Fetish
Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/7276297.

Rating: Mature
Archive Warning: No Archive Warnings Apply
Category: F/M, M/M
Fandom: U2
Relationship: Bono/The Edge, The Edge/Morleigh Steinberg, Bono/Ali Hewson
Stats: Published: 2016-06-22 Completed: 2016-11-28 Chapters: 17/17 Words: 107522

Fetish
by likeamadonna

Summary

Edge can draw and has a photographic memory, sort of. This is set in 1997, and according to my fic's timeline, it has been approximately six years since he and Bono fell in love. While Edge has become a little more realistic about Bono, he is still obsessed. Each chapter is his inner monologue as he draws.

The majority of this story was originally written in 2002. I'm going to finish it here.

Notes

This first chapter is a short one, but they'll get longer as we move through the story. I'll post as often as I can this summer.

I'd like to thank Choose2Live for rescuing this fic from oblivion. I never thought I'd read it again, but I needed to look at it for timeline purposes when I wrote Hidden In Plain Sight. I found myself reading it from the beginning, and when I couldn't stop, I knew I had to finish it. Thanks to fouroux and spacemonkey for their enthusiasm. I hope you'll like the ending.

And thanks in advance to an extremely generous soul who is going to help me with that ending. <3
Windex. Fucking Windex glass cleaner. You had tears in your eyes and suddenly all I could think of was Windex. They call it process blue, the color of our new LED pixels, the color of lines in a notebook, lines designed to disappear when photocopied. This was an inspired breakthrough in my ongoing quest to pin down the exact color of your eyes. But you were crying.

And now here I sit drawing them. I’m spending my predawn hours consumed by your eyes. I’m outlining minutiae like the pink caruncles—why do I know that word?—in the corners and feeling fairly confident that I know their exact shape.

What kind of person does this?

The garish lights outside are still holding their own against the dry black abyss that looms above them. Ten years ago I rolled my eyes at you as we strolled through all that neon insanity, some of it process blue. Tonight we were its bewildering crown princes. I’m happy at least one of us can sleep.

I miss…

We left them in Dublin last week after a sloppy, drawn-out scene composed of goodbye kisses and small children clinging to legs. There was a brief moment of silence; Ali watched me while Morleigh stole a glance at you. Two barely perceptible female nods later, the seamless transfer of power was complete. You moved smoothly from the Ali administration to the Edge administration with a minimum of fanfare. It was all very civilized. Still, I counted four backward glances as you and I departed.

Inside the plane’s cabin, euphoria grappled with dread all the way to Las Vegas. We were wound up, but we were not ready. We were not ready at all.

Romance was a luxury you decided we shouldn’t indulge in until after the first show. As avid as I
already was for you, I had to agree; my mind was busy forming list after list of impending pitfalls and shaky solutions. “Besides, I’m a boxer now, love,” you whispered, applying a feathery left hook to my rib cage. “And you know what they say about athletes having sex before the big game…”

I retreated to my pad of paper while you fidgeted, opened and closed your books, and mouthed shards of lyrics. I lost count of the number of times you left your seat to shadowbox your way around the cabin, pestering everyone with arbitrary comments about nothing in particular, but all of it “extraordinary” as usual. As we approached North America, you kissed several dozen people in celebration, trumpeting their stellar contributions to anyone who would listen. You ended with me, clandestinely slipping your tongue between my teeth and then shouting, “I love this man and I don’t care who knows it!”

If only there were some kind of shut-off valve…

Later I bought a book of optical illusions for Hollie at the airport. You slid next to me in the car as we were driven to Sam Boyd Stadium, openly jealous and very interested in a gift I had selected for one of my other children. Adam and Larry exchanged I’m-glad-it’s-Edge-and-not-us looks as you pored over the illustrations and persuaded me to explain the ones that intrigued you. The book was small and our hands touched; as exasperating as you can be sometimes, your very skin still excites me. We studied the illusions until we started to feel carsick. I looked past you at the landscape, which was a blinding wasteland of rock, dust, and scrubby vegetation that created a sort of five o’clock shadow on the hills in the distance. I spotted a bald eagle in the median and tapped the window so you could see it too. It took off and flew with us for a few seconds. Its eyes were a translucent golden color, and I wondered if those eyes had the ability to zoom in on prey like a camera lens. I wish mine could do that. “I love you,” you whispered so softly I wasn't sure if I had imagined it.

The bedlam inside the stadium resembled an anthill that had been stirred with a stick…yes, and these were special ants hell-bent on constructing their very own sci-fi disco supermarket. “Un-fucking-believable,” Larry muttered.

You scampered around like a puppy. “Look at this!” you commanded the universe, “It’s incredible!” And you were right. “Can you believe how enormous that arch is? I mean, really!”

“How much are we charging, again?” asked Adam.

“Fifty dollars, something like that,” Larry said, gawking at the screens. “Good lord.”

“I’m dating myself, but when I was a teenager I can remember going to see Deep Purple for, what, three pounds?” I said.

You laughed and quipped, “I used to date myself a lot back then.” Your glorious, contradictory eyes, one naive and one worldly, caught me off guard as they flashed with mischief and anticipation. I promptly forgot what I was talking about. “I remember that show like it was yesterday,” you continued. “I can’t believe I was able to convince you to wear a purple shirt. I can’t believe you had a purple shirt.”

I’ve commented on your selective memory many times; you tend to recall exactly what you want to recall. In recent years I have developed a selective photographic memory dedicated to the monitoring of your body, a pursuit I can once again engage in around the clock. You’re mine again, all mine for at least a whole year.

Those first nights I hovered over your naked body as you lay on your back in bed. I studied you, mentally cataloging the changes I noticed, collecting them like butterflies, shells, or stamps and placing them in boxes to sort out later. In a moment of weakness years ago I admitted that I had a
stamp collection as a child, which you mocked with gusto and delight. “Why am I not surprised at all?” you laughed, although ever since my shocking confession, you have given me monthly accumulations of envelopes with particularly unusual stamps. I don’t have the heart to tell you there is no book to put them in anymore.

In your bed I investigated your newly defined torso, arms, and legs with their semi-Nietzschean muscles that you claimed would help you compete with those colossal screens. Despite all the noteworthy differences, I always returned to your eyes. They seemed a bit larger—rounder?—and I felt an instinctive urge to protect you, as if you were a child. Your new haircut promoted that illusion, but in fact your eyes were exactly the same. Your hair…no, I can’t let myself think about that.

You writhed beneath me, but our bodies never really touched. We barely spoke. Then one night you murmured, “You’re kissing me with your eyes. You’re memorizing me, aren’t you, Edge? Your eyes are fucking me. Your eyes are fucking me, Edge…”

…Every night and every morning for five days.

And now I’m pulling my box out from under my bed to compulsively record and classify your eyes. Glittering with rage when things don’t go your way. Unblinking and formidable when someone needs convincing. Dangerously charming when there’s something you want. Dark with lust when you submit to me. Pupils dilated and frenetic when I’m deep inside you. Your eyes are so intense and overriding that your eyebrows have become perfunctory afterthoughts. Do you even need eyelashes?

Your sunglasses act as a protective barrier between your eyes and the defenseless world at large. Tonight they seemed more like a blindfold worn by a man standing before a firing squad, holding a target in front of his own heart. Our first concert in three and a half years…there were so many errors, all of us equally to blame. When we joined you on the B-stage midway through the show, I could see panic and frustration behind the dark lenses. *Staring at the Sun* was predictably problematic. We had to stop the song, incoherently regroup as you told the audience to “talk amongst yourselves, we’re having a family row,” and restart it. Even then, Larry quickly lost the beat but you kept going. You seemed so exposed out there on that island, surrounded by a volatile sea, asking it if it still loved us “even though we fucked up.”

Near the end of the concert you asked the crowd the same question, only this time it wasn’t for us. You asked them if they still loved you.

I knew you would be upset afterwards, but I’ve never seen you so livid and defensive. I was highly agitated myself, but you were lashing out at anyone who came near you as we were hustled out to the cars. Disgusted, Larry and Adam wanted no part of your tirade and didn’t ride with us. You retreated to your corner of the car and seethed, visibly trembling with adrenaline. I knew any remark from me would become a red cape presented to an angry bull, but I spoke anyway.

“They still love you.”

A tremor coursed through your body. “It’s not the same,” you snapped. “I shouldn’t have to ask them. I should fucking know. The fact that I felt I had to ask indicates a major problem. One of many, many major problems.”

“Could you believe what happened with my guitar—there was no sound at all during…”

“They didn’t get it. Nobody got it…it was…this is so fucked up.” Your eyes, usually inhabited by farsighted visions, became myopic and reticent.

I started again. “Even the sound check was more like a…”
You interrupted again. “All of us fucking speechless inside that goddamned lemon…they didn’t get it.”

“We needed to keep this interesting…for ourselves. We’re challenging what a rock concert is supposed to be. I guess.”

“Fuck them if they can’t understand us. Fuck them.” You slammed your fist against the seat.

“They love you, Bono.”

“Fuck them.”

We finished the rest of the ride in silence. I took your hand and you clutched mine tightly.

Back at the hotel, you made it perfectly clear to one and all that you wanted no part of any kind of afterparty. “I don’t care who is here,” you said churlishly, your hand covering a furrowed brow.

Apparently the sound people had decided to further torture us by playing selections from the new album.

Adam surveyed the unwelcome festivities. “I feel homesick already,” he said to no one in particular.

“Homesick? I’m fucking lifesick,” you scowled, turning to me. “The first chance we get, we’re leaving,” you said quietly. Your expression gradually transformed from one of weary loathing to a mask of charismatic self-assurance, and you dutifully let the well-wishers engulf you. Willie took it upon himself to rescue me from the throng. I was more than happy to drink undeserved champagne and hear his laundry list of glitches, given the alternative.

Above the noise I heard a few pronouncements from the Bono camp, including, “It’s not what some people would think of as an ‘authentic’ rock-and-roll concert, but we’re trying to challenge that notion,” and “Our first duty is to keep ourselves interested, and we’re exceedingly selfish in that respect.” As your satellites murmured appreciatively, your eyes scanned the oppressive room and settled on mine, transmitting their one-word message: now.

The mask dissolved once we were alone in the elevator. You looked exhausted and needy. “Edge,” you said. It was the first time you had said my name in hours.

“Baby.”

Soon I was slamming you up against the shower tiles, my interrupting diva, my foulmouthed despot, and kissing you as we washed the night’s events off our bodies. We found refuge in tongues, hands, and necks, quickly remembering how starved we had been for each other. You came up for air, kissed my left eyelid, and regarded me thoughtfully in the steam. “If you were a girl, you could have been a movie star in the 1930s, Edge,” you concluded.

“You truly exist in another dimension, don’t you?”

“I’m serious. I read an article about how in the early days of Hollywood, studios wouldn’t accept starlets who did not have a visible crease between their eyelashes and eyebrows. Eyes like yours were more dramatic and looked more glamorous in photographs.” You slid your tongue over this suddenly valuable commodity. “See, you have a nice crease. I don’t.”

“I seem to remember watching a certain movie and being swallowed whole by those eyes of yours, B.”

“I’ll swallow you whole,” you growled, pulling me out of the shower and into the bedroom, neither
of us bothering with towels. We fell into bed.

“If you had any clothes on I’d tear them off you,” I said with one and only one thing on my mind. You wanted it too, and you rolled onto your stomach, begging me to fuck you. Lust took over, and in a blur of limbs and backs I felt the week’s tension build, explode, and disappear. It happened so quickly I forgot to...there were so many things I had planned to do to you.

Meanwhile, you were having problems of your own. “God, Edge, I don’t think I can...” you said despondently. You lay on your side as I took you in my hands. You were hard and miserable.

“What’s the matter?” I asked.

“Tell me they...”

“They love you, Bono. All of them, all those beautiful women and even the men wanted you tonight.” You leaned back against my chest, your head tipping back, our faces close.


“I wish you could have seen yourself, baby. Those black pants left nothing to the imagination, you realize. I had to fight to pull my eyes away. And all of this...” I caressed your chest and arms. “You’ve never looked so aggressively, unapologetically masculine in all your life. And this...” I kissed the newly exposed area behind your ear. “You have no idea what this does to me. Most of the time I can’t even look at it.”

"Edge..."

“We love you, Bono. We want you, all of us. Especially me.” Your back arched as you cried out and trembled.

Then...silence that lasted a full minute. I felt tears on my neck. “Baby,” I said. You looked at me, your eyes wet and indescribable and...an image flashed: a housekeeping cart in the hallway, sitting out of direct sunlight with a bottle of Windex on it, the blue liquid directly behind the label perfectly matching the color of your eyes. Process blue.

“You still love me even though I fucked up, don’t you, Edge?”

“Of course I do,” I said, disturbed at how my cool, obsessed brain was congratulating itself as you wept in my arms.
Apologies to Vladimir Nabokov. I used a pretty obvious idea of his from Lolita, but I could not resist. It's a tribute! I love that book so much.

I'd like to mention that all media quotes and things that happened during concerts are 100% legit. I researched this thing so much, and doing so inspired some fun ideas I wouldn't have had otherwise.

"Supernova," a deep cut from Liz Phair that's over 20 years old (whoa), has been in my head all week, particularly this genius line:

*Your lips are sweet and slippery like a cherub's bare wet ass.*

I would like to dedicate this chapter to that image and Bono's mouth, of course.
“Your eyes are so beautiful I can’t sleep,” I wrote on a scrap of paper. I placed it on my pillow and leaned down to kiss your lips, which were salty and slightly chapped. It’s this dry desert air—probably even drier at the top of this absurd pyramid—and your tears. I stepped into the bathroom. It must have been modeled after the bathroom of some highly organized pharaoh who liked to have every imaginable travel-sized toiletry at his fingertips.

Including Vaseline, I used my index finger to draw some across your lips, the top one bowed and fragile, the bottom one fuller and pouting. Both are a bit thinner than the rosebud lips of your youth, but both are still utterly alluring to me. Both are mine, and I take care of them.

“Water,” you whispered in the darkness. I didn’t need to, but I found myself lifting your heavy head and helping you take a small sip from a nearby glass. Satisfied and limp, you sank back into your bunker of pillows and blankets. I kissed your neck and heard a soft hum of pleasure. “Wanna suck you,” you murmured pornographically.
“Go back to sleep,” I whispered. “I’ll be downstairs helping them edit that…whatever the hell that is.” You rolled over and groaned into your pillow, your entire being twisting violently from left to right, a full-body protest. “But I appreciate the offer.”

“Madly in love with you, Edge. I’m sorry about last—”

"It's okay. I totally understand."

As I entered the makeshift editing room, my psyche drew itself in for a long siege; I was about to sift through hours of videotape of myself (never a thrill) enduring an error-rich concert (pure torture). Why did we agree to do this? Who thought it would be a good idea to present a self-congratulatory documentary about an album that was already out of the top ten? Complete with footage from our jittery Las Vegas performance? Oh hi, Paul.

“Let’s get this over with,” I said as he passed me some reviews of the previous night’s show—and it was still the previous night, sort of. I silently cursed the internet’s suddenly annoying efficiency.

“There’s also a review of the documentary,” he chuckled sheepishly, “and we haven’t even finished it yet.” I looked at him skeptically. “We sent the connecting segments to a few media outlets, telling them the concert sequences would be added today.”

“Well that’s a really super idea,” I said, locating and skimming the review. Phrases such as amazingly ungracious…egotistical self-serving bunch of alleged artistes…an embarrassment to the network rushed up to me and shook my hand. “I’m hating this already.”

I glanced at the other reviews of the concert itself. Most seemed unexpectedly positive—people were willing to give us the benefit of the doubt, apparently—but every now and then a mean little paper cut of a sentence would appear. …like a special effects movie with a very thin plot…left a sour taste…more tempting than ever to keep your eyes on the screen, rather than the tiny people dancing before it…fails to deliver. I knew these would be the only parts you would remember.

How much of this fiasco was my fault? I should have been more on top of things this year, instead of ogling you every chance I got. How much time could have been better spent perfecting the songs and actually finishing what we started?

But I would see your mouth and want to help you write new lyrics for it to sing, some lyrics chosen simply because I liked the way your mouth looked as it formed certain words, over and over and over. I would encourage you to sing whole verses in that low, breathless whisper I’d heard in my bed, interspersed with ecstatic shrieks and coos. I remember hearing Larry asking, “Are you purposely trying to become Donna Summer or is that just a happy accident?” You took it as high praise and laughed when he walked away saying, “We’re gonna get a whole new following with this record.”

Now that I have you all to myself, sometimes I find I’m too busy staring at your mouth to really hear what you are saying. I am ashamed to admit it. It’s not like me to do this. But when you’re talking to me, you tend to finish your thoughts with, “Edge.”

“…and that’s what I said to him. What do you think, Edge?”

“…we should go there sometime, Edge.”

“…it’s too warm in here, isn’t it, Edge?”

The arrangement of your lips, teeth, and tongue when you say my name makes me want to kiss you every time. Your lips are slightly parted on the E, the tip of your tongue hits the back of your front teeth for the D, and then there’s a subtle pucker/snarl to finish off the rest of my name. If you’re
asking a question, this turns into a little smile. Heaven forbid you should ever ask Edge a question after your lips have been dangerously close to a microphone.

“…how did that sound, Edge?”

I honestly don’t know.

After spending a few hours agonizing over which parts of the show I disliked the least, I heard your voice. Paul was greeting you in the hallway.

“How are we this morning?”

“We are one day closer to the glorious liberation that death will surely bring.”

I turned to watch you enter the room, dressed entirely in sepulchral black. Our eyes locked. It took a split second for my mind to grasp that the person I saw before me was the same velvety creature I fell in love with five (twenty) years ago. A collective of video editors, all wearing t-shirts advertising various brands of esoteric, high-tech A/V gear, quickly surrounded you. You brushed off anyone who did not have a genuinely interesting question, and even those people were given perfunctory grunts and shrugs.

The leather chair beside mine shrieked in anguish as you hurled your still-exhausted body into it. Heaving a dramatic sigh, you watched an adjacent monitor for a while with jaded detachment, a ballpoint pen between your teeth. “The sound is shall we say piss poor,” you declared to the room in general.

Eventually an image of a cowboy in white with fake hypertrophic arms appeared on the screen, and I saw my first Bono smile of the day. “Ooh, daddy,” you said, delighted to utter a word that has fascinated you for quite some time. Back in the days when we were saying yes to virtually every side project that was offered and actively seeking any excuse to work together, truth be told, you discovered an anthology of contemporary erotica. You read it aloud to me as I completed ninety percent of the work on *Conversation on a Barstool*. One of the stories described a sexual relationship between two men. The older, dominant partner took on the role of “daddy.” His lover was always called “boy.” It was daddy’s job to show boy the ropes, so to speak. While I didn’t see much difference between baby-sir and boy-daddy, you embraced the novelty and soon we had additional nicknames for each other.

You continued watching the footage, and your changeable mouth shifted as you looked at yourself, the audience, Larry and Adam, the graphics, the set. I noticed a slight softening at the corners of your mouth any time you saw me. You became aware that I was watching you. “Not charmless but definitely a low-dose show,” you concluded. “Hold this for me,” you said, sticking your pen between my legs, “I’m gonna get something to eat, Edge.”

Oral gratification: how could you get through a day without some? You returned with what seemed like standard breakfast fare along with a handful of Blo-Pops. “I can’t believe they actually had these,” you said, waving them around. I talked to Paul for a few minutes while you ate and issued proclamations such as, “Now this is some sorry French toast,” and “My kingdom for pepper. Does anyone know where I can get pepper?”

You abandoned your meal fairly quickly, opting instead for the superior nutrition offered by a wad of bubble gum on a stick surrounded by red candy. Your eyes returned to the screen, and you became lost in your private world of self-scrutiny and candy sucking. The alarm on my watch went off, startling you.
“Why, Edge, why?”

“I like knowing when it’s eight o’clock, that’s all.”

“I’ll never understand that.”

But Morleigh always has.

Morleigh.

After months of shy, businesslike cordiality, we finally started talking with each other midway through the last tour. I felt a special kinship with her. It was like looking into a mirror and finding something wonderful, pure, and strange. You have often said she’s a female version of me. The easy understanding, the empathetic connection: I sensed it the second she told me about her childhood. She had a collection of shells; she created terrariums; she used to hyperventilate while practicing her multiplication tables on flashcards. How could I not love her?

“Oh my God, Edge, that’s…so…good!” You reached the bubble gum.

And yet, Bono, and yet... If Morleigh is my equal, you are my exact complement. Everything I’m not, you are. With her I feel stability, comfort, warmth. With you I feel electricity, fascination, fire. Such a peculiar symmetry…I see myself in a woman, and a man shows me unknown worlds.

You wanted me to have her.

It seems like yesterday. You were swilling vodka as you removed that post-concert “fucking cottage cheese” from your face. I sat in a chair beside you and cut an apple into slices, most of which you stole. You plopped them into your vodka glass and let them marinate for a minute or so, a concept you believed would “revolutionize the way the world views apples and vodka.” You fed them to me until I agreed that this was the best idea you had ever had. We continued to test this theory in the shower and on the way to our bedroom, tripping over each other’s feet and giggling childishly.

I held your wrists above your head and kissed you as you lay beneath me. I turned my head sideways and licked the line between your lips several times. I kind of lost myself until you caught the tip of my tongue gently between your teeth. “You’re kissing me like I’m a girl,” you said, amused but ever so slightly…miffed? That’s not the word. Knowing. You knew.

“What do you mean?”

“You want a woman sometimes, don’t you?” I was thunderstruck. “I know,” you continued. “I don’t blame you. We should get you one.” My grip on your wrists loosened and you quickly took my place. “Just let me talk for a while.”

You became distracted. “Lightning, Edge!” You stared out the window until you were satisfied that you did in fact see lightning, and the second pale blue flash illuminated the left side of your body like a strobe light. Your lips glistened as you smiled and whispered, “We should get two for you. Two lovely blushing things…I’d show them exactly how to please you, Edge.” You placed a swarm of kisses along my pelvis. “I think it would be…a gorgeous thing…to watch you…with women.”

“I don’t think so, baby.”

“Listen to the rain…you can admit it, love, if you want a woman. You might not want one right now, now that I’m about to—ooh, look at you—but it’s okay if you think about women sometimes. Because…I have Ali…” I looked up at the ceiling, which was divided into twenty-four rectangular panels, and exhaled. “You’re right, Edge, the woman shouldn’t be just anyone. She should be
special. You should love her.” You inhaled abruptly; I reached to stroke your hair. “And if I had anything to say about it, she should be positively mad for you, almost as mad for you as I am, love.” Your voice cracked in there somewhere, and I ached to feel your mouth on mine. I coaxed you up and kissed you. The city lights filtered through the rain-streaked window, casting flickering shadows on your skin. You looked like you were melting, and I was melting too.

“May I please have my pen back, Edge?”

“Uh, help yourself. Oh, B, you don’t want to read those.”

“You’d better believe I do.”

I sighed. “Grain of salt, Bono.”

“Of course.” I couldn’t watch. I finished making a few notes, my minor contribution to the already maligned special. To my left I quickly heard the violent underlining and circling of a man who is not used to reading bad things about himself…well, not in the past eight years, anyway. I touched the arm of your chair; it was noticeably vibrating. Predictably, you had repeatedly circled fails to deliver.

Candy-stained lips formed a barely audible whisper, “They don’t get it,” and the white knuckles on your right hand strangled the pen.

“Most of them were highly complimentary.”

“I was right. Fuck.” You held your face in your hands.

I passed my notes to the nearest video editor and motioned for you to follow me. Adam was entering the room as we were walking out. “Don’t tell me he’s having a tantrum this early in the morning…” You spun around to confront him with a snarl, but I put my hands on your shoulders and kept you moving in the direction of the elevator. I shot Adam a look that I hoped would say, Thanks a lot for making this even worse.”

“God damn it,” you said, punching the up arrow four times, followed by a livid, outraged, “Fuck!” Only you could figure out a way to cut yourself on an elevator button. A bell rang, doors opened, and you stormed inside. I don’t think you noticed, but a pseudo-Egyptian version of Fleetwood Mac’s You Make Loving Fun was playing as you paced like a caged lion. I glanced at my reflection in the mirrors on the back wall.

“Calm me down, Edge. Say something.”

“I had no idea how amazingly gay this mustache made me look until this very moment.”

You gaped at me in disbelief before exploding into gales of laughter. “I love you, you crazy motherfucker,” you said, pretending to strangle me. “Jesus Christ, Edge.”

A maid was busy making up your suite, so we walked over to mine. One of these days we ought to dispense with the formalities and call our rooms what they really are: Bono and Edge East, Bono and Edge West.

Once inside, you fell into my arms and I did my best to soothe you. I tossed out sentences that sounded good in a general way: “When you’re in a band and you have a chance to see how far you can take things, I think you should take it,” and “We need this sense of chaos and risk to thrive.”

Gradually, you began to nod. I continued to rattle off words of encouragement, and I felt your body temperature return to its typical flame-thrower level. Your thumb traced my mustache and you kissed
me with your red-flavored mouth. Then you fell to your knees and said, “Tell me what else I need to hear.”

“I love your mouth.”

“Talk…talk to me some more.”

“Do you still want to suck me?”

“Yes…oh yes, please.”

“Yes, baby…all right…I can read your mind when you suck me, you know…and now…oh…I love that…you’re not doing this to torment me, you’re not trying to be creative or provocative…no…you want approval, don’t you? You get off on my praise, isn’t that right? You’ve always known exactly what I prefer, you’ve always known how to work your perfect mouth around me…baby…ever since that first night when I sat in that chair…just like that…take your shirt off, boy…good, that’s what I want…so beautiful…are you hard? It’ll be your turn soon enough…where would you be without that mouth? That mouth helped you find me…everything that comes out of that mouth is your fortune…it’s our fortune…and except for alcohol…and cigarettes…everything that goes into that hot, pretty mouth helps you survive, doesn’t it? Food, water, air, sugar…and my cock…you need my cock to survive…and I love the way you suck me, the way, the way you look up at me, like, like that, oh my God baby…that’s…so…good.”

Your right hand traveled up my chest to touch my own mouth, and I kissed a tiny cut that wasn’t bleeding anymore.
Neck
It used to seem so impossibly long and swanlike, rising out of turtlenecks, defiantly refusing to be contained. Now it is a force of nature. Your neck…

Last summer I revisited some trees I used to climb as a child, and I was shocked at how thick and weathered the trunks had become over the years. They were so massive I could hardly put my arms around them. Your neck…

The sunrise has finally pole-vaulted over the odd red velvet cupcake that is the visual centerpiece of San Diego’s Hotel del Coronado. I suppose if a hotel repeatedly claims to be one of the most beautiful resorts in the United States, people will start to believe it, but I don’t. The interior is nice enough—stunning, even—but the exterior is an overblown Victorian mess, greedily seizing twenty-six acres of choice oceanfront property. They shot Some Like It Hot here, you noted, adding that you didn’t think either of us could pull off drag half as convincingly as we did five years ago.

A trio of elderly bathers, their waxy flesh dripping down shaky frames, toddle beside a line of palm trees as the Pacific scatters around their feet. This is the first time I’ve really been able to look at the ocean.

We were so busy rehearsing and getting the bugs out in preparation for our second concert. When we weren’t at Jack Murphy stadium or carrying out various media chores, I was holed up in one of our adjoining rooms writing endless notes-to-self on reams of quad-rule paper. One afternoon you floated in after receiving some kind of dubious spa treatment you said was “absolutely mandatory,” brandishing a tropical drink that may have contained more fruit juice than alcohol. “Edge, loosen up,” you purred, unfastening several buttons on my shirt, “we’re in California.” You offered me a small bite of your drink’s pineapple garnish before dragging the juicy remainder down my throat. Your tongue followed in its wake, and you declared me the most delicious thing you’ve ever tasted in your entire life.

It was good to see you happy and hyperbolic again. You seemed ready to leave Las Vegas behind, and you wasted no time in ingratiating yourself to the hotel staff, enlivening the atmosphere of the bar with your ebullience, your head on a perpetual swivel. You were equally playful in bed, waking me at all hours of the night with pinches and jabs then hiding beneath the sheets with only your eyes and forehead exposed. A naughty little animal, you howled gleefully when I caught and tickled you. Things were looking up, and we were all eager to have a second chance to prove ourselves, “this time in front of a real audience,” as you said. When we drove to the venue two days ago, you spotted an unwound cassette tape, its brown spaghetti glistening by the side of the road. “It’s probably one of ours,” you said with a shrug.

I finally felt like I had adequate time to sharpen various sequences—Dallas and I lined up the usual series of pedals and tried them in different combinations until I was satisfied with the sounds they produced. What a relief it was to see all of this in black and white (and red and blue with yellow highlighter). I had warned you in advance that my practicing would be repetitious and meticulous to the point of physical pain, but you wanted to be there with me. After I cracked the code to a problematic millisecond of Mofo that probably only mattered to me, you applauded and watched me jot down the formula. “I envy your patience, Edge,” you smiled. “You’re an astronomer, sitting beside your telescope, carefully taking down your readings.” You never allowed me to get too caught up in my stargazing, however, and you tortured me by casually touching the back of your neck or tracing your hairline with your right index finger. I wish I could be more of a challenge for you, but that’s really all you have to do these days.

Your hopeful outlook was tempered with the occasional negative or jejune remark. Many of these won you an avuncular pat on the back from Paul. He was always waiting in your corner with a fresh
towel, a squirt of water, and a quick shoulder rub, replacing your teeth guard as you returned to the ring, dancing and punching. Other times you would look at me with an expression that asked, “It’s going to be okay, isn’t it Edge?” I would nod and silently reassure you with my eyes, and if that didn’t work, I’d take you aside and talk you through it. You vacillated between charming arrogance and pitiful self-doubt for three days, but you managed to stay on the happy side of that line most of the time.

You called Ali after we arrived in San Diego, full of questions about your girls and brimming over with information on our Las Vegas show. I had no idea how Ali was able to get a word in, but once I heard you pause to catch your breath. You looked at me and smiled, saying, “I’m glad I have him, too.” A few moments later you handed the phone to me: “She wants to speak with you, the Edge.”

“Hi Ali.”

“Is he behaving the way I think he is?”

“Oh yes,” I said, patting your knee.

“You poor thing,” Ali chuckled. This was followed by the brief pause that has become a hallmark of any Ali/Edge conversation. “Don’t let him walk all over you, all right?”

“Thanks Ali,” I said.

You snatched the phone from my hand. “Ali—I forgot to tell you this: the ratings for our special on ABC were the worst that network has ever received, ever! And you know what that means…” You grinned. “We’ve still got it.”

You continued to chatter away as I relived my first uneasy conversation with your beloved wife after…after. It was several days before Christmas, and we had a few months off to work on Zooropa and prepare for the fourth leg of the tour. I had managed to avoid Ali for a couple of weeks. I was content to spend nearly all winter in hermit-like splendor in the studio and was fiddling around with Stay.

She seemed to materialize instantly. I saw her reflection in a window first, and startled, I turned to face her as your miraculous, larger-than-life voice swirled around us. She wore a white coat, and her dark hair fell in artful disarray around her shoulders. Pretty pink mouth. It opened to speak then stopped; she gazed into the middle distance, as if she could see you in the air. I reduced the volume to nothing.

“Edge…”

“Ali, what a…” We looked at each other. She straightened the plastic wrap on the cake she was holding.

“I tried your house.”

“I guess I’ve been here for a few days.”

“Oh…”

“I’m sorry; I must look terrifying.”

“I wasn’t going to say anything.” She giggled nervously and offered the cake. “Happy Christmas, Edge.”
“Ali, you didn’t have to bake me a cake.”

“But I always bake you a cake.” We both stared at the cake. Neither of us knew what to say. Then I felt her hand fall dove-like on my shoulder. “It’s okay.” I couldn’t bring myself to face her. “It’s okay, Edge.” I swallowed and looked down at her brave little smile. She touched the dark circle beneath my right eye and sighed. “I want you to take better care of yourself,” she said. Her other hand turned the volume back to normal, and you were with us again.

“I’ll try,” I said.

“Good.”

“Happy Christmas,” I said, initiating one of the most awkward hugs of all time, which she quickly corrected, and then she was gone.

What a long way we’ve come since then, she and I. Over five years we’ve gone from…whatever that was…to an indescribable alliance similar to that of a mother and a teacher of a brilliant, exhausting child. A child who loves us both.

And you’re still such a child sometimes. Yesterday morning I found you in bed poring over some scholarly tome on Shakespeare. Your chin rested against your chest, a reading posture that has to have been the cause of those two wrinkles that now cross your neck. “So sexy when you’re reading literary criticism,” I said, leaning in to kiss you. I glanced at your book. It wasn’t literary criticism at all. It was a…

“…Comic book? You poser!”

“It’s called a ‘graphic novel,’” came your lame defense.

I studied a few panels. “This is truly filthy, B,” I concluded, taking it away from you and leaving your Shakespeare behind.

You looked up at me, your eyes glowing with blue mischief, and asked, “Well? Aren’t you going to punish me, sir?”

I ran my fingers over your cropped hair. “All right baby. Why don’t you…drop and give me twenty?”

You hopped out of bed, naked of course, and kissed my jaw. “With pleasure,” you replied. “You don’t think I can do it, do you?”

“No.”

You could. You proceeded to execute twenty increasingly pornographic push-ups, each mimicking various Edge sexual behaviors.

“Seventeen: mmm, I love it when you arch your, your back.
“Eighteen: yes love…so tight…
“Nineteen: (you’re licking my hairline now, okay Edge?) Fuck! God I love to fuck you…
“Twenty: oh baby…yes…I’m…I’m almost there…”

You fell on your stomach and writhed against the floor, moaning, then laughing, then shrieking. I joined you on the floor, facing you. Our lips met with a snap of static electricity. “Hey—we made a spark,” you said. You rolled onto your back and pretended to smoke a fake cigarette, cooing, “Oh baby, that was fucking divine.”
You revisited this comedic triumph later that night in front of some 30,000 people (and 25,000 no-shows). Midway through *Even Better* you were smiling widely as you sang. Even if I can’t see your face I can always tell. You looked over to confirm that I was watching you—of course I was—then you dropped to the floor for several maddeningly erotic push-ups as you sang, “Take me higher, you take me higher…”

Just as quickly, you were on your feet again, strutting across the stage towards me, tossing your head back and laughing. Your muscular neck glistened beneath a white spotlight. During sex you duplicate the same motion, offering your neck to me in an act of submission, but this was more of a male display. You were an outlandishly decorated bird, flaunting his beauty to attract a mate.

For me, that was probably the high point of a show marred by erratic pacing and more than a few glitches. As you put it, “It’s going to be one of those years.” Adam broke a string, treating our audience to a bass-free verse and chorus of *Pride*. Before *Staring at the Sun* you warned the crowd “we screwed this one up the other night, so be patient.” We had no trouble creating newer, better problems. Larry’s drums overpowered my guitar, which was just as well—the entire song was gutless and off key. You nearly tripped over a cord in your haste to escape the B stage, and I had to laugh when you said, “It’s a great big stage; what small little fellows we are.”

Still, at the time you seemed pleased with the response of the Real People, teasing them when their sing-alongs fell flat and assuring them that “it really is good to be back.” Several songs became extended jams—when we clicked the magic returned, and I wanted to keep playing forever. All in all it was an improvement over Las Vegas, but still not quite there yet, and I knew the empty seats distressed you. Predictably, you were angry when it was over.

You snapped at Dennis when he said the show was spectacular: “Oh yes, Dennis. This concert could be called spectacular in roughly the same way the Hindenburg disaster could be called spectacular.” Again I was left alone with you, silently fuming in the back seat of the car. I touched your cheek. “I don’t want to talk, Edge,” you sulked, staring through a tinted window that made the night even blacker.

“What…? No.”

Your neck was still warm and damp, but it didn’t move or react to me a bit. Your body was temporarily indisposed as your mind harnessed all available energy to help you focus your rage on the night’s capital offenses. Even so, I continued to kiss that beautiful column of pale flesh all the way back to the hotel.

I handed you over to Adam and Larry—you had many things to say to them. “Would somebody please tell me why the biggest band in the world can’t perform its own songs a show like this has to be perfect I swear to God I’ll be damned if I play second fiddle to a giant television what the fuck was going on with you tonight Larry?” A decidedly non-tropical-looking drink was shoved into your hands primarily to shut you up every fifteen seconds or so.

I excused myself and walked back to our room. It was going to be a rough night and I needed… some silence. I stepped onto the balcony, a white space cowboy listening to the ocean as it subliminally carved away at the side of the continent. My clothes were soaked through with sweat, and air that was refreshing at first rapidly became just plain cold. I took them off, got in the shower, and stood there for a while. A brutal jet of hot water hit the center of my chest before breaking off into smaller tributaries, all of them eager to find the most efficient exit off my body and down the drain. I put on some fresh clothes, including that green shirt you’ve always liked, and sat down, staring at a comfortably blank wall for a few minutes before going back to collect you.
You straightened in your chair the instant you saw me. “Well look who’s back, and just as fresh and pretty as a goddamned daisy.” You offered me a sip of your drink—actually, you refused to remove it from my face until I did so.

“Let’s go back to the room, B.” I whispered.

Your jaw clenched, causing a dusky blue vein to emerge from behind a curtain of muscle. “All you want to do is fuck me,” you hissed.

“Not now,” I lied. I took the drink, finished it, set the glass on the bar, and walked away. You followed.

The room wasn’t far from the bar. You stormed inside and, as is your habit, turned on the television. The Weather Channel, low volume. “Wanna tell me why we need to watch this twenty-four hours a day, in a place where it never, ever rains?” You didn’t change the channel.

I pretended to sort through a pile of papers as you stripped and slammed the bathroom door. Your shower radio-inspired medley of classic rock and opera infiltrated the bedroom, along with tipsy half-conversations. “Boy, you’re gonna carry that weight, carry that weight a long time…oh, don’t you even look at me, Adam, Mr. I Broke a String! Fuck …kiss my neck all night long if I let you…Christ, Edge, do you have to look so…so good…Batti, batti, o bel Masetto, La tua povera Zerlina; Starò qui come agnellina; Le tue botte ad aspettar…”

Eventually the music stopped. Without looking at me, you collapsed into a fetal heap of terry cloth and wet skin on the bed we never slept in. I left you alone and looked out at the night for a while. A half hour? A while. Incredibly, you seemed to drift off to sleep, only to be startled by an advertisement featuring an infuriatingly realistic and loud alarm clock. “Fuck it!” you exclaimed, looking around. Objective: clock homicide.

“It’s not real, love,” I said, walking over to stroke your back.

“Blasted television.”

“I love you, Bono.”

You took my hand and kissed it. We were quiet for a minute; then you whispered, “You’re the best friend I’ve ever had, Edge. God, I’ll never understand what you see in me.”

“You’re forgetting, baby, that all I want to do is fuck you.”

You smiled sheepishly and looked at the bedspread. “I’m sorry. I’m such an utter bastard.”

“And yet I continue to think you’re glorious.”

Another pause. “Wanna look at the ocean?”

I opened the door to the balcony. We couldn’t see anything; we could only listen there in the darkness as the planet inhaled and exhaled. You took me in your arms and held me. “Everyone says it’s simply the last tour all over again, only not as good and with a bigger TV,” you said.

I kissed your cheek. “You’re wrong. First, not everyone is saying that, and second, what we’re doing is unlike anything anyone has ever seen. The only way they can describe it—and not very well—is to compare it with things they’ve seen before. But it’s not like television or cinema. Those pixels, a million of them…winking…it’s like a, a star field. Several times tonight I looked over my shoulder and there you were, fifty feet tall, made of stars. I think it’s incredible.” You scanned the sky for stars
—they filled half the sky. I felt around for one of the large chairs and sat down. “Sit on my lap.”
Soon your chin and jaw were level with my mouth. I ran my tongue along that exquisite line. “I can read this stubble like Braille, you know, like pixels.” I moved down your neck, and this time you reacted, this time you moaned.

“I love you, Edge.”

I could see your weary eyes twinkling in the reflected light of our room. “Let’s get in bed.” Inside I removed your robe and we both fell asleep quickly, worn out.

Several hours later you tried to awaken me, whispering, “Edge…Edge…” Your hand moved slowly up and down my back, and I was awake, but I let you continue because… “Edge, I love you, Edge…wake up Edge, please? Edge…”

“What’s wrong?”

“Edge.” I turned and put my arm around you. Your body found our perfect fit and grafted itself onto mine as your eyes shifted back and forth in the semi-darkness.

“Can’t shut it off?”

“No.”

I pressed my fingers against your right temple. “Poor darling.”

“It’s just…I need it to be flawless—so many problems, so many things I can’t control now, I can’t sleep, I can’t stop it—”

“Shhh.”

“I need them to…”

“Bono, they still love you. I love you.” You sighed and your grip on my ribcage loosened, then tightened again. “Now close your eyes.” I felt you relax a bit. “Here’s what I do. See that blackness behind your eyelids? Like a big black piece of paper?” You nodded. “I want you to put all the things that are bothering you on that piece of paper.”

“Write them down?”

“You can make them words if you like, or you can see images, but put them up there, all of them, okay? Can you do it?” You paused for a few moments and nodded again. “All right—now bear with me—I want you to mentally fold that black piece of paper in half.” A tiny chuckle, then a nod. “And now fold it in half again. And again. One more time. Now wad it up into a little ball.”

“Okay Edge.” I could feel a smile growing beside my chest.

“Now this is going to sound stupid, but—”

“Nothing you say ever sounds stupid, Edge.”

“Shhh. I want you to take that wad of paper and throw it out your ear.”

“Except that!”

“Just close your eyes and do it, B.”
“Yes sir…heh, there. It’s gone.”

“And what’s left?”

“Well…you. You, love.”

“You can do it again if everything comes back. It kind of works, doesn’t it?”

“Yes, it kind of does.” You kissed my wrist; then you took my thumb in your mouth and sucked it. The rest of my fingers cupped your chin, noting its solidity, its indentation, its little scar—without this particular chin, your face would seem so feminine, especially back when we were eighteen or so… A montage of images danced in front of black paper: your eighteen year-old body wrapped in a towel, you boxing, your undisciplined yowl of a voice, your zealot’s eyes, your ease in your own pale skin, your naïveté…and yet you seemed so worldly to me…I wanted to—

“Fucking fugue state.” You flung yourself on your back and glared at the ceiling.

“Bono.”

“Edge, talk to me some more. Please.”

“Beautiful boy. So tense. These muscles—so taut and athletic.” I kissed and admired an arm for a while.

You wallowed in the attention. “You want me, don’t you Edge?”

“I think I know what you need.”

“Mmm.”

I pulled the sheet off your body. “So dark in here.”

“Shall I turn on a lamp?”

“No baby, I don’t think I could bear it—this body.” My fingers slid over your chest. You picked up the remote control and turned on the television. More Weather Channel. You muted the sound, and your body was immersed in a strange blue-green-gold-grey light.

“Maps, spinning globes,” you said dreamily, not making much sense.

I returned to your throat. “You smell like cut grass,” I sighed, my mouth close to that magical intersection of jaw, ear, and neck. “Concentrate on this—this neck, love—it connects your brain to your heart, you know. This remarkable thing, this long spiral staircase…come downstairs, baby. Don’t think. Just feel.” I kept your hands still as I touched your neck and covered it with slow kisses. “I can feel your pulse, oxygen is coming in, and deep inside this neck are two golden bands that create that voice of yours and make the sounds the whole world adores, and some other sounds you reserve for me.”

“Fuck me, Edge,” you whispered.

“Yes, sounds like those. This neck, so thick and warm and engorged, full of blood,” I said. I touched your Adam’s apple and felt the skin glide over that slight protrusion. “Remind you of anything?”

“Yes.”

“Especially when it’s smooth, it feels just like…”
“Yes.”

“Do you want me to start shaving you again, Bono?”

“Oh yes…” you shuddered as I took you in my hand.

“That led to our first kiss. Would you like me to take you back there, baby?”

“Please, Edge.”

My mouth hovered over yours. “So humid and close in that room. We couldn’t resist each other any longer, could we?”

“No.”

“You wanted to seduce me.”

“Yes, Edge.”

“I had to have you.”

“I had to have you.”

We kissed again for the first time, our lips tentative and exploratory, then quickly falling into each other. Becoming each other.

“Or maybe we should go back to that squalid room all those years ago, remember that? Except the lighting isn’t quite the same, sorry about that.” I glanced at the radar over the Texas panhandle.

“No, I love it. It’s the color of your eyes, and it’s all over me, Edge.” Your hand joined mine.

“I love to watch you do this, Bono.” You groaned contentedly.

“Fuck me.”

“No baby, we’ll do this tonight…just total pleasure for you. I wish you could see yourself. Your body is ideal now, everything I’ve wanted it to be.” I removed the pillow from beneath your head and watched your chin tip all the way back. “If we were animals, Bono, if we were fighting or if I were fucking you…” You turned your face to the side so I could see the back of your neck. “Oh, now you know what that does to me.” I coaxed your head back so you faced the ceiling again.

“If we were animals, Edge, if you were fucking me,” you whispered, offering the back of your neck to me again.

“I’d bite this neck right here, and I wouldn’t let go until I came.”

“So hard right now, aren’t you?” You kissed my lips and moved down to suck me, and I positioned myself so I could do the same to you. I wasn’t in your mouth for long. “You get off on my neck, don’t you Edge?” You slid my cock back and forth along your neck. “You’re right, love, they’re exactly the same, and you get off on my neck. I know you do. You’ve been staring at it all weekend; don’t think I haven’t noticed. You get off on my neck. Well, it’s yours now. Go ahead, Edge, get off on my neck. I want you to. Mark me as yours. Get off on my neck, get off on my neck…”

Again and again.

My God.
We clung to each other for quite some time, and as you slowly let go you said, “Well, goodnight Edge, I love you.”

“Bono?”

“Yes?”

“Could you stay awake a bit longer? I want to watch the sunrise.”

“It’s still pretty dark, love.”

“And no one’s out there, and no one will see us.”

“Alright. I swear to God, Edge, one day you’ll make all my dreams come true and fuck me alfresco.”

“I’ll see what I can arrange.”

We dressed. I found my pad of paper, a pencil and pen, and some oversized towels. The two of us walked down to the beach. The sky was gradually changing from navy to a deep cerulean blue, and we lay on our towels watching the last star disappear. The beach had that eerily delicious, deserted quality of my parents’ house when I was by myself, home from school on a sick day. “I always feel so behind the rest of the country when we’re on the west coast,” I said. “I mean, people in New York have been awake for three hours now.” You grinned. “And one day all of this will fall into the ocean. It could happen today. We’re sitting on the edge of the world,” I said, immediately regretting it.

“You’re the edge of my world,” you said, never one to refuse a chance to play with the name you gave me. You touched my neck. “You know what else, Edge? I kind of like your neck, too.”

You wandered off to look for shells as I allowed my mind to stumble from one topic to another. The ocean smelled…biotic, but in what way? I couldn’t really describe it…and then, spume. It was an aquatic term, and it sounded vaguely sexual, but what exactly was it? It was out there somewhere. I made designs in the sand with a stick.

“Found a piece o’ driftwood for ya, cowboy,” you said, tapping my shoulder with it.

“Thank ya kindly, sweetheart,” I smiled, turning it over in my hands, wonderfully smooth and battered by the elements. “It reminds me of your jaw, actually.” You rolled your eyes and sat down to humor me. “See? 120 degrees, 70 degrees—that’s a sculpture of your jaw.”

“What about my darling neck?”

“Your neck…is the Nike of Samothrace.”

“Oh, I love that. I love that very much.” You bent your head backwards to check on the sunrise. “Won’t be long now, Edge.” You began to sing the chorus of Staring at the Sun and I joined in, harmonizing, gently rubbing my neck against yours. “We’ll get it right someday,” you said. Then your face lit up and you said, “No one ever talks about the erotic aspect of harmonization, but that connection is undeniable, wouldn’t you say? When our two voices mesh with each other, and then we look into each other’s eyes—that bond—God, it turns me on when we sing together like that.”

“Me too. But not everyone who harmonizes is involved sexually, B.”

“Example.”
“The Everly Brothers.”

“Okay.”

“Hall and Oates.”

“Uh, you sure about that one, cowboy?”

“At least one of them was married; I’m pretty sure.”

“Yeah, that totally explains everything.” You laughed and watched the waves roll in. “So far from home, aren’t we? I wonder what Ali’s making the girls for lunch.” You pulled your phone out of a pocket. “Good morning, Dennis. I wanted to apologize and thank you for your compliment last night. If you thought we were spectacular, well then I guess we must have been spectacular. There, I’ve said it. That’s been bothering me all night. Now Dennis. Roses for Ali, please. And roses for Morleigh from Edge…whatever’s beautiful…you’re an amazing human being, Dennis. Roses for you as well!…okay…okay…good.” You folded your phone, brushed the sand off your hands, and using my shoulder as a prop, rose to your feet.

“Going back to bed anytime soon?”

“No, B, I think I’m gonna stay out here and draw.”

“I knew you had been drawing again. I saw ink on your fingers a few days ago.”

“Yeah.”

“Alright.”

I took out a pocketknife and sharpened my pencil as you left. Just one seagull circled overhead and seemed to fall from the sky like a kite, picking a morsel out of the water then rising again. How do they do that? How can they even see…?

I felt a tickle by my earlobe, something fresh and white. “For you, love,” you said, gently dragging a strange origami-like flower across my face, its scent cool and spare. “Sharp and perfect, just like you,” you smiled, tucking it into my shirt. You kissed the top of my head and looked out at the water. “So many exquisite things for you to draw…how can you possibly choose?”
This chapter is very long. I didn't have the heart to break it up. It describes Edge's low-key day alone and something Bono does to surprise him. You're either going to be on board with what happens, or you won't. If you're not, see ya next story, because it works its way through the rest of this one. I really hope you'll stick around, and thanks to those of you who have told me you love this part.

Trigger warning? (I'm mostly joking.) Elsewhere in this chapter, Edge pretends to be a cop for Bono's amusement. Again, this was written in 2002, back when weapons and police brutality were not such horrible, everyday American realities.

The sauna joke is, of course, from Seinfeld.
“Did someone forget to inform Denver that it is indeed spring?” you bristled as we exited the plane that afternoon, your flashing eyes cursing the wind. Pulling up your collar, you directed them at me and said, “So cold the hair on the back of my neck is standing up—well, it would be if I had any, that is.” I reached into one of my bags, pulled out a spare cap, and handed it to you, experiencing a vague feeling of déjà vu as I did so. You grinned slyly and continued your harangue: “Times like these a man yearns for the days when he had long hair.”

“Oh, suck it up, princess,” Larry mumbled, rolling his eyes.

“This is neither the time nor the place, Lar,” you laughed, kissing his cheek as we piled into the car. Before entering I took a final look at the sky, one half filled with approaching clouds and the other half still deep blue, slashed by contrails that formed a cat’s cradle and a star. Denver’s quite a hub,
and I wondered if I could figure out the planes’ destinations based on the angles… “Mr. The Edge, Mr. The Bono requests the pleasure of your company inside this goddamn car now, please!” I shook my head and got in.

Adam was gaping at the car’s avant-garde interior—“What color do you call this, exactly… ‘uterine lining’?” He and Larry laughed as you gently informed me that my fly was open. It was not.

“Wishful thinking,” you whispered before addressing all car occupants, “When we left San Diego this afternoon the sun was warm, bright, gaudy even. These people are still waiting for the rest of their snow to melt. I’m going to get a cold, no question about it. I’m having trouble breathing already—there’s simply no air here.”

“Windbags such as yourself tend to require more oxygen than most people,” Adam deadpanned, receiving a high-five from Larry, who chuckled, “‘Uterine lining’…”

“What are you smiling at, Edge? I suppose you have developed some special evolutionary adaptation that allows you to store oxygen like a camel.” I continued to smile, and you studied me, amused. “Mona Lisa over here has been drawing; did either of you know that?”

“What are you drawing?” Larry asked.

“Oh, you know, whatever’s interesting.”

“Can we see?”

“Larry, he hasn’t even shown his drawings to me yet,” you said, the seeds of a campaign to get me to surrender my drawings germinating behind your eyes.

“Better hide them well, Edge,” Adam said, blowing smoke at the closed sunroof.

Distracted, you looked out at the gunmetal clouds that were quickly taking charge of the sky. “Must the weather always be hideous every single time we’re in Denver?”

We arrived at the Hotel Teatro, a small luxury hotel in a chichi section of downtown that was a bit too gentrified and precious to seem truly Western. The two of us were deposited into the gleaming elevator, where I allowed you to push me up against the back wall. “I’ve been the object of 1,500 professional smiles today, but yours…” Your chest seemed to collapse with pleasure as you gazed heavenward. Ceilingward. Your fingers outlined my lips. “With a mustache like that you really look sexy when you smile. Go ahead—yes. Because this is sort of like a frown, but the smile creates a nice contrast, love.”

You admired me as I asked, “Tell me, B, what is it about the combination of elevators and gay mustaches that turns you on so much?”

“Edge, if you don’t know by now…” The doors opened. “Oh, here we are.”

You promptly flopped on the oversized couch. “I’m exhausted, thanks to you keeping me awake all morning. Hey, look—we have a fireplace!” I walked over and located a switch as you sat up and prepared to take on your Old Testament voice. “And Bono said, ‘Let there be fire!’” I hit the switch and a crackling fire appeared as if by magic. “And it was good. And Bono said, ‘Bring Edge unto Me!’” I gave you the aggressive mounting you had been begging for all afternoon. Your mouth
yielded to mine, and I felt your contented moan resonate throughout my chest. You broke away, your voice soft and melodic, “And Edge was very, very good.” What a marvelous face. I touched the tip of your nose. “Cold hands, Edge?” I nodded. “And yet you never complain.”

“I think you do enough of that for both of us, B.” I gave you another long kiss, and we became that strange organism; you and I became us. I will never get tired of your mouth, I thought dreamily, Or that cheekbone, or how...

“Hello? Where is the sauna?” Somehow you had found a way to dial the front desk while I counted your teeth with my tongue. I laughed at my unbeatable ability to captivate you. “Shush, Edge. Tell me, darling—what is your name, by the way?…Claire. How busy is the sauna at this time of day, Claire?…I understand…Why yes, as a matter of fact I am a member of the Irish contingent that’s overrunning your beautiful establishment…Well, you see, my companion here is very cold but also extraordinarily shy—stop it…Oh really?…Money is no object, love…You know, it’s this kind of service that reminds me of why I love America…So someone will be around with a key shortly?…Wonderful…How did you know my room number?…Of course…Off-topic—and Claire, I want complete honesty on this one—what kind of desserts is room service prepared to offer me, and are they any good?”

You listened carefully to your many options. “Claire, it’s a pretty safe bet that you’ll be hearing from me later. I’d advise you to put your pastry chef on red alert…Thank you, love.” You looked at me smugly. “I make things happen, Edge.”

Within fifteen minutes we were on the threshold of a sauna that had been evacuated especially for us. “The steam will be good for my throat, probably,” you said, opening the door. “My God, it’s like a sauna in here!” you grinned, happy as always to dust off your standard sauna joke.

We sat on a bench. “You don’t have to stay if you don’t want to, B.”

“Are you kidding? Of course I want to stay.”

“It’s got to be uncomfortably hot in here for you.”

You took a deep breath. I felt a speech coming on and had the urge to tap on a glass with a knife. “Well if that’s true it is because I am a mammal, Edge. I am a warm-blooded creature. Mammals…ehm…” I watched as you casually unwrapped your towel and gestured for me to do the same. You searched your memory for further mammal information from your boyhood science classes, and finding very little, you concluded, “They know how to stay warm. Unlike certain amphibians I could name.” You moved closer and nestled your cheek against the side of my neck. Soon you were kissing and fondling me. “I just want you to be nice and toasty like me, Edge. So cold outside, but doesn’t this heat feel good? And it makes your muscles just…(turn, please)…liquefy,” you continued, massaging my shoulders. “With one notable exception.”

“You’re dripping wet, baby,” I said, glancing back at your flushed cheeks.

“Just like when you fuck me.” Impromptu mini-massage over, we sat back and studied each other. “Wanna do that thing with the water?” you asked. “It seems like an Edge thing to do.” I got up and did that thing with the water. You rapped your knuckles against the bench. “Is this cedar?”

“I think all saunas are.”

“It smells really good. Oh my…” You regarded me through the steam as I returned to you. “This must be what heaven looks like—misty and…primordial…with the man of my dreams walking toward me. With a lovely smile on his face and all kinds of mysterious notions in his head.”
“You’re being awfully sweet to me. Is there something you want tonight, B?”

“Give me your hands, love,” you said, ignoring the question as I sat. “I need to see if they are still cold.” You arranged them around your growing erection. “Well, that’s a big improvement, Edge, and yes, there is something I want tonight. I want it so much I need it.”

Unfortunately, I was scheduled to give an interview to Guitar World magazine later that evening and was whisked off to a trendy bar in downtown Denver as soon as they found me. Apparently they had been looking all over. It was the kind of interview I didn’t mind giving—lots of procedural questions about technique and equipment accompanied by one drink after another. By the time it was over I longed to practice and try out a few ideas generated by simply talking about music with a total stranger. But it was really late.

I returned to the hotel after two o’clock. Apparently a certain singer had thrown a dessert and beverage party for assorted staff members in the living room. Chairs were rearranged and every horizontal surface displayed the killing fields of a night of indulgence. I found you asleep in the bedroom with all the lights on. Tucked into the waistband of your pants was a scrawled note:

_I hereby command you to wake me up._

I found your pen and wrote on the other side:

_You refused to wake up but I had my way with you nevertheless._

I placed it on the bedside table, undressed your warm, uncooperative body, and managed to slide you into bed. A system of weights and pulleys would have made that process easier. I kissed your right temple goodnight as soft, reddish brown hairs tickled my nose. I kissed it again. I got in bed with you and kissed you for five minutes before forcing myself to stop. “Gonna do it for you, Edge,” you murmured.

You were still sleeping the next morning. I put on a robe and decided to order some breakfast for us and get that chore over with. I’m already tired of asking people to bring me food, the same way I’m tired of choosing clothing to wear every day.

“Ehm, hi, could you send up some coffee to suite fifty? And I also need something suitable for a thirty-six year old with a fondness for fruit…That sounds just about right…And, I don’t know, scrambled eggs for me.” All of this appeared with admirable efficiency. I took a guitar into the living room and practiced beside the fireplace. I didn’t want to disturb you.

What a strange way to make a living, and an insanely prosperous living at that: people pay me to run my fingers along a wooden fingerboard crossed by six strings. They pay me more than all the doctors and teachers in Ireland to strum the strings with my other hand. How is what I do so valuable? Why would I choose to do this in the first place?

I have to do it—I can’t bear not to do it. Even when it’s boring I need to practice. If too much time passes between my playing, I don’t feel right. That need builds inside me and drives me to distraction; that need to explore the infinite number of possible sounds haunts me. Other times I require the comfort of repetition and curl up inside the patterns.

Sometimes I need you. Sometimes I need Morleigh.

You shuffled in, a yawning Lazarus wrapped in a sheet. “Ahh…I see how it works.” You kissed the necks of my guitar and me. “The machines never rest; the systems merely cool…oh, is this food for me?”
“Go ahead, B. The eggs are mine.”

“They’re going to get cold, Edge.”

“I’ll get to them in a while. I’ve just got to…” I trailed off and continued practicing, trying to pin down a melody before it escaped. You sat beside me and busied yourself with the urgent business of breakfast, offering bites of this and that, all of which I refused.

“In your own little world, aren’t you?” you said, eyeing my guitar with a certain amount of envy. You rose and stood before me, allowing your sheet to slither down your body and onto the floor. Leaning over, you whispered into my ear, “How about a little naked houseboy action?”

“Please, Bono, I need to figure this out or it’ll make me crazy.”

