. He suddenly wants a drink. Yet he’s hesitating to go into his own bar and order one because of the young man who is now working there.

"Fuck that!" he says affirmatively, then looks around in the hopes that no one has overheard him talking to himself. Reid starts walking again, taking long strides as he hurries toward the bar. His bar!

Matt just happens to be looking toward the entrance when he sees the owner come in. There is purpose in his stride and his jaw is set. He looks like a man who needs a drink. Matt turns and reaches for the bottles on the shelf, automatically starting on the Sazerac that he knows Mr. Reid will order.

"Hello, Matt," Reid says politely as he approaches the counter. "I'd like a drink..."

Matt holds up one finger, urging him to wait just one more second. He swirls the glass and transfers the drink over, then pushes it across the bar. "Here you go, Sir," he says with a smile, hoping that whatever has darkened the owner's mood will be helped with his favorite drink.

Reid eyes the freshly made Sazerac then looks at Matt, a slow smile coming to his face. "Thank you," he says quietly before taking a healthy swallow. "Perfect." Reid continues to stare at Matt as he croons the word.

"Thanks," Matt says, gathering the bottles to return them to the shelves. He notices with a frown that the bottle of Herbsaint is almost empty. Most likely the stock boy was too lazy to check all the rarely used bottles up on the shelf. "Been that kind of day?" he asks.

"What?" asks Reid, not realizing what Matt is referring to at first. "Oh... yes. Is it that obvious?" he smiles.

"Bartender's intuition, Matt says with a smile. "Lots of practice. But yeah, it shows."

"Sorry," Reid tilts his head in apology as he takes another drink. "I'm sure it comes as no surprise to discover that your boss is not perfect," he gives Matt a teasing smirk.

"Who is?" Matt grins. He's starting to feel more comfortable talking to Mr. Reid, the piercing blue eyes now seeming friendly, not like they are trying to bore right through him.
"You are perfect." Reid keeps that thought to himself as he drains his glass then pushes the empty across the counter toward Matt. "I think one more will improve my mood completely."

"Certainly, Sir," Matt says. He pulls the bottles back down, realizing that Mr. Reid's mood is even worse than he feared... he's never ordered more than one drink. He can feel the owner's eyes on him as he works, draining the last drop of the Herbsaint to finish the drink.

"You make the best Sazerac that I've ever drank," compliments Reid when Matt hands him his second drink.

"How many bartenders have you hired that you didn't have to teach to do it?" he teases, blushing slightly at the compliment. "Obviously your stock boy doesn't know what you drink, he's let the bottle run dry," he says, shaking the empty.

Reid looks at the empty bottle and shakes his head. "Can't have that," he murmurs. "Come on, I'll show you the supply room where we keep the liquor." Reid picks up his drink and gestures for Matt to follow him.

"Oh, you don't need to do that, I'm sure I can get someone to show me," Matt says, even as he trails after Mr. Reid.

"It's on the second floor. And it's locked," Reid explains. "Let's take the stairs," he says as he opens the door to the stairwell. Reid quickly climbs the flight of steps and waits for Matt in the door. "It's over there," he points to another door, retrieving a ring of keys from his pocket as he moves closer. "We keep the top-shelf liquor and some of the more expensive items in here," he tells Matt as he opens the door to the small shelf-filled room and flicks on the light switch.

Matt nods and steps into the small space, barely larger than a closet. He immediately starts to scan the shelves, looking for the distinctive bottle. He spots it near the back, and pulls over a small stool so he can reach up to the highest shelf.

"No, wait..." Reid tells him, releasing the door to the store room so that he can set his drink on the edge of a shelf. "Let me get that for you. I don't know how sturdy that stool is." Reid trades places with Matt, pressing close as he squeezes by him.

Matt swallows hard. While his eyes had told him that the other man filled out a suit nicely, the experience of being pressed up against him is something else entirely. He's completely solid and warm, and he smells amazing. Snap out of it, he admonishes himself, stepping back to give Mr. Reid room, just as the door closes with a thump.

"Here you are," smiles Reid as he hands Matt the bottle of Herbsaint. "Do you think you need anything else while we're here?" he adds softly, his own voice sounding loud in the confined space.

"No, the bar is generally well stocked," Matt says, taking the bottle. "I'm sure they just missed this one." The last thing he wants is the other employees mad at him, so he keeps anything else he might want to say to himself.

"All right. If you're sure..." Reid says slowly, not particularly in a hurry to leave the tiny space of the closet since he has Matt so close and alone.

The space seems even smaller now with the door closed. Matt feels warm, and he's not sure if it's the room or the effect Mr. Reid is having on him. "I'm sure, Sir," he says, his voice a bit breathless.

"I have a confession," Reid whispers, his body thrumming with the ache to touch the other man.
"A confession?" Matt asks, studying the shadows that the single overhead light throw across the other man's face.

"I was going to tell you that you can just call me Reid, but I really like it when you call me 'Sir'," he tells Matt, a slow smile curving his lips.

"Oh," Matt says, and then repeats a softer "oh," when he processes what Reid means.

Reid chuckles softly when it's obvious that he has rendered the young man speechless by revealing his secret. "Don't worry, Matt. I won't bite you." He steps back, making room for Matt. "Not unless you beg," Reid adds quietly when Matt starts to move by him.

"I should go," Matt says, stammering slightly. "Back to the bar I mean. There's no one out there."
He can feel his heart pounding in his chest, the room closing in on him further as Reid's words affect him in ways he can't even process right now. He reaches for the doorknob and turns it forcefully, only to have it come right off in his hand.

Unable to see what's happened and curious as to why Matt isn't making his exit, Reid steps closer. "Not quite ready to leave yet after all?" he asks.

"No, just wondering if this was a set-up right from the start," Matt says, holding up the broken knob. He can feel the head of the other man right behind him so he doesn't move.

"What?" Reid leans over, spying the door knob in Matt's hand. He looks at the place on the door where the knob should be and then back at the knob that Matt is holding. "Bloody hell..." Reid sighs. "Mel is going to fucking kill me."

"Please tell me we get phone reception in here," Matt says, leaning down and peering out of the hole in the door. "I'm guessing there's not much traffic in this hallway." In a way he's glad for this crisis, it's taken his mind off what Reid said to him.

"I don't know, I've never called anyone from this particular closet," Reid replies. "But it's worth a try," he adds as he looks expectantly at Matt.

"Why are you looking at me? Melanie bans cell phones from all employees. No chance of pictures that way so she says." Matt looks expectantly back at Reid.

"Why are you looking at me? I don't take pictures with my phone!" He reaches for Matt's hand to take the door knob from him.

"Because I thought maybe you would have your phone. I didn't think she could ban the owner from having a phone." Matt hands over the knob and then puts his hands on his hips.

"My phone is on my desk. I didn't think I would be needing it just to have a drink," Reid says patiently, but his expression belies his calm demeanor.

Matt closes his eyes, trying to stay calm. "So... now what?" he asks, hoping the plan doesn't involve anything that Reid had whispered in his ear.

"Switch places with me, let me see if I can fix it," Reid tells him. He steps aside, making room for Matt.

Matt squeezes by him, holding his breath as they touch once again. His heart is still racing, and his skin seems extra sensitive.
Kneeling down in front of the door, Reid attempts to reconnect the separated knob with the door. As careful as he is trying to be, nothing is working and with a sigh of resignation, he stands back up. "It's not working. Maybe if I had some kind of tool?" Reid looks around the small space and sees nothing but bottles.

"I could make you a drink," Matt says wryly, trying to lighten the mood.

"I have one, thanks," Reid replies with a smile, reaching past Matt to get his drink from where he put it earlier. "Care for some?" he offers, holding the glass out to Matt.

"No thank you, Sir," Matt says and then immediately blushes when he realizes what he's said.

Reid takes a slow sip, admiring the bashful look on Matt's face and the soft flush on his skin. "Don't be embarrassed," he says softly. "What I said earlier... I meant it as a compliment."

"That's what I'm afraid of," Matt whispers, surprised that the words slip out. He unconsciously takes a step back, putting as much space between them as he can.

For the first time in a very long time, Reid feels like a full-fledged cad. Matt's a good employee and now he will probably quit as soon as he can get out of this closet because Reid can't keep his wicked thoughts to himself. "Matt... I owe you an apology. I shouldn't have said what I did earlier. It was inappropriate and I regret that I've made you feel uncomfortable."

Matt exhales. He can hear how sorry Reid is, and he of all people knows how sometimes things come out of your mouth that shouldn't. "I understand, Si... Reid. We can just forget this all happened. As soon as we get out of this damn closet."

"Yeah. Well, while I'm apologizing..." Reid runs his hand back through his hair and sighs. "It's my fault we are stuck in here. Mel asked me weeks ago to see to this door and I didn't quite get around to it."

"The truth comes out," Matt says. "Do you lure all the unsuspecting new bartenders back here?"

"No. Only the ones that I want to see me make a complete and total ass of myself," smiles Reid.

Reid's smile and words make him feel slightly more at ease. "So now what?" Matt asks. "We just have to hope someone happens to miss us and comes looking?"

"We could yell? Not sure if anyone else is on this floor right now though," Reid suggests.

"Yeah, I'm not sure how effective that would be," Matt says, looking up at the ceiling for possible escape routes. "How long before someone complains that the bartender isn't around? Will Melanie think I quit without telling anyone?"

"Maybe. But don't worry about Mel. She won't blame you," Reid tells him. "I'm the one she'll point the finger at," he adds quietly before he takes a sips of his drink. "You really do make an excellent Sazerac." Reid smiles before setting his glass down again.

"I've had lots of practice," Matt says. "I'm lucky you didn't ask for something hard that day you met me. I probably wouldn't have this job. Of course, I wouldn't be locked in a closet either," he says, finally cracking a smile.

"Yeah, the closet thing is a perk," Reid jokes. "We'll lock you in the cellar for your Christmas bonus."
"Looking forward to it," Matt teases back. He sighs and sits down on the stool, realizing they might be here awhile. "So as owner, if you don't plan to get your doorknobs fixed, might you consider installing a phone or intercom system in your storage areas?"

"Good suggestion. It's your timing for the suggestion that needs a little work." Reid gives him a teasing smirk. "So... when you do get out of here..." His voice trails off, unable to complete his inquiry.

"Glad to hear you say when, not if," Matt says, filling the silence that stretches when Reid doesn't finish his sentence.

Reid smiles again, admiring Matt's clever comeback. "Are you going to quit?" he asks quietly. Matt can see the other man genuinely concerned, so he doesn't joke. "No," he says, just as quietly. "I need this job."

"Good," Reid sighs, visibly relieved with Matt's answer. "You're doing a good job. And Mel likes you."

"Really? Some days I wonder if she's just tolerating me." Matt leans back against the shelf, relaxing somewhat. The tension in the room seems to have dissipated, leaving just the physical closeness in the small room.

"The fact that she tolerates you means that she likes you," Reid explains with a soft chuckle. "She's the heart of this place. Keeps it ticking."

"How long have you known each other?" Matt asks.

"Eight years. She worked at a club where I was a member, before I opened my own club. I stole her away as soon as I knew that I'd be opening R.A.C.K."

"So you're both... in the lifestyle?" Matt says and then wishes he could take it back, knowing that's probably over the line.

"Yes. But never together," Reid is quick to add. "I love Mel. But I am not attracted to women."

Matt processes that information silently, flashing back to things Reid said earlier. "She's a good manager," he says finally. "Really has her shit together."

"That she does." Reid nods his head. Another reason we could never be together. We're both dominants.

"In fact I'm a bit surprised that she hasn't managed to just magically sense that there's trouble. She seems to have that sixth sense about things around here," Matt says, smiling up at Reid.

"Maybe she does know?" Reid laughs and shakes his head. "If it were just me in here, maybe. I wouldn't put it past her to let me sit for a while since I didn't obey her command about repairing the lock." He reaches for his drink again, taking another sip. "Can't see her doing that to you though."

"Good to know. Don't want to be punished for your sins," Matt laughs.

Reid stares at Matt for a moment, enjoying the sound of his laugh and gauging his mood. "So what does our resident bartender do when he's not here at the club mixing drinks?" he asks evenly.

Matt is a little surprised at the change in subject but goes with it, not wanting to disrupt the easy
mood that's settled between them. "Not a lot actually, I'm afraid I'm quite boring. Probably born a bit out of being poor for the last new months, maybe I'll develop some more exciting habits now that I'm gainfully employed."

"I'll tell you one of my hobbies, if you'll tell me one of yours first," Reid challenges. Matt is not very forthcoming with any information about himself, but Reid is determined. If he can't touch the boy then maybe he can at least know a little more about him.

Matt is silent for a moment. He's sure there are plenty of Reid's hobbies that he wants to know nothing about. However he knows it's in his best interest to stay friendly with him, and he has to admit, he's enjoying getting to study the other man up close like this. "I like to go shopping for old books," he says finally. "Can't afford to buy anything fancy like first editions, but I like treasure hunting through crowded, dusty, used book stores just to see what I might find.

Reid feels victorious with the other man's concession. "I like horseback riding. Not dressage or competition riding. Just normal riding." He smiles again. "Who's your favorite author?" he asks, building on the momentum of their conversation.

"Are you looking for a serious answer, or all the cliches of England's greatest hits that you'd expect someone who majored in British Literature to rattle off?" Matt asks with a sly smile.

"Serious answer. If you can't choose one, then tell me all of them." Reid shifts his position in their confined space, stretching his legs a bit.

"Agatha Christie," he says, watching to see what Reid's reaction will be. He's used to getting laughs of disbelief, so he steels himself for that response.

"So you prefer a good mystery?" Reid muses aloud.

"I like a good story," Matt counters. "Intrigue, plot twists, I want it to hold my interest. It doesn't have to be a mystery."

"Do you write yourself?" asks Reid.

Matt shakes his finger at Reid. "Now, now. That's three in a row for you, it's my turn."

"Of course," Reid bows his head and smiles. "I've been known to read on occasion. Ian Fleming. I like all the movies, too."

"So who is your favorite Bond?" The question is cliche but Matt can't resist asking.

"Sean Connery," Reid grins.

"Interesting choice." Matt stretches his legs out in front of him as far as he can, trying to keep them from stiffening up in the cramped space.

"Why interesting?" Reid asks as he shifts, taking care not to crowd Matt after the earlier incident.

"I think a man's choice in Bond says a lot about him," he says, smiling up at Reid. "But what it says exactly is my little secret." He likes teasing the other man like this, and hopes his boss has a sense of humor.

"A secret? And there's nothing I can do to convince you to share it with me?" Reid asks quietly as he stares at him, drinking in the young man's mischievous smile.
"Someone once told me that discretion was a very important part of my job. I've taken that advice to heart," Matt says, pretending to be serious before breaking into a huge grin.

Reid laughs softly. "Discretion doesn't necessarily mean that you shouldn't share at all. I think it depends on the type of secret."

Matt thinks that over for a moment. "So some secrets aren't really secret?" he asks.

"Yes." Reid catches himself staring again and makes himself look away. He clears his throat, the sound breaking the quiet in the small space.

Matt can feel the earlier tension between them start to creep back in. He's not sure what caused the shift but he instinctively pulls his legs back in, wrapping his arms around his knees and hugging them up to his chest.

Reid starts to say something when he's interrupted by the sound of a knock on the door and Mel's voice asking if there is anyone in the closet. He instinctively looks at Matt before he replies. "Yes! And we would like to get out now if it's not too much trouble!"

Mel tugs on the handle to the door, wondering why on earth Reid is in the closet, and exactly who "we" is. The handle comes off in her hand. "The doorknob is broken!", she shouts through the door.

Reid rolls his eyes and sighs. "Yes, Mel, I know. That is why we are in here instead of out there. With you," he says in a relatively calm voice.

"We?" Mel asks. "I don't suppose you've just solved the mystery of my missing bartender?" She leans down, trying to peer through the whole where the doorknob used to be.

"Can't get one by you," Reid murmurs, gesturing to Matt for him to say something to Mel.

"Hello Melanie," Matt says, his cheeks flushing with embarrassment. He hopes the manager doesn't think he got himself into this by goofing off with Reid when he should have been working.

Mel sighs. "Matt, did Reid tell you before or after you were in the closet that he was supposed to get this door fixed?"

"After!" Reid yells through the door, realizing that his response does not vindicate him in the slightest.

Mel shakes her head. "Really Reid?" she mutters under her breath. She's known Matt is Reid's type but she hadn't predicted he'd make such a blatant play during working hours. "I'll go find a screwdriver. Maybe we can take the door off it's hinges."

"We'll be right here. Waiting for you," Reid replies, knowing for certain that he will have some explaining to do when they finally manage to get out. He looks at Matt and smiles. "At least they know where we are now. It shouldn't be much longer," Reid adds, trying in some way to reassure the other man that he won't have to spend much more time alone with him.

"I should ask Melanie for hazard pay," Matt says, pulling himself to his feet using one of the shelves for balance. He can hear the manager's heels clicking down the hall and he, like Reid, has no doubt she'll have this all solved in a matter of minutes.

"Hazard Pay? Ouch," Reid says as he rubs the back of his neck, the tension there now ten times worse than before he walked into the bar. "I suppose I deserve that, but that doesn't lessen the
sting."

Matt realizes he's overstepped, Reid is after all in charge here and he should have paid more
deference to him. "I'm sorry," he says softly.

"No worries," is Reid's stiff response, now just as anxious to get out and away from this closet.

Matt steps back, trying to put as much distance as he can between them. He could kick himself for
pushing too far, already missing the easy rapport that had flowed between them.

"All right you two," Mel calls out as she returns, armed with a screwdriver. "You both better be
decent when this door opens." She sets to work on the hinges, making quick work of them and the
lifts the door up and out.

Reid hurries out of the storage room to help Mel with the heavy door. He leans it against the wall
then looks at her as if to say that now is not the time for the reprimand that he knows is inevitable.

Mel recognizes the look and considers ignoring it, but finally thinks better of it. "Matt," she says,
studiously ignoring Reid. "I hope you aren't too traumatized by all this." The last thing I need is for
him to quit. she thinks, resisting the urge to glare at Reid.

"No, I'm fine," Matt says, his cheeks still stained pink. He quickly loads up his arms with the liquor
bottles that got them into this mess in the first place. "I'm so sorry I left the bar unattended. I know
it's completely unacceptable."

"None of this was his fault, Mel. The blame lies completely with me," Reid says quietly.

Mel lays her hand lightly on Reid's arm, letting him know she hears what he's said. "Nothing to
worry about, Matt," she says. "There's actually no customers out there at the moment so I'm sure
no one even realized you were gone." She smiles, trying to reassure the young man who is looking
a bit skittish.

Matt nods and ducks his head, practically running down the hall back towards the bar. He'll need
time to figure out exactly how he feels about everything that just happened, and he hopes he can at
least finish his shift without any more mishaps.

Mel watches Matt until he turns the corner and then spins around to give Reid the eye. "Really?"
she says, one eyebrow arched. "While he's on the clock?"

"It's not what it looks like, Mel. "He was out of Herbsaint and I was just showing him where the
supply closet is. I forgot about the door," he admits quietly. "It closed behind us and when Matt
tried to open it, the knob came off in his hand."

"You expect me to believe there were no ulterior motives in play?" Mel asks, her head tilted
slightly as she tries to read Reid's expression. There's something off but she can't put her finger on
it. "You've had eyes on him since you first found him."

"No motives. It was an accident, pure and simple." Reid steps back into the storage room to
retrieve his glass. He hands it to Mel. "Would you mind returning this to the bar?"

"If you say so," Mel says after a long pause, taking the glass. She knows her friend isn't being
completely truthful but she decides to let it go. "Get that door taken care of, I'm not comfortable
leaving that stuff out in the open like that," she says before heading on down the hall.

Reid shakes his head as Mel walks away. If only she knew, Mel has nothing to be worried about.
It's obvious that Matt couldn't be any less interested in him. Reid takes one last look at the stock room before he heads downstairs to call a locksmith.
Chapter 6

Matt carefully slices up some lemons. He always leaves this part of his prep for last, finding something soothing about the rhythm of it all. Once the garnish tray is full he dumps his cutting board and knife into some soapy water, right on time for the bar to open. There is never anyone beating down the door for a drink the moment the bar is open, but he still prefers to get there early enough to get everything done, rather than rush around trying to prep while making drinks.

"Hello, Matt," Mel says as she approaches the bar, her smile friendly but professional as always. She looks over his shoulder to see that everything is ready and waiting for the nightly customers. Her smile widens just a bit as she silently appreciates how efficient their new bartender has turned out to be.

"Hey Melanie," Matt says, pleased to see that the manager seems to be holding no ill will toward him since the close escapade a few days ago. "Can I fix you a drink?"

"No thanks," she shakes her head. "Not while I'm working." Mel ends her comment there, not wanting to cast any aspersions on Reid who does indulge now and then.

"Understandable," Matt says with a smile. "Well, you are welcome to sit and chat, even if you don't drink," he says with a conspiratorial whisper. "I won't report you for violation of bar rules."

Mel looks around then slides onto a bar stool. "Maybe for a moment," she says lightly. "I suppose a ginger ale wouldn't hurt. Do you have ginger ale?"

"Of course I do," Matt says, pulling down a glass. "On the rocks?"

"Yes, please." Mel's smile expands to a grin. "And a cherry. Or two."

Matt fills the glass with ice and the adds the ginger ale. He tops it with two cherries and slides it across the bar with a flourish. "So what brings you here tonight?" he says, in his best cheesy bartender voice, just barely managing not to laugh.

"Oh, the usual. You know how it is," Mel answers, playing along before she takes a sip of her drink. "Very nice," she says politely. "And how are you?" She adds, looking at Matt as if evaluating him. "I haven't had a chance to speak with you since the storage closet incident last week."

"I'm fully recovered," Matt laughs. "No lasting ill effects. But I left a note for the stock boy to double check the top shelf stuff so I don't have to risk going back there again."

"Going back there with Reid?" Mel asks, casually prodding for more information since her employer has been conspicuously closed-mouthed about the whole thing.

"Well, actually it probably would have been worse to be stuck there alone. Then I'd really think no one would ever find me. I figured that if the owner went missing that would definitely be worth a search party. A missing bartender? You'd have just hired in a new one before my body started to smell."

Mel blinks in response to Matt’s answer then starts to laugh. "You're funny. Body started to smell..."

"Funny, but true," Matt says with a wink. "So tell me the truth, is that some newbie hazing kind of
thing? Does he do that to all the new guys?"

"Actually... no." Mel takes another sip of her ginger ale, considering whether or not to proceed down this path. She decides to let Matt be her guide. "But you have some... concerns?" she asks brightly, almost too brightly.

Matt pauses, trying to read into Melanie's tone. "No," he says finally. "No concerns. I was just curious."

"Really?" asks Mel, leaning forward in her seat. "Because you've done so well. You've only been here a month and it's as if it's all old hat to you already. Except for the storage closet thing."

"Do your new hires usually run away screaming before that?" Matt asks, only half teasing. While Reid had been correct that the bar was really just like any other bar, the conversations he's overheard have been anything but normal.

Mel's eyes widen. Run away screaming?! "What happened in the closet?" she blurts out, suddenly deciding the direct route is best after all.

Matt is a bit taken aback, surprised by the abrupt question. "What?" he asks. "We went in for some Herbsaint and the door knob broke."

"And..." Mel leans forward a little more.

"And?" Matt parrots. "And you found us and let us out?" He's not sure where Melanie is going with this, unless there really is a history of this happening before.

Mel pushes back in her seat then calmly reaches for her drink. "Of course that's all that happened," she chirps, her bright tone of voice returning.

Matt narrows his eyes as he looks at Melanie. "Why do I get the feeling there is something you aren't telling me?"

Mel peers over her glass of ginger ale, her mental calculator busy at work again. "Reid felt terrible about the closet," she says quietly. "And I know that isn't it, Matt thinks. "I could tell," Matt says. "But I also couldn't help but feel like there was more to all of that," he says, taking a gamble that he might find out more about Reid.

"I don't want you to get the wrong impression of Reid," Mel says carefully. "He's not that guy."

"That guy?" Matt asks, tracing a finger across the bar. He hopes Melanie will go on, but he also can tell that Melanie isn't one to spill secrets.

"The kind of guy who would try and take advantage of a situation. Especially a situation that involves the club," Mel explains.

Matt nods, trying to show that he understands. It doesn't nearly satisfy his curiosity, but he'll take what he can get. "So you're saying I'm safe, he won't make a move on me?" he says, trying to lighten the mood.

"He's never made a move on an employee before..." replies Mel. "Are you worried that he will?"

"No," Matt says quickly. Just wondering if I'm his type, he thinks. He's sure his cheeks are getting red so he tries to finish up that line of conversation. "I'm sure that's against the rules anyway."
"Yeah well, Reid is *that* guy. Mel slips off the bar stool as a smile returns to her face. "The guy who doesn't always play by the rules."

"Good to know." He's not sure if it's a warning, but he takes it as such. "I'll be on the watch for any attempts to lure me into enclosed spaces."

"Probably a good rule to have." Melanie nods in agreement. "Have a good night, Matt! And thanks for the drink."

"Anytime," Matt says, clearing away her glass.

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Reid comes through the front door of the club and stops at the front desk to speak to the young woman who is on duty. When he finishes, he hurries past the bar, mentally reminding himself not to look for any adorable bartenders who might be working in there tonight.

Matt sees Reid breeze by, and he looks quickly around the bar. There are a few customers here and there but everyone looks settled so he risks making a quick trip down the hall. He's been watching for the owner for days now, hoping he'd come to the bar but no such luck so far. Now he has to take matters into his own hands. He winds his way down the back hallways, hoping he remembers the way to Reid's office.

Reid leaves the door to the office open so he doesn't notice at first when Matt appears in the doorway. Surprised when the person who he has been thinking about suddenly appears, Reid just stands there and doesn't say a word.

"You are a hard man to find," Matt says by way of opening.

Reid remembers to smile as he proceeds into the office. "Am I? I guess I didn't realize since I always know where I am."

Matt smiles, despite himself but then forces a serious expression back on his face. "I have something to return to you."

Rounding the desk, Reid gives the young bartender a questioning look. "And what would that be?" he asks as he sits down in his chair.

Matt pulls a small card out of his pocket, holding it up. "Consider this hazard pay," he says, reading off the card. "I didn't even feel comfortable leaving that book anywhere but my locker, it's so valuable. Far too valuable for me to keep in fact."

"You don't like the book?" Reid's expression becomes even more confused. "I thought she was your favorite author?"

"She is," Matt says, sinking down into the chair across the desk. "But a first edition Agatha Christie is hardly an appropriate 'sorry I got you locked in a closet' gift."

Reid stares at Matt, his blue eyes narrowing. "Locking you in a closet is not the only thing that required an apology."

Matt looks inquisitively at Reid, the intensity of his stare enough to take his breath away. "How so?"

"If it has truly slipped your mind as to why I owe you an apology then I would be a fool to remind
your. Reid leans back in his chair. "And I believe my dignity has suffered enough on that particular subject already."

"You have nothing to apologize for," Matt says honestly, his fingers toying with the card.

Reed's gaze drops to the card in Matt's hand. "I'm glad you feel that way."

"Will you be around all evening? I can get that book for you out of my locker before I leave."

Following Reid's gaze to his hands he forces them to be still, self-conscious that they might betray his nervousness.

"You don't like the book?" asks Reid, completely ignoring Matt's question. "It's old," he points out as he recalls what the other man told him about liking old books.

"It is. What I like about old books is that I can get them on the cheap. This one is definitely not cheap." Once again Matt finds it infuriating the way Reid just ignores some things and fixates on others.

"Oh, so you only like cheap old books?" Reid swivels his chair slowly back and forth, his eyes never leaving Matt.

"No," Matt says, shaking his head. "But accepting a gift like that..." he says, looking away as Reid's stare becomes too much to bear. "It's inappropriate," he says.

"In what way?" asks Reid as he stops swiveling his chair.

Matt shifts in his chair, trying to formulate an answer to the question that won't make it obvious what he's feeling. "That's not the type of gift you get an employee you've known for such a short time," he says finally.

Reid begins to laugh as he starts to remember some of the things he has given as gifts over the years. As the owner of a fetish club, he has given some rather creative items, and yet none of those were ever returned as "inappropriate".

Matt blushed, embarrassed that Reid is laughing at him. "I need to get back to the bar. As I said, if you are still here I'll be sure to return the book before I leave." He stands up and turns toward the door.

"Sit down, Matt," Reid orders, using the same tone of voice he uses as a Dom.

Something about Reid's voice tells Matt he should comply, and he finds himself back in the chair before he even realizes what he's doing. "I need to get back to work," he repeats, finding that his mind still works, even if his body seems to be doing Reid's bidding rather than his own.

"I heard you. But right now I want you to listen to me," Reid says firmly. "It seems you think the book that I gave you means something more than I intended. I gave it to you as apology for my inappropriate comments and completely without expectation." He visibly relaxes again and his voice softens. "It is my hope that you will accept the book and let bygones be bygones."

Matt's fingers grasp the arms of the chair tightly and he finally nods, realizing that Reid will not acquiesce on this point. "As I said, there was nothing to apologize for. But thank you for the book," he says. "May I go now?"

"Yes, you may go," Reid says softly. He's irresistibly drawn by the stubborn set of Matt's chin. Could he ever get him to beg for anything?
Matt gets back up and hurries toward the door lest Reid order him to stay yet again. He's halfway down the hall when he realizes he's left his card behind but he doesn't dare go back.

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Mel walks into the bar, not surprised to see that it is as busy as the rest of the club has been tonight. She waits for Matt to finish serving the customers who are waiting.

"Hiya," Mel says cheerfully, good business always putting her in a good mood. "Thought I would pop in and get your receipts to start early on the balancing for tonight."

"Hey Melanie," Matt says with a broad smile. He's found himself growing quite fond of the blonde manager, finding her bark far worse than her bite. "Let me run them for you." He punches the code on the register to let it start churning out the totals and quickly throws together a ginger ale with two cherries. "Have a drink on the house," he says with a laugh. "Am I allowed to authorize that?"

"Absolutely!" Mel grins widely as she accepts her drink. She loves the way that Matt always calls her Melanie. It makes her feel more feminine than the usually barked-out "Mel!" that she hears from others at the club. The fact that the young bartender is adorably cute is not exactly a hardship either.

"It's crazy in here tonight," he says, glancing around. "Probably the busiest night since I started."

"It is," Mel nods. "Every room booked. I actually had to turn some drop by customers away tonight. I can't remember that ever happening before." She takes another sip of her ginger ale as the receipts continue to print. "But I'm ready for tonight to be over," Mel adds with a smile as she thinks of the bubble bath that awaits her at her flat.

"I'm with you on that," Matt says. He collects some empty glasses that a customer deposits on the bar and then grabs the printout as it finishes up. "Here you go," he says with a smile.

"Thanks, love." She says as she takes the totals. "Big plans this weekend?" Mel asks as she glances at the figures.

"I've got a hot date," Matt says and then laughs at Melanie's expression.

Mel is surprised. Matt doesn't usually share much information about himself. Never one to miss an opportunity, she plunges ahead. "That's great! Who's the lucky girl?"

"He's actually just a friend of a friend," Matt says casually, swiping his rag across the bar where the empty glasses left rings.

"He..." Mel repeats softly, not even realizing.

Matt doesn't say anything, enjoying throwing the inscrutable Melanie off her game. He takes care of a customer, leaving his manager to sort through what he's just revealed. He's a little surprised he shared, usually believing that the more professional you can keep your work relationships the better.

"I should go," Mel gestures, pointing over her shoulder toward the exit. "You know, and get totaling. Have a good rest of your night," she smiles.

"Okay," Matt laughs. "See you around," he says giving her a wave goodbye.

Mel walks toward the office, her mind still on Matt's revelation. I hope Reid doesn't find out... She
walks into the office and straight into Reid. "Oh! Hello!" Mel says cheerfully, much too cheerfully.

"Mel..." Reid says as he buffers the collision by putting his hands on her shoulders. "You okay?" He gives her a curious look.

"Just fine," Mel says, the smile still pasted to her face. "Just getting a head start on the books tonight. It's a little crazy out there."

Reid looks down at the paper in Mel's hand. "Are those receipts from the bar? Want me to help you total them?"

Mel shoots him a look. "No, I'd rather just do it right the first time."

"Fine," Reid scowls. "You know, you'd be in trouble if I was really as worthless as you seem to think I am."

"Awww, such the pouty face," Mel says, brushing by him and taking a seat at the desk. "Go have your favorite bartender make you a drink. Quick. Before he leaves."

"Now you're just being cruel," Reid tells her before sinking into one of the overstuffed chairs in front of his desk.

"You know I love you," Mel says, spreading the papers out across the large desk.

"And yet you don't even give me credit for trying," he points out, crossing his long legs and settling in.

Mel turns to the computer, pulling up the accounting program. "Oh, you get credit," Mel says. "Just not as much credit as you seem to think you deserve just for being handsome and charming."

Reid frowns at the back of Mel's head. "Handsome and charming don't seem to be helping me at all in this situation." His frown deepens when Mel doesn't say anything, obviously engrossed in her task. "You really haven't noticed the way that I have been staying away from him? I know he's straight and rather sensitive on some subjects..." Reid recalls last week when Matt tried to return his gift. "But I think I've been very well behaved."

"Staying away from him?" Mel murmurs as she traces her finger across the page, entering the numbers. "Why do I get the feeling that will never work?"

"What won't work?" asks Reid. "It's been working?"

Mel glances over her shoulder, eyebrow raised. "I've seen you skulking around outside the bar, trying to look at him without being seen," she says before returning to your task. "He's got a date tonight anyway," she mutters, punching in more numbers.

Reid scowls, tossing mental daggers at Melanie from behind her back. "Way to twist the knife, Mel. You just love rubbing it in that he isn't even gay, don't you?"

"Date's with a guy, bonehead." The words slip out before she even realizes it and she quickly claps her hand over her mouth and swivels around in her chair. "I did NOT just tell you that." She tries to blame it on being distracted, but she knows it's still her fault.

Reid's eyes widen then a slow smile begins to spread across his face. Without a word to Mel, he hops out of the chair and he's out of the office in a flash. A moment later, Reid enters the bar, slightly breathless from his sprint down the hallway. "Matt," he says to get the bartender's
At the sound of his name, Matt turns from the customer he's talking to and finds Reid at the end of the bar. He raises his hand in greeting but then finishes up with the customer. He hasn't seen the owner in a few days, not since the night he tried to return the book.

Forced to wait patiently for his turn, Reid thinks about what he is going to say to Matt. That particular detail wasn't foremost in his thought process during his attempt to break a world record for the 10 meter dash.

Matt makes sure to check on each of his customers on his way down the bar before finally arriving at Reid's side. "The usual?" he asks, already reaching for the bottles.

"No. I don't want a drink," Reid tells him. "I want to talk to you."

"Oh," Matt says, his hand frozen on the bottle. He'd hoped that things had smoothed over after he'd agreed to accept the book, but now he has a flash of worry that Reid is going to fire him.

"I just wanted to apologize." Reid keeps his voice low so that no one nearby can hear him as he talks to Matt. "Last week, when you tried to return the book and I laughed. I know that offended you."

"What?" Matt says, trying to process. Reid doesn't speak to him for days and then he runs in here like he's on a mission only to apologize for a part of the conversation he doesn't even remember? "No problem," he finally says with a shake of his head. "It's not a big deal."

"It is to me. And I'd like to tell you why if you'll hear me out." Reid glances around the bar, finding it far too full for the kind of conversation he wants to have with Matt. "Come with me," he tells Matt. "It will only take a moment."

"I can't," Matt says, gesturing at the full bar. "It's one thing to step away when it's empty in here but we're packed."

"They all have a drink and you'll be back in time to pour them another when they need it. Now come," Reid says firmly.

Matt sighs, knowing Reid is not going to give up. "Fine." He trails after Reid into the hall, determined to keep this short.

Guiding Matt into a nearby alcove, Reid doesn't waste any more time. "I've been doing my best to stay away from you," he confesses, his stare holding Matt's gaze as he looks up at him. "The book was a sincere apology. Given with no expectations, yet you try and return it. The laugh was not aimed at you. It was my poorly timed response to my own frustration." Reid takes a step closer, his voice softer. "Do you understand?"

"We've been through this already," Matt says. "I agreed to keep the gift, and I honestly don't even remember the laugh, he says truthfully. "So all is forgiven. Now if you'll excuse me, I need to get back to work."

Deflated by Matt's indifference, Reid steps aside. He doesn't say anything else because he feels certain that the young man doesn't want to hear it.

Matt is a little surprised that Reid looks as if he's just going to let him go. He pauses for a moment longer than necessary, just in case, but then turns and walks back to the bar, trying to work out his conflicted feelings about his boss.
Reid watches Matt return to his spot behind the bar then turns back toward the office. His pace is much slower on the return, his hopes no longer high. Reid opens the door and sees Mel still at his desk. Without a word to her, he reclaims his seat in the comfortable chair.

Mel glances up from the reports, intending to keep working, but when the look on Reid's face registers with her she puts down her pen. "So, obviously that didn't go the way you expected."

"Not even close," Reid replies quietly. "He doesn't want anything to do with me."

Mel sighs, leaning back in the chair and crossing her legs. "So because he's gay he should automatically fall at your feet the first time you glance his way?" She knows exactly what the issue is but she's curious to see if Reid can come around to it on his own.

"It's never been a problem before," Reid says honestly, no arrogance in his tone.

"Who's the last person you had sex with?" Mel asks directly, not pulling any punches.

Reid sighs, resting his head in his hand as he leans against the back of his chair. "Jason. That boy you arranged for me. Why?"

"And before Jason?" Mel asks, pressing the point.

"Uh... the French boy..." Reid looks to Mel for help to remember his name and sees the disapproval in her expression. "Andre Luc, Or Luc Andre."

"Luc," Mel says with a shake of her head. "Shall I go on here or are you starting to see a pattern?"

"So you know my type. That's been well established. What's wrong with liking attractive boys?" asks Reid.

Mel has to physically restrain herself from whacking her forehead against the desk. "You have no fucking clue how to 'date' someone. I bring you submissive boys and serve them to you on a silver platter, eager to please and no need for formalities. That is not going to work in the real world!"

Reid sits quietly, staring at Mel as he absorbs her critique. "What works in the real world?"

Mel can't help but laugh. "You look like I just kicked your puppy. The first thing you have to do is eliminate the notion that just because someone is gay that you are their type. Granted you are devastatingly handsome," she says with a wink, "but different strokes for different folks. Maybe he prefers scrawny redheads, or nerdy towheads, it's hard to tell. You have to get to know him... let him know you are interested, but without pushing too hard or expecting it to happen in an instant. What did you think would happen? I let it slip that he's gay and you ran out of here like you planned to have him in your bed before I finished the reports! Things don't work that way in the real world."

"No offense, Mel, but that's the way it's worked until him. He's different," Reid says. "Maybe that's it though. He's just not attracted to me. I am not his type even if he is my type."

"I think it's too early to tell. He's an employee after all, lectured to about discretion, he probably wouldn't even dream of dating his boss." Mel can see Reid's face fall but she knows this is for his own good. "And then add in the lifestyle issues? No wonder he isn't just falling at your feet."

"I know, I know. Stay away from him. He's a good bartender and you don't want him to quit. I get it," Reid growls.
"I didn't say that," Mel says softly, standing up and walking around the desk to lay her hand on Reid's arm. "I'm saying go slow, be patient, and be willing to walk away if he says no."

"You don't seem to understand. This is slow for me. I bought him a gift! An expensive gift. All he wanted was to return it to me as fast as he could. He's already said no."

"Exactly," Mel says, giving Reid's arm a squeeze and then leaning back in her chair. "You don't say "I'm sorry," to an acquaintance of a few weeks by dropping a few grand on a present."

"How do you know how much I spent?" Reid looks at her suspiciously.

"You left the receipt on the desk." Mel feels bad for Reid, even though she knows this tough love is exactly what he needs.

Reid sighs again. "Okay. So for the sake of argument, what should I do now?"

Mel crosses her arms, pondering the best approach. "I think you ask him out to lunch or to tea. Tell him that you know that you might have come on a little strong but you'd like to get to know him better. Feel him out, learn more about him. He's not going to open up to you about his love life just by you demanding an answer. He's not a sub you can order around."

"What if he says no?" asks Reid, the thought of another refusal making him scowl again.

"Then you have to accept that," Mel says, knowing even as she says it that Reid will never take no for an answer.

"I'm going to ask him then. To lunch or tea or whatever," Reid tells her. "Are you going to have a problem with that?"

"I will if you plan to do it during his work hours," Mel laughs. "I already have enough problems with you luring him off into the corners while he's here."

Reid smiles. "I can't help myself. Have you noticed how beautiful he is?"

"He's beautiful," Mel agrees. "But he's also smart, and it seems he has a good head on his shoulders. You need to respect that."

"I do," Reid says quickly. "I know he's different, Mel. But I have to try. You get that, right?"

Mel smiles. "I do." She keeps the rest of her hopes to herself. Could it be that Reid might finally settle down? Or at least aspire to settle down?

"Meanwhile, he has a date..." Reid starts to frown again. "Can't you see if he can work an extra shift or something so he can't make that date?"

"Stop it," Mel laughs. "To tell you the truth he didn't seem all that enthused about it, my guess is that you'll still have a chance come morning."

"Is tomorrow too soon to ask him to lunch or do I need to wait?" asks Reid, still not quite believing that he is asking for advice about dating.

Mel glances at her watch. "Well considering he gets off work in about two minutes, and he'll be hightailing it out of here tonight, my guess is you won't get a chance to ask him before lunch tomorrow. Maybe shoot for the day after?"

Reid nods despite the thoughts firing through his brain. The dominant side of him wants nothing
more than to take Matt into a playroom and restrain him there until he agrees to be with him, but he knows that Mel is right and that it won't work that way with the young bartender.

"Maybe you can take me to lunch tomorrow as repayment for this little therapy session," Mel teases.

"I'll take you out to the place of your choice, if he accepts my invitation." Reid looks at her with a giant grin. "You really think I'm devastatingly handsome?"

"That's the takeaway from that whole conversation?" Mel asks, exasperated.

"No, no..." Reid shakes his head. "Take it slow. And if he says no, he says no. I got it."

"Good."

Mel takes a long look at Reid, hoping that he's telling the truth and her advice has at least given him some food for thought if not a plan of action. "Now unless you plan to help me with this, you need to shoo," she says, motioning him out of the office.

"Shoo?" Reid slowly gets to his feet, eyeing Mel contemptuously. "I'm going. But I will NOT 'shoo',' he says firmly as he opens the door to leave.

"If you aren't 'shooing' then what exactly are you doing?" Mel asks sweetly.

"Like I said, I'm going. Leaving like the man that I am," he tells her. "See you tomorrow," are Reid's parting words before he closes the door behind him.

"See you tomorrow," Mel says to the closed door before turning back to her work.

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It's been four days since Reid's attempt to get Matt's attention. He has followed Mel's advice and he's stayed away from the boy that he desperately wants to know better, but that ends now. Reid walks into the bar area and despite being the owner of the club, he's grateful to find it empty except for the young man behind the counter.

"Hello, Matt," he says with a friendly smile, decidedly ignoring the unsettled feeling in the pit of his stomach.

Matt spins around, startled because he didn't hear anyone come in. "Hello, Reid," he says with a smile, surprised to see the owner standing there. He hadn't seem him in days and once again had the suspicion that the other man was avoiding him. "Your usual?" he asks.

"No. Thank you," replies Reid. "I wanted to ask you something. While you're not busy..."

Matt's hand had reached for a glass out of habit but he puts it back, choosing instead to wrap his fingers around the edge of the bar. "Sure," he says, trying not to sound surprised.

"I'd like to take you to lunch tomorrow," Reid says steadily, bracing himself for Matt's refusal.

Tilting his head slightly, Matt has to play that back to himself to be sure he heard what he thought he heard. "Lunch?" Matt asks and then wants to kick himself for sounding so stupid. "Any particular occasion?" he asks.

Reid looks perplexed, surprised by Matt's question when he'd prepared for a refusal. "Occasion..." he repeats the word as though he's never heard it before now.

Matt smiles, surprised to see the normally composed man slightly flustered. "Just curious," Matt
"The question came out of the blue so I wondered if there was something I didn't know."

"No. Just lunch. Some time away from the club, a nice meal..." Reid hopes this honesty stuff works because he's beginning to wonder.

"That sounds fun," Matt says, his fingers relaxing some. "Did you have somewhere in mind?" He hopes that this isn't some ploy to deliver bad news, like yet another one of his jobs going down the tubes, but he trusts his instincts that this is something else entirely.

"Yes. A favorite of mine. Nothing fancy, but good food," Reid replies. "So would you like to meet here or I can pick you up if you prefer?"

"I can meet you here, or at the restaurant, whatever is easiest for you." Matt can feel some tension from Reid so he's not sure how to respond, hoping he's choosing the right path.

"Let's meet here then I can drive us." Reid smiles, feeling lighter already. "Good," he says with a nod. "I'll see you tomorrow then?"

"What time?" Matt asks, knowing lunch can mean a variety of things to different people, especially those that keep the kind of hours they do.

"Oh... is 11:30 all right?" Reid was so happy with the answer, he wasn't thinking about the details.

"11:30 is fine," Matt agrees, already thinking ahead to the fact that he'll just bring his work things with him and save himself a trip home before his shift starts.

"Good," Reid says again. "Tomorrow at 11:30," he says with another nod. "See you then."

Matt smiles and nods, thinking that of all the things he's heard and seen since starting this job this encounter might rank right up there at the top as the oddest.

The swagger returns to Reid's walk as he heads down the hallway. "I have a date tomorrow at 11:30!" he says quietly to himself.

Matt shakes his head and goes back to work, trying to figure out what just happened.

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Reid takes the back stairs and enters the club through the back. He walks toward the front desk, a happy smile on his face and a spring in his step. He unlocks the front door and steps outside just in time to see Matt walking up. Reid's smile widens impossibly as he admires how great the young man looks in his dark purple sweater with a black scarf wrapped around his neck.

"Hello," he says in greeting as he pulls the door closed and locks it. "Perfect timing. I just walked down." Reid is dressed more casual than usual for their lunch date - jeans, a white oxford shirt and black leather jacket.

"Walked down? Were you getting some work in?" Matt can't help but smile at the way Reid looks at him and he knows the effort he spent changing three times to find the perfect outfit was well spent. Reid looks good too, his usual suits hiding what a hard athletic body he really has.

"No..." Reid looks upward, pointing in that direction. "I live on the top floor of the building," he explains.

"Oh," Matt says, digesting that fact. "So you never really get away then." He tugs on his scarf
nervously, never sure what to do with his hands when he doesn't have a drink to fix.

"Sure I do," Reid smiles, catching the subtle fidgeting Matt does with his scarf. He wonders if he is making him nervous already. "I'm getting away with you today, right?" asks Reid.

"That's one way of looking at it I suppose," Matt says. "Where are we getting away to?"

"I'd like to take you to one of my favorite pubs, The Dove. It's in Hammersmith, on the river. Great view of the Thames." Reid steps closer. "How does that sound?"

"Wow," Matt says, noticing Reid's advance. "Sounds fancy. Am I dressed appropriately?" He's not sure just what circles Reid moves in, but anything with a view of the river is bound to be a bit upscale.

"You look great," Reid says appreciatively. "It's casual. Classic pub." He points to the car lot across the street. "My car's over there."

Matt follows the line of Reid's finger, and out of three possibilities he has a gut feeling that the shiny green Jaguar sports car is the one. R.A.C.K. must being quite profitable, he thinks to himself. "Nice car," he says with an impressed nod.

"Thank you," Reid grins proudly as he unlocks the door to his car. He opens the passenger side door for Matt and waits for him to get inside.

Matt has wondered just how "date like" this invitation to lunch was, and Reid opening the door for him seals the deal. He slides into the plush interior and allows himself a brief moment of "oh my god, I'm on a date with my boss" panic as Reid walks around to the driver's side.

Reid slides in behind the wheel. "Let me know if you get cold. Convertibles are great, but not in cooler weather," he says as he starts the car. "I like autumn though," Reid adds with a smile as he backs out of his parking space then turns onto the street. "This place has seating outside."

"I'm dressed for it. Outside is fine if you are up for it. I rather like not being squeezed in all together." Matt takes advantage of Reid having to look at the road and stares at the other man, taking in his chiseled profile.

"Great. Better view of the river from outside." Reid handles the small sports car easily in the busy London traffic and it's only a short while until he is parking the car again, this time in a pay-and-display car park down the street from the pub.

Matt debates for a moment but then gets out of the car on his own, not letting Reid hustle around and open it for him. "I don't know that I've ever been in this area before," he says, looking around.

"Good. I get to show you something that you haven't seen." Reid smiles as he pays the parking machine then points down the block as he starts walking that way. "This place has been here a long time. As in centuries. And they have a great burger."

"I like a great hamburger so I think we're in luck," Matt smile. He's enjoying the outside of work Reid, finding him much more relaxed.

"Good. They have salads and things like that, too. I was hedging my bets in case you were a vegetarian or a vegan or the like." They reach the door to the pub and Reid pulls it open, allowing Matt to enter first. It's early lunch time and not too crowded yet. Reid asks the hostess if the outside seating is available and it is so she leads them to a table on the deck which overlooks the river.
Matt gawks at his surroundings, Reid having sold the place short by saying it had "a view." The river seems close enough to reach out and touch. "Outside was definitely the right choice," he says with a smile.

"And I don't know if you drink..." Reid laughs softly. "There's a lot I don't know about you, Matt," he smiles at the beautiful young man sitting on the other side of the table. "But if you like beer, they have some fine ales here."

"I enjoy being a man of mystery, stranger in a strange land, all of that," Matt says with a sly smile. "But I have to work after this so I'll pass on the beer this time." Maybe if this goes well we can go out for drinks after work, he thinks.

"Here you are on your best behavior and I'm being a bad influence. Mel tells me all the time that I'm a hedonist and there's no hope for me." Reid sets his menu aside and enjoys the view. The river is nice, but Matt's smile is the best thing he's seen all day.

"Well, even though you asked me to lunch, you're still my boss. I need to behave," Matt says, finally picking up his menu. "So the cheeseburger is the thing?"

"It is good, but honestly, I've never had anything that I didn't like here," Reid answers. "And Matt..." he hesitates, hoping he isn't breaking Mel's "go slow" rule. "I'd rather be just Reid than your boss. Just for lunch. If that's all right with you?"

Matt nods, fingers fidgeting with his napkin. "I'll try, but it's pretty hard to just forget that little fact."

"Understandable," Reid shrugs, still smiling. "But trying is good." The waitress arrives to take their order. Reid defers politely to Matt for his selection first.

Matt orders the burger, smiling at Reid over the top of his menu as he does so. He tops it with chorizo and cheddar and sticks to his word of no beer.

Reid orders the burger with mushrooms and Manchego cheese. He passes on a glass of his favorite ale, thinking it rude to drink when Matt is abstaining. "I'll be a good boy, too," Reid chuckles softly when the waitress leaves.

"There's no need for that," Matt laughs. "Because I know that's just an act."

"You see right through me," admits Reid, smiling at Matt and wanting more than anything to reach across the table and trace the boy's smiling lips with his finger.

Matt holds Reid's gaze as long as he can, but he flinches first, his eyes flicking down toward the table. His cheeks are flushed from more than just the brisk air.

"So..." Reid breaks their silence. "How long have you been in London?" he asks, casually leaning back in his chair.

"Which time?" Matt asks with a laugh, managing to look back up. "I studied here last fall term. I went back home until I graduated in May and then moved back here in July. So all together around... eight months or so?"

"You must like it. To keep coming back," Reid grins.

"It definitely has it's appeal," Matt says, staring right at Reid as he utters that phrase.
The phrase "Paybacks are hell." flits through Reid's mind as he shifts in his seat. Matt's stare is making him wonderfully uncomfortable. The slow pace that he's determined to keep might yet be the end of him. "So what are your plans now that you've graduated? More studying?"

"Whoa, I think I just had a flashback to every conversation with my parents for the last six months," Matt laughs. He tries not to let on that Reid has stumbled across a sore point. "I'm young, in a fabulous city, and just trying to enjoy life. That's enough for me."

"Sorry, no judgments here, I swear." Reid holds up his hand and smiles. "I just know that you're smart and hard-working and I can't hope to keep you forever..." His smile widens with a private thought. "As a bartender."

Matt knows that if he truly hopes to make it as a writer there will be years of work at jobs just like this one, but he doesn't share that fact with Reid. "And you?" he asks, trying to deflect. "I'm not sure that owning a fetish club makes an appearance on the list of things people want to do when they grow up."

"On the contrary. R.A.C.K. is my dream come true. Do I really look like a man who is unhappy with his career choices?" Reid counters with a relaxed smile.

"Not unhappy, just wondering if that's what you'd always aspired to," Matt says, trying to backtrack.

"It is for now. Later... who knows? The club was an aspiration and I've been fortunate enough to be able to make it happen. Like you, I'm just enjoying life and taking it one day at a time."

Matt is saved from his embarrassment by the waiter appearing with their drinks. He waits for Reid to continue on, having discovered that it's safer not to ask his own questions.

Reid takes a sip of his drink and sets it down. "How was your date the other night?" he asks casually.

Matt about chokes on his water but manages to keep composed. "It was fine." The last thing he expected to be talking about with Reid today was dates with other men. "I'll have to remember that Mel can't keep a secret."

Reid pushes a napkin across the table toward Matt. "She must have not realized it was a secret." He smiles at Matt. "Why is it a secret?"

"Well, maybe secret isn't the right word." Matt says, trying to smile. "Maybe she just needs to have more discretion," he says, remembering their talk the first night at the club.

"Do you want to tell her that or should I?" Reid resigns himself to pulling back again. The boy is nothing if not a good deflector.

Matt holds his hands up in defensive pose. "I'd never," he laughs. "I'm a bit afraid of her to tell the truth."

"I understand. I'm afraid of her sometimes, too," Reid admits with a grin.

"I'll keep your secret," Matt says, in an exaggerated, conspiratorial whisper.

"You're good at that, right? That's why you won't tell me about your date?" Reid tries again.

Matt is surprised that Reid turns the conversation back to that topic. He finds it a bit odd that Reid
wants to talk about other men like that while they are on a date. "I don't kiss and tell," he says finally, his eyes searching the other man's face for an explanation.

Reid tilts his head, smiling back at Matt. "You can't blame a guy for being curious about his competition."

"Competition?" Matt blurts out before he can stop himself. "So this is a game to you?" As soon as the words are out he wishes he could take them back. He's not normally this rude, but Reid has him completely off balance.

"It's not a game." Reid's smile vanishes, wondering if he'll ever be able to get out of his own way when it comes to Matt.

"I'm on a date with you," Matt says, worried about Reid's expression. "I don't want to talk or think about other guys, okay? I want to think about you." He hopes that smooths things over, but Reid is nothing but unpredictable.

Encouraged by Matt's words, Reid nods his head in agreement. "You're right. I'm sorry. No talking about other guys. Guess I need to work on that discretion thing a bit more."

"Can I ask something a bit... forward?" Matt ask, leaning closer.

"Of course. I think you owe me a few," says Reid.

Matt hesitates for just a moment and then forges ahead, hoping it doesn't mean the end of things that haven't even had a chance to start. "I'm getting the sense that you don't date much."

Reid sighs, disappointed that he couldn't pull it off past the very first date. "Well, not in the traditional sense of the word. No. Was it really that obvious?"

"A little," Matt says with a soft smile. He sits back and tugs his scarf tighter around his neck, unconsciously. "So is your jump back into the dating pool for any particular reason?"

Despite Mel's warnings ringing in his ears, Reid opts for honesty and a direct answer. "Yes. Only one reason. You."

"Oh," Matt says and then falls silent as he digests that piece of information. There are lots of questions he wants to ask, but he's not entirely sure he wants to know the answers.

Matt's silence is not the reaction he was expecting or hoping for, but he can't say that he hasn't been warned.

"So meeting me caused you to want to date again?" Matt asks, even though that's what Reid basically just said, and then a terrible thought occurs to him. "You didn't like... dump someone for me, did you?"

"No. I see people. But no single relationship," answers Reid. "And that's what I was trying to find out about you as well. To see if you already have someone you are involved with."

"Oh," Matt says, relieved that there is finally a straightforward question. "No, I don't have a boyfriend," he says. "Next time just say what you mean," he grins.

Reid starts to tell him that he's only just found out that Matt is gay, but the waitress arrives with their cheeseburgers. "They are even bigger than I remember," he comments, reaching for a knife to cut the enormous burger in half.
"We probably could have shared one," Matt agrees. "Unless you aren't a chorizo kinda guy."

"No, I like it. I like spicy foods. That's one of the things I like most about New Orleans. The food," Reid tells him before taking a bite of his cheeseburger.

Matt smiles. He's been hoping that Reid would open up more about that. "When was the last time you visited?"

"Last year. March," replies Reid. "I gained seven pounds before I made it back to London," he laughs.

"Well, let me know before you head back and I can give you a list that will ensure you gain at least ten," Matt says before biting into his burger. He moans softly as the flavors explode across his tongue. "That's amazing," he says after he's chewed.

"I'm glad you like it," Reid says quietly, lingering in the sound of the moan Matt makes and hoping that it won't be the last time he hears the boy make a sensuous sound like that.

"So do you travel to New Orleans often?" Matt asks. "The city has a way of calling you back over and over again."

"Not as often as I'd like. I find it hard to stay away from the club for extended periods of time." Reid takes another bite out of his burger. He smiles when he's finished chewing. "I'm more responsible than I look."

"I'll keep that in mind," Matt says and then takes another bite. "So in the mean time I'll make you drinks that make you remember what it's like to be there."

"Works for me. You really do make the best Sazerac. These gin and tonic blokes have no idea what they've been missing."

"Now there's a drink I never really understood," Matt agrees. "The Sazerac is much more sophisticated. A reflection of those that drink them."

Reed goes still, his next bite of burger frozen half way to his mouth, a slow smile working its way across his lips.

Matt winks at him and then takes a sip of water.

"That's not really fair, is it?" asks Reid, still smiling at Matt.

"What's not fair?" Matt asks innocently.

"You being adorable when I'm supposed to be on my best behavior." The boy really has no idea of the effect that he's having on him or he wouldn't play with fire this way.

"Best behavior?" Matt asks, slightly worried about what that means. He doesn't address the "adorable" part, but he definitely heard it.

"No grabbing you and snogging you until that extremely attractive blush returns to your cheeks," explains Reid.

Matt couldn't stop the blush if he tried, but he's pretty sure Reid won't leap across the table and tackle him right here and now. "And why exactly are you on your best behavior?"

"There it is," Reid says when Matt blushes, softly teasing. "I'm trying not to scare you away before
we have the chance to get to know one another. Your first impressions of me..." He shrugs. "I don't get the feeling that they've been good ones."

"They weren't... bad," Matt says, picking at his burger. "I just didn't really know what to make of you."

"Will you go out with me again?" Reid asks him.

"It's not exactly customary to ask someone on a second date before you've even finished the first," Matt says, Reid's eagerness causing him to smile. "Should I chalk that up to your rustiness at this?"

"Yes, that sounds like a good reason. I'm a lot of things, but customary isn't one of them," Reid answers with a chuckle. "Do I get extra points for eagerness?"

"I'll consider it." Matt says, quickly adding "the extra points part that is," when he sees Reid's face fall. "I think the second date is pretty much a given."

"Excellent," Reid says as his smile returns. "Maybe I will get better at this with more practice."

"We'll just have to see," Matt laughs. He pushes his plate away, half his burger still there untouched. "This was amazing, but I'm absolutely stuffed."

"Next time, we'll split one," Reid says, filled with new found confidence that he and Matt will be dating soon.

"Maybe on a non-work day next time so we can sample some of their pints," Matt says, leaning back in his chair.

"Definitely." Reid glances at his watch when Matt mentions work. He doesn't want their first date to end, but he doesn't want Matt to be late to work either. Reid is determined to prove to Mel that his involvement with Matt won't be a problem because they work together. "It's almost time for me to take you back," he says, looking over at Matt. "But you know I don't want to, right?"

"I do. But this was a good first date," Matt says. "You always want a public place and a defined time limit just in case things don't go well, right?" he teases.

"Wow, you're really good at this dating thing. I feel smarter already," says Reid. The waitress brings the check and Reid puts the cash in the folder, leaving a generous tip. He takes another sip of his water then gets to his feet and waits for Matt.

"Thank you for lunch," Matt says, laying his folded napkin on the table and getting to his feet. He pauses for a moment for a last look out over the river before turning back to look at Reid.

"You're welcome. I'm glad you agreed to come," Reid says softly.

"Me too." Matt winds his way back through the restaurant and back out onto the street. He finds himself walking slower than normal toward the car, unconsciously wanting to prolong his time with Reid. "Are you working tonight too?" He's never really figured out Reid's schedule, but he supposes that's a perk of being the owner.

"Yes, I told Mel that I'd be around tonight to help her with things," replies Reid. They walk down the block toward the car park. "I might come by the bar, but I'll try not to be too much of a distraction," he teases.

"I'll hold you to that," Matt laughs though he knows Reid can't be responsible for just how
distracted Matt is just from his mere presence.

When they get to the car, Reid steps around to the passenger side with Matt. He unlocks the car door but pauses before opening it. Moving closer, Reid runs his fingers along the soft scarf around Matt's neck. "I enjoyed our date. I wish it wasn't ending," he whispers.

"Me too," Matt agrees, wishing he had more eloquent words. "But luckily I've already agreed to a second so we know this isn't the end." He can feel the heat of Reid's body radiating against his and he leans closer.

Reid slips his hand around Matt's neck, gently pulling him in for a kiss. Matt tastes as good as Reid knew he would. His soft lips part for Reid and he deepens the kiss, losing even more of himself to his desire for this man.

The kiss seals the deal for Matt, as if he really truly had any doubt left. His body aches for Reid and if they weren't in public he'd be reaching for his clothes in a rush to get naked. He has to settle instead for resting his palms against Reid's chest, feeling the other man's heart race beneath his fingertips.

Breaking the kiss with a ragged breath, Reid covers one of Matt's hands with his and smiles down at him. "The best part of a first date," he smiles. He wants to kiss Matt again, but there would be no taking it slow if he did, so he takes a deep breath and tries to remember how to be a gentleman.

"Gives you something to look forward to on the second date, right?" Matt asks, completely breathless from the kiss.

Reid smiles then gently kisses the tip of Matt's nose. "I'm already looking forward to it so don't keep me waiting too long."
Chapter 7

Reid walks through the front door of the club, whistling a cheerful tune. He smiles at Mel as he passes, but he doesn't stop at the front desk.

"Whoa!" Mel says loudly. "Isn't that what you say to your horses when you want them to stop?" she asks as she comes around the desk.

"Yes," laughs Reid. "But last time I looked, I am not a horse."

"Well, get your ass back here, whatever you're called," Mel says, tilting her head as she examines the giant grin on her friend's face. "And spill it."

"A gentlemen doesn't kiss and tell," Reid says haughtily.

"Then it's a good thing you're not a gentleman. So. Tell. Me." Mel stares at Reid as she waits for him to start talking.

"Maybe I'm turning into a gentleman..." Reid starts then gives it up with a sigh. "All right. It was amazing. He is amazing."

Mel's eyes narrow with suspicion. "Who is amazing?" she asks warily, afraid she already knows the answer.

"Matt, of course. Who do you think I'm talking about?" Reid gives her a puzzled look.

"I was afraid you were going to say that," Mel says with a sigh. She points her finger at Reid sternly. "Don't fuck him over. He's a good employee and I don't want to lose him."

Recoiling from Mel's finger, Reid takes a step back. "Whoa, yourself! I thought you were on my side about this?"

"I'm on your side," Mel says, softening her look. "But strangely enough I'm finding myself on Matt's side, too. I like him. And I've seen how quickly you tire of your play toys."

"Matt's not a play toy," Reid replies, quick to the defense. "I like him, too. I like him a lot. That's why I am trying to do things differently with him. He's not in the lifestyle, Mel. And I don't care. I want him anyway."

Mel processes that information, studying Reid's face. "I've never seen you like this," she says finally. "It's rather odd."

"Oh, come on, Mel..." Reid looks away, embarrassed under Mel's scrutiny. He runs a hand back through his hair and chuckles softly. "I've asked you for tips on dating and actually followed them. Of course you've never seen me like this."

"Like an honest to goodness date?" Mel asks, stunned by Reid's admission. "I never thought you'd actually follow through with my advice," she teases.

"I took him out to lunch yesterday. Before his shift." Reid's smile widens at the memory of the kiss they shared by his car.

Mel raises her eyebrows and nods. "Where did you take him?"
"The Dove. We had cheeseburgers by the river. And even better, we talked," says Reid.

"I feel like a mama bird watching her baby grow up and leave the nest," Mel smiles proudly. "How did he respond? Positively, I'd guess, judging by the way you looked when you walked in here."

Reid immediately puffs up with pride. "He agreed to go on a second date with me."

"Excellent first step. And you kept your hands to yourself?" she asks, giving Reid a stare.

Reid's proud expression immediately changes to a guilty one. "Not exactly..."

"Not exactly?" Mel says, almost afraid to hear what Reid has to say.

"I kissed him," admits Reid. "But he kissed me back!"

"And that's all?" Mel asks, relieved. "That's what you are supposed to do on a first date!"

"Yeah?" Reid asks before he recoups. "Yeah!" he says a bit more assertively. "So I'm on track."

Mel can't help but laugh. "Yes, you're on track. You should go see him or call him sometime today. Just to tell him you enjoyed seeing him."

"Good idea!" Reid nods his approval. "And how many dates until I can have sex with him?" he asks, needing to know this vital information while Mel is being helpful.

"That's entirely up to him," Mel says, betting there's no way Reid will be able to hold out. "But I wouldn't get antsy until you get past five."

"Five? Really? That many?" Reid frowns at first, but then when he thinks about how much he enjoyed the time with Matt yesterday and suddenly five doesn't seem to be that much of a hardship. "I can do five," Reid says softly.

"Oh. My. God. Who are you and what have you done with Reid?" Mel asks, planting her hands playfully on her hips.

Reid rolls his eyes and smirks. "Can I go about my business now or is there any other extremely personal information that you need to know at this time?"

"You can go," Mel says, waving her hand in his direction. "But I expect a full report after date two," she smiles.

"Yes, Mistress." Reid bows low, his smirk still firmly in place.

Mel shakes her head and walks back behind the desk. "Now get out of my hair, some of us have to work around here."

Reid laughs as he straightens and continues his walk toward the office. In a few seconds, the sound of his soft whistling can be heard from down the hall.

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As he rounds the corner that leads into the bar area, Reid is smiling and whistling again. He's on his way to say hello to Matt and tell him what a great time he had on their second date last night. They'd had dinner at a posh restaurant and even lingered over a couple of drinks since Matt has the late shift tonight. More steamy kisses before he finally said goodnight to him and Reid is flying high with the hopes that Matt enjoyed himself as much as he did.
Reid doesn't see Matt behind the bar, but then he notices him standing near one of the tables. His eyes narrow when he sees that the man sitting at the table has his hands on Matt and it appears that his bartender is trying unsuccessfully to extricate himself from the man's firm hold. Reid makes a beeline to the table.

"Is there a problem here?" he asks, glaring at the customer as he tries to put himself between him and Matt. Startled, Matt looks up, not expecting to see Reid there.

"No problem," the other man says with a smile, but without releasing the hold he has on Matt's arm. Matt tries yet again to tug his arm away but the customer has a firm grip. While he's dealt with "hands-on" customers before, this one has turned particularly nasty after a few too many drinks.

"There will be a problem if you don't let him go," Reid says icily, placing himself between the two men and forcing the customer to give up the grip he has on Matt's arm. Matt jerks his arm back rubbing his fingers over what he's sure will be a bruise. His feet are rooted to the ground though, watching as Reid intervenes, with more force that he thinks is probably necessary.

"Hey!" The man protests as he starts to get to his feet. Reid takes hold of the customer's shoulder and shoves him back down into his chair. He notices that Matt has not moved from where he is standing behind him.

"I think you should get back behind the bar," Reid tells Matt over his shoulder without looking away from the man at the table. "And I think it is time for you to leave the club," he tells the customer who is now glaring at him.

Matt backs away slowly, his eyes locked on the other men like a car crash he can't look away from. He makes it back behind the bar and grabs the edge to steady himself.

Reid pulls the drunk customer to his feet and wastes no time in walking him to the front and out the door. He watches for a moment as the man staggers away then slams the door harder than he realizes. Reid is angry and he knows he needs to get somewhere alone and calm down before he says or does anything else that he will regret. He passes the bar without stopping or even looking at Matt and stalks down the long hallway toward his office.

Matt doesn't even realize he's holding his breath until after Reid passes the bar without even a second glance. He tries to pull himself together and get composed, but the fuss has left him a bit shaken. He knows it's his fault that Reid had to intervene, a good employee could have diffused the situation without the owner stepping in.

"How dare that bastard lay his hands on..." Reid stops in the middle of his office, mid-growl, when he realizes what he was about to say - not "our bartender", not "Matt" - he was going to say "my boy".

Trying to keep busy, Matt makes a few drinks and forces himself to make some small talk. He stewed over what just happened, trying to figure out how he can make things up to Reid.

Reid walks around his desk and sinks into the comfortable leather desk chair. He's just glad that Mel wasn't there to witness what he did to that customer. Not that she would have been able to stop him from protecting what he thinks of as his.

The traffic at the bar reaches a lull, quieting down after the disturbance. Matt makes a quick round, refilling drinks and checking in with his customers and letting them know he'll be going on break. As he walks back behind the bar he happens to glance up at the top shelf and he realizes what he
needs to do.

Sighing loudly, Reid leans back in his chair, slowly swiveling as he stares up at the ceiling. He's lost in his thoughts, his mind filled with images of what he could have done better tonight and also with what he could have done worse.

Cradling Reid's drink in his hand, Matt tentatively approaches the office and knocks softly on the partially closed door.

"Come!" Reid says loudly as he turns his chair around to see Matt walking into his office.

Matt holds out the drink, cringing slightly from Reid's rough tone. "I brought a peace offering."

Frowning at Matt, Reid is confused as he looks at the drink. "That wasn't necessary," he says quietly.

The conversation already taking a distinct turn from how he imagined it in his head, Matt steps forward, still holding the drink out for Reid to take. "I'm sorry," he says. "I handled that poorly and I promise to do better if it ever happens again."

Reid stands up slowly and reaches for the Sazerac in Matt's hand. "Why are you apologizing?" he asks softly as he looks into Matt's worried eyes. He takes the glass, spilling a little on Matt's hand. Reid takes hold of Matt's wrist before he can pull away, lifting the young man's hand to his mouth where he kisses away the drops of alcohol on Matt's skin. "None of that was your fault," he murmurs.

Matt's heart races, the feel of Reid's lips against his skin setting him on fire. "I created a situation that ended with you having to kick a paying customer out of the club," he says softly, trying to read the other man's emotions. There's definitely anger there but something else is simmering as an undercurrent, something he can't quite place.

"I don't blame you. I am the one who chose to make him leave. It was my decision and I don't regret it." Reid slowly releases Matt's hand then takes a sip of the drink that Matt made for him. "Perfect. As always," he tells him, a scant smile on his lips.

"It's not like I haven't dealt with customers like that before," Matt says, thinking about moving to the chair but deciding instead to stay right where he is.

"Why did he have his hands on you? What did he say?" asks Reid. His tone is steady, but obviously still irritated with the rude customer.

"Just stupid drunken stuff," Matt says, blushing as he recalls the conversation. "Like I said, things a bartender has to know how to handle, and I just let it get out of hand."

Reid takes a step closer, lifting his hand to brush it against the soft blush on Matt's cheek. "Stop blaming yourself," he warns softly. "It wasn't your fault."

"You aren't mad?" Matt asks, mesmerized by the feel of Reid's hand against his cheek.

"Not at you," replies Reed as he sets his drink on the desk. "I'm mad at the guy who had the nerve to put his hands on you. And I'm mad at the way it makes me feel to see it." He caresses Matt's cheek again then slips his hand to the back of his neck, pulling him closer. "Do you have any idea about the effect that you have on me?" Reid asks him.

"Tell me?" Matt says shyly, needing to hear the words that he hopes will confirm what he's feeling.
Reid smiles with Matt's request. "I've wanted you from the first moment that I saw you," he confesses. "And getting to know you has only made me want you that much more."

Matt is still a little wary about what exactly Reid might include in the idea of "wanting him", but the way he feels right now is enough to push that worry aside. "I want you too," he whispers.

Enfolding Matt in his arms, Reid captures his mouth in a hungry kiss, his fingers tangling in the hair at Matt's neck.

The tension Matt has carried since he first encountered the man in the bar finally drains out of his shoulders and he melts into Reid's arms. Reid is warm and solid and Matt feels like he belongs there.

Reid pulls back, smiling down at Matt. The young bartender looks even more delectable with kiss-swollen lips and eyes darkened with passion. "Don't go home tonight," he tells Matt. "Stay with me."

Matt only has to think about it for a moment. "I'd like that," he murmurs, meeting Reid's gaze.

Pulling Matt in for another kiss, Reid can't deny how much he wants him and tonight he won't have to.

Matt wants nothing more than to go upstairs right now, but he knows he has other obligations. "I should get back," he says when the kiss finally breaks. "Should I meet you back here later?"

"Yes. Come here when your shift is over. I'll wait for you," Reid tells him as he reluctantly loosens his hold on Matt.

Slowly backing away, Matt nods. "I'll see you soon," he says, not quite ready to turn away from Reid.

"Soon," Reid smiles softly. He wants to grab Matt and take him upstairs immediately, but he knows the young man is worth waiting for and so he will.

Matt manages to hide his grin until he's out of the office, but he practically skips down the hall as he heads back to the bar, his emotions a completely 180 since he came the other way.

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Reid keeps looking at his watch as if willing it to make time go by faster. To say he is anxious for the moment when Matt returns to him would be the understatement of the century. He tries to busy himself with some paperwork, but his mind keeps wandering to the way that Matt feels in his embrace and the headiness of his kisses.

Matt finishes the last of his clean-up and then hangs up his half apron. He washes his hands and fixes his hair in the mirror over the bar. He has to finally admit to himself that he's stalling, and he needs to just go. He flips off the last of the lights and then heads back toward the office, rapping lightly on the door jamb in case Reid is busy.

Instead of barking out his usually reply, Reid jumps to his feet and hurries to the door. He smiles widely as he reaches out to pull Matt inside the office and back into his arms. "You came," Reid says softly before giving Matt a kiss hello.

"You were worried?" Matt smiles, even though it had crossed his mind at least once just to go back to his own place.
"Yes," admits Reid. "I was afraid that you might start overthinking this and decide against getting involved with me."

Once again Reid has a uncanny way of knowing exactly what Matt is thinking. "I'd be lying if I didn't say I had some reservations," he says, "but I'm here and that's all that matters, right?"

Reid looks at the beautiful young man standing in front of him, seemingly as eager to be with him as he is to be with Matt. The opportunity that he's been waiting for, but he knows to agree with Matt about that being "all that matters" would be a lie.

"I'm glad you're here." Reid smiles wanly and chuckles. "You have no idea how glad that I am that you're here. But..." He takes a hold of Matt's upper arms. "It's not all that matters."

Matt didn't mean to upset Reid, and he looks up at the other man, trying to show that he does want to be here.

Reid wants to tell Matt how different he is from the other boys he's known. And not because they were in the lifestyle and Matt isn't, it's more than that. Reid is a different man with Matt, a better man in ways, but he realizes that this type of revelation may be too much for the young bartender. Matt may not be thinking of anything more long term than a few nights of fun and instead Reid finds himself willing to change in order to be whatever it is that Matt needs.

"Don't worry..." Reid caresses Matt's cheek, seeing the concern in his eyes. "I just didn't want you to have the wrong idea about me. About this. It's not just for the sex."

Matt turns his head so he can kiss Reid's hand. "Actually, I think it might be easier if it was just sex. So much less to worry about that way," Matt says, trying to lighten the mood.

"Then let's agree to leave any worries right here before we go upstairs. That way, it will be just you and me," Reid tells him, caressing Matt's lower lip with his thumb.

Matt nods his agreement. He can set aside his worries that he's not enough for Reid for the night, especially since his body already aches for the other man's touch.

"Good." Reid takes Matt's hand and leaves the the office. Thankfully, the hallway is clear and there is no sign of Mel or any of the other staff as Reid leads him up the back staircase toward his flat. He unlocks the door, pushing it open and stepping back for Matt to enter first. Reaching just inside the door, Reid flips the light switch and illuminates the large lounge area.

The apartment is spacious and open, the furniture modern and sparse. The space doesn't look "lived in," and Matt wonders briefly if this is a place where Reid just takes his hookups, not a place he actually lives. He pushes that aside, vowing not to worry about any of that tonight. "It's a good thing you own this place or your rent would be astronomical," he says with a smile.

"It is. Why pay rent when I own a building? You should have seen this place when I bought it." Reid shakes his head. "I thought the architect was a mad man, but he made it all work."

"And you can't beat the commute," Matt says, walking across the room to check out the view. "Or the view," he says, smiling back over his shoulder at Reid.

Reid walks up behind Matt and slips his arms around him, his lips close to his ear. "Would you believe me if I told you that you are the first guest I have had up here?"

"No," Matt says honestly, running his fingers over Reid's arm where it wraps around his waist.
Chuckling softly, Reid kisses the soft skin beneath Matt's ear. "I don't blame you. I find it hard to believe myself." He reaches up, gently loosening Matt's tie.

Matt leans back against Reid's chest, tipping his head back against his shoulder. "You are quite the man of mystery."

Reid deftly unbuttons Matt's shirt then pulls back his collar so he can kiss his neck. "Do you like mysterious men?"

"I'm here, aren't I?" Matt asks, moaning softly as Reid's lips meet his skin.

"Yes, you are..." Reid exposes more of Matt's neck and kisses him again. "You have a beautiful neck," he murmurs, raking his teeth ever so slightly across Matt's skin.

Matt's heart beats a trippy rhythm in his chest, Reid's words and his teeth combining into a feeling he's not sure he's experienced before. He works open the rest of the buttons on his shirt, letting it fall open completely.

Taking advantage of Matt's open shirt, Reid slips an arm around the boy's slender waist and pulls Matt against him. He smiles, kissing Matt's temple as he whispers. "I've been wanting to kiss you like this since the closet."

"So now that you've got me," Matt says, twisting around in Reid's arms so he can face him, "are you ready to admit that was all a set up?" He pushes up on his toes and brushes his lips against Reid's mouth.

Reid's hand slips into Matt's hair as their kiss becomes heated. "I swear it wasn't," he murmurs before sucking on Matt's lower lip.

Matt smiles, his fingers working their way down the buttons on Reid's shirt. "If you say so," he whispers into the kiss.

"You give me too much credit," smiles Reid. He brushes the hair away from Matt's face as the other man slowly undresses him. "I can't say I'm sorry it happened though."

"Me either," Matt says, pushing open Reid's shirt. He leans back just enough to get a good view of his chest and it looks just as firm and broad as it felt up against him. He traces his fingertip down Reid's sternum and then leans in and follows the path with his tongue.

Reid moans, his hands gliding over Matt's shoulders and pushing his shirt off until it is a pile on the floor. He wants to touch Matt everywhere as his fingers caress his neck and chest.

Matt kisses the hollow at the base of Reid's throat and then licks his way up his neck, sucking and nipping at the soft skin.

With a soft growl, Reid wraps his arms around Matt and lifts him up against him. He kisses Matt and walks him back toward his bed at the other end of the loft space.

Sliding his arms around Reid's neck, Matt holds on tight but doesn't stop with the kisses, trusting Reid to get him safely to where they are going.

Reid lowers Matt onto the bed, pushing him onto his back and crawling over him as they continue to kiss and touch each other. He had wanted to take it slow with Matt, but the younger man is driving him crazy with need. Reid unfastens the black trousers that Matt is wearing, yanking them off as quickly as he can manage before reaching for his own zipper. Leaning back on his knees, he
stares at the boy who is soon to be his lover, looking at Matt as he watches him undress.

Matt is a little surprised by how fast things are moving, but the sight of a nearly naked Reid is enough to completely distract him from that. The other man is a perfect physical specimen, and Matt has a tiny flicker of doubt about why someone like Reid has chosen someone like ordinary him.

Lying down beside Matt, Reid pulls him into his arms, kissing him until he is breathless. His hands move over Matt's skin, touching him everywhere, as if he can't get close enough to him.

Matt feels like he's being worshiped, and it's not something he's ever really felt before. His cock is rock hard against his stomach, his body betraying the need he feels. Reid moves lower, licking and nipping at Matt's chest, sucking a nipple between his lips and teasing it mercilessly. Arching up against Reid's mouth, Matt buries his fingers in Reid's thick hair, his hand cupping Reid's head lightly.

Kissing his way down Matt's stomach, Reid whispers against his warm skin. "You're so beautiful." He takes hold of Matt, handling him easily as he nibbles at his hip. Reid's hand cups Matt's butt, his fingers sliding along his cleft as he pulls him closer. Matt groans as Reid's fingers probe against him. He reflexively spreads his legs, wanton and ready.

Reid teases at Matt's opening, looking up at the boy's flushed face. "You want me here?" he asks with a smile.

"Yes," Matt gasps, digging his heels into the bed as he pushes himself down on Reid's fingers. "Fuck me," he begs, looking Reid right in the eye.

Matt's plea and the way his eyes are large and dilated with passion, make Reid want to take him, make him his, own him completely. Reaching for the lube and a condom, Reid is finished with foreplay for now. He needs Matt and he can't wait another minute to have him.

Matt stretches his arms up over his head, arching like a cat, before rolling over onto his stomach and then pushing up on his hands and knees.

Reid kneels behind him, kissing a trail along Matt's spine then squeezing his gorgeous ass. "As beautiful of a view as this is..." Reid takes him by the hips and rolls him back over. "I want to see your face when I sink into you for the first time," he tells him as he crawls between Matt's long legs.

Matt goes willingly, pulling his knees up toward his chest and letting his thighs fall open. He reaches up and pulls Reid in, needing to feel their bodies pressed together.

Covering Matt's mouth with his, Reid kisses him slowly, deeply, as he begins to prepare him. Each slow stretch accompanied by a breath-stealing kiss until he's sure Matt is ready for him. Reid slips on a condom, slicking it quickly, and presses against Matt's hole. He holds the other man's clouded gaze as he slowly eases inside him.

His breath catching as he's stretched wide, Matt grabs Reid's arm, his fingers digging into his skin. "Slow," he says, tipping his head up for another kiss.

Reid wants to push inside Matt, taking him and claiming him completely, but he knows the boy is not ready for that yet. He kisses him tenderly, holding back until Matt relaxes and he can move again. When he feels his body adjust, Matt squeezes Reid's arm and wraps his legs around Reid's waist, pulling him in further.
Slowly rolling his hips, Reid begins to move inside Matt. The tight heat that surrounds him and pulls him in is almost more than he can bear. Reid stares down into Matt's eyes, understanding how this is different. How Matt is different.

Matt gets lost in the depths of Reid's eyes, his intense stare ratcheting up the connection between them. He hasn't had sex with someone he's been in a committed relationship with for a long time, but even those memories don't hold up to the intensity of this, and he realizes that he's falling hard for Reid.

Reid kisses Matt, slow and deep, like the rhythm of his thrusts. Taking hold of Matt's wrists, he pushes his arms above his head and holds them there as he continues to move inside him. Reid's need to be dominant is ever present and what he is feeling for Matt makes him want to claim him in every way. Deprived of the use of his hands, Matt has to use the rest of his body to show Reid how he feels. His hips tilt with each delicious slide of Reid's cock and he moans breathlessly, his eyes closed and head tilted back.

Reid ravishes Matt's neck, kissing and nipping at the graceful span of skin. He sucks on one spot hard enough to bruise, but he's not remorseful for leaving a mark on the boy he is thinking of as each minute passes. Matt struggles against the tight hold Reid has on his wrists, not used to the inability to touch and guide his partner. He groans, frustrated by his predicament, but yet finding it heightens the sensations he feels. Releasing Matt's wrists, Reid slides his hand between them and wraps his fingers around Matt's cock. His strokes are as slow and steady as the rhythm of his hips.

Matt immediately wraps his arms around Reid, holding him tightly as he arches with pleasure. His tilted world is back to level now, narrowing to the feel and sound and taste of the other man. Reid buries his face against Matt's throat, breathing in the scent of his sex-warm skin. He growls softly, possessively, as he works to bring them both to ecstasy.

The feel of Reid's hand around his cock along with the steady pressure against his core is enough to send Matt over the edge, Reid's name on his lips as he comes. The sound of his name on Matt's lips and the way the boy's body clenches and shudders beneath him lures Reid to his own finish. His orgasm slams into him, leaving him spent and sated as he collapses to the bed beside Matt.

Matt fights to catch his breath, his body wrung out with pleasure. He reluctantly lets go of Reid, not wanting to seem clingy, though if he had his way he'd stay right where he was. Even though they are both breathless from the ferocity of their coupling, Reid pulls Matt into his arms again, kissing him until they are both gasping for air. Matt smiles as Reid sweeps him back into his arms. He feels right there, like he just fits. His lips are swollen but he can't get enough of Reid's kisses.

Reid finally pulls back enough to look at Matt's face, his beautifully flushed skin and kiss-crushed lips. He smiles as he reaches up to push Matt's sweat-soaked bangs away from his forehead. "I'm never going to get enough of you, am I?" Reid asks softly, as if questioning himself more than the boy in his arms.

Not knowing how to answer that, Matt just tips his head up and brushes his lips across Reid's mouth. He can feel himself falling hard for the other man, and that feels equal parts thrilling and scary.
Chapter 8

Reid rolls over in his bed and encounters something firmer than a pillow, but equally as soft. He smiles before he opens his eyes, remembering the night before and the boy with whom he shared it. When Reid does open his eyes, he is not disappointed. Matt is beautiful even in sleep. His expression is serene. Reid leans over and gently kisses his new lover's cheek.

Matt's hand strays up sleepily to his face to brush away what is touching him but his eyes flutter open when his hand touches Reid. He smiles as the events of the night before rush back. "Good morning," he murmurs, snuggling deeper under the covers.

"Good morning," Reid grins, following Matt as he burrows deeper. He slips his arms around Matt and gently pulls him closer, eager to feel the other man's body against his again. Reid hasn't had a lover sleep over in years, but the way that Matt feels in his arms is reason enough to change his habits. "Good sleep?" he asks before kissing Matt's shoulder as he spoons him from behind.

"Yes," Matt says, relaxing back against Reid's chest. "You wore me out last night," he laughs. "And this bed is incredibly comfortable."

"You are welcome to stay in it anytime," Reid murmurs, brushing his lips across Matt's shoulder to his neck.

"So this was more than just a one-off hook up?" Matt asks, trying to keep the hopefulness out of his voice.

"It is. If you want it to be," replies Reid, his arms unconsciously holding Matt a tad tighter.

Matt can feel the tension in Reid's arms and he knows he has his answer. "I want it," he says, though if he's being honest with himself he's not entirely sure what Reid's idea of "it" might be.

"Good," Reid says, his grin returning. I just hope that I live long enough to enjoy it if Mel decides that she wants me dead for this.

"What do you have planned today?" Matt asks, trying to remember what his work schedule looks like.

"No plans. A perk of being the owner," replies Reid as he silently admires the bruise that is beginning to shadow on Matt's neck. He runs his fingers over it possessively. "Do you have to work today?"

"I do," Matt says with a sigh, wishing he could stay right here all day. "And I'll need to run home to shower and change before then."

"I don't have a change of clothes that would fit you, but you can shower here..." Reid kisses the bruise on Matt's neck. "With me."

"That sounds appealing," Matt says, looking forward to the chance to explore Reid's body in the light, after getting a good feel for it in the dark. "I could just go naked at work today so I don't have to run home," he teases.

"Mmmmmm." Reid growls as he thinks back to the customer who had his hands on Matt. "As much as I would enjoy seeing you naked all day is far outweighed by as much as I don't want anyone else seeing you naked all day."
Matt grins and rolls in Reid's arms until he's facing the other man. "No worries. I'm not the exhibitionist type."

"It would be fine if you were, if I'm the only one you expose yourself to," Reid chuckles softly before he pulls Matt closer and kisses him.

"Is that something you like?" Matt asks hesitantly, knowing they are walking a dangerous line. They've studiously avoided delving into the subject of Reid's more alternative tastes, but Matt knows it has to come up eventually.

"Exhibitionism? For myself? Or do you mean my..." Reid pauses when he realizes that he is talking about something that Matt might not really want to know.

"Your boys," Matt whispers, trying that word out in his mouth.

Reid is quiet for a moment, feeling adrift in uncharted waters. Matt is not in the lifestyle, and yet the fact that he keeps having to remind himself of that is troubling in itself. "If one of my subs exhibits himself for my pleasure, I usually find it enjoyable," Reid answers the question as truthfully and tactfully as he can manage. "Now how about we go and exhibit ourselves to each other in the shower?" he asks with a smile, steering the conversation into safer territory.

Matt studies Reid's face for a moment, seeing clearly the diversionary tactic but choosing to let him get away with it. He smiles and gives Reid a quick kiss. "If your shower is of the quality I'm seeing in everything else around here, I can't wait."

Grinning because he happens to know that his shower is a piece of art, Reid slides out of bed and holds out his hand to Matt. He leads the way into his large bathroom in which the spacious shower lines the wall. Gray stone tile and silver chrome fixtures can be seen through the glass doors.

"And yet again you don't disappoint," Matt says, squeezing Reid's hand. "I'm sure the water pressure is divine."

"With six shower heads, I'm sure one of them will be just right," teases Reid as he holds the door to the shower open for Matt to go inside.

Matt carefully steps into the shower, trying to decide where to position himself. He settles for pressed right up against Reid as his new lover joins him.

Despite the room in the shower, Reid adores that Matt stays close to him. He would like to believe that the young man is attracted to him as much he is to Matt.

Matt gasps as the water surges on, the pressure divine against his back and shoulders. "Amazing," he whispers, sliding his hands around Reid's waist.

Reid pushes Matt's damp hair away from his forehead, his large hands framing his face as he stares down into his eyes. "You look good wet," Reid murmurs before he kisses Matt again.

Meeting the kiss, Matt lets his hands roam across Reid's slippery skin. His fingers trace along the lines of his muscles, still marveling at the other man's physique. He finds himself wondering what it might be like to do this every morning.

As sated as he was last night, Reid feels the desire he has for Matt quickly rising again. He pulls Matt closer as his hands caress and squeeze him beneath the steady stream of warm water.

Matt smiles when he feels Reid's cock pressing against his stomach, hard and insistent. "Let me
take care of that," he says softly, sliding his hands down Reid's chest as he drops to his knees and dips his head forward to catch the tip of Reid's cock between his lips.

Before Reid can react, he feels the wet heat of Matt's mouth and it's so much more inviting than the water falling around them. His fingers slip into Matt's wet hair as he rests his hand there in a loose hold, letting Matt take the lead.

Tipping his head back, Matt looks up and locks eyes with Reid as his tongue slides up the length of his cock. He likes the look he sees there, like he's the center of Reid's world.

Reid's lips part as his breath becomes more ragged. He can't take his eyes off Matt, kneeling before him and giving him such pleasure. Reid knows his efforts to convince himself that he will only be with Matt in a vanilla relationship are now a sham. Seeing the boy on his knees and serving him this way only makes Reid want to dominate him more.

Matt closes his eyes against the splatter of the water and narrows his focus to the way Reid tastes and feels in his mouth. He swallows down his length, hollowing his cheeks and he licks and sucks.

Groaning low in his throat, Reid tells himself to keep his control and his inner desires to himself right now. He doesn't want to scare Matt away. No, definitely not. Reid wants to make Matt his.

Wrapping his fingers around the base of Reid's cock, Matt strokes up and down the length as he flicks his tongue across the leaking slit. He wants his prize and he works for it with determination, wanting to feel and hear Reid fall apart.

"Fuck... Matt," Reid rasps, the only warning he can manage before he spills his release into his new lover's talented mouth. Matt doesn't let up, his mouth still working Reid's cock until every last drop is gone. When he finally feels Reid go still he slowly sits back on his knees, wiping the water from his eyes so he can look up.

Breathless and buzzing from his release, Reid cups Matt's cheek as he stares down at him on his knees in front of him. "That was very enjoyable," he tells him, a soft smile on his face as he traces Matt's swollen lips with his thumb. The boy has no idea what he is doing to Reid, but he knows. And he has no idea what he is going to do about it.

"I thought a good 'thank you' was in order for letting me stay over," Matt says, carefully getting to his feet. "And I'd been thinking about that ever since you got naked last night," he admits.

"Have you now?" Reid's smile widens as he tugs Matt toward him, turning him in his arms so his back is against Reid's chest. He whispers next to Matt's ear as he holds him, his hand wrapping around the boy's half-hard cock. "It's my turn now," Reid purrs as he begins to slowly stroke Matt.

Matt honestly hadn't expected anything in return so Reid's touch catches him off guard. He gasps, biting his lip as he tries to keep his knees from buckling.