“But that’s my job,” you grinned, finding a spot on the floor near my feet, one of which you kissed, placing maddeningly delicate kisses along the instep and down to the toes.

“Come on, B.”

“You don’t like it when I suck your toes anymore?” you asked with a smile.

“Of course I do, but it’s so distracting.” I started playing again and messed up as soon as I felt your tongue, that perfect suction…I put the guitar down.

“Let’s fuck, Edge,” you said victoriously. I stood and walked toward the hall that led to the bedroom. “Race ya,” you laughed, pushing ahead of me. You looked over your shoulder. “Hey, why did you stop?”

“I’m not going in there with you, B.” You seemed puzzled. Using the toe you had just sucked, I drew a line in the carpet at the hall’s entrance. “I am practicing, and if you want to watch me you’re going to have to stay behind this line.”

“Oh really?”

“I’m afraid so.” I kissed you roughly and went back to the fireplace.

“Ooh! There he goes, the thinking woman’s sex symbol, ten times hotter when he puts me in my place, wearing a very foxy white robe and about to play a little ditty he made up just this morning! Ladies and gentlemen, I give you abstract guitar noodlings of: The! Edge!”

You continued to hassle me from afar as I practiced. At one point you left to turn on the bedroom television to an episode of Sanford and Son. The laugh track was loving your assorted puerile comments. I ignored you.

“Edge, never before have I been subjected to this kind of browbeating,” you sighed. Realizing this approach was getting you nowhere, you quieted down and stared at me.

Eventually I was satisfied with the melody I had created and began playing it over and over, giving the muscles in my hands a chance to memorize it. I looked up and found you beaming at me affectionately, your hand over your heart. I winked and gave a slight nod. Slowly, you crawled back to my side, singing along: “Edge, I’m very sorry / I love you darling Edge / Especially when you practice / Creator of beautiful things / Won’t you please forgive me?” You sat on the floor beside me and rested your chin on my knee, your eyes glowing.

I put my guitar in its case, lined with plush blue fabric every bit as velvety as... I stroked your hair to
see if I was right. I was right. “I love you, Bono.”

You smiled, opened my robe, and kissed my thighs. “Now do you want me, Edge?”

“I’ll always want you. I’m sorry I was such a…”

“No. Do not be sorry for that. You are a genius—don’t even try to argue with me about that—and you have needs too. I was being bad. You were right to remind me that it’s not always all about me.”

You paused. “Pretty sexy when you’re mad at me, Edge. We should play with that.”

“Maybe we should.”

Your cell phone (on the coffee table amid a litter of partially-filled glasses) rang. Seven times and counting. “Yes?…Oh, hell…What time?…Well that’s just great…Not this guy again! Fuck, Paul, he called me a pompous arsehole last year!…Yes, as a matter of fact I do feel that characterization is unfair…okay…Yeah.”

You turned off the phone and pretended to stab yourself in the stomach with it. “If people would start buying our record maybe Paul wouldn’t force all these interviews down our throats. Fucked-up timing as always.”

“And we were finally starting to become friends again. So cute when you pout, baby.”

“I wanna be Larry…” you whined. “This! This is the reason why he looks so young! No interviews, plenty of time to sleep.”

“Admit it, you love being the mouthpiece for us.”

You opened my robe a bit more and kissed your way down my chest. “I’d much rather be your own personal mouthpiece.”

“See? Little aphorisms like that…I wish I could be an aphorism kind of guy like you, B.”

“Still wanna be Larry.” You followed me back to the bedroom where I selected a hooded sweatshirt and black pants the price of a used car for you to wear. Funny how I never seem to mind doing that.

“No you don’t, and I’ll tell you why.” I pulled the sweatshirt over your head and arranged its hood around your smiling, soon-to-be-kissed face. “You don’t want to be Larry because I don’t fuck Larry.”

“Good aphorism, Edge! See, you’re an aphorism kind of guy, too.”

I helped you into your pants, pulling them over your skin maybe a bit too slowly before zipping you up. “Nice and snug,” I murmured.

“Oh, like you’re helping.” I kissed the problem area. “God damn it.”

“Off you go, love.”

“Meet back here at…”

“Five o’clock?”

“That should give me plenty of time, Edge.”

After you left, I passed my carpet line, felt the irrational need to erase it, and smoothed it out with my
Two nights later you would re-enact our boundary scene during *If God Will Send His Angels*. You refused to let me cross a line you made by ceremoniously placing your guitar on the stage. Throughout the song you pretended to be angry with me; when it was over we “made up” and you embraced me in front of a half-empty, half-full stadium in the bitter cold.

The weather was fair the morning of the concert, but apparently there was a midday change of plans. By afternoon the sky became cerebral, and as we left for our soundcheck, an insidious mist began to fall. But it didn’t fall so much as float around and cling to things. Larry, Adam, and I quietly contemplated the weather while you sat by the window making imaginative and arbitrary comments.

“You know what’s great about semis?” you asked as we passed a convoy of four. “Each one of those is filled with…stuff…for America.”

“I can see those semi trailers…I can see those semi trailers…” Larry mumbled.

Denver did not disappoint; it continued its staunch record of providing ample precipitation for all of our performances. The show went as well as could have been expected under the circumstances. Apart from a few major and minor sound problems, we were improving. Kinks were being worked out, and transitions were smoother than before. But my hands were so cold in that damp, frigid wind. I felt like they would shatter if I hit them against any solid surface. The crowd was composed of a mixture of fanatics and people who were expecting a greatest hits show (and were sorely disappointed). As expected, the old songs were better-received than the new ones. I hoped the lights were too bright for you to really notice, but people were sitting down. You noticed, of course.

Following a literally breathless *I Will Follow*, you complained good-naturedly to the crowd about its city’s lack of oxygen and abundance of bad weather. “Now snow is in the forecast—what’s wrong with you people?” you said archly.

I watched steam rise from your body all night long.

But all of that was way off in the future; the morning of your “Paulus interruptus” interview was serene and low-key for me. I got ready for the day and made some telephone calls (Morleigh, the children, my parents) while picking at cold eggs and watching downtown traffic from my lofty perch. Then I retreated to the small, den-like space beyond the living room and sat on the floor in silence, relishing the chance to have some time alone.

“You were always such a strange, solitary child,” my mother has never tired of reminding me. She has always loved telling the story of how she had lost track of time one afternoon and realized she hadn’t seen me, age three, in over an hour, and it was quiet. Too quiet. She raced through the house and found me exactly where she had left me, playing with my farm set on an oriental-style rug, lining up plastic animals in neat little rows. I think I’d like being a farmer, actually; it must be satisfying to work with the land, to watch crops sprout in the spring. I noticed my hand was idly stroking the carpet…short and plush, but nowhere near as soft as…suddenly the hotel seemed barren and static.
without your presence. Too quiet. My God, what would I do if something happened to you?

I listened to music and drew for a while. Time passed, and my mind was so preoccupied with thoughts of you that I didn’t realize the music had ended long ago. I heard Adam’s muffled knocking on the door; otherwise I probably wouldn’t have noticed at all, and my ears felt warm and kind of sore from the pressure of the headphones. He invited me to lunch later in the afternoon.

I left the hotel and walked to a nearby used bookstore that has somehow always managed to stay afloat even though I’ve rarely seen buying customers in there. Visiting this bookstore, which is the kind of place that has cats walking around as hostesses, has become something of a Denver tradition for me. I wasn’t too worried about being recognized, rationalizing that there were 510,000 people living in Denver, and only 30,000 had purchased tickets for our concert. I had a seven percent chance of being bothered, and those were odds I could deal with. While I was becoming increasingly visible as your onstage foil, it was easier for me to blend in with my surroundings now that we weren’t dressing like transients anymore.

I entered the bookstore, walked up two creaking flights of stairs, found a few books, and sat in an obscure area between two towering bookcases. A rust-colored cat plopped into my lap and purred. I scratched behind its ears, enjoying the on-the-road novelty of playing with a small animal. Before leaving I bought an art book for you about Egon Schiele, hoping the color reproductions did justice to the actual paintings (a pet peeve of yours). As I walked back to the hotel, I saw four police officers milling around on the sidewalk across the street, drinking coffee and kidding each other.

Adam and Larry were waiting for me in the bar, and we decided to stay in the hotel’s restaurant rather than fend for ourselves. Larry asked when you were going to be back.

“He’s being interviewed,” I said. “It could take days.”

“That’s too bad,” Adam said, pulling something out of his back pocket. “I wanted Bono to see the new merchandise.”

“Christ,” I said. “I didn’t think they were serious when they said they’d be making these…” Larry covered his eyes with his hand in a failed attempt to distance himself from the spectacle of U2 condoms, two for five dollars.

We discussed the usual items—the weather, the problems, the food, the hotel, the gossip—in workmanlike detail. I caught myself formulating Bono-like comebacks and witticisms in my mind as we talked, hearing a sort of running commentary from a voice that has never really left me.

Feeling like the most unproductive human being on the planet that day, I devoted the remainder of the lazy afternoon to reading, sleeping, and waiting. I knew you would want to play, and I had a few ideas.

I was able to pry a metal dowel from the bathroom’s towel rack without much trouble. Replacing it later would not pose a problem. Then I removed a heavily-tasseled tieback from the living room’s curtains, just another rock star trashing his hotel room. I dug through your bags and located your cop hat, your Plan B “in case the bubble pants aren’t such a big hit.” I took these things, put on the hat, and sat near the door, feeling stupid and listening for your never-silent approach.

Notoriously late for everything else in your life, you’ve never been tardy for sex. At exactly two minutes to five I heard your footsteps as you ambled down the hall, first humming my melody from earlier, then singing it with nebulous vowels. You stopped, possibly to study a sparkly object (who knows), and then something fell to the floor with a whack. You must have dropped a notebook. Soon I heard you muttering to yourself just outside the door (“fucking card”) and I stood. Following
a failed attempt—some things never change—you finally stepped inside.

In one swift motion I grabbed your shoulders, saying in a low voice, “Up against that door, hands where I can see them.” I pressed my chest against your back, feeling a shudder of delight rack your body. You love these kinds of improvisational games, and you took about three seconds to get into character. You slowly lifted your arms above your head, palms against the door.

A soft voice emerged from behind the hood. “Is there a problem, officer?” I could tell you were smiling; there was a small upward tone on the end of “officer.”

Fully aware of how ridiculous we were, I gamely continued, “I have reason to believe you are carrying a concealed weapon.” I tapped the dowel back and forth between your thighs. “Spread your legs.” You obliged, and kneeling on the floor, I ran my hands slowly up and down your left leg, feeling the muscles tense and relax. I repeated the process on your right leg, but with a more meandering approach, pausing to examine a kneecap, a beloved inner thigh. I decided the left leg required similar treatment.

“Do you really need to be this thorough, officer?”

I stood, gave your backside an unambiguous slap, and tried to sound threatening, “Don’t tell me how to do my job.”

“Police brutality…and I thought I woke up in America this morning.”

You moaned faintly as I placed my hands over yours and dragged them roughly along the stretchy fabric of your sweatshirt. “You’ll stay quiet if you know what’s good for you.”

Pushing your lower body against mine, you cooed, “But I don’t know what’s good for me, sir.” I slipped my hands beneath your shirt and felt you shiver, although I knew for a fact that my hands were warm on your back. Ten fingertips drifted over silken skin, along your ribcage to your stomach and chest, where beautiful new muscles were veiled by a comfortably familiar arrangement of fine dark hair. You inhaled and pressed your forehead against the door as I played with your nipples, and a sigh escaped your lips as my hands traveled down the front of your pants, which were still as snug as before.

“Just as I suspected,” I said, unbuttoning, unzipping, and freeing you, hard and warm. “This is a very dangerous weapon. Do you have a license for this, boy?”

“I think it’s in my back pocket,” you said coyly. An exhaustive search of all pockets yielded a torn-out magazine page, some inane quiz from a women’s magazine. I did not pursue it.

“Do you have any identification at all?” My hands returned to your weapon.

“No. Oh my.”

“What’s your name?”

“Bono.”

“What kind of name is that? I don’t believe you.” I wished I had four hands, because I had assignments for each of them.

“I like it when you call me boy.”

“All right, my bad boy, hands behind your back.”
You obeyed and asked, “Am I under arrest?”

“Yes. You…” I began, tying your hands together with the curtain tieback and fighting the urge to laugh. I took a deep breath and started again. “You have the right to remain silent…”

“Fuck me, officer.”

“…anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law.”

“But I want you to hold it against me right here.” Clearly I had to regain control of the situation.

“Carrying a concealed weapon without a license is a very serious offense,” I said in a semi-menacing manner as I turned you around to face me.

“Is there anything I can do to make you change your mind?” you asked, smiling sweetly, visibly amused by the sight of me wearing your hat. I picked up my dowel rod and traced it over the lines of your body, stopping when one end was at your lips. You kissed it and looked at me hopefully.

“I want you to write a confession first, and then maybe we can work something out.” I untied your hands, led you to a desk, and gave you a pen and paper. I watched from a nearby chair as you wrote your confession, grinning widely and glancing at me occasionally. Soon you set your pen down with a satisfied snap on the desk. I stood behind your chair and read the scrawled statement over your shoulder.

Guess what, Edge? In my possession is something so devastating it will surely destroy you. Love, B.

“Ehm, I’m not sure if I want to be destroyed at this time, B.” I had no idea what you were up to and you knew it. I backed away from your table and started to take off the hat.

“Aww, come on, Edge! Stay in character, please. I want to see how long you can keep this going—if you can keep this going—upon deployment.”

“You’re the one who decided to jump out of character with that confession or whatever you call it.”

“Not a problem,” you said brightly, tearing off a new sheet of paper and scribbling away. “Look at me, officer, jumping right back in, writing an authentic statement for you. Okay? Sir?”

“Okay. Boy.”

You nodded happily at this and soon presented me with the following:

Yes. I am guilty of concealing a weapon and will gleefully accept whatever punishment you deem necessary. Love, B.

“Much better,” I said, giving you a curt nod.

You stood and approached me. “Anything,” you whispered.

“Get over here.” I kissed your lips hungrily. “Tongue,” I murmured, and the boundaries between our mouths blurred for several lightheaded seconds. My hands cupped your oddly smooth chin and jaw, caressing a face I knew as well as mine as we continued to consume each other. Breathless, impatient little moans greeted my own greed for your mouth, eyes, and neck. You moved your face to one side, and fingertips that were once on a cheekbone shifted to an ear, an ear surrounded by nothing. I gasped.

“Yes, oh yes,” you said almost inaudibly as my fingers froze.
“Baby, what have you…?”

“For you, Edge.” You shrugged your shoulders and tipped your head back. In one effortless motion the hood of your sweatshirt came down.

“Oh my God.”

“For us.”

Your hair had been very short before, but nothing like this. The top was no longer than half an inch, and the back and sides were reduced to mere stubble that ended in a clean, disciplined line around your ears and across the nape of your neck. I could barely look at it.

“Edge?”

With great effort, I focused on your expectant, seductive eyes and inhaled. “That’s the sexiest thing I have ever seen.”

You smiled, seemingly relieved. “Good…you love it, then?”

“I’m speechless.” I looked at the ceiling for a few seconds. “Seriously. I am so turned on right now it frightens me.”

You kissed my cheek, maintaining eye contact the entire time, rapidly becoming aware of your heightened erotic power. “Would you like to fuck me?”

“God yes.”

We staggered to the bedroom; I can’t remember the specifics. Shiny surfaces, carpeting, tiles, a few tables and chairs, lighting fixtures, crown moldings, all distorted by one small change that made all the difference in the world…I couldn’t breathe. I was vaguely aware of the fact that you were stripping en route to our bed. I tugged gracelessly at my own clothing, unable to do much of anything. You turned, saw me struggling, and deftly unfastened my buttons and zippers, saying, “I had no idea the extent to which…this isn’t just a fantasy realized, is it, Edge? This is a true fetish…finally satisfied.” I nodded feebly and your face softened. “My beautiful Edge. Overwhelmed, aren’t you?” You ran your hands up my chest to my neck and kissed my collarbone. “Then take all the time you need. This is really special.”

You took my hand and soon we lay facing each other on the bed. I took the hat off; it was uncomfortable to wear in that position. “Well, that was fun while it lasted,” you chuckled, as I continued to have problems focusing on you. You touched my shoulder and stared at me until I met your gaze. “Edge?”

“I’m still kind of stunned, I guess.”

Your voice was soothing and low. “Why don’t you close your eyes, then? Don’t think; just feel. Come downstairs and just feel, love.” You placed my fingers on your neck and slowly led them up until they were behind your ear. When they made contact with your new hairline you inhaled sharply. “I’m not quite used to it yet either. It’s so sensitive…you have no idea.”

“It’s skin I’ve never touched before.” I reached the slightly longer hair. “This reminds me of the velvet on the chairs of the Savoy cinema. You know?”

“That’s exactly the look I was going for, Edge.”
I opened my eyes. “You don’t mind if I keep doing this, do you?” I was spellbound and imagined this kind of touching could go on for hours and really get out of hand.

“Go ahead, love; I want you to touch me as much as you like. Your fingers are heavenly.” I continued to examine your hair for a couple of minutes, running my hands leisurely over your entire head.

You did this for me.

“It must seem strange…to be in love with a man who fixates on…a texture,” I said.

“We both know it goes much deeper than that, Edge. You’re also fixating on what this stands for.” You kissed my mouth and we moved to a kneeling position in the center of the bed. Our lips met again and created a harmony that made us tremble. My face moved to the side of your head, and I was breathing heavily. “My God, it’s amazing to simply feel your breath,” you said, shuddering as I kissed just behind your temple. “You’ve never kissed me there before,” you whispered.

“Virgin territory,” I said, feeling your erection press against mine. “There’s more of you to kiss now.” The shortest hairs felt rough and bristly when my lips progressed up your head, but smooth and sleek on the way down. I kissed along the shaved, slightly raised hairline above the nape of your neck, which smelled faintly of talc and…your skin. “Oh baby, this will be the death of me.”

Your body shifted and your eyes captured mine. Your facial features were even more exposed by the spare purity of your haircut. “I adore pleasing you,” you said. We kissed again with our eyes open; yours were becoming glassy and slightly narcotized. I can’t begin to know what mine were doing.

“You changed yourself to turn me on.”

“I knew you’d love it,” you said, your hands caressing me. “I mean, you certainly loved it the first time I—we—had it cut, but…”

“This is much more extreme.” I attempted to appraise you but failed again and had to look at a bedside table.

You gently persuaded my face to return to yours, saying, “But it looks good, doesn’t it? If you can be objective about it for a second?” You smiled almost shyly.

“Bono. Your eyes are enormous…neck just endless…nothing to divert attention from the architecture of your face.” Satisfied, you stretched out on your back and soon my body hovered over yours. Some strange energy inside me was compelling me to take over. I led your own hand to your hair.

“My God, it’s so short,” you whispered.

“That’s what they will see. But they won’t realize what this haircut really is…” I parted your legs, kissing areas in the neighborhood of other things that were obviously crying out for attention. Your hips thrust at something, anything.

“Mmm, Edge, tell me what it is.” I began our preliminary routine and prepared you for what was next. “Edge, oh God I love that, tell me what it is.”

I paused and looked into your eyes. “It’s a visual manifestation of your eagerness to please me. Isn’t it?”

“Ooh. Exactly, love.”
I continued to tease and coax you with my fingers, using an item you had impulsively purchased, largely because you liked the reproduction of a sexy Indian miniature on the label. A useless small feather duster may have also been included in the deal. You moaned and writhed agreeably as I touched you, your index finger trailing down the side of your head every once in a while.

I said, “There is absolutely no visual confusion anymore, is there? You look more masculine than ever before.” And you wanted me so badly.

“Yes…please God yes, Edge…”

I began to penetrate you as you scattered formless obscenities across the bed. “You’re a man,” I said. Simple yet effective. I took you in my hand.

“Butch,” you sighed.

“And that…” I looked at your hair again, ostensibly for the first time, and had to start over. “And that makes the sex…hotter.”

“Dirtier.”

“More real.”

I couldn’t talk anymore…all I wanted was to feel you move beneath me, to look at you, to stroke you, to listen to your cries, to hold you down, and to devour you.

“I can’t fight it much longer,” you moaned after several minutes.

“Neither can I,” I managed.

“Then don’t fight it, come on, come on love, come on, fuck me Edge,” You repeated my name eight times. Then one sharp line destroyed me.

Slanted lavender shadows mingled with amber light as we lay nestled beneath the bedspread. Some people just can’t be bothered to turn down the bed properly, because that would mean getting up and un-tucking sheets and dealing with pillow arrangements and I just want to stay here with you, Edge.

“I have a thought,” you announced.

“Go ahead.”

You placed both of my hands on your head. “I want you to imagine how much you’re going to love it the next time I go down on you.” You looked at me, the picture of boyish innocence and lascivious possibilities.

“Oh baby. Too much.” I let my hands explore your still-entirely-too-new hair. “So how did all of this happen today?”

You squirmed with pleasure, gearing up to tell me your story. “Well, Edge, it’s no secret that my behavior over the past couple of weeks has been nothing if not self-absorbed.” You waited a moment for me to protest. I didn’t protest.

“Alright. Yeah. So this morning I was being an idiot while you were practicing.” Pause. Continue. “Sorry about that. I don’t know what got into me.”

“You were probably just wanting sex.”
“You’re being highly charitable, Edge. But I think the stress of this tour is changing me somehow. I’ve never acted this needy before, wouldn’t you agree?” I nodded. “And you have been bearing the brunt of it… I was thinking about it after I left this morning. I’ve been such a burden to you; I know that’s a fact. I wanted to do something to make you…I know you love me, but I wanted to remind you of why.”

“Bono, I do love you, whether you’re good or bad.”

“I know.” You kissed my chin. “There’s that smile again. I love you, Edge. But back to my story. So that guy who called me a pompous arsehole last year was interviewing me, and let me just say: it takes one to know one. He was asking me these really convoluted questions about God knows what, I can’t remember, but definitely not the one we’ve been anticipating. Anyway, I kept getting sidetracked by his haircut. I mean, it was shorter than this. Couldn’t stop looking at it. It reminded me of that time in Eze several years ago. Remember?”

“Of course.”

“Just the two of us. It was so fucking hot all the time; plus every day there was some kind of forced march you made me go on with you.” You gazed at the ceiling, silently cursing your wretched existence.

“Poor Bono, condemned to take mandatory nature walks in the south of France. Man’s inhumanity to man, that’s what that was.”

Out of habit you lifted your hand to run your fingers through your hair and laughed. “Right. You were completely cold-blooded, not even breaking a sweat and looking perfect, while I was dripping wet every step of the way. And you, Mr. Logical, suggested that long dark hair might be contributing to the problem.”

“No ulterior motive there.”

“Oh, none at all. We were walking uphill through a grove of olive and pine trees, heading towards the village, and I was making some very cogent points about Nietzsche if I recall correctly.” I touched the bicep of my little superman.

“We were on the avenue du Jardin Exotique.”

“Say that again, Edge. I love it when you attempt to speak French.”

“Avenue du Jardin Exotique.”

“Très charmant. So I was alternately whining and chattering away, and you took my hand and led me to a small white building covered in vines. Then you said…”

“…I’m in charge.”

You sighed languorously and wallowed beneath the blanket, remembering. “You escorted me inside, and it was of course a barber shop, very old, with an equally ancient barber. No one else was in there. I shot you a look, and you shot back a better look. I thought, ‘All right, what the hell,’ as you attempted to communicate with the man. It was very amusing to watch the two of you engage in sign language for people who don’t know sign language. You pointed at a picture on the wall and then at me. Before I knew it, this man was cutting my hair for you.” You gazed at me with an indulgent, things-I-do-for-you-Edge grin.

“You were staring at me almost the entire time, Bono.”
“Oh, like you weren’t doing the same. It was something you had wanted to see for years.”

“True.”

“After a few minutes of this I thought he was finishing up, but he pulled out those clippers that frankly scared me and went to town on my hair.”

“The attachment on them was not that short.”

“Still. They were very loud and the buzzing sound bounced off the walls of that tiny room.”

“What did it feel like?”

“Edge, how many times have you asked me that question? It wasn’t bad; it felt like somebody was stroking my hair backwards with a metal comb, and my whole head vibrated. Then it instantly felt cool. Kind of nice, actually.”

I kissed your forehead. “You looked incredible.”

“You were so getting off on it. I looked at you and…what words did I mouth? I forget.”

“'Fuck me, Edge,’” I mimed. “Something along those lines, I believe.”

“Exactly.”

Tracing the contours of your right ear with an index finger, I said, “Then when he sort of folded your ears down to outline them, you blushed and shivered adorably. They’ve always been so sensitive, and nothing was covering them anymore. I wanted to kiss them and whisper into them.”

“When it was over I was literally lightheaded. You paid the man outrageously and, oh Edge, we couldn’t get home fast enough.” I grinned and kissed your ear as you continued. “So today I was remembering that. After the interview was over, all I had to do was find Helene, and the haircut took no longer than ten minutes. She was saying things like, ‘Sure you want to do this?’ Because this kind of thing requires near-maniacal maintenance, apparently, and she said she might not always be on hand every time I want a trim. Isn’t she cute, by the way?”

“Darling.”

“I love her Russian accent. So I said, ‘Hey, maybe I can get Edge to help out every once in a while. He’s pretty good at that kind of thing.’”

“You didn’t.”

“You bet I did! And she said, ‘Would be terrific.’”

“Good lord.”

“And Edge, you know me; I will complain loudly and often the second my neck starts itching.”

“I’m sure you will.”

“Excellent foreplay possibilities, too.” You slipped a finger into my mouth. I sucked and bit it gently as you attached your mouth to my neck and moved closer. “Second wind, Edge?”

I smiled at you, and you delineated my lips with a warm, wet finger. “That’s the sexiest thing I’ve ever seen,” you said.
To those of you who are still here, thank you!

I had a blast writing the scene where Bono and Edge mess with the mind of a Mormon mother of eight. It's one of my favorite things I've ever written. I hope you like it!
“Tell me what’s going on in that pretty head of yours, The Edge.”

I was standing on the mezzanine level of our Denver hotel, looking down at the entomological activity that was taking place in the lobby. Dozens of bags and trunks of equipment were being rounded up and organized, destination Salt Lake City. I spotted one of mine. Looped around its handle was a fluorescent pink and green beaded bracelet Jordan made for uncle Edge in school.

“I was thinking about you…the way you looked when you woke up two mornings ago.”

You were eating a messy cherry tart with your bare hands. One hand held the tart while the other acted as a sort of plate. “Have you tried one of these yet?” you enthused, talking with your mouth full.

“Yes, they’re good.”

“I’m going to take some more of these for later.” I pointed to you and then at my chin. “What, do I have a thing on my…get it for me, Edge.” I plucked the trivial crumb from your chin and ate it. You laughed. “Tell me about me two mornings ago.”

We both leaned against the railing and surveyed the oblivious workers below. “I was awake an hour before you. Do you realize how boring it can be, waiting for the other person to wake up?”

“No.”

“That’s right. You’re always the other person.” We smiled at each other. “Well, I got up and took a shower. You were still sleeping when I returned to bed. So I turned on a light and read for a while. I think you rolled over at some point. I watched the news without sound…”

“If I may cut in here for a second, Edge: you’re a mesmerizing storyteller. This one has it all…”

“Oh, you.”

“Plot, conflict, gripping characterizations…I’m enthralled, simply enthralled.” I pulled your hood over your head as you chuckled. “Just because you cover it up doesn’t mean it’s not still there, turning you all the way on,” you murmured. “Proceed.”

“Yeah. So there you were, slumbering peacefully like the little lord Jesus and drooling on your pillow.”

“Heh.”

“A beam of sunlight hit one of your shoulders, and I remember thinking it looked like some kind of beautiful white fruit. I wanted to bite into it.” You inhaled and tapped on the railing with your free hand. “I spent a great deal of time studying the back of your neck, and then you started to do your wake-up things.”

“Such as…?”

“First I noticed a change in your breathing.”

“Psycho,” you said fondly.

“And then…” I ran my left hand down my chest and quietly groaned in my best sleepy Bono voice, “Ohh, I want to, I want to Edge, let me…” I looked at you and raised an eyebrow.

“Well that could mean anything,” you said dismissively, returning to the last bites of your tart.
“I wanted to see your face the instant your eyes opened, so I moved some pillows and lay down beside you. Then your head moved back and forth against your pillow, and your eyebrows knit for a second. Your eyelashes fluttered open…”

“Hey!” you interrupted, a quizzical expression on your face. You removed a small object from your mouth. “A cherry pit! God damn it, I should sue this place for all it’s worth…” You paused, studied the pit, put it back in your mouth, and appeared to be rolling it around with your tongue. I shook my head. “I like the way it feels against my teeth,” you grinned, also sucking crumbs and sticky red syrup from your fingers, playing up your role as resident sensualist. “Wanna try?”

“I know what it feels like to have a cherry pit in my mouth, B,” I said.

“But I could kiss you right here and you could try this one, no? Like a tiny stone, wonderful texture, and so hard.” You paused as I looked at the ceiling. “Sorry; back to your story, Edge. It was getting good. I apologize for my outburst.”

“Okay. So your eyes were opening.”

“You were the first thing I saw.”

“And you seemed a bit confused. You inhaled sharply, your fingers moving to touch your hair.”

“I remember your voice, Edge, low and so seductive in my ear…” You picked at a small flaw in the railing, attempting to act as if we were casually discussing sports or something. “‘Yes baby, it’s all off.’”

"I kissed your neck."

“The night before had seemed like a dream to me, but my eyes were open and it was real, so real, Edge. All I wanted to do was suck you.” Your body shifted and you looked me over.

“Maybe we shouldn’t be talking about this now, Bono.”

You smiled conspiratorially. “We’re on the mezzanine level. No one ever notices what goes on up here. I suggest you pretend we’re talking about normal things, not the way I slid down between those sheets and took you in my mouth…and I knew you were loving it, the way my hair felt beneath your fingers as you caressed it. I decided to see how little it would take to make you come, remember? I stopped sucking you and kissed you for a while, and then all I did was whisper about my haircut to your cock with tiny licks every now and then… Can we go back to the room?”

I took a deep breath. “No. You want some more, don’t you?”

“Yes.”

“So do I.”

You had been the recipient of my abject adoration for thirty-seven hours.

I spotted Adam and Larry downstairs. Larry gestured to us with a donut; evidently it was time to go. You sprinted back to the breakfast buffet and loaded a small paper plate with tarts.

It had indeed snowed overnight. A light dusting covered the sidewalk. “Look at this!” you exclaimed. “The absolute nerve of this town…”

Adam pulled the strings of your sweatshirt until the only things visible through the hood’s opening
were your eyes, nose, and part of your mouth. “You’d better bundle up, sweetheart,” he said with a
grin. “We don’t want our little man to catch a cold.”

His lips covered with powdered sugar, Larry scoffed, “You know, there’s more white stuff on this
donut than there is out here, B.”

You bent over and attempted to manufacture a snowball, but the snow was not cooperating. “Larry, I
don’t think we’re in the financial position to allow you to eat cocaine-covered donuts any time you
like.”

“This is in fact heroin, Bono.”

“A thousand apologies.” You tossed the dry snow into the air like confetti. I looked across the street
and saw a black Pontiac with a shattered rear window. One large gash in the center gave way to
dozens of prismatic tributaries. It was strangely lovely.

Paul came barreling out of the hotel as our car pulled up. “How is everyone this morning?” he asked
jovially.

“I’ll never forget my time here in Denver, Paul,” Larry said dryly, “but Lord knows I’m gonna try.”

“See you lads on the plane,” he said with a wave.

The trip to the airport was routine, except for when you alerted us to the possibility of a skunk in the
area. You also reviewed the incomprehensible Utah drinking guidelines “for regular people, not us.”
We would be staying in a mountain lodge in nearby Park City, “thank god.” Quite some time had
passed since we had last performed in Salt Lake City, a place whose reception of us was so chilly
you vowed never to return, a promise you managed to keep for fourteen years. You bit your
fingernails occasionally during the ride, and I noticed a small violet bruise on your left wrist. I spent
most of our time in the car reflecting on all that had happened since we were on the other side of the
highway. Was that only three days ago?

You and several dozen freckles made sure the last row of seats in the plane belonged to us. “I want
to play our drawing game with you later, Edge. The scribble one.”

“Okay,” I said. “Yeah, let’s do that.” I was dazed, happily entranced by you.

You sensed it. “Why, Edge, are you falling in love with me?” you smiled.

“I’m afraid so.” I looked down at my hands. “Bono?”

“Hmm?”

“Seriously. Am I smothering you? Because I’d hate to think I…”

“Nonsense. It’s not possible for you to smother me. I thrive on your attention.”

“It’s just…it really does scare me sometimes. Especially now.”

“Oh Edge. You’ll get used to this eventually.” You took off your sweatshirt, placed it in the
overhead bin, and sat back down. Tight Chinese red t-shirt.

“I don’t think there’s any danger of that.”

Pleased to torture me some more, you stretched your arms over your head. “You know what this is
starting to remind me of? ZooTV, the first three months after New York. Wouldn’t you agree,
“You’re right.” Chicago, Los Angeles, Mexico City…all of it was a blurred honeymoon of music and sex. After those shows the two of us would stagger into hotel rooms, high on adrenaline and inarticulate with lust, rarely bothering to turn on the lights. Both of us were overwhelmed by the urgency of our love; sometimes you cried tears of relief when I was finally inside you. We were insatiable, blind, mute. I knew I could be easily crushed by something so huge, and once I heard you whisper, “I trust you with my life, Edge,” before you fell asleep.

I held your gaze for as long as I dared.

Dennis came by with a handful of messages for each of us. Mine didn’t amount to much. One of yours was from Ali. You held up the message so I could read it: “Thank you for the roses; call me when you get a chance. Tell Edge I said hi.” I gave the note a sort of cowboy wave and chuckled ironically, burying my face in my hands. “Could our lives be any weirder?”

You moved closer to me and brushed my neck with your lips, murmuring, “I’m not afraid, Edge.”

Returning to your messages, you noted, “Well look at this: something from Helene. Yes, it sounds like she wants to set up some kind of tutorial for you.”

“Christ…damn it, Bono.”

“Excuse me, I’m going to find her,” you announced, jumping out of your seat. In the remaining minutes before takeoff, you located Helene and undoubtedly thanked her for doing everything you told her to do.

I pretended to be absorbed in a newspaper when you returned. “Can we play our game now?” you asked with boyish enthusiasm.

The game is mindless and appeals to people of all ages. Each player is supposed to make a series of scribbles on a piece of paper. The papers are traded, and the players attempt to make something recognizable out of each scribble. No one ever wins this game; it is merely something to do. I dug around and located a pad of paper and some pens for us. “Go nuts, B.” Soon you were scribbling intently, and so was I.

“We’re titling these, I hope you know,” you said amiably.

“Not gonna be a problem.” We passed our scribbles to each other.

“Aww, fuck! These are impossible, Edge.”

We started drawing but were forced to stop as the plane took off. I looked out the window and watched the spinning concrete melt and fall away.

You finished yours before I did. You looked over my shoulder, watching me draw and making wisecracks, including, “Oh my. That’s the sort of diagnostic tree drawing that gets a person institutionalized in a hurry.”
“‘Pretty Good Orgasm,’ Bono?”

You laughed and settled into your armchair philosopher pose. “That’s my favorite one! See, in general my work is on a higher plane than your ‘Some Guy,’ drawing, for example. My art explores the big issues.”

“I see. What does ‘Totally Mind-blowing Orgasm’ look like?” I said, immediately regretting it.

You smiled, searching for just the right phrasing. “I suppose I’ll have to show it to you later tonight, daddy.”

“I walked right into that one.”

“By the way, are you still drawing those mystery pictures of yours, Edge?”

“Yes.”

“When can I see?”

I tried to move the conversation in another direction. “What do you think I’m drawing?”

“I don’t know,” you purred, plucking a piece of lint from my shirt. “The kind of stuff I’d imagine M.C. Escher doing in his adolescence…yeah.”

“You know me too well. Insects, mazes, tessellations, it’s all there,” I said.

“You are totally lying. When can I see?” you asked again.

I sighed and looked into your inquisitive eyes. “Whenever this is finally out of my system.”

“Do you want it to be out of your system?”

“No.”

“I’d like to have a copy of this state’s criminal statutes available for future reference, Edge. Utah is making me feel like a degenerate already,” you whispered the second our plane’s back wheels hit the
runway. The resulting thud caused your nose to bump into my ear. "Ooh, that’s gonna be a big
deduction. I’ll have to give our pilot a 9.55 for this flight. They should let you land the plane
sometime. I bet you’d be an excellent pilot."

"Aren’t you a chatterbox this afternoon?"

"Yes. Pilot. Nice uniform potential…and hat. Think it over, Edge." You were brimming with
energy; I looked at your pale skin and marveled at its ability to contain you.

Most of the staff planned to stay in hotels near Rice Stadium in Salt Lake City, but a select group of
us would be invading the Sundance “village.” Sundance, a secluded mountain property owned by
Robert Redford, was about an hour’s drive from the airport. During one of your trips around the
plane’s cabin, you had learned that the band, Paul, and several others had actual houses waiting
there. “You and I will share a house,” you told me with a wink, and I nodded that yes, the
arrangement was going to be ideal.

You and I had our own car and driver for the journey south. Larry and Adam would follow us, along
with a convoy of five other cars. “See you on the mountain,” you called to them as you stood waving
beside the car’s open door. From the back seat, I tugged gently on the strap of one of your bags.
“Ahh, hello again, Edge,” you said, ducking inside. “How may I serve you?”

Finally free to openly stare at you again, I asked, “Still feeling dirty?”

“Filthy.” I took your hand and kissed my way up your left arm en route to your mouth as the car
departed. Soon your lips and then your body writhed blissfully beneath mine as we lay sprawled
across the leather seat. You attempted to communicate between kisses. “When you kiss…you kiss…
you kiss better than I do…” We were the lead car in a black convoy of excess that snaked through
the city’s oppressive grid of wholesomeness.

Your shirt was a web-like technicality; I was well on my way to freeing your torso from its thin
fabric when my phone rang. And rang.

“Answer it, Edge,” you said breathlessly. “Maybe Paul has some innovative fellatio techniques he’d
like to share with us.”

Hateful beeping sound…alright. “Hello.”

“Edge, are you seeing this?” It was Larry.

“Seeing what?”

“I can’t believe you’re not seeing this.”

“What am I not seeing, Larry?”

“Christ, look out your window at the mountain!”

I did. “Oh my god. Look, Bono…” The mountains seemed to rocket out of the valley without
warning. Together they formed an imposing granite wall that stood towering over the level plane
below. On the west face of one of the mountains was a massive white letter U, a permanent symbol
for the University of Utah. Next to it, an equally huge 2 had been added, some fifty feet tall. You
gasped and pressed your nose against the window like a child.

“That’s fucking priceless,” I could hear Adam’s smiling voice in the background.
“Larry, thanks…it’s unbelievable.”

“I guess they don’t hate us anymore, Larry!” you grinned. I turned the phone off and looked at your face, radiant with delight. So beautiful. You grasped my hand tightly and we rode together in silence for a while, looking out the back window and watching the mountain recede into the distance. Neither of us wanted to talk or even move, for fear that the moment would end. We had no problem trading this kind of contentment for sex, at least for a little while. You turned and placed your head on my shoulder. I nuzzled my cheek against your hair.

As we exited the city, I noticed baby leaves dangling from branches like newly hatched butterflies. That heartbreakingly transitory shade of spring green was infiltrating the valley and sneaking up the mountains. “I love our life,” I said quietly and you nodded.

Later we approached the exit that would lead us to Sundance, and you began to hum a tune that sounded familiar. I couldn’t quite place it. “Okay, I give up. What’s your song?”

You stopped humming, said, “It’s from a certain movie,” and picked up where you left off.

“Would I know this movie?”

“Everybody knows this movie,” you said with a flat Western accent, followed by more humming. “I believe the song won an Oscar,” you added. I kissed the amused wrinkles that punctuated your left eye.

“You don’t say?”

“Really popular when we were boys. Jordan even has a music box that plays it. This is the part where the horns kick in,” you said, demonstrating. It started to dawn on me. “Oh yes Edge, it’s coming…it’s on the tip of your tongue.”

“Raindrops Keep Falling On My Head.”

“Bravo, Edge! From…”

“Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid,” I groaned.

“I’m Butch,” you declared winningly.

The car turned onto a necessarily circuitous road that climbed halfway up the mountain. Two slow miles of increasingly harrowing switchbacks had you alternately hiding your eyes and gaping at the countless pine trees and aspens on the neighboring mountains. I was equally awestruck, but I couldn’t shake the perverse feeling inherent in leading a parade of limousines through miles of pristine wilderness. You lowered a window just a bit and inhaled. “This air is so fresh…it hardly qualifies as air anymore. More like…invisible water.” You smiled at the capabilities of your imagination.

Both of us were agog when we saw the actual location of Sundance. A vast yet tasteful lodge, which must have served as headquarters for the operation, was tucked into a hollow ringed with trees and cut by a rambling alpine stream. Several taller buildings could be seen in the distance. Quite a bit of construction was underway; I spotted excavators on either side of the lodge. Unobtrusive signs stating Redford’s expansion plans dotted the landscape. I had mixed feelings about the entire enterprise.

We circumnavigated this area and drove past a series isolated homes; some were Frank Lloyd Wright-ish, and others struggled to recall pioneer homesteads, if pioneer homesteads had satellite
dishes and two-car garages. One by one I watched cars drop out of the lineup until ours was the only vehicle left on the road. We pulled into the driveway of a large A-frame cabin that bordered perilously on the adorable. “Look Hansel, it’s a giant gingerbread house with candy cane trim—we’re saved!” you laughed.

“I didn’t realize Lincoln Log technology had come this far,” I said.

A short, middle-aged woman trapped in a bubble of unspeakable perfume approached us. Wearing the kind of nouveau ranch-hand apparel that could only have come from an overpriced catalog, she appeared to be some kind of hostess. “Lincoln Log technology,” you chuckled under your breath.

“Good afternoon, gentlemen!” she greeted us cheerfully. “My name is Joy, and I would like to welcome you to The Meadows!”

“Hello,” I said deferring to you as always in situations such as this.

“Why, Joy,” you drawled, smiling ingratiatingly, “It’s a pleasure to finally meet you. And this home couldn’t possibly be more…charming? Is that the word? My friend and I were just commenting on it.”

“Oh yes, The Meadows is by far one of our best-loved guest homes. Would you like me to show you around, sir?”

“I would love you to show us around,” you said seductively, leaning down a bit to better dazzle her with your eyes. The poor woman blushed, led us inside, and delivered her memorized script.

“This richly decorated A-frame cabin features spacious living areas,” she said, showing us an impressive space with tall windows, several leather couches and chairs, a fireplace, and a large open area. Its focal point was a tasteful burgundy rug. The focal point of our guide’s distressed corduroy jacket was a heart-shaped pin from which eight different birthstones dangled. “Notice the hand-hewn posts and rough-sawn beams.”

“There appears to be a real emphasis on wood here,” you said smartly.

“You’re right about that! Our designers have tried to echo the simplicity of the wild and natural setting of Mt. Timpanogas and have succeeded brilliantly.” She made a sweeping gesture with her hands.

“Indeed. Edge?”

“I’ll say.”

Ms. Joy eyed your yellow sunglasses curiously and continued. “All of the rustic yet elegant furnishings are lovingly handcrafted by local and Native American artisans.” She led us to another room. “There’s a fully stocked kitchen, and this dining room can accommodate up to twelve people. If you look outside you’ll see an outdoor recreation space large enough to entertain your whole family. Um, there’s also a big screen TV and prize-winning mounted wildlife on the walls, see?”

“Enchantingly barbaric, darling,” you purred.

“Yes…um, now this is the master bedroom…I suppose you gentlemen will have to draw straws!”

Chuckling, you told her, “That won’t be necessary, ma’am. We’ve already decided who will sleep here.”
“Well…great! The other bedrooms are just down the hall and upstairs, all of which feature the same luxurious down bedding you see here.”

You attempted to rattle the thick bedpost you were leaning against. It didn’t budge. “Yes, I do believe this will be strong enough. Such sturdy craftsmanship, Joy!”

“Uh, it sure is… The bathroom is right over there, and you’ll find the others upstairs. This splendid mountain cottage is within easy walking distance of the Sundance village…”

“Do you have any questions, Edge?” you interrupted, leering at me.

Why not? “Are there any caves in the area?”

“I never would have thought of that. Joy: caves?”

“My my, as a matter of fact there is a wonderful cave on this very mountain, let me see…” Flustered, the woman flipped through some brochures that were artfully fanned out on a desk. “Yes! Here we go, sir. Timpanogas cave. It’s very popular among scientists and even the more…artistic types. Oh you really should go see it.”

“Thank you.”

The woman looked up at a support beam, trying to remember her spiel as you stood smiling at her. “Yes, then each day of fun can be topped off around the fire pit out back—isn’t that nice?—and a soak in your own private Jacuzzi tub.” She giggled nervously. I decided to examine more brochures.

“Can two adults fit in that tub, Joy?” You were having a good time.

“Two? Um. Well yes, they could.”

“They could, Edge!”

“Great.”

“Okay then! I’ll just let you two get settled, and if there’s anything you need, and I mean anything at all, my name is Joy, and you can just call the main lodge and ask for me.”

“Got that? Her name’s Joy.”

“Yeah, B. Thanks, Joy.”

You flashed a quick grin and caught up with Joy, who was heading for door. “Joy, I wanted to thank you for your time, for your excellent information, and…”—you took her hand and kissed it in your own inimitable way—“…for your understanding. You’ve been very kind to us.”

“My goodness, you’re quite welcome! Where are you from, if I may ask?”

Nodding, you said, “We are European.”

“Ahh, I see.”

“Explains a lot, doesn’t it?” you said confidentially. “Have a delightful afternoon, ma’am.”

“Oh, I will! And I do hope you enjoy your stay with us.”

You closed the door and, leaning against it, sank to the floor laughing. “Hey, Edge! It’s time to draw
I walked to the door and locked it, straddling your body, my feet near your hips. Your fingers caressed me through my jeans, followed by your mouth. I pinched your cheek, picked up a few bags, and headed for the bedroom we'd already decided upon. You grabbed your things and followed me. While I put some items in drawers, you located your phone. “I really should check in with Ali—won’t take a minute, Edge.” You reclined on the bed and punched numbers with your bulky little fingers. A few moments later you were speaking with Ali. I took that as my cue to check out the bathroom. The interior designer had a real fondness for giant stone tiles, which lined the floor and the walls near the tub. Yes, two people could easily fit in there. I toured the other bedrooms and viewed a few wall hangings that were lovingly handcrafted by local and Native American artisans.

I returned to the bedroom, where I found you naked and still on the phone. Your clothes were in a heap on the floor. You patted the empty space beside you. Hesitantly, I joined you. My hands floated over you, barely touching your skin.

“So tell me all about Jordan’s tooth, love.”

The skin is the largest organ on the human body. It is composed of two thin layers that cover and protect…everything that goes on beneath the surface.

“I wish I could have seen that.”

Veins, arteries, muscles, nerves, bones…

“He’s fine.”

Your skin isn’t white. It’s an opal; a blue, green, pink, and white opal.

“You’ll never guess what I did the other day.”

The skin on your hands, if you study it very closely, seems to be composed of a series of tiny triangles and quadrilaterals.

“That’s good, but you’re not even close.”

Constellations of innumerable freckles, three birthmarks, plus a new one on your scalp I’d never seen before...

“I’ll put that on my list of things to do. Guess again.”

Scars. One on your foot from when you fell on gravel at age twelve. The beautiful one on your chin. A small white dot on your right arm. The culprit was chicken pox; what a time your mother must have had with you then. A thin, colorless line crossing your left knee that you called Ali’s Scar…some kind of injury that happened around the time you began dating her. A minor cut on your right ring finger that you wouldn’t stop fiddling with…over a week ago I told you it was well on its way to becoming a scar. You said if it did it could be my scar.

“Sorry, Ali. Are you sitting down?”

Four places that are incredibly ticklish.

“My hair is so short you probably wouldn’t recognize me.”

Except for those, you derive pleasure from any kind of touching.
“Now don’t say you hate it if you haven’t even seen it yet, love.”

You wear your skin like the most comfortable clothing imaginable. It is highly resilient, but it is developing creases here and there; delicate wrinkles decorate its surface.

“It feels so good…”

Except for places that rarely see sunlight. The skin on your inner thighs and behind your knees is as soft and flawless as a baby’s.

“He doesn’t seem to mind it too much.”

Male skin…it’s scent is deeper than a woman’s…

“It’s like I’m a different person.”

Slightly salty under my tongue…

“I keep doing double takes in mirrors.”

It confuses pain with pleasure…

“Ohay, I’m sorry for waking you… I really should go too… good night love.”

I wish your skin were semi-permeable, so I could slip inside you and, for at least a moment, become you.

“What I wouldn’t give to have your hands,” you said, setting your phone on the bedside table and turning to face me. You gently pushed the cuticle of my left index finger back with a ragged nail. Then you traced a path from that fingertip along my wrist, up my arm, and across my shoulder to my neck and back again. “Magical corridor,” you sighed. I moved to take off my shirt but you stopped me. “Not yet, love. I’m enjoying the imbalance,” you murmured, getting closer. I embraced your naked body and looked into your eyes.

“Alone at last,” I said. We surveyed our wholesome surroundings. I felt a fleeting impulse to smoke a cigarette. Your lips began to form a slow, devilish grin.

“This place is crying out for some perversity. European perversity.”

I laughed and pointed at a prizewinning moose head. “Would you like to give him a little show? Something he’s never seen before?”

You bit my neck and nodded. “Shall I wear something blue?”

This sentence was one of our prompts. “Yes.”

“Sir…” you whispered dreamily. We kissed for a minute; then you left the bed, conducted a quick search of a small bag, and wandered off to the bathroom. I walked to the kitchen, passing the vast dining room table along the way. I smiled at its overachieving ability to seat twelve. Curious to learn what Utah residents considered to be a “fully stocked” kitchen, I opened some cabinets and looked in the refrigerator. It was filled with fruits and vegetables, things like orange juice and eggs, the kinds of items a person needs to make sandwiches, and, incredibly, various alcoholic beverages, many of which did not require refrigeration. I heard the soft padding of your bare feet on the floor and closed the refrigerator.

Something blue…
Last year you read a book about Elvis and were charmed to learn that early in his career he sometimes walked the streets of Memphis wearing blue eyeliner. “Can you imagine?” you said at the time. “That is so punk rock!” Soon you had invested in a ninety-nine cent blue eye pencil and used it whenever you were feeling particularly punk rock with me, and this usually led to a sexual encounter in which I took the lead. After a while “Shall I wear something blue?” became your way of requesting rough or unusual sex.

You stood before me in a golden sunbeam, blue eyed and naked.

“Are you hungry?” I asked.

“Yes.”

I went over to the dining room windows and closed the rust-colored drapes. The room’s light became warm and muted. “Sit on the table,” I said. You watched me, amused. “I do believe this will be strong enough,” I added, trying unsuccessfully to jar it.

You sat and received a long kiss. I placed one hand behind your head to support it as I coaxed your body down, and within a few seconds you were lying on your back on the table, surrounded by a dozen chairs.

I let you stay this way as I returned to the kitchen. You always seem to benefit from a certain amount of quiet contemplation before we begin something like this, so I took my time. I found a large plate, loaded it with food, and opened two Coronas. I brought all of this to the table and put it near your right shoulder. “These hands stay here,” I told you as I moved them to your sides.

“Yes, Edge,” you said contentedly.

“I’m going to feed you.”

“Mmm.”

I stood near your head and dropped a plump green grape into your open mouth. Your eyes gazed up at me sweetly as you chewed, and I gently stroked the moving muscles in your neck. I gave you several more grapes between kisses, and you reveled in the attention. Every time I put something in your mouth, I moved my hands over your body, rewarding it for its acknowledged perfections and beloved imperfections.

“I’m not sure what this is, really,” I said, examining a rubbery piece of pink and white…something. “I think it is fish masquerading as lobster.”

You ate the small amount I gave you. “Edge, this fish is living a lie,” you chuckled. “You must have some.”

I dislodged another chunk from its weird plastic container, let you bite off half, and ate the rest myself. My face was near yours. “Indescribable,” I concluded.

“With food like this, Edge, presentation takes on paramount importance, and in that respect I give it very high marks.” I let you have a sip of beer and continued to fondle you.

“Is this real bread?” I asked as I took a slice out of a polka dotted plastic wrapper. “Watch this.” I wadded the slice into a tiny ball and it stayed that way.

“Another lie. Who knew Utah could be so deceptive?” you commented. I continued to feed you pieces of cheese and little rolled-up slices of roast beef, and, leaning over your body, I blazed a
crooked trail of kisses from your chest to your hipbones. You licked my fingers clean as I took you, hard and urgent, in my mouth. One of your hands lifted for a second, but you corrected yourself and put it back down. Your hips raised and I withdrew. I found myself looking up at the head of a bighorn sheep as I took off my clothes and joined you on the table. “Permission to speak freely?” you asked.

“What is it, B?”

“Nice ram!” you exclaimed, laughing uncontrollably. I let you enjoy your moment of comedy, and then I put an exceptionally ripe peach in your mouth. “Have some too, love; it’s delicious,” you said. My body hovered over yours as we shared the blushing piece of fruit. We paused every now and then to kiss as your erection became reacquainted with mine.

“Okay,” I said. “We could do this one of two ways.”

“I’ll bet we could.”

“Right here on the table top, or we could climb down and I could, you know, bend you over the table…”

“The first option provides a better visual for our animal friends. Yes, that would be much kinkier.”

“I agree, but it might be a little painful for both of us.”

“I don’t know about you, but I can handle a few bruises, especially if it gives us the opportunity to defile a virginal table.”

“This table is clearly asking for it.” So were you; your breathing was becoming shallow and your decorated eyelids were lowering. One of your hands started to stroke me; I decided it was time to let it do as it pleased. I bit your ear and whispered, “At the risk of sounding like bad porn, you’re still hungry, aren’t you, Bono?”

“At the risk of sounding like bad porn, I’m dying to suck you and you know it, The Edge.” I crawled up so you could do what I knew you were dying to do. The position was awkward but it didn’t matter. No, it didn’t matter at all. As much as I wanted to let go and thrust into your mouth, I forced myself to remain relatively still. This only succeeded in making the movements of your lips and tongue even more maddening. It occurred to me that your hair was very short.

“All right baby, that’s, that’s…yeah.” I moved back down and kissed your neck.

Without missing a beat, your hands took over where your mouth left off. Turning your attention to the contents of the plate, you noted, “Edge, this olive oil appears to be…domestic?” You shuddered. “It’s certainly not French.”

“Truly, yours is a life of incredible hardship,” I said, spreading your legs, and within a few minutes our moans and cries were bouncing off the hand-hewn posts and rough-sawn beams of our splendid mountain cottage. You begged me to do what I was…already doing.

Later, we accepted Paul’s invitation to dinner at his similarly furnished house. You made sure everyone was aware of the fact that “for some reason I am not very hungry,” as you admired the dining room table. “Edge and I have one just like it in our house. It’s an extraordinary piece of craftsmanship, wouldn’t you say, Edge? A million and one uses.”

Paul informed us that we had the following morning off and didn’t have to be at Rice Stadium until mid-afternoon. “In that case,” I said, “Bono and I are going caving.”
“Excuse me?” you said, your mouth full of something you were not very hungry for.

“I want to. I like caves,” I said. “They have tours really early in the morning, so I thought if we went at that time nobody would recognize us.”

“And I thought the days of forced marches were over…” you muttered, grinning slightly. You shot me your patented “thanks a lot, oh agent of my suffering” glare, which I countered with my patented “you’re welcome, oh entitled pest” eye roll. We performed few quick rounds of under-the-table kicking. We were going caving. Many blasphemous drinks later, we walked back to our house in alpine air so crisp and filled with promise I wanted to bottle it.

Once inside, you told me, “Let’s go to bed, love.” You undressed me as I made arrangements for the next morning. All the while it seemed like you wanted to ask me something, but you never did. Instead you lavished me with tender kisses and smutty murmurings. When we slid between the immaculate cotton sheets, I moved to put my arm around you, the way we always drift off to sleep. But you whispered, “I want to, Edge,” and for the first time in recent memory we slept with your arm around my shoulders.
Chapter Notes

I came up with the beings Edge talks about at the beginning of this chapter while riding on the tube in London. I just looked up and saw one of them perched on a rail near the car's ceiling, and he was smiling at me, no joke. Occasionally my imagination can be a curse, but sometimes it's a gift.

Also, that cave is terrific.

Thanks to my intrepid commenters, fouroux and spacemonkey, for their love. You're the reason I'm doing this. <3
Two of you, painted gold and smiling at me…

“Edge, I love you.”
…and fading to white.

“Baby…”

I was lying on my stomach when my eyes opened the next morning. You were kissing my spine, one vertebra at a time, all the way up to my neck. Only a man’s skin feels this way, I thought as your chest followed in the wake of your lips, and I could feel your erection against my left thigh.

“Ahh, Edge, you’re awake at last.” You kissed the nearest available eyelid.

“I was dreaming about you,” I said drowsily.

“A good dream?”

“It was starting to get really good, actually.”

“Ooh, then I’m sorry I woke you up. Do you remember it?” I felt the heavenly weight of your body crushing mine as you whispered, “Tell me, Edge: what was I doing to you?” We shifted around in bed until we were facing each other.

“Well,” I began, “there were two of you—twins.”

“Mmm,” you smiled, a corrupt imp settling in for a dirty story.

I touched the curve of your chin. “They looked exactly the way you do now, except…” I trailed off.

“Except?”

“They were—you were—painted gold. Metallic gold.”

You closed your eyes, imagining it. “All over?”

“Mostly. There were some places where your skin showed through. The gold curved around your body—bodies—like…what’s the style of art where there are lots of curves and spirals?”

“Art Deco? Art Nouveau?”

“That’s the one.”

You toyed with my fingers. “Wow. So you had twin Art Nouveau Bonos on your hands. I’m impressed. Were we naked?”

“Except for the paint, yes. And each of you wore a garland of golden leaves, like Roman emperors, or Greek athletes, or whoever wore those things. And your eyelids were some kind of really vivid peacock blue.”

Batting your lashes, you said, “I’m loving this dream so far. Were we just standing there? Where were we?”

“It wasn’t clear where you were. Someplace white and warm.”

“Nice.”

“And you were kissing each other.”

You kicked the mattress. “Why can’t I have dreams like this?” you asked the universe.
“Kissing. One of you, the alpha Bono, held beta Bono’s wrists in one hand and stroked his pretty gold hair with the other.”

“Of course.”

“And it was so sexy, watching you kiss yourself like that. You were looking into each other’s eyes and whispering. Then one at a time you noticed me and smiled. Alpha Bono put his hand on his twin’s shoulder and coaxed him down until…you were sucking yourself.”

You exhaled. “I want a twin. That’s all there is to it.”

“Then alpha Bono gestured for me to approach him, so I did, and he—you—kissed me the same way you kissed your twin, and soon four golden hands were all over me, making me golden too. I believe that was when I felt your mouth on my back.”

“Oh fuck, Edge, I’m sorry.”

“It’s okay.”

“No, it’s not okay. You were about to have sex with gold twins and the twins were me! How the hell am I supposed to top that?” You looked for answers on the ceiling.

“You can start by getting out of bed. We have a cave to explore.”

“Fuck! Don’t tell me you still want to do that.”

“I do.”

“There’s got to be a bucket of gold paint around here somewhere.”

“Doubtful, B. Up you go.” I pushed you out of bed. “I thought I was going to have trouble waking you this morning,” I said, following you into the bathroom. You started to brush your teeth. “Why were you up so early, anyway?”

You smiled like a mad dog and spat into the sink. “I was plagued by sinful thoughts.”