Spotting Matt's teeth raking over his lower lip, Reid turns the boy's face toward him. "Here. Let me do that," he whispers before he captures Matt's mouth, sucking and nipping at his lower lip. Exhaling sharply, Matt sinks into the kiss, his hips rolling and thrusting against Reid's hand. He
worries he's being too eager, but that only surfaces for a moment before it's swept away on the tide of his pleasure.

"Come for me, Matt. Just for me," Reid murmurs, his hand moving faster as he works Matt's cock.

Reaching out to steady himself with one hand on the wall of the shower, Matt comes hard, Reid's words echoing in his ear.

"So beautiful like this," Reid tells him, kissing Matt's shoulder.

Matt loves the way Reid holds him tightly, not trusting his own legs to do the job. "A guy could get used to spending his mornings like this," he whispers back. "Careful, or I might never leave."

"That's fine with me," replies Reid. He kisses the nape of Matt's neck, his arms tightening around him. "I can take good care of you."

Matt knows he should be concerned with how fast things are moving but he can't seem to work up the energy to care right at the moment. "I believe that," he says softly.

"Good. So you'll come back tonight after work?" asks Reid. Matt hasn't even left yet and he's already anticipating the next time he can have him to himself again.

"Two nights in a row?" Matt blurts out before he can help himself. "Are you sure you won't get sick of seeing me so much?" He tilts his head to the side, craning his neck so he can see Reid's face.

Reid smiles before he takes hold of Matt's chin and kisses him deeply. "No. I won't get sick of seeing you," he murmurs when he finally lets Matt up for air.

As Reid's kisses always seem to do, Matt is distracted from his worries, losing himself in the moment. "I'll remember you said that," he says softly, his fingers stroking the wet strands of hair at the nape of Reid's neck.

Reluctantly, Reid loosens his hold on his new lover. "Let's finish our shower then I'll make you something to eat before you have to go to work," he tells Matt. He lifts his hand to caress Matt's cheek, his thumb ghosting over the slight scar on his cheek.

"You cook, too?" Matt asks with a grin, reaching blindly for the shampoo, not taking his eyes off Reid.

"I can make a sandwich," Reid replies with a slight smirk. "Can't send you off..." The timbre of his voice lowers as he stares at Matt. "Hungry."

"Sandwiches for breakfast?" Matt asks softly, frozen in place by the intensity of Reid's gaze.

Reid takes the shampoo bottle from Matt. "One thing at a time," he says as he squeezes some of the liquid into his palm then hands the bottle back to Matt. "We'll finish our shower first, then breakfast will sort itself out later." Reid turns Matt so that he is facing away from him then slides his soap-covered fingers into Matt's wet hair, gently massaging his scalp.

Matt lets the muscles in his neck and shoulders go liquid, relaxing back into the soft touch of Reid's fingers. He feels pampered and cared for, something he's not used to. "I'll smell like you today," he says, taking a deep breath to inhale the scent of his lover's brand of shampoo. "I think I'll like that."

Something deep and primal within him stirs with Matt's innocent comment and Reid pushes hard to
hold his dominant side back. He wants this boy to smell like him, to wear his mark, to be his.

Letting Reid's hands guide his head under the water to rinse, Matt again thinks about what it would be like to start each day like this. *Or is this just something to help win me over and would go away once he's got me?*

When Matt is finished rinsing his hair, Reid presses a bar of soap in the boy's hand. "I'll let you wash the rest. If I do it, we may never get out of the shower," he gives Matt a grin as he reaches for the shampoo bottle and quickly soaps up his own hair.

Matt is a little disappointed that he won't get to return the favor, but he shares a mutual feeling about the outcome, and he's not sure his exhausted body is up for another round. He's conscious of Reid's eyes on him as he washes and he finds himself showing off a bit, making sure he turns in certain ways so that he gives the other man a good show.

Reid watches silently as he finishes showering, nothing that the boy does escaping his notice. He steps out of the shower first, grabbing a white fluffy towel to enfold Matt when he follows him. Reid wraps his arms around Matt and whispers next to his ear. "Remind me to pay you back for that bit of teasing."

"Teasing?" Matt asks in his best innocent voice. "I was just making sure I was completely clean," he says with a smile.

Not believing that for a second, Reid smirks and reaches for another towel to use to dry off. He likes how playful Matt is. His usual boys are always so eager to please that they forget how to have fun, too. Reid wouldn't want to take that away from their budding relationship - another reason to keep his dominant needs contained.

Matt dries off, wringing out his hair to keep it from dripping on his shoulders and then combing through it with his fingers. He wraps the towel around his waist, not wanting to put his dirty clothes back on just yet.

Reid finishes drying his hair then hangs up his towel. He walks into the bedroom where he gets a pair of boxer briefs and a white tee shirt from his dresser and puts them on. Reid opens another drawer and pulls out a pair of black sweatpants and hands them to Matt. "These are too big I know, but you can cinch the waist to keep them from falling off. And they are warmer than a wet towel," Reid adds with a smile.

"Thanks," Matt says, glad that Reid read his mind. He lays the towel on the end of the bed long enough to pull on the pants and tie them up tight before dashing back to the bathroom to hang it up.

Reid steps into his closet and pulls on a pair of soft, worn jeans. He pulls a red tee shirt from its hanger to carry to Matt. "Here's a shirt that might not swallow you," he says with a smile as he hands it over.

Matt slips the shirt over his head. It's baggy but not bad all things considered. "I'll make sure to pack a few things for next time so you won't have to clothe me," he laughs.

"Good idea," agrees Reid. "You can run home tonight after work and bring a few things back with you." He slips an arm around Matt's waist as he walks out of the bedroom area. "Although you look quite fetching in my hand-me-downs."

Matt smiles at the confirmation that Reid wants to see him again tonight. "Actually, I'll probably have time to run home before my shift starts. That will be easier than doing it later. If I go home
after work I might be tempted just to crash in my own bed.

"Whatever is easiest for you," Reid says. As long as you are in my bed again tonight.

Matt finds that he fits perfectly up against Reid's side, like the spot was made for him. "I'm not on for a few hours yet so assuming you aren't planning a ten course breakfast of sandwiches I should be able to make it."

Reid chuckles, kissing Matt's forehead before he releases him as they walk toward the area of the loft where the kitchen is located. "You can have a seat there and watch me while I make your breakfast." He points to one of the tall stools that line the large island in the center of the kitchen area. Reid opens the refrigerator and pulls out some eggs, ham and bread. "Any allergies that I need to know about?" he asks as he retrieves a pot from a lower cabinet.

"Not to food," Matt says, climbing up on the stool. It's evident in just a few seconds that Reid knows his way around a kitchen and Matt's expectations for breakfast go up a notch.

"What are you allergic to?" Reid asks casually as he fills his boiler with water and places it on the stove before returning to the cabinet for two more pans.

"Penicillin and pollen," Matt says with a smile. "I'm a sneeze factory every spring."

Reid nods, smiling as he imagines how cute his boy will be with a red nose. He turns back to the refrigerator to get the butter and marvels again at how easy it is for him to think of a future with Matt. Reid is not in the habit of thinking of any boy past the time he's had a scene with him.

"What about you?" Matt asks, wanting to keep the conversation going. "Anything I should worry about feeding you if I ever get the chance to cook for you? Or at least take you out to dinner?"

"No allergies that I know of and the only food that I don't like is brussels sprouts and liver." Reid opens the package of bread and pulls out four slices. "I eat just about anything really. And I love trying things that I've never had before," he says as he cuts the crusts off the bread slices. Reid turns on the heat below the two empty pans before he cuts thin slices of the ham and puts them in one of the pans, tossing a bit of butter to melt in the other pan.

"Where did you learn to cook?" Matt asks after watching Reid for a few more minutes. He's hoping to learn more about his mysterious background but he also doesn't want to push and shut the other man down.

"My mother. She's a chef," replies Reid. "I lived with her in America until I was sixteen." Reid looks up at Matt and gives him a smile before returning his attention back to the pans on the stove. "I would go to work with her sometimes, so she put me to use as a sous chef. Chopping vegetables, cleaning and filleting fish, whatever she needed done." He places the four bread squares into the pan with the melted butter.

"You grew up in the States?" Matt asks, before something clicks. He desperately wants to ask if Reid lived in New Orleans but he bites back the question, remembering how reluctant the other man was to talk about it before.

"Yes. I moved to England about a month before my seventeenth birthday. My father was British. He and my mother separated when I was a child," explains Reid as he checks the simmering boil of the water in the pot. Carefully, he cracks an egg and slips it into the boiling water then uses a spoon to keep the egg white from breaking as he poaches it.

"Do you like it better here or there?" Matt asks. "It's nice to have someone to talk to compare notes"
with on how different it can be."

"I suppose I like it here because I stayed," Reid replies, never having thought about the reason he is still in England even after the death of his father. He removes the perfectly poached egg from the water and sets it on a cloth covered plate then checks on the bread browning in the butter. Reid flips them over before cracking another egg into the boiling water. "England has its charms and its quiet, yet remarkably strong affection for kink has made me a successful club owner."

Matt laughs. "That's a good way to look at it." He watches as their breakfast comes together, his stomach rumbling with anticipation. "Can I set out plates or fix drinks? I feel like I should be helping."

"That would be great," says Reid. "Would you mind making coffee? And there is juice and milk in the refrigerator if you don't like coffee." He finishes with the second poached egg and removes the bread from pan as well.

Matt searches the cabinet above the coffee pot and finds everything he needs. Once the pot is brewing he pours two small glasses of juice to go along with it. He sets those at their places on the island and then leans back against the counter and watches as Reid finishes plating up their food. "You look sexy when you cook."

"Then I shall endeavor to cook for you often." Reid responds as he stacks a layer of the sliced ham on the bread squares before topping them with a poached egg. He places a glass bowl over the boiling water and uses egg yolk, butter and lemon to make hollandaise sauce to complete their Eggs Benedict. Dipping his finger into the sauce, Reid holds it out for Matt to take a taste.

With a huge smile, Matt leans in and swipes his tongue across Reid's finger. "Delicious," he proclaims, playing up the double entendre.

Reid smiles, his gaze lingering on Matt's lips just long enough to let the other man know exactly what he is thinking. Turning his attention back to their breakfast, he tops the eggs with the buttery sauce then sets a plate in front of Matt who has returned to his stool. "Bon appetit," Reid says as he walks around the island to take a seat next to Matt.

"Oh, I didn't finish the coffee," Matt says, hopping off his stool before they get started. "How do you take it?" he asks, pulling down two mugs.

"Black," Reid replies, secretly smug as he wonders if he is the reason for Matt's distraction.

Matt sets two mugs of black coffee on the island and then climbs back up on his stool. "Now, bon appetit," he says with a grin, holding up his juice glass for a toast.

"Enjoy," Reid echoes as he clinks his coffee cup against Matt's glass.

Matt takes a sip of his juice and then bites into his breakfast. He gives an appreciative moan as he chews. "That's amazing," he says after he swallows. "Best sandwich I've ever had."

Laughing as he takes a sip of his coffee, Reid gives Matt a nod. "Good coffee, too."

"I'm a man of many talents," Matt laughs.

"And I am looking forward to experiencing them all," Reid replies with a lingering smile before tucking in to his own breakfast.
Reid takes the back stairs to enter the club, whistling a cheerful tune as he straightens his designer suit. He's wearing a new Paul Smith suit in dark grey. His white shirt is tailored and his gray and blue tie is silk. Reid feels like a million pounds and it has nothing to do with the way he is dressed.

Mel hears the whistle before she actually sees Reid and she barks out his name so he doesn't pass right on by the office. "Get your ass in here," she calls when she hears him pause.

"And a good morning to you, too," Reid says sarcastically as he enters the office as ordered.

"It would be a good morning if I weren't missing a vital piece of paperwork," she says with a pointed glare.

Reid arches an eyebrow in confusion. He knows that he completed the closing paperwork last night. "What paperwork?" asks Reid.

"I'm hearing that someone was removed from the premises last night," she says, giving him one last chance to fess up. Reid just continues to stare at her silently so Mel continues. "Forcibly removed. Yet there's no incident report."

"Forcibly removed? I wouldn't use that exact term. In his drunken state, he was assisted in getting to his feet and helped to the door. Not exactly an event that would require an incident report," Reid says with a shrug of his shoulder.

"You know the rules," Mel says with a sigh. "Anytime a member is removed we need to write it up so if it comes back on us we have documentation."

"Fine. I'll fill out an incident report if you insist," sighs Reid. "And he won't be coming back. I've revoked his membership."

Mel sighs again. "This is not how I wanted to start my day." She pulls out the paperwork and pushes it across the desk before flopping back in her chair.

"He was very disrespectful to one of our staff," Reid tells her as he unbuttons his suit coat and takes a seat in the chair, preparing to fill out the form that Mel has thrust at him. "If you had seen the way he was acting, you would have done the same."

As much as she doesn't want to, Mel takes the bait. "What did he do?" she asks, knowing it will mean listening to Reid's entire retelling of the incident.

"He was making a pass at... our bartender."

"Matt?" Mel asks, crossing her legs. "He's experienced enough I would have thought he could handle something like that without calling you in."

"He was trying to handle it himself, but the guy was twice his size," Reid explains. "The grip he had on Matt's wrist was strong enough to leave a bruise."

Mel crosses her arms to match her crossed legs and gives Reid a long look. "So a customer was going to leave a mark on Matt, who just happens to be your type, and so the appropriate response was to toss his ass in the street," she asks, her voice measured.
Reid looks up at his manager and frowns. "It was the only response to his behavior. You know I don't suffer fools well, customers or otherwise."

"And that's all it was?" Mel asks, knowing better.

Unable to lie to Mel, Reid averts his gaze as he returns to the form on the desk. "You know damn well it wasn't, so why ask?"

"Just wondering how long you'd try and lie to me," Mel says with a victorious smile. "The whistling in the hallway? Overreaction to him being touched by another man? You're in deep."

"You have no idea," murmurs Reid as he begins to write faster.

"What happened to taking it slow?" Mel asks, watching as Reid speeds through the form.

Reid sighs and sets the pen aside. "I tried taking it slow, Mel. Honestly, I did. But when he came into the office, apologetic and so eager to be sure that I wasn't angry with him..." He shakes his head and looks at Mel. "Slow was out the window."

Mel slides her chair back. "Not on the desk!" she says, a mixture of disgust and disappointment in her voice.

"No! Not on the desk!" Reid says quickly, shaking his head as his frown deepens.

Relaxing, Mel scoots back up to the desk. "So why the frown then? You were too after-sex glowy earlier for him to have shot you down."

"Are you sure you really want to know?" asks Reid, "I would hate to say anything that might alter your already tarnished image of me."

"Oh my god, you did not dump him after you had sex with him!" Mel says, slapping her hand on the desk. "I do not want to spend my day trying to hire a new bartender!"

Reid just shakes his head again. Mel really does think that he's an asshole. "Matt is still employed here and the last I heard, he will be on time for his shift tonight."

Mel falls silent, studying her friend carefully. She's never seen him like this. "So then why the frown?" she asks finally, unable to intuit her way to the answer.

"You're not going to like it..." warns Reid, continuing when Mel stays silent for the moment. "I'm not going to stop seeing him. In fact, I can't wait for his shift to end tonight so I can take him back upstairs to my place where he will spend the night with me again."

Mel holds her tongue, knowing that a warning would be useless in the face of a fully smitten Reid. "Just be careful, okay?" she finally settles on. "He's a good kid and I like him a lot."

"You're right, he is a good kid. And I like him more than a lot," he tells Mel. "I don't expect you to believe me, but it's different with Matt. He won't be like the others."

"And what about that?" Mel asks, reaching over to tap the form. "You can't kick out every member who looks at him. We'll go under."

"And again, you're not going to like it, but I want you to move Matt from the bar to the front desk. You said you needed someone and I think he'd be a great there."

"Yes, I'm sure he'd be fine there, he's a quick learner, but why would I move him? He's the best
"I'll find you another good bartender and Matt can be the back up bartender, when necessary. You're always saying that we need to cross train the staff to be able to do more than one job," Reid points out. "Matt is smart and a hard worker. I say we start with him."

"Why go to all the trouble? What's the difference between the bar and the desk as far as Matt is concerned?"

"No difference. So why not the front desk?" Reid counters.

"I asked you first," Mel says, used to bantering with her friend.

"I asked you second," replies Reid, holding Mel's questioning gaze.

"You exasperate me." Mel says, throwing up her hands. "If you tell me the truth, then I'll agree to move him."

"Less likelihood of drunken lechers grabbing at my..." Reid clears his throat. "At Matt."

"You better watch that you don't use that word to his face," Mel says, with a victorious smile. "He might run the other way." She turns to the computer and pulls up the master work schedule. "I can have him moved by the end of the week. There's a few more shifts in the bar I'll need him to cover until I can get the new bartender you'll procure for me trained."

"That's fine. I'll have someone here by Friday," Reid tells her as he gets to his feet. "And what word?" he asks, pausing by the desk.

"Boy." Mel says, looking up at Reid.

Reid's lip purse ever so slightly. "How do you know I wasn't going to say 'lover'?"

"Because you were using your possessive tone of voice," Mel says with a soft smile. "You forget how well I know you."

"Do you really think he'll run the other way?" Reid asks quietly.

"I think you need to tread carefully," Mel says. "I don't know how he'll react." She studies Reid's face, the conversation so unlike any they've had about Reid's past conquests.

Reid doesn't reply, but he nods his head before turning toward the door. "I'm going out today, but I'll be back in time for the evening shift."

"Out to find me a bartender?" Mel asks, trying to lighten the mood.

"Exactly," Reid replies without turning around.

Mel watches him go and then turns back to the schedule, sighing as she starts moving things around.

~*~*~*~*~

Matt unties his apron and hangs it on the hook before shutting off the last of the lights in the bar. He stops in the back room to pick up the overnight bag he packed on his trip home earlier and then heads for Reid's loft. He'd talked himself out of it a million times over the course of the evening but
deep down he's known he always intended to end up there.

Hearing the light knock on the door, Reid hurries to answer it. He smiles when he sees Matt and the bag that he is carrying. After his conversation with Mel this morning, Reid has been worried that Matt might change his mind over the course of the day. He knows that things are moving rather fast with them now, but he can't honestly say that he wants it to stop.

"Hello," Reid says softly as he opens the door wider for Matt to enter.

"Hi," Matt says tentatively. "I didn't see you at all today but I assumed the invitation was still good."

"Yes, it is," replies Reid as he takes Matt's bag and closes the door. "I was out all day, but I made a point of getting back before the end of your shift."

Matt smiles and blushes. "That's good. If you hadn't answered the door I would have probably gotten the wrong idea."

Reid sets Matt's bag down, wasting no time in pulling the other man into an embrace. "What wrong idea?" he asks with a soft smile.

"That you'd changed your mind about me," Matt says, smiling as he leans into Reid's arms. "Found someone new to entertain you."

It's on the tip of Reid's tongue to ask Matt if he knows about his reputation, but he doesn't dare in case Matt's comment is an innocent one. He tightens his arms around Matt's waist. "I haven't changed my mind. And I am glad that you didn't change yours."

Matt tips his head up to give Reid a kiss. "Did you do anything interesting today?" he asks.

Reid can't very well tell Matt that he's hired a new bartender so he just shrugs and replies with a non-committal "Not really."

"You made breakfast for a dead sexy man you charmed the pants off of. That's something, right?" Matt teases.

"Oh, I thought you meant after that," Reid grins.

"Well, I did, originally," Matt admits. "But I couldn't pass up the chance to point that out."

"Did I really charm your pants off?" asks Reid, his hand sliding lower on Matt's back until his fingers are tucked inside his waistband.

"You did," Matt says. "Along with the rest of my clothes." He rests his hands flat against Reid's chest, feeling the other man's heartbeat.

"What do you think my chances are to do it again?" Reid smiles.

"I'd say somewhere between good and excellent," Matt grins, not even trying to lie. "But I might make you cook for me again."

"It would be my pleasure to cook for you again. Would you like something to eat now?" Reid captures Matt's mouth for a long, torrid kiss then whispers against his lips. "Or after?"

"After," Matt says softly when he catches his breath. "You're too distracting for me to focus on food right now."
"You're rather distracting yourself. And I don't even have you naked yet," Reid teases as he starts to lead Matt toward the other end of his flat and his bed.

"I can stop. Distracting you that is," Matt says, with a wicked gleam in his eye. He enjoys how much attention Reid lavishes on him.

"You can try." Reid chuckles as he grabs Matt, lifting him over his shoulder as he carries him the rest of the way. He gives Matt's butt a firm swat before lowering him to the bed. Reid hovers over him, grinning widely. "Sure you want to do that?"

"Hey!" Matt protests as he's upended and then flipped back onto the bed. "Just teasing, no need to manhandle!"

Reid's grin fades as he stares down at Matt. "Was I too rough?" he asks.

"No," Matt says shaking his head as he toes off his shoes and starts to unbutton his shirt. "I just wasn't expecting to be tossed over your shoulder," he laughs.

Exhaling in relief, Reid reaches for Matt's hands to stop him. "Wait. I want to undress you."

"Oh," Matt says, letting his hands fall to his sides. "Sorry." He looks up expectantly at Reid. "Am I moving too fast?"

Reid leans down to kiss Matt. "No. I just want to do it. Unwrap you. Like a gift."

"In that case," Matt says, giving Reid another kiss and then pushing back on the bed, sprawling out and giving his best alluring look. "Let me properly present your present."

Leaning in as if to kiss Matt's lips again, Reid suddenly dips his head lower to press his lips against the hollow of Matt's slender throat. He slowly unbuttons Matt's shirt, gently kissing each new bit of bare skin revealed to him.

Matt tips his head back, concentrating on each soft kiss and touch of Reid's lips and skin against his chest. Every time he feels off balance, they end up back like this, their bodies knowing something their minds don't just yet, that they belong together, fit together, work together.

Reid spreads Matt's shirt open, kissing and nipping a trail across his abdomen while his fingers work on the button and zip on his trousers.

Moaning softly, Matt relaxes back against the bed. He rests his fingers on Reid's shoulders, wanting to touch more but waiting his turn.

Slowly, Reid tugs at Matt's pants then gently sucks on the slender hip bone that he reveals. His hands caress Matt's skin, freeing him from his clothes until his lover is lying bare beneath him.

Normally Matt might feel slightly embarrassed with lying naked in the light like this, under such close scrutiny from a lover's eyes, but the expression on Reid's face is enough to show him that the other man is enthralled by what he sees.

"I want to taste you," Reid tells him, rubbing Matt's cock against the palm of his hand.

"Yes," Matt whispers, his cock throbbing from Reid's words and touch.

Spreading Matt's legs and crawling between his bent knees, Reid strokes Matt's cock leisurely before he lowers his head again and takes him into his mouth.
Matt bites down on his lip to keep from making a sound, not wanting to let on just how completely Reid can undo him with just something this simple.

Reid can feel how hard his boy is for him as his cock slides against his tongue. Matt tastes as sweet as Reid knew he would and it makes him ache for more.

Pushing up on his elbows for a better view, Matt can't drag his eyes away from the sight of Reid's lips stretching around his cock. He wants to pinch himself to be sure it's all real, that the events of the last week haven't been a dream.

Looking up at Matt's flushed face, Reid releases his cock with a soft pop and smiles. "Delicious."

Matt can feel his cheeks flush yet again, Reid always having a way to disarm him. "I'm glad you like it," he says.

"I do like it," Reid's smile widens. "And so do you," he adds as he begins stroking Matt's cock as he talks. "Do you want to come now or later? Or now and later?"

Matt finds the question a little odd, but he plays along. "Um, both. Of course," he laughs.

Reid chuckles softly despite the nagging desire to hear Matt beg for his touch and punctuate his replies with a breathless "Sir". He sets those thoughts aside for now, lowering his head and taking Matt into his mouth again.

Moaning with pleasure, Matt curls his fingers against the bed, resisting the urge to thrust up into Reid's mouth. "Feels so good," he murmurs.

Taking his boy's cock deeper, Reid's fingers touch and tease the soft skin of Matt's sac and the sensitive area behind it.

Shifting his legs further apart, Matt rocks his hips wantonly. Reid has a talented mouth and Matt knows he can't hold on for long.

Reid rubs the pad of his finger against Matt's hole as he continues to suck him, anticipating the moment when he can be inside him again.

"So close," Matt warns, his heart racing. He thrusts up into Reid's mouth, needing just the last little bit of stimulation to push over the edge.

Moaning around his mouthful, Reid moves faster, laving Matt's cock with his tongue.

Matt cries out sharply, his body convulsing as he empties himself into Reid's mouth. He falls back against the bed as the aftershocks rock his body.

Reid swallows his boy's offering, licking him clean. When he's finished, he crawls up Matt's trembling body and smiles down at him. "You look beautiful like this," Reid tells him.

"Thank you," Matt says bashfully, reaching up to wrap his arms around Reid.

"And thank you," Reid grins, dropping a quick kiss on Matt's flushed cheek.

"Now I think we need to pay a little attention to you," Matt says, his fingers plucking at the edges of Reid's clothes.

Reid takes one of Matt's hand and presses it against his cock, hard and straining against his zipper. "Feel that?" he whispers, brushing Matt's cheeks with a soft kiss.
"Is that for me?" Matt asks softly, a coy smile on his lips. He strokes his fingers along the tented fabric, feeling the heat and power contained there.

"I want to be inside you," Reid growls softly as he fists the front of his shirt and pulls it over his head.

Even as wrung out as he is, Matt can feel a surge of arousal, the tone of Reid's voice shooting right to his core. "I want that too," he says, sliding his fingers up to open the fly of his lover's pants.

Reid helps Matt to undress him then pulls his young lover with him as he lies back on the bed. He slides his hand beneath the pillows and retrieves a condom and the lube. Pulling Matt close again, Reid reclaims his lips for a deep, slow kiss.

"This way again?" Matt murmurs, bending his legs up and wrapping them around Reid's waist.

"This way, that way," replies Reid, smiling as he kisses Matt again. "I plan on having you every way I can."

"I'll hold you to that," Matt smiles, nipping at Reid's lower lip.

"I want you on top," Reid tells him. "Want to watch your face."

"That can be arranged," Matt grins, holding on tight as they roll and change positions. He sits up, astride Reid's hips and trails his fingers across Reid's chest. "Like this?"

Reid rests a hand on Matt's slender hip and smiles. "Exactly like this," he says as he presses the condom into Matt's hand. "Hold that for me," Reid tells him before he squeezes some lube onto his fingers. "Now how about another kiss?" he asks, slipping his fingers between Matt's cheeks when he leans forward.

Matt presses open mouth kisses to Reid's lips, sighing with pleasure when Reid's slick fingers brush across his hole.

"Do you want me here?" whispers Reid as he pushes a finger inside Matt.

"Yes," Matt says breathlessly, his hips writhing from Reid's touch.

"Not too sore from last night?" Reid asks, taking it as slow as he can manage with his own building need.

"No," Matt assures him, pushing his hips back against Reid's fingers. "Can't wait to feel you again."

Reid pushes another finger inside, working it in and out as he prepares his boy to take him. "Come here," he smiles, wanting Matt to lean down so he can kiss him again.

Matt leans in, stopping for a brief moment just out of reach so he can see the desire on Reid's face. Once he gets his fill he shifts closer, dropping a kiss on Reid's lips.

"Teasing me?" asks Reid, smirking as he tells Matt that it's time to put the condom on him.

"Nope," Matt says as he sits back and strokes Reid's cock a few times before tearing open the condom. "I just like looking at you. Reminding myself that this is really happening." He smiles and rolls on the latex, with a look of concentration on his face.

Reid groans softly as Matt touches him, sheathing him in the condom. "If you need a reminder, I'm
"Don't want to rush," Matt grins, shifting up on his knees and re-positioning himself. He reaches back and uses his hand to help guide Reid's cock as he slowly sinks down.

Arching his back to keep from thrusting his hips and pushing deeper inside the tight heat of Matt's body, Reid exhales a ragged breath and resists the urge to just take what he wants instead of waiting for Matt to give it to him.

Matt exhales, letting his body adjust, and then slowly starts to move, flexing his thighs as he lifts up and then drops down, taking Reid further and further inside with each pass.

Reid reaches up, caressing Matt's neck and upper chest, teasing his taut nipples with his thumb. He watches Matt's face, not wanting to miss every nuance of his boy's pleasure.

"You feel so good," Matt murmurs, leaning further forward into Reid's hands. "I thought about this all day."

Sliding one hand lower, Reid holds Matt's hip again as he begins to move with him. "You thought of me?" asks Reid.

"Yes," Matt admits, his voice strained with pleasure. "Probably wasn't the most attentive employee today. My mind kept wandering."

"Good thing the boss likes you," Reid says as he takes hold of Matt's cock, slowly stroking him as he moves inside him.

"So I don't have to be worried about getting fired for sleeping my way to the top?" Matt says, the grin wiped off his face as he moans.

His boy is beautiful and clever and sexy as hell. Reid feels himself getting deeper and deeper, like quicksand, but he's in no hurry to escape. "Are you going to come again for me, Matt?" he asks.

"If we keep this up? Oh yeah," Matt says. He falls further forward, wanting to kiss Reid again. The angle isn't as good and their hips slow, but the heat of the kiss more than makes up for that. Reid wraps his free arm around Matt, holding him tight as they kiss and move together as if they were time pieces, each in sync with what the other needs. Matt loves the way he feels in Reid's arms, safe and free and desired. He can feel his climax building again, a slow burn this time rather than the sharp attack of their earlier encounter.

Pressing his lips against the small scar near Matt's eye, Reid tells him that he's close. "Come with me," he rasps.

His body obeying Reid's words, Matt muffles his cry against Reid's shoulder. He can feel his lover's body contracting beneath him, their pleasure echoing and feeding off one another. Reid is breathless and his heart is pounding as he continues to hold onto Matt, not willing or ready to let him go just yet. The connection between them is more than their bodies joined in pleasure and Reid can't deny that sex with Matt is more than he's experienced with anyone before him.

Matt worries for a moment that he's too heavy to be sprawled out, boneless, on top of Reid like this, but the strong hold of the other man's arms assure him that he's right where Reid wants him. He rests his head on Reid's chest, listening to the race of his heartbeat.

"You are bewitching me." Reid whispers the quiet accusation, breaking the silence.
Tipping his head up just enough to see Reid's face, Matt studies it carefully. "Is that a good thing or a bad thing?" he finally whispers.

Reid smiles, lifting his hand to stroke Matt's sex-mussed hair. "I think that depends on you."

"Why's that?" Matt asks, folding his hands under his chin and propping it up so he can watch Reid.

"I'm the one under your spell," Reid tells him.

Matt ducks his head, laying it back down on Reid's chest. "That sounds serious," he says softly after a long silence.

"And?" Reid prods, needing to know what his young lover is thinking now.

"And nothing," Matt says, kissing Reid's chest and then forcing a smile onto his lips in hopes of distracting the other man. "Enough of that," he says, wanting to change the subject.

"If you think I'm moving too fast, then it's probably better to tell me. You have no way of knowing this, but it's uncharted territory for me as well," Reid tells him.

Matt raises his head again. "It's just really intense."

"And that's a bad thing?" asks Reid. He's as unsure as Matt seems and no personal experience with a lasting relationship.

"It's a scary thing," Matt admits. "Not a bad thing." He shivers slightly as the warmth of their coupling wears off.

Reid eases Matt onto the bed beside him, finally separating their intimate connection. He pulls the duvet up and over Matt's shoulders. "No reason to be scared. We can take it slower if that's what you need."

Matt curls up against Reid, not ready to be completely separated. "What if I don't know what I need?" he asks, surprised that he said it out loud. There's something about Reid that makes him completely lose his filter, something that makes him forget the walls he's tried to build.

"Still no reason to be scared," Reid says as he wraps an arm around Matt and pulls him a little closer. "Because I'll still be here when you figure it out."

Matt can't help but laugh softly. "A hot guy like you? You'll have others falling at your feet in the mean time. There's no reason to wait around on someone who can't figure out what he wants."

"There's a reason," Reid assures him, smiling softly before kissing Matt's forehead. "How'd you get this?" he asks, tracing the scar by Matt's left eye.

"Stupid accident when I was a kid," Matt says. "I need to make up a cool story so I sound much more interesting," he laughs. "What about yours?" he asks.

"Car door. My friend opened it too soon," explains Reid. "Maybe I need a cool story, too," he adds with a grin.

"We could make them up together. How we got attacked by pirates or something like that," Matt teases, tipping his face up for a kiss.

"We work in a fetish club. Isn't that exotic enough?" Reid points out, covering Matt's mouth with his.
"Not something you can discuss in mixed company," Matt laughs. He finds it strange how fast his emotions can turn when he's with Reid, from anxious to silly in just a moment.

Reid laughs out loud. "Of course, scarred by pirates will draw much less attention than working at a fetish club." He pulls Matt closer, kissing his lover's scar. "My sweet Matty," Reid whispers.

"Pirates are very in right now," Matt murmurs, snuggling against Reid's chest.

"You'd make an adorable cabin boy." Reid strokes Matt's hair as the other man relaxes against him.

"Why do I have to be the cabin boy? Maybe I want to be the captain," Matt says as he yawns.

"Because there's only one captain. And that's me," Reid tells him. "Now go to sleep," he says, yawning himself.

"If you say so," Matt murmurs as he drifts off.
Chapter 10

Matt takes a quick glance into the hallway before stepping through the door. He's not exactly sure who he is hiding from, but he's not comfortable just yet with explaining why he's coming to work via the stairs from Reid's loft. He slides his apron on over his head and ties it around his waist before he starts to prep for the day, the rote work allowing his mind time to wander.

Mel passes the bar on her way to the front desk, but then makes a U-turn when she sees Matt already at work. "Hello, Matt," she says with a smile as she approaches.

"Hi, Melanie," Matt says, glancing up with a smile. "How are you today?" He wonders idly how much Reid has told her about their budding relationship, he knows they are very close.

"Quite well, thank you," replies Mel as she climbs onto one of the tall bar stools and crosses her legs despite the narrow cut of her skirt. "You're getting an early start today," she comments as she relaxes in her seat.

"Shorter commute than usual," Matt says, trying to test out whether Mel knows what's going on.

"Stayed with Reid last night, did you?" Mel stares at Matt with a straight face for a moment before letting her smile return. Matt holds his breath until the smile breaks across her face. "I did," he says, knowing his cheeks are flushed. "Didn't really think about that when I glanced at the clock and it was time to leave for work. I'll have to adjust my thinking if I end up doing that very often."

"And do you think you will? End up doing that often?" she asks softly, doing her own bit of testing the waters.

"I'm not sure," Matt says, pulling out his cutting board to chop up lemons and limes. "I think I hope so," he says, knowing that is a very unclear answer. "He can be hard to read at times."

"In what way?" asks Mel. She knows Reid is hoping for a relationship with Matt.

Matt looks up, debating with himself just how much to confide in her. He feels comfortable talking to her and feels like she understands, but he's also sure her loyalties are with Reid and he doesn't know if what he says would be held in confidence. "I'm getting the feeling he's not really much for long term relationships."

"No. He's not." Mel sees no reason to lie to Matt. If what Reid has told her is true, then knowing the truth shouldn't hurt. "Is a long-term relationship what you want?"

"Isn't that what everyone wants someday?" Matt asks, evading the question.

"I didn't ask about everyone," Mel says quietly. "I asked about you."

Matt sighs and scoops a pile of cut citrus onto a tray and turns to dump the board and knife in the sink. "Do I want that someday? Yes. Do I want it now? Maybe? Do I want it with Reid? Possibly. How's that?"

"So you don't know yet," Mel says with a shrug. "Seems rather normal to me actually."

"Really?" Matt asks, turning back to Mel. "It definitely doesn't feel normal."
"How does it feel?" She asks, suddenly concerned that Reid might be pressuring his young lover.

"Confusing," Matt admits. "Can I make you a drink?" He needs something to do with his hands, something to keep him occupied.

"A ginger ale. Three cherries," replies Mel. "Is Reid..." She hesitates, knowing better than to try to intervene in other people's relationships, yet apparently unable to stop herself. "Is he pushing you?"

Matt pulls down a glass and starts in on the drink. "Pushing? No, that's not it really. I just get the feeling that he's not being completely honest with me. Does that make sense?"

*Oh my god, he IS trying a vanilla relationship with Matt.* "Yes, it does," Mel agrees, wondering if her guess is right.

Plopping the three cherries in the top of the glass, Matt passes it across the bar. "On the one hand he seems to want to spend every moment with me, but then I also feel like he's keeping this distance from me in a lot of ways." Mel takes a sip of her drink and nods, hoping that Matt will continue to share his feelings about Reid with her. "I like him," Matt says, the words tumbling out now. "But we've only been dating a short time and I feel like he's wanting a lot more than I would expect at this stage. Do you think that's moving too fast?"

Swallowing hard, Mel tries to be cautious with her answer. "He probably doesn't realize that it's fast. Since he's never done it before."

"Never done it before?" Matt asks. "What do you mean?"

"Relationships," replies Mel.

"Oh," Matt says, struck speechless. His thoughts whirl and he's sure he's being rude with his silence but he can't help himself.

"Reid cares about you, Matt," Mel says softly. *So much that he's willing to change his lifestyle to be with you!*

"Really?" Matt asks, trying and failing to keep the hopefulness from his voice. "I just don't think I can be... enough for him, you know?"

"Maybe you should let Reid be the judge of that." Mel turns her drink glass between her fingers. "And I think you should definitely talk to Reid about your feelings."

"I just don't want him to think I'm trying to push him away. It's all just really fast," Matt says, glancing over as the first of the evening's customers make their way into the bar. "I don't want to end up hurt."

Mel turns to see the customers and knows it's time to go. She turns back to Matt, reaching out to take his hand. "Just talk to him, Matt. Let him know how you're feeling and give him a chance to share his feelings with you."

"Easy for you to say," Matt teases. "Guys don't like talking about their feelings very much. Of course, I did just spill my guts out to you so I guess I'm wrong about all that."

"It never hurts to try," Mel counters with a smile as she slips off the bar stool.

"I'll keep that in mind," Matt says. "Thanks Melanie."
"See you later, Matt." Mel gives the young bartender a wave then hurries toward the front desk to greet the evening's new arrivals.

Matt turns his attention to the customers as well, his mind mulling over Melanie's advice. He decides that he'll try and talk to Reid, no matter how difficult it is, before he agrees to stay over again.

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Reid notices the time and closes the file he's been working on to log off his computer. He smiles as he makes the trek down the hallway toward the bar, thinking about how much he looks forward to closing time now. Everyone is gone and the bar is empty. Matt is cleaning up and has his back turned when Reid walks into the bar. "Too late for a drink?" he asks.

Matt recognizes the voice without even turning around. "Never too late for the owner, Sir," he says, smiling over his shoulder as he pulls down the liquor bottles.

Smiling when Matt uses "Sir", Reid looks around to make sure that no one is looking on before walking behind the bar. He slips his arms around Matt's waist from behind and kisses him on his neck. "I like it when you call me 'Sir'," Reid murmurs.

Matt stiffens slightly as he realizes the implications. He'd never really thought that through, always just using "Sir" as a sign of respect. "I might mess up your drink if you keep distracting me," he teases.

Reid can feel Matt go still in his embrace. "You know I would much rather have you than a drink," he says next to Matt's ear.

"I haven't worn you out yet?" Matt asks, relaxing back against Reid's chest and setting the bottles down on the counter.

"No. But I would love for you to try," Reid turns Matt in his arms so that he can give him a proper kiss. He brushes his lips against Matt teasingly until he can hear the soft gasp that his lover makes then he kisses him, slow and deep.

Matt has a brief thought about getting caught, but Reid's lips erase that from his mind completely. He's trapped between the counter and the solid press of Reid's body and he moans into the kiss, unable and unwilling to escape.

Reid pulls back, smiling as he enjoys the flush that he's put on his boy's face. "Shall we continue this upstairs?"

Matt almost just says yes, his body betraying what his mind knows would be best. He remembers his earlier conversation with Melanie and steels his resolve. "I think I should stay at my place tonight," he says, his tone of voice not even convincing to himself, much less to anyone else.

"Why?" asks Reid as his smile evaporates.

"This is all just moving really fast," Matt says, reaching up to touch Reid's cheek. "I don't want to rush into things."

Reid searches Matt's face for the real answers, not quite believing the one that Matt is giving him. "What things?" he asks quietly.

"This thing. Our thing," Matt says, sensing Reid's disappointment. "We've only been dating a short
time, and we've spent basically the last forty-eight hours together. I just need some space and time to sort through everything." He winces as the words come out, knowing they are more hurtful than he intended.

Finding himself in unfamiliar territory, Reid isn't sure how to respond, but he can tell that Matt is serious about needing time away from him. He releases him then takes a step back. "I see," Reid murmurs, just for something to say.

"No, I don't think you do," Matt says softly, reaching out to keep Reid from moving too far away. "I like you," he says, tilting his head to be sure Reid is looking at him. "But I don't want this to flare up and burn bright and put itself out, you know? I want something that lasts longer than a hot flash of passion."

"If time and space are what you need to believe that..." Reid lifts his hand to caress Matt's face. "Then take all you need. I'll still be here."

"Thursday is my day off," Matt says, turning just enough to kiss Reid's hand where it touches his face. "Why don't we do dinner and then I'll stay over? Maybe we can watch a movie or something?"

"If that's what you want." Reid stares at Matt, wondering if he's missing something. "It's so much easier when the boy wants to obey."

Matt can tell that Reid either doesn't understand, or doesn't agree, but he can't back down now. "It's what we need," he says firmly.

"It's what you need," Reid corrects him, his tone still quiet. "And I am willing to give it to you. But don't try and tell me it is what I need."

Matt lowers his gaze. He wonders if this is it, if this decision is going to be the end of them. "It is," he says softly, but firmly. "What I need."

"Fine. Shall I call you on Thursday then?" Reid asks as he takes a step back withdrawing from Matt.

"If you want to wait that long," Matt says, eyes still on the floor. "You can call before then if you'd like." He tries to grab Reid's hand before he slips away but all he comes up with is a handful of air.

"Until Thursday then," Reid says flatly, ignoring Matt's attempt to soften his decision. "Goodnight."

"Goodnight," Matt sighs, turning to set the liquor bottles back up on the shelf.

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Matt swipes his rag across the bar, wiping away the rings of condensation from the previous customer's drink. There's a lull in the traffic and Matt can't help but keep glancing at the door, the same way he has since his shift started. He hasn't seen Reid since their conversation on Monday, and now that it's Wednesday he's starting to worry that he pushed away too hard and he might not see him again.

He's on the early shift today so if Reid doesn't show his face in the next hour Matt knows he'll have a hard decision... either call him or assume their date for Thursday is off.

The clock crawls, each minute passing slower than the last until it's finally time to leave. He
gathers his things and with one last look down the hallway, steps outside. It's a nice night, and still early so he decides to walk part of the way home, needing the air and the time to think.

Reid has waited for what seems like an eternity and he can't wait any longer. He presses the screen on his phone to dial Matt's cell phone number. Reid hears the rings and by the third one he is nervous that Matt might not answer.

Matt can hear his phone ring and he has to stop walking and dig it out of his bag where he'd stowed it during work. His heart races when he sees the name on the display. "Hey," he says, a big grin on his face despite all the worry he has.

"Hello," Reid says softly, just the sound of Matt's voice making him feel better. "Did I call at a bad time?"

"No!" Matt says, pushing his bag up on his shoulder and continuing down the street. "I was just walking home. I'm glad you called," he says, resisting the urge to add that he was afraid it wasn't going to happen.

"I called to see if we are still on for tomorrow?" asks Reid.

"Yes," Matt says enthusiastically. "I wasn't sure you were still interested. You seemed to be avoiding me at work this week."

Reid laughs softly into the phone. "You can't have it both ways, Matty. I've been giving you space."

"I needed space as far as not spending every night at your place, not space from seeing you on and off and work," Matt says. "But you ran away so quickly on Monday I didn't get a chance to explain." This conversation is already not going the way he expected.

"We can talk tomorrow," Reid tells him, curious about Matt's "explanation", but not wanting to discuss it with him over the phone. "At dinner. Did you have somewhere in mind?"

"There's nothing I can pick out that would live up to your last choice, so if you have somewhere you like I'd be happy to let you choose. If not I'm sure I can come up with something," Matt says. He's missed the sound of Reid's voice, and having it in his ear reminds him just how much.

"I would be happy to choose the restaurant. Can I pick you up? Or would you rather just meet me there?" Reid gives Matt the second option in the hopes that his boy can see that he is trying.

"I'd love for you to pick me up," Matt says. "That way I can leave my bag in the car while we eat... assuming the offer still stands for me to stay over?" he asks hesitantly.

"You are welcome to stay at my place whenever you want," replies Reid, his spirits lifting with Matt's words. "I'll pick you up at seven."

"I'm looking forward to it." Matt gives Reid directions to his flat, realizing that now he doesn't even think twice about trusting him with that information.

"As am I. Have a good evening, Matt," Reid says softly.

"Goodnight, Reid," Matt says and then clicks off his phone, a spring in his step and a smile on his face.

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Reid turns onto the street where Matt's flat is located. It's a neighborhood in the West End, but he is reminded that some areas have yet to be renovated. He parks the car in the first available space, clicking the button on his key fob to set the car alarm before he climbs the stairs to the front door of the building.

At least it has an intercom to buzz in visitors, Reid thinks as he searches the list for Matt's name. He doesn't find it so he digs his cell out of his pocket and calls Matt's number.

"Hey!" Matt says breathlessly as he struggles into his coat one handed. "Sorry I'm late, I'm on my way down now."

"No need to rush. You're not late, I'm early," says Reid. "Take your time, I'll wait here." He's surprised when Matt doesn't invite him in, but then remembers the other man's plea for "space". Reid walks back down to the street to wait for Matt.

Matt pulls the phone away from his ear and looks at the display as he jogs down the stairs, surprised that Reid hung up so abruptly. He pushes through the front door and looks both ways up and down the street. It takes a moment but he sees Reid walking back toward his car. "Hey," he says with a smile as he catches up with him, worried about the start of the date already.

"Hello," Reid replies with ready smile. He wants to kiss Matt, but he's unsure the intimate greeting would be welcome. "You look good." Reid opts for the compliment instead.

"Thank you. It's good to see you," he says, stepping toward Reid hesitantly. The other man is being distant, but he tries to ignore that and act normally. He pushes up on his toes and gives Reid a quick kiss on the cheek.

Reid's smile softens as he opens the door for Matt. "I'm glad you wore your coat. It's quite cold tonight."

"I'm sure you'll keep me warm," Matt grins up at Reid as he climbs into the car, settling his overnight bag at his feet.