When I exited the bathroom a few minutes later you were already dressed, tying shoes with thick soles that reminded me of chocolate cake. “If you insist upon me going ‘hiking’ or whatever with you, then I get to decide what you will wear,” you said illogically.

I shrugged. “Do what you’ve gotta do, B.”

You browsed through a few drawers, held a patterned shirt up to my chest, approved, and as I put it on, you found a pair of slim white jeans. “I love these on you, Edge. I can see everything. And there’s no guitar for you to hide behind today.” You fiddled with my shirt, buttoning and then, “no, I think I like you better this way,” unbuttoning. You added a pair of your aviator sunglasses and appraised your work.

“Happy?”

“You look like a coked-up Seventies porn star, Edge. You bet I’m happy!” you said as I chuckled.

I reached into a closet and pulled out a light coat. “You’re going to need one of these too. It’s forty-five degrees inside the cave,” I said, layering it over the barely acceptable ensemble you had selected for me.
“Aww, but that coat ruins the whole effect,” you complained, adjusting your cap in a faux-antique mirror.

I kissed the line between the cap and your hair, and placing one of your hands on an area that would be hidden by a guitar, I said, “Just because you can’t see it doesn’t mean it’s not there, turning you all the way on, Bono.” I lingered over your ear and whispered, “You need to cut this.”

“No, you do,” you said, turning and gently biting my neck. I almost lost my balance and had to steady myself by clutching a doorknob. “Do we have to see that cave?” you pressed.

“Yes, love. We have a driver waiting for us right now.”

Knowing exactly where to touch me, you murmured, “You could call him and tell him we’re too fucking busy. And vice versa.”

It sounded familiar. “And you stole that from…?”

You looked at your shoes in mock remorse. “Dorothy Parker.”

“Come on, Dorothy.” We walked to the kitchen.

“So what is expected of me this morning, Edge?” you asked.

“You’ll have to walk for a mile up a gentle incline, endure a thirty minute presentation by a ranger or somebody, and walk back down. You may have to listen to me talk about erosion once or twice.”

Whistling, you took a post-it note from a stand by the telephone. “Oh my, Edge. This one is gonna cost you big time…” Two serious blue eyes peered at me over orange sunglasses. “I expect my payment in blowjobs, of course.” Several fingers were counted and the yellow piece of paper was scribbled upon. “Yes. Three by the end of the week, and if for some reason you cannot fulfill your obligation to me, interest will accrue at the rate of one additional blowjob per week until I receive full compensation.” You handed me the invoice. “Sign here. And initial. Pleasure doing business with you, The Edge.”

Clearly, you were begging to be throttled. I tackled and pinned you against a countertop for a few seconds. I picked up an apple and found some bottled water. “What, are you hungry, Edge?” you asked, still determined to distract me. I bit into the apple with a loud crack that sounded like a frozen pond splitting. “Well, then you really should try the house specialty, ‘hardened cock of Bono’.” I nearly did a spit take, and you were just getting revved up. “We take a beautiful, soon-to-be-thirty-seven-year-old cock, aged to perfection and lovingly looked after by Bono himself, and serve it up just the way you like it: warm and hard. I hope you’ve brought your appetite, Edge, because it’s served with a lovely side dish that’s a meal in and of itself. A word of warning however,” you said with a diabolical grin as I began to push you out the door. “Once you’ve tried hardened cock of Bono you may never go back. It’s filled with a highly addictive substance that, once tasted, may cause all other breakfast alternatives to pale in comparison. Don’t be surprised if you find yourself craving this delicacy each and every morning.”

I shook my head and applauded. “You know what, B? I should deny you sex more often.”

“Keeping you entertained is my second or third priority, Edge.”

The car took us to a visitors’ center on the other side of the mountain. On the way, you seemed to find it difficult to keep your hands to yourself as you simultaneously whined and fawned over me. “What you need is some exercise,” I told you.
“That’s what I’ve been trying to tell you all morning.” You stepped outside the car and gazed up at the task at hand. “But this was not the kind of exercise I had envisioned.” You zipped your nylon Prada jacket and ran your tongue between your teeth and closed lips, looking like a rock star who was trying hard not to look like a rock star and failing miserably.

I went to the visitors’ center, found a map, asked a few questions, and returned to you. “The woman inside said there probably won’t be too many people with us this morning,” I reported. You were sitting cross-legged on the sidewalk, charming a squirrel. A handful of elderly women watched, equally charmed. The squirrel scampered away when it heard my voice.

“Sounds good to me, cowboy,” you said, standing. I felt an impulse to take your hand but resisted. You bowed to the ladies and we started up a wooden ramp. We were quickly swallowed by the same exquisite green we saw the previous afternoon. You lifted my sunglasses for a moment and peeked underneath. “Just as I suspected. Your eyes are incredibly green today, Edge.” You replaced the glasses as if for your own protection.

We hiked in companionable silence along a walkway so painstakingly maintained we might as well have been walking in a shopping mall. The path zigzagged uphill through dense vegetation populated by pine trees, new plants, and several varieties of hearty wildflowers. Once you paused to admire a young maple leaf. “Little baby’s hand,” you said, gently curving it around your finger.

Eventually we emerged from the jungle to a vista of American Fork canyon so dizzying it stopped us in our tracks. We looked down into a steep valley nestled between two mountains.

“We’re the only people on the face of the earth today,” you declared as I read information from the back of the map.

“This mountain lies along a 240 mile fault zone, one of the most active in the world…V-shaped valleys like this one are extremely young, in geological terms. There has been no evidence of glaciation here. If there was, the valley would be U-shaped. The mountain is always in motion…”

You grabbed my map and put it inside one of your many thoughtfully designed pockets. “Edge!” you shrieked ecstatically into the void, smiling as you heard my name reverberate twice. “There’s an echo!” you announced, pleased, before yelling it again.

“You’re going to mess up your voice if you do that much more, love,” I cautioned.

“Yeah. I know,” you said, stealing a kiss. “Say my name, Edge.”

“Bono!” I obliged, and you gave me a kiss for every time it came back.

As we climbed higher, you continued to point out delightful details I would have missed if I were alone. I was looking at a trail sign when you whispered, “Mountain goat over there, look Edge,” pointing at one some thirty yards away. He stood completely still for a few moments, balancing on a rocky ledge; then he shifted to a new motionless position. “It’s like he’s posing for a photographer,” you grinned. Another time you noticed a small flowering tree that was growing out of a splitting rock. “What do you think of that, Edge?”

I said, “Well, this plant was looking for water, and water tends to collect in rock fractures, small cracks, so the roots went down there and found the water. But that made the plant grow, and now the expanding roots are causing this rock to split, B.”

You thought about this for a moment. “So a little plant can destroy a stone,” you said. “Anything is possible.” We smiled at each other, the scientist and the poet. “Glorious out here,” you said,
breathing deeply. “Thanks for dragging me along; I mean that.”

“It’s always better when you’re with me.”

Eventually we reached the cave’s entrance near the summit, some 10,000 feet up. A sign instructed us to wait for our guide on the small platform. “Should only be a few more minutes, fellas,” said the spokesman for a small contingent of middle-aged Midwesterners. “Quite a climb, innit?”

“You’re right about that, sir,” you said, your accent more pronounced than usual.

“Thought we heard somebody hollerin’ down there. Couldn’t make heads or tails what you were sayin’ though.”

“Oh! We were yelling the names of two obscure Celtic gods, right Edge?”

“Yeah.” I watched a hawk glide across the humbling, magnificent gorge as you explained to your new friends that I was a geologist of some note and you were writing an article about me for “Irish Science Quarterly,” a magazine title of your own invention. They oohed and ahhed.

Our guide, a spry old gentleman who had the look of a born storyteller, stomped up the path and wiped his forehead with a theatrical flourish. “Mighty fine morning, folks,” he crowed. “Y’all can call me Frank.” Frank proceeded to reveal a series of three connected caves. Several airlocks kept the caves from drying out, he explained. We marched along a network of catwalks that led us through fantastic, oozing chambers, all spiny with stalagmites and strange frosty formations that reminded me of jewels and deep-sea creatures. At one point we stood contemplating something called “cave bacon,” a calcite formation that looked exactly like…bacon…when you emitted a brief humph of mild annoyance.

“Drop of water get ya, son?” the guide asked.

“I should say so!” you exclaimed, wiping your cheek with the back of your hand. Your pals chuckled.

“Aye, we call those drips ‘cave kisses’ me lad. S’posed to be lucky!” he explained.

“Luck o’ the Irish,” a female admirer giggled. You flashed her a big, beautiful smile, and suddenly everybody in the cave was Irish.

Near the end of the tour we were shown the Great Heart of Timpanogos, a two ton heart-shaped formation almost exactly your height. “Now, geologists tend to cringe when I do this next trick,” Frank said, and instantly all eyes were on me. I shrugged and glanced around. He flipped a hidden switch and the heart was illuminated by a red light. I took it upon myself to begin an enthusiastic round of applause.

As we left the cave it became clear that we were going to descend the mountain much more rapidly than the rest of our group, so we wished them a pleasant journey down. “Goodbye, lads!” a few people shouted.

You fairly skipped your way down the easy path. “That was marvelous, Edge,” you enthused. “I feel reborn.”

“Reborn?”

“Well, of course,” you said. “Caves are traditionally considered to be female symbols. Because, you know, think about it.”
“Okay. Yeah…”

“I mean, why do you suppose cave artists drew all those animals on the walls and ceilings of caves?”

“Because they lived in the caves?”

“No, no, Edge. Art and caves are magical things. Caves are like wombs. By drawing cows and horses on the caves, the artists were trying to produce more animals. Don’t you think? That’s what I’d do, anyway.” I draped an arm around your shoulder. You took my hand and placed it on the nape of your neck. “Just keep it there for ten seconds, that’s all I ask,” you said, fully aware of what you were doing to me. You counted to ten and said, “Say Edge, it’s not so cold anymore. Why don’t you take your coat off?”

“Out of the question.”

“Why not? I don’t understand.”

“You understand me all too well, love.”

“I’m not sure. I’ve been your friend forever, but I feel like I’m learning new things about you on an almost daily basis. And it’s lovely. There’s a certain part of your mind that is unknowable and enigmatic in the same way a woman can be enigmatic. You should take that as a compliment. But then there are some aspects of your personality I understand instinctively. You’re like no other person I’ve ever known, Edge.”

I took my coat off and walked beside you the rest of the way down.

Technically, it wasn’t “home,” but once we were “home” you lured me into the hot tub. “Oh, the things I’m going to do to you tonight,” you murmured, looking for recognizable shapes beneath the water’s restless surface.

“So many things…I almost wish I had a helper, a twin, if you will. Would you like to watch me fuck my twin, Edge?” You sucked my finger and I moaned. “I thought so.”

“Bono, I want you…”

What you said next emerged from your mouth with a tantalizing indolence, almost as if you tasted each word. “I’ve learned a valuable lesson from you this morning. There’s a lot to be said for denying a lover sex. I think keeping you in a constant state of arousal will do us both a world of good.” A deft right hand confirmed that state.

“Come on, baby, please.”

“No.” You took me in your arms, kissed me tenderly, and said with a smile, “This will hurt me more than it hurts you, I hope you realize.” I sank under the water as you left the tub.

This micro vacation was an oasis in a day filled with meetings. We joined Adam and Larry for a quick lunch at the venue. A constant flow of people swirled around us, and our plates were crowded with catered food in various shades of fried. Larry watched the chilling spectacle of you and I tackling a series of chicken wings and legs with our bare hands. Adam gingerly peeled back the brown skin on a thigh and poked at the underlying meat with a fork. “I hope you are aware of the fact that you’re not just eating pure fat,” he said. “You’re eating pure fat that was breaded and fried in pure fat.”
“So that’s the reason why I love it so much!” you enthused.

Larry picked at a salad. “Where were you this morning, anyway?” he asked. “I called a couple of times but you didn’t answer.”

“We, Larry, were busy investigating this beautiful world of ours,” you said proudly, using a chicken bone to give your gestures even more magnitude. “I took our little Boy Scout caving.” For this you received a sideways kick under the table. “I swear to God, Edge, why all the kicking these days? It’s awfully juvenile.”

“How long have you both been here?” I asked, trying to ignore you.

“Most of the morning,” Larry said, yawning. “Believe it or not, we’ll be playing to a full house tonight.”

“How refreshing,” you commented, staring at me.

“It’s a relatively small stadium, so I wouldn’t get too excited, Bono,” Adam said.

“Well, at least it will look better. I hate seeing empty seats. It seems messy, somehow. Unorganized, that’s the word.” We nodded and sat quietly for a moment. None of us liked the look of empty seats.

“Nice ashtray, Adam,” I said, noticing an empty shoe polish tin he was using.

“Yes, isn’t this glamorous?” he chuckled. “Evidently people don’t need them in this blasted state.”

“He’s been carrying that with him since yesterday,” Larry smirked.

Your features became troubled. “Uh oh. Potential problem…” you said, looking at each of us. “I have a peculiar feeling that our audience may not approve of our evolution images.”

Adam sighed, “I never would have thought of that…”

 “…but you’re right,” Larry finished. “Damn it.”

“You might want to stand back by Larry when that happens, B,” I teased. “I’d hate to see you standing there, all alone on that ramp, pelted with…fried food.”

“I’d pay good money to see that, actually,” Adam laughed. For this he received a diagonal kick under the table. “But you do raise an interesting point, Bono. Our audience tonight will be a different kind of crowd. As a matter of fact, Paul arranged for me to meet with a writer from the Salt Lake City Tribune this morning. We were watching some footage from Denver, and she wanted to know how many of us were homosexuals. I told her all of us adore women. Which, you know, we do.”

“Oh really?” you asked, leaning forward. “This is the question we’ve been waiting for! Why didn’t you tell us about this the second you saw us?”

“I’m just kidding,” Adam said. “She asked me how many of us were ‘believers.’”

“God damn it.”

“I’m done,” Larry grumbled as he rose, ready to put the remnants of an unsatisfactory meal to rest. “Hey, Bono,” he added, “Helene wants to see you this afternoon when you get a chance.”

“Ahh! And how is our little spitfire?”
“She’s in rare form today,” Larry grinned over his shoulder.

You winked at me, pleased that I was there to witness this exchange, and decided to take it one step further. “Adam,” you said brightly, removing your cap, “I never asked your opinion—do you like my hair this way?” The surface of the table was covered with a variety of overlapping, boomerang-like shapes.

“It’s a little severe, I guess, but it suits you. Yeah. I know I prefer mine short. I’d never want to grow it back to the way it used to be.”

“Oh, but you totally should!” you exclaimed. “It’d look so great with the surgical mask.” The boomerangs were different shades of maroon and pink on a light grey background. I heard the smile in your voice as you said, “What do you think, Edge? Do you like my hair?” You little brat. Okay.

“I love it, B. I really, really love it. It’s probably the sexiest thing I’ve ever seen. In fact, I can’t stop thinking about it. I fear I’m becoming obsessed with this new haircut of yours,” I deadpanned. “Little narcissist,” I murmured just out of your earshot and Adam tossed his head back, laughing.

You stood, wearing an expression that could have been interpreted any number of ways. You looked at me and said, “This little narcissist will see you at the soundcheck, Edge. Adam.” You left in what some people might call a huff. A very cute huff.

I had a bad feeling about the soundcheck. It was inconceivable to me that the entire production could be dismantled, hauled, and reassembled within the space of two days. As we practiced under the white sun, new problems sprang up after current ones were solved.

When the check was over—well, over enough—you took my hand and pulled me through a maze of corridors, shouting, “Helene!” I looked around for rolls of duct tape, rope, extension cords, anything to deter you from your destination. After much finger pointing and I-think-she-went-that-way, you found our besieged hair care professional of a certain age.

“And don’t you look smashing in yellow,” you declared, kissing her cheek. “Like a little honey bee!” Helene snarled and hustled you out of everyone’s way into a makeshift workstation she had devised. “Come on, Edge,” you called. “You’re here for a reason!”

“Sit,” she ordered, pushing you toward a chair and securing a cape around your neck. What Helene lacks in interpersonal skills, she more than makes up for in speed and precision when cutting our hair. We all love her very much.

“Helene, let’s run away together, just the two of us, what do you say? Wouldn’t you like to spend some time with me in the south of France?” She glared at your reflection and pulled two sets of clippers out of a bag. “No? What’s your favorite kind of jewelry, then? I bet you like rubies. I’ll buy you a ruby the size of your fist, how about that?”

“Head down,” she said. “Now.”

“Just one moment, Helene my darling. You were going to show Edge how to do this, remember?”

She scowled at me as I gave her a look that said, “This is all his idea, not mine.” Helene’s talons gripped my wrist, and heaving a heavy sigh, she dragged me over to our grinning tormentor.

“Is very simple,” she said, pushing your head down.

“She likes you best, Edge!” came a muffled voice from below.
“That’s because there’s less of me for her to deal with, Bono,” I said, winking at her in the mirror. She chuckled a bit and rewarded me with a light tap on the shoulder.

“I saw that!” you shouted. “The two of you ought to be ashamed of yourselves, carrying on like this in front of everyone.” I think she kind of smiled.

I decided that if I was going to survive the next several minutes I would have to separate myself from my emotions. I vowed to become a student: detached, dispassionate, and only interested in learning facts. Helene was going to teach me how to operate…it could just as easily be a camera. Yes. I was going to learn something in a series of steps. I could think about them later.

“I demonstrate now,” Helene said, all business. She showed me two plastic attachments. “Number two makes hair short. Number one makes hair very short. I use number two first.” She snapped it onto the end of her clippers, turned them on with a pop, and held your head still. “Do not let him move.”

“Edge’ll enjoy that,” you said.

“Is like mowing lawn,” Helene continued, smiling at your grunt of outrage. She was right, obviously. She slid the humming machine up and over your head several times, and it did its job mercilessly and efficiently. And I was a student. A student.

I watched without watching as she finished the back and top and allowed you to lift your head, which she tilted to the right. You looked at me with the victorious, decadent eyes of a man who knew exactly how to fulfill his lover’s secret desires. You licked your lips as Helene placed the clippers near your left temple and drew them around your blushing ear. Did every table in the building feature that boomerang pattern? When I was able to look at you again, she had finished with the left side and was working on the right. The entire process seemed easy enough.

(Easy if you don’t get off on it each and every night you fuck me.)

Not you again…

(Look at me. No, really look at me, Edge. See how short it is now? How much would you like to touch it? How much would you like to kiss it?)

Stop.

(Never. Oh, and Edge? No matter what you do, don’t get hard. I’ll leave you alone now, love.)

“Replace with number one,” Helene demonstrated, switching attachments as I nodded.

“Think you can handle this, Edge?” you asked.

“Yes,” I said evenly, not wanting to give you the satisfaction. Yet. Helene ran the clippers over the the back and sides of your head a few times, reducing the hair to a mere fraction of an inch. She ran her fingers across the short, erect hairs in a way that seemed almost affectionate, sending a few tiny clippings onto your forehead and cheeks. You grimaced and wiggled your nose; Helene leaned over and, smiling slightly, blew them off. Puckering your lips, you silently requested a kiss. She touched them with an index finger, and that was as far as you were going to get with Helene.

“These are for hairline,” she informed me, switching on the smaller set of clippers. They produced a high-pitched whine as they came to life. “Help to outline edge,” she said and paused. “Edge. I make little joke.”
The two of us exploded with laughter. The sexual tension between us evaporated, and we became two teenage boys flirting with a girl. “You are a comedic goddess!” you beamed. “May I use that?”

“Yes. If you like,” Helene said bashfully. “Watch now,” she said, using a fingernail to trace a faint path along your hairline. “Can make line higher if he likes. Has nice long neck.”


She pushed your head back down as you giggled. The small clippers defined a straight line in that gorgeous middle ground between your head and neck; she repeated this action around your ears, which she bent down slightly with her fingers. “Can use clippers or razor,” she said. “Is same thing.”

“Oh, Edge should definitely use a razor,” you said as she held your head at an angle, finishing up.

“Why razor?”

“Just look at him. That face. Cheekbones so sharp you could cut yourself on them,” you smiled. You really are in love with me.

Helene extended a tiny finger, touched my left cheekbone, and quickly recoiled as if she had been injured by it, and the three of us lost control laughing, especially you. Looking up at Helene in adoration, you asked, “Am I done?” She brushed the clipped hair off your face and neck, nodding. “Is perfect?” you grinned.

“Is perfect.” She removed the cape and folded it.

You stood and kissed her cheek again, declaring her your “enchanting dominatrix.”

She put the cape in a bag with the clippers and gave them to me. “Do not understand his words.”

“He loves you, Helene,” I explained, kissing her other cheek. “We both do.”

She shook her head at the silly boys, murmuring, “I love you…also.”

“Did you hear that, Edge? She loves us—I knew it! And she almost made another little joke but she stopped herself. Didn’t you, Helene? Say it the right way, please.”

“Okay fine. I love you…too.”

You applauded. “And?”

“I make little joke.”

We clapped some more and got ready to leave. What on earth I was going to do with that bag? “Find me if questions…Edge,” she said.

“Well, well! She said your name again, Edge. I told you she liked you best. I think we’ve experienced a real breakthrough with her today, you know?” I waved at her and returned to the maze. “Helene, I’m serious about that ruby,” you called to her as we left.

“First empty room we can find,” I told you.

“Oh yes,” you said dreamily. We made our way through the pandemonium: left turn, left turn, right turn, left turn, nobody saw, door handle, inside, small multipurpose room, lights off, door locked, bag on the floor, you up against the wall, inarticulate…
…kissing each other long and hard, my hands touching your hair.

“Baby…I…Jesus,” I sort of said, gasping.

“You don’t have to talk, love,” you whispered.

I managed to say, “I can’t.”

“I know. It’s so sexy to watch what this does to you,” you said, moving our bodies and convincing my back that it wanted to feel the wall. “That look in your eyes…I don’t even have to see it to know it’s there. Isn’t it, love?”

“What look?”

“Powerlessness, complete surrender,” you said as I kissed your temple, and then your mouth ensnared mine. In one quick movement and with surprising strength, you grabbed my wrists and pinned them above my head as you pulled your lips away.

Breathless, we stood like that in the darkness. I looked up and saw the blinking red light of a smoke detector. It took a few seconds for us to grasp what was happening, what you were doing to me. I felt like I was in an elevator that was falling too rapidly, and my first response was to tense up. But then you kissed me again, and my muscles relaxed as a warm, seductive apathy took over. The elevator was bigger and more powerful than I was, and suddenly I didn’t mind falling with it.

“That’s it, just relax,” you whispered. “Let me do this.”

“I—Bono…”

“Don’t think, just feel.” Your face was close to mine, and I could still smell the morning’s mountain air on your skin. “Let me do this.” Your feet moved my legs apart slightly; you pressed your body against mine. “It feels good to be held like this, doesn’t it, Edge?” Your voice lowered to a dusky murmur, “It feels good to relinquish control…you want to touch my hair, don’t you?” I felt your lips work their way up my arm, as far as they could reach.

“Yes.”

“But I’m not letting you. Makes you want to touch it even more, doesn’t it?”

“Yes.”

“Mmm. And when I finally decide to let you, you’ll be even more turned on. I know, Edge. You’ve taught me how this dynamic works. I’m going to leave you here, you gorgeous thing, and I want you to think about what you’ve seen this afternoon for a few minutes, all right?”

“No, baby…dear God, I want you right now, please…”

“I’m sorry, love. Remember our rule? You’ll have to wait until tonight. In fact, I’m going to ride back with Larry, I think. You can go with Adam—the two of you were certainly acting chummy earlier.” You had been waiting to say that all afternoon.

You lowered my hands and then, still holding my wrists, brought my right hand up so it occupied the space between our mouths. You kissed it. Hungry for any piece of you I could have, I kissed your lips through the cage of my fingers, sometimes finding you, sometimes kissing myself; it didn’t matter. “Oh, love, feel this,” you sighed, and I groaned as you drew my hand over your head for two piercing, velvety seconds. “The next time you’ll touch this I’ll be naked, waiting for you in our bed.”
I shut my eyes as you opened the door to a loud, fluorescent world. “Don’t forget this,” you said, sliding the bag across the floor until it hit my shoe, and you were gone. I stood there, alternately thinking and not thinking in a multipurpose room that could now add “kinky male power transfer area” to its list of purposes.

Only one thing was going to remove you from my mind. I found Dallas and practiced for what seemed like hours on one guitar after another. It’s hard to say if trying to ignore you improved my playing or not. Rage Against the Machine were rumbling above us, and I wasn’t really listening to what I was playing anyway.

I felt bad for Sharon, who burst into the room I was in, stating she had been searching high and low for me. She held out some clothes, saying, “The rest of them, yes, but you, Edge? You’ve never given me any trouble until now.”

“Et tu, Edge?” Dallas said.

“Oh Sharon, I’m sorry. I guess I forgot—I didn’t mean to let you down. I was just…playing.” I looked at my guitar and put it down.

Sharon studied me and her features changed from annoyance to concern. “Hey, are you alright?” she asked, touching my arm.

For some reason I felt the need to give her a hug. “I’m kind of…indescribable right now.” It was soothing to be embraced by somebody who was just a friend.

“I didn’t mean to come down on you so hard,” she said apologetically.

I smiled. “Impossible. okay. Let’s turn me into a cowboy.”

Before our performance, there was a ten-minute delay nobody really explained. Everyone milled around waiting as rumors circulated. A member of the tech crew said something about a bomb threat, which none of us really believed. You and Paul were nowhere to be found for a while. The next time I saw you, the delay was over and we were lining up for our little stroll out to the B-stage. I heard your voice and looked over my shoulder. There you were, in all your hooded glory, already bouncing around and shadowboxing. You zeroed in on me, raised your hands above your head like a champion prizefighter, and smiled as the music started. The wrong music.

“What the fuck! What the fuck is wrong this time?” you yelled, looking up at the screens in horror as they played the pre-encore Lemon sequence instead of our standard Pop Musik opening. You disappeared to undoubtedly bawl out one of Willie’s poor assistants, whoever was unlucky enough to be your first available victim. I noticed that one row of pixels on the right screen was not working, but that seemed to be the least of our worries. The crowd must have thought it was a normal part of the show and everything was going according to plan, although what thirty thousand Mormons made of our transgender, fifty-foot dancer is anybody’s guess. Lemon had to be played in its entirety before we could actually walk to the stage with the appropriate music playing. I stole another glance at you. You were seething.

Once we were finally onstage, the show was fine. Mofo was explosive thanks to your rage, and you relished singing the words “motherfucking rock and roll” a few more times than was necessary. You dedicated the last one to me, shrugging off your hood, looking at me, and whispering, “Sucking…fucking…” All I could do was play my guitar and sing for your mother.

Your voice was a bit hoarse, so to make up for it your singing became more emotional, and I knew you had to be pleased that our fans were singing along with every song, including all the new ones.
At one point during *Do You Feel Loved* you sang, “When you sing—you sing—you sing better than I do,” and gave me a smile. You told them, “You’re all top fans in my eyes,” apologized for the delay (the fourteen year delay as well as the ten minute one), and thanked them for the U2 on the mountain. “It’s a good thing we’re not the Red Hot Chili Peppers,” you quipped. We butchered a couple of songs, there was an eerie silence when the evolution images finally appeared, and everyone had to endure the dancing Lemon person one more time, but the love and enthusiasm the crowd lavished upon us transformed what could have been a disastrous concert into a respectable, sometimes excellent one.

But I was more than happy to let Larry be your sounding board for an hour or so as we were driven back to Sundance. Adam has always been the best person to talk with after a problematic show, and we laughed a lot more than we complained. A small bag sat beside me.

Eventually I looked out the car window and saw our house. All the lights were on. You were there. Every fiber of my being told me to run to the door, but I fought them heroically, told Adam goodnight, and walked slowly until he was out of view.

Once inside, I did indeed run to our well-lit bed, where you were naked and waiting for me, as promised. “Good evening, Edge, I’ve been expecting you,” you smiled. I kicked off my boots and joined you. Our hands made short work of my clothing, which you collected, wadded, and threw. You reclaimed my body with greedy fingers and lips, and I was instantly, excruciatingly hard. “Do anything you want to me,” you sighed as I took your head in my hands, touching you again. Finally.

“Baby, I won’t last long,” I said.

“Well how could you?” you grinned, rolling onto your stomach. I kissed the back of your perfect neck as you quietly said, “Because really, you’ve been fucking me all day in your mind, haven’t you?”

“Yes love. My God yes.”

“Mmm, good. I feel like talking tonight.”

“I love it when you talk,” I whispered into your darling ear, and you writhed contentedly as I got you ready for me.

“You love to fuck me, don’t you, Edge?”

“You have no idea.”

“Maybe I might have one,” you said ambiguously, arching your back.

“Are you ready, baby?”

“More than you know. Come on, fuck me, please, Edge, mmm, just like that.”

“Oh, yes Bono…” I said as I began to penetrate you. And you began to talk.

“Go ahead Edge, it doesn’t hurt, no, it feels so good…love the weight of your body, Christ it’s divine…I belong to you, every part of me is yours tonight…when you fuck me, oh Edge, sometimes I feel like I’ll faint…because there’s no way you’ll let me escape…and I want you to have your way with me…love your cock…you deserve a good hard fuck Edge…ahh, you like it when I say bad things like that, don’t you?…go ahead, kiss it all you want…it’s really just stubble now, isn’t it?…I love being your object…of desire…I love being…your fetish…and all I have to do…mmm…yes Edge, right there…ooh I wish you could know what it feels like when you…right there…oh my
God…all I have to do…yes…is sit in a chair…I love it when you moan that way…Edge, you’re so good…hold me down…and you…love…all you have to do is…I love you…cut my hair with those clippers…oh you know you will…I’m gonna make you do it…scream Edge…scream my name…fuck me…fuck both of me…”

And I did scream your name. Then I screamed inarticulately as buzzing tremors overtook me and the elevator crashed to the ground. I continued to murmur your name when we lay on the bed, damp with sweat and still joined, still one. Your body was so warm beneath mine, and you began to whimper with need.

“Of course, baby,” I said, slowly withdrawing. You turned onto your back, touched my shoulder, and I sucked you, my eternal idol.

“I want to talk some more…” you began as I took you deeper in my mouth. All I wanted to do was give you pleasure. I took both of your hands in mine. “Such a beautiful, perfect man…that’s what you are to me…ahh…I’ve been waiting all day for this too…since this morning…since I heard your dream…and in that tub, I wanted you to do this…this afternoon with Helene…that look in your eyes…so helplessly in love…so vulnerable…and me…you make me feel so big…I finally did it…I…did something to you in that room…didn’t I?…yes…God I love your mouth, Edge…I took your wrists…your lovely hands…and they were mine…I held you there…helpless darling…slave to your fetish…wanting me…even more than before…”

The hands I held abruptly grabbed my wrists.

“…don’t ever stop loving me, Edge…let me do this…let me…ohh, I want to, I want to Edge, let me…please let me…please…”

I love to watch your torso jolt up and back and hear your cries every time you come in my mouth. I love the abandon I witness in your body as you…you appear to be seeing God. And then you become tender and fragile, naked and small, and all I want to do is protect you from the world.

I crawled up to do just that, but instead you put your arms around me. Still catching your breath, you whispered slowly, “Don’t say a word, love. I need to ask you something and I want you to think about it before you tell me yes or no. Alright?” I nodded, puzzled. “Edge, I love you, you know that. I love what we do in bed, everything. We’ve been together this way for five years, haven’t we?” I nodded again. “And I love the way you—I submit to you, I love that. It’s perfect. But ever since I got this haircut, love, you’ve been…mmm…immobilized by it, in the sexiest way possible.”

I nuzzled your neck, and you invited my hand up to touch the line around your ear. You were right. I was helpless before you, absolutely.

“Do you realize what this has done to me, Edge? How powerful it makes me feel now? You’re so strong, and you always will be much stronger than I am. Except for this one thing. I’ve discovered your weakness, am I right?” I kissed your throat and nodded.

You traced the contours of my collarbone with a finger. “You can’t even say the name of this haircut, can you?” I couldn’t. “It’s marvelous that you can’t. It’s a crew cut, darling Edge, and I adore that you can’t say it. Its name alone channels that much erotic energy for you. It’s unbelievable. And it’s mine.” I was hypnotized by your words.

You held me closer and continued, gently, “Today when I held your wrists above your head, you liked it, I know. Aren’t you curious about what it might be like if I were the one in control? Wouldn’t you like to be Baby for a while? Don’t you wonder what goes through my mind when you…I’m going to say it…when you fuck me, Edge? Don’t you wonder what it feels like for me? I can’t tell
you; there’s no way I could ever do it justice.”

Your chest rose and fell twice, and then you whispered, “All this time and I’ve never tried to… I’ve never really wanted to…but now I do. I’ve been trying to say this for a few days. I want to feel what you feel. I want to fuck you, Edge. Will you let me? You don’t have to answer. Just think about it.”

Your fingers cradled my chin and jaw, and you kissed me. Your tongue entered my mouth, searching for the word you knew was there. The word was yes.
Hand 1

Chapter Notes

Let's all settle in for three long chapters that will take place in Eugene, Oregon. Had I put all of them into one chapter, it would have weighed in at over 20,000 words, and that kind of thing is as hard to edit as it is to read in one sitting. So this means you will also be subjected to three drawings of Bono's hands.

The part where they pretend to be roadies is best read aloud.

Thanks for reading this! It may be a few days before I can post the next part (holiday stuff).

You were dreaming, I could tell. Your lips were parted and undulating vaguely, as if you were talking or seeking a kiss in your dream. Your hands treaded the air like the paws of a sleeping kitten, and the fingers of your left hand appeared to form chords. I couldn’t tell what song it was. Subdued, shy light covered you like an apologetic veil. We were on the west face of the mountain. The sun had been up for over an hour, and we were the last ones to know about it.

I wanted to kiss you, but…had I been eating coins in my sleep? I figured I’d spare you the metallic taste that had taken up residence inside my mouth, so I slipped out of bed to brush my teeth while your invisible guitar gently wept.

My reflection didn’t know what to make of me, so we engaged in polite small talk. A pillow had
created two pink furrows on the side of my face. Something was in my eye—an eyelash. The toothpaste was a tri-colored, stripey affair.

I watched my right hand encircle my left wrist, holding it firmly at first, then tighter.

If I was hungry, you were probably starving. I went to the kitchen and, not motivated enough to prepare a normal breakfast or fry things, I made a couple of sandwiches and peeled an orange. You’d require coffee as well. How many different brands of coffee makers could there possibly be, anyway? I called Paul to double-check when we were leaving for Eugene, Oregon. We still had a few hours. The coffee maker composed a sonata of obscene gurgling noises. A mule deer casually strolled across the lawn and investigated the longer grass growing around a wooden swing-set. The head of one of his cousins looked out at him wistfully from his post above the refrigerator.

I was cold and I missed Morleigh. I’d call her once we were in Oregon.

I heard you yawn as I entered the bedroom. “There you are,” you smiled, sitting up in bed as I gave you the tray. I got back under the blankets while you said, “Aww, you made breakfast. Have some.” You pinched my earlobe and took a sip of coffee.

“Okay.”

“Spectacular breakfast, Edge. What do you call this?” You lifted the corner of a slice of bread and peered underneath.

“It’s a sandwich. A breakfast sandwich.”

“You couldn’t be more charming if you tried.” We ate in relative silence. I looked over and caught you staring at me a couple of times, a tender expression on your face. You set the tray on the floor after I finished the orange. Then you burrowed under the blankets until you were completely covered and in the center of the bed. “Would you like to join me down here, Edge?” asked your muted voice.

“Why am I doing this?” I said, joining you down there.

“Because sometimes it’s easier to talk in the dark.”

I touched your face, barely visible as we lay down together. Your lips brushed against mine, and the scent of oranges, fresh laundry, and skin threatened to smother us. I reached up and made a small tunnel so we could breathe. “What would you like to talk about?” I asked.

You took one of my hands and brought it to your lips, kissing my wrist and biting it gently several times. I sighed, and I could feel your smile spread across my skin. “That’s all I wanted to say,” you whispered, swimming away. I caught your shoulder before you could surface, and you came back down to me. Seconds passed. “What is it, love?”

I took a deep breath and closed my eyes. “Yes.”

You paused. “Yes?”

“Yes.” A moan escaped your lips as we kissed again. Your hands became new, touching and marking my face and neck with an unnamed color, and I didn’t care if I couldn’t breathe anymore.

“Oh Edge,” you said quietly, “I promise… I promise I’ll be good.” Another long pause. These quiet intervals seemed to give birth to a special language, one with its own silent rhythms and vocabulary. The silence felt safe.
A sympathetic mouth was on mine. “Nice…and…slow,” you murmured, kissing me between each word. “I’ll make sure…you love it.” Your hands left my face. “It’s strange. I feel like I’m touching you for the first time,” you said, your finger describing a line down the center of my chest. Withdrawing it, you moved your face closer to mine.

We huddled together in that warm, dark shell. “So quiet,” you whispered. I nodded, exhaling. I felt the blankets sweep over my ear as you gradually pulled them down; they sounded like ocean waves breaking on the shore. You seemed to understand that I didn’t want to talk and didn’t know what to say beyond yes.

We stayed in bed, lying face to face, studying each other. Even after all the time we’ve spent together, I still relish any opportunity to openly stare at you, uninterrupted. You know this. For the most part, your face was the picture of bliss and desire. But every once in a while your eyes shifted from left to right—you were having a conversation with yourself—and a few lines of concern troubled your forehead and the space between your eyebrows. You were a little boy who had been given a present he knew he probably didn’t deserve.

“Are you all right, Edge?”

Your face blurred like a watercolor, and I covered my eyes. “I guess…I’m just kind of confused.”

In an instant you were kissing my forehead and taking me in your arms. “I know…I know exactly how you feel, love.”

“Well, at least one of us does.”

“Do you want to talk about it?”

“No. Not yet.”

“Reg, if you want to forget all about last night that’s fine. We can go back to the way it was. Really, it’s okay.” Your voice was quiet.

“No,” I told your shoulder.

“You need some time to think about it, then. To sort it out.”

“Yeah, I guess I do. Don’t you?”

“That’s probably one of your better ideas, Edge. I’ll give you all the time you need,” you said thoughtfully, looking up at the ceiling.

“I guess I should have seen this coming, but it kind of took me by surprise. Not that it’s bad, I just…”

“You want to find out how you feel about it first; I understand.” Your arm pulled me closer. “As a matter of fact…we could stay in separate rooms tonight if you want.”

I kissed your chest for a while. “I don’t know if that will be necessary,” I finally said, although your idea was not without merit.

“Oh come on. You crave solitude. A little time away from me will do you a world of good.” You tipped my chin up so you could see my face. “Just think about all the fun you’ll have,” you said affably. “And you won’t have to share blankets with me.”

“I wouldn’t call it ‘sharing,’ exactly,” I smiled.
Your face brightened. “Imagine all the drawings you could make, along with any other top secret arts and crafts projects you’ve been wanting to try—no more waiting for me to fall asleep. Have you ever considered macramé? Hey, stop that!” You thrashed around as I bit your arm.

We settled down and you gave me the look that always works. “When people call and ask for you, I’ll have the rare pleasure of telling them that Edge is in Edge’s room.” We nodded and you chuckled. “That idea will generate more gossip amongst the crew than if they knew we were together, you know.”

“‘Edge and Bono are like totally fighting!’” I said in my best southern California accent.

You pretended to smoke a joint. “‘No man, I have a theory. Listen: Edge is freaking out because they’re like trying to decide if Bono should be the top for a while. I shit you not.’”

I reached up, made a pinching movement near your lips, and took an imaginary hit. “‘I’d be freaking out too, buddy. That dude’s a loose cannon.’”

You stifled a laugh and gazed at a nearby antelope, a faraway look on your face. “‘Ya wanna know something, though? I’m gonna be totally honest here. For Bono, I’d be gay for one night. Just to, you know, have that experience.’”

“‘Me too, man. He’s one fine piece of ass.’” With that, we both lost control and laughed at our general ridiculousness.

“That is why I love you,” you said once we caught our breath. Both of us lay on our backs, connected by two hands. Your thumb stroked mine as you said, “We’ll figure this out, Edge. I mean, you’re a genius, and I experience the occasional insight into the human condition. How hard can it be?” A lewd thought crossed our minds. “Don’t answer that.”

I turned my head. “Bono?”

“Edge?”

“You can have one of my keys, and I’ll have one of yours, okay? In case one of us is afraid of the dark or hears a noise…”

“That sounds good.” You rolled onto your side and stroked the back of my neck with your free hand. “Baby,” you whispered, and I felt my body respond with a soft ripple of pleasure.

Eventually we pried ourselves out of bed, got ready for the day, and packed our things. It was satisfying, empty work, and after a while we stood by the door waiting for our car to arrive, a group of black bags surrounding our feet like pet dogs. You took one last look around. “I’m gonna miss this crazy place,” you concluded as the car pulled up in the driveway. Coaxing me away from the window, you embraced me in front of a framed needlepoint that read, “Where we love is home, home that our feet may leave, but not our hearts.” I pointed to it, and after you read the words you kissed me, your lips lingering and feral. “I adore everything about you,” you said.

The trip down the mountain was quiet and somewhat melancholy. Neither of us wanted to be plunged into the rhythm of the tour again. I immediately renounced those feelings when I saw a team of construction workers laboring in the sun at the Sundance site. Their backs were slick and scorched, and it was only May.

Once we were on the interstate we looked out our respective windows, again connected by two hands. Whenever we saw something interesting we alerted each other with a simple squeeze. The valley was on your side, composed of lots of small farms and towns and vegetation in an array of
hushed spring colors. All the plants were nourished by irrigation; water flowing down from the mountains was distributed via a network of trenches. I looked up at the jagged peaks. Their silhouettes against the sky reminded me of a line on a heart monitor. As we neared Salt Lake City, I signaled you and said, “They still have the big U2 on the mountain, B.”

You moved over to my window, looked up, and commented, “I guess they’ll take that down today.” The car took a left exit and we were on our way to the airport.

Once there, we looked at each other and exhaled. A large group stood on the tarmac, waiting to board our plane. “Stay with me, Edge, okay? I’ll fend them off for you.” Bemused, I started to open my mouth but you said, “I want to.” Alright. We got our things together and walked to the plane. Paul approached us first, and in his wake marched four other people who wanted something.

“A little recreational reading for you,” he said cordially, handing me copies of the Salt Lake City Tribune and Deseret News. You whispered something to Paul and he shot me a concerned glance. I looked at the poorly reproduced color photo of our stage on the front page of the Tribune. “He sounded a bit strange on the phone this morning,” I heard Paul tell you under his breath. “Come on everyone; let’s get these lads on first, please!”

“What on earth did you tell Paul?” I said as we were hustled to the front of the line.

“I told him you weren’t going to mention it, but the sunlight was bothering you and you had a terrible headache, probably because we’ve been staying at such a high altitude. Brilliant, eh?”

“Bono, we’re about to board a plane,” I said as I led you up the steps.

“Yes, so your headache will get worse and people will leave you alone.” We were by ourselves in the cabin. You reached around me and ran your fingers across my chest, settling over my heart for a second as you added, “Incidentally, I am in love with you and there’s no need to thank me.”

I looked back. “Thank you.”

“You’re welcome.”

You chatted with the usual parade of characters as I skimmed the newspapers. I looked at the words, but I can’t say I read them one by one. A couple of fan quotes jumped out, though.

"They really catered to the younger fans," said avid U2 follower David W., 30. "They didn't play a lot of the songs the older fans grew up on."

"The new stuff is okay, and I think everyone, including the younger fans, can agree about that," another longtime fan said. "But the new fans don't like the newer stuff as much as the older fans like the older stuff."

It seemed pretty benign, but I debated over whether I should show you the article at all. You answered that question when Larry came over to say good morning. “Edge, a man in your condition should not be reading.” You snatched the papers away from me and said, “Why don’t you try closing your eyes for a while? He’s got a headache, Larry. Altitude sickness, we think.”

“Sorry to hear that, Edge. Hey, do you want some ibuprofen for that? It always works for me.”

“He already took some. You’re gonna be just fine, Edge,” you declared.

“I’m sure I’ll survive somehow.”
Larry pointed at the Tribune. “The fans have some really great ideas for our set list, B,” he joked, patting you on the shoulder before moving on. “Hope you feel better, Edge.”

I reclined back in my seat and looked out the window. There wasn’t much going on; I felt like I had viewed the scene in question several thousand times in my life. I looked without seeing, breaking things down into simple shapes: rectangles, circles, trapezoids, ellipses…a parabola. Meanwhile you talked quietly so as not to disturb me. A person would stop by and say something to you, followed by an inevitable pause where a gesture would be made in my direction, and concluding with the unmistakable sound of fabric rubbing against fabric as you shrugged while performing some other elaborate sickness gesture I tried to ignore. When each person left, you gave me a comforting pat or nudge.

After about ten minutes of this, everyone was finally settled. I looked at you and chuckled fondly. Sunlight filtered through the cabin—your hair was tinged with copper. You unfolded the newspaper with a great deal of fanfare and scanned the article Larry and I had read. “God damn it,” you muttered. “Heaven forbid we attempt something new. Heaven forbid we try to present a few different ideas. I guess we’re just playing for ourselves now.”

“Bono, plenty of people are still listening.”

“They’re not the ones who drive me crazy.”

“I know.”

You put the paper on the floor and moved your seat back so our eyes were at the same level. Shaking your head, you gave me a resigned half grin, “Thank God you’re here with me, Edge. Honestly, I don’t know what I’d do without you.” We gazed at each other for as long as we dared while the plane lumbered down the runway and heaved itself into the sky.

In time your restlessness got the best of you and you wandered around talking to people. Adam came over and sat beside me. I mumbled hello and he studied my face for a moment.

“You don’t seem like yourself today,” he said.

“Didn’t you hear? I’m suffering from altitude sickness.”

“Really?”

I fiddled with the button for the tiny overhead light. “No. That’s just something Bono made up. I’m not sick…I’ve got something on my mind. I’ve been trying to fight it off, but…”

“It keeps growing?”

“Yeah.”

“Maybe you should just think about it, then, and get it over with,” Adam said sensibly.

“I will. I might need to invest in one of those sensory deprivation chambers first.”

“Ha, too many distractions? I find that hard to believe.” We watched you pose for a photograph with one of the tech guys…was his name Steve? You would know. You might know his dog’s name as well.

“Present company excluded, of course,” I said.
Adam’s face has always seemed so…reassuring. “You can always talk to me, you know,” he said.

“I know. Thanks Adam.” He smiled and went back to his seat, patting the top of your head affectionately as he passed you.

I started to think.

You were right. The balance of power had been shifting for well over a week. You had controlled everything even when I thought I was in charge. I used to be so cool and imposing, and you loved that. You loved serving me, but now I was this…this pushover. Sex had become all about me pleasing you, soothing you, worshiping you, Christ, fucking drawing you every chance I got, just like now. You’ve been holding the cards all this time; maybe I should simply admit it to myself and surrender to you. That’s what you seemed to want. Or did you? Did I want it?

You joined me as those thoughts swirled around my mind. Attempting to clear them, I scrutinized your right hand as it posed on the armrest. Your hands are so compact and powerful, but still childlike. They are forever acquiring, gesticulating, touching everything you see regardless of personal space or privacy. Employing their own special sign language, they depict shapes and emotions in the air around your face as you talk and sing. They are a man’s hands with appropriate wrinkles and folds, yet they’re so soft, save for a few calluses. Nearly invisible hairs exist on the back of your hands, and only lips can detect them. Raised blue-green veins branch off and make X and Y shapes there. Sometimes it’s easy to forget all the disturbing anatomy toiling beneath the surface of your skin. Blood, bones, muscles, nerves…ten fingers with twenty-eight bending parts…deep nail beds like rosy seashells, jagged and raw, jutting out from the sand for people to step on…

I watched my own hand grip its armrest. Our skin was the same, but otherwise we may as well have come from two different races. Your hands were little animals, sculptures in perpetual motion…

“Do you like my hands, Edge?”

“I love them.”

“They’d never do anything to hurt you, you know.”

“I know.”

“They are greedy little fuckers, though. Ahh, it’s good to see you smile, love.”

I turned to the window and watched the landscape become greener, mistier, and more like home.

“We’ve never been here before, have we?” you asked no one in particular as we were herded through Eugene’s airport, a small structure that was straining to become something more than it was. Expensive-looking open spaces showcased lone escalators and a couple of brassy, ferny restaurants.

“I don’t think so. I know we have been—” Adam began, interrupted by a loud and slightly desperate female voice over the PA system.

“Please be sure to visit the Gallery at the Airport, a program that provides high quality art exhibits that reflect the cultural richness of Eugene!” she said.

“In Portland a few times,” he concluded, gazing up at a strange bronze representation of Paul Bunyan. “Who exactly was Paul Bunyan?”
“I think he was just some giant lumberjack,” Larry said.

“Hey Larry,” you called over your shoulder, “You should be a lumberjack! Boxer, cowboy, factory worker, and lumberjack: how about it? I’m sure Sharon could figure something out for you.”

“I’m fine in my army stuff.”

“It’s hardly a costume,” Adam joined in. “More like ‘starring Larry Mullen Jr. as himself’.”

“I’m giving the people what they want,” he said in mock superiority, and the rest of us laughed.

We moved through a series of sliding doors, each one gradually reintroducing us to the concept of humidity. The atmosphere was verdant and cool, a real change from the dry air of Utah, and my skin tingled with gratitude. “Well, isn’t this pleasant?” you asked, surveying the tidy ground transportation area.

Larry smiled, “A lot like Dublin, actually.” As if on cue, it started to pour as Larry, Adam, and I got into the waiting car.

You decided the time was right to make a scene and pointed at the turbulent sky. “Oh, is that the way you want to play it? You think you can rain on me any time you like, don’t you? Well go right ahead! People love us more when we’re soaking wet!”

I considered pointing out that this is not always the case, but instead I opened the door wider and pulled your drenched body inside. Your warm, wet hand lingered on my wrist for two seconds longer than it needed to, trampling and pasting its hair to my skin. The moisture soon felt cold, and I watched the hairs as one by one they stood for you.

The car moved into traffic and Adam slumped in his seat, wearily remarking, “Why is it that after several hours in an airplane all people want to do is sit down again?” My eyes returned to your hands. The fact that they were wet made them seem sexual, reminding me of the way they are after a hot shower, pink and malleable like the rest of your body. You wiped them off on your shirt.

Larry patted my knee and looked at me with a caring expression that simply asked, “Okay?” I nodded and Larry smiled a bit, as if to say, “Good.” I silently marveled at how the touch of one person can elicit all sorts of carnal thoughts, while the touch of another person is merely a conduit for basic ideas.

I tipped my head back and looked at the ceiling of the car. It was covered with some kind of really soft-looking grey fabric. I reached up and touched it, downy and fragile, and felt an odd compulsion to poke a hole through it. It wouldn’t be a problem to do that, either. It doesn’t seem like there’s anything particularly solid underneath… I thought to myself arbitrarily.

Adam chuckled. “Having fun, Edge?”

You touched the ceiling and mimicked me, saying, “Ooh, soft,” before informing them that I have a thing for textures.

I ignored you and said, “I can’t explain why, but I really want to stab into this. You know, the way people like to pop bubble wrap?” Larry was amused. “What?”

“Better stay away from Bono’s pants, then, Edge.”

“I’ll have you know those bubbles are virtually indestructible.” I didn’t have to look; you were grinning at me. “And I know all of you secretly wish you had a pair just like them.”
“It’s because they’re so versatile. You can dress them up or down,” said Adam, and the two of you embarked upon an incredibly stupid fashion discussion as Larry and I looked out the windows. I read information on road signs…white letters and numbers on rectangular fields in a shade of green that does not occur in nature. It looked like it would take about ten minutes for us to reach downtown Eugene.

The hotel was nothing special, but I felt bad when I heard the star-struck manager assure Paul that the DoubleTree was the premier hotel in Eugene. His manner was almost apologetic, as if his city’s best was not going to be good enough for us, and I mentally tried to pinpoint the exact date when all of us became show business snobs. A young woman carrying a basket of complimentary cookies made sure all of us took as many as we wanted. When she approached you and Larry, her incredulous mouth seemed on the verge of either laughter or screaming as she gaped at you, then Larry, then you again, as if she were watching the best tennis match of all time. “Don’t mess with this poor girl, Bono…” I thought.

“Tell me, dear, are there any nuts in these cookies?” you smiled.

She paused for a second, attempting to process the question. “Uh…wow. Yeah. Yes. They have walnuts… Uh…”

Larry bit into his cookie. “Affirmative on the walnuts, Bono.”

“Walnuts are an utter abomination,” you declared, taking three.

“Oh no, I’m sorry! We can…we can make you cookies without walnuts!” she stammered.

“Shh, I’m only kidding,” you said amiably. “Thank you very much for the cookies, love.”

“But we can—we want to!” she beamed, waving her manager over and whispering to him. He nodded enthusiastically and she jumped up and down. “I’m totally going to make cookies for you!”

You bounced around with her and exclaimed, “Make sure The Edge gets some!” She stifled a shriek and practically skipped away.

“You can be such an arse sometimes,” Larry muttered, but we all knew you had made that girl’s day and she would associate walnuts with you for the rest of her life.

Paul distributed keys while you sang along with the piped-in music.

You're in my heart, you're in my soul
You'll be my breath should I grow old
You are my lover, you're my best friend
You're in my soul.

Adam pointed to a sign outside the hotel’s bar, announcing that the following evening was Karaoke Nite. “We should force him to do that,” he grinned, and I agreed as you continued to serenade your lover, your best friend.

“I’ll see that no one disturbs you, Edge,” Paul claimed, handing me a couple of plastic cards. “Are you feeling any better?”

You stopped singing and told Paul, “This man needs a sick day. Just look at those sleepy eyes. My god. The number of hoops you ask him to jump through is…well, it’s an absolute goddamn travesty, Paul. Come on, Edge, let’s get you settled.”
“I’m fine, Paul,” I said.

“Don’t believe a word of it! He’s clearly delirious.” You scanned the lobby and escorted me to an elevator.

“Alone at last,” you said once the door had closed. “So. How’s it going, Edge?”

“I love you,” I said. You kissed my shoulder.

We traded one set of keys. “Ahh, we’re neighbors,” you said, looking at the numbers. “In a strange way, I’m looking forward to this.”

“Me too.”

The elevator doors opened to a mauve and hunter green waiting area you decided was “spectacularly nondescript,” and we found our rooms.

You followed me inside mine. I found the light switch, and we looked at each other for a while. “You’re going to kiss me now,” you informed me. I dropped my bags and approached you, cradling your neck in the comfortable curve of my left hand. As we began to kiss I felt you pull that hand away. “Only kissing,” you said, your lips forming a taut little smile, and we were both in New York again, except you were me and I was you. I opened my eyes and saw myself. We kissed some more, and eventually you murmured, “That was good.” You opened the door and turned to leave, saying, “You know where to find me if you need me.”

I turned the lights off, opened the curtains a bit, and looked outside at Eugene. It was still raining, and a misty haze blurred structures in the distance so much I wished I could wipe it away like condensation on a glass. I was able to make out a few buildings I later learned were part of the University of Oregon, along with a small section of the stadium. A river twisted through the city, and small parks and bike paths lined either side of its banks. It seemed like a nice enough place.

The room, which they were calling a suite, was composed of two beds, a small counter with a microwave and refrigerator, a seating arrangement featuring a couch and armchair, two televisions, and a bathroom that would have seemed large in 1981.

Once again I felt cold. Maybe my body was convincing itself it really was ill. I turned up the thermostat and lay down on a bed, the one near the window. Back when we couldn’t afford to have our own rooms, I always slept by the window while you took the bed by the bathroom. Upon arranging the pillows, I noticed the headboard was a separate wooden piece that was attached to the wall and not part of the bed in any way. It was 1981 once again. I took off my clothes and got under the blankets, oddly exhausted. Then I remembered to call Morleigh. She would be getting ready for bed herself. I hadn’t talked with her since Denver.

She was still awake, and she was happy to hear my voice. She updated me on family news and Dublin gossip, pausing every now and then to listen to a few anecdotes from me. I knew she didn’t want to talk about it, but I could tell Morleigh was feeling homesick again. As secure as she is in our tight circle of friends and family, she will always be considered a foreigner, and those thoughts tend to become more distinct whenever I’m gone for an extended period of time. She asked about you, and I left out the things she probably didn’t want to hear. I told her I had seen a deer that morning and it reminded me of her. “I wish I could have seen it, too,” she said, her voice breaking just a bit. “You sound so far away.”

“The connection is fine on this end,” I said.
“That’s not what I mean.”

“I’m sorry…you know I love you, Morleigh.”

We were quiet for a moment. “I was buying groceries today,” she said. “I picked up some cheddar cheese, and the expiration date on the package said July 8. I thought, ‘He’ll be home by then.’ And…I just stood there looking ridiculous, staring at the cheese and trying not to burst into tears.”

“You don’t have to be strong all the time,” I said as she started to cry. I told her I loved her again and again until her breathing returned to normal. We tried to figure out a time when she could join the tour for a few days, but neither of us had calendars handy. I would figure something out. It took us quite some time to say goodbye, and once we did all I wanted to do was fall asleep in the bleachy cotton sheets.

I was in love with two people.

I drifted in and out of consciousness for a couple of hours, the kind of unsatisfying, shallow sleep where every sound is magnified and filters into strange non-dreams. I could hear things you were doing through the wall. How long had it been since that last happened? I heard a toilet flush, a shower, several telephone calls including one to Ali and the girls, you cycling through channels on the television, and a visit from two giddy cookie delivery girls (she must have invited a friend).

Your noises reminded me of the days when the four of us could finally afford to have our own rooms, and how that accomplishment quickly seemed a bit hollow. While it was nice to have some privacy, I missed talking to you before we went to sleep and then hearing the sounds you made at night. In one unfamiliar city after another, you were my home.

One day during the October tour, my neck and right shoulder were sore. I had slept on my side in a strange way on a rock-hard mattress; evidently two pillows folded in half were not enough to keep this from happening. I spent most of the day idly rubbing it. That night we were winding down in our room after a few hours at a bar, and you noticed one of my ineffectual attempts to make myself feel better. “Edge, you’ve been doing that all day. What’s wrong with your shoulder?”

“I slept on it funny…this bed is awful,” I said, sitting on it and pounding the mattress for emphasis.

“Here, let me,” you volunteered, pushing my left arm out of the way.

“No, that’s okay,” I said, suddenly feeling shy about whatever it was you were planning to do.

“Don’t be silly,” you smiled. “I know your back as well as I know my own. Probably better, actually.” You sat behind me on the bed and went to work on my shoulder and neck, your hands rough and clumsy.

“The idea is to make it feel good,” I said.

“And you’re so welcome! Your shirt is the problem.”

“For god’s sake, Bono.”

“Why are you being so modest? I’ve seen your back a million times and have I ever given a fuck? No. Come on.” You have always had the rare ability to be both the irresistible force and the immovable object. I took off my shirt and let you have your way with me because, well, it was easier. And your hands were perfect. I sat quietly and looked at my shoulder, watching your fingertips move in a rhythmic but meandering way, as if they were investigating me, gleaning information. “Am I doing okay?” you asked.
“Yes,” I said.

“You’re a wonderful audience, Edge.”

“What do you mean?”

“A little sound every now and then might help me figure out where to go next.”

“You’re in the right place.” You stopped and cleared your throat. “I mean: mmm, that feels great, B.”

“Now was that so hard?”

“No.”

Your hands continued to entrance me, and I realized I missed being touched like this. Your fingers gradually eased their pressure until they were essentially caressing me, and in spite of myself I rolled my head back until I was looking at the ceiling. Both of us inhaled at the same time, and your hands returned to the serious task of making my shoulder feel better. “You always face me when you sleep, did you know that?” you asked.

“Really?”