Shutting the door securely, Reid's mind is spinning. Matt is flirting with him. There's no way he can be misinterpreting that. Reid rounds the car and gets in behind the wheel. "The food where we are going is really delicious. I hope you like Indian."

"I love it," Matt says, putting on his seat belt. "I developed a taste for it when I was still a student. Easy to find and relatively cheap so it quickly became a favorite."

"Then I think you will like where I am taking you," Reid tells him. "It's one of the oldest Indian restaurants in the UK. Veeraswamy. Have you heard of it?"

"I haven't. But I trust your judgement," Matt says, shifting in his seat so he can watch Reid. "You haven't lead me astray yet."

"Are you certain of that?" Reid glances over at Matt with a smile before returning his eyes to the busy London street.

"Absolutely," Matt says, reaching over to touch Reid's hand. Things feel better now, but he knows things are still strained between them.

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Reid makes a sensuous sound of enjoyment when he takes the first bite of his food. The flavors of
his favorite lamb dish explode across his tongue and he nods in complete approval. "Delicious," Reid smiles.

"Excellent choice," Matt agrees. He'd let Reid order all the food and wine, and he savors the results of that decision. "You seem to know all the best places."

"My father's influence. Only the best for..." Reid stops talking when he almost says his father's name. "Him," he finishes with a smile before taking another bite of his lamb.

It's the first time Reid has mentioned his father and Matt waits a beat to see if he'll continue. When the moment passes, Matt follows up. "Do you see him often?"

"No. He died a few years ago," replies Reid.

"Oh," Matt says quietly. "I'm sorry to hear that."

"Thank you, but we really weren't that close," says Reid. "He was a difficult man to know and even more difficult to love."

"But you moved here to live with him?" Matt can't help but ask. He knows he probably shouldn't, given the tenuous peace between them, but he wants to know more about Reid in hopes of figuring out what makes him tick.

Reid nods, reaching for his wine glass to take a drink before he responds. "Unfortunately, we each had entirely different reasons for that move. But you don't want to hear about that."

"I think you'd be surprised," Matt says softly. "I don't think there's anything I don't want to know about you. But if you don't want to talk about it, I understand."

Staring into Matt's eyes makes Reid want to tell him, if only to help his young lover really understand. "How old were you when you realized that you were gay?"

Matt sits back slightly, not expecting that change of topic. "Some time in junior high. Or at least that's the first time I had a name for it. I probably knew deep down earlier than that."

"I was thirteen. Living in New Orleans, a streetcar ride away from The Quarter. Being raised by a single, very hard-working mother who had no bloody idea what to do with me. My father had been asking her for years to let me come and live with him. I am his only child and he had plans for me." Reid takes another drink of his wine. "The night I was brought home in the back of a police car was the last straw for my mother and she finally relented and shipped me off to England. I saw it as a chance to get away from her, not knowing that I was jumping out of the pan and into the fire, so to speak."

"Only thirteen and coming home in a cop car? Impressive," Matt says, taking a sip of his wine. He hopes Reid will continue, so he falls silent once again.

"The ride in the cop car was when I was sixteen. That was right before I moved to England. I had discovered an underground BDSM club, but unfortunately for me, so did the police." Reid sighs and smiles. "My father had no idea what he was getting, it certainly wasn't what he was hoping for, a gay son with a penchant for kink."

"You've led quite the interesting life," Matt says, taking another bite. "So did that end your relationship with your mother?"

"No. We're actually quite close now, despite the geographical distance." Reid returns his attention
to his food. "Last night, when we talked on the phone. You said you wanted a chance to explain..."

Again Matt is left reeling from the abrupt change in topic. "I did," he says, trying to shift gears. "I feel like you thought the worst of me after our last conversation."

"I'm sorry you felt that way," replies Reid. "If I gave you that impression, it wasn't my intent."

_You pulled away from me and didn't speak to me for three days!_ is what Matt wants to say but he demurs. "Would I be overstepping my bounds to say that you haven't had very many long term relationships?" he asks, practically holding his breath with worry about how Reid will react.

"I believe that you already know the answer to that question, Matt," Reid says quietly.

"I think maybe..." Matt trails off, trying to formulate how he wants to say things. "Maybe you are a little out of practice on how the whole courtship part of new relationships goes. You kinda of went from zero to sixty in the space of about twenty-four hours." Matt fidgets with his wine glass, spinning it back and forth on the table. "You aren't the first powerful man to sweep me off my feet and I was just trying to be cautious."

Reid gives a slight nod of his head. "Point taken. Too much, too fast. I understand. I'd like to say that I am out of practice, but in reality, completely inexperienced is closer to the truth. You are my first and only vanilla relationship." He reaches across the table, lightly touching Matt's hand. "This powerful man... I remind you of him?"

"Not exactly," Matt says, "and that's a good thing, trust me." He sighs, turning his hand over so he can twine their fingers together. "But I need to take it slow."

"You might not believe this, but I thought I was taking it slow." Reid rubs his thumb against Matt's palm. "I'm afraid I don't do 'normal' very well."

"Tell me about your normal," Matt asks tentatively.

Reid's thumb goes still where he was caressing Matt's hand. "We don't need to go there, Matt," he says softly.

"Don't we?" Matt whispers, almost afraid to say it out loud. It's been the elephant in the room for far too long.

"I can't very well pass as your average guy when I own a fetish club, but I have been doing my best not to let that interfere with us." A worried frown creases Reid's brow as he looks across the table at Matt.

"But how long can you continue to be something you aren't?" Matt asks, giving Reid's hand a squeeze.

Reid is quiet, but his heart is pounding so loudly that he can hear the beat in his ears. "Not for as long as I hoped," he says finally.

"So tell me about your normal," Matt says, needing to hear about it. He isn't entirely sure how it will make him feel but it's better than not knowing at all.

"I'm a dom, Matt. A dominant. A top. A Sir. And I like to dominate other men who want to submit to me," Reid tell him. "The form of this submission varies. Some boys enjoy bondage, others prefer pain. I don't really care what form it takes, it's the submission that gets me off. That's my normal."
Matt swallows hard. It is one thing to know that Reid is in the "lifestyle," as he always hears it called, it's quite another to hear the exact words said out loud. "And that's the type of relationships you've had in the past. Boys that want to submit to you."

"Boys' is just a term for a submissive male, a bottom to my top. I don't do underage boys. Consenting adults only." Reid sighs and leans back in his chair. "And what I had with them would not be classified as a relationship."

Matt lets go of Reid's hand as he leans away and he finds himself mirroring the movement, sinking back in his own chair. "So not only is this your first and only vanilla relationship it's your first and only relationship period?"

"Yes," Reid says emphatically, feeling as if he's just been given a test and failed miserably.

Picking at the edge of the tablecloth, Matt sits in silence for a moment. "So why me? Why now?"

"I'm attracted to you. Very much so. And why now? Because you just came into my life," Reid answers, but gives Matt a confused look. "Why are you with me now?" he returns.

"Because I'm attracted to you," Matt says immediately, that part being easy. "I guess what I should have asked is whether you could ever be truly happy in a vanilla relationship."

"How can I answer that when I've never tried?" Reid asks softly.

Matt smiles, as confusing as all this is, Reid is still wise. "Thank you for being honest with me."

"I never intended not to be, yet ignoring the issue wasn't working as well as I'd hoped either," admits Reid, returning Matt's smile. "So what does this full disclosure mean for us?"

"It means we're both on the same page and we've addressed the elephant in the room," Matt smiles. "And we need to keep talking to make this work. How does that sound?" he asks, hoping his rambling makes sense.

"Very mature," Reid grins. "I'll do my best."

"As will I," Matt says. There's a lot more he'd love to ask but he doesn't want to break this tenuous peace. "Now eat up, your dinner is getting cold," he smiles.

"Yes, sir," Reid says playfully before taking another bite of his food.

Matt grins and picks his fork back up. He feels a huge sense of relief and can finally relax more than he has in days.

When they are finished with their meal, Reid and Matt walk slowly back to his car. "So where to now?" Reid asks cautiously.

"Back to your place? Unless you had something else in mind." Matt smiles up at Reid. "I'd say we could go out for drinks but I can't risk you finding a hotter bartender."

"There is no hotter bartender than you," Reid tells him as he caresses Matt's cheek. "I want to kiss you."

"I'd like that. I've missed that this week," Matt says, tipping his face up.

Reid's kiss is tender and slow, a wordless promise to his young lover.
Matt slides his hands around Reid's waist, pulling him closer. He marvels again at how well they seem to fit together. "That kiss is a deadly weapon," he murmurs when they part for air.

"Then I'll use it every chance I get," Reid warns. He unlocks the door for Matt to get in then walks around. Once inside, he cranks the car. "I hope you're not too cold. We'll be home by the time the car warms up."

"I'll be fine," Matt promises, buckling up. "You'll just have to warm me up when we get there."

"I think I can handle that," smiles Reid before he backs out of the parking space. Their conversation is light and joking on the drive back to Reid's place. He parks the car then carries Matt's bag as he leads him toward the back entrance to the building. They climb the flight of stairs leading to Reid's door where he pauses to kiss Matt again. "I'm glad you came back with me."

"I like staying over," Matt says. "I just didn't like the feeling that you were expecting it every night," he continues, keeping his tone light. "Needed to apply the brakes a bit, that's all. But I must say I've dreamed of your shower."

"Ah hah! The truth comes out," Reid laughs as he unlocks the door and they go inside. "It's not me, it's my shower." He sets Matt's bag on the couch and pulls the beautiful young man into his arms.

"You discovered my secret," Matt laughs, throwing his arms around Reid's neck. "I just couldn't stay away from the shower any longer."

"So I'll just go to bed then while you take a shower," Reid teases.

"You'd pass up the chance to see me naked? You've wounded my fragile ego," Matt grins, stepping back and clutching his chest dramatically.

"Never," Reid says, reaching for Matt and pulling him back into his arms. "I will take each and every opportunity to see you naked. That I can promise you."

"Well, I think a viewing could be arranged," Matt says. "It might cost you though."

"How much?" asks Reid, his hands already searching for some bare skin to caress beneath Matt's shirt.

"Lots and lots," Matt laughs, leaning closer to Reid. "And probably breakfast in bed."

"As long as it's my bed, I will make you breakfast whenever you want," promises Reid as he kisses Matt's neck.

"You better not be making promises you can't keep," Matt says softly, his hands sliding up Reid's back and coming to rest at the nape of his neck. He inhales deeply, having missed the scent of Reid's cologne.

"Never," Reid murmurs next to Matt's ear. "And I'm glad you're staying until breakfast. I have a few ideas of how we can pass the time 'til morning."

"Care to tell me about them?" Matt asks softly, the sound of Reid's deep voice sending shivers of arousal down his spine.

"I'd rather demonstrate," Reid smiles, lifting Matt against him. "Mind if we move this to the bed?"

"Excellent suggestion," Matt says, tipping his head up to give Reid a quick kiss. "I missed your bed
almost as much as I missed your shower."

Reid chuckles softly as he lowers Matt onto the enormous bed and hovers over him. "Then I think my mission is clear," he says as he begins to slowly unbutton Matt's shirt.

Matt has to resist the urge to help Reid, knowing his lover likes the slow reveal. He relaxes back against the bed, his gaze fixed on the other man's face.

"I need to make you miss me as much as you miss my bed and shower," Reid says. He finished with the last button and slowly opens Matt's shirt, drinking in the sight of his young lover's smooth skin as he pushes the fabric aside.

"I do," Matt whispers, "it is just a lot harder for me to admit that." He's happy for the shadows in the darkened room, letting them hide his face. "The bed and shower are easier to talk about."

"You need to learn to let go, love," Reid whispers before kissing the spot right above Matt's navel. "I can help you with that."

Matt threads his fingers into Reid's hair, pushing it back away from his face so he can see where Reid's lips meet his skin. "I think that scares me even more," he says, so soft he hopes Reid might not hear.

"There's nothing to be scared of," assures Reid as he pulls Matt up enough to slide his shirt away. "Do you trust me?" he asks softly as his fingers begin to unfasten Matt's belt buckle.

_It's me I don't trust_, Matt thinks as he watches Reid's deft fingers. "I do," he says, keeping his other thoughts to himself.

"I'm not going to hurt you," Reid tells him, a piece of his soul aching as he murmurs the words. He unbuckles the belt, unfastens the button on Matt's trousers then slowly lowers the zipper. Reid lets the back of his knuckles rub against the fabric of Matt's underwear as he watches his boy's expression.

"I trust you," Matt repeats, hearing something in Reid's voice that makes him want to reassure him. And, he has to admit, saying it again helps reassure him as well. He wants to spread his legs open in invitation and rock his hips against Reid's hand but his pants are still twisted around his thighs, keeping him still against the bed.

Reid pulls Matt's trousers off, kissing his shin, his knee and his hip as he crawls back up his lover's body. "I want to make you feel good. So good that you won't worry about letting go with me." He hooks a finger in the waist band of Matt's underwear then pauses with a smile. "And I'm wearing too many clothes," Reid says as he lets go and moves back to shrug out of his coat jacket and begin undressing.

Matt's cock aches with the anticipated then denied touch. His breath catches as Reid pulls away but he watches with rapt interest as the layers of his lover's clothes are pulled away.

Slowly sliding off his boxer briefs, Reid smiles as Matt watches his every move. Perhaps he is a bit of an exhibitionist after all. Taking hold of his own erection, he slowly strokes himself as he tells Matt how much he wants to be inside him again.

Matt pushes up onto his elbows and reaches out for Reid, wanting to pull him close enough to touch.

Crawling back onto the bed within Matt's reach, Reid smiles at how eager his boy is to touch him
"Let me do that," Matt smiles, his fingers closing around Reid's cock. He strokes slowly up and down his lover's length, pausing at the top just long enough to swipe his thumb across his slit.

Reid moans with the pleasure, his cock hardening with Matt's slow and steady strokes.

"I dreamed about this while we were apart," Matt whispers, staring up at Reid. "I'd wake up in the night thinking about you."

Matt's words are like fuel on the fire that's been burning inside Reid since the first time he realized that he would have to make Matt his. Reaching for Matt, he pulls him closer and claims his mouth with a hungry and possessive kiss.

Letting his legs fall open, Matt lets Reid settle between them before wrapping his own legs around the back of Reid's thighs. He can feel the hot press of his lover's cock against his hip and he moans into the kiss.

Reid yanks at the briefs that Matt is still wearing, needing him naked as soon as possible. He reaches for the lube and condom, unwilling to wait much longer to be inside his boy again.

Breathless, Matt watches as Reid prepares himself. He can't help but reach out and traces his fingers across the lines of Reid's abs and down over his hip as he waits.

Lying down beside Matt, Reid asks him to roll over. "On your side." He places a guiding hand on Matt's hip. "Please," Reid adds softly.

Matt gives Reid a quick kiss before turning onto his side, his back pressed back against the other man's broad chest.

Reid kisses Matt's shoulder as he begins to prepare him, sliding his lube-covered fingers between Matt's cheeks and rubbing them against his hole. "This is where I want to be," he tells his young lover.

"Yes," Matt murmurs, "I want you there." He loves the warmth of Reid's breath on his shoulder, and he bends his top leg at the knee, pulling it toward his chest, to give Reid's fingers more room to explore.

Pushing a finger inside Matt, Reid begins to slowly stretch him. The dom inside him wants to take what is his, but he is resisting the urge to rush anything with Matt. He needs to show his boy that slow can be just as pleasurable as fast.

Matt twists around, craning his neck so he can see Reid's face and capture his mouth in a kiss. He loves the way Reid looks when he's this aroused, eyes darkened and skin flushed, and knowing he's the cause gives him a rush of pleasure.

Reid continues to kiss Matt as he finally eases inside him, capturing each breath and moan between them.

Gasping as his body stretches and adjusts, Matt reaches his hand back to rest on Reid's hip. He arches his back, pushing his hips back greedily, his body aching for more. Smiling at how responsive Matt is to him, Reid moves slowly inside him. His hand slides along Matt's stomach up to his chest where he teases his nipple while they continue to kiss. Matt breaks the kiss with a gasp for breath, Reid's fingers working his nipple to pebble hardness. His fingers tighten against Reid's hip, as his body responds to his lover's touch.
Reid moves his hand back to Matt's hip to slow the rhythm between them. He is going to take this slow and so will his boy. Reid notices the fading bruise on Matt's neck, the mark he gave him. He brushes his lips across it as he moves inside him.

"You must like that spot," Matt murmurs, his entire body buzzing with need as he adjusts to the slower pace. He doesn't admit he spent a lot of time looking at the bruise in the mirror, tracing his finger over it as it faded, in the time they'd spent apart.

"I do," Reid murmurs, racking his teeth across it, barely grazing the skin. "I like the boy who has that spot," he tells Matt as his hand moves from his lover's hip to his cock. Matt moans when Reid's hand finds his prick, his hips jerking forward unbidden. Reid slides deeper inside Matt, capturing him completely between his cock and his hand. He keeps the slow, steady pace as he begins to stroke Matt as he continues to fuck him from behind.

Turning his head to muffle his cries in the pillow, Matt's hips pinball between the tight grip of Reid's fist and the aching stretch of his cock, his body unable to decide what it wants most. Releasing Matt's cock, Reid's hand moves back to his hip. He stops stroking Matt's cock, but he continues to move inside him.

"Keep going," Matt pleads, his voice thick with need. When Reid's hand doesn't move, he releases his own hold on Reid's hip and snakes his hand back toward his cock, the dual sensation too heady to miss out on.

Reid wraps his hand around Matt's wrist to stop him. "Trust me," he says, raising Matt's arm above his head where he can hold onto him with his hand. Reid's other hand returns to his boy's cock and begins stroking him again.

Matt struggles for a moment against Reid's hold until his brain processes though what Reid has said. "I trust you," he says, hoping that saying the words aloud will convince his brain to believe them. His body knows how to respond without any convincing, his cock throbbing in Reid's hand.

"I want to make you feel so good," Reid croons next to Matt's ear as his boy begins to settle, his hips rocking with his strokes again. He kisses Matt's temple, his jawline, his neck. Reid releases the hold he has on Matt's cock again as his own thrusts inside his lover increase in speed and strength. He knows that the starting and stopping is frustrating his boy, but Reid also knows that it will be worth it.

"No!" Matt cries out, feeling his cheeks flush with embarrassment at his outburst. "Please don't stop," he says, once again pulling against Reid's strong grip on his wrist.

"Shhhhhh," Reid whispers, pressing another kiss next to Matt's ear. "Trust me, love. I'm going to take good care of you," he promises as he tightens his hold on Matt and quickens his own thrusts.

Matt huffs out his frustration, pushing once more against Reid's hand before going slack, knowing Reid will let go when he'd good and ready to do it and not a moment before. His body is screaming for relief but he can't get there on his own.

Reid thrusts faster. He knows Matt is on the edge and he wants to keep him there, wanting and needing release. Reid's hand starts to caress Matt's chest again, pulling and pinching his nipple as he moves inside him. Turning his head into the pillow, Matt screams out his frustration. His body trembles, the need so intense he's sure he will explode. Sliding his hand down over Matt's stomach, Reid palms his boy's rigid cock. Matt is so hard, his body rigid with tension as he whimpers and shakes in Reid's embrace.
"Please," Matt whimpers, afraid Reid will pull away yet again. He arches and twists in Reid's arms, his body completely out of his control.

"Please what, love?" asks Reid as he pushes deep inside Matt's body as he keeps rubbing him with the flat of his palm, possessing him as completely as possible.

"I need to come," Matt pleads, right on the verge of his climax yet left chasing after the elusive edge.

Reid wraps his hand around Matt's throbbing cock and begins to stroke him hard and fast. When he detects the first moment of Matt's release, he sucks hard on the fading bruise on his boy's neck, knowing that he'll leave a mark again.

Matt arches and comes harder than he ever has, the release slamming through every nerve ending of his body at once. He's never felt anything like it and the feel of Reid's lips and teeth against his neck are just icing on the cake.

With the tight heat of Matt's body clenching around him, Reid has to stay focused himself so he doesn't come before he is ready. His boy in pleasure is the most beautiful thing that Reid can imagine and he doesn't want to miss a second of it. Matt's body spasms and jerks for what seems like an eternity, wave after wave of pleasure coursing through him. Reid's arms ground him though and keep him safe.

"So beautiful," Reid murmurs next to Matt's ear as he kisses his neck and holds him close. His boy is even more responsive than he's hoped and Reid can't stop touching him as he slowly begins to come back.

"You make me beautiful," Matt whispers, turning his exhausted body just enough to give Reid a kiss. He's dimly aware that his lover hasn't come but right now the haze of pleasure is making him lazy.

Reid kisses him, long and slow. He caresses Matt's face, brushing his sweat-soaked hair away from his forehead and admiring the warm flush in his lover's skin. "I want to come with you watching me," Reid whispers against Matt's lips.

"Yes," Matt murmurs back, smiling in anticipation. "I want to see that."

Easing out of Matt's spent body, Reid guides his boy to lay on his back as he straddles Matt's legs. He removes the condom and begins to fist his cock while holding Matt's gaze.

Matt stares up at the perfect physical specimen that is is Reid, his stomach twisting in pleasure even as wrung out as he is. "You look so good right now," he says softly.

"You see how hard you make me?" asks Reid, taking a slow pull on his shaft as he memorizes Matt's freshly-fucked features.

Blushing, Matt's tongue darts out to wet his lips. "I like that I can do that to you," he admits.

"Good..." Reid smiles at his sexy boy, his lips parting as his breath comes faster. With a low groan of pleasure, his release spurts over his hand and onto Matt's chest and stomach.

Matt is transfixed by the sight of Reid's climax, he's sure it will play over and over again in his dreams. He slides his finger across his stomach, collecting a bit of the sticky fluid and brings it to his lips, tasting his lover.
Exhaling in satisfied huffs of breath, Reid crawls over Matt and claims his mouth for another kiss. He can taste himself on Matt's tongue, never getting enough of marking his boy, inside and out.

Wrapping his arms around Reid, Matt presses up into the kiss. The entire experience has been overwhelming but this part feels right and he's pretty sure he wants to do it again pretty much right away.

Shifting to lie down beside Matt without moving from his boy's embrace, Reid looks into his eyes and smiles. "Was it worth trusting me?" he asks, caressing Matt's cheek right below the scar near his eye.

"Honestly?" Matt says, pausing long enough to see the agreement in Reid's eyes. "In the moment, I think I wanted to kill you. But then once I came, it was so intense that I decided to let you live."

Reid tilts his head back, laughing loudly at Matt's response. "Don't hold back on me, Matty. Tell me how you really feel," he teases, loving his boy's frankness.

"Sorry," Matt laughs. "I really was thinking some pretty murderous thoughts though," he says, resting his head on Reid's chest.

"And you are gorgeous like that. There's no resisting you," Reid tells him as he strokes his fingers through Matt's hair.

"So doing that..." Matt says, his eyes closing as he relaxes. "That's something you like to do with your boys?"

Reid hesitates, wanting to answer Matt's question, but in the best way for his new lover to understand. "Delaying orgasm, yes. But in other forms. Not as intimate as what we just shared."

Matt mulls over Reid's answer, his fingers curling softly against Reid's skin. He's curious about things but he's also not entirely sure he wants to think about Reid having sex with other men.

Reid wants to tell Matt that it is different with him, that he was never as turned on by what they did until now. He wants Matt to know that he's the reason. But how can he convince him?

The silence stretches between them, but Matt feels content just to lay beside Reid and be close to him. His fingers continue to move slowly across the other man's skin, just exploring and feeling.

"I'm glad you came back home with me. I'm glad you're here," Reid says quietly, breaking the silence.

Matt lifts his head and opens his eyes, glancing up at Reid. "I'm glad you are being patient with me. I know I'm... different than what you are used to."

Reid caresses Matt's forehead, letting his hair slide through his fingers. "You say that as if being different isn't a good thing."

"Is it a good thing?" Matt asks, his eyes fixed on Reid's face.

"I think it can be..." Reid says carefully.

"Okay," Matt says after a long pause. He gives a slight nod of his head and then lays it back down on Reid's chest.
Chapter 11

Reid balances the tray that he carries, being careful not to spill the coffee and juice. He puts the tray holding an enormous, fluffy, golden yellow omelet and a small bowl of berries and cream on the bedside table then crawls onto the bed to begin searching for the beautiful boy who he knows is still sleeping beneath the mound of covers.

Matt squints as the blankets are pulled away from his face but quickly smiles when he finds Reid staring down at him. "Good morning," he murmurs, his voice cracking and making him smile even wider.

Grinning as he pushes the duvet and sheets aside, Reid replies with "Good morning. Ready to come out of hibernation for some breakfast?"

"Making me choose between your bed and your breakfast? That's cruel," Matt says, pushing up on his elbows.

"You don't have to choose," Reid tells him as he gestures toward the tray of food. "Breakfast in bed, just as you requested last night."

"Amazing." Matt sits up and scoots back to make room for the food and Reid beside him. "So when I ask for things you can just make them appear?" he teases.

"No, I'm not Santa Claus," laughs Reid as he repositions the tray on his lap. "You seemed to like eggs the last time you were here so I hope you don't mind an omelet built for two."

"It smells delicious." Matt leans over and gives Reid a kiss. "I'm so glad I didn't follow through on my impulse to kill you last night."

"You really wanted to kill me?" Reid smiles as he uses the fork to cut into the omelet, scooping up a piece and offering it to Matt.

Matt leans forward and accepts the bite, moaning softly in appreciation at the perfectly cooked egg. "No, not really. Punch maybe but not kill."

Reid stares at Matt as he chews, something stirring inside him at the sound of his boy's soft moan. "I'd take a punch to see you like that again. You're so beautiful when you're flushed and frustrated."

Matt can feel his cheeks flushing at the memory. "So that's something you like? Seeing me ready to rip your head off?"

"Seeing you on the edge of pleasure and knowing I'm the one that's going to take you all the way there," Reid says softly as he offers Matt another bite of the omelet. "That is what I like."

Taking another bite of the omelet saves Matt from having to say something right away. He chews and swallows as he processed what Reid has said. "So you like being in control of me," he says softly.

"I supposed that is one way to look at," admits Reid. "Does that bother you?"

"No," Matt lies, reaching out for the cup of coffee on the tray.

"Are you sure about that?" Reid pushes, sensing that Matt is holding back with him.
Rather than lie again, Matt sips his coffee. He hates that Reid can see through him so easily. He's promised himself he wouldn't let his past bother him anymore and here it is coming up just when things are going so well.

"Talk to me, Matt," Reid says quietly.

"You've already learned how I like my coffee," Matt says softly, staring down at the cup. It's such a little thing but it shows how much Reid pays attention. He knows he's avoiding what Reid wants to know but he's been avoiding talking and thinking about it for so long that he can't just come right out with it.

"That worried expression on your face has nothing to do with your coffee." Reid reaches over to caress Matt's chin and tilt his face back up to look at him. "If you won't tell me, I'll think the worst. And I have a horrid imagination."

"I had a bad experience with someone who wanted to control me," Matt says, hoping it will be enough.

Reid keeps his features neutral despite the tempest stirring inside at the thought of someone else controlling his boy. "A lover?" he asks carefully. He has to know.

Matt sets his coffee cup down on the tray, his appetite gone. He should have known Reid wouldn't let this go. He could kick himself for letting it come up in the first place. "I'm sure everyone has war stories about old boyfriends."

Interesting choice of words. "Is that what is was like with him. A war?" asks Reid.

"More like a surprise attack," Matt says softly. "But I guess you don't know do you? You haven't had a relationship before." He knows he's being unfair but he can't help but try and deflect the topic away from his past.

"Who was he, Matt?" Reid is straight forward, not willing to take the bait or be distracted from knowing more about this.

Matt looks over at Reid and can see the tenacity in his eyes. He's not going to let this go. "Fine," Matt says under his breath with a sigh. "You win." He pulls his knees up to his chest, being careful not to disturb the tray. "I had a brief but intense relationship with one of my professors in college."

Reid is aware of Matt's body language and he can feel him pulling away emotionally as well. "A professor. An older man? Like me?"

"Yes older. Older than you. Controlling." Matt can hear the distance in his voice as he delves into the memories. "He courted me... pursued me... eventually won me over. It was all so fast and so intense," he says, remembering those heady days.

"Then what happened?" Reid tries to ignore the descriptions that sound just like what he's been doing with Matt, telling himself he's different from Matt's professor.

"I moved in. I was sure that it was meant to be and I was always going to be that happy. Unfortunately, after about a semester, he got bored and started looking elsewhere. Liked the chase, not so much the rest of it all I guess."

"He was a fool," Reid says bitterly. "I am sorry that you were hurt by him. Now I understand your need for us to slow down. It makes sense. Although I don't like being categorized with your professor."
"In a strange way he's actually partially responsible for us meeting," Matt says with a rueful laugh.

"How so?" asks Reid as he recalls the moment when he first met Matt in his friend's club.

"I ended up studying abroad because I hadn't bothered to fill out a housing contract for the dorm. I was going to be living with him, right? So when he finally kicked me out just before the semester started I had no place to live. Then by a miracle of happenstance my friend who'd planned to study abroad got sick and couldn't go. I stepped in and took his place. If I hadn't then I never would have moved here after graduation and met you. So something good did come of it, right?"

Reid reaches out to Matt, hoping he will take his hand. "I think it's a good thing that I met you. I hope you do, too."

Matt twines their fingers together and gives Reid's hand a squeeze. "Definitely a good thing." He hates that he poured that all out, but so far Reid doesn't seem to be running away. "Maybe you have the right idea with this 'no relationships' policy."

"Had," Reid murmurs, leaning over to kiss the back of Matt's hand. "It's not what I want now."

Matt forces a smile, but deep inside he's still worried. He's not sure that part of him will ever fully trust again. "I let our breakfast get cold," he says, ready to change the subject.

"Here..." Reid gives Matt the bowl of berries. "Nibble on those until I get back with something hotter," he says with a grin.

"No, it's fine really," Matt says, keeping a hold on Reid's hand so he can't leave. "I'm not really hungry." He does take the bowl of berries, but he pulls one out with his fingers and feeds it to Reid.

"But you barely ate anything..." Reid says when he's finished chewing the berry.

"I know. I promise I'm usually a good eater," he says, knowing that Reid already knows that to be true. "I'd just rather you stay here right now."

Reid puts the tray of food aside so he can pull Matt into his arms and hold him. He worries that he has upset Matt by making him talk about the bad relationship with his professor.

Matt hopes that his revelation doesn't change things between them, it's too late to take it back. He snuggles up against Reid's solid chest, sliding his arms around him.

"I'm sorry," Reid says softly. "I can tell it was hard for you talk about that. I shouldn't have pushed."

"It's okay. You needed to know." Matt softly kisses Reid's chest, hoping he can make him stop talking.

Reid caresses Matt's hair, his fingers resting on the nape of his neck. He gently massages Matt's neck, aware of the tension there.

Matt slowly shifts his body down the bed, kissing his way along Reid's stomach. He hums happily as he explores the expanse of skin, investigating every rise and valley.

Matt's soft hair slips out of Reid's fingers as he moves lower. It seems that his lover might have something else on his mind other than food or talking.

Rolling Reid over on his back, Matt settles down in between his lover's thighs. He splays his hands
out over Reid's hips as he traces his tongue down the line of hair going south from his navel.

Reid's lips part as he inhales a quick breath past his smile. Matt's soft licks and kisses are getting his full attention.

Matt lifts up just enough to see Reid's face, wanting permission since they've moved so quickly from talking to sex. The look in Reid's eyes tells him everything he needs to know and he dips his head and sucks the tip of the other man's cock between his lips.

The sight of his cock sliding past Matt's beautifully full lips is enough to make Reid groan aloud in pleasure and the sweet sensation make him instantly hard.

Matt closes his eyes and concentrates on what he's doing, wanting to make Reid forget all about the conversation they've just had. He's already discovered a few tricks he knows that Reid likes and he pulls them all out, working over his lover's cock with driven intensity.

"Aaah... fuck, Matty. That feels so good," Reid moans, his hips tilting instinctively as his boy takes him deeper.

Matt wants to smile but his mouth is busy. He loves that he can do this to Reid, to make him sound so needy. He relaxes his throat, taking Reid as deep as he can, his hands letting up their pressure on Reid's hips, letting his lover fuck his mouth.

"Gonna come, Matt." Reid's warning is slurred as he can feel his release uncoiling.

Good is all Matt has time to think before his mouth is flooded with Reid's essence. His fingers curl against Reid's skin as he holds on as long as he can, his lips and tongue milking every drop.

Reid's eyes are glazed over with pleasure but he continues to watch Matt's every move, marveling again at just how beautiful his young lover is. "Thank you," he says huskily.

"My pleasure," Matt murmurs, meaning every word. He crawls back up and lays back down beside Reid, resting his hand on Reid's chest.

Covering Matt's hand with his, Reid gives it a soft squeeze. "What time do you have to work today?" he asks, always hoping for more time to be with Matt.

"Three," Matt says, already dreading it. "I have the early shift today."

"Mmmm. Do you want to get a couple more hours of sleep?" asks Reid, knowing they had a late night last night and he woke Matt up early this morning. "I promise to keep my hands off you, if you do," Reid grins.

"Well, in that case... no," Matt laughs. "Why would I want your hands off of me?" he asks.

"So you can sleep." Reid pulls Matt closer, his thigh sliding between his lover's legs and rubbing against him. "Because if I'm touching you, I'd like to think that might keep you awake."

Matt bites his lip, his body involuntarily arching toward Reid. "Sleep is good," he whispers, trying to keep a serious look on his face.

"Then you should sleep," Reid whispers, capturing Matt's mouth for a kiss and slowly sucking on the same lip he was biting.

"If you say so," Matt murmurs into the kiss, making no move to pull away.
Reid's hand slides into Matt's hair, holding him close as their heated kiss continues. His other hand cups Matt's ass and pulls him against him, his upper leg rubbing against Matt's cock again.

Matt moans, all pretense of not wanting this gone. He hitches his leg up higher, using it to pull their bodies even tighter together.

Releasing Matt from their kiss, Reid brushes his lips against Matt's jawline then nibbles on the curve of his ear. "I have another idea," he whispers.

Matt tilts his head back just enough to see Reid's face. "Yeah? What's that?" he asks, his hips still grinding against Reid's thigh.

"I think I'll just keep kissing you instead of letting you sleep," Reid smiles.

"I think maybe I wouldn't stop you from doing that," Matt grins. "In fact you could do that pretty much all the way until three o'clock and I wouldn't complain."

"I'm only going to kiss you until I get hard again. Then I'm going to fuck you," promises Reid as he tilts Matt's head back and leisurely sucks on the spot on his young lover's shoulder that he has marked for himself.

"Promise?" Matt groans, his imagination already running wild as he looks forward to having Reid inside him again.

"I promise," Reid replies, his answer a soft breath against Matt's heated skin. "I love fucking you."

Matt smiles, those words sounding so sweet coming from Reid's lips. "I love it when you fuck me," he says before capturing Reid's mouth again in a heated kiss.

The truth is that Reid would like to tie Matt to his bed and never let him go. He would just keep his boy with him always and fuck him into the submission that Reid fears he will never have with Matt. He reaches for the bottle of lube that he has begun to keep very handy when Matt is visiting and starts to prepare him.

Matt closes his eyes, focusing on the way Reid's fingers feel as they open him up. He can feel his breathing change as his body reacts. He continues pressing open mouth kisses against Reid's lips and neck and shoulders and chest, any part of him he can reach as they shift together.

Despite the fact that he's just come from Matt's glorious blow job, Reid is hard again and ready to be inside his lover. He rolls on a condom before kissing Matt again. "Are you ready for me, Matty?" he asks.

"Always," Matt says, his body aching for Reid. "How do you want me?" he asks, his eyes already glazed with pleasure.

"Roll over," Reid says with a smile, needing to take his boy deep and hard.

Untangling himself from Reid's arms and legs, Matt rolls onto his stomach. He cranes his neck to look back at Reid only to find him admiring the view. "Like what you see?"

"Very much," Reid grins before he takes hold of Matt's hips and pulls him up and back so that he can rub his erection along the crease of his boy's beautiful ass.

Matt pushes up onto his hands and knees, arching his back and spreading his thighs as Reid slides between his cheeks. He's always like getting fucked like this and he can feel his cock leaking
already, before they've even begun.

Reid admires the way that Matt moves, graceful and sexy as hell. He can't wait anymore and he slowly pushes inside Matt, watching as his boy takes every inch of him.

Exhaling sharply, Matt resists the urge to push back, letting Reid set the pace as he slowly sinks in. "You feel so good," he murmurs, his words muffled in the sheets.

"You do, too," replies Reid. You were made for me, he thinks as he begins to move slowly inside the tight heat of Matt's body. His hands hold Matt's hips, pulling him back as he thrusts forward.

"Yes," Matt moans, loving the way Reid takes him so deep. He fists his hands in the sheets and uses them as leverage as he rocks back into each shove of Reid's hips.

"You like my cock, don't you, Matt?" Reid croons, his hips snapping forward as he pushes hard and deep.

"Yes," Matt cries out, his body aching with need as Reid's cock drives to his core. "Need it," he says, working his hand under his body to fist his own length.

"How bad do you need it, baby?" asks Reid as he stops, buried deep inside his lover.

"Oh God... don't stop," Matt whines, his hips jerking as he strokes his cock. "Please... I need it so bad."

Reid starts moving again, slowly at first, his hips rocking slowly as he fucks his boy. Matt feels too good and Reid needs more, too, so he starts moving faster. Soon all he can hear is the sound of skin slapping against skin and the moans that Matt makes.

Matt moans Reid's name, telling him he's close. He doesn't want this to end but his body has other ideas, the sheer amount of need overwhelming his senses.

"Come for me, Matt. Just for me," Reid growls as he clenches his hands still on Matt's hips. The boy will have bruises tomorrow from the ferocity of their fucking.

The moment Reid's words hit his ears, Matt is coming, hard enough that his entire body convulses. He spasms and shakes, even as Reid continues to split him wide open and the feeling of being used like that is better than he could have ever imagined.

With a noise that sounds like a feral growl, Reid cries out as his second orgasm of the morning slams into him. He slumps over Matt and takes him with him as he falls to the bed, sated and exhausted.

Matt doesn't have the strength to move, he lies motionless in Reid's arms as he tries to catch his breath. The intensity of the connection he feels with Reid scares him, but deep down he knows that something that feels like this can't possibly be wrong.

Reid finally moves, slowly, carefully. He kisses Matt's shoulder as his cock slips from his boy's hole. As weary as he is from their energetic coupling, Reid knows he will never get enough of Matt.

Stretching his entire body like a cat, Matt rolls over and curls up against Reid's side. "Better than sleep, right?" he murmurs.

"Better than anything," admits Reid. He disposes of his condom and pulls Matt closer. "You are
addictive."

"I like the sound of that," Matt says. He likes knowing that he's not the only one feeling that way.
Chapter 12

Mel walks toward the bar, a slight frown on her face. She is not looking forward to this particular task, but she knows that avoiding it any longer than she already has will only delay the inevitable.

*He better not quit because of this, Reid, or you will be the one between the rock and hard place,* thinks Mel as she spies Matt behind the counter. He's early, as usual, and that only makes her seethe a tad hotter with the thought of losing her best employee.

"Hello, Matt."

"Hey Melanie," Matt says, turning around at the sound of her voice. "Ginger Ale with two cherries?" he asks already starting to make her drink.

"Yes, thank you," she replies as she stands near the counter, but does not take a seat. "I need to talk to you about something," Mel starts carefully.

Matt jerks his head up to look at Mel, practically knocking over her glass in the process. He manages to steady his hand in time to keep up the practiced motion of making the drink but his heart is thumping so hard he's sure she can hear it. "Does anything good ever start with those words?" he asks, trying to keep his voice even.

"I'm sorry," Mel says quickly. "A poor choice for my lead in, but it's not bad news." She looks at Matt with a reassuring smile. "However, I must admit to being... concerned. About your reaction."

Matt drops the cherries in her drink and then slides it across the bar. "That noticeable, huh," he mutters.

"You're quite expressive," she says softly then thanks him for the drink. "Reid wants to make a change," continues Mel. She prefaces the news with the point that the decision is not coming from her. No way is she taking the hit for Reid on this one. "He would like you to start cross-training to begin working at the front desk."

Matt's heart stops when Melanie says "make a change," his mind immediately racing to the worst. He'd just left him minutes ago and everything seemed fine, how could things have changed that fast! He dimly hears her continue on and forces himself to process the rest of her words. "Wait... what?" he says, still reeling.

"He wants you to start working at the front desk," repeats Mel. "You're smart, good with customer service. I think you'll do great in that position."

"Is he... unhappy with me? I mean with my work here in the bar?" Matt asks. He's searching Melanie's face, trying to decide if there is some coded message there, something she's trying to tell him about Reid.

"Not at all." Mel shakes her head as her expression becomes even more sympathetic. "You are a great bartender. I wish I could clone you," she smiles. "Think about it for a moment. You must know how Reid feels about you."

Matt leans against the bar, exhaling as he realizes just how jumpy he must seem. "I thought I did. But then you just gave me a right scare without even trying, so maybe I'm not as sure as I thought?" Matt shakes his head, trying to clear those thoughts away. "So why would he want me to move? Surely it's easier to find new desk help than it is to find a bartender?"
"Actually, he's already procured another bartender for us. He stole her from another club. That should go over quite well with that owner when he finds out." Mel rolls her eyes and takes a sip of her ginger ale. "I usually don't speak for Reid, but since he's left me with this task, I'll make an exception." She looks at Matt's still-worried face and smiles. "He wants you at the desk because he feels you'll be safer there. No drunken, handsy customers to grope you. It's harder to grab your ass when you're standing behind the desk," Mel grins.

Matt has to wait a moment, just be sure Melanie isn't teasing. "Seriously? He's still on about that?" He shakes his head. "And what if I don't want to move?" he asks even though he's pretty sure he knows the answer. "I rather like being a bartender, handsy customers and all."

"Then I would try to convince you to reconsider," Mel sighs. "That is my job, as loathsome as it is at times." She shakes her head again. "This is not a bad thing, Matt. And absolutely no reflection on you or your work. It's something that Reid needs, so he'll make it happen."

"Was he afraid I wouldn't take it as well coming from him?" Matt asks, running his finger along the bar, realizing just how natural he feels there and wondering what it will be like to not stand there any more.

"Of course," Mel replies bluntly, seeing no reason to shade the truth. "It's a difficult situation when you are the boss and you're in..." She almost says "love", but catches herself. "A relationship with your employee."

"I'm sorry he put you in that position," Matt says honestly. "I know that having something like this going on makes it difficult to manage your staff."

"He wants you safe, Matt." Mel bites her lip and mentally debates with herself at saying any more to try and make the young bartender understand.

"I'm probably safer behind this bar than I am walking to work," Matt laughs. He can tell that Melanie is struggling with this and he tries to ease her mind. "It's okay, Melanie. I know this isn't your fault.

Mel takes another drink of her ginger ale then sets the glass back down. "Since you've been working here..." She looks at Matt and chooses her words carefully. "Have you picked up on some things? Things about the people who come here. Their lifestyle?"

Matt frowns and gives Melanie a strange look. "I know it's a fetish club. Is that what you mean?"

"Not exactly. I meant more like the personalities of our customers." Mel lowers her chin, still looking straight at Matt. "Like dominants and submissives."

"Oh," Matt says, blushing slightly. "Yes, I know about that part."

"Good," Mel smiles, encouraged by Matt's reply. "Well, the dominant thing is more than just a preference in bed. It's a personality trait. Not exactly something you can turn off and on at will," she tries to explain. "It's that way for Reid, you see. He cares about you a great deal. And the dominant in him is determined to make sure that another man won't be putting his hands on you."

"Oh," Matt says again, thinking through what Melanie has said. "So even though I'm not a... submissive," he says, the word sounding funny to him in his mouth, "he's treating me like one?"

Mel's smile droops. "No... not exactly. When you hear 'dominant' you might think control, but I don't think that's Reid's motivation here. He's not moving you to make you submit to him. He's moving you because he has an innate need to protect you."
"And what do you think?" Matt asks directly. "Am I 'safer' at the desk?"

"For now, I think we'll all be safer with you at the desk." She smiles again, hoping that Matt understands.

Matt has to laugh at that. "True," he says, smiling at Melanie. He knows it isn't her fault and he reminds himself not to take it out on her. "So how much longer do I get in here, or does my exile start right away?"

"The new bartender will be here tomorrow so just one more night in the bar," replies Melanie.

"I better enjoy it then, right?" Matt says. "I'm guessing the tips aren't nearly as good at the desk either," he says with a sigh.

"No, but I'm sure Reid can arrange a salary adjustment to cover the difference. It's the least he can do for your inconvenience at having to learn a new job."

"I promise I wasn't fishing for a raise," Matt laughs. "Will you be training me on the desk?"

"It's a valid point though. This is your livelihood, after all," Mel points out. "And yes, I'll be the one training you. I'm sure you'll be great."

"Thanks. Same schedule or will my hours be different?" Matt asks. He looks over as the first customers of the night wander in, but he has just a minute more while they get settled.

"It will be the same for the most part," answers Mel as she follows Matt's glance and sees the customers. "Well, I'll leave you to it," she tells him. "Truthfully, I'm just glad you didn't quit. I would hate to lose you," Mel whispers before she turns to leave.

"I'd hate to be lost," Matt whispers back, remembering his earlier panic. "I'll see you tomorrow." He grabs her empty glass and whisks it away, lamenting that it's probably the last time they'll share a conversation over her signature drink.

Relieved that Matt wasn't angry about the move, Mel is glad that chore is now behind her. I think I'll ask Reid for a raise for me, too, she thinks as she walks away.

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Matt finishes the last of the dishes and looks around, making sure everything is in it's proper place. He ducks out of his apron and hangs it up, and then reaches over to turn out the last of the lights. He pauses for a moment and then leaves one light on, turning back to the bottles and carefully making one last drink.

The Sazerac cradled in his hand he makes his way up the back stairs and then knocks on Reid's door. He hopes Reid is at home, he'd checked the office and found it empty and dark and other than his loft he wouldn't know where else to look for him.

Reid opens the door to his flat, surprised to see Matt standing there. "Hello," he says with a genuine smile. "I wasn't expecting to see you tonight..." Reid confesses as he steps aside and gestures for Matt to come inside. "But I'm very glad to see you," he adds softly, leaning in with the intention to kiss Matt as he enters.

Matt leans back, staying just out of Reid's reach. "I brought you a drink," he says, holding the glass out in front of him. "The last one I'll ever get to make, evidently."
Taking the Sazerac from Matt, Reid's smile vanishes and is replaced with a sheepish frown. "Matt... it's not what you think..."

"Tell me what it is I think," Matt says, leaning against the doorjamb. "Because frankly at the moment I'm not sure what to think."

"Don't think whatever it is that is making you look at me like that," replies Reid, the request tinged with a subtle command.

"It was very unfair of you to make Melanie do that," Matt says, his frown deepening. "I don't understand why you didn't come talk to me yourself."

"I didn't tell you myself because I was trying to avoid the conversation that we are having now." Reid sighs. "Are you coming inside?" he asks softly.

"On one condition," Matt says, standing his ground.

Reid gives Matt a cautious look before asking. "And what would that be?"

"I need a raise. I'm guessing your members don't tip the desk attendant like they do the bartender. And I want you to do something nice for Melanie for making her do your dirty work. Okay, so that's two conditions I guess." Matt watches Reid's face carefully, wondering how he'll respond.

Slowly nodding his head, Reid's smile begins to return. "The raise is just good business sense. You're right about the tips. You should be compensated for the move." He takes a wary step closer to Matt. "Any suggestions for the 'something nice' for Mel?"

"New shoes," Matt says, shifting forward and rising up on his toes to give Reid a chaste kiss.

Reid smiles, savoring the sweet kiss. "You know her well."

"Now I'll come in," Matt says with a smile.

"Please." Reid waves his arm toward the lounge as he closes the door. "And thanks for the drink." He raises the glass in a silent toast before he tries it. "Perfect. As always."

"I hope you thought this decision through. I doubt you'll be lucky enough to find a second bartender in London who can make one of those for you." Matt takes a seat on the sofa, his legs tucked up underneath him.

"I don't want anyone else to make this drink for me. It's special. Something that I only want to share with you," he tells Matt as he takes a seat close to him.

Matt leans closer, resting his head on Reid's shoulder. "That's very sweet. But I understand if you want to teach the new girl to make it too."

Reid slides his free arm around Matt's shoulder, his fingers lightly caressing his neck. "Sounds to me like you need some convincing," he murmurs.

"Convincing?" Matt asks, not understanding what Reid means.

"I need to convince you that you are the only one that I want to share a Sazerac with," explains Reid before he covers Matt's mouth with his.

Matt can taste the drink on Reid's lips and it makes him smile. "Maybe I should have added a third condition," he teases.
"I might be convinced to reopen negotiations. But then you'll have to do something for me." Reid wants to kiss Matt's smile, but he waits for the younger man to respond.

"Hmmm, should I be concerned about where this is going?" Matt laughs, scooting so close he's practically in Reid's lap.

"Maybe a little, but you're adventurous, right?" Reid smiles. "What's your third condition?"

"A little," Matt says sternly, having a bad feeling about what exactly Reid would classify under the seemingly innocuous term of adventurous. "I should have made it a condition of moving that I would still be able to go back behind the bar and make you a drink whenever you asked."

"Agreed. Now that wasn't so hard, was it?" teases Reid before he kisses Matt again.

"Hard?" Matt asks, his hand sliding over into Reid's lap. "Hard is a bad thing?" he asks innocently, his fingers stroking across the front of Reid's trousers.

Reid's eyes glitter as he smiles at his lover. "Not usually," he replies, relaxing in his seat, his knees spreading farther apart as Matt touches him.

"I love that look in your eyes," Matt says, "and I love even more knowing I caused it."

Reid leans in to kiss Matt again. The familiar heat and instant craving for him returning full force. "Care to move this to the bed and see where it takes us?" Reid whispers.

"I think I could be convinced of the merits of that plan," Matt agrees, untangling himself from Reid so they can stand up.

Still holding his drink in one hand, Reid slips his arm around Matt's waist as they move to the bed. "I want to undress you," he tells Matt as he sets his drink on the side table and takes a seat on the bed, pulling a still-standing Matt between his legs.

"Okay," Matt says softly, suddenly feeling a little shy for no good reason. It's not like Reid hasn't seen him naked, but there is something about the laser-like focus that Reid can have at times that makes him feel completely exposed.

Reid looks up at Matt, holding his gaze as he slowly unbuttons the black shirt he wears for work. He gently pushes it off Matt's shoulders and lets it fall to the floor behind him. Reaching over to his Sazerac on the table, he dips his finger in the amber liquid then rubs it on one of Matt's nipple, never looking away from Matt's face. Reid leans in and licks the alcohol away, teasing his boy's nipple with his tongue.

"Mmmm," Reid murmurs then kisses Matt's chest. "Tastes even better this way," he says as he begins to unfasten Matt's trousers.

Matt can't help but sway forward, he catches himself just as he starts to lean too far. He's hypnotized by the way Reid is looking at him, with reverence and desire.

Reid kisses Matt's stomach, moving lower as he unzips his trousers and lets them fall around his lover's ankles. He kisses Matt's pelvic bone, gently raking his teeth over the skin there.

"Reid..." Matt moans softly, his cock stirring as his lover undresses him so slowly and with such care.
He loves to hear Matt say his name, laced with the passion building between them. Reid gets to his feet and moves to stand behind Matt, nudging him closer to the bed. He wraps an arm around his boy's waist then dips his finger into the Sazerac again before brushing it over the bruise mark showing on Matt's shoulder. His mark. Reid slowly licks the bruise, sucking it on to taste the liquor and Matt's skin.

Matt tilts his head to the side, exposing more of his neck. His hands rest on Reid's arm where it bands around his waist, steadying himself against the weakness in his knees that being this close to Reid always causes.

Reid presses closer, his hard erection rubbing against Matt's ass. Taking hold of his boy's hip, he tips Matt forward until he is bent over the side of the bed, supporting himself on his arms. Reid wets his finger again by swirling it in his drink, then runs it down the center of Matt's back. He quickly retrieves the rolling drops, chasing them with his tongue as he licks his way up Matt's spine.

Shifting his feet, Matt rolls his hips enticingly, putting on a show for Reid. The alcohol is cool on his skin, a pleasant contrast to the heat of his lover's mouth.

Kissing his way down Matt's back, Reid begins to tug at his lover's briefs that are blocking his access. He slowly pulls down Matt's underwear, letting it drop around his ankles as well. Continuing his path, Reid licks and nips at the curve of Matt's ass.

Matt wants to spread his legs, open himself wantonly to Reid, but his pants keep his ankles close together. He kicks at the fabric in frustration, trying to get free.

Reid notices Matt's struggle. "Up on the bed," he tells him as he bends to help Matt out of the tangle of his clothes. "Stay on your knees," orders Reid, he's not quite finished with his exploration.

Crawling up on the bed as instructed, Matt positions himself right at the edge of the bed, practically right where he'd been, only this time he can spread his thighs and arch his back. He glances over his shoulder, needing to see that Reid appreciates his efforts.

Smiling, Reid holds Matt's gaze as he leans down and takes a playful "bite" of his boy's butt. "You have a gorgeous ass," Reid tells him, licking where he's bitten.

"I'm glad you like it," Matt murmurs playfully, rocking his hips from side to side.

"I think I want a better taste," Reid says as he dips two finger into his drink again. He spreads Matt's cheeks. This time he dribble the alcohol over Matt's hole before licking it away, slowly rimming his lover.

Matt shivers as the cool liquid rolls across his skin and he moans softly as Reid's tongue invades his core. He shifts his weight just enough to braces himself with one hand and free up the other to stroke his cock.

Reid stops and takes hold of Matt's wrist to stop him. "No rushing ahead, love. That's mine and I'll want it for later," he tells Matt.

Struggling against the hold Reid has on his wrist, Matt moans in frustration. His cock throbs and he aches for stimulation, not entirely understanding why Reid wants him to stop.

"It will be worth the wait. Remember last night?" Reid takes hold of Matt's hips and pulls him back, lowering his head to resume what he was doing before being distracted by his boy's impatience.
"Unfortunately I do," Matt says, stretching his hands out in front of him to get them as far away from his cock as possible to remove the temptation. He tries to ignore the need and concentrates on how good Reid's mouth feels on him.

Reid smiles against Matt's skin. He's never had to train a boy before, they always came to him well disciplined. Looks like Matt is going to be a challenge for him in more ways than one. Reid takes his time with his task, enjoying the soft sounds of pleasure he is evoking from his young lover despite Matt's frustration.

Matt closes his eyes, his moans moving from frustration to pleasure. "Reid..." he murmurs, his voice muffled in the bed. "Need you so much."

Hearing the need in Matt's voice, Reid tells him to roll over. He kisses Matt's inner thigh as he moves between his legs. "Tell me what you need, Matty. Do you want my mouth?" Reid takes hold of Matt's straining cock and brushes his lips against it. "Or do you want me inside you again?" he asks, giving his impatient boy the choice.

It takes all the effort Matt can muster not to thrust his cock up toward Reid's mouth, but given the choice he knows exactly what he wants. "Inside me. I need you to fill me up," he says, his body shuddering merely at the thought.

Reid quickly frees his cock from the confines of his clothes and reaches for a condom and lube, needing to be inside Matt as much as he needs him. Crawling between Matt's legs, he pulls on his lover's hips and enters him in one quick plunge.

Matt cries out as Reid takes him, all the pent up need finally coming to a head. He reaches up, pulling Reid down as he lifts up off the bed, needing to kiss him right now.

Their kiss is hungry and feral with the passion they share. Reid loves the way that Matt clings to him; it scratches the itch that his dominant side has had lately.

The extended foreplay makes this culmination even sweeter, Matt can feel every nerve end tingling with pleasure as they move together.

Wrapping his hand around Matt's cock and stroking him as they fuck, Reid smiles at him and whispers "Mine."

The hand on his cock is just what he needs, and Matt cries out his appreciation. "You make me feel so good," he say softly, his hands sliding over the flexed muscled in Reid's back.

"That's what I want," replies Reid. "To always make you feel good." Matt is so perfect like this, his eyes dark and wide as they look up at him, his skin flushed and warm. Reid falls a little bit harder for him each time he sees him like this.

In this moment Matt never wants to leave. He wants to stay here with Reid every moment of every day just forever suspended in this state of bliss. All of his worries and insecurities disappear, leaving him in a primal state.

"Come for me, Matty," Reid rasps, needing to see the moment when his boy comes completely undone.

Matt looks up, needing to see Reid's face, Reid's eyes, Reid's need, and the look he finds there sends him flying, his body erupting with pleasure.

Slowing his hand on Matt's cock, Reid revels in the sight of his shattered boy. Matt gives him
everything and Reid is just greedy enough to take it all and still want more. He takes hold of Matt's hips again, driving hard into him again until he explodes with his own orgasm.

Completely wrung out from the intensity of their coupling, Matt reaches weakly for Reid, pulling him close as they both ride out the last tremors of their climax. He wonders if he should be worried about how much he craves constant contact with Reid, but on the other hand he is absolutely not planning to give it up.

Reid kisses his boy tenderly, exhausted and replete. "Worth waiting for?" he murmurs with a smile. "Yes, but that doesn't mean I like waiting," Matt says truthfully, an exhausted smile on his lips.

"Of course not," Reid laughs softly, kissing Matt's smile again.

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Matt keeps a smile plastered on his face until the guests pass the desk and continue down the hall, but then his face falls and he sighs. He's been on desk duty for a few weeks now and he still feels lost.

Melanie has been so patient with his training, but he still feels stupid when members quiz him on the various rooms. He's comfortable with the reservation system and he can read the list of items contained in each, but when pressed for specifics or questions about whether the equipment would accommodate certain activities, he's at a loss. He can't bring himself to ask her more questions, he's trying his best not to be a nuisance since he knows she'd prefer someone else at the desk.

If it wasn't for how good things have been with Reid, Matt might have considered looking for work elsewhere, but the proximity to his boyfriend is too good to pass up. He hears footsteps approaching and he schools his features before looking up and finding Reid standing before him.

"I was just thinking about you," Matt says with a smile.

"What a coincidence, because I was just thinking about you." Reid wishes they were alone so he could give Matt a proper greeting. It's been three nights alone and Reid is determined that he won't spend a fourth in the same manner.

"I was actually relieved it wasn't another member just yet. The last one grilled me for ten minutes," Matt confides.

Reid's eyes narrow and his smile slips. "Grilled you? In what way?" he asks calmly despite the instant jealousy that Matt's words evoked.

"I'm afraid I'm not nearly as good at this job as I was at my other. You thought you could stump me with an obscure drink and I hit it out of the park. Over here I get asked what I'm sure are the simplest questions and it's like people are speaking a foreign language."

Relieved with Matt's explanation, Reid begins to breathe a bit easier. "Don't be so hard on yourself. You've only been doing this what? Three weeks or so? It takes time to learn these things. Especially since you don't..." He doesn't finish the statement, smiling again at Matt instead. "We'll be glad to answer any questions. I will be glad to answer any questions. You have only to ask them."

"I don't even really know where to start or what to ask," Matt admits. "And as much as I like Melanie the idea of having to call her to help me answer a guest's questions is rather embarrassing."
Reid can understand Matt's predicament and he also knows that he better do something to help his boy before the issue becomes a real problem. "I can help you, Matt. Let's just approach this logically, a tutoring session, so to speak. Let's start with some of the questions that you are being asked?"

Matt looks around, making sure there is no one who can overhear them. "Mostly I get asked specific questions about the equipment. Obviously there's a list in the system for each room but they ask me questions like "Can X thing be used to do Y?" when I don't know what X or Y is." He can feel his cheeks flush but he forces himself to push on. "Does that make any sense?"

"Yes. It does make sense," Reid replies, wanting nothing more than to caress that blush on Matt's cheek right now. "I suppose I take it for granted that everyone should know what I know, but how would you? I can teach you those things. I don't know why I didn't think of it before now."

"You probably don't usually hire people who know as little as I do about all this," Matt points out.

"But you can learn it. I know you can," replies Reid. "What if I give you a tour of some of the rooms and show you the various equipment? Then you would know exactly what the customers are referring to?"

Matt glances over at the computer. "I can't really leave the desk unattended," Matt says, knowing Melanie would kick his ass if he did. "And several of the rooms are in use."

"After your shift then," Reid offers. He was hoping that Matt would stay the night with him tonight anyway.

"Is that your way of asking me to stay over tonight?" Matt asks, knowing exactly what Reid is thinking.

"It's my way of offering to help you learn about your new job," Reid says evenly.

"I was teasing," Matt says softly, unnerved by Reid's reaction. "I'd love to stay over."

"And I'd love to have you stay over. But after your lesson," Reid looks at his watch to see how much longer Matt has to work the desk. "Think you can survive another two hours?" he asks as he smiles at him.

"I can," Matt says. "But if you get any complaints, you'll know why," he laughs. "Want to meet me back here after closing time or should I come upstairs first?"

"I'll meet you here. If you come upstairs, I might get... distracted," Reid smirks as he stares longingly at the young man behind behind the desk.

"I'll be waiting," Matt promises, both scared and excited about their "date".

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Reid walks down the hallway from his office to the front desk. It's closing time which means time alone with his lover. He can see Matt working at the desk as he approaches.

"Is everyone checked out?" asks Reid.

"They are," Matt says, looking up with a smile. "And the cleaning crew is done with all but the last room." It has been a tedious two hours, each minute ticking by slowly as he anticipated what was to come.
"I'll lock the front and then we can get started." Reid crosses the foyer to the large, heavy door which is the main entrance into the club. He locks it and returns to the desk where Matt is waiting. "Grab for the key for Room 8," Reid tells him. That room is his personal favorite and the one he uses. Or should he say "used"? It is well-appointed with equipment and devices which will make it a good place to begin with Matt.

Matt picks up the key, hooking the ring on his finger. His heart beats loud enough that he's sure Reid can hear it in the silence of the empty club. "Lead the way," he says, his voice thinner than usual.

Reid senses his boy's apprehension and he realizes that this will be Matt's first deeper look into his world. He vows silently to take it slow. This is for information only. No reason for his dominant side to get excited for nothing. Reid walks down the main hall and turns right down another. He stops at the door with a gold "8" on it and unlocks it. Reid pushes it open and gestures for Matt to go in. "After you."

Matt has been in the room before. Melanie had given him a cursory tour when she'd trained him, but somehow now, with the club closed and dark, alone in here with Reid, it's a very different situation. He steps through the door, but doesn't go much further, waiting for further instructions.

Reid switches on the light and closes the door. He could just show Matt the various pieces of equipment and toys and tell him about them, but he's not sure that is the best way to give Matt the information that he is needing to do his job. "Tell me the last question that a customer asked and you had a hard time answering?"

Matt thinks back to the last customer, the angry balding man who he'd spoken to just before Reid had found him earlier this evening. "He asked whether the bondage cross was a... St. Andrews? Is that right?"

"Yes. Over here," Reid takes Matt's arm and leads him toward the corner of the room where a large, wooden X with leather straps at all four points is located. "This is a St. Andrew's Cross. Used when the sub's arms are over his head and his legs spread. He can face the cross or face outward, either way," Reid says quietly. "This model even turns, if the sub is to hang upside down." He demonstrates by rotating the large cross.

Matt steps back as Reid manipulates the cross, then steps closer and runs his hand over the wood. His mind flashes with pictures of what someone would look like strapped to it. Then he imagines what he would look like strapped to it. He can feel his face burn and he steps back, hoping Reid doesn't notice in the low light.

"It's a popular item so we have it in most of the rooms, although there are many types of equipment for bondage." Reid continues and points to large silver eye-hooks on the ceiling. "For chains," he explains. "There are several kinds of those as well and we offer a versatile variety in all the rooms."

"Can you adjust their positions?" Matt asks, remembering another question. "Or are they fixed to those spots?"

"You can adjust the position by length of chain and use the chains with the sub either standing or on a table." Reid points to a table topped with a padding covered in black leather. "Subs can be bound to the table by chains, rope, straps, cuffs..." He looks at Matt. "A lot of options."

Matt feels overwhelmed already, but at the same time his entire body feels flushed and alert. "How do you decide?"
"Personal preference," Reid shrugs. He takes Matt's hand and leads him over to the cabinets and drawers used for storage. Opening a drawer, he takes out a pair of fur-lined leather cuffs. "Come here," Reid says softly as he takes Matt over to the table. "Sit up here," he says, patting the black leather.

Matt moves cautiously, but he hops up on the table as instructed. "I thought this was strictly an informational tour," he says, watching Reid like a hawk.

Reid smirks. "It is. This is a demonstration." He slips the leather cuff onto Matt's slender wrist and tightens the buckle. Then he attaches a light chain to the cuff and clips it to a ring on the table's leg.

Matt tugs on the chain and the metal rattles as it pulls taut. He runs the fingers of his free hand over the cuff, flexing his hand back and forth as he tests out how it feels.

Stepping closer, Reid speaks softly as he runs his forefinger along Matt's arm to his wrist where he is bound. "This kind of cuff won't leave marks."

"So there's others that do leave marks?" Matt asks, even though he's sure of the answer. "And that's something you want to do sometimes?"

"Sometimes," Reid smiles. "It's a dom thing."

"How so?" Matt pushes. He knows Reid is a dom and he wants to know more about that side of him.

Reid's blue eyes evaluate his lover's expression, silently judging just how much to share with Matt in this moment. "The desire is to dominate. Marking the boy you are topping is an expression of that. You are showing the rest of the world that he's yours. The marks you leave on him tell others to stay away because he belongs to you."

Matt's free hand drifts to his neck, his fingertip brushing over the fading bruise. "Every time it's just about gone, you bruise this spot again. That's why?"

His eyes follow Matt's fingers to the bruise, a tender smile forming on Reid's lips. "Yes."

"You're dominating me," he says matter-of-factly. "Claiming me." He rolls those thoughts around in his brain, in light of what Reid has just said.

"In a way..." Reid can't gauge Matt's feelings by his expression and he's suddenly wary that he's divulged too much, too soon.

I was already in the lifestyle and didn't even know it, Matt thinks to himself. "So you use other cuffs when you want marks, or want to inflict pain. And we have all of those different kind here?" he asks, turning the conversation back to their purpose.

"Yes. Leather straps without the lining. Or metal cuffs," replies Reid. "Some of our customers bring their own items of choice. I've seen people use plastic zip ties."

Matt wrinkles his nose as he thinks about how those would feel. "And people like how that feels? I would think it would be really uncomfortable."

"For some, it's more about being restrained. Controlled. Not the physical discomfort it might cause. Bondage can be quite erotic." Reid rubs Matt's wrist tenderly near the cuff.

Matt turns his wrist back and forth in the cuff, letting Reid's fingers slide across his skin. "It's the
trust that makes it that way, isn't it?" he asks, thinking it over.

"Absolutely. Trust is a major component. It doesn't work without it." Reid leans in, brushing a kiss against Matt's temple. "And it has to be on both sides."

"So I have to trust that you won't go off and leave me chained to this table and you have to trust... okay that's the part I don't really understand," Matt confesses.

"I have to trust that you know your limits. That you will tell me what your boundaries are before they are crossed. It's a common misconception that the dom has all the power," Reid says quietly.

Matt absorbs Reid's words, his hand still twisting back and forth in the cuff. This conversation isn't at all what he'd planned when he'd asked for more training, but now that it's happening he realizes how inevitable it was.

"Here. Let me release you." Reid unbuckles the cuff and frees Matt's wrist. "What other kinds of questions do they ask?" He feels the need to change the subject.

It takes Matt a moment to snap out of his reverie. "Oh, um..." he stammers as he tries to think. "The list in the computer has floggers and their various lengths, but I was asked if they were leather or synthetic," he says, going with the first thing he can come up with.

"We have both," Reid says as he moves away from the table. He walks over to a group of various items displayed neatly on the wall and takes down two of them before returning to Matt. "This is leather." Reid hands the flogger to Matt. "This is synthetic," he explains as he holds up the other flogger. "Rubber. Floggers come in a variety of materials and they all feel different against the skin. Again, it's personal preference."

Matt runs his fingers through the tails. They are soft to the touch but based on the name he has a feeling they aren't so soft when wielded properly. "I think my next project might be making more explicit lists in the computer. These are pretty stupid questions I have once I see what people are talking about."

"That's a good idea," Reid smiles. "See... it's all just a matter of learning. Just like you learned to make the perfect Sazerac. You can learn to answer each and every annoying question the customer might have," he grins teasingly.

"Stop teasing me," Matt laughs. "It's no fun feeling stupid when they ask things." Although his words are playful there is honesty underneath.

"I know," Reid says with a sympathetic nod. "And that's my fault. For not realizing that you might get questions like that. I'm a terrible boss. That's why I have Mel."

"It's a good thing too," Matt smiles. "So the difference between floggers and crops? I mean I can see how they are different but why do you use one over the other?"

"Each one brings a different type of sensation. A crop will deliver a strong pinpoint smack while floggers cover more area and leather floggers can even damage the skin if not used properly."

"Damage?" Matt asks, his voice sounding strange in his ears.

"Yes." Reid looks at Matt and sees how pale he is. "But that doesn't happen when the dom knows what he is doing," he explains quickly.

"And you..." Matt swallows, glancing around at the various implements. "You know what you're
Reid's brow creases in a frown. "Yes. I know what I'm doing."

"Why did you frown at me?" Matt asks, cocking his head to the side. "I was just asking."

"Because I worry about the other questions it might bring to mind," confesses Reid, knowing that there is no easy answer for the divide between their two worlds right now.

"You're worried about what I might find out about you?" Matt asks, his mind immediately fearing the worst.

"No, love. I have nothing to hide from you or anyone. What I am worried about is that you will think the worst of me. And that it will make you afraid."

"I'm not afraid of you," Matt says, reaching out and touching Reid's arm. "I don't necessarily understand everything about you, but I'm not scared."

Reid covers Matt's hand with his, caressing it gently. "Have we had enough of a lesson for one night? I am feeling a strong need for some alone time with my favorite... young man."

"Yes," Matt agrees. "I wasn't well prepared with my questions. I'll start a list," he smiles.

"Feeling better about the new job then?" asks Reid.

"I still prefer the bar," Matt admits. "But I'm getting more comfortable at the desk."

"Then I will make a deal with you. Since I am the boss and you are my boyfriend," Reid grins. "You stay at the front desk for a few weeks and learn the job. If after that time, you still prefer the bar, then you can go back to tending bar. Deal?"

"Really?" Matt says, his eyes lighting up. "You'd let me go back to the bar?" He has a strong feeling this is too good to be true but he can't help but hope.

"Yes. Really. If it's what you want." Reid pulls Matt into arms, unwilling to resist kissing Matt's smiling lips for a moment longer.

"It's very much what I want," Matt murmurs into the kiss, wrapping his arms around Reid's neck.

"Now can I have something that I want?" Reid whispers, lifting Matt up against him.

"Of course," Matt says, feeling happier than he has in days.

"I want you. In my bed. All. Night. Long."

"As long as you are there with me, I totally agree," Matt says, giving Reid another kiss.

Reid grabs Matt's ass, holding him up as he moves toward the door. "Oh, I'll be there, too. You can bank on that."

Matt holds on tight as Reid carries him toward the door. "I guess I ought to buy myself a spare toothbrush to keep over at your place."

"Really?" Reid mimics Matt's surprised reaction from before. "Only if you're sure that's not too much of a commitment?" he adds jokingly.
Reid's teasing hurts just a little more than he'd like to admit, but he keeps on his happy face. "That's why I said a spare. Too much commitment to bring my one and only."

"I suppose I need to work a bit harder to tip those scales in my favor," Reid ponders aloud, wondering if he can convince Matt to give him a chance.

"Just be patient," Matt says softly, offering Reid the metaphorical key to his heart.

"I am, Matty. I am," Reid replies softly as he carries his boy out the door.
Reid enters the club through the front door, shaking the snow off his coat as he slips out of it. He's smiling and humming a soft tune despite the frigid weather outside. There is someone other than Matt at the front desk so it must not be his boy's shift tonight. He folds his coat over his arm and walks down the hallway toward his office.

Mel looks up when a shadow falls across the door then smiles when she sees Reid standing there. "Haven't seen much of you lately. To what do I owe the pleasure?" she asks.

"Just checking in. It's the least I can do really. Since I do own the place." Reid hangs his coat on the rack and brushes some errant water drops off the lapel of his tailored suit.

"Oh you do, do you?" Mel teases. "I thought you just hung around and distracted my employees from their work duties."

"He's not at the front desk tonight, so this might be your opportunity to actually get some work out of me," Reid smiles, not bothering to pretend he doesn't know what Mel means by her comment.

"Actually, all I have for you is a few purchase orders to sign," Mel says, pulling a folder out of the drawer and sliding it across the desk. "Speaking of Matt," she says, watching Reid's face carefully, "how are things going?"

Reid reaches for the folder and one of the pens in the holder on the desk. "Very well. Thanks for asking," he grins as he opens the folder and begins to look over the documents inside.

"Really? That's all I get?" Mel crosses her arms and frowns at Reid. "After all I've done to accommodate your whims about him?"

Laughing softly, Reid looks up from the papers. "Things with Matt are..." He smiles as he tries to think of the most appropriate word to describe how he feels when he is with his new lover. "Sublime."

Mel smiles and nods, happy to see Reid in such a good place. "He seems to be tolerating the move to the front desk but I can tell his heart isn't in it."

"I asked him to stay at the front desk until he learned the job, but if after that he's still not happy, then I told him that I would move him back to the bar." Reid looks back down at the purchase orders and signs the first one.

"And I'm supposed to do... what exactly with the new bartender you had me hire?" Mel asks, even though she knows the answer will be whatever Reid wants when it comes to Matt.

"She can be the back up when it's not Matt's shift. She said something about less hours after the first of the year anyway. Going back to school or something. It'll work out."

"I'm sure it will," Mel agrees. "And I'm sure it will be my problem to fix if it doesn't," she teases. "And how will you adjust to him being back in the bar?"

"I've thought about that actually. We could hire a waitress. She can be the one to delivery the drinks to the table while Matt remains safely behind the bar," explains Reid, managing to keep a straight face when he looks up at Mel.
Mel arches her eyebrow at Reid. She's fairly sure he's joking, but on the other hand Reid is definitely not himself when it comes to Matt. "And we'll pay for that... how exactly?"

"You know, we might be able to find someone to do it for free. Put them in a sexy uniform and tell them it's cosplay." Reid's lip quirk as he suppresses a laugh.

Mel can't help but laugh. "Evil man," she says, pointing at him.

"Just thinking of the bottom line," Reid replies with a grin.

"The only bottom you are thinking about these days belongs to a certain employee of yours," Mel laughs.

"And the most alluring bottom it is, but that's beside the point." Reid signs another purchase order. "It's what he wants and he is what I want, so I need to make it happen."

"And how are the other parts of what he wants working for you?" Mel isn't sure she'll get an answer from that, it's dangerously close to the line, but she's dying to know how Reid is handling a vanilla relationship.

"I don't believe that he knows everything he wants. So I am going to help him with that. If he wants me to," Reid says carefully.

Mel bites her tongue. She has strong opinions on the matter but it's not at all her place to share them. "Be careful," is all she offers.

"I'm not pushing him, if that's what you're worried about," is Reid's quick response.

"Can I ask an honest question? Without you getting defensive?" Mel asks, rocking back in her chair.

Reid sighs, lowering his gaze back to the papers in his lap. "Of course."

"Would you even realize if you were pushing?" She starts to follow it up with another comment but decides to just let that one hang and see how he responds.

"Yes, because Matt would let me know," he says as he signs another form.

"You're sure about that?" Mel asks, having seen the utter adoration in Matt's eyes whenever he looks at Reid.

"He's very independent, Mel. Why wouldn't he?" Reid asks as he stands to pass the folder back to her.

"Because he's head over heels for you." Mel is comfortable that she's not breaking any confidence with what Matt's told her, anyone with eyes can see it's true. "I can see him not wanting to do anything to harm your relationship, including not telling you that you are pushing."

"You really think so?" Reid smiles, focusing only on the news that Matt is as smitten with him as he is with his boy.

"Um, yeah," Mel laughs. "No worries there."

Reid is all smiles, but he knows that Mel has real concerns. "I'm not pushing him, Mel. I swear it. The worst I've done is given him a perpetual hickey on his shoulder."
Mel can't help but laugh at Reid's protest. "Okay, okay. I'll stop trying to mother the two of you."

"Has he said anything to you about it?" asks Reid. "I know the two of you talk."

Mel crosses her legs, picking at a non-existent thread on the hem of her skirt. "We do, but he trusts me, like you do, to keep his secrets. You'll have to talk to him about it."

"I do talk to him. I only wanted to know if he's expressed some concerns or given you the impression that I am asking too much of him?"

"Stop worrying," Mel says. It's both an answer and not an answer to his question all at the same time.

Reid smirks as he sits back down in his chair. "My only complaint is that I don't get enough time with him."

"Well, if you stole him away from the desk any more often than you already do, then he might as well not come to work at all," Mel teases.

"Our employees deserve breaks, Mel." Reid's smile turns wicked as he remembers last week's quickie in the supply closet.

"If you say so," Mel laughs. "Poor boy was blushing so bad I thought his face might burn right off when he came out and found me waiting for him at the desk."

"He does have a lovely blush. Especially when he..." Reid catches himself, remembering that he's a gentleman.

"Don't want to hear it," Mel says, cutting him off.

Reid laughs, in spite of or maybe due to the way he can unnerve his friend and co-worker.

"Just try and remember that he does have an actual job to do, okay?" Mel says with a wave of her hand. "Don't spirit him off too often."

"Yes m'am." Reid bows his head. "I'll do better at controlling my urges."

"Doubt it," Mel laughs.

"I wouldn't have to resort to those drastic measures if he would just consent to stay over more nights," Reid says and looks at Mel with what can only be described as a pout.

"He will when he's ready," Mel assures him, knowing it has to be killing Reid to let Matt walk out the door most nights.

"But that's just it, Mel. I think he is ready. He just won't let himself give in to what's happening with us." The frustration returns to Reid's expression. He sighs and shakes his head. "He's too worried about what might happen. Because he's been burned before and because he doesn't trust me. My reputation has preceded me and he can't believe that I'm interested in a real relationship with him."

"Frankly," Mel says, pausing for just a moment before letting her real thoughts fly, "it's hard for even me to believe it, so I can see that it might be hard for him to believe it. You have to give him time, and if it's meant to be it will happen."

"I am giving him time. And space." Reid holds up his hand, indicating a small space between his
"I'm bloody close to having my status as a dom completely revoked!"

"There's a committee that can revoke your credentials?" Mel says, cracking a smile. "I'm sure owning this place gives you at least a little status."

"Small comfort when I've been reduced to a puppy dog who follows its owner around waiting for a pet."

"Somehow I doubt you've resorted to that. I'm sure you are more dominant than you even realize," Mel says.

"Every night I'm waiting for him to tell me when he will stay over as opposed to the fact that he's not chained to the table in Room 8, waiting for me. " Reid arches an eyebrow and gives her a grim stare. "Does that sound dominant to you?"

"There's other ways to dominate that don't involve chaining him to the table," Mel says, rolling her eyes. "I just find it hard to believe that you've put your inner dom away completely when you are with him."

Reid's eyes widen. "If what we are doing isn't vanilla, then I don't want to know what vanilla is!"

"Fine!" Mel says, holding up her hands and backing off. "Forget I said anything."

Sighing again, Reid's expression softens. "I know you're worried about him. I know you're worried about me. And I appreciate it. You're a good friend, Mel."

"I'm trying," she sighs. "You boys are a bit thick-headed though."

Unable to disagree, Reid shakes his head again and smirks.

"Now it's time for you to get out of my hair," Mel smiles back. "Since Matt isn't here I don't have to worry about the front desk suddenly being unattended so I'm actually getting some work done in here!"

"All right, all right!" Reid says as he stands and walks toward the door. "Do me a favor, Mel..." he says as he turns to look at her. "Another favor," Reid smiles. "Don't blame Matt for his disappearing act. It really is my fault."

Mel smiles and nods her head. "No worries. I know who the culprit really is."

"His blush really is irresistible..."

"I know. I'm not blind," she laughs.

Reid nods, a wide smile on his face as he turns to leave the office. Mel watches him go, a smile still on her face even after she turns back to her computer.

~*~*~*~

Matt hoists his bag up higher on his shoulder as he climbs the stairs to Reid's apartment. He hopes Reid will be happy to see him, for the first time he's showing up unannounced. Knocking on the door he shifts his weight back and forth hoping his boyfriend is home.

Reid answers the door, smiling when he sees Matt. "Hello there," he says as he reaches for his boy, pulling him in for a greeting kiss.
Matt drops his bag and goes willingly into Reid's arms. "Are you busy? I didn't call first," he murmurs into the kiss.

Kissing his young lover slowly and thoroughly, Reid pulls back with a smile. "I'm never too busy where you are concerned," he says softly.

"That's good to hear," Matt says, smiling broadly. "I was just feeling lonely and got tired of it and came here instead."

"I'm glad you did. You're welcome here anytime," Reid tells him as he bends to pick up Matt's bag. He closes the door and slips an arm over his lover's shoulder. "Have you eaten? I can make you something. I've taken to keeping the fridge stocked. Just in case."

"I could eat," Matt smiles. "You didn't even say anything about how heavy my bag is," he says as he follows Reid through the loft. "I brought some extra stuff over, I was hoping there would be room for it here."

"Really?" Reid says, a wide smile transforming his face as he looks at Matt with a hopeful expression. "There's plenty of room. In the closet. And some empty drawers, too."

"That way it's easier for me to just stay over on a whim. If that's okay with you, of course." He's pretty sure it is, but he doesn't want to assume.

"That is very okay with me," replies Reid. He's feeling more and more optimistic about his relationship with Matt and this feels like a huge step for his young lover to take.

Hoping Reid doesn't read too much into all this, Matt waits while he deposits the bag near the bed and then returns to the kitchen area. "I'm not interrupting any grand plans for the evening, am I?" he asks, climbing up on one of the bar stools.

"Not at all," Reid assures him. "I was resigned to watching telly or reading a book." He stops in front of Matt, looking down at him. Reid lifts his hands to frame Matt's beautiful face. "Believe me. I'd much rather be spending my time with you."

Matt can't help but smile, Reid always has a way of making him feel incredibly wanted. "You can still do that," he says. "I'd be perfectly content curled up on the couch next to you while you did either of those things."

"As would I. But I'm not going to waste my time doing those things while I have you here with me." Reid pulls Matt closer, lowering his head for another kiss.

"Spending time with you is never a waste," Matt whispers, tipping his face up to get the kiss.

Reid is hungry for something other than food, but his boy needs something to eat so he pushes his desire aside for now. "Now. What can I make for you?" he asks as he walks over to the refrigerator and opens it. "Do you like fish?" asks Reid, looking back at Matt.

"I do," Matt says, breathless from the kiss. He gathers himself and then focuses on Reid, just in time for an excellent view of his ass as he bends into the fridge.

"I just happen to have a beautiful filet of sole," Reid grins as he pulls a brown paper wrapped package from the refrigerator and placing it on the counter. He gathers everything that he will need and puts a pan on his stove, melting a large spoonful of butter in it as he preps the fish.

"I love watching you cook," Matt says. "Have I mentioned that once or twice?"
Reid smiles at the compliment. "What do you like about it?" he asks as he puts another pot on the stove to begin boiling water for the polenta he wants to make to accompany the fish.


"Thank you," Reid replies with a slight bow of his head. "That's a great compliment," he smiles. "All that time spent with my mother in one of her kitchens, I used to marvel at how they did it every night."

"I'm guessing that confidence and assurance plays out in other parts of your life as well," Matt says as he continues to study Reid as he cooks.

Reid shrugs as he trims the asparagus. "Sure. I guess you could say I'm a confident guy."

It's not what Matt meant, but he isn't sure how else to express himself so he lets it go. "Can I help with anything?"

"Yes, you can open a bottle of wine for us," Reid tells him. "I have a fairly good selection, but we can always raid the club's cellar if we need to," he says with a grin.

"Ownership has it's perks," Matt laughs. He slides off the stool and starts to inspect the bottles in the wine rack. "Any particular kind you have in mind?"

"Anything's fine. I'll defer to my favorite bartender, whatever he thinks is best." Reid adds some grated parmesan to the polenta and stirs.

Matt reaches down into the wine cooler and selects a Chardonnay. "Corkscrew?" he asks, pulling down two wine glasses from the cabinet.

"In the drawer by the dishwasher," answers Reid. As Matt opens the wine, he checks on the progress of the polenta and the asparagus before he finally puts the fish into the pan. In only a few minutes, their meal will be ready to eat.

Matt deftly opens the wine, making a soft noise of appreciation at the quality when he samples it, and then pours a glass for each of them. "As in all things, you have good taste in wine."

"I like all these compliments. I might start to think that you like me a little," Reid says with a smile.

"Just a little," Matt teases, raising his glass for a toast. "To good food and good company."

Reid picks up his glass and clinks it against Matt's. "Cheers," he says before taking a sip. "Mmmm. Good choice. Goes well with the fish."

"Thank you. The quality of your collection made it easy to pick a winner." Matt stays close to Reid rather than going back to his stool, hoping he isn't getting in the way.

Reid deftly plates the food, arranging the sole, polenta and asparagus just so before placing them on the bar. "Ready to eat?" he smiles, slipping an arm around Matt's waist before he can move away.

"I am," Matt says, snuggling against Reid's side. "Thanks for making dinner for your unannounced house guest."
Kissing Matt's cheek, Reid murmurs, "Thanks for coming over and being my house guest."

I could get used to this, Matt thinks to himself. He smiles and reluctantly lets go of Reid so they can sit down to eat.

Seated at the bar, Reid waits for Matt to take the first bite. He watches his expression as he tastes his food for the first time.

Matt closes his eyes, savoring the explosion of flavors that flood his tongue. "This is amazing," he says after he swallows.

Reid is all smiles when his boy approves. "Good," he grins, picking up his fork and taking his first bites.

Sipping his wine, Matt alternates between watching Reid and enjoying his dinner. "How was your day?" he asks, wanting to keep their conversation going.

"Good. Productive. Starting to think about what the club will be doing for the holidays. They always seem to arrive before I am prepared for them."

"I haven't even started thinking about them either. Time has slipped away from me this fall," Matt says, not adding that it's been Reid keeping his thoughts occupied.

"Thanksgiving is next week. You should let me cook for you and we can celebrate it together since the Brits don't know much about that one," offers Reid.

"I think a whole turkey might be a bit much for just the two of us," Matt laughs, spearing a stalk of asparagus with his fork.

"I can substitute. Cornish hens maybe," Reid smiles. "What is your favorite Thanksgiving dish?"

"Mashed potatoes," Matt answers without hesitation. "Made with lots of cream and real butter. Is that in your bag of tricks?"

"Absolutely. And cornbread dressing, right?" asks Reid, knowing that Matt is a southern boy.

"Yes," Matt agrees. "You'd really make all that just for the two of us?"

"It would be my pleasure. So it's a date then? Next Thursday?"

"It's a date," Matt agrees. "Is there anything I can bring?"

"A pair of loose pants?" laughs Reid.

"How about I just go without instead," Matt says, a wicked twinkle in his eyes.

"That's a wonderful idea. However, that will distract me from cooking," Reid warns him. "A welcome distraction, but a distraction nonetheless."

"Well, I wouldn't have to take them off until it was time to eat. After the cooking is done," Matt laughs, finishing off his wine. "That way the food wouldn't be at risk."

"Good thinking," nods Reid. "I'm very focused when I cook, but you, I couldn't ignore."

"Focused can be good. Focus on the food and then focus on me," Matt says, blushing slightly as he remembers just how intense it can be when Reid is focused on him.
There's that blush that Reid adores. He reaches over and caresses Matt's cheek. "I love focusing on you," Reid says quietly.

"I love it, too," Matt confesses. He reaches over, taking Reid's free hand in his.

"Are you going to let me focus on you tonight?" asks Reid, giving Matt's hand a squeeze.

"I think I'd like that," Matt says softly, the wine giving him just enough courage to blurt out something he'd been thinking about. "And I wondered if maybe we could try something."

Distracted by the lovely shade of pink still on Matt's cheeks, Reid agrees without thinking about it. "Sure. Anything you want."

"Something like you showed me downstairs?" Matt says, his heart racing.

"Downstairs?" Reid asks, not catching on to what Matt is referring.

"In Room 8," Matt whispers, just about reaching the end of his courageous streak.

"Room..." Reid is stunned at first but then notices Matt's body language and the obvious difficulty his boy is having with trying to communicate his desire. "Hey..." Reid soothes as he gets to his feet to move closer to his boy. "It's just me, yeah? Talk to me."

Matt closes his eyes, finding it easier to talk that way. "I haven't been able to stop thinking about the way that cuff felt on my wrist," he admits. "And I thought maybe..." he stops, hoping Reid can fill in the rest.

"Maybe I can cuff you with those while I focus on you?" Reid guesses, his own heart beating faster with the idea of Matt restrained with the cuffs.

Matt nods, happy that Reid seems to be on the same page. "If you don't want to though, I understand," he says.

"I want to," Reid says quickly. "Did you want to go downstairs to the room?" he asks, silently hoping that Matt won't get skittish and change his mind.

"Oh," Matt says, realizing that he'd been picturing himself here. His heart pounds as he thinks about walking downstairs with Reid, about people seeing him go into one of the rooms. As brave as he thought he was, he's not ready for that. "Could we stay here?"

"Yes. Of course," Reid says softly, caressing Matt's cheek reassuringly. "Give me just a minute to run downstairs and I'll be right back."

Matt nods, hoping he hasn't gotten himself in over his head. The room suddenly seems very warm, his entire body is flushed. Reid kisses Matt then pulls away and turns toward the door. He knows his boy is nervous about the request so he hurries down the stairs so he can get back to Matt quickly before he has time to have second thoughts.

Matt clears the dishes, just to give himself something to do. He's just rinsing the plates when a thought hits him. The first night Reid had brought him here he'd said he didn't bring men upstairs. Matt hadn't believed it at all, assuming it was just a line. But if Reid really did have to run down stairs for something as simple as cuffs then maybe... just maybe he'd been telling the truth.

Returning to his flat, cuffs in hand, Reid finds Matt in the kitchen cleaning up. "You didn't have to do that. But thank you," he tells him with a smile.
"Needed the distraction," Matt says honestly. "What I should have done was finish the bottle of wine," he says with a nervous smile.

"If you're not sure about this..." Reid says quietly.

"I'm sure," Matt says, stepping closer. "Nervous but sure. I trust you, utterly and completely."

Reid smiles. "Good. Then let's see how these feel," he says lifting the cuffs and gesturing for Matt to walk toward the bed with him. "And we can stop at any time. All you have to do is tell me."

"I will," Matt promises. He follows Reid to the bed, feeling the need to reach out and trail his fingers down Reid's arm, just to have the contact.

Taking Matt's hand in his, Reid leads him to the bed. He takes a seat and looks up at Matt. "Before we do this. I need to know that you're doing this because you want to do it. Not because it's something I want."

"Well, it's partially because it's what you want," Matt says, wanting to be honest. "It's not something I would have ever thought of trying if I hadn't seen the way your eyes looked when you put these on me the other night. I can't stop thinking about that, can't stop thinking about the way that made me feel." Matt hopes Reid understands what he's trying to convey, and that he understands his lover's concern.

"The only thing I want is for you to be happy with me," Reid tells him. "I don't expect you to adopt my lifestyle to be with me. I thought we've been doing pretty good so far?" he smiles, rubbing Matt's hand. "It hasn't been my intention to pressure you into something that you don't want for yourself."

"I know," Matt smiles. "I'm doing this because I want to." He looks Reid straight in the eye, making sure the other man sees him completely. "I promise."

Reid smiles, his boy's assurance making him feel hopeful again. He takes Matt's hands in his, turning them palm up before bestowing a gentle kiss on each wrist. Just the simple gesture is enough to stir Matt's cock, a wave of arousal pulsing through him.

"You need to take your shirt off, love. Can't get it over the cuffs," Reid explains with a soft smile.

"Oh," Matt says sheepishly. "I suppose you are right." Pulling his arms up into his sleeves, Matt shrugs his shirt up over his head and lets it drop to the floor.

"Now shoes. But I want to take off the rest." Reid watches his boy's graceful moves, admiring the flush of the skin on his bare chest. It's the same lovely color that is on his cheeks.

Once he's sock-footed, Matt moves right back to where he was standing, nestled between Reid's knees, looking down on him as he sits on the edge of the bed. "How's this?" he asks, his entire body throbbing with anticipation.

"Perfect," Reid replies, looking up into Matt's eyes. "You are perfect."

"You make me perfect," Matt whispers, tracing his finger down Reid's cheek.

Reid kisses the tip of Matt's finger and smiles as he takes hold of Matt's waist. "Onto the bed with you," he says as he tugs at his lover. "On your back," Reid tells him as he reaches for the fur-lined leather cuffs.
Matt crawls into the center of the bed and then stretches out on his back. He leaves his arms at his side, knowing Reid will give him further instructions.