“Every time I wake up in the middle of the night, I’ll look over at you and see your face.” I imagined two blue eyes glowing in the dark like those of some nocturnal creature.

“I had no idea I did that.”

“I like it, though. It makes me feel safe, as if someone is watching over me. Like an angel.” You considered your words for a second and gave my shoulder a kiss before leaving the bed. Taking an extra pillow off your bed, you handed it to me, saying, “One day we’ll be able to drag our own beds everywhere we play, Edge.” We fell asleep facing each other...

A telephone rang in a hotel room in Eugene, Oregon. “Hello?”

“It was busy before,” you said a bit impatiently.

“I was talking to Morleigh.”

“What are you doing now?”

“Trying to sleep…and I’m thinking about you.” I looked at the shoulder you kissed in the days when you didn’t give a fuck about seeing my back.

“No one has bothered you, then?”

“Just you,” I said, yawning.

“Good. You need your rest.”

I heard several glassy noises. “What are you doing?” I asked.

“I’m just having a little drink. These cookies are gorgeous. So what were you thinking about?”

I rolled onto my side. “Do you remember rubbing my back about sixteen years ago?”

You whistled. “Uh...drawing a blank here...”
“You said I was an angel and you kissed my shoulder.”

“I did that? How sexy of me,” you said with a pleased chuckle. “Although the scenario sounds shockingly unoriginal.”

“Too bad you don’t remember it.”

“I must have been pretty drunk. But I love that you remembered it.”

I did too. “Are you in bed?”

“As a matter of fact I am.” You paused, and I could hear the shifting of blankets. “Isn’t this fun?”

“Yeah.”

“And your voice…it’s like you’re right here in bed with me,” you sighed.

“I hope no one’s spying on us.”

“Of course they’re not, Larry.”

“Right, Adam.”

“So, Lar,” you murmured. “I want to ask you some questions. Is your room nice and dark?”

“As dark as possible.”

“Perfect. Have you thought about…it?”

“On the plane. I might be getting used to the idea of…it.”

You paused. “You’re making me very happy. Did you like how I took care of you today?”

“Yes.”

“Did you like it when I said ‘only kissing’?”

“Yes.”

“I noticed. And how about when I called you baby this morning?”

I smiled. “Physical response.”

“Hmm.” You pondered what to say next. “Let’s try something. Are you naked?”

“Yes.”

I could hear you take a drink and swallow. “I want you to get out of your bed and sit in that armchair. You have one too, don’t you?”

“I’m pretty sure all of these rooms are identical.”

“Of course. You’re going to sit in that chair and wait for me.” I was quiet as you inhaled and exhaled, giving your words time to sink in. You lowered your voice to a whisper. “And you’re going to do it…because I said so.” I closed my eyes and we both listened to each other breathe. Heavily. I sat up in bed and touched the wall that separated us as you said, “Goodbye, Larry.”
My eyes watched with great interest as my body did what it was told. Once I was sitting in the chair, my heart delivered a warm, blushing sensation up to my face, surrounding my brain and pulling it under. I felt an increasing awareness of my own body, colored deep blue in the darkness and cut by a silvery ribbon of light that snuck between the curtains. I watched the door.

*I want to please you,* I thought. *I want to know what you’ve felt all this time. I still want to fuck you.* *But I want you to fuck me. I really think I do now.* “Fuck me,” I whispered to the empty room, just to hear what it sounded like as I anticipated your arrival. I knew you wouldn’t have the patience to make me wait much longer.

I heard your door open and close. Soon shadows from your feet blocked the warm glow that filtered beneath my door. Then there you were, outlined in gold.

You locked the door and approached me. Standing a few inches away from me, you moved your hands lazily over my neck, shoulders, and face as I stared straight ahead. I was silent at first, but after a while I didn’t have to try; I became a wonderful audience for you. You cupped my chin in your right hand and lifted it until I was looking into your magnetic eyes. “I want you to think of this as a learning experience, Edge,” you said. “You were always such a good student. You like to learn new things, and you like to earn rewards. And I have something you want.” One of your fingers found its way into my mouth. “When you’re good, baby, I’ll let you touch it.”

I kissed your hand.
A few weeks ago new commenter P.J. said Bono reminded her of a cat. I immediately wanted to tell her I've thought so for at least 14 years and have written proof, but I didn't do it because *spoiler alert* it's an incredibly unimportant part of this chapter. ;)

You moved even closer as I kissed the hills and valleys of four knuckles, and when I looked up again you were straddling my legs, watching me. “Say something, Edge,” you murmured, taking my hands in yours. A metal room service cart rumbled past our door with a clatter of silverware and dishes. Two women chatted merrily in Spanish. Wincing, you asked, “Want me to tell them to be quiet out there?”

“No, that’s all right…although it is like…”

“Hold that thought. Uhh…” You turned slightly and shouted in the general direction of the door, “¿Favor de es silencioso?” Several muffled, panicky apologies answered your question and the cart
rolled away. You returned your attention to me, an appeased expression on your face. “What is it like, baby?” That word…

“This—what’s happening between us right now—feels almost like a ceremony, something sacred, even.” You leaned down and kissed me, moaning just a little. “If nothing else, it’s the start of something new,” I whispered as you pulled away slowly.

“It’s all of those,” you said, placing one of my hands on the back of your neck and kissing me again. A current of desire snapped between our bodies. “Oh, the things I want to do to you.” I made a few inarticulate sounds as my body, heart, and mind unanimously agreed that they wanted you to do those things, whatever they were. You sighed. “We’ll have to wait until later tonight.”

“Does Paul want to go over the schedule?”

“Yes. He told me you don’t have to be there.” The implication was that you wanted me to be there, of course.

“I’ll be there.”

You grinned and nibbled on my earring. “We could make this fun, Edge.” I tipped my head back and allowed my fingers to move slowly over your neck. “You’re still in love with that line, aren’t you?” I nodded. “Tonight at the meeting, you will do two things for me.” Your eyes flickered with the joy of improvisation. “Physical contact for no less than…seven seconds, in plain sight, and I don’t care how you do it. And eye contact, uninterrupted, for—I know that will be more difficult for you—six seconds. One…two…three…four…five…six. Think you can do that for me?”

“Yes.”

Your fingers progressed down my body. “I’m looking forward to this meeting already. Mmm, so are you, evidently.” You eyed a nearby digital clock. “Better put your clothes on, Edge. We’re supposed to meet Paul in fifteen minutes. No, make that fourteen.” I stood with you, and before you left you embraced my naked body, whispering, “Dear god, I love this.” It was almost a prayer.

You closed the door behind you as I flipped a light switch. The room became ordinary again.

I got dressed and waited with you near the elevators, where we talked about things like where the meeting was and whether food would be available. You had changed into a new white t-shirt, and your body was in the process of ironing out its wrinkles. I imagined the scent of new cotton warmed by your chest as I relieved your right sleeve of a small sticker that read, Inspected by 40. I turned and studied the hotel’s fire escape route, noticing your amused reflection in its brass frame.

The meeting room was actually more suitable for a large wedding reception. Two dozen people looked out of place in the lavender, semi-futuristic room that was cut into rectangular sections by three sets of oppressive beams and columns. You headed straight for the buffet, which was near a bank of vertical blinds…periwinkle. They undulated, accordion-style, in the gentle air conditioning. Paul approached us, saying, “Edge, you don’t have to be here.”

“I tried to tell him that, Paul,” you claimed, taking a little bit of everything from the buffet, “but he wouldn’t take no for an answer.”

Paul laughed. “Well, this shouldn’t take too long, alright?” I saw Larry sitting by himself, already eating and looking at a light fixture overhead. It resembled the illuminated shell of a gargantuan sea turtle and didn’t fit the rest of the room at all. I caught his eye and we exchanged what the hell is that? looks.
“Fucking monstrous,” Adam said from nearby, also gazing at the ceiling. I grinned. “You look like a
new man, Edge. Did you think about that thing?”

“Yeah.”

“Any conclusions?” he asked as you entered our conversation, standing on your toes behind Adam
and resting your chin on his shoulder.

“Hmm,” I said, addressing my two-headed friend. “Yes. I think it’s alright to hand somebody else the
keys every now and then.”

“I’m an excellent driver,” you mumbled as Adam shook his head. I put a few things on my plate and
we sat down together at Larry’s table. Apparently I had selected a square piece of salmon. It was
good, but eating salmon always gets old quickly.

I decided to fake a coughing fit. “Whoa, Edge, you okay?” you asked, mildly concerned. I grabbed
your shoulder, ostensibly for support, as several coughs became several laughs. I glanced at Adam
and Larry, who were fencing with butter knives.

“Seven,” I whispered to you. You rolled your eyes and patted my knee.

Paul got everyone’s attention and told us about the situation at Autzen Stadium. Some of our
equipment was too large to enter the stadium through their fifteen-foot tunnel. A section of fifty seats
would have to be removed in order to expand the tunnel. The four of us exchanged looks. You
smirked and your eyes twinkled—you were enjoying a dirty thought. “You’re the big news around
here,” Paul said. “And we certainly want that, but please know you will probably be recognized, so
take the necessary precautions.”

In addition to the sea turtle light, a number of icy spotlights dotted the ceiling, casting unflattering
shadows on everyone’s faces. They highlighted four white hairs near your forehead. They were
oddly beautiful and seemed to glow, kind of like fiber optic—

“Edge, is that okay with you?”

“Yeah, sure Paul.”

“Good. So tomorrow Bono is doing interviews to promote future concerts in Chicago and
Washington, D.C., and Edge will be our spokesperson here.” That’ll teach me, I thought as I glared
at four white hairs. “Larry and Adam, you really ought to be there with Edge tomorrow.”

“Aww, do we have to?” you whined on behalf of the rhythm section.

“It wouldn’t hurt you to put in a cameo yourself, Bono,” Paul said before moving on to details that
didn’t involve the four of us very much. You unwrapped a moist towelette, wiped your hands off,
and absentely allowed your fingers to intertwine and caress themselves, each one becoming a body in
an orgy. Still fidgety, you took a piece of paper and folded it into progressively smaller triangles.
You unfolded it; you folded it again. We established eye contact and your fingernails tapped on the
table. One, two, three, four, five…and you looked away with a smile.

The meeting ended and drinks were ordered. We signed a few items for some elated food service
workers and circulated among assorted staff and crew members. After a while, we returned to our
gang of four.

“Edge, you said you talked with Morleigh today,” you said, gesturing with a shot glass. Adam and
Larry looked at me.
“How is she?” Larry asked.

I exhaled and said, “Well, the truth is she’s having a tough time adjusting.”

You touched my arm. “What did she say?”

“She’s homesick and she misses me. You know how it is—it’s the stupid, mundane things that rip a person to shreds.” I paused and said, “I hate it when she cries and there’s nothing I can do about it.” An all-purpose gloom settled over us and I looked at the white tablecloth. “Fuck, I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to depress everyone,” I said to variety of “no big deal” gestures.

Larry said, “It’s hard for each of us.”

“And she is pregnant, after all,” Adam said quietly, and we nodded.

I looked at you. “It ended okay and I told her I’d figure out some time when she could join us.”

You raised an eyebrow. “Then Ali should come too. And Ann.” You paused, and then your face became animated. “I phoned Ali this afternoon,” you smiled, in an attempt to change our table’s mood. “Jordan wrote a story about you, Adam. She illustrated it, too.” You looked at his face as if had become the funniest thing in the world. “It was about a dog named Adam, and Adam lived in a pet store, waiting and waiting for the right girl to come and take him home.” You laughed. “Ali emailed one of the drawings—you were this little tan dog with glasses and a frowny kind of smile, and these two lines here…” you touched the creases on either side of Adam’s mouth as he regarded you with amusement. You rummaged through a few pockets and located a creased picture. “See, doesn’t it look exactly like him?” you asked. All of us huddled over it, applauding and laughing at the dog with Adam’s face.

“Was I in the story?” Larry grinned, sipping a beer.


We were stumped. I finished my drink and said, “I don’t think you’re any kind of dog at all.”

“Oh?”

“You’re a cat.” You nodded slowly and presented your chin to me, which I scratched as you pretended to write.

“Correct as always, Edge,” you concluded. Larry yawned and tapped three drumbeats on the table, staring at the exit. Adam nodded and they said goodnight to us. You fished around for your lighter and a cigarette. I looked away. “Something wrong?” you asked.

“You know I wish you’d stop,” I remarked, looking into your eyes.

“Oh Edge…” you trailed off, lighting up anyway.

“I know you think you should be allowed a few vices.” I continued to watch you. “But Bono, what if I had a vice that gradually, almost subliminally damaged my ability to play the guitar? How would you feel every time you saw me doing it?” Your features softened. “Maybe you should think about that, love,” I quietly concluded. Maintaining eye contact, you put your cigarette out. “I think that was almost twelve seconds,” I said.
You nodded and stood, saying, “Come with me, Edge.”

Two elevators arrived at the same time for us. “Race ya,” you proposed.

“Sure.”

“What floor are we on, anyway?”

“Eight.”

My elevator stopped at a floor where no one was waiting, so you won. When I got to the eighth floor, I could see your door was open, and you ambushed me with possessive kisses as soon as I stepped inside. You kicked it closed. I fell to my knees in front of you and kissed your upper thighs through the thin fabric of your pants. “Such a good boy tonight,” you said. I heard the knifelike sound of metal on metal as you unbuckled your belt. Then you stopped and buckled it again. I looked up at you.

You ran your fingers through my hair and smiled. “I’m going to catch up on some reading now, Edge. Good night.” I groaned and shook my head. “I know; I’m such a fucking tease, aren’t I? I apologize, baby. But really, I’m the one who’s the big loser tonight.” You parted my lips with your thumb. “That divine mouth of yours…yes. No. Sorry. Reading. I should read. Now give me a kiss, love.” I stood, shrugged, and kissed your cheek, figuring I’d be seeing you again before the night was over.

I went back to my room and took a shower. I tried my best to sort out the day’s events. If nothing else, letting you control our erotic life was going to be easier for me than when I was in charge. Coming up with new amusements for you was a challenge sometimes, and it would be interesting to see what kinds of ideas you might have for us.

And—my god—there was something undeniably sexy about the way you were treating me. I was having trouble comprehending it, but several times during the day a flash of recognition had hit me, an overwhelming feeling of curiosity, of yes, of do whatever you want to me—and I still can’t put it into words or fully understand the reason why. But as I stood there in that warm, white shower stall, I wanted to know more, and I wanted to explore it with you.

Languid and comfortable, I got in bed and turned on the local news. By all accounts area high school baseball action was really heating up. During the few seconds of dead air between the news and commercials, I distinctly heard a moan penetrating the wall. Smiling, I turned the television off and listened to you. I think you may have noticed the sudden silence in my room, and you continued your feverish sounds, obviously for my benefit. The sounds were unquestionably authentic and designed to make me use my imagination, so that’s what I did. I saw a new white t-shirt on top of a heap of clothes, several pillows shoved aside, an adoring sheet clinging to your legs and chest like the fingers of countless fans, and your hands…

You had given me one of your keys—did you want me to go over there? Those thoughts crossed my mind, and I was amazed at how quickly I had adapted to this new arrangement. A week ago I would have simply opened your door and walked in. Now I felt as though I needed your permission or an invitation, and I realized that even though we were in different rooms, I was under your control. You stopped. The phone rang.

“Edge,” you said in a breathless whisper, “come to my room.”

“Bono…”
“Now, Edge. I want to…” You hung up. I had my invitation, or rather, my summons. I got up and tossed on the same clothes I wore earlier. Taking off and putting on clothes seemed to be my day’s main activity.

I entered your room and locked the door. You were in bed, on your back, and naked, just the way had I pictured you. A rose-colored lamp was on, and you had stripped all the blankets off the other bed. “I wanna look at you, Edge,” you said. I stepped forward and leaned over to kiss you. “No. You’re going to be naked and on that bed.” I took my clothes off again and smiled at you; you seemed to be paying rapt attention while remaining in your own silky fantasy world. I stretched out on the bed, lying on my side so I could study you. “Not like that, baby,” you said with a sigh. “On… on your stomach…that’s right…yes, that’s good.” I became jealous of your hands as I watched you admire me. Your attention alternated between my face and my body. “Edge,” you said, breathing heavily, “Part your legs—more—yes…” All of your muscles tensed, your skin shimmered, and your eyes closed, but soon your focus returned to me.

The unexpected power I felt as I lay there, the object of your desire, was intoxicating. “Bono,” I whispered, running a hand over my ribcage and down. You watched, spellbound, as I gradually clasped my hands behind my back, and you cried out my name when I raised my pelvis only slightly. You pushed a pillow off your bed, nearly toppling a glistening cup of ice water from the nightstand, and again I heard your interpretation of a simple nickname composed of two consonants and the same vowel, twice.

Your left index finger beckoned me over to your bed, where you were catching your breath. I kissed cool, dry lips that drowsily formed the words, “Enjoy your reward, love.” My mouth moved to the artful spiral of your ear and a simple but enthralling line.

You took me in your hand, inhaled deeply, and began to speak.

“I have a distinct advantage, don’t I, baby?” you asked. I nodded and kissed your damp, vaguely salty hair. “I’m the personification of your fetish—so I know exactly what gets you off. I kind of wish I had one, too.” I was mute and blissful. “I’ve been thinking about it for quite some time: how am I going to, you know, initiate you? You were so creative with me.” You chuckled. “Heaven knows I’ve got to be just as inventive as you were.”

I murmured your name. “Does that feel nice, baby? Baby. So hard for your man, aren’t you? Yes.” Your lips moved across my collarbone. “And I don’t think I’d be able to humiliate you—you look too sexy on that pedestal of yours, Edge. Still, I’m reserving the right to tie you up. That’s just psychologically delicious, and it can mean as much or as little as you want.” You grabbed my wrists tightly with your free hand and I felt my face burn.

“Today on the plane I made a mental inventory of the things you do that I love the most. Do you know what they are?” I shook my head and you smiled instructively. “Demonstrative acts, Edge, acknowledgements that I’m turning you on. It can be as simple as you looking at me when I sing to you, or when you touch me in public in even the slightest way. Any time you let your armor fall to the floor and you show me things no one else can see…that’s what I want, okay?” Dazed, I nodded; your hands knew exactly what to do, and your mouth knew exactly what to say. “When you give me what I want, love, I’ll give you what you want.” You bowed your head and I kissed the back of your neck. I was so close… “I’ll make sure you learn to associate your fetish with the things that turn me on. And you know what else turns me on, Edge? The very idea of fucking you. The very idea…”

“You’re staying with me,” you murmured before falling asleep, and I spent the night in your bed.
The next morning when I opened my eyes, you were watching me intently. “How long have you been staring at me like that?” I asked with a yawn.

“Oh, only about twenty years,” you smiled.

Each of us had interviews that day, and you seemed particularly unenthusiastic about yours as we got dressed. “Two phone interviews, one this morning and another this afternoon,” you complained. “I have to try so much harder to get my point across over the phone. They can’t see my expressions, my gestures…”

“Your shameless flirting…”

“It’s called ‘charm,’ Edge. Where the hell is my…?” You looked under the bed for your right shoe, which you retrieved with a victorious smile. “And then I’ll have to answer the same questions I always get. ‘Why the lemon?’ and ‘Why the arch?’ I swear, one of these days I’m going to scream, ‘Because we can! Because we fucking want to!’ and hang up.”

“You’ve always been a man of few words.”

“Are you making fun of me, smart guy?” you snarled playfully, pushing me to my knees before you.

I kissed your left upper thigh, which was tightly encased in black leather. “I’m afraid so.”

“What am I going to do with you?” you sighed. “You’re not wearing that shirt again, are you?”

“All my clothes are in my room.”

You took a fistful of the back of my shirt and began pulling it over my head. “Let me rephrase that: You’re not wearing that shirt again.” I chuckled. “That black, sort of transparent one, Edge. Transparent? Translucent. Give the locals a little thrill, alright?”

I climbed my way up your body and kissed your neck. “Alright.”

“I’m loving this new eagerness to please me,” you said drolly as I walked over to the door, checking through the spyhole. “Good idea, way to make sure the coast is clear, Edge. That chest is mine and I’m not sharing it.” I looked over my shoulder and you shot me a look that said, “Well, except for Morleigh of course.” I smiled and shook my head as I left.

Back in my room I found the shirt. I was putting an unimpeachable denim jacket over it when I heard you pound on our connecting wall. “Edge!” you yelled.

“It’s called a phone, Bono!” I yelled back.

“This is easier! Meet me here for lunch!”

“Okay!”

Instantly, heavier pounding came through the opposite wall. “Edge, will you please shut the fuck up?!”

“Sorry, Larry!”

I could hear your laughter as I pulled on my boots.

The morning passed quickly. Adam, Larry, and I were driven to the stadium for the local TV news interview. The reporter, whose knowledge of us was clearly limited to whatever information she had
found in our press kit, chose to interview us from inside the stadium while our crew assembled the stage in hazy sunlight. I’m sure it made for an interesting shot, but the sounds of construction interrupted us, and we had to start over a couple of times.

I called you from the car and we arranged to meet at the hotel’s mostly-empty restaurant. I spotted the top of your black cap behind a mountain range of unfolded newspapers and pulled down your current one, startling you. “Hey, there you are,” you said. “I already ordered for us.”

“Thanks.”

“You’re not even going to ask what I got for you?”

“I trust you. You know what I like.”

You made room for me in your corner booth and straightened your pile of newspapers. “We’ve finally made the front page of the Eugene Register Guard,” you said, pointing at the now-obligatory, horrible color reproduction of our stage alongside a photo of you with your American flag umbrella. “How was your morning?”

I took off my jacket. “Oh, the usual. The reporter—I think her name was Julie—regarded us as beings from another planet.”

“It’s the accent.”

“Yeah. When it was over I mentioned to Larry and Adam that I was meeting you here for lunch.”

“Larry already knew that.”

I nodded. “This Julie person seemed to find it highly entertaining that—I don’t know, that we eat actual people food.”

“We will if it ever gets here.”

I tried my best to imitate an American woman in her forties. “‘You’re meeting…Bono?…for lunch at the hotel?’”

“Did she pronounce it correctly?”

“Close enough. I guess she thought we lived in some alternate universe for celebrities, or maybe pods.”

“I assume you did most of the talking…”

“Let’s see. Adam tossed in a couple of casual asides, and Larry answered one question.”

“No kidding?”

“She asked us if we had ever played in Eugene before. Larry said, and this is a direct quote, ‘No.’ Then he sat back with this my work here is done expression for the rest of the interview.”

Our food arrived courtesy of a shuffling older gentleman—hamburgers and French fries, standard diner food. You beamed at him and said thank you. “Eat your lunch, Edge, it’s bad for you,” you said, saturating everything with ketchup. We bit into our hamburgers at the same time and confirmed that they were orgasmically delicious. “I fucking love food,” you informed me. We ate for a while in silence, punctuated by a few gratuitous moans as you devoured your new love. “So,” you said, looking down at the carnage on your plate, “Did you say anything about me? Because I talked about
“You. A lot!” I nodded. “I like those sunglasses, by the way.” They were mirrored aviators.

“Bono, you just like to look at yourself while I’m talking to you,” I teased. Seemingly cut to the bone by this remark, you removed the sunglasses, placed them on my cowboy hat, and rubbed the pink mark where they had set on my nose. “I’m kidding. I like them too. They help me mask my naked lust whenever I talk about you.”

You nodded, pleased. “You know, I started wearing sunglasses to interviews a lot more after we… yeah. So tell me, answer my question,” you said, settling in for a story. A story that was going to require a certain amount of embellishment.

“Well, our friend Julie asked me to comment on what seems to be an increasingly obvious homoerotic dynamic between the two of us onstage…” You threw a French fry at me and I ate it. “…And whether this dynamic was intentionally choreographed or something that just kind of happens whenever the two of us are feeling particularly affectionate.”

“Uh-huh. Sure.”

“I said we do a little of both. Sometimes I’ll stay in your room all night if necessary so we can perfect our interactions.” You grinned naughtily. “But at the same time I know you like the element of surprise.” This received the middle finger it deserved. “No. She wanted to know if you had any hobbies.”


“Well, yes. Because life on tour is so monotonous—I mean, what do we do to pass the time between concerts? It’s a good question, actually.” You nodded. “I told her you are a voracious reader and you like to play chess.”

“I’ll play you,” you chuckled. “Thanks for making me sound like a complete wanker. Reading and chess? I thought this was going to be the tour where we presented ourselves as being halfway cool. Did you tell her about your mysterious art projects or your fetish for short hair?” I hurled my parsley garnish at you while you rolled with this idea. “Do you have any idea how satisfying it is for me to make you blush? You’re a grown man, Edge, and look at you, you’re blushing, love.” I looked at you with a pained expression. “Okay, I’m sorry. One more question, though. I’ve been meaning to ask you this,” you said, leaning in. You lowered your voice to a whisper. “Is it everybody? Women too? Or just men? Because look at that guy—his is really short. Does that turn you on?”

“No.”

“Look at me, love.”

“It only applies to you, Bono.”

I had naively assumed you had understood this fact, but as I watched your eyes gleam and your mouth transform into an ardent leer, I knew I had just recited a sentence that was destined to replay in your head for a long time. You were staring at me, but I couldn’t make myself look back. You glanced from side to side to see if anyone was watching us. A couple of people were reading menus several tables away, but that was it. A late lunch has its advantages. You took the sunglasses from my hat and put them back on me so I could look at you more easily. Then you removed your hat and ran your fingers slowly over your hair. “Just me?”

“You.”

“Not even yourself? Yours is short now.”
“If only it were that easy.”

“I’m easy for you, Edge.” We studied each other wordlessly, breathing, wishing the entire world would dissolve. Just for five minutes...that’s all we would require. You took my wrist and checked my watch. “Goddamn interview,” you mumbled. “To be continued, Edge.” I got up to follow you to the lobby, but you motioned for me to sit, saying, “Stay there—I ordered some cake for you.” I laughed as you waved and walked away.

I had planned to spend the afternoon practicing, but on the way to the elevators I ran into Helene. She was holding several burdensome shopping bags.

“I’ll carry those for you, Helene.”

“Ahh, thank you,” she said distractedly. “Edge!”

“Helene!”

“Shirt is awful.”

I pretended to be outraged, and then I gave her an affectionate look. “That’s a magnificent scarf.”

“Is gift from son. Is also awful, but I wear it,” she shrugged.

“The things we do for the people we love. What floor?”

“Two.” She stood on her toes and inspected what she could see of my hair. “You need trim. Today,” she frowned.

“You’re the boss.”

The door opened and she took her bags from me. “Two-zero-three. Today.” Looking up at my hat, she added, “Cowboy.”

I tipped it at her, drawling, “Ma’am,” as she chuckled and scurried away.

A small arrangement of daffodils was waiting for me on my desk with a note from my daughters. I figured Hollie might still be awake, so I called. She and Aislinn picked up the phone at the same time. “I’ve got it!” Hollie announced brightly.

“This is a school night,” her mother said. “Five minutes, okay?”

“Sorry,” I began, but her extension clicked off.

“Don’t worry about it, Dad. Did you get the daffodils? That was my idea.”

“Yes, and they’re beautiful, thank you. How is school?” She launched into a rambling, one sentence monologue, the likes of which only a twelve year-old could produce, ending with her frustration over a drawing she was struggling to complete. “It’s like I can’t even draw anymore,” she said, tactfully omitting the logical “I wish you were here to help me” conclusion.

“Your hands can’t do what your eyes want them to, right?”

“Everything I draw looks like cartoons,” she said forlornly.

“I think that happens to a lot of kids your age, but it’ll pass, I promise. Don’t get so discouraged that you stop drawing, sweetheart.”
“What should I draw then?”

“You should draw what you know, Hollie. You should draw what you love.”

“I should draw you!"

“I do look kind of like a cartoon these days,” I said, and she shrieked with inspiration.

“Yes! I’m going to draw you now!”

Aislinn’s extension clicked on. “Say goodnight, you two. Goodnight Edge.”

“Aww!” came my little girl’s protest.

“Goodnight ladies.”

“Goodnight Daddy!”

I listened to the dial tone and watched my mental images of them slowly fade. I decided I really needed to play a guitar, any guitar. I opened the curtains and played the river, the modest skyline, my daughter’s frustration, flying birds, yellow flowers, your upper lip…just messing around. Eventually I found a pattern I could get lost in, and I stayed there for god knows how long.

I finally snapped out of it. I took one of the daffodils and went down to Helene’s room. She stood in the doorway and tapped her foot theatrically, hands on her hips. I appeased her with the flower, which she appreciated and put in a glass of water. She sat me down in the bathroom, and as she worked on my hair we formed that rare, comfortable alliance between two people who, if given the choice, will always prefer silence to small talk. When she was finished she touched my sharp cheekbone dotingly. “Both very handsome,” she said, and I assumed that by “both” she meant the two of us. I batted my eyelashes and kissed her cheek.

“Thank you, Helene.”

“Shirt is still awful. I am sorry.”

“That’s alright. I’m not wild about it either.”

“Okay cowboy.”

Back on our floor, I tapped on your door to see if you were inside. You recognized the knock and yelled, “Get in here, the Edge—I’ve been waiting forever!” For future reference, forever is somewhere in the neighborhood of fifteen minutes.

“Lousy interview?” I asked.

You flopped on the bed and gaped at the ceiling, exasperated. “How long have we been on tour, Edge?”

“A couple of weeks.”

“How much longer is this tour supposed to last?”

“Another year, Bono.”

You slammed the back of your head against the pillow a few times. “Is it too much to ask for a little originality from these interviewers?” I took off my hat and joined you on the bed. “I found myself
wishing for questions about my hobbies.”

“And this one was with…”

“The Washington Post. I think I came off as a bit arrogant. Defensive, or something. I’m so tired of justifying what we do.”

“I hate to break it to you, but when you jump out of a giant disco lemon several times a week, people are bound to ask questions.”

“I know, I know, but must I always be expected to spell out why we do it? Why can’t Americans accept the fact that absurdity is supposed to be absurd and leave it at that? Christ, it’s not like I’ve become Ziggy Stardust. It’s not like I have a lightning bolt or some giant circle on my forehead.” I kissed your misunderstood forehead. “More like a target on my forehead, that’s what.”

“I’m sure you were charming, love.”

Your gestures increased as your rant continued. “Oh, and do you want to know what else? I snuck out to buy a magazine from that big place across the street.”

“Not wise, Bono.”

“Not the point, Edge. They sell music there too. So I was looking at the magazines, and somebody had left our CD with them. Propped up next to Newsweek! Do you realize what this means?”

“Tell me what it means,” I said softly. What lovely ears you have…

“It means—and I wish you’d get a little more fired up about this, Edge—it means somebody picked up our CD as if to buy it, and then while they were at the magazine rack they changed their mind and decided not to buy it! I stood there glaring at my smug little orange face and then I left.”

“It’s just one CD, Bono.”

“No. It’s a symbol. We’re not in the top ten anymore. We’re not even close.” You looked at me sadly and then returned your attention to the ceiling. I didn’t know what to say to make it better. I took your hand, caressing it with my own until I felt some of your tension slip away.

After a suitable amount of time had passed, a little while but by no means forever, I rolled onto my side and looked at the profile that belongs on a coin. Actually, you probably will be on a coin within the next hundred years. A copper one would be lovely…I smiled. “Helene thinks you’re very handsome,” I told you.

You exhaled with a tiny laugh, struggled to regain your serious expression, and failed. “Oh really?” you asked.

“Well, it was more about us. ‘Both very handsome’ was how she put it.”

You laughed. “So she sees us as a sort of couple, you think?”

“Probably.”

“That’s adorable.” You turned. “Well, look at you, Edge! Very nice.” A sturdy index finger drew a line around my ear.

“You’re turned on beyond belief, aren’t you?”
You made a few mute choking sounds and twitched. “You…have…no…idea…”

I shook my head. “You were pretty sexy at lunch.”

Your eyes lit up in protest. “Uh, no, you were the sexy one. ‘It only applies to you, Bono.’ I wanted to rip all your clothes off.”

“I would have let you.”

“You know when you were telling that woman about my hobbies? You forgot to mention my favorite one—seducing my guitarist.”

“I don’t think seducing me is going to be a big problem for you.”

“True, but this part, this working up to it part, I love it. I love thinking about it.” Several buttons were unfastened and you kissed my upper chest. “God, this has been driving me crazy all day.”

“Permission to speak freely?”

“Yes.”

“You’re doing everything exactly right.” You kissed my ribcage through the filmy fabric. “The last time you were like this with me was…do you remember?”

“Refresh my memory, Edge.”

“Way back at that exhibition of Anton’s photos.”

“Yeah.”

“You were in control then, and you’re in control now. I love it.”

You crawled up so we were facing each other. Clearly you had been thinking about it. “That’s good, because I’m going to tell you to do something, baby.” You rolled me onto my back and crouched over me, pinning my docile hands. “Okay.” You paused and enjoyed the position I was in. Clearing your throat, you said, “Edge, you’re going to get that bag Helene gave you, bring it back here, and…go over that line you love, that’s all you have to do. It probably won’t take you more than a minute. Yes. That’s what you’re going to do for me, love.” I moaned and you nodded, unquestionably the most powerful man in the world.

And somehow, I did it.

Those sixty seconds passed in a sparkling blur, and I’m still unable to process most of it. Your skin was luminous…something took over…adrenaline and…a line…a vibration that went up my arm and through me…your naked body the sun…too many mirrors, too much light…that sound…somehow, I did it.

You took that little machine I can’t bring myself to think about and turned it off while I stood there unable to breathe. You kissed my mouth as if to resuscitate me. You undressed me. You led me into the shower with you. You praised me as I stood there. My hands trembled in the white steam.

“Oh baby, so good, you did exactly what I told you…I’m so proud of my Edge, come on Edge, come back to me, that’s right…” I started to kiss you back and you grinned. “Say something, love.”

I leaned into the stream of water as if it were a lover, as if it were another version of you holding me up. I finally asked, “What do you want for your birthday?”
Caught off guard, you laughed, wet and beautiful. “Why, I want what every boy wants, Edge: toys, and somebody to play with.” I nodded. “Wet black lace,” you sighed abstractly as your right hand traveled up my chest en route to my mouth. “Close your eyes.”

“Yes.”

Four fingers were on my lips while your thumb stroked my jaw. “Take whichever one you like,” you told me. I kissed all of them before settling on your index finger. “Good. Now take it in your mouth, mmm, suck my finger, yes.” Gradually you made your finger rigid, both of us moaning softly. We made eye contact as you slid it in and out, saying, “That’s right, go down on it, baby, let me help you.” Soon our lips met around your erect finger, kissing it while kissing each other. Once again I lost track of what was happening when you whispered, “I think you know what it needs to do to you now, love.”
When I researched this chapter long ago, I was delighted to learn that this was the first concert where they did The Very Important Thing, and that's probably why I devoted these three chapters to an otherwise ordinary-seeming concert date in Eugene, Oregon.

And here is a good example of someone singing "Love Me" by Elvis. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dZHFhMxf-8

Thanks for sticking around! I'm going to run out of previously-released chapters soon, at which point my breakneck pace of posting will slow down considerably. Odd how it's so much faster and easier to post an already-written chapter than it is to write something entirely new.
Wrapped in a towel, you drew lazy arabesques in the condensation on our large window that overlooked the city. It was raining, and the gray, late afternoon light made your face and chest appear ashen, while your back remained warm and rosy, still damp.

I was sprawled across one of the beds, victim of a too-hot shower with you that had left me lightheaded. You joined me and removed your towel, revealing an expanse of skin so pink it looked spanked. “Feeling better?” you asked.

I turned my pillow over and buried my face in cool cotton, sighing comfortably. “Yes, B,” I mumbled. My muscles were heavy and limp.
You traced my spine with a finger, probably The Finger, and nuzzled my left shoulder blade. “You liked it, though, didn’t you? I didn’t hurt—it felt good, right?”

“Bono, I loved what you did to me,” I told your concerned face.

“I want you to love it,” you said, touching your new hairline. “So pleased with you, baby.” You lay down beside me and presented the back of your neck. “Mmm, Edge,” you murmured happily, curling your body against mine. Together we watched the rain in drowsy silence. I kissed your soft, damp hair, and eventually we both fell asleep.

“What channel is it on?” I heard you whisper in my dream. I opened my eyes, and you were brandishing the remote. Dan Rather, Peter Jennings, and Tom Brokaw were in the process of tying ribbons around their respective newscasts and inviting us to watch other news-related programming later that night.

It took a few moments for me to comprehend your question. “Oh. I think it was ABC.”

“That guy?”

“No. Blue tie.”

“Okay. Got it.” We watched a few advertisements for cat food, an area auto dealership, and an attorney who promised to fight for us if we were in an accident. Synthesized trumpet fanfare and typical floating graphics indicated it was time for the local news. You sat up eagerly and listened as Mike and Julie introduced themselves. “That’s the Julie?” you asked.

“That’s her.”

Mike started off with a report concerning ongoing interstate construction. Meanwhile, you ranted humorously about us not being the top story and how this was indicative of America’s disturbing inability to appreciate us. You perked up when Mike said, “And speaking of construction, there are some strange goings-on at Autzen Stadium, aren’t there, Julie?”

Julie turned to us with a dazzling smile. “There sure are, Mike. International rock superstars U2 will be performing at Autzen Stadium tomorrow night, and I was there this morning to talk with the band about their upcoming performance…and some interesting props.” Cut to Julie standing in front of the arch, the olive, the lemon, the screens, the hideously expanded tunnel, and scenes of us from the much-ignored ABC special. She read standard press kit information, heavy on number-of-trucks-type statistics. And then there we were (I was), talking with her.

“Edge!” you applauded. “God damn it, why do they have to write your name in quotation marks? You’re The Edge, not ‘The Edge,’” you complained, making disgusted air quotes. You quieted down and listened to what I had to say in the severely edited interview, beaming dotingly as if I were a ten year-old spelling bee champion. Then a bit of spliced-in footage of you performing Where the Streets Have No Name appeared.

“Bono is an ingenious performer,” I heard myself saying. “He has the ability to transform a stadium of 50,000 into a small Irish pub.”

“Edge, I fucking love you,” you announced, jumping off the bed and kissing my smiling, televised face, then pulling away, repulsed, as I turned into Mike.

“Well, I certainly hope the weather cooperates for our Irish friends,” he said. “Let’s send it over to Marty for our first look at weather. Marty?”
“Mike, I think those lads are going to feel right at home here in Eugene tomorrow,” he said, attempting to mimic our accents and falling flat on his face. “Looks like hit or miss showers all day, highs in the upper sixties.”

You turned off the set and grabbed a cookie, one of the dozen just-for-you cookies that had been delivered to your room daily. “Want one?”

“Yeah.”

You returned to my side and put a cookie in my mouth. “Small Irish pub,” you said fondly. “You looked awfully sexy on the news tonight, Edge.”

“You know that shirt’s not really my style.”

“That’s exactly why it’s sexy,” you murmured against my chest.

“I’m not sure I understand…”

The telephone rang; you answered. “Hi Larry…Oh, not much…Yes, he’s here--did you see him on the news?…We’re not really that hungry, are we, Edge?” I shrugged. “Take it or leave it…Yeah, we could do that…About an hour?…Sure.” You hung up. “We’re meeting them for drinks later.”

“Sounds good.”

“As I was saying…you’re the quiet one. I’m the loud one. You’re wearing me, and that’s why it turns me on.”

“I never would have thought of that.” We returned to watching the rain and thinking our own thoughts.

“Edge,” you said, breaking the silence. "Tonight you’re going to whisper something sexy to me.”

“Of course.”

Later we took an elevator to the lobby and followed the noise to our hotel’s dimly lit bar. “Look, it’s ‘Karaoke Nite,’” you said. I waved as I spotted Adam near the back of the room. Our entire organization was there. “This is probably the strangest convention our hotel has ever seen,” you commented, laughing at the collection of riggers, technicians, managers, and support staff. I said hello to a few key people I genuinely needed to talk to, sat beside Adam, and ordered our drinks.

Predictably, it took you thirty minutes to join us. “Adam, any table you sit at instantly becomes the VIP table,” you declared, your body covered with the invisible kisses, handshakes, and embraces of several dozen people. “Where’s Larry?”

“I think he’s talking to Suzanne,” Adam replied.

“Okay, now I see him.” You and Adam reviewed the day’s uneventful events. You retold your phone interview and CD on the magazine rack stories, which you spiced up with several extra details. Adam tossed in a few gossipy items about various staff members. As you talked I glanced around the room and remembered that I still needed to figure out a time for Morleigh and now Ali and Ann to join us. Actually, it might be easier for us to go see them instead. I thought about my children—children who needed me and sent me flowers. I remembered your frustration earlier that afternoon. What a long road we had ahead of us. And then there was the matter of buying you a birthday present. I thanked God for the internet and a generic real name. I thanked God for our love and for you, my lover. God… And then the usual questions: God accepted us, didn’t he? Did I want
to believe in a god that didn’t? I had come up with answers I could live with long ago, but they
didn’t always stop the questions from reappearing every now and then. I frowned at them and told
them yes, no. I studied the calluses on my fingers.

I felt Adam’s hand on my shoulder, heavy and affectionate like the head of a favorite dog. You
gazed at me with hypnotic tenderness. The love I felt from both of you was enough to bring tears to
my eyes, and I didn’t even realize I had silently requested it. “Thanks,” I said, blinking.

“Any time,” Adam smiled.

“A million miles away,” you observed.

“I’m back now.” You took my hand under the table and squeezed it. A backwards-walking Larry
lifted a bottle in the direction of Dallas, and in doing so he bumped into your chair. Several tech guys
began singing *Whip It* on the bar’s small stage.

“There’s the perfect outlet for you tonight, B,” Adam said, softly singing *you must whip it* and
nodding in time to the canned music. You held up your hands in mild protest.

“Absolutely,” Larry enthused.

I jumped on board. “I have to do it every night on stage…but we all know who really wants to be up
there singing those Neil Diamond songs.”

“Not on your life, Edge.”

“Please, Bono?” Adam whined as if he actually cared one way or the other.

I put my head on the table and looked up at you childishly. “Sing me a song, Bono?”

Larry fluttered his eyelashes and mouthed the word, “Please?”

You grinned beatifically and caressed my cheek in a motherly fashion. “What song would you like to
hear?”

I stood and put my hand to your ear, took a deep breath, and murmured in a pre-orgasmic whisper,
“Bono…Bono…Bono…” My voice cracked slightly on the last one and I felt your ear burn beneath
my lips. I sat back down.

Covering nicely, you said, “No Edge, you sing that song much better than I do.” Adam and Larry
were quickly losing interest, so you announced, “Alright. I’ll sing, but on one condition: I want the
rest of you up there with me.”

We protested. “No way,” said Larry. “You are a singer. Why do you need us?”

“Because, Larry,” you said coyly. “I am shy.” All of us laughed as more drinks were deposited on
our table by a subliminal waitress. Formal negotiations began. Adam would only sing backup, and
we should consider ourselves fortunate to be getting that much out of him. Larry would sing a song,
but only if he found one he deemed acceptable. Knowing I was doomed to sing whatever song your
twisted mind desired, I said I would require another drink first. You slid me yours and said, “I think
we need to sing one song as a group, you know, with each of us taking a verse. Any suggestions?”
None of us had any suggestions. Well, *Bang a Gong* occupies a special place in my heart,” you
mentioned in an offhand manner. “Let’s sing that if they have it.”

I chuckled and Larry and Adam nodded. “We’ll probably have to wait a while,” Adam said
hopefully.

“Oh, I think they’ll let us cut in,” you grinned.

After another round of drinks and decision-making, Larry got onstage and sang Love Me in character as Elvis as Adam accompanied him with endearingly tuneless backing vocals. Clearly Larry was enjoying the hell out of Karaoke Nite. “He’s really good,” I told you from our “on deck” table.

“I happen to know Larry has a machine at home—I’m sure he practices regularly.” We enjoyed this idea and applauded our multi-talented drummer, who received a centerpiece’s silk tulip from one of the riggers.

“Your turn, Reg.”

“I should really throttle you, you know?”

“I’m afraid you relinquished all throttling capabilities a few days ago, love. Now go up there and make that song your own,” you said.

“That’s exactly what I don’t want to happen.”

“Off you go,” you chirped.

I sat on a stool and, in the style of Johnny Cash, a man I figured could survive any song, I performed Like a Virgin as you led the crowd in cheers and whistles. I delivered the chilling line “Gonna give you all my love, boy” with tough-guy intensity and stared down the crowd as I spoke-sang the chorus. I must have been doing something right; I received a standing ovation for my efforts.

You approached the stage, jaw on the floor, and announced, “That man is a fucking genius. He’s the reason we’re all here tonight in Eugene, Oregon!” Applause. You sat and donned your lounge singer persona. “Edge, this one’s for you,” you said over a delicate piano. You gestured with a shot glass and began to sing. “It’s a little bit funny, this feelin’ inside, I’m not one of those who can easily hide…I don’t have much money (especially not after this tour, heh heh, right, Paul?) I’d buy a big house where we both could live (I’m thinking maybe the south of France, what do you say?)” You continued this way, managing to be both amusing and touching, and gazing right at me during key lines. Your audience gave you the love you deserved.

Finally the four of us sang Bang a Gong. You graciously encouraged me to sing the first verse, which was obviously written with you in mind. Your eyes projected a blue spotlight on the left side of my face. You informed me that I was built like a car, and then we stood back and let Adam and Larry take care of the rest. Adam had finally found a chorus he could really get behind, and the crowd went wild every time he opened his mouth. We exited the stage to much cheering, glass-raising, and back-slapping.

I wanted to return to your room and so did you, but it would have been rude and incredibly obvious for us to leave at that point. Instead, you decided we were on the verge of starvation and requested some sandwiches. We spent the next hour joking with Larry and Adam and cheering for our fellow karaoke artists. Whenever I looked at you, you shot a smoldering glance my way, and we were probably becoming a little careless, truth be told. No one was paying much attention to us, though, and we slipped away the second it became politically correct for us to do so.

“Say it again,” you told me after the elevator doors closed. I kissed your ear and quietly moaned your name until they opened again.

“No sex tonight, just talk,” you said once we were in your room. You turned off the lights. “And
both of us naked, love.” We kissed and undressed each other in the process-blue shadows.

“What would you like to talk about?”

You led me to your bed and pushed the blankets aside. “Lie down, baby. On your stomach—that’s right, you know how I like to see you…displayed.” I felt the mattress sink as you crawled on. You planted your hands on either side of my ribcage, and I could feel the warmth of your body as it hovered over mine. “I love you, baby.”

“I love you, Bono.”

“Call me sir—I want to know what that feels like.”

I looked over my shoulder and smiled at you. “I love you, sir,” I said. You closed your eyes and inhaled.

“Alright.” You paused. “What thoughts went through your head the first time you held my hands behind my back?” you asked, placing my hands in that position.

“Way back in New York? I think my first impulse was to protect you from yourself. You would have gone too far, too fast, had I let you.”

“That’s true.” You bit my earlobe gently.

“And part of it was selfish. If I was going to have you, I wanted to savor you slowly.” It all still seemed incredible to me.

“Yes, but did you feel—did the act of physically restraining me turn you on, especially in the beginning?”

“Of course, much more than I had ever imagined. As soon as I did it, this jolt of…recognition, I guess, ripped through me.”

“Yes.” Your chest brushed against my back, teasing me.

“And it ripped through you as well—I’ve never seen eyes so wild and helpless.”

“And you were suddenly so dominant.” To ease your wrists, you rested on your elbows. Your body was closer and warmer.

“So instead of defusing our lust, I inadvertently caused it to escalate.” We thought about this idea for a while.

“Later on when I obeyed you, did that change your feelings toward me?” you whispered.

I considered this as I lay there, deliciously uncomfortable beneath you. “The more you obeyed me, the more entranced I became. You were all I wanted to think about. In your submission, you became increasingly powerful. Surely you must know that. The sex wasn’t about me as much as it was about you, and everything I did with you was the result of untold hours of fixation.”

“Oh Edge…” you sighed.

“Why do you ask? Is that happening to you?”

“Yes.”
“You’re thinking about me a lot more now, aren’t you?”

“Yes.”

“You can’t wait, can you, love?”

“I think I’m becoming—it’s probably too soon to tell…”

“You think you’re becoming obsessed with the idea?”

“Yes.” You bent your head so I could kiss your temple.

“I don’t think you can begin to comprehend how utterly erotic your hair has become—”

“But I think maybe I do. I think we’re finally even now, baby.” You moved my hands and held them against the sheets, and soon I felt the full weight of your body. “Were you as nervous as I was the first time, Edge?”

“I’m sure I was.”

“You put up an incredibly convincing façade.”

Your weight…you were showing me what it would feel like. “You needed me to take over,” I said. “But I was scared, of course. I didn’t want to hurt you; I wanted you to love it, but I wasn’t sure if that was even possible.”

“It was.” You kissed my cheekbone. “I want it to be like that for you.”

“You’re doing everything exactly right.”

“Say it again.”

“You’re doing everything exactly right.”

“No sex, nothing tonight—it’s an experiment in tension,” you whispered, as if to remind yourself. You moved off me and we faced each other.

“Okay.”

“Kissing, though,” you said, holding my hands together like a bouquet.

“Only kissing?”

“That’s right, baby,”

“Sir…” Your tongue parted my lips and you kissed me. We kissed until our need for each other became excruciating, and then we kissed through that need until it transformed into something soothing and almost delicate. We kissed until we fell asleep.

The next day was going to be hectic, so I was awake early. I let you sleep as late as possible as I completed some tasks. I ordered your birthday present, arranging for it to be shipped discreetly to our hotel in Tempe, the next stop on the tour. While I was at it, I bought online flowers for every woman and girl I could think of. I started to make another drawing of your hands, but the sound of pencil on paper caused you to stir, so I put it away. I heard the shifting of sheets and pillows, followed by a
flow of Bono-waking-up noises: a tiny sigh, mumbling, and a full-blown yawn impregnated with your first insight of the day: “Ack ere Ezhe.”

“What’s that, B?”

“Get back here, Edge.”

I moved to the bed, and my fingers stroked your rough jaw. “Good morning,” I said, kissing your forehead. Your sleepy eyes twinkled. “Beautiful,” I added.

“Beautiful?”

“I’m afraid there’s no other word for it.”

You wallowed in your big white bed. "I have to get up now, don’t I?”

“All of Eugene is counting on you,” I said, pulling you to your feet.

“Nice talk last night.”

“It was illuminating, wasn’t it?”

“Wanna get you in bed and mess around,” you complained as I pushed you into the bathroom.

“What about your experiment in tension, whatever that may be?”

“Fuck the experiment.”

I shook my head. “I don’t think my conscience would allow me to disappoint the scientific community like that, and besides, we’ve got a very busy day ahead of us, B.”

“Damn it.”

I spent the better part of the day with Dallas, practicing until every chord, every sequence seemed to become a part of my body and another voice for me. I positively loved playing the new songs, I decided, and I wanted to live up to them and possibly improve them. I remembered the ecstasy of creation I felt when those songs were born, and now the four of us were raising them and helping them grow. I wanted our songs to leave the nest and soar.

“Why Edge, you’re…beautiful. I’m afraid there’s no other word for it,” you said later as I met you en route to our sound check.

“I feel really good about the way I’m playing today.”

“I can’t wait to hear you.” You put your hand on the back of my neck, and we stared at the mangled stadium. “My god, that looks awful,” you said. “They’re going to hate us for destroying their tunnel.”

“I think they’ll forgive us if we put on a good show.”

You nodded. “Edge?”

“Yeah?” Your neck was astonishing.

“Surprise me tonight. Do something that will—just surprise me, alright?”
I squinted at the white, overcast sky. “I was planning to do that anyway.”

A large group of us ate together after the sound check—a nameless four o’clock meal that was too late to be lunch and too early to be supper. The catered food was good but not remarkable. It was as if a survey had been taken of death row prisoners’ last meal requests, and what we were eating was number eight or nine on the list.

I thought about the interviews we had been giving lately and our feeble attempts to describe the tour. There had to be a better way to explain it. ZooTV and Popmart were almost like brother and sister. ZooTV was the beloved golden boy, the favorite son, but Popmart…Popmart is his sister, his slutty, genius sister who tells jokes most people don’t understand, who gives them what they want while mocking their base needs, who rolls her eyes at their inability to follow her conversation because they are too dazzled by her strange beauty. Popmart is the slutty, genius sister…who secretly cries herself to sleep.

Yes, that would make a nice sound bite for the local news.

I looked at my band mates. Your eyes focused on a point above our heads, maybe twenty feet away, populated by thousands of imaginary people. Your lips formed silent words. Adam’s head moved rhythmically from side to side, lost in a groove, and Larry’s eyes shifted rapidly from plate to glass to bowl to spoon. I looked at my left hand; it was forming chords and I hadn’t realized it.

I found a pen, wrote Until the End of the World on a napkin, and passed it to you a few hours later. I heard you singing it as we waited to walk out into the drizzly mist.

You stormed the damp stage with the demeanor of a beloved gladiator, larger than life in your digital colosseum, alternately pleasing and confounding your bloodthirsty audience. They stood still during Mofo, but they yelled and danced for I Will Follow. How dare you, you seemed to say. How dare you ignore this; how dare you turn your backs on me as I yell for my mother then embrace me when I give you line one, song one, album one?

You swaggered over to my side of the stage, the first of many visits. Your body was disquietingly taut. If the audience wouldn’t give you what you needed, I would. I let the music propel me until I became an uninhibited counterpart worthy of you. I became a teenager again, but with a veneer of experience and discipline. We shared a smile that, although it was projected behind us forty feet high, transmitted our private language. Fuck them if they don’t get it; you do and you’re what matters and I’m performing for you tonight. We provoked and fed off each other, went out to win over the masses, and returned to our haven where no one else existed.

Whenever you approached me, you stared me down and I stared back. I smiled when you put your glistening head on my shoulder, your hair sparkling with sweat. You became distracted by my unprecedented assertiveness, and Staring at the Sun paid the price. “Daddy just can’t play guitar,” you sang while I tried to pick up the slack. On the way back to the main stage you nearly tripped, and Adam, Larry, and their techs shared a furtive laugh.

Whenever you approached me, I felt the power of the beloved, the pursued.

Whenever I watched you stand on the catwalk all alone, seducing the crowd one hard-won person at a time, I was almost frightened by the intensity of my own adoration of you, my darkest, most precious secret. You wanted all of me. I was giving myself to you and you were taking me. You think we’re finally even, but you can’t comprehend the depth of my love, I thought, feeling the loneliness of the one who loves more. I wanted you so badly a mysterious emotion approaching anger took over.
“Come on love,” you sang to me with virile bravado, beckoning me with your shameless middle finger.

Feeling surly, I stomped over and lunged at you, stabbing at your torso with the neck of my guitar. You gaped at me with shock and delight; I raised an eyebrow, grinning. Taking the bait, you bounded towards me with your arms up, a fierce little creature trying to appear more imposing. Retreating, you turned your back on me, stroking your hair as I stalked you down the catwalk. You spun around and mimed an ecstatic scream, and I thrust my guitar at you again. We continued this sort of duel for the duration of our song until you were trapped on the B stage, hands raised in joyous surrender as the crowd exploded. I studied you for as long as I dared before hurrying back to the main stage to begin *New Year’s Day*.

During the songs that followed, you regarded me with an almost reverential awe, and our encore couldn’t come soon enough.

As we hurried down a flight of stairs and were led through a labyrinth of corridors, you shouted my name, followed by a series of random exclamations. Then, tackling me, all you could say was, “You! Edge!”

“Good show, Reg,” Adam said, looking back at us.

“I think you should knock him flat on his arse next time,” Larry grinned. You remained dumbfounded as we changed costumes. As always, I took the longest—too many accessories and the usual boot ordeal—and you made sure to lag behind.

After Larry and Adam climbed the stairs to the lemon, you backed me into a darkened nook and said, “Genius. Perfect. Exactly what that song’s about—a duel.” Your mouth ravished mine for a gasping second, and then you muttered, “Wanna fuck you so badly I can’t stand it anymore, baby.”

I kissed behind your ear, and for the first time I said, “Fuck me, Bono.” You groaned and pulled me to the stairs.

“There you are,” Adam said when we entered our insane vehicle. “Really. Both of you: amazing tonight.”

“Thanks,” I said.

“Yeah,” Larry added. “Maybe we’ve finally hit our stride. Although would it kill you to learn *Staring at the Sun*, Bono?”

“I don’t know what the fuck’s going on with that one,” you said vaguely.

“Hey, you know what?” Larry asked. “Ehm…we’re not moving.” All of us paused to verify this, and we promptly burst into a riot of laughter.

“If we don’t get out of here alive,” I announced with weepy sentimentality, “I want you all to know…I love you very much.”

“Aww Reg,” you said, kissing my cheek. “Come on, the man needs a hug, too.” One corny group hug later, we felt the lemon start to move.

“This seems…different,” Adam said.

“Are they…manually pushing us?” you asked, inciting another outbreak of hilarity. “Can’t you just picture all those people scrambling around down there, fucking pushing us?” This idea was almost
too much to take, and luckily the lemon opened without incident as the four of us struggled to maintain straight faces. I walked down the steps wearing a goofy smile—all of us did—and when you descended the stairs singing, “You can push…”, Larry, Adam, and I couldn’t fight the laughter any longer. We spent the rest of Discotheque grinning like idiots, and you finally lost it during your faked orgasm near the end.

You were positively stunning for the remainder of our performance, however, wailing on With or Without You and One as if this were the final time you’d ever sing those songs, mad to win every last heart.

Upon reflection, our concert that night must have seemed like a strange art film, one the audience needed to see three or four more times before they could begin to comprehend it. Unfortunately, it was over and we weren’t going to perform it again. We would have been incapable of duplicating it even if we had wanted to.

Finally alone in our car, you and I gawked at each other in worn-out euphoria, breaking the silence every once in a while to impart various exemplary adjectives.

Four minutes later, we were at the hotel. Three minutes later, we abandoned the entire concept of political correctness. Two minutes later, we were in the elevator, cursing the numbers for moving so slowly. One minute later, we were ripping each other’s clothes off and stripping the bed.

Once again I felt your full weight against my back. “Genius, genius,” you moaned. Your hands claimed me as you kissed my neck the same worshipful way I liked to kiss yours. “You led me on with those innocent eyes,” you sang to me.

“Fuck me…”

“Not yet, love.”

“I just want to say it,” I whispered.

“Yeah…”

“Fuck me, Bono,” I moaned quietly, and your breathing became shallow in my ear.

Your voice was hushed as you said, “I want to be you, baby.”

“I want to be you, Bono,” I sighed. You bit the back of my neck and I took a deep breath. “Do whatever you want to me, Edge,” I said, feeling you hard and warm against my right thigh.

“Then help me come, Bono,” you said, moving up a bit and pulling my arm behind my back. Awkward but eager, I took you in my hand.

“So good, Edge,” I murmured. “So sexy when you looked right at me tonight, and you wanted me to touch you, you couldn’t get enough of my hands, could you? You were on fire tonight, love, and you tried to fuck me, Edge, you tried to fuck me with your guitar right there in front of all those people…”

You cried out and said breathlessly, “And how about you, Bono, teasing me all night, strutting around like the brazen tart you are. You almost kissed me, Bono, five or six times—why didn’t you?”

“I should kiss you next time, Edge,” I said. “I’ll touch you and feast on you; I’ll even thrust against you—I don’t care. I’ll show the world you’re mine and you let me do whatever I please with you
You were very close. "Fuck, Bono."

"Come all over me, Edge, come all over my back," I sighed, "and kiss it, get your reward, love."

Your mouth returned to my hairline, kissing and biting as you gasped your own name over and over again. Then, cooing into my ear, you collapsed against me and we breathed together.

Sated, you rubbed my back, and my skin drank you in. "Roll over, B," you said, burying your face in my chest. "I know you love it when I suck you."

"Edge, yes. Go down."

"So hard for me, you poor boy." Your middle finger trailed down my stomach. "Lie there a minute, Bono. I want you to stay just like that until I come back." You stepped into the bathroom and returned a few seconds later. "Now relax, B—we need to continue our lessons." You smiled as you took me with your finger and your mouth, and like you, after a while all I could do was cry out my own name.

We slept until dawn; white light insinuated itself into the room, and I watched your sleeping form. You were lying on your stomach, wearing a snug white t-shirt and nothing else. When did you put that on? You must have been cold overnight. The shirt made the rest of you seem startlingly exposed. I watched as you moved onto your back, neck extended, arms uninhibited. The shirt had crept up slightly, revealing your pelvis and stomach, soft dark hair. Through the thin fabric I could see the shadow of your chest, and I wanted to see that shirt wet—wet and then removed.

While I was looking at your chest, you must have awakened; when I returned my attention to your face you were smiling at me. You pulled your shirt down a little, coughed, and walked into the bathroom. I could hear water running—you were filling a glass.

I got out of bed and stood in the bathroom doorway. You took a drink of water and motioned for me to come closer. We watched our reflection as I bit your salty neck. My fingers traced the sleeves, hem, and neckline of the innocent shirt that only made me want your pornographically semi-naked body more. You watched me. "You’re drawing pictures of me, aren’t you?" you asked. I said nothing. "You don’t have to tell me, baby. But...when you draw...you always start with...?"

"A line, love," I whispered, kissing your hair.

"You fixate on my boundaries—the shirt, my hair..."

"Your lines."

"Yes, you fixate on my boundaries, and not just the ones you can see," you said softly, caressing my right hand with yours. You turned and kissed both of my eyelids. "As if I needed another reason to give you your name."
I recycled the remark about the hole punch back when I wrote Verse Two (I had warned readers I would be doing that kind of thing occasionally). Here's where it originated.

And speaking of origins, the illustration for this chapter is the original drawing I made in 2002. (Edge is finally using regular drawing paper and not his quad rule pad, let's say.) If it seems somehow familiar to you, please know they'll talk about it a little more in the next chapter.

The flashback here brought tears to my eyes when I wrote it, and it continues to do so. It's an important scene, and I hope you like it.
I wanted to stay in that room with you forever, our bodies locked in suspended animation and surrounded by soft, white silence. You kissed me; your mouth was cool and watery and mine was not, but you didn't seem to care. “Fuck me, Bono,” you whispered, and we shared the first of the day’s many secret smiles.

"Edge," I breathed into your ear, playing along.

"Last night—now I almost don’t want to," you began slowly, and I nodded. "I mean, we could, and it's not like it would cancel out what happened, but…” You struggled to find the right words, settling for a you-know-what-I-mean shrug instead. You wanted coffee. I massaged your temples with my fingertips for a few seconds, feeling your skin glide over bone.

I said, "I think it might be a good idea to keep last night fresh in our minds today, uncorrupted."
You moved your face to the side and gently bit the palm of my left hand. "Uncorrupted by whatever hot little impulses we might wish to act upon this morning?"

"Yes."

You looked into my eyes. "I agree," you said, pulling your shirt over your head with a corrupt leer. I bent to kiss your chest as you backed away. "Shower?" you asked, drawing back the textured glass doors and busying your hands with their daily puzzle. "How do—? Oh, I see."

"You go ahead, Bono. I'll wait."

"Sure you don’t want to join me?"

"I think I'll sit out here and watch you instead," I said as I pulled a chair into the bathroom.

You grinned. "Now why do I find that sexier than if both of us were in this shower together?"

"It just is, B," I said, closing the door on your happy face. You groaned with pleasure as the hot water pulsed against your upper back. You spent the duration of the shower wavering between pretending I wasn’t watching you and putting on a show for me, both of which I enjoyed. The misty glass offered pixelated suggestions of your body—dark shadowy areas and bright expanses of slick, light-reflecting skin. Once you pressed a hand and then a forearm against the glass, and I was able to view them in greater detail.

"Would you hand me a towel, Reg?" you called. I found one and opened the door a bit. "Hot in here," you said, adjusting the water's temperature. You stood under the cooler water for a few seconds and stepped out of the shower. "That feels about right for you, doesn’t it?"

I kissed your dripping collarbone. "It feels perfect," I murmured.

"Your turn, baby." After I was inside and about to close the door, you said, "Hold onto the shower head, that part where it attaches to the wall…good. I’m going to look at you." I stood there and watched your eyes move over my body as you idly dried yourself with the towel. Your gaze revisited my raised arms several times. "You’re a lovely sight to behold, Edge," you said, closing the door.

Later, after my shower and after I had checked my unnecessary room for anything I might have left, I poured a cup of room service coffee and stood beside you at your window. "It seems like we've been here for months," you remarked, looking at the murky sky.

"I know," I said. "We’re in for quite a change."

"Sun Devil Stadium." You set your cup on a table and yawned. "This place looks like home, but Tempe will feel like home." I nodded and placed a hand on your shoulder—the negligible fabric of your blue shirt mimicked bare skin, and it was sheer enough for me to see the dark pattern of hair on your chest, like a tree at dusk. "You like that, love? Arousing you is my raison d’être, you see."

"Way to go, B." I looked at my watch. "I’m pretty sure we’re leaving at 9:30. Three hour flight, too…we’d better get down there."

You paused and blinked. "What was that again, Reg?"

"Ehm…we’d better get down there?"

"Of course, sorry. I was just—sometimes your eyes, I mean, my god…" You looked up at the ceiling
and inhaled.

"You do that to me too."

We gathered our bags, and I watched your fingers slide over the rumpled sheet of our unmade bed as we left. Inside the elevator, we savored our last secluded moments together. "I love you," you told me as the elevator’s descent slowed. "Here we go."

The doors opened onto the usual checkout bedlam. Dozens of people, at least one third of them with cell phones, dashed across the lobby. Everyone seemed to be needed at opposite ends of the room. Paul waved and made a diagonal beeline for us, both of his hands raised in a semi-exasperated gesture. "You disappeared last night," he informed us.

"Yes Paul, we certainly did," you said, looking him in the eye and grinning unapologetically. "If anyone needed us, we weren't that difficult to find. Nice work with the lemon, by the way. I really appreciated that."

Paul laughed. "We knew it had to happen sooner or later. And you wouldn't believe the number of complaints we’ve received because of the noise." He shook his head and pinched the bridge of his nose.

"What did you think of the show otherwise?" I asked.

Using his pen as a guitar neck, Paul parodied my dueling act and pretended to stab you. You dropped your bag, mimed a scream, and bounded toward him. "Was that not the most brilliant thing you've ever seen him do?" you asked Paul, beaming at me.

"It added a whole new dimension to that song, absolutely."

"I told him to surprise me," you said confidentially. He nodded and playfully rubbed his hand over your hair. "Now why did you have to go and mess that up, Paul?" you asked, stifling a laugh. Paul spotted Sheila and heaved a sigh—back to work.

Adam and Larry were waiting by the exit. "Come on, Edge," you said, picking up your bags. I followed as you effortlessly crossed the chaotic room; a Red Sea of people deferred to your presence as if you were Moses. Larry gave us an affectionate but reprimanding scowl as he saw us approach. "Christ, is it written all over our faces?" you murmured, looking back at me. "Can’t I spend some quality time with my guitarist after a show?" I felt controversial and juvenile, like a teenager with a neck full of love bites. At least there were no marks on yours. Adam lifted his chin and held up a cigarette. You nodded enthusiastically. He nudged Larry and the four of us convened on the sidewalk outside.

"Missed you last night," Adam said with a knowing grin.

"Yeah, yeah," you said. He handed you his pack of cigarettes, and the two of you engaged in your beloved ritual. I fidgeted with a zipper on my luggage as I watched you smoke. My brain conjured up an animated educational film from my childhood: a cross-section of two healthy pink lungs inundated with black specks. Larry picked a leaf off a nearby shrub and methodically tore it into tiny pieces.

"Something wrong, Larry?" I asked.

He tossed the remains of the leaf over his shoulder. "Ann. You do not want details."

"Are you sure I don't?"
Sighing, Larry muttered, "Don't worry about it—it's...the usual, she understands but she misses me, you know." He picked another leaf. I nodded and we sat on the curb. "I actually said it was an occupational hazard, can you believe that? Like I don't even miss her myself. God, what an arsehole." I patted his knee and we studied the dingy sky. Low clouds and fog drifted in front of the blank white disc of the sun. "Looks like somebody punched a hole in the sky," Larry said.

"Pretty violent imagery for so early in the day," I remarked.

Larry smiled. "No. I meant with a hole punch—like on a piece of paper." I put my arm across his shoulders for a moment and we chuckled quietly, shaking our heads. "How're you doing, Edge?"

I looked over at you. Adam had removed his jacket and held it in front of you, matador-style, and you were taking the bait, you little Taurus. "Good," I said, pushing back a cuticle with my thumbnail. "Yeah, it's good, thanks."

Our car pulled up to the curb, and in the distorted reflection of the hubcap I could see you and Adam walking toward us. We rose and got ready to go.

The ride to the airport didn't amount to much; we sat and made standard post-concert conversation. "Ehm...we're not moving," Larry remembered. We all had another laugh about that, and Adam wondered if there were automotive repair outlets in Phoenix equipped to handle foreign vehicles such as ours.

"If we ever decide to sell the lemon, the used car salesman is going to have one hell of a time trying to unload it on some poor sap," you said.

"'Oh no—this is not a lemon. It’s a quality vehicle.'" Adam said dryly. "'It was owned by four men who only took it out for fifty-yard drives every once in a while.'" We looked at each other in amusement, easily the only people in the world who would ever have a conversation about selling oversized mechanical lemons. Covered with mirrors, no less. I wondered how my 25 year-old self would view our situation. All of it.

I felt tired once we were on the plane. As usual, you had many things to say to everyone who passed you. I sat back and looked out the window at several small commuter planes and some weeds springing up through cracks in the concrete. Not much to see. I listened to your voice. Once you had satisfied your urge to communicate with your devotees, I leaned over to put a notebook and a few other items under my seat. "Bono?"

"Hmm?"

"One of your shoes is untied."

Your bold fingers stroked the back of my neck. "Tie it for me," you said softly. And I did, surprised to feel my body stir at so minor a request. When I finished your face was radiant.

"What?" I asked. I wanted to touch you.

You leaned close to me and whispered, "I guess it is written all over my face. Doesn't everyone look like this after a night of great sex?"

"I'm not sure; how do I look?" I asked.

"If you only knew, baby." I stretched a little and settled back. You reclined your seat to match mine. "Sleepy?"
"Kind of," I said.

"Take a nap, love. Sorry if I wore you out last night."

"Shh… that's okay."

"You bet it is." You opened the newspaper someone had given you. After skimming the brief article about our concert, you reported that they liked us, but with all the noise they were undoubtedly pleased to see us go. I watched you breathe for a while, your chest rising and falling, your shirt clinging to your torso. Your chest…

…a place I can't touch.

I can touch your arms, and sometimes I can hold your hands briefly. I can caress your shoulders, I can put my hand on your knees, your legs, I can rub your back, and I can even embrace you in a certain way. I can place my mouth a fraction of an inch from your ear and whisper. If I could stand it, there would probably be nothing wrong with me stroking your hair, and depending on the situation I might be able to touch your face and neck. I can kiss you, but of course quite a few restrictions apply. There are some obvious places I can't touch when we are in public, and one of them is your chest.

I was in the studio; I can't remember what day it was. Actually, it was night. Ali’s Christmas cake was on a table beside the mixing board. I had eaten some, but it was still a little too strange to think about. I wasn't sure what to do with the rest of it. I had listened to my repetitive guitar work so much I was barely hearing it anymore, but your voice seduced my mind as it begged to stay. There was a certain amount of satisfaction to be had in making your voice come to the forefront. It was so crisp and alive it seemed like you were living inside my body, breathing, reminding me of how lonely I was and how much you wanted to be with me.

I started the song again and turned everything else down except for your voice: "Green light, 7-11…" I smelled cigarette smoke. I turned around and there you were, standing in the doorway, a veil of grey vapor temporarily obscuring your face. "Hey now, check your change," you sang, harmonizing with yourself as you tossed your cigarette into an ashtray. Infuriatingly beautiful, you wore your brown suede coat with sheepskin lining, thrown haphazardly over a pair of black jeans, no shirt. I don't recall what I was wearing, not that it mattered. You walked over to me, put your fingers on mine, and pushed them up the mixing board until my guitar matched your voice, creating a spare duet. Then, raising my hand to your lips, you kissed my fingers as the scent of wet suede and your skin surrounded me.

"It's not a good idea to wear a suede coat in the rain," I said.

"This coat and I have an understanding."

"And what's that?"

You continued to lean over me, and you kissed my face as you said, "It's in love with me, you see, and it is happy to be chosen by me regardless of the weather or time of day."

I was too exhausted to argue; your mouth was at my neck. "Is that so?"

Your teeth… "It's remarkably resilient, even when I've treated it carelessly. As a matter of fact, I don't know why I deserve to have a coat as excellent as this one."

I lowered the volume somewhat and stood, staring at you. I walked toward you until your back was against the wall. Your hair glistened with rain. Positive the cruel lighting wasn't doing me any favors,
I flipped a switch beside your arm and the room became half as bright. "I haven't seen you in days. What do you have to say for yourself?" I asked.

"I want you to fuck me, Edge."

"Right here on the floor?"

"I've been so bad."

We began to breathe heavily as one by one all of our circuits reconnected. "Yes you have." We studied each other's faces for quite a while, and you murmured obscene suggestions. Neither of us had any intention of actually having sex in the studio, of course, but it was lovely to imagine it. I gradually unbuttoned your coat and eased it off your shoulders. "Christ, I've missed this," I whispered, my hands staggering down your chest. The song ended, and I remember thinking it seemed unfinished without that loud cymbal at the end. And then you gasped. Your breathing stopped.

Adam saw us.

He appeared to have paused in mid-stride; he was merely passing through after a night out and...he saw us. Adam lifted his hand and turned his head for a second. Then he glanced back.

I instinctively pulled my hands away from your body, but you caught them and brought them back. My hands and fingers became icy except for where my skin touched yours, as if I were standing in front of a fire in the bitter cold. Your heart was beating rapidly, almost twice as fast. It must have been beating for both of us; mine had stopped. You stared at Adam, your gaze tense yet surprisingly self-assured.

You nodded slowly.

I tried to look at Adam the same way, but my memory of the scene is merely an impressionistic blur of his shocked face, your coat, the wall behind you, a brown paper bag on the floor...and your hands and piercing eyes holding the three of us together.

Stunned, we remembered to breathe at roughly the same time. Adam shook his head slightly as if he were trying to decide if what he was seeing was real. Your eyes remained fixed on him.

"Adam..." I managed.

He blinked a few times and finally said in a troubled voice, "It's alright." Then, like me, he didn't seem to know where to look. "I guess I've always known," he told the floor. "You..." he trailed off and pulled his coat around himself. He turned to leave.

"Adam," you said.

"Later, okay?" he called, walking away. "Just...later." We listened to his footsteps and the closing of a door.

My hands were still on your chest, and you placed yours over them. Your eyes were blue, your skin was pale, your hair was black--these were the kinds of concepts my brain was able to process.

"Damn it," I said in a barely audible whisper.

You took a deep breath and, still holding my gaze, said, "I love you, Edge. I love you." I nodded and you embraced me. We kissed; our mouths were dry with the metallic taste of adrenaline. Both of us were silent as we held each other and confronted the deluge of emotions swirling around us. "We
knew it had to happen sooner or later," you whispered, kissing my ear.

"This could destroy everything."

"Do you really think so?"

"I don't know."

"Maybe with two lesser people, but... Adam and Larry..." You touched my rough face and said sadly, "So thin. I wish you’d take better care of yourself, Edge." I shook my head slightly, overwhelmed. Your eyes were full of tears. "Please. Do that for me. I can't stand to think of you here by yourself, every day, every night. God, I miss you..."

"I miss you, Bono."

"I know you do, love." You held me again. Adam knew. He knew. My shoulders began to shake. "Shh," you soothed. "I have faith in them. I would trust Larry and Adam with my life, and I trust them with this."

I thought about it. "Yeah." More silence again. Somehow your hands knew where my shoulders and neck were aching, and they reawakened muscles that had not been touched by another human being in... it had been a long time. My mind continued to reel.

You pulled back and smiled a bit. "Look at it this way: what would you do if they were the ones...?"

I closed my eyes and chuckled in spite of myself. "I can hardly imagine the two of them together."

You raised an eyebrow, grimacing in faux-horror. "But if they were," I said, "I would do my best to understand and accept it. I mean, I love them. What else could I do?"

"Larry’s probably gonna give us hell for a while, and it won't be easy for any of us, but in the end I trust them. Yeah. I really do." I nodded. "Maybe I'm speaking too soon, but I'm kind of relieved they’ll both know."

You opened your coat and pulled me in. I bent and kissed your chest, your kind heart. "Bono?"

"Hmm?"

I glanced at the clock. "Is there some reason why you’re visiting me here at two in the morning?"

Stroking my hair, you said, "I couldn’t sleep. I wanted to see you, and I wanted to sing."

"This song? It’s finished."

"No... I wanted to sing it for you, for us."

There are two known copies of the song you sang that night, yours and mine. I’ve never heard you sing Stay more emotionally before or since. You sat on a chair beside me as I accompanied you on an acoustic guitar. You gestured for me to sing the backing vocal during the chorus. Your voice was achingly vulnerable, and then raw, naked, and finally flying. When the song ended, you leaned over and held your head in your hands. After a minute of silence, you told me you loved me.

"Edge?" you whispered. I opened my eyes. I was on a plane headed for Arizona.

"Yeah?"

"Edge."
"What is it, Bono?"

"Nothing. I just...I wanted to see your eyes again." You seemed embarrassed.

I smiled at you. "You know what you remind me of today?"

"Okay, let's hear it," you sighed.

"You are a teenager who has rediscovered a favorite childhood toy."

A grin raced across your face, and you actually did look like a teenager. "That must mean you're my farm set, Edge!"

"You had a farm set? I had one of those, too."

We arrived at the Arizona Biltmore a couple of hours later. We had stayed there before and looked forward to the resort's low-key sophistication. A colleague of Frank Lloyd Wright designed it in 1929, and I could never decide if the complex's grey, slab-like buildings were elegant or oppressive. They certainly looked better at night, dramatically lit and framed by a navy blue sky and the nearby Camelback Mountains. Palm trees and flower beds dotted the manicured grounds, an oasis kept alive by the constant hiss of sprinklers. The resort's famous swimming pools were especially memorable. The last time we were at the Biltmore, a member of the maintenance staff spotted us sitting at the edge of a voluptuous pool. You were admiring your toes. "This was Marilyn Monroe's favorite swimming pool," he informed us. He moved on before we could ask him if it was her favorite pool of all time or merely her favorite Biltmore pool.

Although it claimed to be a family resort, it seemed like we would probably be the only people under sixty staying there, which was just as well. You and I were going to share one of the resort's four presidential suites. As we rode from the airport with Adam and Larry, you and I lost a complicated rock-scissors-paper tournament, and as a result they would get the largest one, which was one story above ours. "Patio? We want the balcony," you complained.

"What's fair is fair, B," said Larry, who had no Eva Peron-like balcony tendencies, unlike some people.

"I'm hungry as fuck," you added, and we were all highly concerned.

We bypassed check-in and were directed to our building, a focal point that overlooked the Marilyn pool in the center of the resort. The hot, dry desert air was quite a contrast to Oregon's haze. Everything seemed closer as a result: I could see trees on mountains that were miles away, and I felt like I could reach out and touch the heavy ultramarine sky.

"Well, this is not so bad," you enthused as we entered our new home. "Fireplace, sunken living room, nice high ceilings, Christ, it's a beige-lover's paradise...hey, do you think that's walnut?" you asked, pointing at the wet bar.

"Would you like it to be walnut?"

"Yeah."

"Let's call it walnut, then."

You scurried around, looking for food. "Brilliant!" you yelled from the kitchen as I hauled our things into one of the bedrooms. When I returned you had poured some wine for us and were gorging on a selection of fruits and cheeses. "We're going swimming after this," you informed me as I sat down
beside you.

"You're not supposed to swim right after you—"

"Oh for god’s sake, Edge."

"Alright," I said. "You know what?"

"What?"

"Last night." We smiled and you took my hand.

"You know what else?" you asked.

"What?"

"Tonight."

Adam and Larry were already lounging on deck chairs when we went out to the pool. "Nice…"

Adam said lecherously as we passed in our swimming trunks.

"Black’s a really good color for you guys," Larry added.

You flipped them off. "It showcases our pasty white thighs…wanna make something of it, glamour boy?"

"That's an awfully manly drink you have there, Larry," I said.

He glanced at his coconut-with-umbrella cocktail. "Boom cha, indeed," he grumbled, taking a large gulp, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand, and belching.

We set our sunglasses on a table with some towels. The water’s surface became a distinct dividing line between hot and cool as we eased ourselves into the pool. The temperature was perfect, and we made the kinds of faces people make when they eat really good food, or sink into leather chairs, or have profound religious experiences, or…

"If I could fuck this water I would," you sighed.

"Exactly," I laughed. We bobbed around aimlessly with no clear swimming agenda, occasionally going underwater. I noticed an insignificant scrap of a cloud hovering overhead. I pointed it out to you, and we floated on our backs, watching it dissolve in the heat. The water made me feel lazy and careless. I wanted you. Your eyes matched the pool and the perimeter of the sky, and the hairs on your chest and arms swayed in the water like tiny aquatic plants. I sat on the side of the pool and studied you. The harsh sunlight made the lines around your eyes, forehead, and neck more distinct. Like a copper sculpture, time had left a patina of age on your body that merely made you more alluring.

The chlorine caused you to sneeze. "Bless you," I said. "I'm going inside, B."

"Okay," you nodded, holding your breath and diving below the surface. Your body became a series of abstract, formless shapes that got smaller and smaller, and--

“May I see? Please?"

You are here.
“Bono…” You take off your wet trunks and join me on the couch. Your body smells a bit like bleach as you kiss the length my left arm and, oddly, the back of my pad of paper. Soon your forehead and eyes peek over the top of it.

“Could you at least describe your drawing?” you say. “You're perfect, incidentally.”

I sigh and put down my black pencil. “It’s not finished.”

“What is it going to be, Edge?”

“I thought you weren't going to pry.”

You nod and turn away. “I'm sorry. I'm just interested. Go ahead and finish it, love; I'll leave you alone.” You get up and head to the bedroom, resigned. I close my eyes and inhale.

“Bono?”

“Yes?”

“It’s you. It’s a drawing of your chest.”

“Really?”

“Would you still like to see it?”

“As if you had to ask.” I hand you the pad of paper. You scrutinize the drawing carefully, smiling, and then you look at me. “Edge… I'm touched.”

“Like I said, it's not finished,” I shrug.

“May I finish it for you?” You kiss my cheek.

“You really want to?” You nod and place my hand on the back of your neck. Your tongue parts my lips, and I realize once again that I would do anything you'd ever ask. You break away then come back for another kiss.

“Do you have a red pen?” you ask. I find one for you, and soon you are scribbling away on the unfinished area, drawing your own heart with my name on it. It takes you no more than thirty seconds to do this. When you are finished, you tear it from the pad and hand it to me.

“I adore you, you know,” I say.

You smile. “I'm going to draw you now, love.”
I would like to welcome PJ of bonos-grindcore-sideproject to my little Pop world! This wonderful person agreed to draw as Bono for this chapter as well as a few future ones. I will continue to draw as Edge. I am so thankful and excited and I'm kind of losing my mind here. Please give her some love, people!

So that means this chapter will begin with a shift in point of view. The person who's drawing is the person who narrates, and it's past tense when they're thinking while drawing and present tense when they're communicating while drawing. I dunno, it makes a certain amount of sense to me. :)

This chapter, like Bono, is also a little shorter. It marks the last of the old, previously-posted story, and what will come next is going to be entirely new. I still have to write it, but ohhh I have so many ideas just waiting to get out of my head. I really hope you'll love what happens.

Again. PJ. You fucking rule.
“What else have you been drawing, Edge?” I place a pillow on my lap and set the pad of paper on it—actual drawing paper, not your usual quad rule tablet. The clean, milky surface feels cool as I trace an outline of your angular face with my fingers. “Mind if I borrow that red pencil?”

You hand it to me. “Well…I’ve been drawing different parts of you, one at a time.”

“And they’re all from memory, too? Amazing. Such as?”

You hear the muffled thump of a diving board outside and glance at the closed curtains. “Your hands. Your neck.”

I smile. “And my hair, of course.”

“Of course.” Your eyes are indescribable. I should start with them.
“Baby, stay there. Stay just like that.”

That analytical gaze of yours…it’s no wonder you have memorized me after twenty years of investigation.

I recognized your intelligence the first time you allowed your eyes to meet mine. In that split second before you looked away so long ago, I saw everything I wanted to possess in your eyes: strength, wisdom, serenity, and self-reliance. All of this was accompanied by a sadness that was hard to pin down. I saw it in the angle of your eyebrows and the way your eyes seemed to retreat beneath them. Maybe you were becoming resigned to the idea that you were different from everyone else, and profoundly so. Your eyes held the melancholy of the observer, but also the wit.

You watched me when I wasn’t looking at you. I could feel it. Somehow I knew when your eyes were on me. With you I never experienced the shivery nervousness of a person who thinks he is being watched. Instead I felt protection and even then a sort of love. You were a gift from my mother; I’m certain of it now.

Christ, and you can really fucking draw—infuriating polymath. I can’t remember the last time I’ve even attempted to draw anything. It’s been an age since I’ve taken a subject apart with my mind and put it back together on paper. Those little offhand scribbles don’t count, either. I’m merely a poor man’s John Lennon, and he was a poor man’s Picasso...Picasso at his most slapdash, no less. You cannot be summed up with just a few casual lines. No matter how hard I try, I won't be able to—how do you draw intelligence? Serenity? And look at you now. You are unnerved by my discovery, and you are very much in love.

“You drew parts of me, then…” I say, making conversation.

“Yes.”

“Why?” I scowl at a line I probably shouldn’t have drawn. Too late now--I can't erase it.

You look at the ceiling for answers and then remember I am drawing you. “It’s hard to explain. I think you’ve been a little overwhelming to me, those first few days especially. Having you back with me—it was like I had to rediscover you, and I found myself fixating on different parts of you. And then I drew them.”

“When you draw something, you begin to understand it.”

“That’s right.”

“Have I changed that much?” I ask, knowing the answer.

You nod anyway. “A little. So have I.”

“That drawing you made of me today reminds me of something, but I can't put my finger on it.”

“Do you remember the first time we went to the Louvre? Ten, twelve years ago?”

“Possibly.”

“The drawing is based on Michelangelo's *Dying Slave* sculpture.” You give me a shy, slow smile. Seriously, Edge, to hell with your cheekbones for being so spectacular.

“That's the sexy, unfinished one, right?”
“You looked at it at the time and laughed and said something like, ‘Dying from orgasms, maybe. Amnesty International be damned; I could really get behind slavery if this is what goes on.’”

“This experience obviously had a profound impact on you, Edge.”

“Possibly.”

I return to my drawing and we listen to the pencil for a while. I decide that if I keep working on your eyes they will turn into somebody else’s eyes. I hold the pencil vertically with my outstretched arm because that is something I’ve seen artists do. “Are you finished?” you ask, your face at once relieved and bashful, a man whose secret has been exposed and, much to his surprise, celebrated.

I look at the pencil, pretending to be interested in the manufacturer and the exact name of the color (924 Crimson Red). “No,” I tell you. I attack the paper one last time, my hand eager to capture as much of your face as it can fit on the page. “I want all of you.” And I will have all of you. I will, I will. All of you. Yes, look at me like that. Breathe that way. You’re so capable and yet so helpless, aren't you Edge? It only makes you more beautiful…my hero, powerless with love for me.

I finish the drawing with the scribbled impatience of a new lover who has been kept waiting far too long.
My pencil clattered to the floor. The pad of paper followed it with a flutery thud, dog-earing the lower right corners every page as you pushed me onto my back. I glanced down at your version of my face, which seemed to be watching us. "All of you, Edge," you said again, kissing me avidly and claiming everything you had just drawn. Your abrasive face burned my lips and skin but I didn't care. If anything, it was exactly what I wanted. I was trapped beneath the weight of your naked body, which you allowed me to touch for only a few seconds. "Hands, please," you whispered. I reluctantly removed them from your back and neck. You folded them together and raised my arms over my head.

"You have some colored pencil on your finger," I noticed. You looked at your right hand thoughtfully, grinned, and kissed my inner arm. Then you pressed your red finger onto my damp skin, dragging it down my arm and leaving a rosy stain in its wake. Satisfied, you resumed your insistent kissing and murmured gruff, pornographic suggestions.

"...Should take you right here on this couch—you’d like that, wouldn't you?"

"Yes."
You paused and regarded me with a sly grin. It softened as you touched my swollen lips with your finger. You slowly shook your head and said quietly, "Oh Edge. I don't deserve you."

"And yet here I am."

We shifted positions. I put my arm around your shoulders as you lay on your side, wedged between the cushions and my chest. The couch was too small for us to stay like that for very long. My arm fell asleep almost instantly, and I'm sure you were equally uncomfortable and making similar sacrifices to accommodate me. You kissed my neck and my leg fell off the couch. "I could stay like this forever," you said with faux dreaminess, punctuated by a truly epic stomach rumble. We chuckled.

"Hungry again?" I asked.

"It feels like it's been years since I’ve eaten real food," you smiled.

"I thought you just had some wine and cheese."

"I don't want little snacky stuff," you pouted.

"Let's see what we can find, then."

We sat up and you flipped through a pamphlet on the coffee table that included a map of the complex. After puzzling over the map for a grand total of two seconds, you decided you couldn’t make sense of it. You handed it over to me with the complete understanding that I would and wandered off to find some clothes. I took the liberty of drawing a straight line between the "You are here" arrow and the dining area some fifty yards away. You reappeared.

"You may want to keep this map, Bono, in case we get separated," I said, tracing my finger over the simple line I had just made.

"Well, well. Mr. Mensa strikes again," you said, pocketing the map and a loose black marker.

We walked outside where Larry was sleeping in a lounge chair by the pool. You clicked the marker, put a finger to your lips, and crept behind him. Gingerly, you began to write your name on his pinkish back. We laughed as Larry woke up and muttered, "Payback, you goddamn bastard."

Once he was out of earshot, you asked, "Ever think about drawing Larry, Reg?" It had officially begun: the merciless teasing that will in all likelihood continue until my dying day.

"No."

"Oh come on. Now that is a face. He’d be a wonderful muse for you! And his hair: that's just the way you like it, am I wrong? So fucking clean cut."

Alright, Bono, I thought. "You know, you make a good point about Larry," I said. "A person can only draw you so many times before the initial thrill wears off, and one is left to contend with...well, that troublesome nose of yours, for example."

We made eye contact for a few wry seconds. You erupted with laughter. "Oh, this is going to be fun," you said.

A cluster of white-haired tourists were having an important weather discussion in the middle of the sidewalk, and we had to split up and walk around them. Other than that, it seemed like we continued to have the place to ourselves as we found Wright’s, the resort’s "signature restaurant." The virtually abandoned dining room reeked of new carpeting. In an attempt to cover up the newness of the place
and perhaps summon the spirit of the Old Southwest, the management had covered every conceivable surface with garlands of dried red peppers. You smelled one and indicated that they were real. "Did you know red peppers are the hottest peppers?" you asked.

"Actually, I'm pretty sure the smallest peppers are the hottest."

Unable to find any kind of staff, we seated ourselves and you fiddled with your cloth napkin. It had been folded to resemble a fan, or a shell, or some similar item that had nothing to do with the spirit of the Old Southwest. "I don't know; that seems wrong to me, Edge."

I nodded noncommittally.

You opened a menu and grinned. "Okay, look at this. What do they use to symbolize hot?"

"A pepper."

"And what color is that pepper?"

"Red."


"That pepper is also very small."

You threw your napkin at me and noticed an attractive waitress of indeterminate age hovering beside you. "Oh! Why hello there…Maria," you said, scrutinizing her name tag.

"Good afternoon, gentlemen, and welcome to Wright’s," she said, smiling gently at both of us.

Your expression became conspiratorial. "May I ask you something?"

"Of course, sir," she replied.

You lowered your voice to an unnecessary stage whisper. "How does this place turn a profit? I mean…" You gestured at the empty room.

"Oh! Well, actually the dining room does not officially open for another two hours."

You shot me a reproachful glance, beamed at Maria, and said, "On behalf of my friend here, I would like to apologize."

"Perfectly all right, sir. Exceptions can be made."

You turned to me. "Edge, haven't I always said that Southwestern women are the most gracious and charming on the planet?"

"If you've said it once, you've said it a million times."

You opened your menu. "I promise you we won't be any trouble. Tell me, Maria, which of these entrees with the peppers beside them would you recommend?"

She winked at me. "Well, I usually don't recommend this dish to the average guest—but if you're feeling adventurous, you might enjoy our pork enchiladas with habanero salsa. I should warn you that they're not for the faint of heart…"

"Heh. No one has ever accused me of that, Maria. Okay, enchiladas sound wonderful. Are you
"I think I’ll just have a vodka and…a bowl of vanilla ice cream, thanks."

"Absolutely bizarre," you muttered as Maria began to walk away. "I love what you've done with the place, incidentally," you called after her. "All these peppers—it's very festive."

She smiled and said, "Why thank you, sir." She took a few steps backward, seemingly unable to stop looking at you, a common phenomenon that occurs whenever you encounter virtually any woman. You gave a little wave to break the spell and she scurried away.

"Now did you hear that, Edge? ‘Thank you, sir.’ I like that. You’d do well to emulate her example when addressing me in the future."

"I'll try to keep that in mind."

As we waited for our waitress to return, you reminisced about the times we’d been to Arizona before and told anecdotes about people you had met, none of whom I could remember. I listened and nodded. As you chattered away, I felt the tension draining from my mind, my heart, and even the rest of my body. These weeks of drawing you in secret—and feeling somewhat guilty about keeping it from you—had become burdensome. Now that the burden had been lifted, I felt lightheaded with a relief that bordered on giddiness, and I found myself laughing at whatever it was you were saying.

Predictably, your meal was comically hot, and you spent almost a whole minute pretending your sinuses weren't exploding. I thought our relationship had moved beyond the showing-off phase; were you doing that for my benefit or Maria’s or both? There was no need to impress two people who are already in love with you. Still, your little spectacle was endearing, and I could hear Maria’s far-off laughter when you finally exclaimed, "Jesus Christ, Edge!" You reached for a glass of water.

"That's only going to make it worse, Bono," I said. "Here." I gave you my vodka as you regarded me with quizzical eyes. "The water will merely spread the heat around. Alcohol—do you want me to get into the chemistry of it?" You rolled your eyes as you drank, so I took that as a no. I slid the ice cream over to you and gestured for you to have some. "Ice cream is sometimes even more effective."

You finished your drink in record time and came up for air. "Tell me, how is it that you know everything in the entire goddamn world?"

"Have some ice cream, B," I said. You did so and gave me a small, fond smile.

You wisely abandoned your meal and opted to gorge on the complimentary chips and salsa instead. I sat back and listened to more of your stories, my mind still reeling a bit from what had happened earlier in the afternoon. Eventually you paused and looked at me. "Awfully quiet, aren't you?" I nodded, and we were quiet together for a while.

"I can't get over it, Edge—the drawings," you said, breaking the silence. I didn't know what to say. I just looked at you. You moved closer and whispered, "I've never been so turned on by you." I scoffed at that. "No, I mean it," you continued. "It's like…it's like a veil has been lifted, you know?"

I nodded slowly. "I kind of feel the same way."

"I want to see all of them, you realize."

"A certain young man is having a birthday soon."

You set several hundred dollars on the table. I couldn't believe you’d had the foresight to bring
actual money. You stood up and said, "Let’s get out of here. Follow me."

I couldn’t resist saying, "Are you sure you’ll be able to find your way back?"

You looked over your shoulder at me as I followed you outside. "You're destroying the mood, Edge."

I grinned, "Oh wait, you still have that map."

"That will be quite enough," you snapped/laughed as you pushed me into a tiny alcove between two buildings. Soon you had me pinned against a wall, facing it. The sun-warmed stones were the same temperature as your body. I turned my head, and we kissed as you pressed yourself against me. Whatever unseen pepper remnants were still on your lips stung mine, which had already been abraded during our session on the couch. Almost instantly my lips felt swollen and tight as I drank in your hot, divine venom.

And now there you are, sitting right in front of me, your right hand supporting your beautiful head. I put my pencil down and nod at you. The drawing is spare but I’m calling it finished. “Was my nose troublesome?” you grin.

“As usual.”

“I'm an excellent model, aren’t I,” you announce rather than ask, stretching your arms over your head.

And why wouldn't you be? You love attention more than anything else in the world. I look up from my pad of dog-eared paper and my eyes meet yours. “You're perfect and you know it.”
A year ago, I never would have considered even reading this story, much less finishing it. But...here we are: new material after 14 years of no material. I really hope you enjoy it, and I hope the quality of writing is the same as before if not better. (Please don't tell me if it's not as good. My Bono is extremely sensitive to harsh criticism, and I fear he may be tempted to jump ship before we're done here.)

Fetish will continue for six more chapters after this one, with alternating points of view. This one is an Edge chapter, and these two are happy and very much in love. As I wrote it, I began to fret: Are they too happy? Where's the conflict here? Is this story boring now? Then I remembered the number of words I've devoted to our heroes to get them to this place, and I feel like they deserve a long, creative, happy ending, and so do you, my dear readers.

But you might want to brush your teeth after reading this one. It's so sweet you could get a cavity.

PS About 2/3 of the way into this chapter, I referred to something as "small," but I was ever so tempted to call it "smol" because that's what it is. You'll know it when you read it.

PPS A huge thank-you to fouroux for leaving me some incredibly gratifying comments on previous chapters last week. God, I hope this new one lives up to your expectations, sweetheart.
We climbed the stairs to the top floor of the villa. We opened the door, saw the massive windows, and knew it had to be ours.

“White. We should paint it white. All of it: ceiling, floor, walls, furniture. Like in the Imagine video, you know?”

“Do you think we could get a white piano up here?”

“Edge, we can do whatever we want.”
The white room is off limits to everyone but us (the occasional housekeeper notwithstanding). You and Ali have a bedroom, and so do Morleigh and I, but the white room is exclusively yours and mine. The majority of its windows face the Cote d’Azur, but when we’re in our white bed, all we can see is the sky. And in the shadows of twilight and just before dawn, our room is blue.

“I always feel overwhelmingly naked up here, B.”

“That’s kind of the point.”

Mirrors are its only artwork, and up there it’s silent except for the wind, the sea, and the music we create. The room is so stark we can’t help but focus on each other. Every hair, every freckle, every scar, and every perceived flaw is visible, accepted, and loved.

“Earth to Edge,” you called softly from our bed du jour. Apparently I had been sitting cross-legged on the couch/bench hybrid at the foot of the bed for quite a while. The swimming pool just outside our suite looked like it was filled with Windex.

“You’re up already?”

“I have been awake since you began your little zen exercise or whatever it is you are doing down there. Some of us require breakfast, you know.”

I crawled back to join you in your bleached-sheet empire. “Poor darling. How long have you been waiting for me?”

You checked your watch-free wrist. “Something like fourteen years.”

“And yet you haven’t aged a day.” I kissed your cheek. “Happy almost-birthday, B.”

“Well, unless I have this wrong, we’ll be busy all day tomorrow, and my actual birthday is on a travel day, so as far as I’m concerned, today is my birthday. I do hope you have all kinds of plans for us, the Edge.”

“I think we each have interviews this afternoon, but yes, I have plans for us.”

“Was that what you were doing down there? Plotting and scheming?”

“As a matter of fact, no. I was just thinking...well, if you really want to know, Bono, I can’t stop thinking about the white room.”

You studied my face and murmured, “Mmm, I like where this is going.” I felt a hand run up my thigh. “Tell me about the white room.”

“I keep thinking about what it will feel like,” I said, looking straight ahead.

“Of course you are, love.”

“And I’m seeing flashes, as if I’m outside my body and watching us on the bed. Bright sunlight. You’re on top, and we’re moaning and gasping and crying out each other’s names.”

“Edge.”

“I’m looking at my own face, and my eyes are closed. I’m biting my lip, but I’m smiling. And your expression is one of pure...rapture.”

“Oh my. You can't stop thinking about me fucking you in the white room,” you said dreamily as you
sank beneath silky Egyptian cotton. “Now I’m thinking about it, too.”

“Yeah.”

“Christ. First chance we get, Edge.”

“This summer.”

“This summer.” You paused. “But…that’s not gonna be the first time I—because I can’t wait that—”

“Oh no. Of course not. Don’t be ridiculous, sir.”

I heard a tap on our door over your happy groan. Room service had arrived with coffee and an attempt at a full Irish breakfast. A small birthday cake decorated with thirty-seven tiny candy bumblebees was also on the cart.

“This is some seriously cute stuff,” you said, tossing on a bathrobe and scrutinizing the bees. “What the fuck, Reg, is this one wearing a crown?”

“Happy birthday, King B.”

“Get over here and help me eat all this,” you said, popping the royal insect into my mouth.

We sat beside each other at the dining table just outside the bedroom and ate from the same plate and fork, each of us well aware of what we do and do not like about an Irish breakfast. (You are perpetually disturbed by the black pudding and the “weird tomato,” so I ate them for you, and you took care of the soda bread for me.)

I glanced at the complimentary local newspaper and felt your hand return to my leg. Your fingers stroked down the length of my thigh and back up. “Gonna be 100 degrees today. And tomorrow.”

“Ahh, fuck.”

“I’ll never get over the temperature differences in this country.”

You cleared your throat between bites of cake. “No wonder I’m hoarse these days. Last week it was snowing. Mmm, eat some of this; it’s absolutely decadent.”

“I declare a heat blizzard. We’re staying here today.”

“What, did you have a forced march up that ho-hum mountain back there or maybe a golf outing planned for me? You know my views on golf.”

“I thought we could at least drive out to the mountain, but maybe that can wait until the sun’s down.”

“Do you really want to, love?”

“Yeah.”

“Then we’re going. That’s all there is to it.” Your hand continued its hypnotic movements.

“I have other things planned for you, B. For us.”

You leered and nudged an empty cardboard box toward me—we had already experimented with its contents. “I had fun last night.”
I shrugged. “You explicitly asked for toys and someone to play with, and I aim to please.”

“You please me a great deal, Edge.”

I nodded at your hand. “Enjoying my leg?”

You shifted in your chair. “Your legs are perfect. Look at this pearly skin, and this divine dark hair is so soft. Fuck. You’re a walking miracle. The pride of Wales.” The carpeting was tan with evenly-spaced brown stripes of alternating widths. “And I still have the power to make you blush, even at my advanced age. I’m the luckiest man in the world.” I closed my eyes and smiled, and you took this as your cue to trace your tongue along the curves of my right ear. “Tell me about these exciting plans of yours,” you whispered.

I turned my head a bit and kissed your chin. “Two words: couple’s massage.”

You laughed with bemused glee. “Oh, really? Us?”

“No. You and Larry.” I shrugged. “This place is a spa, too. It’s not their job to judge. And anyway, I’m sure they’ve seen it all.”

“I’m sure they have, Reg,” you chuckled. “You are something else. When is this happening?”

I looked at the clock on a nearby wall. It was an annoying, number-free, analog affair in the aesthetic of Frank Lloyd Wright, and it barely qualified as a clock. “In an hour and fifteen minutes? I think? Right. Ten o’clock.”

“Hmm, better get ourselves cleaned up, then,” you said, sucking on one of the bees and grinning at me.

“What?” I asked as I followed you into the cream-colored bathroom.

“I’m just trying to picture you setting this up.” You made a fist and extended your thumb and pinkie, creating a pretend telephone. ‘Ehm, my lover and I are rock stars of some note, and I want to surprise him by taking him to a dim little room where two strangers will rub our naked bodies with expensive oils as we nearly perish from sensual pleasure.’” You raised your hand to your forehead and faked a swoon.

“Were you eavesdropping? Because that’s exactly what I said.”

You fiddled with the shower and turned to me while the water heated up. “Thank you, by the way. I’m proud of you for stepping out of your comfort zone for me.”

“I hope you’ll have fun, B.”

“Get in here,” you said, and I joined you in the not-too-hot steam. Normally I am not a fan of shower-sharing. One person (ahem) generally monopolizes the water while the other person shivers and doesn’t know where to look. But luckily this one was larger than usual and had an additional shower head. You sang some of the more idiotic parts of Happy Birthday by Altered Images while I wondered how many years had passed since I had even thought about that song.

Once you had exhausted Happy Birthday’s thin lyrics, you regarded me with a self-satisfied heh. “Wanna help me out with the back, Edge?” you asked sweetly, handing me your razor and facing the wall. You placed your hands and forehead against the tiles (a geometric design involving concentric squares), exposing the nape of your neck. “You can do it, love. I believe in you.”
Your razor was red--of course it was--with a textured, rubberized handle that made it easier to hold. This was a good idea for an accident-prone person like you, or really anyone with shaky hands and an idiosyncratic predilection for...oh my love. Your inescapable neck. The line. I watched my hands shave the stubble below the line and down that impossibly long stretch of beautiful skin, flesh, bone, and just...sex. I watched my hands shave your neck, and I heard the razor’s delicate rasp as you sighed. The line was no more than eight inches long and was composed of two 120 degree angles joined by a straight line that had the power to fucking enslave me, your hard, helpless lover whose tongue couldn’t stop itself from following in the wake of the blade.

“Your turn, gorgeous,” you drawled, taking the razor and deftly switching places with me. You nudged my legs apart and stood between them, and we inhaled as our twin erections pressed against each other. “Or rather, my turn.” The tiles were cool against my back, and you held my chin and jaw in your hand. “Let me.”

“Anything.”

You rubbed some gel on my face and neck. “You’re mine, you know.” One hand held me in place while you shaved with the other. I closed my eyes, but I knew you were smiling at me solely based on the sound of your breathing...which I finally remembered to do. You provided a sort of running commentary of cooed observations as my hands traveled all over you and all over me, distinctions that didn’t matter because by that point we had become one being.

“Perfect cheekbone, I’ve always wondered what it must be like to do this...ooh baby you’re so lucky to have that flawless jawline...this hot little sideburn, fuck me...fun to work around this shape...it’s so ludicrously sexy I can hardly stand it...don’t worry I won’t mess it up, not on my life...I’m saving your chin for last, for dessert, you realize...now this other cheekbone, goddamn it you’re all man, aren’t you?...Edge, do you want to know what it’s like for me?...Do you want to know what it’s like for me when you fuck me?...Do you want to know what it will feel like when I’m fucking you?...Because, and baby, this occurred to me last night: the first time I fuck you, I’ll know what you’ve been feeling all this time. And the first time I fuck you, you’ll know what I’ve been feeling all this time. That’s never happened before, and won’t that be interesting, love?...neck so fucking elegant, not obscene like mine...Do you want to know?”

“Yes.”

“Yes, well, you are extremely fortunate, Edge, because you have given me plenty of time to learn, and I know what feels good, and I know what works, and I’ll be able to take you places you’ve never...oh Edge, I’ll make sure you’re ready for it, but even the most careful and patient and gentle work leading up to it will not adequately prepare you for...me fucking you, me inside you at last, and you’re just going to have to accept that and deal with the absolute mindfuck you’ll experience...and make no mistake, Edge, I will fuck you, but if you can go into it knowing that indescribable emotion will become your reality...yes love...oh god Edge keep doing that...it’s exquisite and dirty and sexy and sublime and you will feel utterly helpless when I get to that place, that place, you know the one, and if I can make you come when I’m there, love, it’s an orgasm like no other, and if I can make you come when I’m there, love, and if at the same time I can get your hand on this line you love so much, well, I can’t even hazard a guess as to how hard it will hit you and how unfathomable it will be for you and how profoundly it will change you, love...oh fuck, Edge, help me.”

I took the razor from your hand--you had long since finished with me--and we kissed, long and hard, the first real kiss of the day. Then you dropped down a bit and took my smooth chin between your teeth, gently biting it at first, then sucking, then kissing as I helped you, and you helped me, and dear god we needed a release--
“Muse.”
“Genius.”
“King.”
“God.”

We sank to the floor of the shower—I adjusted the water temperature on the way down—and sat there in the lukewarm rain holding hands for a strung-out minute or two, our legs trembling. “I’m so happy,” you whispered.

“Me too.”

“Wanna guess what time it is?”

“I believe it’s fifty-six o’clock, B.”

“You know, Edge...if we ever manage to exit this shower, and if we can somehow drag our waterlogged bodies to wherever the hell we are supposed to go, they’re gonna take one look at us and say, ‘These men couldn’t possibly be more relaxed. There’s nothing we can do here,’ and we’ll be sent away.”

“A pre-massage orgasm really was a good idea.”

“Agreed.” You made a feeble attempt to stand. “Ugh, it’s as if the force of gravity is ten times greater in this shower.”

I was having my own problems. “Well, the earth’s gravitational pull varies from place to place, you know. It’s stronger at the poles than it is at the equator. But it’s nothing you would ever notice.”

“Help me up, professor.”

We dressed in clothes that would be removed a few minutes later. On our way to the spa, we decided that there was no need to reveal our identities to anyone, should they ask, and any flirtations with the staff, intentional or otherwise, would probably be a bad idea given the situation. “Doesn’t matter, Reg. You’re the only person I want to look at this morning.”

We opened the heavy glass doors at the spa’s entrance and were instantly enveloped by its narcotized atmosphere. I checked us in while you stood beneath a skylight and admired a planter filled with dozens of colorful orchids. We gave each other a secret smile.

A serene woman with dark hair (easily your type, and my type, too, for that matter), led us down a hallway to an area where we changed into robes. From there we were guided to a small room. The decor was minimalist with a few candles and teak hardwood flooring that ran up the walls as well. A large window looked out at the ho-hum mountain, which was partially obscured by a thin screen, and two massage tables were artfully draped to resemble something less medical.

We were joined by a couple of middle-aged massage therapists who may have been husband and wife, or brother and sister, or possibly cousins. Whatever the case, they clearly had no idea who we were. They asked us if we had any problem areas. I mentioned that I was a guitarist, and the male massage therapist immediately understood what he could do for me. You said your job involved dealing with the public on a daily basis, and the woman gave you a knowing nod. They left the room so we could undress, get on the tables, and chuckle quietly about your “public.”
Our enigmatic new friends returned as an inoffensive New Age drone was piped in. I shot you a look that I hoped would telegraph *Just surrender to it, B,* and you responded with a fond, *Totally gonna do that* glance.

I had scheduled a massage for the two of us after having spent a few minutes online with a menu of the spa’s various amenities. At the time, I thought it would be a semi-campy experience we could laugh about when it was over. But when I felt every muscle in my back liquify beneath a pair of intuitive, strong hands, I realized how much tension I had been carrying with me. When I heard your gentle, appreciative sighs, and when your blue eyes caught mine for a euphoric split second, I realized I had stumbled upon something much more profound than an amusing detour on our day off. You needed this. I needed this, too.

My eyes returned to you periodically during our 75-minute session, and it was surprisingly moving to watch anonymous but highly-skilled hands caress your body and to feel the same sensations with mine. What a subtle but effective bonding experience.

I thought of my unsure self sixteen years ago when your hands on my shoulders and back were everything I needed. Then not even ten years ago when I was starved for the touch of another human being, you were there, too. You have always been there, and you have had so much on your mind and so many problems to solve. I wanted you to feel the love you crave and deserve, and not just from me but from everyone.

We’ve spent so many years being posed, dressed, groomed, and arranged by people. For the most part, our inhibitions have become a thing of the past, especially yours. And my god, you have nothing to feel self-conscious about with that glorious body, that soft ripple of a ribcage, that lovely stomach whose dark hair patterns I’ve long-since memorized...so many small perfections housing a soul that, miraculously, is in love with me.

We were being manipulated in other places that were innocuous and forgotten--ankles, elbows, wrists--yet they felt so much better afterwards. Throughout the session you were remarkably unticklish. I was hungry to have you all to myself again and even a bit jealous of the professional hands I had hired to soothe your body, when not even an hour ago we were as close as two people could possibly be. I wanted to learn how to touch you like this. I wanted to remember the sequences and techniques, but then I heard your voice saying, *Leave it to you to turn a massage into a learning experience.* So I let my mind drift for a while.

*Just surrender to it, Edge.*

*The next time you sigh, I will join you, B.*

The muscles in my arms were being worked so thoroughly I wondered if they’d remember how to play a guitar when it was over. I looked at you one last time. *He’s so beautiful. Blissful little smile. Content and happy. Beloved.* Then I finally abandoned myself to the idea that for all intents and purposes, I was a simple creature composed of flesh and bone who should probably just relax and breathe in and out and maybe the world wouldn’t stop turning if I let go for a while.

An indeterminate amount of time passed--either minutes or dozens of minutes--and then the kind, glorious, and angelic siblings/spouses/cousins quietly informed us that our session was complete. They said we could take all the time we needed before we got dressed, and then they disappeared.

“Oh my god, Edge,” you moaned, staring at the blank ceiling in wonderment. “Was I abducted by aliens?”

“I experienced some lost time myself.”
You slowly rolled onto your side and smiled, “Now I can finally look at you. I was tempted to stare.”

“Me too.”

“You looked so sexy lying there, Edge, with that man’s hands all over you. I wanted to watch a lot longer—I wanted to join in!—but then I thought, yeah, maybe let’s not look at him too much. You know.”

“Oh, I know.” I sat up a bit and marveled at the things attached to my shoulders that used to be my arms. “I hope I’ll be able to play tomorrow night. I wouldn’t be surprised if he completely erased all my muscle memory.”

You laughed and sat up, and we faced each other for a moment. You smiled and mouthed the words, “Thank you.”

So relaxed I worried my legs wouldn’t support the weight of my body, I tentatively got up and approached you with a hug and a kiss. “I love you.”

“Baby.”

I held your face in my hands and kissed your lavender-scented forehead. “I had no idea this would affect me so much.”

Still on your table, you leaned in and placed your cheek against my chest, and I stroked your hair. “Watching the person you love receive pleasure—the same pleasure you are experiencing—it’s a profound thing.”

“And those two were perfect.”

You got up and we put our robes back on. “Honestly, though? Even after all that, I wouldn’t be able to pick either them out of a police lineup.”

“That’s got to be the mark of a true professional in this line of work.”

We made our way back to the first room and got dressed. You regarded your shoelaces with wry dismay. “God, my muscles feel like they’ve been puréed.”

“I’ll tie them for you.”

We returned to the ridiculous blast furnace that was the Arizona sun at noon, 95 degrees and rising, and walked/floated along whatever shady paths we could find to the same pepper-laden restaurant we had visited the day before. Paul saw us enter (“Right on time, thanks lads”), introduced us to two reporters, and before we knew it we were seated at different tables and talking with them over the course of a couple of hours. We had unobstructed views of each other, though, and we stole any number of glances as we answered the same five questions over lunch along with some guitar-related technical questions for me and more artistic ones for you. I’m certain our interviews will seem oddly blissed-out and borderline high when they’re in print.

Meanwhile your lovestruck Maria made sure that you and I stayed well-hydrated at all times, and just for fun, she gave us complimentary bowls of ice cream. Her jaw dropped when I told her it was your birthday. This news resulted in your second cake of the day (decorated with peppers she assured you were made of frosting), a kiss on the hand and tickets to our show for a thrilled Maria (“Make that happen, Paul,” you called across the room), and a free round of drinks for everyone still eating lunch at 2:00 p.m. (“Make that happen, too, Paul”).
We frittered away the remainder of the afternoon on phone calls home, recreational reading in bed, an unnecessary nap, and as much time as we could stand in the swimming pool beneath the punishing sun. This amounted to twenty minutes for you and twenty-one minutes for me. I heard Larry’s laughter erupt from a shady chaise lounge as you hot-footed it back to our suite, your small wet footprints instantly evaporating on the concrete.

I found time to arrange for a car—no driver—and some Maria-approved snacks and beverages for us that evening. At sunset I drove us five miles east to Camelback mountain, which at 2,700 feet and situated near the center of Phoenix did not exactly inspire awe, but it was a change of scenery.

“It looks sort of like a camel, I guess,” you said as I parked in an obscure lot near a trail head. “A clinically-depressed, dying camel who has given up on the entire concept of joy. Even this sunset is not doing it any favors.” I looked at you with an exaggerated pouty frown. “Aww, I’m sorry, Edge. You’re doing the best you can with what you’ve got.”

We rolled down the windows and warm-but-cooling air flooded the car. I tuned the radio to a niche station that played alternative rock recorded long before it became a recognizable genre. The clearly-stoned deejay seemed to be playing up the nostalgia angle. “Disturbing how the songs we grew up with are now...good-time rock and roll oldies,” I said.

“You, who can forget putting a dime in the jukebox at the malt shop to listen to this old favorite by The Damned?” you asked, investigating the snacks. “Oh, fuck. Empanadas? I love these little goddamned pies.”

“Me too.”

We ate the little goddamned pies and you drank from a bottle of “not completely objectionable” whiskey. Phoenix traffic had thinned considerably—presumably everyone was home watching Friends and Seinfeld. I had no real agenda for our field trip other than to sit in a car with you for a while. The sunset was about what you would expect at the end of a cloudless, blazing day: a brief hiccup of orange and yellow along the horizon as the blushing sun slipped away apologetically.

You held your fingers and thumbs at right angles and created a viewfinder with them. “Lookin’ right at home out here, cowboy,” you said, putting me in the frame with the silhouette of a saguaro cactus in the distance. I tipped my hat to you before tossing it behind me—the driver’s seat headrest had been interfering with its brim, which is something they never talk about when you buy one. You fiddled with the handle beneath your seat for a few seconds. With a huff of victory, you slid the seat back as far as it could go, reclined it a bit, and put your feet up on the dash (“the only advantage of being this short”). I repeated your actions but kept my feet down, and we sang along to Lust for Life. You gave Hey man where’d you get that lotion? the emotional heft it deserved.

“Good idea bringing us out here, Edge.”

“We’re not doing much of anything, though.”

“Exactly.” You took my hand. “I just like being with you.”

“The feeling is mutual.”

We continued to listen to the radio and watched the amber grid of Phoenix come to life. In twenty-four hours you and I will be on stage in front of (hopefully) thousands of people and engulfed by our own gigantic light show, I thought. But tonight we were just a couple of guys in an anonymous car, listening to music made by other people.
I gave your hand a tentative squeeze. “Wanna see my other drawings?”

You sat bolt upright. “Yes!”

I handed you a folder. “Happy birthday, love.”

You kissed my lips. “Oh Edge, thank you. I know you must have mixed feelings about showing these to me.”

I shrugged. You examined each one with a smile on your face and pointed at favorite parts while I sat there bashfully. “Christ, Edge. I feel so loved, so known,” you said. “I wish my mother could have met you. I know I’ve said that before.”

“You are loved, and you always will be.”

“I think about her a lot on my birthday. A birthday is as much about the mother as it is about the child, if not more so.” You watched the red and white lights of a plane as it flew over us.

“You’re right.”

“I mean, can you imagine giving birth? Everything changes for that woman for as long as she lives.” You sighed and rubbed the bridge of your nose.

I stroked your forearm. “How old was she when—”

“She was 48.”

“I knew it was something like that.”

You opened your eyes and looked at your reflection in the rear-view mirror. “Sometimes I think if I can make it past 48, maybe I’ll be safe. Until then, and I know this is irrational, Edge, but until then I feel like it could hit me at any time, the same way it hit her, and then I’d be gone just like that.” You paused and made a sweeping gesture at the city lights and the mountain. “How many days like this does a person get? Life is so fragile.”