"Hold out your wrist," Reid tells him, tapping the arm closest to him. When Matt obliges, he slips his hand through the cuff then tightens it just enough so his boy's slender wrist won't slip out, but not tight enough to interfere with his circulation.

Matt can't help but ball his fingers into a fist and then release, and then twist his hand back and forth, just to feel how the cuff moves and presses against his skin.

"How does it feel?" asks Reid, watching his boy's instinctive reaction to the binding.

"Good," Matt says. "Like I remember... soft but firm." He smiles up at Reid and holds out his other hand, eager to have a matching set.

"The fur should keep the leather from making any marks on your wrists when you pull at them." Reid loops the chain that connects the cuffs around a metal rail in his headboard then slips the other cuff on Matt's waiting wrist.

Matt tips his head up so he can see his wrists along with the cuffs and chain, over his head. "No marks is good," he murmurs.

"Sometimes," Reid says with a smile as he tightens the other cuff. He looks down at Matt, loving the way his boy looks right now. "You look beautiful like this. Cuffed to my bed. Awaiting my pleasure."

Matt loves hearing that from Reid, and the look in his eye that he so craved seeing again is there.

Reid caresses Matt's chest, rubbing his nipple until it hardens. "If you want me to release you, all you need do is say it. Understood?"

"I understand," Matt says. Reid always knows how to make him feel safe, and today is no exception. "Just don't go off and leave me here, okay?" he asks, even though he's sure Reid would never do that.

"Leave? With a beautiful young man in my bed? Not a chance," Reid grins. He leans in and kisses Matt. He can feel his boy's accelerated heartbeat against his hand where it is pressed against Matt's chest. Reid hopes it is because Matt is excited with anticipation.

Matt presses up eagerly into the kiss. It feels foreign to not be able to pull Reid up against him, to cling tightly to him as they meet.

Reid kisses his way down Matt's neck and chest then lower as he unfastens Matt's jeans and pushes them down over his hips along with his underwear. Sucking on Matt's hip, Reid tries to be gentle despite the temptation to mark his boy's skin.

Matt moans softly, the heat of Reid's mouth against his skin enough to make his body ache for more. He pulls against the cuffs, testing their give.

The sound of metal rubbing against metal makes Reid smile against Matt's skin. He continues to kiss and lick and nip at his boy's smooth skin as he slowly undresses him. When only Matt's socks are left, Reid takes his time with those, too. Slowly peeling them off then kissing the arch of Matt's foot.

Reid's movements are just slow and deliberate enough to be maddening. "More," he whispers,
needing something... anything to help stoke the fire that is building inside him.

Reid runs his fingers along the bottom of Matt's foot with feathery touches, tickling his impatient boy.

"No fair tickling!" Matt cries, trying to jerk his foot away. "That's not playing fair."

"Did I say that I play fair?" Reid grins, quickly recapturing Matt's leg by grabbing his ankle. Instead of tickling him again, he slowly spreads Matt's legs as he moves between them, kissing his knee then trailing up his inner thigh.

"That's much better," Matt whispers, settling back against the bed. He feels completely at Reid's mercy, and the more he thinks about it the more he realizes he likes it.

"Bossy bottom," Reid teases as he takes hold of Matt's cock, kissing the tip of it before he begins to slowly stroke him.

"Am I..." Matt starts to say before Reid's hand closes on his cock, taking his breath away. "Am I not supposed to do that?" he asks once he's regained a shred of composure.

"There's no rules, Matty. You do whatever you want to do," Reid reassures him. He lowers his head, taking Matt's cock into his mouth.

Without thinking, Matt tries to reach down and bury his fingers in Reid's hair. The chains stop him short though and he struggles against them, whimpering as he has to settle for arching his back and rolling his hips to show his appreciation.

Looking up at his boy as he struggles against his restraints, Reid growls softly in appreciation around his mouthful. He slides a finger against Matt's hole, rubbing and teasing him as he continues to suck him.

The chains rattle again as Matt shifts down against Reid's finger, his legs spreading wantonly as he invites his lover in.

The flush on Matt's skin has deepened and his eyes are wide and dark as he pulls against the cuffs on his wrists. Reid has never seen him look as beautiful as he does right now. He can't wait much longer to be inside his boy so he quickly prepares him. Reid rolls on a condom and soon he is pushing inside the familiar heat of Matt's body.

"Reid," Matt moans, his legs lifting to wrap around his lover's waist. "Need you so much."

"I need you, too, Matty," replies Reid, his hips jerking as he thrusts into his lover's body.

Matt stares up at Reid's face, seeing that need painted there clear as day. The feelings he has for the other man are so strong they almost drown him, but he's saved by the connection between them.

Reid's pace gets faster, the passion spiking between them. He works Matt's cock as he continues to push, hard and fast.

Matt's arms ache as he pulls hard against the chains, his body arching and flexing to meet each thrust of Reid's hips. "Gonna come," he cries, the rush of arousal accelerating inside him.

"Do it. Come for me. But I'm not going to stop fucking you," Reid tells his boy.

Matt lets loose a scream as he comes, his cock throbbing with release as he convulses. He can't
ever remember feeling like this, like his teeth might rattle right out of his head as his climax pulses through him. Reid releases his boy's cock with one final squeeze. Grasping hold of Matt's hips with both hands, he begins to pound harder. The pace is brutal but Matt is completely pliant, moaning softly as Reid uses him.

Completely out of his mind with pleasure, Matt gazes up at Reid, his hazy vision making it hard to focus. The entire bed shakes with the force of Reid's thrusts, the chains that connect his wrists rattling against the headboard with each snap. Reid comes with a possessive growl, buried deep inside his boy. Leaning forward, he kisses Matt, thinking that his lover has never looked so sexy and satisfied. Matt devours Reid's mouth, his kisses giving both thanks and pleasure.

Grinning down at his boy, Reid kisses him again before he finally reaches up to unfasten the cuffs around Matt's wrists. "If only you knew how tempting it is to keep you chained here forever," he tells Matt, only half joking.

"Okay, not ready for that," Matt says, wrapping his arms around Reid as soon as he's free. Reid envelops Matt in his embrace, loving the way his boy clings to him affectionately. "You were fantastic. So sexy."

"You weren't half bad yourself," Matt murmurs. "Thank you for indulging me."

"Anytime. And I do mean, anytime." Reid kisses Matt's shoulder, his boy's skin warm from their coupling.

Matt slides his hands up Reid's back and then lets his fingers toy with soft hairs right at the nape of his neck. "Thank you," he says again.

"You're welcome," Reid says softly, rubbing his nose against Matt's.

~ * ~ * ~ * ~

Matt rolls over, snuggling deeper into the bed. Reid is still sound asleep beside him, and Matt likes laying up against him and listening to him breathe. His arms are pleasantly sore from last nights antics, and the rest of his body feels like he's had a really awesome workout.

He glances up at the headboard, the cuffs are still dangling there where they'd left them. He pulls one arm out from under the covers and checks out his wrist. It looks just like it normally does, absolutely no marks from the cuffs. *Reid was right,* he thinks with a smile.

He's glad he'd asked for it. While it hadn't been his intention for the evening, the idea just popping out of his mouth before he even planned it. But obviously his subconscious knew what it was talking about, it had been absolutely amazing.

Reid rolls over, his arm draping over Matt. He pulls his boy closer, hugging him tightly.

Matt traces his fingers over Reid's arm where it bands around his waist. He loves how strong and how sure Reid always is, even in his sleep.

"I'm not ready to get up yet," Reid mumbles, keeping Matt locked in his hug.

"Then don't," Matt whispers, content to stay here all day.

"That means you can't get up either," explains Reid as he nuzzles against Matt's neck.
"Not planning to go anywhere," Matt says, smiling into the pillows. "In fact you couldn't pay me to get out of bed right now."

"I like waking up with you," Reid confesses, wishing that his boy would stay over more often so that he could experience it more.

"I like falling asleep with you," Matt confesses back. "You make me feel safe."

"Is that what you need, Matty? Someone to make you feel safe?" Reid murmurs. He's beginning to realize his own need for Matt and wonders if his boy feels the same.

"If I say yes, does that make me less of a man?" Matt asks quietly, thankful that they are both facing the same way so Reid can't see his face.

"Not in my book. You shouldn't feel like you're less of a man for needing someone." Reid kisses the nape of Matt's neck as his arms tighten around him.

"Do you need me?" he asks, the words hanging heavy in the cocoon of their bed.

Reid presses his mouth right next to Matt's ear and whispers. "Yes."

Matt smiles, exhaling the breath he was holding. "Good," he murmurs. "I need you too."

Reid's hand rubs Matt's stomach as he grins at his boy's response. "How are you feeling this morning? Any soreness?"

"My shoulders are a little sore, but no pain. Just achy muscles. How are you feeling?"

"Hungry," replies Reid, raking his teeth over "his spot" on Matt's shoulder.

"Better work on that," Matt teases, "the bruise is fading again." He tilts his head back against the pillows, giving Reid plenty of room to move.

"I know. Can't let that happen," Reid gives him a wide grin as he hovers over Matt.

"Nope, can't," Matt agrees with a smile. "I'd worry something was wrong if you did."

Reid's hand glides over Matt's thigh. "Are you hungry, too?" he asks.

"Not hungry enough to get out of bed," Matt says. "I wasn't kidding when I said I could stay here all day."

"Not that kind of hungry, love," Reid says as he gives Matt's ass a squeeze.

"Oh," Matt laughs. "I'm always that kind of hungry. Growing boy after all," he teases.

Reid gropes for Matt's cock, stroking his boy's hardening length. "You are growing," he murmurs, taking Matt's earlobe between his lips and sucking it.

"I'm not the only one," Matt murmurs, wiggling his hips back against Reid's hips. "Glad to see I didn't wear you out last night."

"Last night was fantastic, but I can't get enough of you." Reid caresses Matt's neck then moves lower to pluck at his nipple.

"You can have as much of me as you want," Matt says, his hand drifting back to slide up Reid's
"Let me get a condom," Reid tells him, his voice gravely with need. He can't wait any longer; he wants to be inside his boy now.

Matt nods, pulling away enough to let Reid move. He shivers at the loss of the warmth along his back and pulls the covers up closer to his chin.

Reid returns, condom and lube in hand. Matt is still slightly wet and stretched from last night and knowing that he's the one who put him in that condition only fuels Reid's fire.

Sighing with contentment when Reid returns, Matt twists his torso around so he can give Reid a kiss.

Reid kisses his boy languidly, his fingers caressing Matt's slender neck. "So addictive," he murmurs against Matt's mouth, tugging on his lip before deepening the kiss.

"I like being your drug," Matt whispers, pressing as close as humanly possible to Reid.

Running his hand up Matt's thigh, Reid squeezes his boy's butt and spreads his cheeks. He enters Matt slowly despite his desire to thrust and take what he needs.

"I've missed you," Matt murmurs with a smile as Reid stretches him open with his cock. "I like having you in me."

"And I like being inside you," smiles Reid. He hooks Matt's leg over his hip so that he can push deeper, harder.

Matt takes advantage of their closeness to kiss Reid deeply as they move, completing the connection between them.

They hold the kiss until they are both breathless and panting. Reid's hold on Matt tightens and he begins to move faster, driving hard into Matt.

Matt clings to Reid, his fingers curling against his skin as he moans his appreciation. "So good," he chants softly, over and over in time with Reid's thrusts.

Reid takes hold of Matt's cock, stroking him as hard as fast as his thrusts. "Don't come 'til I say," rasps Reid as he keeps the pounding pace.

Matt isn't sure he can, but he nods just the same, feeling a deep need to please Reid. "I'll try," he gasps, his body lurching forward against his lover's hand.

"You feel so damn good," Reid growls. "You like my cock, don't you?" he asks, his hand working Matt's erection.

"Yes, god yes," Matt moans, contracting his muscles to squeeze his body tight around Reid's cock. "Can't get enough."

"And my boy likes it rough, don't you?" Reid's pace is brutal, shoving them both toward the ecstasy they crave.

"Only from you," Matt says, without even thinking about his answer, the need and the drive completely overwhelming his senses. "Only with you."

Reid buries his face against Matt's neck, moaning one word as he comes. Mine.
It takes every shred of his self-control to keep from coming as he feels Reid spasm deep inside him, but he holds back, not even really knowing why, desperate for that word from his lover.

Reid has stopped his strokes as he climaxed, but he begins to work Matt's cock again when he comes to his senses. He looks into his boy's eyes, drowning in the dark pupils and the way Matt stares back at him, right on the edge. "Come for me, love. Just for me," Reid tells him.

That's all it takes, Matt lets go and comes with a sharp cry, his eyes never breaking Reid's stare. He could get lost in those eyes and the way they see right into his soul.

Knowing that he really is witnessing something that is only for him, Reid kisses Matt tenderly as he brushes the hair away from his face. "Beautiful."

"Thank you," Matt says softly, tipping his head forward to rest against Reid's shoulder.

"Thank you, love. Reid slowly pulls away to dispose of his condom before settling back into his place, arms around Matt. "That was the perfect way to wake up," he tells Matt before kissing him again.

"Not half bad," Matt teases with a sated grin. "I might not be able to walk the rest of the day, so I hope you don't mind me staying right here."

"Do you have to work today?" asks Reid, silently hoping that Matt can really spend the day with him.

"It's my day off." Matt tugs the blankets up over them so they can stay warm while they rest. "But I don't want to impose, I'm sure you had plans for the day."

"Yes, I do." Reid grins as he enfolds Matt in a tight bear hug. "My plans are to spend all day with you. We can stay in bed all day, if you want."

"We don't have to stay in bed," Matt laughs. "I'm just not going to be running any marathons or anything after that workout you gave me." He strokes his fingers along Reid’s arm where it bands around him tightly. "I'm sure we'll have to get up for food at some point."

"In a while," Reid says as he nuzzles against Matt’s neck. "I'm not ready to give you up just yet."

"Good." Matt says softly. "I don’t want to be given up." His fingers tighten on Reid’s arm, betraying the emotion behind the words.

And you won’t be. Because you are mine, thinks Reid. He rubs the mark on Matt’s neck, a subtle reminder about who he belongs to.

"Can I ask you a question?" Matt says after the silence has stretched for several long moments. He feels safe in this space, the blankets pulled around them, a cocoon of intimacy around them.

"Of course. You can ask me anything," Reid replies.

"When you tell me when to come... like to wait or to do it now... stuff like that." Matt pauses trying to figure out how to proceed.

"That’s not a question," teases Reid. He kisses Matt’s temple. "What do you want to know about that?"

"I’m guessing that’s a dom thing?" Matt says, snuggling back tighter against Reid. "Since I've
never had anyone do that before.”

“Well... yes and no,” Reid answers. “It is a ‘dom thing’ because I like to tell my boy what to do in the heat of passion. It makes me feel proud to be obeyed. But it’s also a sub thing. Usually, a sub want to please his master and what better way to do that than to fulfill his command?”

“So what happens if I mess up?” Matt chews his bottom lips, absorbing what Reid has to say. “I mean I wouldn't on purpose, but I don’t want to do the wrong thing.”

“The wrong thing? You mean come without permission?” Reid asks softly as he reaches up to caress Matt’s bottom lip.

“Yeah, or just not realize that I was supposed to wait. I mean is that something you always want to decide or is it only that way sometimes.” He worries he sounds stupid, but he puts himself out there because he really does want to know.

“We don’t have an agreement, Matt. It’s just us. Having sex. It’s not the same thing in a vanilla relationship.”

“I feel like it’s not though. Vanilla anymore.” Matt hopes Reid understands what he’s saying and doesn't take it the wrong way. “I think we’re at least at Chocolate Chip level.”

Now it’s Reid’s turn to bite his lip - to keep from laughing. He nods instead. “I agree. Not just vanilla. And that’s my fault, I know. And if it’s something you’re not comfortable with...”

“Is it bad if I say I don’t know yet what I’m comfortable with? I know that probably sucks for you.” Matt tips his head up, kissing the lip that Reid bit.

Reid returns the soft kiss. “You haven’t told me no either,” he points out.

“True,” Matt murmurs, giving Reid another kiss. “I think the fact that I liked hearing you say 'mine' in reference to me has fried my brain a little.”

Reid pulls Matt a little closer so that he can look right into his eyes. “The fact that you liked hearing it or the fact that you like being it?”

“Both,” Matt smiles. Trust Reid to get right to the point, zeroing in on what Matt is feeling. “Scary, right?”

“Is it?” Reid smiles. “Am I scary?” he asks.

“Sometimes,” Matt teases. “Put another way, you make me feel scary things. How’s that?”

“Better. And I’ll see your feeling scary things and raise you an uncharted territory,” he laughs softly. “This is new for me, too, remember? I’ve had boys, but you’re my first boyfriend.”

“I’m your boyfriend?” Matt says, searching Reid’s face for any trace of teasing. “I have the feeling that’s a huge step for you to even think that, much less say it out loud.”

“A step I’m ready to take. Should I have asked you first?” Reid smiles. “Like I said, I’m new to this.”

“I think I can forgive your newbie mistake,” Matt says, unable to hide the broad smile on his face. “How does it feel to have your first boyfriend?”

“Pretty good. I like it,” Reid nods.
“So we are both living in scary times,” Matt smiles, nipping at Reid’s lower lip. “I’m glad to not be the only one who feels like that.”

“Scary, but right. You and me, it’s good. You feel it, too, don’t you?” Reid whispers against Matt’s lips.

“I do. And what we did last night? Didn’t scare me. It felt right.” Matt admits with a smile.

“We’ve come a long way from when we were trapped in the liquor closet together. I think you were scared then,” Reid teases.


“Anxious to be let out,” laughs Reid.

“Worried they’d find our bones weeks later,” Matt adds with a laugh.

Reid tightens his arms around Matt, hugging him close and sharing another kiss. “I suppose I should feed you now, speaking of bones.”

“I’m okay at the moment,” Matt says, not wanting to let go of Reid just yet. “Unless you need to eat.”

“I’m in no rush.” Reid settles in again, still holding on to Matt. “I could get used to this, you know. Waking up with you.”

Matt has a feeling this is Reid’s way of feeling out once again how he feels about moving in. “I like it too,” he says, but doesn’t go any further. “Especially because it usually means sleepy morning sex.”

“You like that, too? I thought it was just me,” Reid jokes.

“You can’t tell I like it?” Matt asks with mock indignation. “What part was confusing, my moans of pleasure or screaming orgasms?”

Reid tips his head back against the pillow and laughs loudly. Just another thing to love about his boy, his quick wit and sense of humor.

Matt takes advantage of Reid’s moment of weakness to push him the rest of the way onto his back and roll on top of him. He stares down at Reid’s smiling face and then dips his head to kiss him. “Thank you for being patient with me,” he says softly when they part.

“Ditto,” Reid says softly as he looks up adoringly at Matt.
Chapter 14

Reid passes the room where the equipment is stored and sees that Rebecca is inside, taking inventory. An idea quickly forms in his mind.

"Rebecca," he says with a smile. "Can you do me a favor?" asks Reid as he takes the clipboard she is holding.

A moment later, Rebecca arrives at the front desk to find Matt. "Hiya," she says brightly. "I'm here to watch the front desk. Mel wants to show you how to take inventory of the equipment. The storage room is on the second floor."

"Oh goody," Matt mutters, logging off the computer and pushing the keyboard toward Rebecca. He wonders what he's done to make Mel mad, usually only the people on her shit list end up doing inventory. He bounds up the stairs, determined to smile and be charming and hopefully make whatever it is up to her.

Reid hides behind the door that he has left ajar as he waits for Matt. He stays quiet when his boy enters the room then quietly shuts and locks the door behind him, grinning widely when Matt turns to see him.

"What?" Matt sputters, not expecting to find Reid. "What are you doing here?" he says, smiling despite his surprise.

"Helping you take inventory," Reid replies as he offers Matt the clipboard. "I asked Rebecca to cover for you for a while."

Matt's face falls at the sight of the clipboard. "Inventory? Seriously? I so thought you had other plans in store for me."

"Inventory is very important, Matty," Reid says softly, placing the clipboard into Matt's hands.

"I know," Matt says, resigned to actually doing work instead of what they usually get up to in tucked away spaces. He takes the clipboard and pulls out the pencil as he scans the list. "Where do you want to start?"

Reid moves to where he is standing close behind Matt. He brushes the hair away from Matt's neck.

"That's going to be distracting," Matt says softly, his eyes closing as he relaxes back against Reid's chest.

"I have to be thorough. Inventory is very important," Reid whispers as he slides his hands around Matt's waist and begins to pull his shirt out of his pants.

Matt smiles as he realizes just what exactly Reid plans to inventory. His initial instincts were right. "Are you finding all you expected?"

"Too early to tell. Need to wait until everything has been accounted for." Reid begins unbuttoning Matt's shirt. He tells his boy to turn around when he's done. Reid pushes Matt's shirt over his shoulders and drapes it over a nearby sawhorse. Matt leaves the clipboard on the shelf, figuring he won't need it. He watches Reid's face as Reid watches him, loving as always how much desire he sees there.
Reid takes hold of Matt's belt, pulling him forward to claim his mouth for a hungry kiss as he unfastens it. Matt slides his arms around Reid's neck, rising up on his tiptoes to press into the kiss. Quickly freeing Matt from his trousers, Reid pushes his briefs down over his hips and takes hold of his boy's hardening cock. Shivering as the cool air of the storage room washes across his skin, Matt tightens his hold on Reid, using his strong frame to keep himself steady.

"Is this for me?" Reid murmurs, his hand working Matt slow and steady.

"Maybe," Matt teases softly. "Is it on your list?" Reid's touch is expertly keeping him just on the edge of arousal, without offering any sense of relief.

"It's at the top of my list, right next to this..." Reid slips his finger between Matt's cheeks, massaging his hole.

"I'm glad it's on your list," Matt whispers, biting his lip to keep from moaning "Because it's yours." He hopes it's the right thing to say, that Reid understands what he means.

"Mine," whispers Reid as he slowly penetrates Matt with a finger as he continues to stroke his cock. The tone of Reid's voice makes Matt tremble. He can't hold back any longer and a soft moan escapes his lips.

Reid loves the effect he is having on his boy. "I want what's mine," he tells Matt. "I want it now."

"Take it," Matt murmurs, shifting his feet to move his legs further apart. "Take what's yours."

Lifting Matt into his arms, Reid walks him back toward a padded table stored in the corner. He puts Matt down and bends his boy over the table then leans down to begin rimming him.

Just as Matt recovers from being manhandled over the table, Reid's warm, wet tongue short circuits his brain. He clutches the edge of the table, his breath quickening with pleasure.

Reid squeezes his boy's ass as he spreads him open, fucking him relentlessly with his tongue.

"Reid," Matt moans, his legs trembling. He hopes the table is sturdy enough to hold him so they both don't tumble to the floor.

Pulling away, Reid scans the shelf, smiling when he finds a box of condoms. He rips the box open to get one then quickly frees his cock. The urgency to be inside his boy, making him hurry, and with no warning, Reid lines himself up and pushes inside.

Matt cries out, the burning stretch of Reid's cock spearing him open feeling like an itch that's finally been scratched.

Reid rides his boy hard, caught up in the urgency of their time together and his own need to claim what is his. Reaching around, he takes hold of Matt's neck, rising up on his tiptoes to press into the kiss. Muffling his cries in his arm, mindful that as secluded as they are there could still be people passing by, Matt completely lets go and gives himself over to Reid's pleasure. His toes lift off the ground with each thrust, but he still aches for more.

Moaning with the pleasure of being with Matt this way, taking his boy hard and fast, Reid doesn't hold anything back and all too soon he can feel his impending climax.

Matt can hear the change in Reid's breathing, knows that it means he's close. "Yours," he moans, knowing that his lover will like the sound of that.

Reid groans as he comes. Breathless and replete, he leans over Matt's back and kisses his lover's back. "Mine," he murmurs against Matt's skin.
Matt's body thrums with need, but something keeps him hovering on the edge, waiting for Reid's approval. "Please," he says softly, the word almost lost in the sound of their breathing.

Smiling against Matt's back, Reid whispers. "I'm going to take care of you. I'll always take care of you." He turns Matt around and drops to his knees, taking his boy's cock into his mouth.

Leaning back against the table to steady himself, the first brush of Reid's lips against his cock has him teetering on the edge, the need to come almost unbearably strong.

Reid looks up at his boy as he sucks him harder, adoring the flush of Matt's skin and the spaced-out look in his eyes that only good sex can cause. After just a few moments, Reid's expert mouth drags him across the edge and he’s coming, his body convulsing hard enough to rattle the table.

Taking hold of Matt’s hips as he swallows his prize, Reid doesn't let go until his boy is drained.

Matt bends forward and reaches down, resting his hands on Reid’s shoulders. “This was the most fun I've ever had doing inventory,” he murmurs.

Reid chuckles, kissing Matt’s hip then his stomach before he gets to his feet where he claims his boy’s mouth, sharing his taste with him.

Wrapping his arms around Reid’s waist, Matt moans happily into the kiss. He nips playfully at Reid’s lower lip, his hands sliding down just enough to cup his lover’s ass. “Do I have to go back to work?”

Reid groans, wanting nothing more than to take Matt upstairs and continue what they've started. “I wish you didn't, but if I steal you away... Mel will murder me.”

“We can’t have that. I’d miss you too much,” Matt says, squeezing Reid’s butt playfully.

“You would?” Reid smiles, the innocent comment going straight to his heart.

“I would,” Matt smiles back. “A lot.”

“Can I see you after work?” asks Reid, hoping that he’s not pushing his luck by asking.

“Yes,” Matt says, loving how hopeful Reid sounds. “I have the early shift, do you want to get a late dinner? You don’t have to cook we could go out somewhere.”

“It’s a date,” Reid grins. “But I will cook breakfast for you,” he adds.

“Good thing I moved in my toothbrush and a change of clothes,” Matt teases, tipping his head up for another kiss.

“Yes, it is,” agrees Reid, silently hoping for the day when he can convince Matt to move in completely.

“I better get back before people start to wonder. And by people I mean Mel,” Matt says reluctantly.

Reid sighs and nods. “You’re right. She’s like a bloodhound when it comes to us. She just seems to know when I steal you away.”

“She knows you too well,” Matt teases, slowly stepping out of Reid’s arms and searching for his discarded clothes.

“It’s not my fault that you are so irresistible that I can’t keep my hands off you,” Reid tells him.
“Discipline,” Matt grins. “I would have thought you’d know something about that.”

Reid laughs. “Oh, I do, love. I really do.”

“Then put it to good use before Mel fires us both,” Matt laughs, as he finishes getting dressed.

“She can’t fire me, I’m the boss,” Reid points out. “And she’s not going to fire you. She likes you. And then she would have to deal with me. And Mel makes it a practice not to have to deal with me.”

“Good to know,” Matt says, moving back to where Reid stands. “Being the boss has its privileges,” he murmurs, his voice full of innuendo.

“Best job ever since you came to work here,” Reid says softly.

“Did you have this planned ever since the moment I walked into your friend’s club?” Matt asks, remembering back to how they first met.

“No. I liked the way you looked, of course, that’s why I gave you my card and told you about the job. I didn’t start planning until later. When I got to know you better.”

Matt nods, liking that answer. “Good,” he says softly.

Reid stares into his boy’s eyes, wanting to say more and yet knowing that this is not the place or time to do it. “See you later then?” he says instead.

“You know where to find me,” Matt smiles. “I’ll see you for dinner.”

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Reid walks by the front desk and sees Rebecca working instead of Matt. He looks at his watch and it is well past the time when Matt is scheduled to be here.

"Where’s Matt?” Reid asks Rebecca.

"He's not here tonight. Mel asked me to fill in,” she replies.

Reid nods, mumbling "thanks" as he goes in search of Mel. He finds her coming out of the office.

"Mel, did you change Matt's schedule?” asks Reid.

"No, he called in sick. A cold or something. He sounded really nasal on the phone..." Her voice trails off when she finds herself talking to no one because Reid is heading straight for the door and out of the club.

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Reid stands outside the building where Matt's flat is located. He sends Matt a text.

ARE YOU AT HOME?

Yes.

GOOD. WHAT IS YOUR FLAT NUMBER? I'M COMING UP.

I'm sick. I don't want to infect you.
DON'T MAKE ME KNOCK ON ALL THE DOORS IN THIS BUILDING.

Matt suffers through a dramatic coughing fit and then sighs and falls back against the pillows.

I'm fine. Just a cold. Please don't make the neighbors call the police on you.

WHAT IS YOUR FLAT NUMBER? DON'T MAKE ME ASK AGAIN.

7B. Matt tosses the phone down on the bed and yanks the covers up over his head. All he wants to do is sleep but it seems Reid has other plans.

Reid knocks on the door to 7B, his frown deepening when a strange young man opens it. "I'm here to see Matt," he says firmly.

"Yeah, sure..." the other man says, stepping aside then pointing toward a small hallway. "His room's over there."

"Thank you." Reid gives him the perfunctory response and strides down the hall. He stops at the only closed door and knocks.

"Come in," Matt mumbles from under the blankets, resigned to his fate.

Reid enters the small bedroom to find a completely covered lump in the bed. He closes the door behind him and sets the container of chicken soup he's brought for Matt on the dresser. Reid shrugs out of his coat and drapes it over a nearby chair as he waits for Matt to at least peek out of his hiding place and greet him.

"I'm sick," Matt says, feeling Reid's presence even though he can't see him. "I don't want you to see me like this."

"Why ever not?" Reid snorts as he moves closer to the bed.

"Because I don't feel well and look terrible and I might infect you with my yucky germs."

Reid takes a seat on the edge of the bed. "I'm sorry you don't feel well. I'm quite certain that you don't look terrible although you may feel terrible. As for the germs, you have warned me therefore you are completely indemnified of any wrong doing should I become infected." He pats the lump who is still hiding beneath the covers. "Now, will you give me a proper hello?"

Matt sighs and pushes back the covers. Reid's brow is creased with concern and he looks flustered like he came over at a dead run. "Hello," he says, before dissolving into another coughing fit.

Just as he suspected, Matt doesn't look terrible at all. Reid is concerned; however, when he sees the feverish flush to Matt's face and hears the deep cough. "Are you taking anything for that cough?" he asks.

"No," Matt says, knowing Reid won't like that response. "Woke up like this and haven't even gotten out of bed yet."

"I need to make a trip to the chemist then and get you something. I'll be right back," Reid tells him as he gets to his feet again.

"I'm fine, really," Matt protests weakly. "I just need to rest. I can send one of the guys out later for something."

"Then you rest. I'll be back soon," Reid repeats as he pulls on his coat. "I brought you some soup,
too. Do you want me to heat it up now or later when I get back?"

"When you get back," Matt says, resigning himself to Reid's "doctoring."

Reid looks around the sparsely decorated room which is not much better than the lounge area he passed through on his way in. The feeling that his boy should not be here is quite strong, but he pushes that aside for now to concentrate on the things that he needs to get for Matt right now. "See you soon," Reid says softly, giving Matt his first smile of the day.

Matt smiles back weakly. As much as he hates that Reid is seeing this side of him, this part of his life, he has to admit that it feels good to see how worried his lover is about him. "Be safe, don't rush."

Nodding, Reid turns to go. He reminds himself that there is a time and place for the discussion about Matt's living arrangements and right now is not that time. He returns an hour later with a sack full of medicines in one hand and a humidifier under his arm. Reid breezes past the same man who answered the door before, not stopping to explain as he makes his way back to Matt's room.

Matt manages to doze off in Reid's absence but he wakes up when his door opens. He's used to sleeping lightly, never knowing who might wander into his room unannounced. "You're back," he says with a half smile. "Feeling sick yet?"

Reid smiles, kicking the door shut behind him. "No, not yet." He sets the humidifier on the end of the bed and begins to dig through the bag of medicine. "I spoke to the pharmacist. He recommended this for the cough." Reid hands the bottle to Matt. "He said as needed, but no more than once per hour. This..." he gives Matt another bottle, "is for fever. Two now and two every 4 hours."

"You expect me to keep track of all those numbers in my addled state?" Matt laughs, which sends him into another coughing fit. "You'll have to make me a schedule."

"I could take care of you better back at my place, but since I know you won't even consider that..." Reid takes his coat off again. "You'll have to settle for me taking care of you here."

"You don't need to stay," Matt protests even though he kind of likes watching Reid in full mothering mode, knowing how completely out of place Reid must feel here in his crappy flat. "I promise I won't die on you or anything."

"I may not need to stay, but I want to stay," Reid says quietly. "Come on. You haven't even tried my soup yet," he adds with a smile.

"Your soup?" Matt asks, glancing over at the container which looks suspiciously like it came from a take-away shop. "You made it, or you bought it?" he teases.

"I brought it. For you." Reid grins as he pats the humidifier box. "This, too. Now can I stay or do you really want me to leave you alone?"

Matt weighs how absolutely miserable he feels with how good it is to spend time with Reid, and as always, Reid wins. "You can stay, as long as you are clear that you are in no way obligated to hang out in my crappy flat and take care of me. You are free to leave any time."

"Good," Reid says as he reaches for the bag that holds the soup. "Now let me heat this up for you. You should eat before you take the medicine. I'll be right back," he tells Matt and he opens the door.
Working himself up to a sitting position, Matt stuffs his pillows behind his back. He glances around the room, wishing he'd been smart enough to try and straighten up while Reid was at the store.

Reid returns, the hot soup steaming inside a large mug with a spoon in it. "In the interest of time and the fact that I couldn't locate a proper pot, I warmed it in the microwave," he explains as he takes a seat on the side of the bed.

"I'm sure it will be fine," Matt says, scooting his legs over to make room for Reid on the bed. "I'm actually more surprised you could find a clean mug to put it in."

"It wasn't," Reid chuckles as he passes the mug to Matt, letting go of the urge to feed his sick boy.

Matt smiles and accepts the soup. His hands are shaky and he almost drops it, but then he manages to steady himself and take a sip off the spoon. The warm flavorful liquid heats him from the inside and he knows it was the right choice to sit up and eat.

Reid smiles when Matt tries the soup. He watches his boy's every move, wishing that his stubborn lover would let him do more to help him. If only he knew how much Reid craves the right to care for him.

"So how long did it take Melanie to sell me out after I called in?" Matt asks, resting the soup in his lap between bites.

"I went to her. When you weren't at the desk," Reid answers. "I do wish that you would have called me," he adds quietly.

"You came looking for me?" Matt asks with a soft smile. "I bet you were disappointed if you were in the mood for what that usually means. I'm sure Rebecca wouldn't have turned you down though."

"I did come looking for you," says Reid, "but not for what you think," he smiles. "I wanted to talk to you about something."

"It must have been something pretty important if you tracked me down all the way to my flat just to say it," Matt says, his heart racing, wondering what Reid wants to ask.

"I wanted to invite you to go with me to Exeter for the holiday. The club is closed for a few days around Christmas and I thought you might like to see my house in the country," Reid explains.

Matt sets his soup on the bedside table and leans forward, trying to make sure that he really heard what Reid said, that it wasn't the medicine affecting his addled brain. "You want me to go away with you for the holiday?"

"Yes, I do. If you haven't made other plans?" Matt is so close and Reid wants to touch him so badly.

"No, I don't have plans," Matt whispers. "I take that back," he says, wishing he could kiss Reid. "I do have plans. I'm going to Exeter."

Reid gives Matt a wide smile. "Wonderful. I'll call Mr. Billington and let him know that there will be two of us there for Christmas."

Matt leans back slightly, digesting what Reid just said. "Mr. Billington?" he asks. He has a sneaking suspicion that Reid's idea of a "country home" might be just a little grander what what
he'd first envisioned.

"The caretaker. He and his wife look after the place. He's excellent with the horses." Reid senses some apprehension from Matt. "I'm sure you will like them, they are a lovely couple."

Relaxing back against the pillows, Matt reaches over and pulls the soup back into his cradled hands. "I keep forgetting that you are Mr. Reid, big shot, and not just..." he pauses, having to bite back the word my, "Reid."

"I am just Reid," he says. Unable to resist any longer, he cups Matt's cheek, his feverish skin warm against his palm.

"I have to admit," Matt says, resting his head against Reid's hand. "I hated the thought of you coming here, but I'm really glad you did."

"Why didn't you want me to come here?" asks Reid.

"Because I know you don't like that I live here, and I was grumpy and tired and sick and looked awful. I knew you didn't care about that stuff, but I still didn't like you seeing it."

"I can't see anything or anyone, but you," Reid says softly. "And you look beautiful to me."

Matt can feel his cheeks flush and he knows it's not just from the fever. "Thank you for taking such good care of me."

"Thank you for letting me take care of you." Reid lowers his hand reluctantly, knowing that he should probably go and let Matt sleep.

Matt glances down at his soup and halfheartedly eats a few more bites. "Would you mind putting the rest of this in the fridge for later? I promise it's making me feel better, I just can't finish it right now."

"You ate more than I expected. That's good," Reid smiles as he takes the bowl. "I'll put it away on my way out. I should be going. You need to sleep."

"I hope to be back at my post tomorrow. So when you come looking for me you won't be disappointed," Matt says, tugging the blankets back up to his chin.

"But if you're not feeling up to it, I want you to call me," Reid tells him in his authoritative tone. "If I call you instead of Melanie she might have my head," Matt smiles. "But I'll call both of you next time," he promises.

"Me first," Reid smirks as he tucks the end of Matt's blanket over his shoulder.

"You first," Matt agrees. "Hopefully, we'll never have to worry about it again. I usually don't get sick."

"Just feel better. And take your medicine," Reid stands reaching for his coat. "Or I will have to come back tomorrow."

"Yes, Sir," Matt teases, burrowing back under the covers.

"Good boy," Reid says softly before taking his leave.

Matt smiles at Reid's words and closes his eyes, feeling relaxed enough to rest now.
"There it is," Reid says with a smile as he turns into the drive leading up to a classic 18th Century country home, beautifully decorated for Christmas with a green wreath on every window. "It used to be the vicarage for the Earls of Gainsborough, but they sold it in the 80s. That's when my father bought it," he tells Matt as he slows his car to a stop and parks at the steps leading up to the front door.

Matt sits in stunned silence, staring out the windshield at the manor before them. "Country home was selling it a bit short I think." While he should have been expecting something like this, Matt can't help but be a little overwhelmed by the sheer size of the estate.

"It's really not that impressive. Just a lot of rooms filled with old things. And it's drafty as hell," laughs Reid as he climbs out of his car. "The stables are at the back. We can go riding tomorrow, if the weather holds."

"It's impressive," Matt murmurs, respectfully disagreeing with Reid. He's been nervous about spending the holidays with Reid, and the formal surroundings don't do much to ease that worry. "So just to be upfront," he says, mustering up a smile, "you own this, and your loft. Anywhere else I should know about so I'm not surprised yet again?"

"Just those two. But I've been looking at a time share in Ibiza..." Reid gives his young lover a sly smile.

"That's too far away. You can come here and back in day, if you go there you'll be gone too long." Reid walks around the car to stand in front of Matt. "If I go there, you can come with me. Bathing suit optional." He smiles and gives Matt a kiss.

"Unlike some people," Matt teases with a laugh as they kiss, "I have to work for a living. No jetting off to Ibiza for me."

"I have it on good authority that the boss is quite fond of you. I'm sure he wouldn't mind giving you some time off," counters Reid. He looks at Matt's clear eyes and pale skin, his cheeks turning rosy in the cool winter air.

"If he throws in the rent money I'll miss by taking off work, it's a deal," Matt grins, hoisting his bag up on his shoulder.

"You wouldn't have to pay rent if you moved in with me," Reid says as he reaches around Matt to get his own bag.

"Yeah, you'd enjoy having a full time house boy, I'm sure," Matt laughs as they start up the walk.

"Only if that boy is you, thinks Reid as he follows Matt up the stairs to the front door. "Don't forget how much you love my shower. And my bed," Reid says with a smile before he turns the doorknob and pushes the door to go inside.

"And the man who occupies it," Matt agrees. He follows Reid into the house, his jaw dropping again as he looks around. "Yeah, just some rooms filled with old things," he says, the description falling far short of the beautiful home.
"Well, you would have to admit, this..." Reid gestures toward a large sitting room filled with mahogany wood furniture and gilded accents. "Is not really my style. A tad too feminine."

"Yes, a lot different than the modern clean lines of the loft. But this is good, too. Very English country estate." Matt wanders over toward the window, looking out on the expanse of land that rolls out behind the house.

"Honestly, I'm in it for the horses," Reid confesses. "The area is perfect for riding."

"So there are really seriously horses?" Matt asks, turning around to look at Reid. "I kinda thought you were joking about all that."

Reid shakes his head and smiles. "Oh no, I wasn't joking. I have horses and I enjoy riding them. I'll take you out to the stable later and you can meet them. Right now, let me show you our room."

Matt likes the sound of "our room". He reluctantly leaves the window to explore more of the house. "Do I need to make myself a map? I don't want to get lost."

"It's a simple lay out, I'm sure you will manage," chuckles Reid as he walks back toward the entry and the staircase there. He climbs the stairs, his long legs taking two at a time. Turning right, Reid leads them to the end of the hall and opens the door. "This isn't the master, but I prefer the view. It looks over the garden."

Matt immediately goes to the window and can't help but smile. "Excellent choice," he says, admiring the view. "I bet it's hard to come back to the city after spending time here."

"Not as hard as it used to be," Reid says as he moves to stand behind Matt at the window. "Since I have someone special in London," he whispers as he slips his arms around Matt's waist.

"Absence doesn't make the heart grow fonder?" he asks softly, leaning back against Reid's chest.

"It does. But having you with me works, too," Reid replies, kissing Matt's neck.

Matt loves hearing that despite everything Reid has, what he really wants is him. "I'm glad you were persistent and made me come with you."

"I'm glad you came. I'm looking forward to spending Christmas with you," Reid tells him. "Mrs. Billington wanted to decorate a tree for us, but I thought you might like to go into town and we can pick one out ourselves."

"That sounds fun," Matt says, giving up the view in favor of turning in Reid's arms so he can face him. "But don't go out of your way just for me, I'm happy to do whatever you normally do for the holidays."

"I usually stay in London for the holidays. Alone," confesses Reid. "So I am rather glad not to be doing the 'usual thing' this year," he says with a smile as he pulls Matt closer.

"Alone by choice?" Matt asks, his hands sliding up Reid's chest. "You shouldn't be alone at Christmas."

"I'm not alone. Not now." Reid lifts Matt up against him. "I want to take you to that bed and have my wicked way with you, you know that don't you?"

"I like that idea," Matt says softly. "I need to test and see if your bed here is as good as your bed at the loft."
"It's better," Reid grins as he walks them toward the bed. "Solid English oak. Very sturdy."

"Oh, you've tested it?" Matt laughs, letting Reid pull him willingly toward the bed.

"No. You'll be the first. Again," replies Reid as he falls to the mattress, pulling Matt with him.

Matt lets himself fall on top of Reid, stretching out along his solid body. "You're gonna give me a big head if you keep talking like that," he whispers.

"Good," Reid smiles, his hands sliding under Matt's jumper. "I keep hoping that you are going to figure it out."

"Sometimes your brain shuts off things that are a little scary to hear," Matt confesses, pressing down into Reid's hands.

"Don't be scared, Matty. It can be great, just let it happen." Reid pulls his boy in for a slow, tender kiss.

Matt relaxes into the kiss, trying to let Reid's words sink into his brain. "I'm trying," he murmurs, the promise pressed against his lover's lips.

Reid wraps his arms tighter around Matt, pressing his face against Matt's shoulder. "I know you are. That's why I'll still be here. Waiting for you."

For the millionth time Matt wonders how he got so lucky to find someone like Reid. "I don't know what I did to catch you, but I feel like I won the lottery."

Pulling back, Reid grins up at Matt. "I'm no prize. However, I do have excellent taste in bartenders," he teases.

"You are definitely a prize," Matt says firmly. "And hopefully you only have a taste for one particular bar tender."

"Mmmmm... let's see," Reid muses aloud before he rolls over, pinning Matt beneath him. He pushes Matt's jumper up to reveal his stomach and slowly licks a stripe down the center of it. Reid looks at Matt and smiles. "Yes, there's only one bartender for me."

"Good," Matt smiles, his heart racing from the feel of Reid's mouth on his skin.

"Are you cold?" Reid asks as he caresses Matt's smooth skin.

"Not as long as you keep doing that," Matt says, sliding his hands up over his head, out of the way of Reid's explorations.

"Good. Because I need you naked," smiles Reid as he unbuttons the top button on Matt's jeans.

"You need me naked or you want me naked?" Matt asks, his voice full of anticipation. His eyes are fixed on Reid's face, drinking in the desire he sees there.

"Need," Reid repeats as he stares back at Matt while he begins to undress him.

"You need me?" Matt asks, just wanting to hear Reid say it again.

"Yes," Reid says as he pulls off Matt's jeans then crawls back up his boy's body to look down into his eyes. "I need you."
"Good," Matt says softly, a smile on his lips. "Because I need you too." He slides his arms around Reid's neck, pulling him down for a kiss.

"Mr. Reid?" A voice calls from downstairs.

Reid lifts his head, a slight frown on his face. "That's Mrs. Billington," he tells Matt.

"She won't just walk in right?" Matt asks, glad he's hidden from view with Reid on top of him. "I'm guessing she's not use to you having guests."

"No, I suppose not. I've never brought anyone here before," Reid says as he stands and straightens his shirt. "I should run downstairs and greet her. Will you join us? When you're ready?" he asks as he smiles as his beautifully disheveled lover.

"Yes, of course. I'll be down in just a minute," Matt says, sitting up and running his fingers through his hair.

"Sorry for the interruption, love, but I won't forget where we were." Reid chuckles as he walks to the bedroom door.

"Oh, I have no worries about that," Matt smiles, swinging his feet around to the floor. "From what I've seen, my naked body is never far from your mind."

Reid laughs louder as he exits the bedroom and heads downstairs. Mrs. Billington is at the foot of the staircase, smiling up at him.

"I saw the car at the front. How was your trip?" she asks brightly.

"Good, thank you," Reid says before he bestows a chaste kiss on the older woman's cheek. "Mrs. Bills, I've brought someone with me this time," he tells her. "Someone special," Reid adds pointedly.

Mrs. Billington's eyes widen as well as her smile. "Really, dear? How lovely!"

"His name is Matt. He'll be down in a moment." Reid is certain that The Billingtons are aware of his sexuality, but bringing a boy "home" for the first time is probably a surprise nonetheless.

"Matt. That's fine, dear. Just fine." If Mrs. Billington is surprised, she hides it well, her gaze turning back to the stairs as Matt descends.

Matt is glad that he took the time to be sure his clothes and hair were all back in place, as the woman next to Reid stares at him. He stops at the foot of the stairs, just a step or two behind Reid and gives her the best smile he can muster. "Hello," he says.