“Oh, Bono,” I said, placing my hand on your knee. “The odds of that happening to you have got to be slim. But I don’t blame you for feeling that way. For what it’s worth, we’re together right now.”

“It’s worth everything. I love you for drawing these, Edge.”

“I love you.” We sat there for a moment, and both of us smiled in recognition as XTC’s Plans for Nigel began playing.

“May I ask you a question, though?” you said, pointing at my drawing of your mouth. “Why do some of them have these lines, you know, and some of them don’t?”

“The lines are just a compositional device.”

“Ahh, listen to you.” You grinned and settled in to listen to me.

“It’s true. Sometimes artists will draw a line at a certain angle and follow it up somewhere else in the composition. Like maybe the top of a window will continue as a line on a bookshelf. It creates a kind of visual order. It’s known as a classical follow-through, but people like Picasso and de Kooning did them, too.”

“You enormous, beautiful geek.”
“Once you learn about them, you start seeing them everywhere. It’s like this secret, underlying art language.”

“Classical follow-through, eh?”

“It’s also known as ‘coincidence of edge.’”

“Oh is it, now?” you laughed, raising an eyebrow. “That’s all I’m ever gonna call it. How did you learn about this?”

“The miracle of the internet.”

You gave me a sly grin. “Were you in fact searching for yourself, the Edge?”

“Possibly.”

You found my last drawing. “Okay, well, why didn’t you make those lines on all of them?”

I turned to face you. “I suppose those drawings without the lines are me at my most love-struck.”

“Oh, I see.” You lifted my hand to your temple and drew it back into the short hair over your ear. “Baby. If you could see your face right now...”

I shook my head a bit. “Huh. Wow, I was just remembering something--I haven’t thought about it in a while.”

“What’s that?”

“Well, there’s no way you’d remember this. You were asleep at the time. We were very young.” I continued to stroke your hair. I simply couldn’t stop. “It was after a show, and I was sitting on a couch somewhere, and MTV was on in the background. And this should give you an idea of how long ago it was: they were playing music videos all day and night. No other programming.”

“That was a long time ago,” you smiled, leaning into my hand.

“I’m thinking it was 1984. Drive by The Cars and When Does Cry, What’s Love Got to Do With It, songs like those. Just in a random order like they used to do. So I was reading something and you came strutting in, talking a mile a minute. You plopped down beside me and became quiet after a while, and you watched the videos as the night’s adrenaline drained from your system. I could tell you were fading fast because your head popped up as the rocket launched at the top of the hour, but I knew you were a goner when Here Comes the Rain Again began playing.”

“Well, that song’s essentially a lullaby.”

I wanted to put my arm around you, but the bucket seats were too far apart, so my fingers took one for the team and traced the line on the back of your neck instead. You writhed playfully. “Right. So you curled into a little ball beside me, Just like a kitten, I thought, and you fell asleep. Some of your longer hair had fallen across your nose, and it was twitching, so I pushed your hair back.”

“Fucking mullet.”

My fingers returned to your temple. “But as I did that, I touched the shorter hair over your ears here, and I felt this strange thrill, like I had been zapped somehow. You were oblivious, of course, and I saw your eyes flicker beneath your closed lids. And Annie’s voice was so crystalline and melancholy, and I heard her words in your voice.”
“Talk to me like lovers do.” Your eyes reflected the radio’s glowing lights.

I kissed your forehead. “Yes. I wanted to touch you again, but I knew I probably shouldn’t. Then I looked at her, and I looked back at you and tried to imagine you with hair like hers, and that thought was so erotic I couldn’t handle it.”

“Ooh, baby,” you said, chuckling. “Except maybe not orange.”

“Definitely not. But I was a father, and we were both married, and I had been trying to keep you out of my mind, of course. And yet you were there, and so was I, and Annie and you were singing to me. My hand was hovering over your ear as the song wound down, and those video credits appeared in the lower-left corner of the screen, you know: artist, title, album, record company. And the name of the album was...Touch. So I did.”

“Thank you, Annie and Dave.” Your fingers traced the contours of my cheekbone.

“I touched that shorter hair again and died just a little bit more. Then I heard you say mmm, or maybe it was mum, and I carefully withdrew my hand.”

“Me and my big mouth.”

“There's more to it than that, but I guess you could call it an origin story of sorts.”

You gave me an awkward but affectionate embrace over the gearshift. “I love that you touched me.”

You took both of my hands in yours as David Bowie’s Rock ‘n’ Roll Suicide faded into Perfect Day by Lou Reed, and we smiled at each other.

“God, this is us today,” you said, kissing my fingers and then my mouth until Lou began repeating, You’re going to reap just what you sow.

“That line is amazing,” I said.

“You will, you know, Edge. You’ve given me so much. And I’ll give it all back to you, again and again. I will. I’ll give it all back to you.” We studied each other in the twilight for the remainder of the song.

“Let’s go home, B.”
This chapter is from Bono's point of view, and therefore it rambles on for a very long time. It details a busy day and night in the life of B and E along with a series of flashbacks related to Stay (Faraway, So Close!). It is also populated by a number of women and girls and angels, Edge's shorts (which I somehow knew existed days before photographic evidence surfaced), and a sexy ribbon nobody ever seems to talk about. This chapter even has a villain: the fucking sun.

The house cats remark is a direct quote from Mad Men I couldn't resist dropping in. I could find very little information on the Tempe concert described below, other than it was a by-the-numbers show that included a snippet of Alice Cooper's Hello, Hooray. This was the first and only show where U2 played that snippet, but I don't know what part of the song they used, so I went with the part that worked for me. Everything else is totally made up by me and is, of course, super gay.

I want to thank P.J. very much for creating this beautiful drawing of Edge in profile. You might think it would be easy to find a good reference photo of the left side of Edge's face from the 90s, but it's not, and she had to resort to some screen-cap heroism to make this happen for us. This was exactly what I wanted, my friend, and I love it and you to pieces.
I awoke to the subdued sound of an acoustic guitar coming from...somewhere inside the suite? Outside. From the bed I saw you practicing by the pool. “I’m going to take advantage of this pocket of time,” is something you say frequently when we’re on tour. That’s what you must have thought yesterday morning, although I know you prefer long, uninterrupted stretches when it comes to your guitar, or anything else, really.

You were also taking advantage of that pocket of reasonable weather—the one person at the Biltmore smart enough to realize that early morning was the only acceptable time to be outside before it became a scorching hellscape once again. There you were sitting on a chaise lounge in your cowboy
hat and those swimming shorts I made you buy last year because they’re smaller than what most men usually wear, and, I don’t know, they just look right on you. A soft, rose-gold light bounced off the water and danced across your face, hands, and legs as you seemed to be conversing with your guitar, almost cooing at it...the magic hour.

A knock on the door interrupted my spying. Coffee had arrived along with a navy blue ribbon-tied box containing dulce de leche sandwich cookies that were so perfectly imperfect they had to be homemade. A darling note from Maria confirmed this. I threw on a t-shirt and whatever pants were on the floor and pushed the cart outside.

Guitar practice apparently over, you were swimming the kind of clumsy laps a man with no access to swimming pools until age nineteen is capable of executing. Survival swimming. I’m just as bad if not much worse, and I admired you for even attempting any kind of exercise on what was shaping up to be one of the tour’s more exhausting days.

I settled into a deck chair with the Egon Schiele art book you had given me in Denver. This was admittedly just for show. You were all I wanted to look at, and Schiele’s figures wished they could inspire such carnal thoughts. You abandoned your approximation of a basic crawl stroke and were swimming underwater for as far as you could go. I found myself wanting to jump in and challenge you to a contest, but at the same time I was riveted by the much more graceful way your body slid beneath the water.

You surfaced near me with a gasp and a smile—my beloved—and pulled yourself out of the pool. You shook off that humorously leaden gait one takes on after spending any amount of time in the water and stood before me, a dripping wet column from the Pantheon. “Thanks, B,” you said, helping yourself to cookies and coffee and pouring a cup for me. When I took it from you, I noticed a tingle in the palm of my hand. I had been gripping the armrest of my chair so intensely it had created a deep pink rut in my skin.

“Pretty sunrise,” I said, raising my cup to the east while trying not to ogle you as you toweled off. It was the last positive thing I said about the sun yesterday.

You spread your towel on the chaise and stretched out on your stomach. “Wanna do my back?” you asked, winking.

So adorably lame, Edge. Lame yet effective. “The sun is currently posing no threat to your skin, you realize,” I said as I extricated myself from my chair to assist you.

“All set, love,” I said. “Plus now you smell like a garden of scientific delights.”

You looked over your shoulder at me and raised your hips ever so slightly. “I love your hands on me.”

I closed my eyes and enjoyed that sentence. “Sleep well, Edge?”

“In one of my dreams I was eating my grandmother’s crushed velvet couch, and when I opened my eyes, I was kissing your hair. I’m surprised you didn’t wake up.”
“I love your dreams so much I kind of hate them,” I said, returning to my chair.

Pleased with your little poolside flirting campaign, you sat up, put your hat back on, and returned to your guitar. You were playing the bridge from Staring at the Sun, appropriately enough. I felt a bit guilty sitting there doing nothing while you practiced--god knows I could stand to master that song sooner rather than later. I always feel a similar pang of mild resentment when Ali breezes through a series of yoga poses while I’m trying to watch television. I’ll find a pocket of time later in the day, I thought to myself while reaching for another gorgeous cookie.

I will say this for Schiele’s nudes: the vast majority of them gaze at their viewers with a level of eye contact that borders on the confrontational. Meanwhile you are all about showing me your profile, which I am attempting to draw while I’m sitting beside you on the plane (as if turbulence might make this task easier--what’s wrong with me?). How many cumulative hours have I spent staring at the side of your face as you play your guitar, look out the window, or simply contemplate the middle distance? What percentage of those times am I rewarded with a Princess Diana-like sidelong glance? Thirty? Forty? Whatever it is, that number is increasing, gods be praised.

Your playing had stopped again, and I could tell you were looking at me. You were in fact sketching me; I was sure of it. Your eyes studied me for a few seconds before darting back to your pad of paper and drawing your carefully-considered lines. We made eye contact with each other. It’s still a thrill. We continued to relish our quiet morning of pencils scratching, pages turning, and pleasantly humming pool mechanisms.

Egon Schiele was sentenced to a month or so in prison because his work was deemed pornographic, and during that time he painted a self-portrait titled I Will Endure for Art and the Happiness of My Lover, which is something you and I have been trying to do as this tour...dear god, this tour has only just begun. So many months lie ahead of us. But anyway, the things this artist would have done with your pelvis, especially the way it--

“Are you a cowboy?” A petite young woman wrapped in a beach towel leaned over and peered at your face. She spoke with a stutter, but her enthusiasm for you and your hat was obvious.

You beamed at her and slid your pencil into your sketchbook’s spiral binding. “No, I’m not a cowboy, but sometimes I pretend to be one.”

She laughed and noticed your drawing. “Can I see?”

“Of course,” you said, handing the pad to her and pointing at me.

“It’s him!”

“He’s my best friend and I love him,” you explained as she clapped her hands, her long red hair shining in the early morning light.

“You...? Are good,” she said slowly and earnestly. You are, Edge.

You tipped your hat to her. “Thanks, little lady. Do you have a best friend, too?”

She laughed and noticed your drawing. “Can I see?”

“Of course,” you said, handing the pad to her and pointing at me.

“It’s him!”

“He’s my best friend and I love him,” you explained as she clapped her hands, her long red hair shining in the early morning light.

“You...? Are good,” she said slowly and earnestly. You are, Edge.

You tipped your hat to her. “Thanks, little lady. Do you have a best friend, too?”

“My sister,” she said, grinning at the older woman approaching us.

“Don’t bother the nice man, Emma,” she said.

“No, that’s fine.”

Emma nodded at the pool and tossed her towel on the concrete. “Practice time.”
“I practice, too,” you said, patting your guitar case. Clearly this was not going to be enough, so you took your guitar out and showed it to your new admirers, one of whom was jumping up and down.

“Play while I swim?”

“Sure,” you said, the wheels turning in your head. Of course you came up with the perfect song: R.E.M.’s Nightswimming. Emma listened for a few moments before diving into the pool, where she began swimming laps with a level of speed and grace that was breathtaking.

“Remarkable,” you told her sister after playing and watching for a few minutes.

“She’s training for the Summer Games in Raleigh—the Special Olympics. It’s in a couple of years. The individual medley is her specialty,” she said, clearly in awe.

“Well, she’s just incredible. I wish I could swim like that.” You looked over at me. “Can you believe this, B?”

“Extraordinary,” I said, actually meaning it.

You finished the song. “We are in a band together.”

“Oh...I’m sorry. I’m afraid I don’t know who you are. She’s taken over so much of our lives.”

“Well, if you and your sister and anybody else would like to see us play,” you said, tearing a sheet of paper from your pad and writing on it, “Just call this woman’s number and go to this place tonight. We’ll take excellent care of you.”

“But this is...a stadium?”

“That’s right. Emma and...?”

“Um. Jana? You play in a stadium. Oh my god. I wish I--”

“I’m Edge and he is Bono.” I waved.

“Those are unusual....”

“We’re European.”

“Oh. Got it. Wow, thank you so much.”

Emma emerged from the water as you played the traditional Olympic fanfare. “You...are very good,” you told her, extending your hand.

“Let’s go, sweetie.”

Emma hugged you and touched your mustache with a cheeky grin. “Bye cowboy!” She waved at me. “Bye best friend!”

We watched them walk away hand in hand, and we chuckled when Jana said, “I’ve got a big surprise for you later.”

“You were dangerously cute with them, Edge.” You gazed heavenward, an angel merely obeying instructions from on high. “And you’re coming with me,” I decided, pocketing the ribbon from the cookie box. We gathered our things, and I pulled the cart back inside in a graceless, clattering way. I also managed to stub my toe on the threshold. “Ow. Bedroom.”
“Yes, sir,” you said, stifling a laugh.

“What’s so funny?” I snapped. You always made being in charge look easy.

“You’re adorable when you’re trying to be bossy.” You walked over to your side of the bed and attempted to locate the corner of the sheet.

“Not so fast, Edge. That wet swimsuit is coming off.”

“Whatever you want,” you said gamely.

“On your back.”

“Done and done.”

Still fully-clothed, I crawled onto the bed until we were face to face with me on my hands and knees above you. “This chest of yours has been distracting me all morning.”

“Sorry about that.”

“I wanna touch it all the time,” I said, running my hand over your clavicle.

“Go right ahead.”

Your chest is so fucking provocative it’s no wonder you concealed it as much as you did for twenty years. Perfectly male and the polar opposite of Ali’s...I truly have the best of both worlds. You lifted a hand to touch my chest, too. I grabbed it along with your other hand, and working quickly, I tied your wrists together with my ribbon.

“Making good on that promise of yours from a while back, I see,” you murmured as I raised your hands above your head.

I regarded you for a moment. God, you please me, Edge. “I’ve made a decision,” I said, kissing your forehead. You looked up at me expectantly. “It’ll have to be like this, with you on your back. Hands untied, of course.”

“Of course.”

“That way I can see you, and that way you can touch this,” I said softly, my hand at the back of my neck. I leaned closer and whispered in your ear, “Tell me what it’ll feel like for me, love.”

You exhaled slowly. “You want to know what it’s like to fuck a man...”

“Yes.”

“Well, obviously you’re the only man I’ve been with, so that’s not exactly a reliable sample size.”

You pretended to be uncomfortable.

I rolled my eyes. You. “What’s it like to fuck me, Edge?”

You smiled, and then your expression became thoughtful. “I think what surprised me the most, especially during those first few months, was the emotional component. I mean, you can probably guess what it feels like physically, and I will certainly tell you about that too, if you like.”

“I like,” I said, kissing you from your elbow to your wrist. I stopped to gaze into your eyes.
“But the level of trust you had in me made me feel responsible for you. I wanted to give you infinite pleasure.” The things you say, Edge.

“Oh and you did, love, again and again.”

“You gave yourself to me, and in doing so you became an even more beautiful object of desire.”

“Edge...I can feel that happening to me already. You’re...I’m becoming increasingly obsessed.”

“My focus was overwhelmingly on you. My own orgasm was of little importance.”

“Oh, baby.”

“There’s more.”

I leaned into you and kissed your mouth. I simply couldn’t stop. I wanted to give you a very important orgasm. A sexy groan reverberated in your chest, and I felt it in mine. Summoning a herculean amount of self control, I said, “Maybe we should save your...more. Feed me bits and pieces of it throughout the day. It’ll give me something to look forward to in this heat. Let’s stay turned on like we did last week.”

You raised an eyebrow. “Sure, B.”

I grinned. “Incidentally, do you know what we’re doing? Do you know what this kind of thing is called?”

“Why don’t you tell me?”

“It’s called edging. Can you beat that?” You laughed. You knew. Of course you knew. “I may have searched for you online at some point as well.”

“Obviously we have to do it now.”

“You look incredibly good tied up with my ribbon, you know. And it’s navy blue. Does that remind you of anything?”

“How could it not?”

Berlin, October, four years ago. The end of the tour was tantalizingly close, and we had taken a break to film the video for Stay (Faraway, So Close!) with Wim Wenders over the course of a few days. On the evening before this began, you and I walked around the park near the Victory Column where we’d be filming, and we looked at a Baroque monument to Beethoven, Mozart, and Haydn that featured sculptures of each composer. I didn’t think much of it at the time, but later I found myself mentally designing Dublin’s inevitable U2 monument, concluding that maybe crowning it with four gilded cherubs holding a laurel wreath above their heads might be a bit much.

You gave Mozart some extra attention. He was easily the best-looking of the three (Beethoven seemed thoroughly pissed off that his head was too small for his body, and Haydn was tragically horse-faced). While you contemplated Herr Mozart, I bought a miniature music box from a parkside souvenir vendor. It ended up in the video simply because I wanted Wim to document the beauty of your hands turning its tiny crank.

I was brushing my teeth at the hotel the next morning when you entered the bathroom. You kissed my shoulder and tied my hair into a ponytail a la Mozart with a navy blue ribbon you had appropriated from a floral arrangement, possibly.
“You’re wearing this today,” you informed me, happy as always to find some new way to mark me as your own.

Wim was similarly excited about it. “Not even girls wear ribbons in their hair anymore,” he enthused, forming a shaky hypothesis that angels are androgynous, otherworldly figures who would be more likely to do so. And I had to wear that ribbon for the next three days of filming, of course.

I looked at the one binding your wrists and appreciated the way its color echoed the tracery of blue veins on the backs of your hands. “So did tying my hair with a ribbon speak to your lovely kink, the Edge?”

“Let’s just say it was...kink adjacent.”

“Too late to do that again anytime soon,” I said with a sigh.

“Much too late,” you murmured contentedly.

I freed your hands and put the ribbon around your neck, tying it into a sort of long necklace. “You’re wearing this today,” I informed you.

“Fair enough.” You looked up at the ceiling. “That girl never stood a chance, you know. What was her name? Meret?”

“Meret. Poor thing. I teased her relentlessly while she tried to pretend I wasn’t there.” I settled beside you and traced my finger along the bridge of your nose.

“You were lethally charming. I think that was our first video where you were really smiling, too.”

“Aww, Edge, were you jealous of her?” There’s that little mole near your eye only I seem to care about.

“Hell, I was jealous of that giant sculpture you were singing to.”

“I just pretended it was you. Same with her.” And that sharp angle where your lip meets your chin—I ran my index finger back and forth across it.

“That really is our song, isn’t it?”

“It started to emerge on that first night when we kissed. So yes.” Then under your chin to your neck, both appealingly rough this morning, and back down to your chest once again. “Fuck,” I moaned, rolling onto my back to stare at the ceiling along with you. You took my hand. “I just wanna be house cats today, Edge.” Sometimes you use that term to describe us on our days off (“We’re house cats: we’re very important and have little to do”).

You sat up and pulled me along. “Come on, B. Time to turn ourselves into show ponies.”

We pulled on the first of several doomed sets of clothing we’d sweat through that day. I watched you rub sunscreen on your arms and neck, and you gently put some on my face and ears and other places I wouldn’t have given the time of day, telling me I already had an adequate number of freckles and didn’t need more. We downed four ridiculously-small hotel glasses of tap water, something of a tradition on a show day like this one, and were out the door within thirty minutes.

We met up with Adam and Larry, and as our car approached the stadium at around noon, we saw several hundred fans waiting miserably but patiently in the heat. Many had umbrellas or had set up tarps to protect themselves from that godforsaken sky laser. “Okay, that’s dangerous. We should do
something for them,” Larry said. “Let’s make sure they have water.”

“Ice pops, too, maybe,” Adam said, and soon we were figuring out who would be the best person on staff to pester in order to make that happen.

As soon as we walked out onto the stage, which was a beehive of activity and noise, you declared the stadium a “solar oven.” I asked you what that meant, but those two words gave me a pretty good idea, and I admit I kind of wasn’t listening to your explanation of the science behind it because my fogged-up sunglasses were welding themselves onto my face.

More than happy to acquaint ourselves with the subterranean world behind the stage, we were led to a meeting room. The air conditioning was barely keeping up. Paul informed us that at the moment the crew’s number one concern was keeping the computers from overheating. “I beg to differ, Paul,” I said. “Their number one concern should be keeping me from overheating.”

“I’m afraid you’re merely number six on the list today, Bono,” he said dryly. “Also be careful when you walk on the stage. We’ve had reports of people’s shoes sort of...melting.” Adam’s ice pop campaign met with zero opposition.

After the meeting, we picked at a buffet composed of the kinds of things healthy people like to eat, and you received a phone call from Morleigh. “She said she’d call at around this time,” you told me before you answered. I made my usual “want me to go?” gesture, and you made your usual, “no, it’s fine” gesture. So I sat beside you and listened to your end of the conversation.

“Well, somebody sounds excited. How did it go?...Oh that’s good. I’ve been thinking about you this morning...”

News to me, Edge. Hard not to feel a twinge of jealousy when you say things like that to her.

“So did they tell you today?...As a matter of fact I am sitting down...”

I mean, it’s unavoidable. And you miss her, I know.

“I can hear you smiling. I think I know what it is...”

That woman is a saint for being okay with this.

“Oh!...How wonderful, love...My god, I wish I could have been there with you when you found out.”

I love her. I’m happy you have her, of course, of course.

“Bono. It’s a girl!”

“Oh. Oh Edge! What great news!” I said, simultaneously feeling joyful and stupid as I heard Morleigh’s elated “Hi Bono!” over the phone.

“And everything’s fine so far, right?...That’s amazing...Our first baby...I love you, Morleigh...I miss you, too...”

You put your arm around me, and I kissed your shoulder.

“Did you get the tape?...Well, it should reach you pretty soon...Bono and I came up with some impromptu choreography the other night, and I thought you’d appreciate it...*Until the End of the World*...I kind of turned it into a bullfight. Like I was a matador or something.”
“Costume idea!” I said loudly enough for her to hear.

“He dodged around and sort of taunted me, I suppose. I’m sure it won’t be the last time...Okay, sure. B?” You handed the phone to me.

“Congratulations, Morleigh!”

“Thanks! I’m so happy, Bono.”

“Of course you are. All women secretly want girls.”

“I don’t know about that, but in my case, you’re secretly right.”

“Think we’ll ever have boys, Edge?” I asked, beaming at you.

“I don’t know if the world is ready for the kinds of sons we’d produce.”

“Morleigh. This is lovely, lovely news. Our big beautiful family. We love you very much. Please reach out to Ali if you need anything, alright?”

“She’s already been so great, Bono. She even came with me to the doctor today.”

“I’m not surprised.” I looked at you. “Two perfect women, Edge.”

“Can I just say, Bono...?” Morleigh paused and I could hear her take a breath. “He sounds a lot happier than he did a couple of weeks ago. Thanks for taking care of him.”

“Listen to you. Morleigh, when this tour started, I was totally fucking out of control, and I’m afraid I took it out on Edge. He has calmed me down considerably.”

“He really does have a soothing effect on people. People he loves.”

“He’s a special creature, this Edge of ours.”

“That he is.” Morleigh laughed.

“What’s so funny?”

“I just had an idea for your bullfight. You know what you should do next time? Make horns with your fingers. Just hold your hands up to your head and really try to move around like a bull.”

“I love it.”

“What do you love?” you asked.

“You’ll see.”

I handed the phone back to you and began to get organized. I felt like practicing for a while, or maybe even writing. And of course there would any number of people who would need my opinions on god knows what. You held up a piece of paper upon which you had written “2:00 & 4:00. Back here.” I nodded and was quickly caught up in a whirlwind of people with questions and bottles of water they kept shoving at me.

Eventually I was able to break away from them, and with some effort I located my guitars. I grabbed the black Gibson--I smiled at the “I feel good” sticker on its underside--and found a stuffy, empty room. Stay still on my mind, I played its simple backing chords over and over: E, F flat, A. E, F flat,
A. I wished we were the kind of band that could insert a different song into the set list at a moment’s notice, and I wished this were the kind of production that could stop on a dime and adapt to a change like that. But we’re not, and it’s not.

The song is such a time machine. It was playing when Adam discovered us in the studio that night. You were upset, and frankly so was I, but I was the one who calmed us down for a change. As much as we both needed it, sex was out of the question for obvious reasons. But I didn’t want to go home, and I didn’t want you to be alone. So we pushed a couple of couches together to create a makeshift bed. The couches' backs and armrests created a comforting nest for us, and if a large blanket had been available, I would have put it on top for a roof. We slept fitfully with our hands intertwined, and we kissed and consoled each other from time to time.

The phone rang the next morning. It was Adam, and he said, “We’ll be there at around nine.” He paused and added, “It’s gonna be alright.”

You and I decided to wait for them in the studio’s main meeting room. “I’m pretty sure it's Christmas Eve,” you said quietly. How about that.

They came in together and sat with us at the table. Larry, looking like an exasperated archangel, ran his fingernail along a groove in its woodgrain for fifteen seconds (I counted). He looked at me, and then he looked at you. “Talk.”

“We're in love,” you said. “We've been in love for a year. What Adam saw last night was not a one-time thing.”

“Ali...?” he asked, facing me.

“She has known for months. She understands. As amazing as that sounds.”

Larry and Adam turned to each other and attempted to process that. A few seconds later, Adam looked from me to you with kind eyes. You were tired but still so beautiful, Edge, a living, breathing Christ painted by El Greco. “Are you happy?” Adam asked. “Is this what you want?”

I reached across the table and took your hand. “Yes,” you said.

“I really love him.”

Larry exhaled and looked out the window. “I guess we always knew something was going on with you.”

Adam continued, “A certain way of communicating, a chemistry, a kind of magic.”

“A spark,” Larry nodded.

I smiled at you and said, “I loved Edge from the start.”

“Bono is everything I'm not,” you said, squeezing my hand.

“We love you both no matter what,” Adam said.

Larry returned to his woodgrain groove. “You're our brothers. I wish you would've told us. We can’t keep secrets from each other. A lesser band would implode over something like this.”

You released my hand and rubbed your neck. I watched the sun break through the clouds in the window behind your darkened profile. “You’re absolutely right,” you sighed. “I suppose we wanted
to see if this was going to turn into anything real first...but of course we knew it would. We decided we’d tell you eventually, but this year and especially the last few months have been such a blur.”

Larry looked at the two of us and shook his head. “Christ, you really are in love. Holy shit.”

Adam chuckled and patted your back.

“We need to protect you,” Larry continued. “You can’t be careless. I’m not saying this for the band’s sake but for your sake. Things could become dangerous for you if people found out. As I’m sure you’re aware.”

“They’ve done a pretty good job of keeping it a secret so far.”

“We exist inside a tightly wound, heavily insulated cocoon, especially when we’re on tour,” I said, looking at you. “If you ask me, no more than a dozen people need to know about us. And I trust those people without reservation.”

Larry exhaled. “True. Life for us as a band just got more complicated.” Then he chuckled and shrugged. “And though I can't say why, I know I've got to believe this can work.”

You seemed visibly relieved. I nudged your ankle with my boot.

Adam’s serious expression turned wry. “If you don’t mind me asking, which one of you made the first move?” Larry held his face in his hands.

“Take a wild guess,” you said.

Pleased with myself, I said, “I seduced him but, uh…”

“I'm in charge now.”

Larry laughed. “I feel marginally better.” We studied each other for a while, and our bandmates’ support warmed my heart. We are so fortunate, Edge. Larry stretched his arms and rolled his eyes. “This explains...so much.”

“Those concerts when you were all over each other.”

“Ehm. Sounds.”

Adam patted your hand and said confidentially, “After a while it becomes increasingly difficult to pretend it's just the television.”

Larry grinned. “You can only tell yourself Bono's watching gay porn so many times. Irish gay porn with lots of talking, Jesus fucking Christ.”

I smiled at my band. “A tragically overlooked subgenre.”

All of you chuckled, and in the silence that followed, your gentle voice touched my heart. “I want to be with him for the rest of my life.”

“So do I.”

Another lull, except this one was dreamier as you and I stared at each other. Just as Adam, Larry, the table, and the rest of the room began to disappear, Adam said with equal parts sarcasm and affection, “Now kiss,” and everyone laughed.
It was gonna be alright.

I put my guitar away. It was almost two o’clock, and I retraced my steps back to the meeting room. Along the way I passed Sharon and complained, “My kingdom for some breathable clothing, my darling.”

She had been looking for me, apparently. “We ought to plant tracking chips in all four of your necks, gorgeous,” she said, tossing a three-pack of white t-shirts into my hands. I tore into it, discarded my current shirt, and put on a new one. You were waiting for me in the meeting room. Without saying a word, you took my hand, led me to a glorified closet lit by a low-watt light bulb, and closed the door. Your mouth was on mine, all tongue.

You pressed your lips to my neck. “My, don’t you look wholesome in this shirt?”

“I can assure you my thoughts are anything but,” I smiled, fondling you through your jeans.

You inhaled and asked, “You know what I miss?”

“What’s that, Edge?”

“The scent of leather.”

“Oh baby. Next tour.”

You tilted my head back and kissed the length of my neck. “Next tour you’ll be in leather from head to toe.”

“Your wish is my command, love,” I said, feeling a pang of nostalgia for dominant you.

“Yes.”

“Leather doesn’t exactly breathe, you realize.”

Your hands moved down my chest. “I like to watch you sweat. I want you to drip all over me.”

I bit your chin. “What’s it like to fuck me, Edge?”

“Mmm.” You took a breath. “Okay. It’s just about unbearably tight at first. Once you get past the first...boundaries...it becomes this hot, yielding embrace. And when you come, I feel those same spasms around me, and that’s almost always enough to make me come, too, and oh god, you’ll love it, you’ll absolutely love it, Bono.”

“Edge...I need to fuck you.”

You kissed me again, long and hard, before breaking away. “I love you. I’ll see you at 4:00.”

It took a few minutes for me to compose myself in that stifling little room after this exchange. I don’t really remember what I did for a while—I know I found a marker and wrote Property of Bono NOBODY ELSE on the package of shirts and left them on a table. Then I drifted around aimlessly while trying to give the impression that I was walking with a purpose. Helene was not buying it, and she pulled me into her work station at some point. Adam was enduring a bleach touch-up and appeared to be hating life...either that or he had fallen asleep in her chair. She turned me around and inspected my neck. “Tell Edge is not bad. Not bad at all,” she smiled, pinching my cheek.

“We are both madly in love with you, Helene.”
“Is too bad. Good thing you have each other.”

“You should have seen him by the pool this morning. Devastating.”

“Both very handsome,” she said once again. I fucking love her. She turned and nudged Adam’s shoulder. He was indeed asleep.

I returned to my guitar for a while, attempted to write some lyrics that didn’t amount to much, answered questions, and drank more water. I walked through the whirling maze of assistants on cell phones and giant gear cases and garbage cans filled with paper plates and wires taped to floors and mysterious curtained-off areas and banks of blinking computer monitors and tables crammed with chafing dishes and lunch remnants and signs with indecipherable technical jargon I didn’t need to bother myself with. All the while I sang Stay’s “oh-oh-ohh-oh-oh-oh” refrain and other vowels. People smiled at me and some of them joined in. As I worked my way back to our closet, I repeated some other vocal warm-ups I had read about, such as, “I live in Ohio I live in Ohio I live in Ohio” and “My arm is numb my arm is numb my arm is numb.” By now our crew is used to this kind of behavior, but what if they weren’t? I’d be hospital-bound in no time.

Back inside our tiny room, I pushed you against the wall and said, “More.”

“Sir.”

“Baby.”

You held my face in your hands and looked into my eyes. “When I fuck you, Bono, I love to look at your face because that’s when I feel like I can see you at every age, from the day we met to what you’ll probably look like in the future.”

“Go on.” I took your thumb between my teeth.

“And it’s in no particular order. You can look innocent and wide-eyed one second and experienced and knowing the next. You squint and I see wrinkles; you roll onto your back and they disappear. It’s fascinating, and I love every version of you.”

I lowered my eyes then returned your gaze. “And I’ll get to watch that happen to you.”

“I hope so. It’s quite moving.” Your hands shifted to the back of my neck, and you closed your eyes. I sighed and pushed my torso into yours. “Is it strange that I want you to fuck me again? Sometimes I want to go back to the way it was.”

“Just because you’re in control now doesn’t mean you’re always going to be,” you said evenly.

“Edge.”

“Oh no,” you smiled, thrusting back. “I can see us playing with this for years to come.”

“God I love your cock.”

“And you realize you hold all the cards. If you want to enslave me, you know exactly how to do that now,” you purred, kissing my hairline.

“Fuck.”

“So it’s really up to you.” You held your watch to the light. “Alright. Soundcheck is happening pretty soon. I’ll see you in a few minutes.” And once again you left me catching my breath in the
I was the last one to arrive onstage, and the 100-degree heat and the glare were stunning. “White light goin’ messin’ up my mind,” I sang loudly as I took my place. “Don’t you know it’s gonna make me go blind.” You grinned at me. The crew had set up some large fans for each of us. I stood in front of one and grooved to your quarter-note delays. I shook my head back and forth and pretended to have a glorious mane blowing in the breeze as I sang. Every drop of sweat my body produced evaporated immediately, but that didn’t stop it from trying. The sound check was mercifully brief. I looked at the soles of my shoes. They continued to be comically thick.

Back in the underworld, I pulled on a new t-shirt, and the four of us ate together. You, Adam, and I complained about our costumes’ superfluous elements that were only going to make the night’s heat worse: vests, hats, stupid bubble pants, those fucking spandex muscle shirts. Larry laughed at us. “All of you can go straight to hell for not having to wear a bloody surgical mask,” Adam moaned.

“Maybe you don’t need to wear those jackets,” you said helpfully. “Like that one with the pictures all over it.”

“Yeah, I can’t get that thing off fast enough.”

“The red shirt underneath is my favorite, though. I love to look at your arms,” you said, boldly tracing imaginary constellations formed by the freckles on my left arm.

Adam and Larry gave each other semi-withering looks and left the table. “See you lovebirds in a bit,” Larry said.

I don’t have to read any reviews of the night’s concert to know what they said. The show was by-the-numbers, the crowd was worn out and limp, and the heat was largely responsible for the way we spent the night seemingly going through the motions (motions that were nevertheless 100 percent fucking tiring, especially in those miserably swampy costumes of ours). This North American campaign continued its admirable tradition of being a really fun Bono and Edge sex tour interrupted by shows we desperately tried to keep on the rails.

We shared some moments that were largely for our own entertainment. At the beginning of Until the End of the World, I surprised you with a snippet from Alice Cooper’s Hello Hooray (“I feel so strong, I feel so strong,” I sang because at that moment I really did, Edge). Then I took Morleigh’s excellent advice, and my finger-horns produced an actual Edge convulsion of laughter before you proceeded to slay me. Later you convinced me to stay on the B-stage during part of your karaoke segment. You woke up the crowd long enough for them to sing an enthusiastic happy birthday to me, after which you blew me a kiss, Edge. You actually blew me a kiss. Later on, I performed a slow, bubble jacket-removing striptease and sang a bit of Love to Love You Baby to you and you alone. So the show was not without charm. I will endure for art and the happiness of my lover.

The crew had organized a birthday-themed afterparty at the hotel, but everyone’s heat exhaustion kept it brief, and my dehydration saw to it that I felt drunk after two glasses of champagne. You spent some time talking with Adam as I worked the room. After a while, you and I broke away from the party to walk around the Biltmore’s formal gardens in the moonlight. We passed a gigantic lawn chess set, and I scolded you for not telling me about it before. You proceeded to slay me. Later you convinced me to stay on the B-stage during part of your karaoke segment. You woke up the crowd long enough for them to sing an enthusiastic happy birthday to me, after which you blew me a kiss, Edge. You actually blew me a kiss. Later on, I performed a slow, bubble jacket-removing striptease and sang a bit of Love to Love You Baby to you and you alone. So the show was not without charm. I will endure for art and the happiness of my lover.

The crew had organized a birthday-themed afterparty at the hotel, but everyone’s heat exhaustion kept it brief, and my dehydration saw to it that I felt drunk after two glasses of champagne. You spent some time talking with Adam as I worked the room. After a while, you and I broke away from the party to walk around the Biltmore’s formal gardens in the moonlight. We passed a gigantic lawn chess set, and I scolded you for not telling me about it before. You will pay for that, Edge. I caressed a suffering hibiscus bloom, kissed it, and told it, “You shouldn’t have to put up with that bullshit sun and its bullshit heat, my poor, poor darling.” You took this as your cue to shepherd me back to our room, where I removed your blue ribbon. Honestly, I had kind of forgotten about it. We stood under cool running water for probably seven or eight hours.

In bed, we had a sleepy discussion of our video’s final day of filming in Berlin. Wim’s idea for me to
throw myself onto the road during the wee hours of the morning sounded good in theory. In practice, it was not good at all. I was cold, and he was grumpy and critical, and once I had finally given him what he wanted, I was covered in bruises.

“And I bruise easily, you know that,” I reminded you.

“I made sure I kissed each and every one of them.”

“Always so good to me, Edge.”

“I came over when Wim was watching you on camera. And he said he thought you were beautiful and the only person he knows who is equally convincing as both angel and devil.”

We were facing each other there in the darkness, and I cradled your jaw and cheekbone with my hand. Such a perfect fit. “You took the ribbon from my hair when it was over. I have no doubt that you saved it.”

“Of course.”

The city where U2 nearly broke up haunts me from time to time. “What if we had stopped being a band seven years ago? Do you think you and I would have fallen in love, Edge?”

“This...I’ve got to think this would have been inevitable. Even if the band had broken up, I’d always be drawn to you. I’d always want you. I’d always love you.” You kissed me and rolled onto your stomach. I watched your feet slowly glide back and forth near the end of the bed—something you do right before you fall asleep. I covered us with a cool white sheet and listened to the quiet hum of the blessed air conditioner.

I was awake and reading this morning when coffee arrived along with a present from Ali and the girls. Additionally: a box of Mexican wedding cookies. Maria loved, loved, loved the show and we were the best band in the world.

Ali had sent a videotape along with a card that said, I love you and miss you more than you know. I thought you’d enjoy some time with your girls. Happy birthday, my dear sweet husband, Love, Ali. Elsewhere inside the box were six small rocks wrapped in tissue paper. Jordan and Eve had painted them to resemble themselves, Ali, Morleigh, you, and me. Touched by their sweetness, I played the tape at the lowest volume so as not to disturb you, and I watched my girls cavorting on the beach and finding the rocks. Little Eve ran to the camera and gave the lens a kiss, and Ali laughed, “You are your father’s daughter,” and Eve came back with, “Of course I am!”

Next I watched my daughters at the kitchen table, both busily drawing on the rocks and painting them with their darling little hands. “Daddy is a rock star,” Eve said to herself, painting me. A couple of cupcakes sat alongside their art supplies, and Ali made them take a break to sing Happy Birthday to Daddy and have a snack.

Finally Ali’s camera-shy face filled the screen. Jordan had commandeered the camera, so the action had become significantly shakier. “I want Daddy to see this, too!” my birthday girl told her mother. Ali was at the table meticulously coating each painted rock with a layer of clear fingernail polish. “That way they’ll be shiny and you can put them in your pocket and they won’t get messed up,” Jordan explained. Ali grinned at her and made a kissy face at me, and that was the end of the tape.

I heard you chuckle behind me. “I wanna see these rocks,” you said, smiling and pouring yourself a cup of coffee.

I lined them up on the cart and you studied them, delighted. I opened the box of cookies. “Will you
marry me in Mexico, Edge?”

“If I can have cookies every morning, the answer’s yes.”

“I should give my birthday girl a call.”

“Of course.”

Ali answered the phone, and I could tell she was hustling around. “Thank you for that video, you goddess,” I said.

“Did you like it?”

“It absolutely made my day.”

“That’s good. Listen, could you keep the girls occupied for a bit? I’ve got some last-minute things to do before Jordan’s party.”

“Nothing would make me happier, love.”

“Okay, hold on. And happy birthday!” I could hear Ali’s muffled voice call out, “Girls? It’s Daddy,” and soon I was in Jordan’s hands.

“Daddy!”

“Happy birthday, JoJo!”

“Happy birthday to you, too! Did you like the rocks?”

“They’re the cutest things I’ve ever seen, sweetheart, and they’re going to travel the world with me. Thank you very much.”

“Put Eve and me in your pocket.”

“I will do that. So! It’s almost time for your party...”

“Mommy is going crazy!”

“I’ll bet she is. What does your cake look like?”

“The Little Mermaid.”

“How about that...Edge and I met a little mermaid yesterday.”

“Really?”

“Kind of. Say, don’t you have a present from me? And one from Uncle Edge? Why don’t you open them over the phone?”

“Okay!”

“Do you know how to put it on speaker?”

“I’m eight years old, Daddy. Of course I know how to do that.” I could hear her footsteps as she ran to get the gifts, and Eve began singing an impromptu song about mermaids. Ali and I decided long ago that the girls would receive normal, relatively inexpensive presents for their birthdays and at Christmas, and something about this made them even more exciting. I heard the footsteps again.
“I’m back!”

“Okay, love, open mine first.”

I could hear the tearing of paper and Jordan and Eve squealing. “Bunnies! The mama and the babies!”

“They’re stuffed animals she’s been wanting,” I told you. “Do you love them?”

“I love them!”

“I love them, too, Daddy!”

“What did Edge get you, JoJo?”

Jordan shrieked at the idea of another present, and she got right to work unwrapping it. “Crayons and paints and paper! Yay, thank you Uncle Edge!”

“You girls can share that, okay?”

“Okay!” There was a general rustling of paper and more shrieking.

“Girls...girls?”

“Daddy!”

“I think your mother wants me to keep you entertained for a little while. Do you want me to read The Pale Green Pants?”

“Yes! Go get it, Evie.”

“Do you feel older, darling?”

Jordan sighed. “I feel so old, Daddy. Do you?”

“I feel so old, too. I wish I could be there, love.”

“That’s okay. It’s just a kid party.”

“I still wish I could be there. I love you so much. Guess what we did for my birthday?”

“What?”

“Edge and I went to a mountain and had a picnic. Tiny little pies! And he’s been drawing pictures of me, so now I’m drawing pictures of him, too. Yesterday it was 100 degrees!”

“I can’t even believe that,” Jordan said.

“I couldn’t either.”

“Story time!” Eve shouted, running back with the collection of Dr. Seuss stories. This, too, had been a gift from you. Your girls had loved it, and mine love it now, and you and I had read it aloud so many times we had it memorized.

“Edge, I think this tale needs some musical accompaniment,” I suggested, and you retrieved your guitar. “Are you ready, girls?”
“Yes!”

“Alright. The Pale Green Pants, by Dr. Seuss,” I began, imagining Jordan with the opened book on her lap and Eve cuddled beside her. You played a menacing guitar riff that had them giggling.

“Well…” I said, grinning at you as your playing became subdued and creepy, “I was walking in the night, and I saw nothing scary. For I have never been afraid of anything…not very.” I motioned for you to continue.

“Then I was deep within the woods, when suddenly, I spied them,” you smiled. “I saw a pair of pale green pants…”

“With nobody inside them!”

We continued to read and play for my girls until it was time for the party, and we said our goodbyes. I became a bit emotional after the phone clicked off. “God, I miss them.”

“I miss my girls, too.”

“There’s something so poignant about raising girls. And you with another one on the way.”

You kissed my forehead. “What a life we lead, B.”

“You? Are good, Edge.”

“So are you, Bono.”

We sat down with the box of cookies, and I played the video again.

And now here you are beside me on the plane en route to Dallas. You’re staring straight ahead, thinking about the life we lead, probably, and I’m almost finished with this drawing, except…

Look at me.

Look at me.

Look at me.

There.
Profile 2

Chapter Notes

The bulk of this big chapter was composed on public transportation--buses, planes, subways, and shuttles--and they are responsible for some of the scenes here. I was standing on a subway platform whose fluorescent lights were buzzing, and that led to the story behind a certain song, for example. Travel is so inspiring, especially when you're writing about people who travel.

The hotel is real, but I've changed its name so this story doesn't pop up in "where to stay in Dallas" searches. But the name is similar and with a little imagination you should be able to find it easily if you're curious. The decor is, in my opinion, really bad, but this seemed like the best choice for the band to stay. The sushi restaurant is something I totally made up, but you've got to admit I'm sitting on a billion dollar idea here. (Who knows, somebody is probably already doing it.)

Big thanks to the glorious fouroux, with whom I had a chat about hand comparisons that must have been made early on. It tied in nicely with the helicopter story I was sketching out at the time.

The main themes of this chapter are memories of longing and creative envy. Lots of eyes, lots of hands. A few laughs, I hope, and lots of love.

Thank you so much for reading this. <3
“That’s beautiful, B,” I said, giving your thigh a squeeze beneath the drawing pad that was once mine but is probably yours now.

“Thanks, love,” you purred with pleasure, flexing that muscle purely for my benefit.

“Taut little Taurus.” I murmured. I looked out the window for a moment. “Don’t you love those irrigation circles?”

You knew exactly what I was talking about—enormous circular fields created by a line of sprinklers rotating from a central pivot—but you unbuckled your seat belt so you could lean across me to see
them. “Oh, those,” you said, turning your head to glance at me. “Big green vinyl records lined up and waiting to be played.” I fought the urge to kiss you, and I ran my hand over your hair instead. Everybody else does it. Wide-eyed, you returned to your seat, chuckling and pretending to be scandalized.

“You and Adam were thick as thieves at the party last night,” you said with an air of insouciance that nevertheless made it perfectly clear that you wanted to know exactly what we were talking about.

“Well, aren’t you observant?”

“I am a keen observer of the human experience, Edge.”

“Yes, you are.” You stared at me for ten seconds before I laughed and said, “We were talking about you. I may have told him our dynamic is...evolving.”

This time you were actually somewhat scandalized. “Do go on.”

“You know how perceptive he is, B. He picked up on a vibe between us.”

“I’ll put a vibe between us.”

I placed my hand near your ear and whispered, “I can’t wait for you to fuck me,” as my pinkie luxuriated in the rough resistance of your sideburn. Ex-sideburn. “Sometimes, I swear to god, it’s all I can think about.” I kissed your ear, but it was barely a kiss. My lower lip merely grazed your earlobe, and you shivered.

“That makes two of us.”

I sat back. “If you’re curious, you should ask Adam about it. He said he might try to talk to you sometime.”

You took a deep breath and smiled at the ceiling. “Maybe I will, Edge.”

I returned to my irrigation circles, and you got up and made your usual rounds. You became involved in an intense conversation with Sharon. Your fingers created swirling gestures that provided a glimpse into what you might look like at a Grateful Dead concert. I didn’t even want to guess what that was about. Eventually you sat beside Adam, and as you talked, I watched the tops of your heads—his nearly white and yours reddish-brown—until I dozed off.

Grinning, you returned as we began our descent into Dallas-Ft. Worth.

“Well...?”

“Well, the Edge,” you whispered, giving my ear the same treatment I gave yours earlier. “I am so turned on right now.” Had you been wearing your usual stage costume, I could have confirmed that at a glance, but instead you were wearing track pants that left something to the imagination. “I suppose the only way I can impart information to you and retain a shred of dignity is to take on the plummy tones of one Adam Clayton.”

“Proceed.”

You cleared your throat and got into character. “As I’m sure you must know, Bono, relinquishing power can be frightening. Edge is making himself vulnerable to you, and you need to respect that.” Your impression was, as usual, flawless, from the leisurely baritone to the slight lisp. “You should use this as an opportunity to delve into his mind and his heart. Use it to bind you closer. And for
god’s sake, enjoy it. Have fun with it. And make sure to tell Edge I encourage you to fuck him at even the slightest provocation. Tell him it would also behoove him to blow you onstage whenever he notices you are in need of attention. Which is often. Tell him—” At this point I had to shove you away, and the two of us laughed as the plane landed with a thud.

I had expected the weather in Dallas to be every bit as awful as the conditions in Arizona, so I braced myself as we exited the plane. But it couldn’t have been more pleasant. “For once we won’t be able to use extreme weather as an excuse for our next substandard performance,” Larry noted as we stood near the car.

I noticed two concrete-colored grasshoppers engaging in what appeared to be a courtship ritual. Their black and yellow inner wings unfolded like fans as they flew closer to each other. One of them hopped to the side but immediately got back on track, and soon they were together, with the smaller male on the back of the larger female. It’s so easy for them, I thought. I could feel your eyes on me, and I looked back as you leaned against the car, your body bathed in late afternoon sunlight. It’s so easy for them, but it’s nowhere near this enthralling.

Our hotel was in downtown Dallas. Its cheery decor bordered on the aggressive: obnoxious patterns and outsized white crown molding were everywhere you looked. The gleaming lobby made my teeth ache with its Willy Wonka-like colors. “This hotel is...most twee,” you observed.

“Forget everything you think you know about Texas,” Adam said, blinking at the floral air fragrance that assaulted us the second we entered. “Remember when hotel lobbies didn’t smell like anything? Way back in 1993?” Larry moaned. “This shit is carcinogenic, I swear to Christ.”

You looked disappointed, too. “This place—well, obviously it can’t happen here, Edge,” you informed me while half-heartedly swaying. The faint but unmistakable chorus of Dancing Queen filtered in from an adjoining restaurant. “If that song isn't fucking perfection, I don't know what is.”

An attractive concierge sidled up to us as our people took care of the arrangements. “Gentlemen, my name is David,” he said, looking at me and handing me his card. “If there is anything I can do to make your stay here at the Hotel Violet more enjoyable, please do not hesitate to ask.”

I could hear your mind crackling with suggestions for this person, such as Well, for starters, every single thing about the decor here is an unmitigated disaster. But you stayed quiet as David returned his gaze to me. He shook, or rather, he fondled my hand and whispered, “Big fan,” before smiling and returning to his post.

You hummed along to Xanadu, the only song that could follow Dancing Queen and live to tell the tale, and you had the decency to wait until we were in the elevator before you exploded. “I love it when other men fawn over you!” After reenacting the hand fondling with exaggerated, pornographic gusto, you sank to your knees in front of me. “Big fan,” you told my zipper before jumping back up and composing yourself as the door opened onto our adjoining suites.

“Oh for god’s sake,” you said, gaping at the navy couch with big white polka dots, the chunky blond wooden furniture, and the intermittent photo murals of flowers. “It’s as if a child designed these rooms, and not in a good way.”

“Every wall is an accent wall.”

“Yes. And this horrid white molding. No, I can’t possibly fuck you here, Edge. Especially not in this bed with an iris—an iris?—looking on.”
“Mine has tulips,” I called to you from my suite. “And they’re just as pink as they can be.”

You walked over to look at them. “Unbelievable. I mean, I can see Eve liking this. Maybe.”

“Even six year-olds have a certain amount of taste and restraint.”

“You’re right.”

“Whatever we do in here, B…the lighting has to be as dim as possible.”

“Yes. Obviously these rooms are begging to be defiled in a variety of ways. But let's save...it...for Memphis.”

“It,” I said, leaning over and resting my elbows on a window ledge to watch the setting sun.

“It,” you whispered into my ear as you spooned me, and we were quiet for a while. Your hips were exactly where they wanted to be. “Christ, Edge. The things you do to me.”

You kissed the back of my neck the way I like to kiss yours, and then you turned and walked to the bathroom to splash some water on your face. “Edge? Edge. Look at this tile,” you called to me. I found you on your knees near the toilet, tracing a finger over a large floor tile’s abstract marble veins. “Tell me: does that look like an evil moon or does that look like an evil moon?”

“Evil moon, no question about it,” I said.

“How the fuck are we supposed to use this bathroom for the next two days?”

“The show must go on, B.”

We were on our own for the rest of the evening, so we decided to explore the neighborhood around the hotel and find something to eat. You demanded that I wear my denim jacket and cowboy hat (“Come on, we’re in Texas, so you pretty much have to”), and you went with a pair of yellow sunglasses and an otherwise nondescript black outfit. In the elevator, you pulled your hood up and said, “I dare you to give...was his name Kevin?”

“David,” I sighed.

“I dare you to give David a smile when we walk by. No, wait, do that little hat tip thing. No, do both.”

“Would that make you happy?”

“You have no idea, the Edge.”

“If you insist.”

I followed your instructions to the letter as we passed a beaming David. “Have a lovely evening, gentlemen,” he said.

“Same to you,” I told him as you chuckled.

“Extra credit for actually talking to him,” you said as we exited the lobby. “My golden boy.”

We walked in concentric circles (or squares) around the hotel under a sky that shifted from orange to pink to lavender. Car headlights and street lights blinked on, and the sidewalks were dotted with couples looking for something to do on a Saturday night. Buildings that had been facing the sun all
day emitted a voluptuous warmth I felt on my left shoulder as we walked around. I wanted to hold your hand.

“I know you’re unaware of this, but people tend to stare at you, Edge,” you said.

“That’s because I kind of fit in here, but I kind of don’t. They’re trying to figure out why.”

“It’s because you’re very sexy.”

“It’s because I’m a stalk of corn in a bean field.”

You chuckled. “That, too. And they’re wondering what you’re doing with this little man who looks like a drug dealer from a Broadway musical.”

I put my hand on your shoulder. “This little man embodies my fetish, and I’m afraid I am at his mercy.”

“See that you stay that way, baby.” You stopped and pointed across the street. “I believe we have a winner.”

“Longhorn Sushi? That sounds suitably bizarre.”

“I’ve got to see what goes on in there.”

“Obviously.”

We crossed the street to the brightly lit, mostly-customer-free restaurant. Their concept of Texas sushi was as misguided as anyone might expect, with an emphasis on fried elements, minimized vegetables, maximized cream cheese, and barbecued brisket and pulled pork instead of fish. You declared it “completely wrong and stupidly delicious.” We ate entirely too much of it and staggered back to our hotel.

I was strongly encouraged to wink at David, who winked back.

Your phone rang as we reached our floor. Paul wanted to touch base regarding a last-minute interview he had arranged for you the next morning. After you left to deal with him, I took a shower and got comfortable with a book on our dimly-lit, tulip-bedecked bed.

I heard you speaking near the elevators upon your return--you were struggling to say goodbye to another caller. The mere sound of your voice saying things like Yes...of course...ooh if you say so...yes...that sounds lovely...oh please...exactly what I want...alright...alright was enough to elicit a physical response from me that I didn’t feel like hiding from you.

You entered our rooms with a few inelegant stomps that cut off the moment you noticed me. “Okay, Sharon, I’m sorry but I really have to say goodnight, love...good...sure...bye.” You snapped your phone shut and pushed its antenna against your temple. It disappeared into its little compartment.

“My my, what are you thinking about, Edge?”

I glanced at the cover of my book. “Global warming, apparently.”

“I find that difficult to believe,” you smiled, pulling your shirt off and crawling over to me on the bed. You took me in your hand.

“Honestly all I had to do was listen you talking out there.”

“My voice was all it took.” You stroked me for a few aching seconds. Then you stopped and turned
off my reading lamp.

“Please, touch me some more, Bono.”

“As if you even had to ask.”

Greedy for your mouth and tongue, I kissed you in the semi-darkness. You took me in your arms. I listened to your heart and teased your nipples with my tongue as delicate hairs tickled my lips and nose.

We continued to shift positions. “I can’t seem to get close enough,” you said, on top now, teeth grazing my neck. “If I could absorb you, I would.”

“I love you.”

You looked up at the dim-but-still-there-flowers. “Let’s defile this awful little room, alright?”

“I’ll do anything you say.”

“Stay right there, Edge.”

You got up and turned on a light in a neighboring room. “You’ve got to think somebody’s mistress was responsible for these awful design choices,” you called to me. “And she was given a frighteningly wide berth.” You returned, naked and holding some supplies. “I mean, that couch alone...who does that?”

“She must have been fantastic in bed.”

“I should hope so.”

You stretched out beside me and our eyes met. “So much time has passed since...was it the shower the other day? Christ, I feel like I’m about to explode, love.”

“Yes.”

You motioned for me to roll onto my stomach. “Do you like what we’ve been doing with the toys?”

“So much it scares me.”

“One of the human body’s best-kept secrets, isn’t it?” you asked as you slid a finger down my spine.

“You’re so right.”

Two hands parted my legs and began to explore. “Tell me what it feels like, baby.”

I exhaled. “They’re some of the best orgasms I’ve ever had. They last longer, and the rest of my body is more involved. And it’s strange because when you touch that amazing place, you don’t have to do much else to make me come.”

“Go on.”

I sighed, feeling a gentle finger. “They’re almost unbearably intense, and this is just with fingers and toys. It’s not you. Not yet. I almost feel disappointed we didn’t try this sooner.”

“Well, let’s make up for lost time, love. I propose 69 with penetration for you.”
I looked over my shoulder. “Proposal accepted.”

“Awfully formal tonight, aren’t you?” you said, smiling and getting me ready for more.

“Yes, sir.”

“Baby...why don’t you imagine there’s two of me? No, actually there’s three,” you said. I shuddered with pleasure as you penetrated me with something slick and hard. “Good?”

“Mmm. Yes.”

“That's good,” you said softly, moving the toy a bit. “You’re much more relaxed than I ever was, not that that’s surprising at all.”

You love even the mildest begging. “Deeper. Please.”

“Oh, Edge.” You moved down on the bed, your lips near my cock. Soon I was engulfed by your mouth, and somehow one of your hands continued its movements. Gasping, I pulled your hips closer and sucked you, swollen and comforting familiar. The combined sensations were almost too much to take, and they forced me to surrender to you completely. I simply had no other choice, and oh you knew what to do as we worked happily in relative silence together, myself and the three of you, slowly thrusting deep inside me, sucking me, and fucking my mouth. After too much and yet not enough of this, I began to tremble and groan, and I felt a tap on my forehead. Knowing that if given a choice, you preferred praise to anything else my mouth could do to you, I fondled you with my hands instead. I cried out your name three times, once for each of you, and a golden light ripped through me. Your left foot flutter-kicked near the headboard as you came all over my chest with a gasp and some gratifying tremors, followed by a slow exhale.

“Oh...oh Edge...fuck, I needed that,” you sighed, giving my hipbone a kiss and stroking the back of my leg. You crawled up to me so I could kiss your damp, salty forehead and touch your perfect hair.

Knowing I needed to deal with it sooner rather than later, I reluctantly rose from the bed for a quick clean-up. My legs were shaky beneath me. “Darling baby colt,” I heard you say while I encountered the evil moon face.

You were kissing my arm and murmuring “lover” when I opened my eyes the next morning.

“Need something, B?”

“No...just some nonobjective adoration going on,” you said, returning to my arm. Waking up to this kind of attention--you declaring my right index finger “the best finger I have ever seen” and so on--reminded me of myself a few years ago. We were lying on a bare mattress on the floor of the white room, back when it reeked of fresh paint, and I kissed the multitude of new, temporary white freckles decorating your sleeping arms, chest, and face.

“What time is the interview?”

“In about an hour out at the stadium. You don’t have to come if you don’t want to,” you said, smiling and kissing your way up my shoulder en route to my cheekbone.