"Mrs. Bills, this is Matt," Reid slips an arm around his boyfriend, nudging him a bit closer.

"Hello, Matt." Mrs. Billington's smile is warm and genuine as she reaches out to take one of Matt's hands and presses it between her two. "Such a pleasure to meet you."

"Wonderful to meet you as well," Matt says, relaxing when her interest appears to be genuine. "Reid speaks very highly of you," he says with a smile.

"Ahh, well..." She looks at Reid and smiles fondly. "Mr. Reid is a fine man."

"Reid, Mrs. Bills. Just call me Reid," he asks her, yet again. "Where's Mr. Bills?" asks Reid.
"Tending to the horses. I think he loves those animals as much as you do," she says with a warm smile. "Would you two lads care for a cup of tea? I've stocked the kitchen, but if there is anything else you need, just let me know."

Matt defers to Reid, not wanting to disrupt what might be the normal rituals of his visit.

Reid looks at Matt and shakes his head. "Not right now, Mrs. Bills. We're just settling in. I can fire up the kettle later. Thank you for getting the house ready. Everything looks wonderful."

"You're welcome, dear. Always a pleasure to prepare the house for Christmas." She smiles, looking at Matt then back at Reid. "All right then, I shall be on my way. If you need anything, just give us a ring. So good to have you here, Matt. Have a good evening!" Mrs. Billington gives a little wave over her shoulder as she disappears toward the kitchen.

Matt waves back and then turns to Reid. "So that went well I think. She didn't seem terribly shocked."

"She's a gracious lady. She wouldn't say anything even if she was shocked," Reid smiles. "Still, it's probably for the best that I met her like this, not naked on your bed," Matt teases. "True." Reid chuckles, pulling Matt closer. "I hope that you don't mind that I passed on tea."

"I don't mind at all." Matt says, leaning in to whisper, "I'm only hungry for you."

Reid kisses him, showing his boy how hungry he is for him, too.

The fire that had so abruptly been put out springs right back to life as soon as Reid kisses him. "Anyone else we should meet or things we should see before we can retire for an afternoon nap?" Matt murmurs.

"Nope," Reid says quickly, taking Matt's hand to lead him back up the stairs.

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Reid pulls the door to the stable back and tells Matt to go on inside. "To the left," he says, following him after he closed the door. "I only have two right now, since I don't get to spend a lot of time here," explains Reid as they approach the stalls where the horses are housed.

Matt steps closer to the stall, eyeing the horse through the wood slats. "They are so big," he marvels, tilting his head as one pushes it's nose out and sniffs the air.

"This one likes his nose rubbed," Reid smiles as he pets the horse.

Following Reid's lead, Matt tentatively reaches out and touches the horse's velvety nose. "What's his name?"

Reid looks surprised when asked the question. "I don't know actually," he says with a soft laugh. "I mean, I have their registered names on the paperwork, but I would have to look to remember. Mr. Bills probably has pet names for them. I'll have to ask."

"You don't know his name?" Matt laughs, softly so as not to spook the horse. "That's not very nice."

"Well, we never talk, you see. It's always right down to business. I arrive. I ride. I brush. All rather perfunctory, I suppose." Reid grins, adoring the way Matt's cheeks dimple when he laughs.
Matt shakes his head. "Well before you take me out riding, I want to know their names," he says. "I might need to talk to them, unlike you. Convince them not to throw me off just because I'm a beginner."

Reid nods, still chuckling softly. "I'll be sure to find out their names and make a more proper introduction before we go riding."

"Thank you," Matt says, smiling when the horse whinnies as if he agrees. "The only horses I've been this close to before are the carriage horses in Jackson Square. Yours seem much happier."

"I imagine they are. What with the loving care that Mr. Bills lavishes on them, I'm sure they are quite content. He rides them regularly. His children, too, when they are visiting."

"Don't have to haul around tourists everyday either," Matt laughs. "And I'm sure the scenery here beats making the same loop all day."

"For certain. The grounds here are quite beautiful." Reid takes Matt's hand and leads him toward the tackle room. He points to plaques and ribbons hanging on the walls. "My father had horses here," is all he says about the awards.

Matt glances at the awards and then continues down the row, looking at all the various equipment so carefully lined up and put away. It's obvious that Mr. Bills, as Reid would say, takes great care in what he does. "Have you ever thought about living out here permanently so you can spend more time doing all this?"

"I have," replies Reid. "But I know I would miss London. My life there." He doesn't elaborate, knowing that Matt will understand what it is to which he refers.

"And now I'm there too," Matt smiles, taking Reid's hand. His eye catches on a crop hanging on the wall. "That looks just like the one you have at the club," he teases. "Is that where you got the idea?"

"The other way round actually." Reid keeps hold of Matt's hand as he reaches up to get the leather crop from where it hangs. "I was introduced to a crop before I was introduced to riding," he grins.

Matt blushes despite his best effort. "Why does that not surprise me?" he asks, tilting his head against Reid's shoulder.

"Is there any mystery left to me?" Reid asks softly, releasing Matt's hand so that he can caress his cheek.

"There's a lot of mystery left," Matt promises, looking up at Reid. "More mystery than the parts I've figured out," he admits.

"I love this color on your skin," Reid whispers, lowering his head to kiss Matt.

"You always seem to be the cause," Matt whispers into the kiss.

"I'd love to see that color on your other cheeks, too," Reid confesses, as he rubs the leather crop in his hand against the side of Matt's thigh.

Matt's heart skips a beat and then pounds in his chest loud enough he's sure it will scare the horses. "With that?" he asks softly, even though Reid's intent is crystal clear.

"Yes," Reid replies, his tone a soft plea. "But only enough for a pale blush. Trust me?"
Matt nods, not trusting his words. He slides his hand behind Reid's neck and pushes up on his toes for another kiss, needing the connection to seal his resolve.

Reid lifts his boy into his arms, still kissing him as he backs his way out of the tackle room. Excited at the prospect of Matt's submission, he needs to act now. He doesn't want to take the chance that his boy will over think again and change his mind. Reid carries him over to where the hay is stored, releasing Matt only long enough to throw a blanket over the bales before he begins to help his lover undress.

Matt forces the part of his brain that over thinks things to shut down, wanting to just experience the moment. He shivers as Reid starts to bare his skin, the cool air replaced with the warmth of his lover's hands as Reid explores each inch that he exposes.

Matt stands nude and shivering slightly in front of him, uncertainty in his eyes. His boy is so beautiful like this, bare and submitting himself to Reid's desire. He guides Matt to lie face down on the blanket, his hands caressing his lover's bare skin. Reid spies the leather straps hanging in the corner and on impulse, he gets them and ties them around Matt's wrists, remembering his boy favors being restrained.

Focusing on keeping his breathing steady, Matt tugs against the straps. They are stiffer than the padded ones Reid has used before, and the edges bite into his skin. He discovers that the bite isn't necessarily a bad thing, it keeps him aware of his predicament in a way the more comfortable ones didn't. He cranes his neck to look over his shoulder, needing to see Reid there.

"You are so incredibly beautiful like this," Reid says with awe as he caresses the curve of Matt's perfect ass.

Matt knows he's blushing again, but knowing that Reid likes that keeps him from hiding his face. "Thank you," he whispers, adding a "Sir" at the end, just to test out how it sounds.

Reid's face breaks into a wide smile when he hears Matt call him "Sir". He slowly rubs the leather crop against Matt's bare ass. "If you want me to stop, love. All you have to do is tell me."

Nodding again, Matt turns back and rests his head on his outstretched arms. The feel of the crop against his skin is so light it tickles, but he still braces himself, knowing that at any moment it will change.

The first hit is not at full strength. That is not what this moment is about for Reid or his boy. The fact that his young lover is trusting him this way is more than Reid could have hoped for and he is not going to ruin it by pushing beyond Matt's limits.

The sound startles Matt more than the actual feel of the impact, it's much louder than he anticipated and it makes him jump. Once he settles back down, he realizes that the spot where the crop landed feels warm, but there isn't the pain he thought might happen.

"All right there?" Reid asks as he rubs the skin where he struck.

"Yes, Sir," Matt says, smiling against his arms where it can't be seen, at Reid's check-in. "May I have another?" he asks, hoping it's the right response.

"Oooh, Matty. You're pushing all the buttons," Reid says softly. He takes care not to spank in the same spot with his next blow. The strength is a tad harder, but still not a full force hit.

Matt is prepared this time and can concentrate on the feel of the crop smacking against his skin. He's surprised to discover his cock stirring, both from the way his skin tingles, and the knowledge
that he's choosing to do this.

Reid smacks Matt's ass again, the leather crop changing his boy's ass to a lovely shade of pink. He notices the slight shift to Matt's hips as his boy tries to get some friction against the blanket. "Perfect." Reid says without even realizing it.

Glowing from the compliment, Matt turns his head just enough to catch sight of Reid. His lover's eyes are sparking and his face is flushed and Matt knows he's the cause, not the bracing air.

Taking hold of Matt's hips, Reid pulls him up so that he is on his knees. He slides his hand between his boy's thighs. "Can you take you another one?" asks Reid as he slowly palms Matt's balls and growing erection.

"Yes," Matt gasps, trying to resist the urge to shove his hips back against Reid's touch. "Yes, Sir."

Reid raises the crop then lets it fall right across the reddening skin on Matt's ass. He wishes he had a condom. The desire to fuck his boy like this is incredibly strong and Reid can feel the way that Matt is into it, too. He drops the crop and takes Matt by the hips again. "I'm going to turn you over," Reid tells him.

Matt moans softly as Reid's hands caress his hips, the soft touch a contrast to the sting of the crop. He lets Reid guide him, giving him complete control.

Checking the leather straps around Matt's wrists to make sure they won't cut off his boy's circulation, Reid rolls Matt onto his back. He drops to his knees between Matt's legs and begins to stroke his boy's cock.

Leaving his arms up over his head, Matt discovers that the scratch of the blanket against his reddened skin actually turns him on, making his cock throb in Reid's hand. He doesn't take the time to think about what that might mean, he just rides out the waves of pleasure he experiences as Reid touches him just the way he likes it.

Reid is loving the sound of Matt's accelerated breathing and the way his boy's body is crying out for more. Bending between Matt's long legs, he takes Matt's cock into his mouth.

Matt aches to touch Reid and his hands pull against the leather straps. "Please," he begs, not knowing whether he is begging for more, or for the torment to stop.

Releasing Matt's cock just long enough to tell him to come when he wants, Reid quickly returns to sucking off his boy. He massages the sensitive skin behind Matt's balls then slowly slides a finger inside him, crooking it just right as he rubs against his prostate.

With Reid's fingers pressing against just the right spot, Matt comes hard, his voice echoing through the stable.

Reid swallows Matt's offering, easing out of him then lowering his boy's legs. He reaches up and releases Matt's wrists, wrapping his lover in his arms and pulling him close. "Thank you," Reid whispers as he hugs his exhausted boy.

Matt curls against Reid's chest, mentally and physically exhausted by the encounter. "You're welcome," he says, even though he feels like he should be thanking Reid for taking this chance.

"Let's get you dressed and back inside before you begin to cool down," Reid says softly as he reaches for Matt's clothes. "How's your bum feel?"
"A little raw, but not bad," Matt says, rolling his wrists around to get the feeling back in his fingers. "Mind-blowing orgasms have a good way of making everything feel better."

"Don't they though," Reid chuckles as he helps Matt dress. "I'll put on some lotion, that will help with the sting," he tells him, before pulling him in for another kiss. "You are amazing," Reid whispers.

"You are pretty amazing yourself," Matt says, enjoying the way Reid is setting his clothes to right, taking such good care of him.

"So the crop before the horse? Not so bad, eh?" teases Reid as he helps Matt to his feet.

"Not bad at all," Matt smiles, keeping a hold of Reid's hand even after he's steady on his feet. "Now should we go see about taking as good care of you as you did for me?"

"No worries about that, love. You're giving me exactly what I need," Reid assures him as he puts the blanket and the leather straps back in their place and picks up the crop to return it to the tackle room. "Exactly," he says again with a smile as they leave the stable.

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Reid blinks at the morning sun that spills into the bedroom from the window overlooking the garden. It's a bright, clear Christmas day and he smiles as he remembers the date and the young man who is in bed beside him.

His time here in the country, alone with Matt, has been more than he expected. The hours that they have spent talking and laughing and getting to know one another have been incredible. The time spent in Matt's arms has been even more so. His boy's willingness to explore with him and go beyond anything they have tried before has Reid hopeful for their future together.

Reid rolls over to see his boy on his stomach, sprawled on his half of the bed and sleeping soundly. Slowly tugging at the bed clothes, he slowly uncovers Matt's naked bottom. Reid smiles when he sees the smooth skin and delightful shape. He leans over, bestowing a soft kiss on one perfect cheek.

Matt's first thought as he awakes is that he's lost the blankets somehow, but he quickly realizes that it's Reid's doing. "Good morning," he murmurs, his face still buried in the pillows. "I see you've found your Christmas gift."

Reid laughs as he reaches for Matt, rolling him over and into his arms. "It's perfect," he says before kissing Matt. "Thank you."

"What else do you get the man that has everything?" Matt asks, settling comfortably into Reid's arms.

"I really do feel like I have everything, when you are with me," confesses Reid. "Happy Christmas, Matty."

"Happy Christmas," Matt whispers back, reaching up to rest his hand on Reid's cheek. "Thank you for spending the holidays with me."

Taking hold of Matt's hand, Reid turns his face and kisses his boy's palm. "There is no one who I would rather spend my time with than you." He looks into the beautiful blue/green eyes staring back at him and smiles. "I love you, Matt."
Matt's heart skips a beat. He realizes in an instant that he feels the same, despite not wanting to put it into words before this moment. "I love you, too," he says, the words scary and thrilling all at the same time.

Reid's smile grows exponentially. He pulls Matt in for another kiss, passionate and reverent.

Wrapping his arms around Reid tightly, Matt loses himself in the embrace. He lets his usually reserved emotions overflow, pouring them into the kiss.

Kissing Matt's lips then his cheek, his jaw, his neck, Reid wants to kiss every part of his boy's body and claim every part of him as his and his alone.

Matt slides his hands up Reid's back, pulling him over on top as he rolls. Their bodies are drawn together like magnets, the need between them demanding to be satisfied.

"I need you," Reid murmurs against Matt's skin as he rolls his hip, his cock rubbing against his lover's.

"I'm yours," Matt promises, his legs parting to make room for Reid. "And I want you to be mine," he whispers back.

"I am yours. All of me." Reid pulls away for the briefest moment, only long enough to get the lube and a condom. He wants to be inside his boy. Reid spreads Matt's leg, massaging and stretching his hole. He looks into Matt's eyes again and whispers, "Mine."

Matt doesn't even about what he's doing until his hand has already moved, gently tugging the condom out of Reid's hand and tossing it aside. "You get tested, right?" he asks, his eyes never leaving Reid's face.

Reid stares at Matt, surprised and excited by his boy's action. "Yes. I always use a condom... are you sure?" he asks softly, the dominant side of him reveling in Matt's offer.

"I want this," Matt says, his voice unwavering. "I want you."

Reid uses more lube, stroking his bare cock. "Matty," Reid breathes his lover's name as he slowly pushes inside, the silken heat taking him in.

Matt gasps as Reid's cock drags along his skin with delicious friction. "You feel so good inside me," Matt whispers, pulling Reid closer. "So warm."

Pushing forward, Reid claims Matt's mouth for a slow, devouring kiss. He hooks his arms beneath Matt's knees, opening his lover wide to take him deeper.

Moaning into the kiss, Matt's entire body aches with need. As good as it always is with Reid, the skin on skin contact makes it just that much better, cementing the connection he's always felt with Reid.

Reid grabs Matt's hips, pulling him in with each deep thrust forward. He can't get enough of the connection he's feeling with his young lover and it makes him crave it all the more.

"Yes," Matt murmurs over and over, his body meeting each thrust of Reid's hips with a demand for more. "Come inside me," he begs, the words tumbling out of his mouth, "make me yours."

Breathless and sweating from their vigorous coupling, Reid practically shouts the word "Mine!" as he comes inside Matt. The claim in both words and the look on Reid's face send Matt flying, seeing
stars as wave after wave of pleasure rocks his core.

"Best. Christmas. Present. Ever." Reid nuzzles Matt neck as he whispers the words.

"You're welcome," Matt smiles, even though he feels like he's the one that should be giving thanks.
Chapter 16

Matt gazes out the window, watching the lights of the city go by. After being out in the country the brightness and bustle of the city are a change, and Matt can feel himself missing the quiet already. He's enjoyed having so much concentrated Reid time, without any of life's more mundane issues to distract them. Dragging his eyes away from the window he looks over at Reid and finds him staring back. "Eyes on the road now," he laughs.

"That's hard to do. I'd rather be looking at you," Reid replies with a smile, loving the sound of his boy's laugh.

"Yes, but we aren't in the middle of nowhere anymore. Here you'll get us both run over if you aren't careful," Matt admonishes playfully.

"Yes, sir." Reid smirks as he takes a turn toward the club, toward home.

Matt cocks his head, pointing out the window at the road they just left. "Um, in case you've forgotten I live that way," he laughs. "I'm not on the work schedule tonight."

"What?" asks Reid, confused. "You don't want to come home with me?"

"I can if you want," Matt says, returning the confused look. "I just figured we'd both be busy catching up after being gone... you know laundry and that kind of stuff before work tomorrow."

"Only during the transition. Once you're moved, it won't be difficult at all," Reid reasons with a shrug of his shoulder.

"Transition?" Matt turns sideways in his seat, trying to figure out what the hell Reid is talking about. "I think I've missed something along the way here."

"What? There's always a time of transition when you're combining two households. But by the looks of your place, you won't have much to move."

"Combining two households? Um, did all that country air somehow make you lose your mind?" Matt mentally rewinds himself of all the conversations from their holiday and can't come up with anything that might have remotely suggested what he thinks Reid is now referring to.

"Lose my mind?" Reid shoots his lover a puzzled look. "No. I am in complete control of my senses."

"Then do you mind filling me on on what's going on? I'm obviously not keeping up."

"I love you. You said you love me. I want to share my life with you. In my mind, that involves living together," explains Reid.

"I do love you," Matt says, choosing to focus on that part first. "Very much so. But were you planning on asking me to live with you or were you just assuming I would give up my place at the drop of a hat?"

"Give up? What is it that you would be giving up? The messy roommates? The dirty kitchen? Or is it the tiny bedroom?" Reid's tone turns sarcastic.

Matt stares at Reid for a moment, completely flabbergasted at what just came out of his mouth. He
turns back around in his seat, resolutely staring ahead as they fly down the narrow streets. "My messy roommates. My dirty kitchen. MY tiny bedroom."

Reid finds the first available space and parks the car. Turning in his seat now, he looks at Matt's pouting face. "You're my boy. Your place is with me."

"Your boy?" Matt asks softly. He's heard that term a lot at the club and images of what it means flash through his head. "So loving you means being owned?" It's an honest question, as Matt realizes there's so much he hadn't thought through.

Reid's eyes narrow and he shakes his head. "No. It doesn't mean that at all. And if you think I want you to be with me because I think I own you, then you really don't understand anything about me or my lifestyle." He turns back in his seat and puts the car in gear. "I'll take you home," Reid says quietly as he steers the car back in the direction from where they came.

Matt reaches over and rests his hand on Reid's arm. He wishes they'd stayed parked, but he can't help that now. "You're right," he says. "I don't understand. But I want to."

"It was my mistake." Reid keeps his eyes focused on the road despite Matt's touch. "I shouldn't have assumed that you would want to be with me."

Matt sighs, sensing he's lost any connection with Reid that he might have forged over their holiday. "Being with you has never been a mistake," Matt says honestly. "I think we just need to talk about this."

"Maybe you can call me. Or the next time you're free after work." Reid's words are flat and unemotional.

Matt emotions are rolling, anger, frustration, sadness, heartache, and back to anger again as Reid shuts down. "Seriously?" he mutters, crossing his arms.

Reid remains quiet as he turns onto the street where Matt lives. His boy's rejection is hitting him hard and he knows that he is not reacting well to it, but then he's never experienced anything like this.

The silence stretches between them until Reid pulls to a stop in front of Matt's building. Matt doesn't make a move to get out of the car, still not ready to leave like this. "I had a wonderful time. The best Christmas I've had in ages."

"I'm glad," Reid murmurs quietly, hating that their idyllic holiday is ending like this.

"I'll call you tomorrow, okay?" Matt says, unbuckling his seat belt. He can tell that further conversation is only going to frustrate him more, so maybe time will let cooler heads prevail.

"Tomorrow." Reid repeats the word, understanding how the meaning of it has changed so much in the last half hour.

Matt waits a beat for Reid to say anything else. When he's met by stony silence Matt slams out of the car. He yanks his bag out of the backseat and then slams the door shut, his feet rooted to the ground.

Reid pulls away from the curb and hits the gas, refusing to look in the rear view mirror as he speeds away.

Matt feels a brief flash of sadness as Reid drives away without even a backwards glance, but then
his anger returns full force. After all he's shared with Reid about his past relationship he'd thought that Reid would be more understanding. But maybe he's judged wrong.

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"Fuck! Stupid printer..." Reid looks at the ink on his hands and scowls. "It's brand new! Why the hell is it leaking ink?" he yells to no one as he rants in his empty office.

Mel comes to a dead stop in the hallway and briefly debates just turning around and heading back out to the front. She realizes that whatever Reid is up to will eventually land on her plate so she might as well deal with it now. She sets her shoulders and steps into the doorway. "Trouble?" she asks, putting on a light tone.

"The fucking printer! Look at my fucking hands!" Reid holds his ink-covered fingers up so that Mel can see them. "If I get this shit on my new suit, I'll..." He growls and shakes his head in frustration.

"Is there a particular reason why your hands were in the printer?" Mel asks, gently stepping between Reid and the offending machine.

"It told me to change the ink cartridge," replies Reid, glaring at the printer. "What it didn't mention is that the damn thing would leak all over me."

"Take one giant step back from the printer, and take one giant deep breath," Mel instructs. "And then don't move while I get you something to wipe your hands on." She resists the urge to laugh, knowing it will only make Reid madder.

Reid takes the step back then exhales loudly, wishing that was the answer to all of his frustrations. He takes the tissues that Mel offers and wipes off as much of the ink as he can while she deals with printer. Excusing himself, Reid goes into the bathroom and washes his hands. He pauses as he looks at himself in the mirror, the frowning face staring back at him. It's not the printer that has him upset. Reid dries his hands and returns to the office, dropping into one of the guest chairs since Mel is sitting at the desk.

"Did the printer eat your puppy or something?" Mel asks, taking in Reid's dejected demeanor.

"Funny," Reid says absently. "It's not wise to tease a wounded animal."

"Wounded?" Mel asks. It's a risk to push Reid to talk when he's in a mood like this, but given the damage he's already caused to the printer it's not likely to get that much worse.

"Yes, wounded. As in gutted and bleeding profusely." Reid scowls, just thinking about what happened with Matt yesterday makes him re-live the pain. "You warned me about this sort of thing. Now I understand what it is that you were talking about."

"You're going to need to catch me up here," Mel says, settling back in her chair. She hasn't had a chance to ask how the holidays had been for Reid, and she's guessing it must have not turned out as expected.

"It's Matt," Reid sighs. "We had a brilliant holiday. Perfect. I told him that I loved him," he smiles as he remembers the moment and the way Matt responded. "He told me that he loved me, too." The scowl returns to Reid's face. "Apparently, just not enough to want to live with me."

It takes Mel a moment to digest what Reid has said. In all the time she's known him she never expected to hear him profess his love for someone, especially someone like Matt. She's so happy
for both of them and it hurts to see this bump in their road. "He said he didn't want to move in?"

"He said it was his messy roommates, his dirty kitchen and his tiny bedroom. He seemed rather clear on the subject." He gives Mel a look of disgust, the same one he had when Matt said it to him originally.

"I think maybe you are leaving something out," Mel prods gently. "Somehow I'm thinking that little rant might have been throwing some of your own words back at you."

"It doesn't matter who's words they are, Mel. They are true. And he would rather live in a sty than with me." Reid shakes his head, still not believing it. "He has no idea about the changes I have made. All for him."

"And why doesn't he have any idea about that?" Mel asks, crossing her arms. Reid can be stubborn, and she knows tough love is sometimes the right call.

Reid looks at his manager and frowns again. "And tell him what? Look Matt! Look at everything that I have given up just to be with you! Doesn't that make you feel special?" he says sarcastically. "And what kind of guy would that make me? A right minger. That's what."

Shaking her head, Mel can see she's probably not going to get anywhere on this subject. "I think you took a huge step letting him know how you feel about him. It's just going to take time for you both to adjust to what that means. The dating process isn't over the moment you use the L-word you know."

"Here we go again..." Reid murmurs, sinking into his seat.

"How did you ask him to move in?" Mel asks, wanting to make her point.

Reid rolls his eyes and sighs. "I did not ask him. I assumed. There. I admit it. I made the assumption that he might wish to cohabitate with the man he loves. How simply ridiculous of me."

Mel raises her eyebrow, staring pointedly at Reid. "So instead of asking him nicely to completely upend his life, you've decided murdering my printer is a better use of your communication skills?"

Reid gives her a look that could wither roses. "I hardly think that moving from an overcrowded hole in the wall to my flat would qualify as upending his life. And that's my bloody printer! Or at least I paid for it!"

Ignoring the outburst about the printer, Mel decides to push just once more and then let it go if Reid continues to be stubborn. "What did that overcrowded hole in the wall cost him? And I don't mean financially. What does it mean to him?"

"I have no idea what he pays for rent, if that's what you mean." Reid huffs.

Mel sighs, completely over Reid's self indulgent anger. "Fine. Dear Abby time is over. I'll get a tech in here to fix the printer and let you know when it's safe to try and print again."

"Dear Abby you're not..." Reid mumbles. "You haven't given me one bit of useful advice."

"Whatever, Reid," Mel mutters, standing up from her chair and heading for the door. "I'll be up at the desk if you need me."

Reid exhales another huff of frustration as Mel leaves. "Good to know that Matt's flat means more to him than me," he says to his empty office.
Matt checks the display on his phone for the umpteenth time, making sure that it all appears to be in working order. He's called and texted Reid with no answer before his shift and it's the longest he can remember going without hearing from him. Having his cell phone out at work is a major no-no, and he's constantly looking over his shoulder to be sure Mel isn't lurking there ready to pounce.

His distraction allows a member to approach the desk unseen and Matt's head snaps up when he hears a rapping on the desk. "So sorry," he stammers, smiling at the young man before him. "Can I help you?"

"I was just curious if there were any free rooms this evening," Jason asks with a smile. He leans one elbow on the desk, evaluating the other boy. Cute enough, he thinks, but definitely not Dom material.

Matt turns to the computer and taps through the reservations. "Do you need any specific equipment?" he asks, having learned it is better to let the member specify rather than list off all the amenities of a particular space.

"No, nothing special. If Room 8 is open that has sentimental value," Jason smiles. "And I'm actually not ready to make a reservation, I just wanted to know my options for the evening. I'm hoping to make a catch tonight and I didn't want to be left hanging if you were booked up."

Matt's smile turns wistful as he thinks of Reid's favorite room. He wonders if Reid's silence is just the beginning of the end. "Looks like you are in luck. It's open all night."

"Excellent," Jason says with a broad smile. "It seems like maybe my luck is with me tonight. I'm going to need it."

Matt resists the urge to check his phone yet again. Just his luck he's got a chatty customer when all he wants to do is brood about his own misfortune.

"My name is Jason," he says, extending his hand. "Would it be possible to keep that room open as long as possible just in case?" he asks. "Obviously if that room is needed I understand but it would be great to keep that option open."

"That's fine," Matt says, poking a few buttons on his keyboard. "No guarantees of course." Resigned to chatting him up, Matt sinks back into his bartender persona, making polite conversation while his mind is focused elsewhere.

"So this is a bloke you've met here before?" he asks, feeling as if he should have a rag in his hand to wipe down the desk just out of old habit.

Jason stays propped against the desk, his eyes keeping a steady scan over the patrons coming in and out of the bar just in case the Dom makes an appearance. "Yes. In fact the manager here set us up. A blind date of sorts," he says, remembering the night with a smile.

"Oh really?" Matt asks absently. He knows Melanie has a reputation for match making but he didn't realize it went quite that far. "And it must have been a good date since you're back."

"Oh the best," Jason says. "I just wish I'd had the courage to come back way before now. This all happened... well over six months ago now."

"Yes, that is quite a long time to wait for a second date," Matt agrees, giving a small wave to one of his old bar regulars as they pass.
“Well, maybe date was overstating it a bit,” Jason says, lowering his voice. “It was really just a scene, but I’d really like to make it more if you know what I mean. Unfortunately, his reputation led me to believe there was no chance.”

Matt swings his focus back to Jason, his curiosity now peaked. It has become painfully obvious that he doesn't understand how Reid's lifestyle really functions and maybe listening to this over-sharer might give him some insight into BDSM relationships.

“I'd heard amazing things about him... you know, hottest Dom in town and all that fanfare, but I didn't really believe it. Let me tell you though, he was all that and more,” Jason says, a smile on his face as he recalls that night.

“His reputation precedes him?” Matt asks, finding it a little amusing. He wants to ask if there is some sort of ranking system or secret underground messaging system to keep it all straight.

“Definitely. Best Dom you'll ever have but you'll only have him once. Never uses the same guy twice, so don't bother getting attached.” Jason leans back from the desk, making sure there is no one he's missed in the bar. "He'd just gotten a new cane and wanted to test it out. Almost more pain than I could handle, but he knew exactly how to take me to the edge and leave me right there in that sweet spot.”

Matt nods, wondering why that much pain would be a good thing. "So you're thinking you are the one that can change his ways?” he asks, realizing as he says it that it's exactly what he's been thinking with Reid.

"I can't stop thinking about him. About that night," Jason confides. "So I finally decided that I had to at least try. I can't stand not knowing."

"Well good luck then," Matt says, as he sees a couple approaching the desk. "I'll try and keep Room 8 open for you." He watches Jason prowl into the bar, hoping that his intended target doesn't shoot him down completely, and then turns back to do his job.

Distracted with a fairly steady stream of customers, Matt manages to take his mind off both his silent phone and Jason's plight. It's a good half and hour before he has a break, and out of curiosity he leans over the desk, giving him a full sight line into the bar.

It takes a moment but he locates Jason, standing at the end of one of the booths with his hip cocked out to the side. He holds a drink in his hand, offering it to the man before sliding in next to him.

Good for him, Matt starts to think, just as he gets a clear view of Jason's companion.

Matt feels his heart stop for a full beat before it leaps into his throat. The man in Jason's cross hairs is Reid. All of Jason's praise comes flooding back to him, the words as loud in his head as if someone were screaming them right in his ear. Never uses the same guy twice. Hottest Dom in town. Almost more pain than I could handle. Dreamed about it ever since. To his horror he sees Reid smile, leaning in closer to speak to young man further over the noise of the crowd. He waits five seconds... ten seconds... sure that Reid will shut Jason down, but instead they continue to converse, Jason's hand reaching out to rest on Reid's arm.

Matt grabs the edge of the desk with a shaky hand, trying to force himself to take deep breaths. He chides himself for not seeing it sooner. How can I ever be enough for him?

It takes Matt almost a full ten seconds to realize his cell phone is ringing. If he weren't in complete and utter distress he'd wonder about the karma of having wished all day it would ring only to have it happen when he knows it can't possibly be the call he was waiting for.
Managing to focus his eyes on the screen of his phone he's surprised to find his father's name displayed. His sense of dread intensifies, knowing that it can't possibly be good news waiting on the other end.
Chapter 17

Matt eases quietly down the hallway toward the office, trying to be aware of his surroundings so he doesn't accidentally run into Reid. He peeks around the door and finds Melanie at her desk and then knocks softly before entering.

"Got a minute?" he asks, desperately hoping he can hold it together long enough to get through this.

"Of course," Mel replies when she sees that it is Matt, waving for him to come into the office. "What are you doing here this early? You're not on shift until later."

"That's actually why I needed to stop in. I'm going to need some time off." He braces himself, not knowing how Melanie will react. He knows good help is hard to find and they always seem to be shorthanded.

"Time off?" Mel asks, her tone even despite the spike of anxiety that she is masking. She wonders if this has anything to do with Matt's relationship with Reid.

"There's a family emergency and I need to make a trip home," Matt says, hoping he doesn't have to go any further into the circumstances. "I'm not exactly sure how long it will be."

Mel is concerned for Matt, yet relieved that it isn't what she was dreading. "I'm sorry to know that, Matt. Is there anything that we can do to help? Other than the time off, of course."

Matt tries to gauge her concern to see if Reid has spilled the beans about their fight. "No, I think I have everything else under control," he says, trying to organize his chaotic thoughts. "Here's some cash for Rebecca, she covered half my shift last night. Can you see that she gets it?" He slides an envelope across the desk.

"Matt..." Mel frowns at the envelope then pushes it back. "Don't bother yourself with those things right now. Rebecca will be compensated. I'm more concerned about you. You're obviously upset..."

Matt picks at a tiny piece of fuzz on his jumper, trying to decide how much to confide in Melanie. "I'll be fine. Just unexpected, you know? You kinda get settled into a routine of how your life is and then something upends all the normalcy and throws you for a loop."

"It's none of my business, Matt, but I am going to ask anyway. As a friend, which I hope we are," Mel says sincerely. "Why do you need time off?"

"My mom is sick," Matt says the words sounding odd to his ears. "I'm not really sure exactly what's going on. My dad is the one who called... we're not close... and he isn't a great communicator. I could get over there and everything could be fine, just a false alarm, but I don't want to risk not going." Especially when I need time away from everything that's going on here, he adds mentally.

"Of course not, it's your mum," Mel says quietly, assuringly. "Don't worry about work. And your position is here for you when you return. With the good news that your mum is better," she adds with a gentle smile.

"Thanks Melanie. I appreciate that." He wonders absently if her offer will still be on the table after she's had a chance to speak with Reid. "I'll text you and let you know I made it there safely and keep you updated."
"Yes, thank you, Matt. I hope you have a safe trip and do keep in touch." Mel nods as she gets to her feet. She rounds the desk, reaching for Matt to give the young man a hug.

Matt sinks into the hug, the friendly affection something he needed desperately. "Thank you for being so understanding," he murmurs.

"It's going to be all right," Mel tells him, trying to comfort Matt who is obviously worried and upset.

"Let's hope," Matt agrees, taking a step back. "You take care of things around here, okay?" he says, trying to lighten the mood.

"I will," Mel nods and smiles.

"I'll see you soon," Matt says, trying to sound hopeful. Take care of him, he adds silently.

~*~

Reid enters the club, shaking off the icy rain. He looks over at the front desk and instead of seeing Matt there, he spies Melanie as she assists a member. Reid takes off his coat and waits for her to finish before stepping up to the desk himself.

"December in London," he grumps as he runs a hand back through his rain damp hair. "I hope it doesn't rain on New Year's Eve. We had good attendance at the party last year. I'd like to see the same this year."

Used to Reid complaining about the weather, Mel just ignores his grumpiness. "People will come. They won't mind."

"Mhmmm," Reid murmurs. "Where is Matt? Have you got him working somewhere else?"

Mel throws a strange look Reid's way. "What?" she asks, wondering if she misunderstood. "Matt's not here."

"He's off tonight?" asks Reid, wondering if he looked at the work schedule wrong. He had left the club early yesterday and rented a hotel room last night with the thought of staying away from his estranged lover, but the time alone had only convinced him that he needed to see Matt. And to talk to him about their disagreement.

In a flash, Mel realizes that Matt didn't tell Reid that he's left. "When was the last time you spoke to Matt," she asks softly, conscious of the other people moving around them, not wanting to discuss their private business where others can overhear.

Reid frowns at Mel's question. "The day we came back from Exton. Boxing Day. Why?"

"He's gone," Mel says, reaching out to touch Reid's arm. "Back home."

Reid stares at Mel, his brain refusing what she is telling him. "To his flat, you mean," he says quietly.

"To the states," Mel says. "I'm sorry. I thought you knew."

"What?" Reid asks loudly, his frown deepening as he scowls at Mel. "Why? When?"

"I don't know how much I should share," Mel says, squeezing Reid's arm. "I've probably already said too much."
Reid jerks away from Mel and stares at her as if she has grown horns. "You haven't said enough! Tell me what you know, Melanie!"

"His mother is ill. He's flown back to be with her," Mel says quietly, refusing to meet Reid's temper. "Obviously he's still unhappy with the situation between you two or he would have told you this himself instead of putting me in the middle."

Reid turns away from her, but he doesn't know where to go or what to do. Matt left. Without a word to him. He knew that Matt was upset by their disagreement, so was he. But to leave like this? Reid is in shock.

"Have you tried calling or texting him since you've been back?" Mel asks. "Have you reached out to him at all or just let your anger simmer?"

Shaking his head as if coming out of a daze, Reid turns back around. "Now is not the time for an 'I told you so', Mel," he says quietly.

"It wasn't meant to be one," Mel says. "I can see how much you are both hurting and I am just trying to figure out how to make it right."

Reid sighs. It's a sound of defeat. "Rather difficult to accomplish while we are on separate continents," he says grimly.

"Well, other than calling him, I don't know what other advice to give. Unless letting him go is your plan."

"Who let who go here, Mel? I'm not the one who left without a word." Reid shakes his head then turns to go. "I'll be upstairs if you need me."

Mel shakes her head, frustrated at Reid's stubbornness. "Fine. If you get bored you could do some paperwork, I'm getting behind by being down here."

Reid doesn't respond to Mel's barb, he just keeps walking, his thoughts filled with a dark blond boy with beautiful blue/green eyes.

Mel sighs and turns back to her work. She hopes she hasn't made things worse, but Reid needed to know that Matt isn't just avoiding him, he is well and truly gone.

~*~*~

Matt taps the keys on his laptop, scrolling through the search results until he finds what he needs. He punches in the numbers on his new cell phone and waits for it to ring, checking the time to be sure he's figured the difference right. An unfamiliar voice answers and it makes him sadder than he expected. He asks for Melanie, giving his name, and waits, hoping that he's right and she'll be there as usual.

"Hello?" Mel says when she picks up the phone.

"Hey Melanie, it's Matt," he says, her voice so familiar even across all the miles. "Sorry about calling you on the main line but I've lost my cell phone and it had all my numbers in it."

"Matt! I was so worried! We haven't heard from you in weeks!" Mel holds her hand over the receiver and tells the new girl working at the front desk to hurry and go get Reid.

"I'm so sorry. There's just so much going on here and without my phone... well time just slipped
away.” He doesn't mention how long it took him to even function properly after the funk Reid's complete absence in his life had caused.

"How's your mum?" asks Mel, unable to discern Matt's mood by his guarded tone.

"Better now, thankfully," Matt says. "She's still got some recovery time ahead of her but she'll make a full recovery. But speaking of that..." Matt says, finding it surprisingly hard to break the news to Melanie.

"I'm so glad to hear that," Mel says as she looks toward the hallway in the hopes of seeing Reid. "So when are you coming back?" she asks.

"I'm not," Matt says, finding it better just to spit it out.

"But why not?" Mel turns back toward the desk, seriously worried now.

"I think it's just healthier for me to stay here. To reconnect with my family, focus on my priorities." Even as he says it he knows it sounds stupid and hopes she doesn't push the issue.

"Matt..." Mel looks around. Where did that girl go? Where's Reid? "You've been through a lot in the past month. You don't have to rush into any decisions right now."

"I know. But I didn't want you waiting on me. Even if I do come back eventually it's not fair for you to keep waiting. I'm sure there's someone there who could use the job. If I know you, you've been taking on the extra hours and that's not fair to you."

"You and I both know that I am not talking about just the job, Matt," Mel says softly.

"Aren't we though?" Matt's heart aches, just thinking about Reid. "That's the only thing left there for me."

"No..." Mel can tell by the sound of Matt's voice that she won't be able to keep him on the line much longer. "You need to talk to him."

"Why?" Matt asks. "Both of you need to just move on. You'll find someone even better than me in no time."

"Is that what you're doing, Matt? Moving on?" she asks, anything to keep him on the phone.

"You take care of yourself Mel. I miss you. Give everyone my love." He doesn't answer her question, knowing she won't like the answer. "It was good to hear your voice again." He pulls the phone away from his face and hits end before he loses his nerve.

"Matt? Matt?" Mel scowls at the receiver before replacing it to the cradle. Damn it, Matt.

Reid pushes the door out that leads out of the stairwell and bolts down the hallway to the front. He sees Mel and her disappointed expression as he gives her a questioning look, then he sees the phone. "He didn't want to talk to me," Reid says quietly.

"I tried to keep him on the line," Mel says apologetically.

"What did he say?" asks Reid, almost afraid to know why Matt was calling Melanie.

"He said that he's not coming back. That we need to move on.” Mel hates repeating the words to Reid.
Reid hears what Mel is saying, but understanding is another problem all together. He stands there stoically for a moment, then finally nods his head before turning to go.

~*~*~*~

"Matt. It's Reid again. Please... this not speaking and your leaving... just call me. Please, Matt. Call me. I need to talk to you. I love you." Reid hits the button to end his call. He's made so many of them that he's lost count, all without a response. He's left message after message, but still no word from Matt.

He realizes now that he should have talked with Matt instead of shutting him out, but the pain of his lover's rejection was enough to make him feel justified in the selfish way he behaved. The excuse that this whole "love thing" is new to him has started to ring hollow even to his own ears. Reid has finally run out of any plausible rationalizations and the only thing he knows now is that he wants his boy back. He needs Matt.

Reid hits the button for the number to the office downstairs.

"Mel. It's Reid. Do you still know that guy who works at the detective agency?"
Chapter 18

Matt dunks the dirty glasses in the sink full of soapy water, letting them rest there to soak for a while. It's almost closing time, but it's been a quiet night at the bar, nothing like the hustle and bustle Matt had expected when he took the job. He'd been hoping for something to keep his mind off everything but so far he's just ended up with a lot of time on his hands.

He doesn't hear anyone else come into the bar as he finishes with his clean-up, so he is surprised when he hears a familiar voice placing a late order.

"I'll have a Sazerac."

Matt jumps about three feet, completely startled by the voice behind him. His brain is still processing as he turns, his mouth opening to speak when everything crashes together at the same time. Reid. Sitting at the bar. After all this time his body still reacts on a base level to seeing his former lover. He positively aches from the sight of him.

"Long way to come just for a drink," he chokes out.

Reid devours Matt with his stare, drinking in every detail about his boy. It's been almost two months since he last laid eyes on Matt and the very sight of the young man is like food for a starving man. Matt's hair is a little longer and he seems a bit too pale for Reid's liking, but he is still as beautiful as he remembered.

"I'm not here just for the drink," Reid replies. "But I will always take the opportunity to have one of your Sazeracs."

Matt's hands shake as he makes Reid's drink. There's a million questions he wants to ask but he doesn't know where, or even if, he should start.

Reid remains quiet as Matt makes his drink, still observing everything about the young man that he has been missing for the past weeks. He notices the tremble of Matt's hands and wonders if his sudden appearance is upsetting his boy. Reid has hoped for a happy reception, but since Matt hasn't returned any of his phone messages, he is feeling uncertain about the decision to come to the states to find him.

The drink complete, Matt slides it across the polished wood bar. "How did you find me?" he blurts out, unable to take the silence any longer.

"A private detective that Mel knows." Reid doesn't see any reason not to disclose the truth at this point. The time has past for him not to be completely open with the man he still loves. "I contacted him after your last phone call to Mel. I hired him to find out your location only. Nothing else," he explains. "I held on to the information in the hopes that you would finally answer one of my phone messages, but when you didn't, I decided to come in person."

"I wasn't trying to hide," Matt says, touched that Reid went through all that just to find him. "I just couldn't..." he shakes his head, gathering his strength. "I couldn't be there and not be with you."

"I didn't want that either," Reid says quietly. "I know I shut you out after our argument..." His jaw tightens with the realization of how foolish it all seems now. "But I never thought you would leave. Leave me. Without a word."

"I didn't intend to," Matt sighs, remembering back to that chaotic time. "It just kind of all happened
and then suddenly I hadn't talked to you in a week and I didn't know what I would say even if I did and then a week became a month and then here we are."

"Why didn't you call me? I left so many messages..."

"I have a new number," Matt says, his heart racing at the thought that Reid had actually tried to get in touch with him. "Didn't Melanie tell you? I lost my old phone."

Reid frowns, realizing that Mel must have forgotten to tell him. "No. She didn't." He doesn't want to believe that she would keep that from him, knowing how miserable he has been since Matt's departure. "So you didn't get any of those messages," Reid says with a shake of his head.

Matt shakes his head. "I just thought that you'd moved on. With someone who could be what you needed." He gets a painful flashback of the last time he saw Reid, snuggled into a booth with another boy. "Like Jason, or whatever his name is."

"Jason?" It takes Reid a moment to remember the eager sub. "I don't understand. You really believe that I would just forget you and move on?" he asks, staring at his boy with obvious confusion.

"I wasn't sure what to think," Matt says, a hint of defensiveness in his voice. "There was a lot going on, and a lot of things I didn't understand."

Reid sighs and looks around the empty bar. "What time can you leave?" he asks. He and Matt really need to talk, but this is not the place to do it.

"Basically now," Matt says. "I need to finish cleaning up, but it's past closing time so let me just lock the door and finish up."

Reid picks up his drink and takes a healthy swallow of it, needing the fortification that the alcohol will provide. He has a soft smile on his face as he looks at Matt. "Still the best."

Matt smiles and walks around the end of the bar to lock up. "You enjoy the rest of that while I finish up." He can feel Reid's eyes on him as he washes the dishes and sweeps the floor. He consciously doesn't look at him any more than he has to, not wanting to get distracted from his work.

Reid sips on his Sazerac as Matt hurries to complete his closing duties. When it looks like his boy is finished and ready to go, he gets to his feet. "Are you staying with your parents?" asks Reid.

"I am. Where are you staying?" he asks, wondering if Reid has been to see his mom.

"The Maison Dupuy. My mother's place is rather small and she's hardly ever there," says Reid, feeling the need to explain, but omitting the hope that he and Matt would need a private place to talk. "Will you... can we go there? To talk?"

"To talk," Matt says with resolve, even though he knows his willpower is weak when it comes to Reid. "Let me make a quick call," he says as he hangs up his apron and sets Reid's empty glass in the sink. He quickly calls his house, letting them know not to worry and then shoves his phone in his pocket and shrugs into his jacket.

Reid waits for Matt by the door then walks out with him. "That's my rental," he says as he points to a silver car parked on the street. He clicks the keyless entry and waits for Matt to get in on the passenger side. Reid looks at the digital clock on the panel to see that it is after 1:00 PM. "Quiet night at the bar?" he asks, making small talk as he maneuvers the car through the streets of New Orleans.
"Very. There's no shortage of bars in this city and some 'entrepreneurs' think they can just hang out a shingle and make a go of it. Somehow I don't think this one will be here much longer." Matt takes advantage of their time in the car to study Reid's face, matching it up with the images in his memory.

"How is your mother? Mel told me that she wasn't well." Reid keeps his eyes on the road, only taking the opportunity to glance toward Matt when he stops at a red light.

"She's doing better, definitely out of the woods," Matt says, the streetlights illuminating the dark circles under Reid's eyes. "How are things at the club?"

"Mel is keeping things running." Reid doesn't explain that he hasn't had much to do with the club since Matt left.

Matt is curious about Reid's response but he doesn't push. "Now she's someone I'd take a good bet on being able to make a successful go of it in a bar here," he laughs.

The sound of Matt's soft laugh is like music to Reid's ears. He only wishes that it was him who is making Matt laugh. "I'm sure she could. She's a very determined lady," Reid says as he turns off Canal onto Rampart at the back of The Quarter.

"She'll probably never forgive me for leaving her in a lurch," Matt sighs, gazing out the window.

"She'd take you back right now," Reid says without thinking, almost missing his turn onto Toulouse when he realizes what he's said.

"Still hasn't managed to find a good replacement?" Matt asks absently as they approach the hotel.

"There's no replacement for you, Matt," Reid says quietly as he pulls into the garage and parks where the valet instructs him. He gets out, handing over his key before he walks around to the passenger side where Matt is getting out.

Out of habit, Matt reaches for Reid's hand as he climbs out of the car. He hesitates when he realizes what he's done, but then goes ahead, giving Reid's hand a squeeze as they pass into the lobby.

There is a party out in the court yard of the hotel. The loud music is muffled when they enter the hotel and they walk toward the elevators. Reid doesn't want to stare at Matt, but he can't help looking at him as they wait for an elevator.

Matt blushed under Reid's stare, and he hates that he always reacts that way. "Is this where you always stay when you visit?" Matt asks, searching for appropriate polite conversation until they make it upstairs.

"No. Not always," replies Reid, wishing he could touch Matt's flushed cheek. The elevator finally arrives and he holds the door open with his arm as Matt goes in first. He presses the button for his floor and the doors close. "I hope my room is all right for our talk? I'm sorry, I didn't ask. There's a lounge in the bar downstairs if you'd be more comfortable there?"

"This is fine," Matt says honestly. He's always felt safe with Reid and that hasn't changed one bit. "It will be quieter up here."

The elevator doors open again and Reid steps out, searching his pocket for the key card as they walk down the hallway toward the room. He opens the door and gestures for Matt to go in first. Reid closes and locks the door then searches for a light, finally switching on the lamp on the desk.
After a quick glance around, Matt takes a seat in the chair by the bed, not trusting them both on the bed together. He rubs his hands up and down his thighs nervously, his mind trying to guess what Reid might say.

"Would you like something to drink? I think there's a mini-bar in the fridge," Reid offers as he shrugs out of his coat and hangs it in the closet.

"No thanks," Matt says, "but please go ahead if you'd like."

"I'm good. Nothing can beat the Sazerac you made for me anyway," Reid smiles as he loosens his tie and takes a seat on the corner of the bed opposite of where Matt is sitting.

"Are you trying to butter me up?" Matt teases, relaxing slightly.

"Maybe a little. Is it working?" asks Reid.

"Too early to tell," Matt laughs. He's missed this dearly, the ease of conversation between them, the playful banter.

"I've had a lot of time to think about what I would say when I finally saw you again," Reid tells him. "But now that you're here..." He shakes his head and smiles ruefully. "It isn't as simple as I imagined."

"I know the feeling," Matt says, having had the same imagined conversations in his head a million times. "Just start from the beginning," Matt says. "Or the end, either way."

Reid looks at Matt as the familiar feelings flood over him again. "There shouldn't have been a beginning. I should have apologized instead of shutting you out," he admits quietly. "As for the end... I love you, Matt. Now and always."

"I love you too, Reid," Matt says getting that out of the way, and feeling like a huge weight has been lifted from his chest. "I just don't know if I can be what you need."

"You are what I need. Who I need. That's why I wanted you to move in with me. You're the only one I want."

"I know you think that," Matt says, his voice catching in his throat. "But I think you aren't being honest with yourself about what you really desire from your partner. Your boy," he says, using the word he knows will make his meaning clearly.

"Matt... I didn't use that term to upset you," Reid tries to explain. "You are my boy because I want to share things with you. I want to take care of you and call you mine. It's a term of endearment. I'm not using it to make you feel like you're not a man. I called you that because I love you."

"It doesn't upset me," Matt promises, leaning forward in his chair. "And I do know it's a lovely compliment and I'm honored that you use it for me. But I realized that night, and it took hearing it from a third party for me to really understand it, that you were giving up so much to be with me."

Reid is confused again. "What night? A third party? I don't understand, Matt..."

"The night I got the call about my mom, I'd talked to someone you'd..." he searches for the right word, "scened with. I realized that while I'd been thinking of you as a Dom in the abstract, I'd never really thought about the specifics of what that meant."

"That was before I met you though..." Reid replies.
"I know," Matt says, "but it just made me realize what you were giving up in order to be with me. And it scared me," he admits.

"But I never felt like I was giving up anything to be with you because you are what I want." Reid looks at Matt, a worried expression on his face. "Did I push you too hard?" he asks. "The things we did in Exton?"

"No, you never pushed too hard," Matt promises. "But that pales in comparison with what he said you really liked."

"What I really like is you, Matt. And everything else I had before is what pales in comparison." Reid intertwines his fingers, clenching his hands where they rest in the space between his legs. "What I have with you is not what I had before, but it doesn't mean that it's not better."

"Why would you give that up though?" Matt asks. "Wouldn't you always wonder if you could have it all, not just settle for me?"

"No!" Reid says forcefully as he gets to his feet, turning away from Matt as he paces the floor between the bed and the door. "When you left me did I go back to what I did before? No. Because I didn't miss it. I missed you. You!" He turns to Matt. "I don't want another boy. I want you. Why don't you want me, too?"

"I do want you," Matt says softly, leaning back in his chair and pulling his knees up to his chest and curling into a ball. "It's all I ever wanted. But I'm scared you'll get tired of me and leave me because you need more than I can handle."

"What can I do to convince you then? How can I fight against a fear of what you think might happen?" Reid steps closer, kneeling down in front of Matt's chair. "Tell me. Because I don't know what to do here," he says softly.

"I don't know." Matt says honestly. "But chasing me down to the ends of the earth, or at least New Orleans, is a good start."

Reid smiles, leaning closer. "So you're not angry with me for coming here?"

"No," Matt says, unfolding enough to lean down and kiss Reid's forehead.

Encouraged by Matt's soft kiss, Reid slides his arms around his boy's waist and pulls him closer. "Will you come back to London with me or do I have to move to New Orleans?"

"I haven't even agreed to take you back and you're already planning to move here?" Matt teases, resting his head on Reid's shoulder.

"But you are going to take me back, right?" Reid asks, running his fingers through Matt's soft hair and gently massaging the back of his neck.

"You're sure about this? Sure that it's enough?" Matt pulls back enough to see Reid's face.

"You're more than enough. You're everything. You're mine," Reid whispers before he pulls Matt in for a kiss.

"I'll go back to London," Matt whispers against Reid's lips. "But I have conditions," he cautions before Reid can get too excited.

"You don't have to move in with me," Reid says quickly.
"Do you want me to live with you?" Matt asks, his fingers trailing through Reid's hair.

"You know I do..." Reid says, leaning into Matt's touch like a cat.

"Then if you have room for me at the loft I'll stay there," Matt says, hoping it really is what Reid wants.

"Really?" Reid smiles, pulling Matt close to kiss him again. "You won't regret it, love," he murmurs against Matt's lips. "I will take such good care of you, you'll see."

"I want to keep working though. It doesn't have to be at the club, I'm sure you've already filled my place there. But I need something that's my own."

"Whatever you want. Mel would love to have you back, but if you'd feel more comfortable somewhere else... that's fine. Just fine," Reid agrees readily, anything to have his boy back.

Matt is surprised, he'd been sure Reid would argue that point. "We can figure out the particulars later," he says, kissing Reid again.

"Yes... later..." Reid mumbles between their kisses. "Is that... everything?" he asks.

"Well, I was thinking about forcing you to let me help pay the living expenses, but I figure you'd draw the line there," Matt smiles, clinging tightly to Reid.

"You can buy me dinner once in a while," Reid teases before lifting Matt into his arms. "Now, if the negotiations are at a conclusion, I am going to make love to you," he says as he lays Matt on the bed.

"You don't waste any time, do you?" Matt laughs, going willingly onto the bed.

"I've wasted enough time. I need to be with my boy," Reid says softly as he begins to unbutton Matt's shirt.

"So you forgive me for leaving?" Matt asks, still not quite able to believe the events of the night.

"Yes," Reid nods, slipping his hand behind Matt's neck and pulling him in for another kiss. His boy's kisses are so sweet, he can't get enough of them. "Can you forgive me for letting you go?"

"I didn't give you a choice," Matt murmurs, his arms sliding around Reid. "So there's nothing to forgive."

Reid thinks he acted like a fool and he should ask forgiveness for that, but right now he's too anxious to have his boy again. "You feel so good," he says, holding and kissing Matt.

"I've missed this," Matt agrees, his body fitting right back into it's spot up against Reid's strong frame. "You wouldn't believe how lonely it felt sleeping alone all this time."

"I can believe it." Reid pushes Matt's shirt open as he kisses his neck and shoulder. "I was alone all this time, too."

"You didn't..." Matt lifts his head, looking down at Reid. "I saw you with Jason that night."

Reid looks up to meet Matt's gaze. "What night?" he asks softly.

"The night before I left. He inquired about a room and then I saw you with him in the bar." Matt could kick himself for bringing it up, just when things were going so well, but the words just
tumble right out.

Reid thinks for a moment. "Yes. I remember. I was in the bar when he approached me." Reid looks at Matt and he can see the apprehension in his boy's eyes. "He wanted to scene with me again. He was very eager," Reid caresses Matt's face. "But I told him that I couldn't because I had a boy."

"So you turned him down?" Matt needs to hear for sure.

"Yes," Reid replies. "There's no one for me except you, Matt."

"You really do love me," Matt grins, his hands sliding beneath Reid's shirt.

"Yes, I really do," Reid chuckles before helping his lover get him out of his shirt.

Matt tugs at Reid's clothes until he exposes all of his lover's skin. He kisses and touches every inch, getting reacquainted with all of it.

As Matt kisses him, Reid works on getting him out of his clothes, too. He lifts Matt's face, pulling him in for another slow, deep kiss. Reid loves the soft moan that his boy makes as he kisses his neck and his chest. He runs his fingers over Matt's shoulder and notices that his mark is completely gone.

"It's gone," Matt says, feeling exactly where Reid is touching. "It lasted almost a week after I left."

Reid nods, the possessiveness building inside him. "It doesn't hurt anymore," he says softly as he pushes back the urge to mark Matt again for fear of his boy's reaction.

Matt tilts his head, baring his neck, and pulls Reid closer. "Mark me," he whispers, his voice threatening to crack with the emotion he feels.

Pulling Matt into his arms, Reid kisses and sucks his neck then rakes his teeth across his lover's skin as he bites him. The sound of Matt's soft cry as he does it lets him know that he has his boy back.

Matt feels whole again, the piece that had been missing slammed fully into place. "Better now," he says with a soft smile.

"Do you like wearing my mark?" Reid whispers against Matt's skin.

"Yes," Matt says, "it makes me think of you even when we are apart."

"A reminder that you are mine. My boy. My love." Reid punctuates each word with a soft kiss.

Matt murmurs his agreement, his legs wrapping around the back of Reid's thighs. Pulling their bodies tightly together, he shifts his hips just enough to show Reid just how ready he is. "Need you."

Reid groans as he presses back against Matt. "I can't wait to be inside you," he says in a soft growl. Reid's groan gets louder when he realizes something. "Oh for fuck sake... I don't have any lube," he tells Matt.

Matt can't help but laugh, finding it oddly endearing that Reid is so unprepared. "You really must not have planned on me taking you back," he smiles. "We'll just go really slow," he says, knowing how hard that will be for both of them. He reaches down and pulls Reid's hand up to his lips, playfully sucking on his fingers.
Watching Matt's lips wrapped around his fingers has Reid mesmerized and aching for friction in other areas. "Hold on," he says almost regretfully. "I saw something in the bathroom," explains Reid as he slowly extricates himself from Matt's loving embrace. "I'll be right back," he tells his young lover before quickly running into the bathroom. Reid returns a second later, a wide smile on his face and a small bottle in his hand. "Best hotel ever," he says as he crawls back into Matt's arms. "Moisturizing oil."

"Well, I guess that works too," Matt laughs. "I don't think you would have been patient enough to do it the other way."

"You know me too well, love. Patience is not my virtue," Reid grins as he squeezes some of the oil onto his fingers. "I waited for you though," he says softly as he pulls Matt close, sliding a lubed finger along the cleft of his ass.

"Hopefully I can make it worth the wait." Matt pulls his knees up toward his chest, spreading himself open to Reid's touch.

"You already have," Reid whispers before he kisses Matt again. He slips his finger inside him, carefully working him open. "Thank you for giving yourself to me again," Reid tells him as he pushes inside Matt. He's always taken the submission that was given to him for granted. Until Matt. Reid was lost and broken without his boy and now he knows what a gift his submission is.

Matt knows it will still take some time before he can fully trust Reid to take good, careful care of him again, but the path to that point is stretched out before him, warm and welcoming.

Reid cups Matt's butt, pulling him in as he begins to thrust. His lover's tight heat is as inviting as always and he's been without him for far too long.

"You feel good," Matt murmurs, tipping his face up for a kiss. "Like home."

"So good," Reid echoes between kisses. "Mine," he adds as he wraps his hand around Matt's cock and begins to stroke him.

"Yours," Matt moans, his eyes falling shut as he focuses on the slide of Reid's cock in and out of his body. He's spent many nights alone, remember what this was like, thinking he'd never experience it again, and his imagination absolutely pales in comparison to the real thing.

Reid looks between them, his hand moving faster as he works Matt's cock with the same rhythm of the jerk of his hips. He presses his forehead against Matt's shoulder, taking it all in: his boy's taste and smell, he sweet sounds of surrender he makes as Reid takes him.

Matt wants this to last forever, just to stay in this moment of pure pleasure and never come down.

"Close," Reid moans as he feels his climax uncoiling in his center.

"Let me come with you," Matt asks, wanting to let Reid give him permission to go over the edge.

"Yeah... come for me, Matty," Reid rasps, his hand still stroking him.

Matt lets out a sharp cry, his voice echoing off the walls. His body contracts as he comes, painting Reid's hand with his seed.

The contractions of Matt's body squeeze around Reid's cock, milking him dry as he pulses inside him.
Matt curls his fingers against Reid's arm, holding him in place as he gasps for breath. "I missed that so much," he says once he's regained the power of speech.

"Me, too," Reid murmurs, kissing Matt's flushed cheek. "I missed you."

"Can I stay here tonight?" Matt asks, having a strong aversion to going anywhere that doesn't involve a naked Reid right at the moment.

Reid can't help but laugh, muffling the sound against Matt's shoulder as his arms tighten around his boy.

"Is that a yes?" Matt asks, resisting the urge to dig his fingers into Reid's ribs just to hear that laugh again.

"Yes, of course, yes," replies Reid, still chuckling. "You really thought that I was going to let you leave? Silly boy," he says playfully.

"Good. Just the answer I wanted," Matt smiles, the happiness on Reid's face a welcome change from the sorrow that haunted him earlier.

Reid shifts to lay on his side, pulling Matt into his arms as they relax again. They lie there in silence for a long while, Reid gently stroking Matt's hair. He finally breaks the quiet with a softly spoken plea. "Don't ever leave me like that again, okay?"

"You know there are no certainties in life," Matt whispers, knowing it's not the answer Reid wants. "But I promise to communicate better so we don't end up in that situation again."

"That's fine. Talk to me first. I'll do my best to talk you out of going," Reid tells him, pulling Matt in for a slow, but possessive kiss.

Matt sinks into the kiss. Now that the edge has been dulled he can enjoy the slow burn as they reconnect.

"Stay with me," Reid murmurs between kisses. All night. All day. Stay with me until we go back to London. Please," he adds softly. "I want you to meet my mother, too," Reid smiles.

"I'd like that," Matt says. "Meeting your mom I mean. And staying with you, too."

"Excellent!" Reid says, giving Matt a soft squeeze. "I've never brought a boy home before," he grins.

Matt wishes he could be excited about taking Reid to his house, but he knows that it's not a good idea. "Does she know you came here to get me?"

"No. I haven't told her that I'm here yet. I needed to talk to you first," he explains. "What about your mom? Do you need to stay a while longer while she is recovering?"

"No, she's past that stage. Right now I'm just an awkward third wheel around there," Matt admits. "I just didn't have anywhere else to go, and I didn't have the emotional capacity to strike out on my own again."

"A third wheel? You feel like that with your parents?" Reid asks softly. Matt has never talked much about his life here in New Orleans or his family.

"I don't fit in there anymore. It's strained and awkward. I know they love me and of course they've
taken me back in, but it's like everyone is on their best behavior. Like when company visits?" Matt tries to explain. "It's not 'home' anymore."

Reid nods slowly. "I can understand that. I have a new definition of what 'home' is for me, too."

"Hopefully it involves me," Matt says boldly, having made up his mind that he'll speak frankly to Reid about his feelings.

"You know it does," Reid smiles. "Remember me? The one who wanted you to move in with him?"

"Home is more than a physical space," Matt says. "My crappy flat was home, even though I hated the actual place."

"And I felt like my home was with you. I didn't express that in the best way," admits Reid. "But it's the truth nonetheless."

"Good," Matt smiles, kissing Reid's shoulder. "So where does your mom live?"

"Garden District. Her house is unbelievably tiny. I feel like a giant just standing in her living room," he laughs. "She's hardly ever there though, she really lives at her restaurant. A hole-in-the-wall place on Magazine Street. She never really got over her 'hippie stage'."

"I think there are a lot of people in the city like that," Matt says, enjoying the chance to learn about this side of Reid.

"How she and my father managed to get together, I will NEVER know," Reid laughs. "They were complete and total opposites. Might explain some things about me, actually."

"Well opposites do attract," Matt says. "I think we all like to see how the other half lives."

Reid pulls Matt in close, nuzzling his neck and kissing his boy's new mark on his shoulder. "Is that what you're doing with me?" he asks playfully.

"Maybe," he teases. "I can say I never dreamed I'd be with someone who had a country estate, complete with horses."

Grabbing Matt's side, Reid tickles him until he is squirming. "That's not the side I was talking about and you know it!" he laughs.

Matt playfully beats his fists against Reid's chest, trying to get away. "I couldn't resist!"

"I should spank you for that!" Reid threatens, easily subduing his boy.

"Only if you ask nicely," Matt says, winking at Reid.

Reid's grin is happy and relaxed as he rolls over, hovering about Matt. "Maybe later, right now I have other plans," he tells him before kissing him hungrily.

"Someone's been eating their Wheaties," Matt murmurs when they part again for air.

"Someone's been missing his boy," Reid replies as his hands begin to wander over Matt's body, caressing and stroking.

"I shouldn't plan on getting out of bed any time soon, right?" Matt laughs. Reid's hands feel so good against his skin, there's no place he'd rather be.
"Nope. It's three in the morning. Where would you go?" asks Reid as he slips an arm beneath Matt's lower back and pulls him up against him, rubbing his cock against Matt's.

"It's New Orleans. The city never sleeps," Matt says, his breath catching as Reid's cock drags along his.

"So true. So I suppose we shouldn't either," Reid grins as he frots against Matt.

"We keep this up and we'll just pass out from exhaustion at some point," Matt teases.

"Sounds like the perfect plan to me." Reid bends to kiss Matt's already slightly swollen lips.
Chapter 19

Reid walks out of the bathroom in a cloud of steam. He's rubbing his wet hair with a white towel and another towel is wrapped around his hips. He smiles when he looks over at the bed to see that Matt is awake and looking at him.

"Good afternoon," Reid smiles as he walks over to the bed.

"It's an even better afternoon now," Matt grins, ogling his half-naked boyfriend.

Reid sits on the side of the bed, leaning in to give Matt a kiss. "Did you get some sleep? I know I kept you up rather late."

"I did," Matt says, reaching up to touch Reid's face, running a soft finger over the tender skin beneath his eyes. "Your dark circles look better today so I'm guessing you got some rest?"

"Best sleep I've had in weeks," admits Reid, taking Matt's hand in his and kissing his fingers. "Now, I am starving. I was thinking that we could go to my mother's restaurant for dinner and surprise her. What do you think?"

"I'd love to meet her," Matt says, "Are you sure she won't mind, being at work and all?"

"No, I don't think she will. She loves for me to go to the restaurant when I'm in town. I grew up in her kitchen." Reid gives Matt another kiss. "And I can't wait for her to meet you."

"Just let me jump in the shower," Matt says and then trails off, realizing he came here right after work. "I have no clean clothes to wear."

"You can wear what you were wearing last night and we can stop at store and get you something else to wear before we go to the restaurant. There are a lot of stores on the way. Unless... you'd rather go home?"

"If you let me borrow one of your shirts I think I can get by with the pants I had on at work," Matt says, rolling out of bed. "Unless her place is more upscale, then we'll need to run me home."

"You can borrow one of my shirts, of course, but reconsider letting me buy you something," Reid says quietly. "It's one of those things that I'd really like to do for my boy," he adds with a tender smile.

"If that would please you," Matt says softly, kissing Reid's cheek. "I'll be quick," he says, heading into the steamy bathroom.

"Need someone to scrub your back?" offers Reid, admiring his lover's ass as he walks away.

"We'll never make it to the restaurant if you get in there with me," Matt calls out, shutting the door behind him.

"It was worth a try," Reid chuckles to himself as he stands up and starts to get dressed.

~*~

Matt flips down the mirror in the car, checking his hair and making sure he doesn't have anything in his teeth. He knows his clothes look good, he'd let Reid pick out everything and the man has impeccable taste. He's still nervous about meeting Reid's mom though, so he keeps nervously
checking his appearance, wanting to make a good first impression.

Reid glances at Matt as he drives and smiles. "You look great. And stop worrying. She is going to love you."

"I'm that transparent?" Matt asks, flipping the mirror shut and turning his focus to Reid.

"I like to believe that I know a little more about you than the average onlooker." Reid laughs softly, reaching over to give his young lover's hand a squeeze.

"Maybe just a little," Matt says, squeezing back. "So does your mom have a specialty? Or is just everything amazing?"

"The last time I was here, she was experimenting with Lebanese cuisine. She made a fabulous Baba Ghanoush. But who knows what she has moved onto now. Odds are it will be amazing though."

"I can't say I've ever had that," Matt says. "England was a good fit for me because I've never been terribly adventurous in my eating."

"I'll have to remember that," Reid says as he finds a parking place on the street. He puts the car in park and kills the motor. Turning to Matt, he smiles and asks. "Ready to meet my mum?"

Matt takes a deep breath. "I think so," he smiles. "Are you ready for your mom to meet me?"

"Absolutely. Let's go." Reid opens the door and gets out. He waits for Matt to get out then locks the car. "It's over there," Reid says as he points across the street and smiles. "Karma Cafe. Told you she's a hippie."

Following Reid across the street, Matt can't help but smile at the charming entrance to the restaurant. It draws you in, the bright interior making it seem warm and inviting.

Reid speaks to the young woman who greets them. "Yes. There will be two of us. And can you tell me, is Linny here?" He smiles when the hostess tells him that she is. "Wonderful. I am her son. Would you mind terribly telling her that I'm here?" Reid asks as he and Matt are seated at a table.

"So what do you think?" Reid smiles as Matt looks around the restaurant. The splashes of color are everywhere, in the hangings on the wall and the cloths on the tables. Interesting items from varied cultures are on display and there is no shortage of greenery with all the healthy plants.

"It's so cheerful," Matt says, drinking it all in. Reid is so reserved, his mother, if this is any indication, is exactly the opposite. "I love it."

"A.J., baby! What a surprise!" A woman with dark blond flowing hair and cornflower blue eyes stands in the middle of the dining room, smiling with her arms stretched out wide.

Reid gets to his feet quickly and moves to meet his mother. "Hello, Linny," he says as he hugs her and kisses her cheek.

"I'll be damned if you don't get more handsome with the years, A.J." She says, her smile wide and bright. "Those are my genes. Your father was a looker, but you got those eyes from me. When did you get into town? Why didn't you call? Or did you call and I missed the message? That new iPhone is a pain in the ass."

Reid can only laugh as his mother rattles off her questions. "I arrived late yesterday. I didn't call because I wanted to surprise you." He holds out his arm to pull Matt, who has been standing
behind him, into their circle. "And I want you to meet someone special. My boyfriend. Matt."

Matt steps closer, trying to get a read on how Reid's mom might react. The other part of his mind is processing the fact that she called him A.J., and wondering what exactly that stands for. "It's nice to meet you," he says, extending his hand.

Linny's mouth drops open and she looks at Reid then back to Matt. "Are you kidding me?" She ignores Matt's extended hand, opting to pull him into a hug instead. "It's the south, baby. We hug here," Linny laughs as she pulls back. "He's gorgeous, A.J. Looks like a model," she says to Reid.

Reid smiles at Matt. "Yes, he does," he agrees. Matt is from New Orleans, but I met him in London. He works at my club."

Matt laughs as Linny gives him a big hug. "Had to go half way around the world to meet someone from my hometown."

"Aahh. Isn't that the way? Destiny is awesome. It's a real pleasure to meet you Matt. A.J. must really like you, he's never brought anyone else to meet me." She gives Reid a knowing grin. "And if I wasn't supposed to say that, so what?"

"Linny..." Reid shakes his head though he is still smiling. "Never too old to be embarrassed by your mother, right?" he says teasingly.

"Well, sit down, sit down!" Linny gestures for them to reclaim their seats at their table. "I hope you're staying for dinner?"

"Of course," replies Reid. "I've raved about your cooking so you have to give us your best. What's on the menu tonight?"

"Old school Creole. I'm getting back to my roots," replies Linny. "Turtle Soup and the best Trout Meunière that you will ever eat!"

"Sounds delicious," Matt says, finding Reid and Linny's banter quite entertaining. "I can't wait."

"That does sound good," agrees Reid.

"Wonderful! I'll get on back to the kitchen and get started and Caroline will get you something to drink," Linny tells them. She pats Matt on the shoulder and smiles. "So glad you're here," Linny says with a sincere smile before she heads back to her kitchen.

Matt smiles as he watches Linny walk away and then swings his focus back to Reid. "So should I be concerned that you've been living in London under an assumed name?"

Reid has a classic "deer in the headlights look" before he lowers his head and sighs. "Reid is my surname and the name I prefer to go by, but Linny doesn't like it."

Matt tilts his head, studying Reid. "You don't look like an A.J."

"I'll take that as a compliment," Reid smirks. "Alistair Joseph Reid, III," he says quietly.

"Alistair." Matt tries out the name, finding it incongruous with the man he's grown to love. "It's very British. I'm sure you'd fit right in if you changed your mind about using it."

"I won't change my mind," Reid says definitively.

"Joey? You could go for the American mobster vibe," Matt teases, hoping Reid understands he's
just having fun, not actually making fun of his name.

Reid chuckles and shakes his head. "I like Reid..." he takes hold of Matt's hand, rubbing his palm with his thumb. "Especially when you call it out when you come."

Matt blushed, taking a quick glance around, but the noise of the crowd keeps his lover's voice from carrying. "Yeah, Reid is best for that. Alistair Joseph Reid, III takes too long to get out."

Lifting his hand to caress Matt's pink cheek, Reid's smile is adoring as he stares at his boy. "You can call me whatever you like, Matty."

"Since you insist on calling me Matty I should start using A.J.," Matt threatens playfully.

"You don't like it when I call you Matty?" asks Reid as he reluctantly lowers his hand.

"Frankly, I'm just happy you are around to call me anything," Matt says softly.

Reid smiles then whispers so only his boy can hear him. "I love you, Matt."

"I love you, too," Matt whispers back, sliding his hand over to squeeze Reid's thigh. "I'm glad you chased me down."

Leaning in, Reid gives his lover a soft kiss. "I'm glad you let me catch you. And this time, I'm not going to let you go."

"You are so good to me," Matt says softly. "I hope I deserve that."

"You do. And I'm going to enjoy proving it to you every day," Reid tells him.

Matt has to lean back slightly, afraid that getting any closer to Reid right now will cause them to do something that would result in getting kicked out of his mother's restaurant.

Reid looks up as the hostess approaches their table to take their drink order. Their conversation is interrupted for now, but his promise to Matt has no expiration date.

~*~*~

"That was a fabulous meal. I can't believe that my own mother would not share her recipe for that bread pudding," laughs Reid as he turns onto Canal Street.

"I would be a willing test subject if you wanted to experiment with trying to recreate it," Matt says, patting his full stomach. "She's an amazing cook, I see where you got your skill in the kitchen."

"Yes, she is," Reid nods. "I used to think she was rather corny, the way she insisted that her food tasted good because she cooked with love. Now I believe her completely. She has a passion for cooking and you can taste it. If I can cook half as well as her, I will have accomplished quite a lot."

"It was fun seeing you two together. I can see a lot of her in you now," Matt says, slipping his hand into Reid's as he drives.

"Really?" Reid smiles, that thought making him feel happy. "She's a unique woman. Definitely her own person. Living by her own terms."

"All those things describe you, too," Matt points out. "Well, except the woman part," he laughs.

Reid smiles and nods. "I suppose you're right," he admits as he takes the turn onto Rampart. "I've
been very fortunate. Life's too short to live it any other way."

"That's one of the things I love about you. Your complete acceptance of who you are. Even if you did change your name," Matt grins, squeezing Reid's hand.

"It took me a while to get here, but the journey was worth it. I don't think you ever stop growing and changing though. If you're lucky, it's for the better." Reid turns onto the street where the hotel is located and pulls into the garage.

"Very wise," Matt says. He waits for Reid to circle around the car and open his door, enjoying the way Reid likes to do things like that for him. "Did you want to get a drink or just head back upstairs?"

"A drink would be good. More time to digest," Reid laughs as he walks into the hotel lobby behind Matt.

Matt laughs, loving Reid's one track mind. "Plenty of time for that later. Let's grab something and go sit out in the courtyard."

"Sure. I think I saw a fire pit out there so we won't get cold," Reid says as they pass the elevators and head toward the bar. "What would you like to drink and I'll order for us?"

"I'll just take Rum and Coke," Matt says. It feels weird to order a drink; he can't remember the last time he was on this side of an open bar. "Because I'm sure his Sazerac wouldn't be up to snuff."

Reid laughs, but he knows better than to order his favorite drink from anyone except his favorite bartender. He loves the fact that Matt would prefer him to not have anyone's Sazerac except his.

Matt lingers near the doorway, watching Reid as he orders their drinks. He can objectively say that Reid is the hottest guy in the room, and he can hardly believe that he gets to go home with him night after night.

Smiling and thanking the bartender, Reid spots Matt and walks toward him. "Rum and Coke," he says as he gives Matt's drink to him. Without thinking about it, Reid rests his free hand on Matt's lower back as they walk out into the courtyard and find comfortable seats near one of the cozy fires.

Matt loves the hand on his back and he lets Reid steer them to some out of the way chairs. "Thanks for the drink," he says as they settle in.

"You're welcome, love. Cheers," Reid holds up his glass in toast then takes a sip of it after Matt has clinked his glass next to his. "Mmmm. That's good," he says with a nod of approval.

"Careful there," Matt says, sipping his drink. "You walk a fine line when you compliment the bartender."

Reid grins. "The rum. It's very good rum," he says, as if quickly trying to make up for his faux pas.

"Right," Matt laughs, nudging Reid's leg with his foot. "The exceptional rum of New Orleans."

"Absolutely," he maintains with a nod. "New Orleans is known for Hurricanes, right? What goes in a Hurricane? Rum." Reid knows he doesn't have a leg to stand on, but bantering with his boy is fun.

"Just keep digging," Matt laughs. "I won't stop you."
"You know you are my favorite bartender," Reid says with a smile.

"Is that just because I put out?" Matt teases. "Those are always the best bartenders."

"As long as you only put out for me." Reid's eyebrow raises. "Have I mentioned that I don't share very well?"

"I could have guessed that about you," Matt says. "And frankly I think it's rather hot when you get all possessive."

"That's good," Reid nods then takes another sip of his drink. "That's a trait that I don't think I could get rid of even if I tried."

"I'd kinda guessed that," Matt smiles. "After all, you did throw a member out of your club just for looking at me the wrong way."

"He was also touching you," Reid points out. "He grabbed your ass. The ass I consider mine and mine alone," he murmurs before taking another swig of his rum and Coke.

"My ass is proprietary?" Matt asks, his hand sliding over to rub Reid's thigh.

"Very," Reid says, the smile slowly returning to his face with Matt's touch. "Perfect and proprietary. He stares at Matt for a moment, a serious look in his blue eyes. "You really are coming back to London with me, right? I didn't dream that."

"I am," Matt says, his fingers caressing Reid's leg. "And you didn't. I even said I'd move in with you."

"I don't know which is more strange. The feeling that I couldn't have the one thing that I wanted the most or the realization that I now have everything I could hope for."

"Everything you could hope for?" Matt asks, that shred of doubt still nagging at the back of his brain.

Reid leans toward Matt. "Everything that I could hope for," he repeats softly.

"Have I mentioned how glad I am that you followed me here?" Matt asks with a smile. "Now I have everything I ever hoped for, too."

"I think you may have mentioned it," Reid teases. He touches Matt's cheek and smiles. "So when should I plan for our return? I know you'll need some time to prepare."

"Oh god, I'll have to quit my new job," Matt says with a rueful laugh. "That will go over really well I'm sure." He takes a sip of his drink, thinking things through. "I could be ready in a few days."

"And your family? Are you sure they are going to be all right with you returning to England?" asks Reid. "Would it make them feel any better if they were to meet me?" he adds quietly.

"No," Matt says honestly. "You have two strikes against you... you're a man and you live abroad. They'd be pleasant and polite enough but secretly picking apart your flaws so they could use them to try and convince me to stay here and get a 'real' job."

"But I don't have any flaws?" Reid says with a smirk. He understands what Matt is telling him about his parents. It's a reminder of just how fortunate he is to have a parent who is supportive instead of judgmental.
Matt can't help but laugh. "That's right, you don't," he agrees with a playful smile. "Do you want to stay here until I'm ready and fly back together or do you need to get back?"

"I'll stay. As long as you need. I don't like the idea of leaving without you," Reid confesses. "It's that whole control thing, you see."

"I figured," Matt says, finishing off his drink and setting his glass on one of the side tables. "You'll come back and visit me in coach on the plane trip back?" he asks, knowing exactly how Reid will respond.

"No need. Since you will be in seat right next to mine. In first class," Reid says smoothly before finishing his own drink and setting his empty glass down next to Matt's.

"I've never flown first class," Matt says, leaning in close. "Is it nice and private up there?"

"More private than coach," smiles Reid as he takes hold of Matt's arm and pulls him closer.

"Good because I don't think I can go for eight whole hours without touching you right now. Not when I'm still trying to get used to the fact that you're back in my life."

"Did you miss me, love?" Reid asks softly, the same adoring look on his face as he pulls Matt onto his lap. He doesn't care who might be looking. As far as he is concerned, they are the only two people in the world right now.

"More than you could ever know," Matt whispers. He doesn't care a bit about the other guests, feeling completely safe in Reid's arms. "I was sure I'd lost you forever."

"And I thought I had lost you," Reid murmurs as he holds Matt close. "Please never leave me like that ever again. Even if I am behaving in some ridiculously childish manner. Ooh, maybe I do have a flaw after all..." He smiles as he kisses Matt's cheek.

"I like that you need me," Matt confesses. "It probably shouldn't feel as good as it does."

"I do need you. And making you feel good is the best part." Reid presses his lips to Matt's for a gentle kiss. "Ready to go upstairs now, love? I feel the need to ravish you."

"Never been more ready," Matt agrees, gracefully sliding off Reid's lap and then offering him a hand to help him up.
Chapter 20

Matt reaches up to grab a bottle off the top shelf, wincing as the plug deep inside his ass shifts. Reid had sent him down to work like this and Matt is sure that he's probably lurking somewhere just to watch his boy's cheeks flush as he tries to move carefully while making drinks. He's given up fighting his raging erection and just hopes he isn't called on to step out from behind the bar, exposing his predicament to everyone at the club.

Reid enters the bar area when Matt's back is turned. He leans against the bar as Matt retrieves another bottle from above him and he notices the care his boy is taking with his movements. "It's not something that is easy to ignore," Reid says to get Matt's attention.

Matt wheels around at the sound of Reid's voice, his breath catching as the plug shifts inside him. "No, not at all," he squeaks out, wondering what he has up his sleeve now.

"You have the loveliest flush to your cheeks, Matty," Reid says softly. "Are you excited? Or embarrassed?"

"Both," Matt admits. "Definitely excited, but also worried that someone will know somehow, as silly as that sounds." He's not sure why he's worried, everyone in the room as seen, and done, far worse he's sure. "I've screwed up three drinks already," he confesses.

Reid glances over his shoulder to make sure that no one else can hear their conversation. "Let's just keep that tidbit of information between the two of us. If Mel knows that I am interfering with your performance at work, a butt plug will seem minor to what she can do."

"Yes, but she'd do that to you, not to me," Matt whispers conspiratorially. "Seems only fair, Sir."

Chuckling softly, Reid shakes his head then whispers, "I think you do protest too much, love. Imagine when I can slip it out of you. And replace it with something even better."

"That's what's got me so distracted," Matt smiles, leaning closer across the bar. "Thinking about how open and ready I'll be for you."

"Now who's the tease?" asks Reid as he reaches up to caress Matt's cheek with the back of his finger.

"You brought it on yourself, Sir," Matt says, tilting his head into Reid's touch. "Did you expect anything less from me?"

"Not at all. You are always going to be a challenge. It's just one of the things that I love about you." Reid chuckles again. "Although, the look on your face when I proposed that you wear the plug today..."

"I'm still not entirely convinced you aren't off your rocker," Matt grins. "But I'm beginning to come around to this idea."

"If you only knew how beautiful you looked when I was putting it in..." Reid grins when the blush on Matt's face deepens. "I love your shyness about these things. It's an incredible turn on."

"I can't help it," Matt protests. "I try not to blush but it just happens. Maybe I need to start wearing make-up or something to cover it up."
"Don't you dare!" Reid tells him. "Those are my blushes and I covet each and every one of them."

Matt smiles, having anticipated, and intentionally provoked, Reid's response. "I have a feeling you have no shortage of ideas on how to produce them."

"Or how to make your other cheeks just as rosy," Reid points out. "Especially when you threaten to cover them up."

"I think Mel might have a problem with me not covering up those cheeks while at work," Matt points out.

Reid laughs, imagining his boy wearing a pair of leather chaps to work. And nothing else.

"You're picturing me in chaps, aren't you," Matt accuses before dissolving into a laugh. "Is that within the dress code?"

"Unfortunately no. Not for employees. Although I can speak to Mel about that if you'd like?" offers Reid.

"No thank you, Sir," Matt says with a twinkle in his eye. "Although maybe you could speak to her about it being my break time?"

"How long do you get?" Reid asks quickly.

"30 minutes," Matt says, his heart already pounding. "I'm due for my dinner break."

"I'll meet you upstairs," Reid tells him, his voice gravely with anticipation. "Don't keep me waiting."

"Yes, Sir," Matt whispers, his knuckles white as he grips the edge of the bar to keep his knees from buckling just from the sound of Reid's voice.

Reid holds Matt's gaze as he backs away from the bar, not releasing it until he turns to leave. He takes the back stairs two at a time. There is no time to waste when it comes to preparing to be with his boy. Reid closes the door to his flat behind him, leaving it unlocked for Matt. He quickly shrugs out of his suit coat and hangs it on the back of a bar stool chair. Reid unfastens his cuff links and drops them into a dish on the bar then slips out of his shoes.

The anticipation that he feels with Matt surpasses any preparation he ever did as a dom in scene with the endless list of boys he used. What he has with his lover now is more than he had hoped for and Matt has truly turned out to be his one and only.

Matt has to take a deep breath to force his hands to stop trembling with anticipation. He picks up the house phone and calls back to the office, letting Mel know he's going on break and then forces himself to walk slowly upstairs, the plug shifting and pressing deep inside him with each step.

Reid is waiting, standing in the middle of the large room when Matt comes in. He smiles, admiring the darker shade in the flush on Matt's cheeks now. He lifts his arm, gesturing with his crooked forefinger for Matt to walk to him.

When Matt gets close, Reid reaches out and pulls him into his arms. He captures his mouth for a devouring kiss as his hand slides over Matt's ass, pushing at the plug he knows is still there.
Moaning into the kiss, Matt wants to reach up and grab on tightly to Reid but he holds back, knowing that this is about Reid's desires and letting him take the lead.

Reid loves the sound of Matt's moan so he rubs his hand over the plug again, knowing each touch is torturing his lover just a little bit more. "You're so beautiful like this," he murmurs, his other hand sliding between them to feel how hard his boy is.

"I'm so hard for you," Matt breathes. "Having the plug meant you were in my head every moment we were apart."

Now it's Reid's turn to moan. Knowing that his boy has been thinking of him all day is heady stuff. Reid begins to unfasten Matt's belt and trousers, anxious to feel his warm flesh.

When Reid has him stripped from the waist down, he wraps his arms around Matt's waist and lifts him up against him. He carries him over to the couch and puts him down. "Lean over the back of the couch," Reid tells him as he gives his boy's bare ass a good squeeze.

Carefully balancing his knees on the seat cushion of the couch, Matt leans forward over the back. He can feel the electricity sparking between them, Reid's dominance in full force.

"So this plug had you thinking of me all day?" asks Reid as he rubs Matt's ass with the flat of his hand. "Exactly what were you thinking?" he asks with a smirk just as he twists the plug.

Matt moans softly, arching his back and pressing his ass back toward Reid. "That you have control over me... control of how I feel, control of how I move, control of what I think about."

Reid leans over Matt's back, turning his face enough for him to claim his boy's mouth. "Mine," he smiles. "You're mine." Running his hand along Matt's spine, Reid takes hold of the plug again, turning it once more before he slowly pulls it out. He moans again when he sees the way that Matt's muscles clench in an effort to hold onto it. Reid aches to feel that slick heat as it spasms around his cock. Freeing his cock from its confines, he presses the head against Matt's hole and enters him with one forceful push.

Matt doesn't even have time to mourn the loss of the plug before Reid's cock fills him deeply and completely. His body is relaxed and open, and he gasps as Reid slams home.

"Who's boy are you?" Reid rasps as he leans over to take hold of Matt's cock. He begins to stroke him with the same force as his thrusts, pushing Matt against the back of the couch with each one.

"Yours. Only yours," Matt moans, Reid's rough touch verging almost on pain but staying right on that edge of pleasure.

"And you're going to come for me... only me..." Reid growls softly as he works Matt's cock, controlling his beautiful boy every way that he can.

"For you," Matt repeats, his fingers digging into the couch as his entire body slams forward over and over. "Please, let your boy come for you."

"You can come... but I am going to keep fucking you," warns Reid.

"Yes, Sir," Matt replies, the slow burn of the evening followed by the intensity of Reid's strokes too much for him to handle. He comes with a shout, his body arching like a bow as the pleasure rips
out of him.

As good as his word, Reid's thrusts don't stop even when Matt comes in his hand. Using that same hand, he lifts it to Matt's face, turning his boy's mouth toward him for another kiss as they share the taste of Matt's release on his fingers between them.

Matt lets out breathy cries of pleasure as Reid continues to take him hard and fast despite his sated pleasure. He mouths his lover's fingers and nips at his lips, needing to connect with him in every way.

Reid's breathing becomes stilted between moans and soon he growls loudly next to Matt's ear as his climax pulses inside his boy. "Mine," he rasps again.

"Yours," Matt breathes, one hand snaking back to rest on Reid's hip. "All yours."

Reid kisses Matt's shoulder and his neck, breathing in the scent of their love-making on Matt's skin. "I want to take you to bed and never let you leave. You know that, don't you?"

"Right now that sounds like an amazing idea," Matt murmurs.

"Shall I call Mel and tell her that her bartender has come down with something?" smiles Reid as he sits on the couch and pulls Matt onto his lap. "We barely have time to get you cleaned up."

"I have a feeling she'll know exactly what we were up to," Matt sighs, curling against Reid's chest. His body aches in the most delicious way from their frenzied coupling.

"It's a fairly easy guess. What am I always up to with my boy?" Reid chuckles as he holds Matt.

"This way I'll have something to look forward to after my shift. Knowing you are up here waiting for me."

"Absolutely," grins Reid, loving the fact that Matt is his boy and wants to be with him as much as he wants to be with Matt. "I'll make you something to eat. Since your dinner break did not include eating."

"Give us enough energy for round two," Matt smiles.

"Excellent plan!" Reid agrees, kissing Matt softly again.

Matt savors the kiss even though he knows he should be going. "Plug or no plug for the rest of the night?" he murmurs against Reid's lips.

"Mmmmm," Reid moans. "Can my boy take it?" he grins.

"If my Sir asks it of me," Matt says, dropping his kisses to Reid's neck and shoulder.

"I do love the thought of my cum still inside you as you work. Proof you are mine. Only mine."

Matt shivers as that thought works its way through his brain. "Plug it is," he decides.

"Up and over," Reid tells him, reaching for the plug where he discarded it early. He rubs Matt's ass, giving it a firm pat as his boy leans over the back of the couch again. Reid slowly inserts the plug again then takes a playful bite out of Matt's butt before releasing him again.

The plug slides home much easier this time, and Matt can already feel his body readjust to it's size and weight, his muscles clenching around the base. "Thank you, Sir" he whispers.
"You're welcome, love," Reid says with pride. "I'll be waiting for you after your shift."

"I'll be counting the minutes," Matt promises, sliding off Reid's lap to search for his clothes.

"As will I." Reid stands up, tucking himself back into his pants then helping Matt back into his. When his boy is dressed and ready to return to work, Reid has to kiss him just one more time to hold him until later. "Love you, Matty," he murmurs.

"Love you too," Matt replies, pushed up on his toes to kiss Reid. "Stop by for a drink later if you aren't busy."

"Good idea. Save a Sazerac for me," Reid smiles.

"Always," Matt says, giving him one more kiss and then slipping out the door.

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