“Of course I want to, B,” I said, stroking your jaw. “We’re a team.”

“It would be interesting to watch everything go up around us. And escape this--ugh--this place for an hour or two.”
“Is there coffee?”

“Coffee and eggs for you.”

“You’ve been up for a while.”

“Yes I have, love.”

Adam and Larry were needed for a different interview promoting next week’s Kansas City shows. I assumed Adam would do most of the heavy lifting for that one. I gave the other couple in the band a wave when we passed each other in the lobby.

“I like to watch a city waking up,” you said a bit later, studying the workers on a beeping garbage truck as we were driven to the stadium. Early morning light streamed through the car’s window once we escaped the tall buildings of downtown and approached the stadium. An orange sunbeam hit the side of your your head and illuminated your ear. It glowed like a tiny pink lantern. You noticed me staring and smiled affectionately.

We were deposited into a medium-sized meeting room within the bowels of the stadium where we waited for our interviewer and her small entourage to arrive. A bank of fluorescent lights buzzed above us and created a C-major drone. You hummed along with the lights and, winking, you began to sing, *I have climbed the highest mountain...* The drone gave the song the distinct flavor of an Indian raga. Wishing I knew how to play a sitar, I harmonized the refrain the way I always do before we burst into laughter.

That song has held a special, secret meaning for us since the first time we had sex that night in New York. You had finally told Ali about us, and we felt like we could proceed with relatively clear consciences. You kissed me awake in the middle of the night to say, “We’ll need to change the song, Edge. I’ve found it.” You nuzzled my chest and drifted off to sleep, but it took me a minute to parse what you had said. I eventually landed on the song, of course, *of course*, and mentally scanned its lyrics. *Oh, Bono.*

Later you confirmed that *I Still Haven’t Found What I’m Looking For* was about me—or at least it could be about me if anyone wanted to hear it that way. The brilliant and often maddening thing about your lyrics is their universality. So many of them can be interpreted to fit any number of situations. But you assured me this one was different.

Early that next morning, we sat huddled together on a commercial flight that would catch us up with the rest of the tour in Washington, D.C. Your content, drowsy eyes caught mine, and soon your mouth was near my ear. Over the din of the plane you said, “I wrote it during one of those dark nights of the soul. I’d had a disturbingly carnal dream about you. Ali was asleep beside me making those delectable little sighs only women can produce, and I remember feeling like such a fucking monster. How is this perfect woman somehow not enough for me? But we had been home for a while, and I missed you, Edge. I longed for the easy companionship we had when we were younger. I needed to feel the unspoken intimacy that occurs when two people travel, create, and sleep together in the same room for months at a time. I missed holding your hand and imagining I had any claim on your affections at all, especially now that you were a father and our very success was keeping us separated...in rooms of our own on the last tour.

“So I got up and sat at the dining room table and looked out the windows at nothing. Just darkness. And to me that darkness was God. I wanted to pray, but all that came out was a frustrated...list...of things I had done for him and things I should be thankful for but they weren’t enough. They were *never* enough. And even though I had every reason in the world to be happy, maybe I wasn’t, and maybe true happiness was going to be impossible for me without your love. So that list became a
psalm, an angry psalm to a god who, for whatever reason, made me this way but imposed rules upon me that would suppress something that was beautiful and precious to me.”

I pushed that beloved and perpetually-errant strand of black hair from your eyes and smiled at you. Your face brightened. “So of course I made you sing most of that song along with me. I knew what I was looking for. I just couldn’t have it. And now people view the song as a kind of questioning hymn, one that describes a crisis of faith, even. They have no idea I was begging God for you. But now I have you. Now I belong to you.”

Apparently things had started to happen while I was thinking about this because suddenly we were up in the nosebleed seats and being interviewed by a woman named Becky, whose little-girl voice did not match her beauty pageant curves. She sat at least six inches taller than the two of us. Her questions were inane. While you answered them graciously—as if this were the first time you had heard any of them—I could see your forehead’s stress vein in high relief. To relieve you, I gave a soft “hmm” of faux-amusement to her next question (“Why a lemon and why not, say, a watermelon?”) and fielded a couple of others. She asked me what kind of thoughts I had when we were performing. “I often wonder how many times I’ll sing the word ‘sky’ in my lifetime,” I said. You cackled and slapped my back, but Becky did not understand the reference. She also seemed confused when you referred to the just-installed arch as our yellow Arc de Triomphe, and she asked you to spell that for her.

After she left (“Thank yew! Y’all’re sweet.”), we lingered in the cheap seats and watched our crew and local workers construct parts of the stage and screen. “Look at them. A hundred shows to go and already they’re a machine,” I said.

“They leave their families—they abandon their privacy—and sleep on buses just so we can be...us...for a couple of hours. We have to be perfect for them, Edge.”

“We’re getting there.”

You looked up at the cloudless sky. “These interviewers will never ask us The Question, will they?”

“It doesn’t seem like it.”

“We could just volunteer it, you know.”

“That’s not what we agreed to, B.”

You sighed. “Well, maybe it’s just Arizona, or Texas, but so far the spirit of this country does not exactly inspire confidence. I feel like it’s becoming strangely...conservative? Don’t you think? More so than before. I don’t know. Maybe I’m wrong.”

“Let’s see what happens in the bigger cities.”

“I’ll declare my love for you at the top of the Empire State Building, how about that?”

“When you’re not busy swatting at airplanes.”

On our way out, I stopped to talk with Dallas for a minute, and he handed me an unmarked CD. “The new Radiohead,” he said, mouthing the word Wow. He and Jonny Greenwood’s tech are friends, and OK Computer would be released in about a week. Dallas and I have a near-telepathic understanding of each other, and when I glanced at you and then back at Dallas questioningly, his tentative shrug seemed to imply that the album was intimidatedly good. I nodded.

“What was that all about?” you asked as we walked to the car.
“This is the new Radiohead, B.”

“Oh...fuck.”

“Yeah. Wanna go back to the room and listen to it?”

“I guess I’m as ready as I’ll ever be. I suppose we should figure out lunch first.”

“Sure.”

“I doubt Thom Yorke gives a damn about lunch. Eating is exceptionally low on his list of priorities,” you said, settling into your seat and looking straight ahead.

“Thom Yorke wishes his profile were an eighteenth as majestic as yours,” I said, kissing your forehead, the tip of your nose, and your chin. “I’ll never get over the geometry of your face. I stared at it for most of the interview,” I added.

“You ain’t so bad yourself, cowboy.”

“So what would you like for lunch?”

“Something unchallenging and ordinary.”

We ended up ordering room service macaroni and cheese “with our unique blend of nine different cheeses!” I couldn’t tell if the clown-like patterns on the plates indicated that this was an item from the children’s menu or simply par for the course at this hotel. For dessert you selected a packet of M&Ms from the mini bar (“Looks like I’m gonna beat the expiration date on these by a good year and a half”). Meanwhile, we began listening to OK Computer’s tracks with their unknown titles. We did our best to disguise our feelings of inadequacy as one groundbreaking, zeitgeist-defining song followed another. About halfway through the album, we gave up and openly gaped at each other. “Jesus Christ, this is their masterpiece,” you declared. This is the album we should have made, your eyes said. This is the album our fans wanted. In terms of musicianship, they are light years ahead of us, and Jonny’s guitar innovations made my own recent attempts seem insipid and overworked.

A few humbling tracks later, a chiming lullaby of a song began--delicate and deceptively simple. Why must I feel the need to make a guitar sound like something it’s not when it can sound this haunting? You smiled and gently shook your head. It was undeniably beautiful, and Thom had not even started to sing. I held my hand out and asked, “May I have this dance, B?”

You grinned, and soon we were off the bed and embracing as Thom began: A heart that’s full-up like a landfill / A job that slowly kills you / Bruises that won’t heal. “Motherfucker,” you said, swaying back and forth with me. The song became truly hypnotic. Your fingers unbuttoned my shirt and eased it off my shoulders. I pulled your shirt over your head, and then we were one, skin to skin. I looked down at our chests and the dark, diamond-shaped negative space they created--one of my favorite things. We laughed at Thom’s sinister and ironically triumphant tone when he sang Such a pretty house / It’s such a pretty garden. “Incredible,” you said.

“ Incredible.”

At the end of this song, whose title I assumed was No Surprises, we took a break to check in with each other. “Hard not to feel jealous,” you admitted. “He is truly the voice of melancholy and ennui.”
“And you are the voice of joy and love and sex and hope. You have the voice of an angel.”

You kissed my throat, and I ran my hand up the back of your head. “Thom and Jonny are probably not this deeply in love with each other,” you sighed.

“Not even close.” We kissed. “We should welcome this album. It's remarkable. And we're not here to take over music. We’re here to add to it.”

“I dunno about you, Edge, but I’m here to take over.”

I chuckled and admired the next song’s unique atmospherics. “God, they are special.”

“You. So are you. Your love--your brilliance--is such a gift.” The music began to swell, and we got back on the bed and finished our congealed lunch. Clearly the album was going to end on a very high note. You looked at the window. “Edge, what floor is this?”

“Seven.”

“Hmm. That might be enough to do the job.”

“The windows don’t open, B, so you can just forget about jumping out,” I said, kissing your cheek. The music stopped, and we looked at the stereo for a few seconds.

“Let’s do something,” I said, not having the slightest idea as to what that might be. I got up and looked around for the “things to do in this city” magazine every hotel room in America seems to have. I found it on a tiny table that cowered beneath a Rococo mirror beset with gilded curlicues.

“Such as…?” you said, following me and resting your chin on my shoulder. You peered at the magazine and stole a glance at yourself in the mirror.

“You’re looking very good, B.”

“As are you, E.”

I studied the calendar of events for the weekend of May 10. It was Sunday, wasn’t it? It was. “Okay, I have an idea. Wanna listen to Beethoven?”

“I love to listen to Beethoven,” you sang in a falsetto that morphed into a deep alto. I hadn’t thought about that song in years, but I suppose I was asking for that. “It’s like Annie Lennox lives inside your mind, advising you.”

“So what do you think? The Dallas symphony is performing in...about an hour and a half. Symphony No.7 in A major, opus 92.”

“Sounds wrong, Edge. Are you sure it’s not opus 94? Totally different thing. I do not wish to be disappointed.” Our eyes met in the mirror, and you batted your eyelashes comically.

I turned around and kissed you. “Have I ever let you down?”

“Never,” you smoldered.

“Classical music would be so much easier to appreciate if it had titles that weren’t just a series of numbers, though. Do you have any idea what one this is?”

You pushed me up against a wall by the door, your bare chest warm against my back. “Not a clue,” you said. “But now that you mention it, maybe numerical titles on Pop would have given this tour
some much-needed gravitas.”

“U2 Symphony No.10 in F, opus, I don’t know, 115? Also known as the one where you sing about your teeth at my back and being tied down and so on.”

Chuckling softly, you placed a series of bites between my neck and shoulder. “Thom Yorke doesn’t have to sing about being tied down.”

“Thom Yorke sounds like he already is tied down, and he’s become completely disillusioned with the idea.”

“Heaven forbid that should ever happen to us, love,” you murmured, nuzzling my jaw and setting me free. Regarding me with amusement, you said, “Okay, Edge. Let’s expose ourselves to some high Texas culture. Make this happen for me. I saw your man down there earlier. He’s got to be bored out of his mind, just waiting to do your bidding.” You nodded at the phone, knowing that for the most part I hate the phone. Hopefully one day it will all be email.

“While you wait?”

“Of course while I wait,” you grinned, picking up the receiver and putting the phone on speaker. You attempted to sink into a red armchair that contained no sink-capabilities whatsoever. “Don’t you roll your eyes at me, mister.”

Bracing myself for the awkwardness to come, I dialed the concierge. Just channel Bono, I told myself.

“Concierge desk, David speaking. How may I assist you?”

“Hello, David. This is room 702. Your guitarist friend. Uh.” God, my name is such a pain in the ass.

“Is this the Edge?”

“This is the Edge!” you shouted with glee.

“Yes.”

“Oh my! I am delighted to speak with you today. It’s an honor and a privilege to have you and your band staying with us, by the way. The staff is positively abuzz with excitement.”

“Well, this hotel is really...something.”

“It is, isn’t it? The owner’s new wife recently redecorated the guest rooms, the lobby, and some of the other spaces.”

You laughed. Loudly.

David chuckled and lowered his voice. “Is that Bono?” he said reverently.

“Yes it is.”

He paused. “You guys can’t stand the decor, right?”

“Ehm…”

“It’s okay! All of us hate it, too! Phyllis was given free reign, unfortunately. I’m afraid our hands are tied.”
You took on a pained expression and lifted your arms above your head, wrists together. All you needed was a leather vest and a ponytail.

“I’m sorry to hear that. The place is unforgettable, I’ll give it that much.”

“Well, you’re exceedingly gracious to say so. My goodness. Where is my mind? You obviously need something, don’t you, sir?”

“Ehm, yes. I realize this is last minute, but my fr— Bono and I would like to see the symphony this afternoon if it’s possible. We would also like to rent a car.”

You raised your eyebrows, and I shrugged.

“I specialize in making things happen at the last minute, as a matter of fact...uh...the...”

“You can just call me Edge.”

“Oh my god.”

Your hand fluttered over your heart.

“Okay. Edge. Wow. Yes. I assume you’ll want to sit in a spot where you won’t be bothered?”

“Maybe someplace near the back. Nothing special, though. We just want to listen to the music.” You turned in your chair and, facing the wall, you wrapped your arms around your torso. Your hands ran up and down your ribcage and shoulders, and you pretended to make out with yourself.

“Um, if you could just hold for a second? I need to make one phone call and then I’ll be right back with you.” We could hear a faint Holy shit before the hotel’s hold music (Good Times by Chic) came on.

You pointed at me with both index fingers and mouthed “You?” Your fingers drew a heart in front of your face, and you stage-whispered, “Adorable.”

“Why are you whispering? He can’t hear us.”

“Maybe I like being a mime,” you whispered before initiating a brief staring contest.

“Hello? Edge, sir?”

“Hi.”

“It’s all set up.”

“Wow, thank you very much.”

“My pleasure! All you and Bono need to do is come down here in thirty minutes. Is an Acura NSX okay?”

You swooned.

“Oh, that’ll be more than okay. How did you even—”

“We keep a few cars in the parking garage in case of emergencies. This is the sexiest car.”

“I love it. We might take a little drive after the symphony.”
You kissed your fingertips then extended them, creating the international symbol of culinary excellence.

“It’s yours for as long as you need it during your stay. The symphony is just a few blocks away, and I’ve arranged for a valet to take care of you when you arrive. Your seats are back row, center.”

“I am very impressed.”

“The Hotel Violet specializes in world-class service...don’t let the polka dot couches fool you.”

I winked at you. “David, are you going to be at our show tomorrow night?”

“Of course. My seat is similar to where you will be sitting this afternoon.”

“Would you like to be somewhere a whole lot better?”

“Yes!”

“I’ll make sure you are. Our people will be in touch with you shortly.”

“Oh my god!”

“And we’ll be down in a little bit.”

“Wonderful!”

You walked over to me and took the phone from my hands, deftly releasing my finger from the cord I had wrapped around it (a nervous phone habit of mine). “See you soon, David,” you purred before hanging up. You kissed my cheek. “That, the Edge, was masterful. Love you; proud of you.”

One quick phone call to Paul and another session of fawning and gratuitous hand-fondling later, and you and I were on our way to the symphony in a delightfully vulgar black sports car. After I had driven it for less than a mile, David’s aforementioned valet flagged me down outside of the I.M. Pei-redesigned concert hall. When I parked, you inhaled the car’s leather upholstery and said dreamily, “You go on ahead, Edge. I want to spend some time alone with this...divine thing.”

A series of pleasant handlers guided us to our orchestra-terrace level seats. The majority of the audience had already been seated, and the musicians were filing in. “Well, isn’t this spot optimal as fuck?” you said quietly. It was. Looking around at the predominately gray-haired crowd, you added, “Plus I feel at least fifteen years younger.”

I looked at the program and read an interesting paragraph that described Beethoven’s antics as he conducted this symphony, including lots of violent arm movements. He even jumped in the air at points that were particularly dramatic, and that reminded me of you. I pointed the passage out to you, and we read it together. “At its premiere, Beethoven remarked that it was one of his best works. The second movement, Allegretto, was the most popular and had to be encored at the conclusion of the symphony. To give our patrons an idea of what that might have been like, the Dallas Symphony Orchestra will repeat the Allegretto today as well.”

“How punk rock is that? Reminds me of our early shows when we didn’t have enough songs,” you said. The musicians began tuning up, creating a complex ocean of sound that perfectly illustrated the word anticipation. You closed your eyes and smiled.

“I hope this will be less painful than Radiohead,” I said. “You know, Morleigh doesn’t always like to watch other dancers. They leave her feeling jealous or like an impostor more often than not.”
“Okay, you need to tell her that’s ridiculous. She is phenomenally talented. And this,”--you gestured to the symphony--“and us? Apples and oranges.”

“Obviously we don’t have the education or the vocabulary to really appreciate this.”

“But I’m going to enjoy watching you react to it. Just let your mind wander, love.” You beamed at me indulgently.

I nodded. “You do the same.”

We stood as an elderly woman slowly made her way across our row. She squinted at her ticket, which her trembling hand held a few inches from her eyes. “B16, ma’am?” you asked her. She smiled as you kindly checked her ticket and helped her into her seat.

“Why thank you, honey.”

“The pleasure’s all mine, love.”

She tilted her head and quickly fell victim to your eyes. “You didn’t come all the way from Ireland just to listen to Beethoven, did you?”

“We did indeed.”

She waved at me and opened her purse. Removing a small plastic bag of candy, she held it aloft and asked, “Lemon drop?”

“Oh yes. My favorite. Edge?”

“Thank you, ma’am.”

You would have easily spent the next five minutes learning this woman’s life story (classically-trained violinist, former teacher, widowed but her husband looked just like you way back when, twenty grandchildren, baker of award-winning carrot cakes, I guessed), but the lights dimmed and the conductor’s tap-tap-tap signaled the beginning of the performance. You had to settle for a pinch on your cheek.

The auditorium’s acoustics were so precise I barely wanted to breathe. I watched the black-clad musicians--there must have been at least ninety of them--slowly transform into a single organism. Some members were active and others were still at times, and occasionally all of them were playing. The first movement reminded me of an engine warming up, dense forests in springtime with flowers blooming, horses galloping, hunters in the snow, celebratory dancing...I felt like I was in the passenger’s seat with a capable, confident driver. I was in the hands of an undisputed genius, and when I closed my eyes, I experienced a floating sensation.

From time to time I glanced at your mesmerized face as you watched the giant organism. You nodded here and there, smiled a bit at particularly clever melodic phrases, and probably, like me, you thought about what it would be like to be one of those musicians. How must it feel to be spectacular at your craft but not a star? Would it be enough to simply play music this timeless and perfect but never have your work acknowledged or understood by the vast majority of the world?

The famous second movement began. We recognized it immediately from any number of movie soundtracks, and we looked at each other in awe. The violas and cellos began a low, repetitive melody...someone walking slowly up a hill. It was solemn but determined. “Edge...I had no idea it was this one...fuck, I may cry,” you whispered. Violins took over this melody while the violas and cellos played a second one on top of it...slender goddesses, hand in hand, twirling and dancing...
around the hill-walker. I was perversely reminded of *Numb* and your ethereal falsetto swirling over my plodding monotone. The goddesses began to gasp and wail, and I watched a single tear slide down your freckled cheek. Your new friend took a travel pack of Kleenexes from her purse, silently offered you one and took another for herself, and the two of you dabbed at your eyes. I could hear masculine and feminine sniffs from all around the auditorium, mine included.

The third and fourth movements had a swoony, sexy energy that was similar to the first--more dancing and horses charging into battle.

Horses.

My thoughts returned to the past once again. Memories always seem to flood my mind when important changes are happening in the present, and this one...I’ll never forget the image of your wide-eyed face as you looked out that helicopter’s window. I wished I could have seen you as a child as you reacted to things like snow, rainbows, chocolate, and trains for the first time. But those childhood days seemed so long ago. We were both married by then, and I had to maintain the new boundaries between us.

We landed in the wilderness somewhere in Sweden to film the video for *New Year’s Day*. It was windy and brutally cold, and Adam made the excellent point that other bands had the good sense to travel to places like Sri Lanka and Antigua to take care of this tiresome video business. Bundled up until all of us were unrecognizable except for you, we buried bottles of whiskey in the snow around us and visited them frequently. I think some of them might still be there. You refused to wear a hat and gloves, and I admired your stubborn dedication. You knew our viewers needed to see you, and having not yet mastered lip-syncing, you endured take after frigid take. I was pretty sure Meiert Avis, our director, came to hate us that day.

As difficult as the shoot was, I loved the stark beauty of that forest in the dead of winter and the adventure of it all. I loved that while we were younger than most bands, looking attractive or cool was not on our agenda that day. Maybe it was on your agenda a little bit. But it was a relief to mostly remove that from the equation and just be a bunch of ordinary guys out there in the snow, pretending to sing and play a song that was not about pretty girls or getting laid. Yes, I was almost positive we were the only band playing a song about Lech Walesa and the Solidarity movement in Poland.

We did what we could to take breaks and warm up periodically, but by late afternoon we were all dangerously cold. Meiert had to find four Swedish teenage girls to take our places and ride those slobbery horses through the woods. Oh yeah, he hated us.

That day marked our first ride in a helicopter, and while that was an experience none of us were wild about, we were happy to return to it. Four passenger seats faced each other behind the pilot, and Adam and Larry piled in first. You sat beside Larry and were knee-to-knee with me. Larry was shivering--his teeth were literally chattering--so you put your arm around his shoulders, and he was so cold he didn’t resist you. You looked at me as if to say, *You okay?* and I nodded. Your lips, nose, ears, and fingers were bright pink, and as we waited for our pilot to arrive, the mild warmth of the helicopter’s interior caused all of our noses to run. “I will be with you again,” you sang softly while staring at me. You sniffed. “Jesus, I’ll never get this song out of my head.”

The flight was loud and quick. It didn’t take long until we were back in some semblance of civilization. Our collective breathing had caused the back windows of the helicopter to fog up, and before you got out, you pressed your hand against the condensation, making a print. You jumped down and looked up at me. I felt the need to cover your print with my own hand, and you grinned at that.

Mine was bigger than yours, something you had pointed out to me on the day we officially met at
Larry’s house. At the time you looked at my hand, raised yours, and extended it. Let’s compare, your eyes said, and I held my palm against your own. My fingers were longer than yours by one joint, and I curved them down over your fingertips. I felt the crescents of your fingernails as they worked their way into my bent fingers’ accommodating creases. Our thumbs instinctively caressed each other. “I wish I had hands like yours,” you said, turning them so you could study mine. Then Adam began telling a joke in the living room, and you were gone before I could tell you about the things you had that I wanted.

They were playing the second movement again. I smiled and took your hand there in the darkness, and doing so felt like the most natural thing in the world. Cool skin surrounded warm, and you turned to me with love in your shining eyes.
Almost finished! Some notes:

1. there's an embedded haiku right before Edge talks about a haiku
2. the lozenge theory is my own and I am delighted to share it with you
3. the hand-bound books thing happened to me
4. the concert was gayed-up just a tiny bit but the believable-seeming details really happened
5. celadon is an important color to me, and it appeared in Monarch, my long-lost first story
6. the last scene is my tribute to something Carina wrote that I can't seem to get out of my mind
7. definitely check out that sculpture.

AND thank you a million times to the fabulous PJ for drawing what I think is her very best Edge. She even made him wear the right shirt and she didn't know I was writing about it at the time. LOOK AT HIM LOOK HOW BEAUTIFUL I LOVE YOU PJ YOU ARE *THE BEST.*

Thank you for staying on board and for your comments. This is a long one at 8,500+ words. :)

---

Edge
I didn’t think you’d say yes.

“Alright with you if I drive, Edge?”

You tipped the valet, paused, and smiled indulgently. “Sure.”

“Good. Where are we going, exactly?”

You pulled a David-drawn map from your back pocket. “I asked him for the easiest route out of the city. Looks like we head east on 80 and just keep going for about twenty miles.”

“Sounds like something I could handle. Which way is east?” I asked. You laughed and I said, “I’m joking, Edge. It’s that way.” I pointed in the direction I was 75 percent sure was east.

“Correct, B.” I loved how you knew I needed to hear you say that. The car was so low to the ground even I felt tall standing beside it, and we each sort of fell into its bucket seats. I familiarized myself with the controls on the steering wheel and console. “It may interest you to know that in America they drive on the right side of the road,” you added helpfully. With a smirk.

“Fuck you, my love.”

“Looking forward to it.”
You helped me find the interstate in a way that was much more patient than, say, Norman used to be when he attempted to teach me how to drive. Once we hit cruising speed and were gliding down the road, I felt like we were in our own miniature space ship. I saw your hand reach for a button on the stereo, but apparently not wishing to distract me with music, you put your hand back down. Oh yes, I saw that, Reg. But I also saw you looking out the window and noticing things one can’t pick up on when one is staring straight ahead. I know you love the passenger’s seat.

“Hungry, B?” you asked once the traffic had thinned out.

“Always.”

“If I may make a suggestion…”

“Anything you want, Edge.”

“A vegetable? Remember those? It’s been forever.”

“You are an absolute madman.”

You scanned billboards for upcoming restaurants that held the promise of those things you call vegetables, and eventually we exited the road for some fast food place that insisted we try their new salads. The young woman working the drive-thru window recognized us up to a point (“You’re U2! You’re U2!”) andlavished us with an embarrassment of croutons, napkins, plastic cutlery, and an entire flight of salad dressing options. “You guys have got to make new ones right now I mean it you guys!” she yelled over her shoulder before fixing our drinks with shaky hands. As we waited for those guys to prepare our food—no prepackaged fare for U2 at this fine establishment—I grabbed a napkin and drew a quick sketch of me eating a tomato and you eating a cucumber. I slid this to our hostess along with one hundred dollars to pay for the meals of the two cars waiting behind us in the drive-thru (“Feel free to keep whatever’s left, love”).

After we were back on the open road for ten more minutes, I made the executive decision to exit for a place called Poetry, Texas. “Because how could we not?”

“It’s the obvious choice.”

Poetry was a tiny bedroom community that boasted one street, several homes, a church, and a gas station/car wash. “Heh, this town is the textbook definition of ‘blink and you’ll miss it,’” I said.

“It’s basically a haiku.”

I continued to drive until the road became an ambling country lane lined with spring-green hedgerows, and I parked next to a roadside table near a small pond. Off in the distance, a lone oil derrick pumped away under the deep blue, late afternoon sky. “What flowers are we looking at?” I asked you as we took our food out of bags and sat down.

“Those are poppies, and I think those are primroses.”

“Well, they couldn’t be prettier.”

You picked one of each, handed me the fiery poppy, and studied the primrose’s yellow center and pink petals. “Our girls are probably asleep now,” you said. I nodded. We instinctively gazed in the general direction of Dublin and pictured all seven of them, snug in their beds, somehow existing six hours in the future. You opened your salad’s container with a loud, plastic-on-plastic snap that seemed entirely out of place in such a bucolic setting.
I looked over my shoulder at the car. “Have I ever told you my lozenge theory, Edge?” I opened my salad, nearly spilling its contents in the process, and dug around in a bag for its various accessories that were also swathed in plastic. So much tiresome ceremony is involved in the eating of a salad. It’s really worse than smoking.

“We’ve known each other for twenty-one years. You probably have.”

It sounded like you had little interest in my lozenge theory, but I soldiered on. “This is my theory,” I stated grandly for the benefit of any squirrels, snakes, or armadillos within earshot. “Let’s say you’re looking at a car, but you’re not sure if you should buy it. You need to imagine that car shrunk down to the size of a lozenge. Would that lozenge feel good in your mouth? If so, you should buy that car.” I pointed to the Acura with my fork. “That,” I said, “would feel good in your mouth.”

You nearly choked on a piece of lettuce. “It’s a fucking great theory.”

“You’d better believe it.”

You noticed a red-winged blackbird that was building a nest in some cattails by the pond, and we watched it gather leaves and sticks while we ate. It made sounds that reminded me of a horrid alarm clock, but the bird’s red and white epaulets looked very stylish against its black body. “I loved how you took my hand earlier today,” I said quietly.

“The music reminded me of the day we met...in a roundabout way,” you said, patting my knee. “What was going through your mind?”

I crunched through a rock-hard crouton. “Sex.”

“Really?”

“Oh come on. The first movement alone made me want to strip you naked and take you right there in the aisle.”

“Then it was an afternoon well-spent.”

“You and that dreamy expression of yours. Your tongue licking your lips. Christ.” You smiled shyly and looked at me. “We need to make a decision, incidentally,” I said.

“What’s that?”

“Okay. It’s Sunday night. Tomorrow’s our show. Tuesday morning we’re flying to Memphis where, barring some kind of natural disaster or food poisoning or the like, I will finally have my way with you.”

“Do you intend to have your way with me that morning or later on?” you asked drolly.

“Later on. I have a couple of other things planned. Loosely planned.”

“Okay. So what’s to decide?”

“Well, according to my calculations, we have 48 hours to go.”

“It checks out.”

“My question to you is this: should we wait until then, or will we require a--let’s call it a maintenance orgasm--between now and then?”
“I can wait if you can,” you said with a cool indifference I saw right through immediately.

I reclined awkwardly on the narrow bench and put my head in your lap. Looking up at you, I said, “Oh, please know I fully intend to torment you every step of the way, baby.”

You fed me a bit of a hard-boiled egg. “Likewise.”

We were quiet for a while, each of us formulating ways to torture each other. At least that’s what I was doing as the golden light filtered through the trees. You broke the silence to say, “I love this, B.”

“It’s a beautiful adventure.”

You stroked my hair. “Please don't ever leave me.”

“Just try to get rid of me, Edge.” The bench was becoming uncomfortable, so I sat up. A mosquito landed on your neck and I slapped at it. “Motherfucking mosquitoes are going to eat us alive if we don’t take off soon.”

“Do you wanna drive back?”

“No particularly. It’s your turn.”

You figured out how to get back to the interstate with an ease that made me feel comparatively helpless. Along the way, you noticed a box turtle in the middle of the road, and you stopped the car, got out, and placed him in the ditch where he wanted to be. I kissed you when you returned. And because you are some kind of saint, we stopped to wash the dust off the car at one of those automatic places that seem vaguely like a carnival ride. I saw to it that we made out there as well. During a pause between the wash and rinse cycles, I noticed a man on a tractor across the street. He was mowing tall grass by the side of the road. “Hey, Edge. Is that sexy to you?”

“He’s not even remotely my type.”

“No, is mowing sexy to you? Because look: you’ve got long grass, and then you cut it with a machine. Is that short grass doing anything for you? Legitimate question.”

“I’m not saying it is, but I’m not saying it isn’t,” you said with a shrug.

“Holy shit.”

Once we were on the interstate, I turned on the car’s stereo and scanned the radio stations. I caught the tail-end of Pride on one of them. “It’s always an old song, isn’t it?” I asked rhetorically.

“Still a nice feeling, though.”

“That was U2,” the deejay drawled as the song ended. “And they’ll be playing the Cotton Bowl tomorrow night—looks like they’ve been building some kinda spaceship over there! Lots of tickets are still availa—”

“Oh of fucking course there are!” I groaned, turning off the radio and glaring at some shredded tires littering the side of the road. They looked like burnt corn husks. You took my hand and stroked my thumb with yours.

“Well, those people are missing out,” you said calmly. “You know, Bono, you make the most beautiful shape with your body when you sing Please. I never remember to tell you about it, but something you did today reminded me of it.”
I mean, who could resist that? You had my undivided attention.

“And it’s a simple thing. You just stand there very still with your arms crossed in front of you, and your fingers touch your upper arms. Do it. That’s right. Just like that. Your shoulders look so broad, and your torso becomes an amazing inverted triangle. And even though you seem so alone then, you need to know I get turned on when I look over at you, especially when you drop to your knees and, my god, your voice has never sounded as haunting as it does when that song turns into *Streets*. It’s indescribable. And I always think, *This man is an artist. This man is a genius.*”

“Edge, I--”

“I love you. What you do out there every night is courageous, and I admire you so much.”

“Edge.”

You. We were quiet for the rest of the drive, my hand in yours.

Back at the hotel, I thought it would be a good idea for us to sleep in the bed with the iris photo mural above it. “She’ll make sure we behave, Edge.”

“I’m still sleeping naked, though.”

“Of course. We’re not Puritans, for god’s sake.”

We weren’t very tired, but we got into bed anyway and set up nests of notebooks, snacks, drinks, and reading material. I noticed that a Lego-like coffee table was laden with a stack of coffee table books that weren’t there earlier: photography, nature, art. *Further apologies for this hideous table, etc.--David*, read a note on top of them.

Eventually you closed the quad rule pad in which you had been drawing small diagrams, I placed David’s book of ancient Greek sculptures on the bedside table, and we turned off the lights. I moved over to your side of the bed and put my arms around you.

“Do you like being the little spoon for a change?”

“Everybody likes being the little spoon, B.”

I kissed your shoulder. “Point taken.” We were quiet for a moment, inhaling and exhaling, and I adjusted my breathing to match yours.

“Ever have a crush on a boy when you were young?” you asked. “Romantic or otherwise.”

I grinned. “I think I was four or five years old, as a matter of fact.”

“Who was he?”

“He delivered the evening paper,” I said, the memories flooding back. “I wasn’t in school yet, and on nice afternoons Mum and I would play outside and wait for Norman to come home. This boy came by a little later on his bike, and he’d toss the paper on people’s doorsteps. But he’d stop if he saw us. Even though he looked like any other kid on our block, he was a teenager, so to me he was an exotic creature. He always had a kind word or a question for me, and he had a way of making me feel like I was the only boy in the world. Like the sun was shining on my face. His name was John.”

“Ahh. Very sweet.”

“Looking back, I’m sure he had a thing for Mum. She was so pretty and kind….anyway. We had a
white poplar tree in our yard. Its leaves resembled fat hands, and the backs were covered with white velvet. Very soft and downy. And in certain lights it was silvery, like these sexy hairs at your temples, Edge.” I turned your head to kiss them, even though I couldn’t see them in the dark. I knew they were there. “Very professorial. Fuck, just thinking about them…” I bucked against your back. I couldn’t resist.

“Go on with your story, B. So you had this tree?”

I sighed and settled down. “Yes. Apparently it was rare. One day John came by and asked if he could have a couple of its leaves for a science project. He had to collect as many different kinds of leaves as he could find. So I ran over to the tree and Mum helped me pick a few for him.”

“I used to have a leaf collection.”

I bit your shoulder and whispered, “Of course you did, Edge.” You laughed quietly. “Later on he showed me his leaf collection and pointed out the ones I’d given him, and there were labels and arrows. I felt so proud. So the wheels started turning in my infantile mind, and after that I kept giving him leaves and acorns and other things small boys find.”

“Always such a charmer.”

“One day he gave me a branch from a pussy willow tree, and he wrote To Paul from John on it with blue ink. Those little nubs on the branch were covered in silvery fur, like toy kittens or baby seals. I loved it so much, and I ran around with it all evening yelling ‘pussy willow,’ much to the amusement of Norman. I didn’t even know what pussy meant at the time, of course.”

“Of course.”

“I kept it in my room, and looking at it made me feel special, you know? I wonder what happened to John…”

“He probably went on to college.”

“Yeah. What about you, Edge? Any boyfriends before me?”

“Well, a little bit. I would have been around the same age as you were. There was a neighborhood boy who always had comic books. His name was Ben, and he was a few years older than me, and his brother worked at a newsstand. He gave Ben the leftover comics that didn’t sell. All the kids on my street were mad for them, and he’d share them with us. He even made a little library for the comics out of a milk crate.”

“What did Ben look like?”

“Blond hair, dark eyes. Probably eight years old. So: just devastatingly sexy.”

“I am seething with jealousy.”

“I was the youngest boy in our group, and I couldn’t read yet. But he taught me how using those comic books...admittedly the simpler ones like Little Lulu and Archie. Anyway, Ben was very smart, and he was able to explain what sounds the letters made in a way that was easy for me to remember. I felt like he was handing me the keys to the universe, so of course I was fond of Ben and wanted to be like him. I bet he’s a teacher now. He should be, anyway.”

“Perfect little Edge.”
“So yeah, I knew how to read before I started school.”

“What did your teacher do with you when she was teaching everybody else how to read?”

“She made little hand-bound books for me to write stories in. And then I had to read them in front of the class.”

“Jesus Christ.”

“My popularity skyrocketed, needless to say.”

“You poor thing.”

“It’s alright. Rolling Stone Magazine’s sexiest male artist from five years ago really wants to fuck me, so I’ve got that going for me now.”

I laughed. “You bet I do.” You sighed happily and turned to face me. “This Ben person: did he have hair like mine? Just curious.”

“Yes, come to think of it.”

“Ahh, all the puzzle pieces are falling in place.”

“Yes. It’s exactly that easy.” Your fingers grazed the back my neck.

“Mother! Edge is touching me in a sexual way.” You laughed and pulled your hand away, but I grabbed it and kept it where it was, and I could feel your body become warmer. “Amazing how something so mundane--something I was going to do anyway--has such a profound effect on you.”

“With great power comes great responsibility,” you said, gazing at the ceiling.

“Nelson Mandela said that.”

“Yeah, I’m pretty sure he didn’t.”

I yawned. “I have a surprise for you tomorrow.” We kissed until we fell asleep.

The next morning, my eyes opened at 6 o’clock and refused to cooperate with the rest of my body and return to sleep. I wrote a note to you explaining as much and added, “I’ll be in the sex bed.” I grabbed my book because I’d hoped looking at Greek sculptures would lull me back to a state of unconsciousness, and normally they would with their too-perfect-to-be-sexy bodies and blank eyes. But one of them disturbed me in a very good way and even inspired an idea. You wandered in a couple of hours later. “I believe I have become a morning person,” I told your amused face.

I convinced you that we should venture outside the hotel and look for breakfast (“Why?” “I want to.”). I had seen an unremarkable diner during our walk the other night, and like so many other places in this state, it specialized in items shaped like Texas. My pancakes were speared with a toothpick that was crowned by a blueberry and placed in the general location of Dallas. They used a similar mold with your fried eggs, too. We tried to determine the state that would produce the stupidest-looking pancakes and were torn between Oklahoma and Maryland.

But eating Texas-shaped food was not my morning’s main objective, and soon we were back on the sidewalk. “Oh, fuck me,” you muttered when I pulled you into a humble, one-chair establishment I had also noticed the other night.

“Oh, I will,” I said, nodding at a bench. You sat down, and I made myself comfortable in the big
leather chair.

“Howdy, fellas,” the barber said predictably. Paunchy and jocular, he seemed like the kind of person who would want to engage, but I did not particularly wish to engage with him. I wanted to watch you. Adorable, fidgety you.

“Uh, just a light trim,” I said. “How many days has it been, Reg?” You would know.

“Seven,” you said casually, and I nearly started laughing.

“Y’all’re travelin’?”

“We are from Ireland. Just passing through.”

“We’re in a band,” you volunteered, as if this would somehow explain everything and not invite a boatload of additional questions. Luckily a bell on the door jingled, and a man who was obviously a regular walked in. He (“Chet”) and the barber (“Frank”) began a series of politically-charged exchanges that would last the duration of my haircut, gods be praised. The clippers mostly drowned out their blustery takes on the day’s news, all of which were undoubtedly lifted from Rush Limbaugh’s radio program. Meanwhile, you pretended to read an issue of Field & Stream magazine and glanced at me occasionally. I understand, Edge. I am the sun.

You and I made eye contact as Frank tilted my head to the side, folded my left ear down, and buzzed around it, and I hope my expression did not betray my feelings of pure desire the way your green eyes did. Just for a second. Back to the magazine. Who knew you were such an avid fisherman, Edge? Later you noticed a loose thread on the seam of your jeans, something that was obviously much more compelling than the sight of warm shaving cream being spread over my neck and carefully scraped away. Eye contact. Then away. Then back. Then the bulletin board loaded with photos of Dallas luminaries such as Tommy Lee Jones. Then the shabby decor. Then the magazine. Then the thread. Then me. Then a shy smile.

I can’t wait to fuck you and feel you writhe beneath me and watch your face and hear you gasp when I’m finally--

This delicious thought was interrupted by that damned brush with its sneezy talc all over my face and neck—which, who knows, might be fraught with importance for you. This was for the best because the more we explore your predilection (and I so rarely get a chance to use that word), the more I experience sympathetic arousal. And how considerate of you, Edge, to be turned on by something this pedestrian, as opposed to, say, shoplifting or pyromania.

A bitten lip. Eye contact. A blushing 35 year-old genius. Mine.

“All set,” cape off (probably also important), cash surrendered, out the door, hood up, “You wicked thing,” quick walk back to our hideous hotel with me snickering about your seven days, salute to David (“love the books”), fucking endless elevator ride, staring at each other for the duration, and back in our rooms once again.

You took my hand and led me to the sex bed. I dragged you back to the bathroom. “Shower first; I’m itchy,” I informed you and the evil moon face. You turned the water on, and we stripped in a blur while it heated up.

“Awful curtain,” you said as clammy plastic billowed against your legs in the cramped space. It must not have bothered you too much, though, because before I knew it, my chest was pressed against a decorative border of tiles that were unsuccessfully aping Matisse’s cut paper collages. They just
“Bono,” you murmured, your lips at my neck.

“It’s probably still got powder—oh, is that a thing?”

That is a thing.

“So fucking butch,” you said dreamily.

I got under the water and faced you. “You like that, don’t you, pretty boy?” Your hands followed the water from my head down to my shoulders, and you gave me a long, needy kiss, your cock hard against mine.

Your fingers slid along my smooth neck. “Nice timing.”

“I probably should have waited until tomorrow, though, right?”

You turned my head to the left and purred into my ear, “The second day is better. Because then this part”—you licked my nape—“is rough.”

I shuddered with pleasure and drew your hips closer, my hands lingering. “Fuck, Edge.”

Dilated eyes. “Please...I need it now.”

“Baby.”

You grasped me with your practiced hand. “Please let me come.”

“Edge.”

Your head thrown back, your neck on full display... “This is torture. God knows you need it, too.”

“I thought we were going to wait.” We both knew you would get what you wanted, but the possibility of hearing you beg some more was irresistible to me.

“We were, but I wasn’t prepared for this morning at all, and now...I’m so hard.”

I confirmed that this was the case. “Just the way I want you, love.”

It was your turn to stand under the shower, and you smiled seductively as water streamed down your splendid chest. “Don’t you want to?”

“Of course I do.”

You leaned in for a kiss. “Because I was thinking…” Little pecks as you moved to my ear.

“What were you thinking?”

You inhaled and took my earlobe between your lips, and I heard the click of your teeth against my earring. “Maybe a simple maintenance orgasm today…”

“Yes…”

“Would result in you fucking me longer tomorrow night,” you whispered. How could I possibly argue with that?
“God, Edge. Yes. Yes.” You moaned as I kissed your jaw and neck, and down. Your fingertips stroked my short, wet hair.

“Thank you.”

“Promise me one thing, love.” I stroked you and sank to my knees. The tub was uncomfortable, but I wasn’t going to do what you thought.

“Whatever you want.” My lips stopped beneath the shelf of your rib cage, and I sucked and bit until I had made a rose-colored mark there. “Oh, B.”

Finished, I smiled up at you and stood. “I expect you to be diamond hard for me tomorrow.”

“With you walking around looking like that? I’ll be diamond hard for you within the hour.”

We dissolved into more kisses, grasping hands, and established, beloved rhythms. You paused to mark my chest directly above my heart. Soon. You were right. This will help me to fuck you longer. And harder. Tomorrow. I’m going to fuck you tomorrow, love.

You began to groan, and I slowed my hand. “Such a good boy, aren’t you?” You swallowed and nodded. “I’m very pleased with your progress this term, Edge.”

“Fuck me…”

I sped up again. “After this we’ll let it build.”

“Yes, oh god, I’ll do anything you say.” I rewarded you with the back of my neck, and you came with a violent convulsion that made me worry for a second that you might actually fall. As soon as you caught your breath, I coaxed you to your knees. You gazed at me with adoration, and I succumbed quickly and loudly to your lips and tongue and hands.

We collapsed onto the iris bed and stared at the ceiling for a while. I was just about to fall asleep when the relentless cacophony of a jackhammer put an end to that. “That’ll be me tomorrow night, Edge,” I joked.

You rolled your eyes. “Seven floors down, and we can still hear it. Amazing.”

“I don’t think Phyllis gave much thought to soundproofing these rooms.”

“We should probably get going soon anyway.” You stood up and playfully grabbed my foot.

“Do not, repeat, do not tickle me.”

“Cutest little feet I have ever seen.”

You leaned over and sucked my big toe as I shrieked. “Sensory overload, Jesus fucking Christ, Edge!”

Returning my foot to me, its rightful owner, you smiled and said, “I’ll make you learn to love that one day.”

“Today is not that day!”

I had a thought when we were getting dressed a few moments later. “Edge, wear this.”

“You shirt?” you asked, looking dubiously at a certain lime green mesh number. “I mean, it’s so
obviously yours.”

“Yup. And I’m wearing…” I said, rifling through your clothes. “Ahh, here it is.” I’ve always coveted your black collared shirt with the fabric that looks sort of sheer and sort of like lace.

“So obviously mine.” I put it on and turned to you for approval. “You look good in anything, B.”

“Your turn.”

“Yeah, I don’t know.”

“I do… See, just as I suspected. It looks better on you than it does on me.”

“I can see that mark you made.”

“Then you’ll need to have an explanation ready to go in case anyone asks. Highly unusual for you to sport random bruises.” I ducked to escape the headlock I deserved, and we laughed.

“You are a wicked thing.”

I held your black shirt’s collar to my nose—it was perfectly clean, and yet it still smelled vaguely like you. A lover can always tell. “I wanna smell like you.” You shook your head and gamely tossed your bottle of cologne to me, and five seconds later I smelled like amber, soap—no, shaving cream, right Edge?—and a forest after a thunderstorm. I found my own fragrance and sprayed it on you.

“Well, this will drive me crazy all day,” you said, taking the label-free bottle from me. “What even is this?”

“I’m afraid it is…bespoke,” I grinned.

“Oh, you would.”

I embraced you and nuzzled your neck. “I wanted something that would remind people of leather, and ginger, and smoke, and…”

“Sugar.”

“Of course.”

“And money.” You kissed my forehead.

“We’ll have to make one for you. Although what you’ve got right now is basically perfect.” I inhaled and admired your chest through my shirt. “Mmm, Edge. You realize people who know about us must imagine us having sex.”

“You think so?”

“I mean, don’t you do that with other couples? The attractive ones, anyway. Or the really unconventional ones.”

“Yeah, sure.”

“We’ve got both of those things going for us.”

I put three child-painted rocks in my pocket before we left. “He raised your hairline about half an inch in the back,” you said when you saw me in direct sunlight. “I can see a little bit of a tan line.”
“Do you like that?”

“I love that.”

“Well, do try to ignore it for the next twelve hours if you can, Edge.”

“Not possible.”

We spent the ride to the stadium getting our minds together: we were two rock stars with a job to do. The car slowed down and passed a long line of cheering fans, and I lowered the window and waved. “Hello, cowboys and cowgirls,” I yelled as they lost their minds. That truly never gets old, and their screams increased when you rested your chin on my shoulder and pointed at them. Our driver pulled into an underground entrance, and we put our game faces on.

“Let’s get ‘em, B.”

“Let’s.”

We split up for a few hours, but your shirt and your scent created a constant, underlying awareness of you as I took care of garden-variety, day-of-show tasks. I was looking around for a piece of scrap paper when Sharon tapped me on my shoulder and presented me with a shopping bag. “I found everything you wanted,” she grinned.

I looked inside. “Oh yes. This is exactly what I had envisioned. How do you do it, Sharon? Thank you so much.” She looked at what I was wearing and raised an eyebrow, and I laughed. “I just wanted to see if anyone would notice.”

“That’s funny. Edge said you guys were doing it for good luck.”

“Oh, that too!”

She shook her head, gave me an ironic salute, and walked away laughing.

Helene, resplendent in a celadon pantsuit, cornered me a bit later and studied me. “Tell Edge he is pro already,” she said approvingly. I didn’t have the heart to tell Helene I had cheated on her.

“Important night tomorrow,” I grinned.

“You will need touch up?” she said, her fingernail grazing my neck.

I leaned over and whispered, “He likes it rough.”

She chuckled knowingly and winked at me. “We all do, darling.” She left me breathless in her wake.

The four of us convened in a rehearsal area around mid-afternoon. Adam and I sat on a couch and waited for you and Larry to show up. “You look exceedingly happy,” he said, offering me a cigarette.

“Thanks, Adam, I am.”

“Despite the difficulties of the tour.”

“Edge is keeping me sane.”

Adam exhaled and smiled. “Remember when you nearly bit my head off after that first show?”
“Oh yes. Sorry about that.”

“No, it’s fine. I’m just glad things have normalized.”

“So many months are ahead of us. Oh and by the way? The new Radiohead is circulating. Do not listen to it unless you’re a glutton for punishment.”

“I’ll take that under advisement.”

You and Larry walked in. Larry was on his phone, and you took your acoustic Gibson out of its case and started to tune it. “I love the sound of your voice,” Larry said warmly, presumably to Ann, and Adam and I whistled and blew kisses at him. He glared at us and walked toward the windows.

Adam’s expression became wistful, and he said, “You’re fortunate to have someone--two people--to love you. Some of us...we have to wait, apparently.”

I put my arm around him and leaned against his shoulder. “I love you, Ad.”

“I love you, too, B.”

I grabbed his chin and turned his head to face me. I batted my eyelashes and channeled Vivian Leigh. “Just not in...that way, Rhett.”

“Frankly, my dear, I don’t give a damn.”

You seemed to be enjoying this exchange. “Adam,” I said, pointing at you. “He looks as if...as if he knows what I look like without my shimmy.” We locked eyes for a goofy couple of seconds, and then my phone rang. It took a moment for me to register that the voice on the other end was Ali.

“Ali, darling. How are you on this fine evening?”

“It’s a lovely night. So many stars in the sky. Pretty little crescent moon. I’ll send it over to you.”

“I’ll look for it, love.”

“Feeling good?”

“Surprisingly calm. It’s been such a pleasant couple of days here.”

“Ahh, I’m glad to hear that. You know, I’ve been wondering. The girls’ school year ends soon. We were thinking about visiting you in New York.”

“Oh, I hope you do! Please, and bring Morleigh!” You gave me a thumbs-up.

“Of course. We miss you.”

“I miss my girls. And my gorgeous wife,” I murmured. Adam stood and walked over to his gear, still slightly bemused by our unusual arrangement. The conversation was admittedly getting a little weird.

“Are you treating Edge well?”

“Indeed I am.”

“See that you do.”

“I love you, Ali.”
I love you. Wanna talk to Jordan and Eve?

Absolutely I do.

They’re supposed to be in bed, aren’t you, girls? I’m putting you on speaker.

Daddy!

My beauties! I have three little rocks in my pocket.

Jordan, me, and Mommy!” Eve said happily.

“If you girls get in bed, I’ll sing you a lullaby.” I could hear the rustling of blankets--one of them had the phone in her hand. This was followed by a loud snap as the phone was placed on the table between their beds. As big as our house is, they still like to sleep in the same bedroom. “Ready?”

Sing, Daddy!”

“Okay, but I want you to go to sleep right after this. Promise?”

“We promise,” Jordan said.

“Yes,” Eve giggled.

I decided to sing our most lullaby-like song, and you beamed as I began, Is there a time for keeping a distance / A time to turn your eyes away / Is there a time for keeping your head down / For getting on with your day.

You started to accompany me, so I got up and sat beside you, Is there a time for kohl and lipstick / A time for cutting hair / Is there a time for high street shopping / To find the right dress to wear.

“Here she comes,” sang two sleepy little voices and the one right beside me. Light flooded through a window and backlit the hair on your left forearm, and it looked so soft, so masculine.

Brian had written Make the music of the future you want to live in on a whiteboard in the studio, and I thought about that a lot during our summer of swirling, dreamlike creativity. What seemed like a dozen auxiliary projects were on the table along with what would become Passengers, and you and I had the best of both worlds: blissful domesticity and a rich songwriting vein to excavate together.

Morleigh and Ali loved having us back, but on those occasions when they were preoccupied with work or children or too tired or simply not in the mood (but we were), you and I were a mere phone call or email away. The distance between our houses is exceedingly walkable, and bathroom floors, studies with locking doors, remote darkened patios, and that computer lair of yours were fair game for phone sex or a rare visit. And...we also had a hotel.

One balmy July night, Brian wanted to debut his mix of Miss Sarajevo, this time with the addition of Luciano’s solo, for Larry, Adam, and the two of us. He had decorated the studio with his inimitable touches: strings of colorful lights, unusual fabrics, and a monitor playing a loop of silent cartoons and old movies. “This is very special,” he said, and we listened to the by-then-overly-familiar strains of the song. I know you loved my voice there, gentle and subdued, and I took your hand as we sat together on a couch behind Brian. Your beautiful guitar work transported me to the previous summer’s divine nights in the white room. And then...Luciano’s voice. Paired with your guitar and the romantic strings, it completely blindsided me, and I gasped, and that gasp became an uncontrollable and rather embarrassing sob. Brian swiveled around and grinned (mission accomplished as far as he was concerned), and Adam and Larry were respectful enough to stifle a
few laughs. But I felt your hand on my face, and you turned my head and looked at me with an expression of awe. Our best song was being born, and you kissed me. You kissed me for the first time in front of any of them.

“Let’s go.”

Soon we were driving into the city, breathless. I was on your car’s bulky, book-like phone that plugged into the cigarette lighter. Now it’s already a fossil, but at the time it seemed like the apex of modern technology. I called The Clarence and merely said, “It’s Bono. We want the terrace...Heh, should we be worried no one is there tonight?...You’re right, it’s just a Tuesday...Don’t bother; I’ll use my key.” You parked in our spot, and we took the elevator no one knows about to the reason why we bought that hotel in the first place.

You made love to me--it wasn't just a release and it wasn't just sex and it wasn't just fucking. It truly was lovemaking, and when it was over we slept on the terrace under the stars and I want it to be like that for you and I want to make love to you and I want it to be perfect for you...

“Now girls, I don’t want to sing this part because I’m not warmed up at all, and it can hurt my voice- ...

“Also it makes you cry sometimes, Daddy.”

“Very funny. You can try to be opera singers if you like.” I held the phone so we could hear their confused but enthusiastic attempts at Italian leading up to a couple of triumphant L’amour!’s. I settled them down and brought the song in for a landing.

“Good night, sweet angels. Give your mother kisses for me.”

Sometimes a memory can color the rest of the day, and as the afternoon shadows lengthened, a languid mood settled over me. I’m not used to feeling that way before a concert, but I didn’t want to fight it, either.

We had our odd 4:00 buffet-meal together as usual. “Promise me you’ll at least try this,” you said, spooning a green bean-ish substance onto my plate.

“You’re on, cowboy.”

The substance was probably the most revolting thing I have ever eaten: okra--noxious, slime-exuding okra. “This is the worst buffet on the tour so far, hands down,” I declared while transferring the rest to your plate.

“There’s no crying on the yacht, Bono,” Larry said with a grin.

I sat back and looked at him with a certain amount of admiration. “How long have you been waiting to use that one on me?”

“Not long. Letterman said it last week.”

“Well, I want it embroidered on a pillow as soon as possible,” I said.

“They’re predicting about 7,000 unsold tickets tonight,” Paul announced as he breezed in. I bristled at this news.

“Thirty-eight out of forty-five thousand? It’s been worse,” you said, patting me on the knee.
“Yes,” Paul smiled, “and I’m happy to report that in a couple of weeks you’ll be looking at sold-out stadiums once again for most of the North American dates.”


“A toast to the bearer of good news,” you said, raising your paper cup, and we cheered our beloved manager as he took off to deal with his list of last-minute things to do.

What that Texas crowd lacked in numbers, it made up for in decibels. Early on I invited them to come to church with me but skip the religion during *Still Haven’t Found*. Your vocals were particularly strong during that song, and it was one of the night’s highlights. Otherwise the first set was a little sloppy, or rather I was, and I managed to screw up the lyrics to *Until the End of the World* (you were looking right at me the whole time, Edge, and you seemed to take a special glee in slaying me) and of course our fucking albatross *Staring At the Sun* (I was too busy watching your mouth; I admit it).

But otherwise it was shaping up to be a fine show. “Take your time leaving,” you whispered to me as you got ready for your karaoke segment with the audience. “This one’s for you, B,” you said, grinning over your shoulder at me while I walked backwards down the catwalk to the tune of *Daydream Believer*. I curtsied at the first “homecoming queen” and made my exit, smiling at your voice above me as my disgruntled and rushed handlers discarded and reapplied my clothing.

An audience member made his way onstage during *Bullet the Blue Sky* and was scooped up almost immediately. I saw it happen and convinced security to let him stay. That was ultimately my mistake because this guy turned out to be a loose cannon--but you can never know that until it’s too late. He was moving erratically and started reaching into his pockets for money to toss during “100, 200,” and, unsurprisingly, his rolling papers fell onto the B-stage. “No thanks, I don’t do drugs,” I said as I returned them, and I waved goodbye as he was escorted off. You and I locked eyes and we shrugged. Then you lifted your chin skyward, and I did the same. A cluster of white lights shot up into the sky and circled the crescent moon. For all the money we’ve spent on technology and special effects for this tour, that relatively simple one was the most beautiful.

I became increasingly affectionate as the night wore on, and Larry bore the brunt of my sentimentality when we were in the lemon. “Larry, you really do love me, don’t you?” I pinched his cheek.

“More than you can even begin to understand, B.”

“Posh Irish model.”

You entered the lemon last, and I knelt before you, my rhinestone cowboy, my guitar god, and I kissed your hand. “Marry me, Edge.”

“Name the time and the place.”

“Tomorrow, Memphis.”

“You’ve got yourself a deal, darlin’.”

And for good measure, I kissed our dear Adam during *With or Without You*. This band of ours, Edge. What a life, what a life.

You and I were scheduled to leave Dallas a few hours before anyone else would the next morning, so we were back at the hotel no more than fifteen minutes after the show ended. We elected to take separate, workmanlike showers and reconvene beneath the iris.
I found you in bed covered with its white sheet. The lights were dim, and you were looking out at the night. I’m sure you were replaying the show in your mind, pinpointing the one or two technical missteps you made that nobody noticed, and developing a plan to correct them.

I pulled the sheet off you. “Mind if I pose you, love?”

“Not at all.”

I placed the bed’s other pillows behind your back until you were propped into a slumpy, almost-seated position. “Okay, I need your left leg over here...just let your foot dangle off the side of the bed. Good.” You chuckled. “Now bend this other leg as much as you can. Great. Knees as far apart as you can get them. I’m serious; please?”

“Awfully slutty pose, sir.”

“Oh, just you wait. Now I want you to tip your head back and sort of rest it on your left shoulder like you’re asleep. Then, like, touch the back of your neck with your right hand. Elbow pointing up at the ceiling. Exactly.”

“What do I do with my left arm?”

“Actually, I’m not sure. It was cut off.”

“Cut off?”

“I was looking at Greek sculptures this morning, and the one you’re copying didn’t have a left arm. So just do whatever you want with it, I guess.” You laughed. “Stay in the pose, Edge. Sleepy, slutty Edge.”

“Am I a god?”

“You are to me, but in this case, you are a drunken faun. A satyr.”

“Aren’t they supposed to be part goat, or something?”

“I think so, but this one just looked like a man. Maybe he had horns, but it was hard to find them in his hair. It doesn’t matter, Edge.”

“Okay.”

“So I was flipping through that book of boring sculptures, but this one--the Barberini Faun--he captured my imagination. He was in this amazingly wanton pose, just everything on full display, you know, and I wanted to imagine he was you, but he had this face...I dunno, Edge, he just looked kind of dumb.”

“Well, you said he’s supposed to be drunk.”

“Right. And I didn’t want him to be. I wanted him to have your face, your intelligence, your eyes, yes, just like this. So that’s why you find yourself in the predicament you’re in now. Can you stay like that for a while?”

“I guess.”

“Move a little if you need to.”

“No, I’m fine.”
I got on the bed and kissed your chest. “So you were a Greek sculpture, and the Romans took you, and you decorated a mausoleum in Rome for a few hundred years until the Goths attacked. The Romans hurled sculptures down on them, including you. Can you imagine? Being killed by a projectile this lovely? So part of your head and your limbs were damaged, and you were buried in a moat for over a thousand years before they found you again.”

“Poor me.”

“But here you are, perfectly restored, extremely lifelike, and inspiring impure thoughts once again.” My hands wandered down your body. I noticed a slight tremor developing in your right arm, but you held the pose. “You get more beautiful every day of your life.”

“You’re so good to me.”

I continued to admire and investigate my living, diamond-hard (well, marble-hard) sculpture. “Today I found myself becoming nostalgic for our nighttime phone calls.”

“Oh, really?”

“Yeah.” I kissed your mouth and pretended to have a reason to turn my head in just the right direction for you.

“Wanna have phone sex with a sculpture?”

“I do, Edge.”

“Okay.” You paused and smiled at me. “Hi, B. Can you talk?”

“Sorry Edge, not tonight. We’re kind of busy.”

You rolled your eyes. “Hilarious.”

“No. Of course I can talk. Just give me a bit.”

“Call me back when you can. (Forty-five minutes later.)”

Why was I making a pretend phone with my hand when I could slide it over your legs? “Hey Edge, I’m here.”

“Sorry, I couldn’t wait any longer. Crisis averted.”

“Fuck you,” I laughed.

“Just kidding. Talk to me.”

“Okay, Edge, well, I really miss your cock,” I said, acknowledging this in real life.

“I bet you do.”

“Yeah.”

“I miss fucking you, baby.” Your voice was low and sexy.

“Ooh. Daddy.”

“Where are you?”
I kissed your neck. Slowly. “My office.” Up to that jaw...

“Good. I want you to go over to that leather couch.”

“Edge.”

“Bend over the arm.”

“Fuck.” Pretending you were the couch, I positioned myself across your hips.

“Just like that.”

“Oh Edge.” It took a few seconds for me to get comfortable, and I squirmed a bit.

“Do I have to tie your wrists together?”

“No. But I’ll keep them behind my back if that’s what you want.” I actually needed one of them to stay balanced on the bed, but I put the other behind my back, knowing you would understand.

“That’s what I want.”

“Yes.” This minute-long return to our old dynamic was enough to make me yearn for your weight on my body.

“Baby.” Your voice, firm and loving...irresistible.

“I miss that, Edge.”

“Baby.”

“Sir.”

“Legs apart.” I did what I could. “Are you ready for me?”

“Oh yes,” I sighed.

“No matter how ready you say you are, you’re always so tight.” You were warm and impatient against my chest, and your hips were starting to break the pose.

“Just the way you like me, sir.” Keeping my back arched, I moved to kiss your cock.

“Yes, baby. Oh fuck, yes.”

“Edge, my god.” I looked up at you.

You inhaled sharply. “Bono...please.”

I moved back so our faces were closer. “No, we’re waiting. Remember?”

You looked out the window and exhaled. “You were extremely lenient with me this morning.”

I let you suck on one of my fingers. “That’s right, Edge. You need to be patient. You’ll have my cock soon enough.”

“Yes. I will.”

I ran my hand down the length of your torso and up again. “You’re the only man I’d ever fuck,
“I’d never be fucked by any other man.”

I gave you my neck and whispered, “Soon, love.”

“Soon.”

“I love the way you kiss me, Edge.”

“How do I kiss you?”

“Like this.”

My mouth covered yours, and I kissed you long and hard. Stubble, teeth, tongues, greed, lust, and yes, love...I was kissing you. I pushed your right arm down and in doing so hinted that you could move again. Your hand flew to the back of my neck, and your body clung to mine. We stayed like that for a long time.

“Tomorrow is special, Edge.” I glanced up at the iris.

Your eyes followed mine. “I can’t believe we did all of that in front of her.”

“Don’t worry about it anymore. She’s happy that I have you, and she loves you very much, you know.”
Hello. I wanted to cover let's say a lot more in this chapter, but these two had a very busy day in Memphis, and this thing was approaching 10,000 words and they hadn't even returned to their hotel yet. SO the main event is going to happen next chapter. And because I love you, the current plan is that it will happen twice. :D

Okay, a lot of real-life experiences and actual people are in this chapter, including a teacher I admire and a lady at a restaurant. They really are exactly this sweet and charming. The restaurant is also real, but I've renamed it because I didn't want this to end up in a Google search. But if you're planning a trip to Memphis and you want to go to there, message me and I'll tell you the name of the real place. The real place has since moved to a new location, but this was where it would have been in 1997. The hotel is real, and I didn't change its name because its name is pretty generic.

In the Close series, I had a Wizard of Oz undercurrent going on, and it pops up again in this chapter.

Re: Bono and squirrels. Look for it on YouTube. You will not be disappointed!

And the person who's into them? In my B/E universe, I've hinted that she's into them. Please see my story Hidden In Plain Sight. :)

I hope you'll enjoy this. I've been pecking away at it for over two weeks and would appreciate your feedback very much. Thank you! <3
I was trapped inside a copper-colored rock, and you were in the process of freeing my body. The rock became granular and fell away—maybe it was sandstone—wherever your lips touched it. You were working slowly and in no particular order (face, right hand, left foot, chest), and you smiled at me periodically, pleased with your strange new skill. “I’m saving the best for last,” you whispered sweetly, and I wanted to touch you, but I was still mostly immobile. Then off in the distance, bells began to ring…

“Hello...oh yes...thank you...Did you enjoy the show?...Do you in fact ever sleep, David?...Glad you had a good time...I’ll be happy to sign one of the books...Thanks for all you’ve done for us...I’m
I glanced at the bedside clock. 5:45 a.m. You were already busy drawing sunglasses on the face of the Venus di Milo. You flipped the book over, drew a cowboy hat and a mustache on a discus thrower, and grinned at me. “Good morning, love.”

“It’s so early…”

“I know, I know. But you can nap on the plane, and I don’t know about you, but I plan to go to bed early tonight.” You winked unnecessarily. Oh, you knew about me, alright. You kissed my cheek and the gigantic iris overhead and sprang out of bed.

“Merry Christmas, B.”

“Joy to the world, Edge.”

A couple of hours later, you and I were on our way to Memphis in a private jet. I had to hand it to you: I had no idea Jimmy Iovine was at our concert, but you did, and you charmed him into offering us the use of his plane for the morning (hence the pre-dawn wakeup call). “I just couldn’t bear the thought of us flying commercial on such an important day,” you said, luxuriating in your sumptuous recliner with my/your sketchpad and pencil. I hoped you wouldn’t accidentally mark or poke a hole in the pristine white leather.

I sat facing you, and I tried to nap, but I rarely sleep on a plane during daylight hours. I don’t think I’ll ever get used to the miracle of flight and the unique perspective it provides. I love how the geometrically precise fields contrast with the beautifully abstract shapes of lakes and rivers. And rivers are so bossy, the way they dictate the organization of cities, farms, forests, and everything else.

In developed areas, subdivisions resemble centipedes, and their swimming pools are pieces of jewelry inlaid with turquoise. Even at lower altitudes, it’s rare to see actual human beings walking around outside, particularly in America. It’s such a massive country, and frequently the towns and cities feel oddly vacant. Vehicles on the roads are often the only hint that anyone lives here at all.

Years ago I noticed a miles-long, tan smear interrupting the pristine order of a flat Midwestern landscape: the path of a tornado. It disrupted some green fields and barely clipped the northern tip of a small town. I probably should have been horrified, but I felt oddly fortunate to have seen it. I thought about that as we circled an anvil-topped thunderhead like a small spacecraft orbiting its mothership--

“You’re being an angel again, Edge.”

“What do you mean?”

You leaned in and placed your hand on my thigh. “I think the modern equivalent of an angel is someone who looks down at you from a plane. I mean, when you see a plane in the sky, don’t you wonder if anybody inside it is observing you or at least taking note of where you live? Wouldn’t it make you feel special to know that a person you’ll never meet is thinking about you and your life in some tiny way?” You squeezed my knee and returned to your chair’s comfortable embrace. “These giant metal tubes full of people are always in the sky, and in every flight there are at least a handful of passengers who love to look out the windows, wouldn’t you say?”

“Yeah. Easily. I read somewhere that at any given moment there are around ten thousand planes in the sky worldwide.”
“So let's say you’ve got at least twenty thousand angels in the sky at all times. And right now one of them is you. One of them is this gorgeous man, and he’s in the air over, what is that, Arkansas?”

You peered out your window, as if doing so might let you know one way or the other, and then your eyes locked on mine. “And he’s thinking about those people down there, and they don’t even realize a fucking wizard is six miles overhead, contemplating their existence. And I think that’s kind of wonderful.” You glanced down at your drawing and erased something.

“You’re kind of wonderful, B.”

“Kind of?”

“Completely.”

Cloud cover put an end to my angelic ways, so I watched you draw for a while. Years of signing autographs and doodling cartoons for fans had shut off any self-conscious feelings you may have had about drawing in front of an audience. The picture you were working on was excellent. You tend to exaggerate things that are important to you, and you made my eyes a bit larger and therefore more soulful than they really are.

“It’s your best one.”

“Do you really think so?”

“I wish I looked like that.”

“You look like that to me, Edge.” You smiled, stretched your arms, and returned to your art project.

Your body was encased in black denim and red cotton, and I thought about my endless attraction to it. On the small side of average, compact, powerful—in many ways you are quite the opposite of my litesome Morleigh, and yet you’re both equally beautiful to me. Her skin is softer than yours, but not by much. And when you’re indulging in everything that’s bad for you, your body can feel more feminine than her consummately disciplined instrument. I’d never tell you so. The very thought would undoubtedly offend you, especially now that you’re in the best shape of your life, but...I love your little belly and your fleshy, perfect ass.

You reached for a nearby bottle of water and struggled with its tight screw-on cap. Its plastic ribs bit into your index finger. “These fucking things,” you said, displaying the rosy imprint it left. Then you tilted your head back and downed most of the water as though you were in an advertisement for...some very sexy water.

“Jimmy warned me that I’d be dealing with two of the biggest rock stars in the world today,” the jet’s middle-aged flight attendant said as she served us breakfast. “But he didn’t say you’d be so quiet and handsome.”

“My name is Bono and this is the Edge, and flattery’ll get you everywhere, dear,” you said.

She nodded at the sketchbook on your lap. “Wow.”

“All this and I can draw, too,” you purred.

“That’s him.”

You beamed at me. “He’s my best friend and I love him.” I beamed back. Why not?

“Love creates the best art,” she said knowingly, leaving us to our non-Texas-shaped waffles.
A reporter rushed out to meet us when we arrived in Memphis a half-hour later. Apparently the airport there is so small any out-of-the-ordinary planes get noticed. This good ol’ boy must have been working the airport beat for so long his cronies there were more than happy to tip him off.

“Bono…?” he said, looking down at his small pad of paper and mispronouncing your name, “and ‘The Edge’? Okay, which one is which?”

“I am Bono, and this is the Edge,” you said, unphased.

“Fancy handles ya got there!”

“We are from Europe, and we are one half of a little four-piece called U2.”

“Huh. So they’re tellin’ me you fellas are here for a few days for…a rock concert somewhere in town, is that right?”

“Yes. I believe it’s called the Liberty Bowl.”

“The Liberty Bowl? Well, hell, you two must be pretty big deals! Ted Bolger from the Memphis Commercial Appeal, by the way.” He shook/crushed our hands.

“Commercial Appeal? We could use some of that…” you said, wincing.

“Anything you’d like to say to your fans here in Memphis?” He pressed a button on a small tape recorder.

I looked up at the overcast sky and inhaled the sweet, primordial scent of mud and chlorophyll. “Well, this is where it all began, isn’t it?” I said.

“You got that right, friend.”

“Ted. You can tell your readers to expect something…quite new from us with this tour.” you said, picking up steam. “We have failed here and there over the past few weeks. At the point where it’s the most interesting, you get the most confusion. But at the moment the arc is in our favor, and we’re starting to play our best shows in the midst of…well, a whole lotta trash.”

“Trash?”

“You’ll see. Our stage could not be trashier. But our job as artists is to find beauty in unexpected places,” you said, slipping the drawing pad into one of your bags.

“Y’all’ve played Memphis before?”

“Oh, it’s been at least nine or ten years,” I said.

“Ahh, so you’ve been around the block a time or two.”

“Well, yes, but we are not a nostalgia act,” you smiled. “On Thursday night, we want our fans to feel as if they’ve been to school, they’ve been to church, and they’ve had their asses kicked.”

“Heh! This one’s pretty damn quotable, isn’t he?”

“You’d better believe it,” I said, glancing over your shoulder at a yellow Jaguar coupe that definitely passed your lozenge test. Its driver stood beside it and idly tossed its keys in the air a few times.

“Well, I’ll let you fellas go,” Ted said, closing his notepad.
You opted to give him a wave in lieu of more hand-crushing, and I followed suit. We glanced at each other, and as we turned we heard an incredible rushing noise in the air--literally the sound of speed--followed by an invisible, bone-shattering explosion. “What the fuck…!” you exclaimed.

“Sonic boom!” he laughed. “We get ‘em sometimes. An air force base is just a little bit south of here. Nothin’ to worry about. Y’all have fun in Memphis.”

“We most certainly will.”

I nodded at the car. “Your idea?”

“Hello, gorgeous,” you said, regarding its curves with a leer. “I’m driving.” You rummaged through one of your bags for a set of computer printouts and handed them to me. Driving directions.

“I suppose this means I’m navigating.”

“Would you please?”

During the easy, fifteen-minute trip to our hotel downtown, you asked, “You know how I said at the point where it’s the most interesting, you get the most confusion?”

“Yeah.”

“We are the exception, Edge. I’m not confused about us, and you and I could not interest me more.”

“We’re incredibly interesting to me, too.”

The interstate ran alongside the gloomy, colorless Mississippi River for a couple of miles, and you glanced at it with admiration. “Such an ugly motherfucker today. But this city is the holy land. Rock ‘n’ roll Jerusalem. It’s got so much more soul than Dallas. Sexier. Cooler. Slightly spooky.”

“Go ahead and take a right up here.” I put my hand on your shoulder. “I love your tendency to anthropomorphize cities, B.”

“Well, I named my daughter after this one, so…”

“That’s not gonna be a problem for you tonight, is it? Left.”

“What? Don’t be ridiculous, Edge. I will fuck you in this town. I don’t care what its name is.”

“Right.”

“Damn right.”

“No, I mean turn right. Here we are.”

After our experience in Dallas, the decor of the Madison Hotel was a relief. It too was trying very hard to create a quirky, artistic vibe with its colorful walls, luxe fabrics, and busy patterns. But a halfway sane individual was at the helm this time. It reminded me of something Prince might come up with if Prince had a designer at his side who was not afraid to tell him no occasionally. An older gentleman sat at a white baby grand piano playing *Killing Me Softly With His Song*. He raised his chin at us.

“Kind of fun coming in here without an entourage,” you said, striding purposefully across the empty lobby to the registration desk. Two beautiful women, possibly sisters, tried their best to erase their deer-in-the-headlights expressions. “Good morning, ladies. We have a reservation. It’s probably
under B. Or maybe H; I forget. We’re part of the Irish organization that will be invading this lovely place later today.”

The older sister blinked a few times and grinned at you as you talked. “Oh, we know who you are, sir,” she said with a gentle Southern drawl. The other one blushed, straightened a stack of papers, and tucked a strand of long blond hair behind her ear.

You shifted into full peacock mode: “Well, then, I know it’s early, but you pretty things need to ask yourselves this: are you ready for me? More importantly, are you ready for the most gifted guitar genius of his generation?”

“He tosses that term around liberally, I assure you.” I put my bags down and joined you, wondering how long the four of us could continue this way without mentioning actual names.

“We’re ready for both of you,” smiled Little Sister while Big Sister typed briskly at her computer. “And you’re both geniuses.”

“My my, thank you so much, darlin’.” You selected a piece of red hard candy from a bowl on the counter. Then you untwisted its crisp cellophane wrapper with an agonizing slowness that guaranteed all eyes would stay on you for the duration. “We just love Memphis.”

“Please let us know if there’s anything we can do to make your stay at the Madison more pleasurable. We’re thrilled y’all are here, believe me.”

Big Sister put two key cards inside tiny folders and placed them in front of us. “Presidential suite. Adjoining specialty suite. I’ll let you decide who gets what,” she said, executing her sister’s blond-hair-behind-the-ear move.

I slid the former over to you. “Hail to the chief.”

“Why thank you, The. Edge.”

I gave both ladies a confidential smile. “This is merely a formality. We share everything.” They chuckled politely and you nearly choked on your candy.

“Wait, didn’t we have bags?” you asked, looking around and coughing a bit.

“Oh, those are up there already, sir.”

“Mmph. I’m impressed.” As you do at nearly every award show or red carpet, you gave a final, disarmingly crooked grin and walked in the opposite direction of where you needed to go.

“Elevators are over here, Bono.”

“Delightful talking with you, ladies.”

We heard them shriek as the doors closed.

Impatient, you watched the numbers light up overhead. “Long elevator rides are the price one must pay for the best rooms in a hotel. Well, that and hundreds and hundreds of dollars.”

I touched the tip of your nose. “When you smile even a little bit, the shape of your nose changes.”

“You don’t say?”

“Normally it’s straighter, but a smile makes the tip turn down and your nostrils move up. All of these
“little muscles get involved,” I said, caressing the apple of your cheek and tracing a line down to the corner of your amused mouth.

“Obsessed with me much, Edge?”

“Was there ever any doubt?”

The doors opened onto our floor, and the rooms, when combined, created a massive suite the size of a small house. I was forbidden to enter your space until later--you wanted to create some kind of fully-immersive erotic experience for me, I assumed. So after you checked out the Presidential suite, we settled in mine temporarily. The decor throughout was a continuation of the lobby’s Paisley-Park-Sans-Glitter-and-Doves theme, with lots of warm metallics and saturated colors. The hotel had branded itself as a rock ‘n’ roll getaway of sorts, and to help drive that point home, a couple of acoustic guitars were propped against a dark red couch. “Hey, how come you get a circular bed and I don’t?” you asked, brandishing the rose that had been placed on my pillow and waving it around like a conductor.

“Does that suddenly change your plans, B?” I opened some curtains and looked out at the Mississippi.

“Not at all. But please be advised that important things will be happening in this bed tomorrow night. And also now. Get over here.” You grabbed my hand and pulled me down onto the bed with you. We kissed and fondled and made a sappy spectacle of ourselves. It was the kind of cloying scene I would find difficult to watch in a film if it had involved anyone else. But this was us, and we were very much in love and obscenely happy. Considering our history, I knew we had earned this opportunity to gaze at each other in awe on a ridiculous bed whose sole purpose was to provide wealthy tourists a novel platform upon which to fuck.

“This bed is hilarious, Edge,” you said, rolling me over and causing the lower third of my body to dangle over the side. Your mouth still tasted faintly of red, and your eyes were turning dark with greed.

“So what do you have planned for us today?”

You looked up at the ceiling and sighed. “A handful of activities that--now that I’ve had some time to reflect--seem embarrassingly wholesome. Maybe we should just stay here.”

“Do you think these wholesome activities, whatever they may be, will make the things we’ll do tonight seem even more unwholesome in comparison?”

You blinked. “This is why I love you.”

We decided to unpack a bit--you wanted to get your bedroom “organized,” and I had promised to call Morleigh. I took the phone out onto the balcony.

“Hello?”

“Hi, Morleigh.”

“Hey! Sorry I couldn’t talk yesterday.”

“That’s okay. You were meeting with dancers…?”

“Yeah. This pregnancy has triggered a creative spurt, I think, and I’m gonna run with it until I’m too big to run with it anymore. Changes...are happening.”
“Watching your body evolve like that must be so fascinating.”

She laughed. “Well, today I just really want waffles.”

“Hey, we had waffles on the plane this morning.”

“Okay, I did not hear that.”

“So what are you doing right now?”

“Well, right now it’s raining, and I’m drinking some herbal tea from your old mug. The one with the coffee stains I can never quite get out? It still kind of smells like coffee.”

“I know exactly which one.”

“I used the same mug the other day and got emotional. The warmth of the tea made me imagine I was holding your hand, and it felt good but kind of sad to put my lips where your mouth has been literally thousands of times.”

“Oh, sweetheart.”

She sighed. “It’s okay. I miss being held, but honestly my body’s so sensitive I don’t know if I could even begin to handle it. At least not this afternoon. Ask me again tomorrow and you’ll probably get a different answer.”

“Has Ali talked with you about visiting us in New York?”

“Yes! I can’t wait.”

“Same here. And I can’t wait for you to see Popmart.”

“I know. The videotapes aren’t doing it justice, I’m sure.”

“We seem to be getting better with each performance.”

“Is Bono still doing those moves I taught him?”

“Yes. Along with a few others of his own invention. He’s really selling it. Most of the time he walks this odd line between sex and comedy.”

“It’s important for him to commit to what he’s doing and make it big. Otherwise it’s not going to work at all.”

“It’s working. And for your information, I’ve got a couple of moves too, you know.”

“Heh! That little side-to-side foot thing where you scoot across the stage?”

“I’m afraid so.”

“Well, it’s not much of a move but I’m proud of you for doing it.”

“I’m proud of you, love.”

“So how are...things...with you guys?”

I could tell she was smiling, and I decided to tell her, sort of. “Ehm. As a matter of fact...we’re going to try something new soon.”
“Hmm. Are you nervous about the new thing?”

“I feel good about it.”

“Good.”

“Yeah.”

“So. Um. Whatever it is? Just relax and breathe. You know.”

“I will.”

She paused and asked, “Is it still weird that the thought of you together turns me on?”

“It makes you a bloody miracle.”

“It'd be easy to say it's the pregnancy talking, but we both know I've been into this since the beginning.”

“Baby…”

“Almost ready?” you called, opening the sliding door. You noticed I was on the phone.

“It’s Morleigh,” I said. I smiled in an incredulous, “I don’t deserve this woman” kind of way. You took the phone from me.

“Morleigh, darling. Tell me. Earrings or necklace?...Ruby, or how about emerald?...You don’t think I will but I assure you I absolutely will, love...You're much too good for him, and that’s the truth...Haha, he actually told you that?...I'm blushing...Of course...I promise...Now hush, you...Okay, here he is again.”

We finished our conversation with a mixture of neighborhood updates and in-jokes, and I went back inside. You were studying your reflection in a mirror near the bed, and you said in a flippant way, “Seriously, Edge. Who the fuck am I? What is this thing I am looking at here?”

“You’re my gorgeous chameleon.”

“Changed my hairstyle so many times now, don’t know what I look like.”

I unearthed my camera from the bottom of a bag and kissed the side of your neck. “I feel bad that I haven’t taken more photos lately.”

“You’ve been exploring other media.” I placed the lens on your shoulder and took a shot of us in the mirror. You grabbed the camera and turned it on me. “I’d be remiss if I didn’t take a photo to commemorate your...imminent deflowering.” This made me laugh, and I took a few steps back. The shutter snapped. “Gonna be a good one, Edge.”

“By the way, is what I’m wearing appropriate for today?”

“Yes. And anyway, you have the rare ability to make jeans and a black shirt look utterly dignified in any situation. I don’t know how you do it.”

We went back down to the lobby where you gave our reception friends a formal nod and waited until you had reached the revolving door to shriek. Once we were in the car, you revealed that we would be visiting the National Civil Rights Museum about a mile away. “I’ve wanted to see this since it opened a few years ago.”
The museum is a modern building that incorporates the Lorraine Motel where Martin Luther King was assassinated. We parked beside a school bus across the street and walked over to the motel’s sadly iconic sign and seafoam green, two story facade. A large white wreath had been placed on the second floor railing, and it wasn’t hard to imagine Dr. King’s associates bursting out of the room behind it and pointing at the ominous brick building across the street. We beheld this scene for a moment. You reached out to it, as if you were holding it in your hands, and then you dropped your arms. You turned to me, deeply moved. “Edge.”

“I know. And we haven’t even set foot inside.” I put my arm around your broad shoulders. The museum occupied a city block in the middle of an ordinary-looking neighborhood, and it was jarring to see such a tragic historical site surrounded by a diner, a fire department, and a barbeque place.

You leaned into me, sniffed, and composed yourself. “Let’s go in.”

The entrance was on the other side of the building, and we were greeted at the ticket desk by a woman who asked, “Teachers or chaperones...and which school?”

“Ehm...we're just...fans?” you said with a shrug.

“I’m afraid we’re not part of any group.”

“Oh! No, that’s fine! It’s just that today’s a free-admission day for students, and we’ve got a couple of field trips coming through. Go right in.”

We wandered inside. The exhibits were arranged in chronological order along a highly-detailed timeline that ran throughout the museum. In situations like this, you have a dual tendency to want to read every bit of information while being distracted by the promise of upcoming, showy displays.

A teacher who was a bit older than us was guiding his racially diverse class of pre-teens from room to room, and we sort of stayed with that bunch throughout the museum. When we’re on tour, I find myself missing the daily presence of children, so I was happy to be among a group of excited kids who were roughly Arran’s age. They became more somber as they moved through the exhibits. One by one they approached their teacher and pointed out something they found noteworthy, saying, “Just like you taught us in class, Mr. Johnson.” And he had a kind word and apparently a nickname for all of them.

“This guy,” you whispered. “This guy is a rock star.”

“Total hero to these kids.”

The thing that made this museum unique and profoundly moving was the constant presence of freestanding, lifesized figures. These sculptures were the color of the Mississippi River--sort of a brownish gray--and they were slaves crowded beneath the deck of a ship, people holding signs at the March on Washington, women walking with bags of groceries during the Montgomery bus boycott, and so on. You could interact with these exhibits, too, and I watched you and a young girl sit beside sculptures of teenagers at a faithfully-reproduced lunch counter. You looked at each other with wide eyes as recordings of racial slurs assaulted you from every side.

A bombed Freedom Riders’ Greyhound bus was a sobering reminder to you and me of some awful scenes from our own childhoods. Later on, a group of striking Memphis sanitation workers stood beside a garbage truck. They were the reason Dr. King was in Memphis on the day he died, and they held picket signs saying “I am a man.” A video of King’s “Mountaintop” speech--the last speech he ever gave--was projected onto the side of the truck.
One of the most elegant and devastating exhibits was a replica of a Montgomery, Alabama bus. We entered the bus and saw a single figure seated near the front—Rosa Parks. You and I sat together in a cramped seat nearby, and Mr. Johnson and his students filed in, too. Activated by our presence, racist insults began to rain down on all of us, and a few of the children had tears in their eyes. You took my hand, and we looked at each other. This is what it could be like if people knew about us.

Mr. Johnson made eye contact with me as he comforted a couple of students, and I mouthed the word, Wow. He nodded and looked at us quizzically. I was pretty sure he was trying to figure out who we were.

The museum’s climactic moment occurred at the end, which of course we should have seen coming, but it still took us by surprise. Daylight could be seen at the end of a long ramp. We walked up the ramp, and to our right a motel wall had been cut away to reveal Dr. King’s humble room as he had left it, with its slightly rumpled bedspread, no-frills lamps, unread newspaper, and room service plates and cups here and there. Mahalia Jackson sang an unidentifiable but majestic gospel song that became louder as we went outside to the balcony. The balcony where he was killed.

You turned away and walked down the railing a bit, and I followed you. Your arms were crossed in front of your body, and you seemed to be giving yourself a hug. You bowed your head, and I held you. “I love you.”

“Oh, Edge.”

“That was intense.”

I looked back and saw students pointing at the brick building across the street—miniature facsimiles of the tragedy’s original players. All wore troubled expressions. Mr. Johnson gently encouraged them to write their thoughts in journals he was handing out. As they sat on the balcony and wrote, you and I leaned against the railing and were quiet. I patted your back, and you seemed content to stay by yourself for a while.

I turned and nodded at Mr. Johnson. “Your students are so well-behaved.”

He chuckled softly. “Oh, they know today is very special. We don't get to take many field trips, so yeah, they’re on their best behavior.”

“What an incredible place for them to visit. I had no idea it would be so powerful.”

“That’s right. I’ve been here with lots of groups, and it still gets to me every time.” He smiled down at a boy who was beaming up at him. “And these kids...this is the age when they really start to appreciate what it means to be black in America.”

“Well, my friend and I were saying you’re obviously a real hero to them.”

“Thanks, man. Heh, something tells me y'all are not from Tennessee.”

“We're from Dublin.”

“Ahh, far from home. How long are you staying?”

“A few days. Ehm, just wondering: do you have any tips on where to eat lunch? Someplace only locals would know about?”

“Oh. Desiree’s. Best barbecue in Memphis.” I took one of your maps from my pocket, and he circled its location with the red ballpoint pen all teachers must be required to have.
“Thanks. I'm sure he'll love that.”

We looked at you, still leaning against the railing. A raindrop fell on your forearm, and you glanced at the sky. Something about the long neck, the chin, the nose, the otherworldly expression...it dawned on him. “Wait, you're that band U2, aren't you?” he asked confidentially. I grinned. “You wrote that song about him!”

“We did.”

“He’s the singer and he’s got that huge voice, and you play the guitar, right? Right? And it sounds like a bell.”

“Thanks.”

“That’s a great song. A really great song. Mark Johnson.” He shook my hand.

“I’m Edge, and that’s Bono.”

“Nice to meet you, man. Wow.”

The boy beside him tugged on the leg of his pants. “Mr. Johnson, it’s raining.”

“Okay, c’mon kids. We’ll finish this inside.”

He began to corral his students, and I smiled at him. “Where do you teach?”

The rain didn’t amount to much, and once we were back in the car, you turned to me and said, “New favorite museum.”

“You say about most museums, you know.”

“I mean it this time. New favorite museum.”

“It blew me away, too.”

“It’ll take me a while to process that.”

“Yeah. Well, let’s do it over lunch. Mr. Johnson gave me a tip on where to go. Unless you had plans.”

“No, that’s great. I was just gonna play it by ear.”

We drove to a part of Memphis that may have been something at one time, but it wasn’t anymore. Desiree’s restaurant was part of a mini-strip mall, and it appeared to be the only building left standing on that block. Surrounded by vast gravel parking lots that probably used to be businesses, this little place seemed destined to bake in the sun all summer long. Its glass front was crowned by a bright blue roof and a cheap white sign with “Desiree’s Place” bracketed by twin Coca-Cola logos. A few cars were parked in front of it, and a couple of customers emerged carrying styrofoam boxes and plastic containers. “Probably more of a take-out place,” I guessed as we pulled up.

Then we opened our car’s doors and were hit by the unmistakable scent of sweet, smoky barbecue goodness. “Oh, fuck me,” you murmured.

A regal, gray-haired woman in a sparkly pink dress sat on a small couch just inside the door, and a cassette player on the counter played Stevie Wonder’s *Sir Duke*. The woman smiled at us as though we were beloved nephews. Take it away, B.
“Oh my goodness...you’re not the Desiree, are you?”

“You’d best believe I am, honey! Come on in and get yourselves something to eat.”

You looked up at the menu over the counter--it included everything from ribs to fried bologna sandwiches--and returned to our hostess. “I wouldn’t even know where to start; it all sounds so good. What do you want us to have, Desiree?”

She winked at me. “Y’all like chicken?”

“Of course.”

“Ray?” she called to someone in the kitchen. “Two cornish hens with slaw and beans.”

“Yes, Mama.”

“Cokes?”

“Please.”

A big bulletin board behind me held newspaper clippings and even a few magazine articles about the place, along with children’s drawings and business cards. “Just take a seat back there, and we’ll get that right out to you, boys,” Desiree said, nodding along to the music.

“Thanks, ma’am.”

A little separate dining room was just around the corner, and we sat at one of its three booths. My seat was ripped and had been patched with duct tape. Sun-bleached art prints were hung in odd places. The stained ceiling and the dark wood paneling had seen better days. “It’s basically perfect,” you whispered with a grin.

More Stevie Wonder tunes played--I think somebody must have edited Songs in the Key of Life down to sixty minutes to fit on one side of that tape. “Takes you back to when we were just getting started, doesn’t it?” I asked. While we were into other musicians at the time, even four wanna-be punk rockers from Dublin could not escape the omnipresent Stevie Wonder in 1976. His virtuosity was undeniable, and he was obviously Joey Ramone for any number of bands in this city. We listened to the bass line from I Wish. “Now that is a genius, B.”

“Yup.” Your feet engaged with mine under the table, and one ran up my ankle.

“Are you in fact ten years old?”

“Yup.” We gazed at each other in relative privacy, and another round of customers came and went. They knew Desiree, and she held court while Ray rang up their orders.

“I wish we had a place like this in Dublin.” You looked down at your stomach. “Then again, maybe I don’t.” You laughed, and your crooked lower-front teeth were on full display. What I wouldn’t do for those four little teeth, the freckles on your arms, the pulse in your neck.

“Oh, this one!” you exclaimed, and Desiree began to sing in the other room. You could not resist joining in, and I was surprised by how closely your voice resembled Stevie’s when you sang, “Isn’t she lovely / Isn't she wonderful / Isn't she precious / Less than one minute old.”

“Somebody’s a singer in there!”

“Somebody’s a singer out there, too!”
Desiree came in, and you got up and danced with her. The two of you continued your duet, and you knew most of the words to the second verse. "Isn't she pretty / Truly the angel's best / Boy, I'm so happy / We have been heaven blessed / I can't believe what God has done / Through us he's given life to one / But isn't she lovely made from love. You gave the spry, beaming woman a little twirl and kissed her hand.

"Is he always this cute?" she asked me, laughing.

"It’s really quite unbearable."

"Where are y’all from?" She put her hand on my shoulder, and you sat back down.

"We’re from Ireland, and we’ve been in a band together since...well, since this song was a hit," I said. "Ahh. This harmonica."

"Nothing is as joyful as Stevie Wonder’s harmonica."

"That is so true. I wish I could play like that," you said wistfully.

"You play harmonica?"

"Well, when I do it doesn’t sound joyful. It sounds like it’s just saying ‘damn it’ most of the time."

Desiree laughed. "‘Damn it’. that’s good. I like you two. Ray! Those hens better be on the way!"

"Comin’ up, Mama."

"Give ‘em some banana pudding, too."

"You bet."

"So you’re in a band! Do you sing any songs I might know?"

"Hmm, I’m not sure. Edge?"

"I have climbed the highest mountain..."

"Maybe. Desiree: I have climbed the highest mountain / I have run through the fields / only to be with you / only to be with you / but I still...

"...haven’t found / what I’m looking for. Oh my, you wrote that song?" You nodded. "I know that song! Well, pleased to meet you!"

"Bono."

"Edge."

"Okay, now those are some mighty odd names!"

"It’s an Irish thing."

She gave your hand a squeeze, and Ray came in with two red plastic trays heaving with food. "Now, my husband Ray Senior, God rest his soul, said all he wanted to do here was to serve a few people the best they ever had." She touched her pendant—a gold charm that said Try God. "So I sincerely hope this is the best y’all’ve ever had, boys." She smiled warmly and returned to her post by the door.
The smoked cornish hens were slathered in barbecue sauce, and this was accompanied by a piece of white bread that served as a sort of mop-it-up utensil. The cole slaw and beans came in small containers with lids. We were given nothing more than a flimsy plastic fork and knife, and this was a testament to how delicate and velvety the smoking process had made the chicken. We took one bite and moaned loudly. Desiree laughed. “You weren’t kidding, Desiree!”

“Best you ever had?”

“I should say so!”

A hush fell over our table as we continued the important work of eating this sublime meal. We looked at each other occasionally in disbelief, and in between greeting take-out customers, Desiree had interesting things to tell us such as, “This is Oprah’s favorite song,” and “It took Stevie two whole years to record this album, can you imagine?”

“Can you imagine, Edge?” you asked. “Two whole years.”

“Yeah, get it together, Stevie Wonder.”

A song about Saturn ended with the sound of young girls jumping rope and chanting, “Strawberry shortcake, cream on top, tell me the name of your sweetheart--a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p--Paul! Oh, Paul!”

“Paul!” I laughed.

You chuckled in disbelief before announcing, “Desiree, this banana pudding is pure sex, I swear to God, and you really ought to be ashamed of yourself!” She cackled with glee.

You slid an obscene but appropriate amount of cash under your plate before we said goodbye. “Would you be able to handle feeding a hundred people tomorrow afternoon?” you asked her.

“Wednesdays are pretty slow around here, so yes, yes I think we could!”

“I’ll have somebody call you tonight, how about that?”

“Well, bless you, son. Awfully sweet of you.” She hugged us and waved as we pulled away.

“Spreading sunshine everywhere you go,” I said, pinching your cheek.

“That was good for my soul,” you said, grooving to the Stevie songs that would remain stuck in our heads for hours.

“So where are we going now?”

“Sun Studio. Not for very long.”

“It’ll be nice to be there without cameras in our faces at all times.”

“And no high-stakes recording session, either. I just wanted to go back for old times’ sake. Which way?”

“Back the way we came.”

You rolled your eyes. “And which way is that, Edge?”

“Turn left onto that main drag, and we’ll go about a mile until we turn left onto another main drag.
Then we’re there.”

“Must be nice to go through life with an innate sense of direction.”

“It doesn’t suck...oh my god.”

“What?”

“According to this map, there’s a part of town called The Edge.”

“Holy shit. We have to see it.”

“It’s very close to Sun Studio. It’s just a single city block. It looks like we could park there.”

“I’m all about it. Maybe we can find a little out of the way alcove where I can fuck you.”

“Alright, I’m sorry I brought it up.”

“Then I can fuck The Edge in The Edge!”

“Oh my god. Left.”

The Edge was a disappointment. “A student alumni center, a parking lot, and a parking garage? I expected so much more from something named after you, darling.”

“Like what?”

“Don’t get me started. Half the businesses would be guitar stores. Then you’d have an assortment of adult bookstores, labs, and, like, places where super geniuses go to break codes, that kind of thing.”

“And everyone there is obsessed with the Bono part of town.”

Sun Studio, a flatiron-shaped brick building, was even smaller than I remembered it. To access the studio, we had to go through the gift shop next door. A History of Sun museum occupied the second floor. As soon as we stepped inside the place, the man selling tickets nearly did a spit take. He had impressive muttonchop sideburns and the kind of over-the-top novelty eyewear that could give you a run for your money. “Holy fuck!” he shouted, followed by a quick, “Shit. Sorry. Little kids are upstairs.”

“Let me guess. A field trip? Is Tuesday a free day everywhere?”

“Uh, yes? How did you know that? Good lord, Bono and the Edge, welcome back, you guys!”

“Thanks, uh…” You looked at his name tag. “Stan.”

He studied us for a second. “So would you like to tour the museum, or…”

“We just wanted to take a quick look at the studio, if that’s alright. In and out.”

“ Wanted to return to your old stompin’ grounds, eh?”

“Exactly.” Christ, B, stop rubbing the back of your neck.

“Well. Please. By all means, go on in and feel free to hang out for as long as you like. We’ve got some kids who might show up in a few minutes, but…”

“That’s fine. Thank you so much.” He opened the side door to the studio and we stepped in.
“Just like we left it,” you said. We walked through the tiny reception room with its desk, potted plant, and not much else. “Heh, they said this used to be a barbershop, remember?”

“Oh, I remember.”

The recording studio was also very small, but without our instruments clogging up the floor, it was less claustrophobia-inducing than before. The same large black and white photos of Elvis, Jerry Lee Lewis, Roy Orbison, Johnny Cash, and many others decorated the walls. The collection now included one of us, and a separate photo of a dead-serious, 28 year-old you was near the drum set.

You bounded over to it and gave yourself a peck on the cheek. “Hello, little me. I’m happy to tell you the thing you want so badly will actually happen. You and Edge will become lovers. So would it kill you to smile?” You turned and slid your hand into one of my back pockets. “This,” you whispered, “has been driving me crazy today.”

“Just today?”

“I want it to be perfect for you, Edge.”

“If it’s not, we can always try again.”

“We’ll try again even if it is perfect. Especially if it’s perfect.”

We were interrupted by a dozen ten year-olds. They walked in ahead of their two young teachers, who saw us, shrieked, and immediately apologized.

“We’re getting a lot of that today.”

“Completely used to it now.”

This was followed by a series of oh my gods and children’s laughter as the poor things tried to pull themselves together. “We are such huge fans!” one of them managed.

“Who are they, Ms Hamilton?”

“They are U2! Bono and Edge! They’re like our version of Hanson.”

“That poster? That I have behind my desk? That’s them.”

“It’s totally us.”

“But they don’t look like your poster. At all.”

I positioned you in profile beside your photo, and you took on the same grim expression. “See? Only one person in the world looks like that.” You smiled for a split second, and then it was back to the frown.

“Okay, I guess he kind of looks like the poster.”

“Kids, they recorded three songs here back when Ms Haley and I were in high school.”

“Indeed we did.”

Ms Hamilton got excited again. “We’re going to your show Thursday night! We’re taking the whole day off and the next one, too!”
“Sorry it’s on a school night, love.”

“Doesn’t matter! Oh my god.”

A little girl pulled on my sleeve. “Ms Haley loves you the most.”

“What do you teach, Ms Haley?”

“Music. And she teaches history. We’re co-teaching a unit on the history of rock music in Memphis and oh my god it’s really you!”

“It’s also him.”

“I can’t even believe this!”

Stan walked in and seemed prepared to give his usual tour of the studio, complete with musical snippets and a memorized script. But he saw the lay of the land, and instead he asked us if we’d like to play a song or two. The lovely teachers squealed again and encouraged their students to sit down on the floor. A couple of acoustic guitars and chairs materialized, and we sat down. “Any requests?”

“Elvis!”

“You’re kind of putting us on the spot here, Edge? Any ideas?” Luckily a lot of the earliest rock songs managed to be very simple but beautiful. Elvis Presley’s version of *Blue Moon* is merely a single verse repeated several times with some forlorn, falsetto howls in between. You kind of played along as I sang, *Blue moon, you saw me standing alone / Without a dream in my heart / Without a love of my own / Blue moon, you knew just what I was there for / You heard me saying a prayer for / Someone I really could care for*. I looked over at a smiling you and made a series of sigh-like wails. Then I cut the song short and began playing *Love Me Tender*, a song you knew or could at least fake. “Take it, B.”

You did not require encouragement to channel Elvis. Your Windex-blue eyes sparked, and they made contact with everyone in the room, one at a time and ending with me, while you sang in your soft, low voice, *Love me tender / Love me sweet / Never let me go / You have made my life complete / And I love you so / Love me tender / Love me true / All my dreams fulfill / For my darlin’ I love you / And I always will*. At this point Ms Hamilton and Ms Haley had tears running down their pretty faces, and the kids were polite enough to clap for a couple of weird, probably gay dads singing slow, mushy songs that were nowhere near as much fun as *Hound Dog* or *Jailhouse Rock*.

We stuck around a little while longer, signing three-ring binders and grade books and promising the ecstatic teachers some preferential treatment on Thursday night. After we said goodbye, you made a beeline for a liquor store across the street while I waited in the car. You purchased a bottle of twelve year-old scotch for a sum that could have paid one of those teachers’ salaries for the week. “Just think, Edge,” you said, lifting it from its brown paper sack. “This scotch was born on the day Annie Lennox told you to touch my hair.”

“How about that?” I said, running my fingers over the stubble above your ear and feeling aroused almost immediately. “So thoughtful of you, B.”

“Anything for you. Anything at all.” You started the car. “Now we’re going to drive back to the hotel, drop off the car, walk down to the river, and drink some of this.”

“Excellent plan.” The sky, which had been overcast all day, was becoming gloomier in the southwest, and the atmosphere was definitely up to no good. It was mid-afternoon, but any light in the sky was coming from the east. My favorite kind of weather.
Madison Street led us to a riverside park two blocks from our hotel. While nobody was in the park at the time, we decided to sit beneath a tree instead of on one of the more visible park benches that lined the sidewalk. The dark river and the rest of the landscape were eerily still, and nature seemed to be holding its breath in anticipation of a storm. The only movement was traffic on the nearby bridge. Most of the vehicles had turned their lights on.

You opened the scotch and handed it to me. “Better get to work on this, Edge. I don’t think we have much time.” I took a sip and sighed contentedly. “What’s it like?” you asked.

“You, on a bed wearing leather pants, and I’m running my tongue up your leg.”

“Fuck.” You took the bottle from me and tried it. “Yes. That’s exactly how it tastes.”

“Hey, look at that little squirrel over there.”

“Very funny.”

“Just thought you’d like to know, B.”

“I will never live that down.”

“We were such babies back then.”

You handed the bottle to me again. “Tell me a story about when we were babies.”

“Okay...I loved to listen to you when we were in our rooms at night.”

“Keep talking.”

“We had separate rooms by then, of course, but somehow you and I always managed to be neighbors.”

“I may have expressed a preference. Because I needed my rest, and you were so quiet.”

“No I wasn’t.”

“And neither was I.”

“I always listened for you through the wall.”

“And I learned that once I started, you’d join in.”

“Occasionally you’d be on the phone with Ali, but most of the time you were alone.”

“Thinking about you.”

“The sounds you’d make.”

“The sounds you’d make.”

“Then usually as soon as it was over, you’d appear at my door, flushed and slightly out of breath. Obvious sex face, often buttoning something. And you’d ask me if I’d like to go get a drink or smoke a cigarette or whatever, as if nothing had happened.”

You grinned. “I could always count on you to play along, Edge.”

That face of yours. “I wanna kiss you.”
“Do it. No one’s around.”

I leaned toward you and kissed your smiling lips, and you moaned, the same kind of moan I’d hear through a thin wall about halfway into one of our...sessions. “Oh, Bono.”

“Very soon. I’ll have all of you, baby.”

“Yes. God yes.”

I looked across the wide, still river and saw us on the other side: huge, Godzilla-sized, thrashing about with me on my back and you on top. Trees snapped beneath us, and you were inside me at last, with your head thrown back, every vein and artery in your neck on display, and my fingers in your hair. One of your feet braced itself against the bridge, and doing so helped you go harder and deeper. Our cries produced sound waves so powerful that windows in buildings shattered and barges overturned. Lightning struck the bridge--

Actual lightning struck the bridge.

“Jesus Christ, Edge, let’s get out of here!” you shouted, and laughing, we got up and ran. The deafening thunderclap ushered in an instant, torrential downpour. We dashed over a railroad crossing, and electrified tracks seemed like an appropriately stupid way for two rock stars to die, but we escaped unscathed. One block into the uphill sprint back to the hotel, and we were soaked to the skin and out of breath from running while shouting obscenities. You grabbed my hand and pulled me into a doorway with an awning overhead, and we collapsed into each other with the hilarity of it all. Rainwater soon flooded the gutter and streamed down the sidewalk inches from our feet. You raised your brown paper bag in front of our faces, kissed me, and held me in your wet, slippery arms.

“Bono,” I protested weakly.

You paused and we locked eyes. “Edge, it’s okay. The street is empty, and anyway no one could see us in this storm.” Pea-sized hail pelted the street and ricocheted off parked cars. You smiled at it and held out your hand. You caught a little hailstone and put it in my mouth. “We’re in love. So we are pretty much required to kiss in the rain, and I don’t know, hold hands in gazebos and so on.” I nodded and your tongue was probing my mouth again and toying with the ice. It was one of the most gorgeous moments of my life. The downpour let up much sooner than was necessary.

We emerged from our hiding place and walked the last block to the hotel. I tried not to stare at your chest in that flimsy, soaking wet t-shirt. “I hope it doesn’t become sunny after this front moves through,” I said. “If a day starts out gloomy, it should be required to stay that way.”

“Agreed,” you said as we approached the door. Turning to address the weather, you announced, “Attention, storm: you may resume...storming...now.” Nothing happened, so you added, “Soon.”

The lobby was a bit busier than before, and its air conditioning made us shiver almost immediately, but a woman playing the piano stopped you in your tracks. “Edge,” you said quietly. “Mother used to love this song.” We slowly approached the piano. The woman smiled at us and began to sing.

*The first time ever I saw your face*
*I thought the sun rose in your eyes*
*And the moon and the stars were the gifts you gave*
*To the dark and the endless skies my love*
*To the dark and the endless skies*

*The first time ever I kissed your mouth*
I felt the earth move in my hand
Like the trembling heart of a captive bird
That was there at my command my love
That was there at my command my love

And the first time ever I lay with you
I felt your heart so close to mine
And I knew our joy would fill the earth
And last 'til the end of time my love
And it would last 'til the end of time

The first time ever I saw your face
Your face, your face
I started this story in 2002 and finished it in 2016, almost 2017. I can't quite wrap my mind around it. I do know this: Fetish is better than it would have been had I written it like a normal person.

A couple of months ago I found the hard-copy outline I had put together originally, the one I thought I had thrown out a few years ago. That outline would have been no help to me when I resumed writing this--really all I took from it was a handful of quotes (I used them when Bono and Edge were being interviewed at the Memphis airport; everything they told that guy was real.)

Anyway. I think I needed to get some living under my belt in order to finish this. I was younger than Pop-era B&E when I began this, and now I'm older than they were. As crazy as it is to write novel-length slash fiction, I must say I'm proud of what I've accomplished here. I love my versions of these people very much, and it makes me sad to say goodbye to this story. I can't read the ending without crying. Hell, I can't even think about reading it without crying. I was a wreck yesterday as I typed the last words.

Haha! I hope you all enjoy it!

Thanks as always to my beloved commenters: Jana, Carina, and PJ. I would love to hear from more of you. Much love to my husband who has put up with a solid year of me writing this stuff. A couple of weeks ago, he told me he'd read Fetish when I finished it. (Sweetie, if you're reading this chapter, I can send you an edited version. No hard feelings.)

This chapter is divided into two pretty obvious parts.
I do the sign language thing when I'm nervous.
I tell jokes when I'm at the doctor.
The concept of envying rain comes from Lucinda Williams.
Thanks to Jana for reminding me of The Van Years.
Thanks to PJ for the "Etch" pronunciation.
Thanks to Carina for the idea of being FINE and "deadpan kind of way."
Real B&E started playing "Staring At the Sun" in the new way described below a few weeks after this story takes place.
At the end of this is a playlist of songs mentioned in Fetish. Edge wrote it, let's say. I can't link to an actual Spotify playlist because then you'd know who I am, wouldn't you?

Thank you very much to all my readers.

Love and apologies to Bono and Edge.
“Sky Terrace, y’all! Wooo!” yelled the bride-to-be, as she and her entourage of what seemed like a dozen wooo-screaming bridesmaids piled into the elevator after us in a cloud of perfume, hairspray, and noise. We weren’t able to push the button for our floor, but we didn’t want to attract any attention, especially not from that bunch. So we silently resigned ourselves to a trip to the roof and back down one level to the bed where I would have you at last, the Edge.

The girls had smashed us into a corner. Your still-damp left arm grafted itself onto my right arm, and I made a point of shifting mine ever so slightly from time to time. Soon the rest of our bodies would become one, and I wanted you to remain aware of this fact. I certainly was. That day every sensation
seemed heightened: colors were more vivid, the beard-burn you had left on my cheek was positively blazing, my emotions were more intense, and my god, Edge, the scent of rain on your skin made me want to eat you alive.

The bachelorette party was oblivious to our presence and stayed preoccupied with each other’s cute outfits and like really cute purses and oh my god girl where’d you get those shoes?

I shot you a look that said, Least favorite kind of women. You replied with a silent, Bullets dodged.

Above the din, I heard Elton John’s voice:

When are ya gonna come down?
When are ya going to land?

Your right hand was busy forming letters in sign language--w a y g c d w a y g t l--an endearing habit of yours. When you were a child, you had found a chart in an encyclopedia and taught yourself how to sign letters. This evolved into an unusual tic: you would hear lyrics and sign the first letter of each word as the music played.

You used to do this a lot more when we were younger. When I first noticed your long fingers flying into different positions as you stared into space, I had to ask you about it. You explained your unusual habit in a rudimentary way and concluded with, “I dunno, I’ve been doing it since I was a kid,” a bit embarrassed and technically still a kid. This of course prompted me to say, “Edge, do the thing!” whenever I heard tunes with fast, impossible lyrics like The Revolution Will Not Be Televised or Ever Fallen In Love With Someone (You Shouldn’t’ve Fallen In Love With)?

The point is: you were nervous in that elevator. You were nervous about what was going to happen, Edge, and I loved it. I loved that I was still able to elicit that kind of response even after all this time.

The girls exited the elevator at long last, and I hit the door-close button and our floor’s button simultaneously before flying back to our corner and your hot, needy mouth.

Oh I’ve finally decided my future lies
Beyond the yellow brick road

You had the presence of mind to festoon your suite’s door knob with a “do not disturb” sign, and I made a mental note to do the same to mine. As soon as you closed your door, I pushed your back against it and kissed you again. My hand moved from your jaw to your cold, damp shirt. “Baby, you’re all wet.”

“Take it off me.”

I attempted to rip it off, but apparently when left to their own devices, some people will buy well-made clothing with high-quality fabrics that resist tearing, and anyway, it was a very sexy shirt that didn’t deserve to be ruined. You chuckled as I unbuttoned it instead and tossed it onto the floor behind me. Back to your neck, your chest, and oh Edge, I envied the rain that had poured all over your body and gave you goosebumps and hardened your nipples and amplified your already intoxicating scent. “All day...it’s like a spring has been coiling up inside me, and it’s being wound tighter and tighter.”

“I’ve been driven to distraction, too,” you said, your hand in my hair.

I pulled it away, opting to save the most explosive weapon in my arsenal for later. “I think I know you about as well as anyone possibly can,” I said, studying your sphinxlike eyes. “But sometimes I feel like part of you will ultimately remain elusive.”
“Well, I think I know what part that is, and you’re getting it tonight, so…”

I laughed and rewarded your witty mouth with my tongue. “Are you ready, Edge?”

“Oh yes.”

“You’ll love it. Your pleasure is of utmost importance to me. My god, I’ve been obsessing about this for weeks. It actually seems like years.”

“I have every confidence in you.” You raised my shirt over my head, and it joined yours on the floor. Then you pulled me close.

“Mm, baby.”

“So. Tell me what you want me to do.”

“Well. First. We are going to retreat to our corners for a little while and get ready for each other. I put some things in your bathroom this morning, and, you know, do with them what you will.”

“Okay.”

“And,” I said, taking a few steps toward your still-hilarious bed, “I’m going to turn the stereo on.” The radio was playing *Misty Mountain Hop*. “When you’re ready, switch the radio over to this.” I put a CD in the player. “That way I’ll know when it’s time for me to, uh, get into character.”

“Oh my.”

“Yeah yeah, I know. Please just play along.”

“What’s on the CD?”

“It’s this kind of droning New Age outer space music.” You laughed. “Yes. It’s the songs of your people, Edge. I never know what kind of music to have sex to; you know that.” I could not stop staring at you.

“I understand.” That thicket of dark hair on your chest, and down...

“It’s just gonna be there as background. And it’s for your benefit. Believe me, you do not want complete silence when you’re trying something like this for the first time. Or ever, really.”

“Oh, I totally get that.” You were staring, too.

“And if you become too excited later on and want to prolong things, I suppose you could concentrate on what’s wrong with the music or get ideas. I don’t know.” I shrugged.

“No, B, this is wonderful. I’m touched by how well-prepared you are.”

I put my arms around your neck. “I want this to be special. I love you, you see.”

“Yes you do.”

“I absolutely fucking love you, Edge.”

“I absolutely fucking love you, too, Bono.”

First things first: sign on the door; check. Next: a quick series of phone calls regarding Desiree’s
Place, VIP treatment for two or possibly three teachers on Thursday, and donations to the social studies and history/music departments at two area schools. Check, check, check. I watched another thunderstorm begin its advance on Memphis as I made these calls, and I pictured the woo-girls above us scrambling for shelter.

I heard the muted hiss of your shower and, recent baptism by thunderstorm notwithstanding, I decided to take one as well. And I thought about you. I hoped you weren’t too nervous about this, even though I was sure I had done my fair share to overhype the experience. I realized there’d be no way I’d be able to live up to that, of course.

I was drying off when I noticed the radio had been playing One. When it was over, the deejay announced that you and I had been seen in Memphis that afternoon. I heard a loud Ha! issue forth from your bathroom, and we laughed as one of the teachers called in and told listeners about her chance encounter with us at Sun Studio. “I swear to god it happened,” she said. “They were gorgeous, and they couldn’t have been nicer. They even sang a couple of Elvis songs to us and I totally cried. It was so simple and pretty, just a couple of guys with guitars.”

“Well, how about that? They’re already starting to set up shop in the Liberty Bowl, so don’t be surprised if you see ’em around town this week! Here’s U2 with Staring At the Sun on a Two-for-Tuesday.”

“Edge?” I yelled. “Edge!”

“Yes?”

“Important idea! Meet me at my door!”

I could hear you drop something, and this was followed by a Damn it and a bit of scrambling, but within seconds we were at the adjoining door with white towels wrapped around our waists, both of us dripping wet and a bit out of breath. “What?”

“You. Me. Acoustic guitars. This song.”

“...Huh.”

“Right?”

“You know, that could really work.”

“Yeah!”

“Fuck! Great idea, B.”

“Isn’t it, though?”

“How much more time do you need?”

“Maybe ten minutes?”

“Cool.” Your fingertips moved along a section of the door frame as if it were the neck of a guitar.

“You’re not actually thinking about prac-”

“Oh god no.”

“Okay, good.”
“Ten minutes.”

Yes. Why hadn’t we thought of that sooner? You and I singing our love song about each other...to each other. Stripped-down arrangement. Harmonizing inside our bubble. The entire world disappearing. Golden.

Gold.

I had two more things to take care of, and they were in service of making a recent surreal dream of yours come true.

Last week I procured a--I guess you would call it a stick?--of gold metallic makeup that I planned to draw on myself. (“How does one use this?” I had asked a makeup artist on our crew after idly pilfering through her kit. “Ahh, you just apply it where the sun would hit you and smudge it with your fingers,” she said, pointing to those places on my face. When I batted my eyelashes, she had no choice but to give it to me. She was savvy enough to not ask questions and was rewarded with a wink and several hundred dollars. I mean, I assumed that would cover the cost of the item. “Less is more!” she called after me.)

So I attempted to follow her directions. The gold was bright but sheer, and it was actually a whole lot of fun to play with. I managed to stop long before the amount of gold my on face had reached Mask of Tutankhamun levels. Then I rubbed my hands over my hair, depositing the gold remnants from my fingers there and figuring you’d probably be on board with that. It felt wrong to just stop at my neck, so I put it a few other places, too. Then I lined my eyes with blue because that’s the way I was in your dream, and also because of Elvis, and the night was special, of course.

Sharon had done the impossible and found several yards of metallic gold velvet for me in what she called a burnout pattern of Art Nouveau curves. This, when draped over my skin, created the illusion of painted designs. I wrapped this around my shoulders, dimmed the lights somewhat, and waited for you on the bed.

Fleetwood Mac was playing: You Make Loving Fun followed by Sara. I used to listen to Fleetwood Mac with Larry, of all people. We didn’t buy their records, but we never changed the radio station when they came on, which was often back in the late Seventies. And we were too cool to admit it to each other, but I am positive he found as much comfort in Christine’s and Stevie’s voices as I did.

Drowning in the sea of love
Where everyone would love to drown

“Edge, do not turn this song off until it’s over, okay?” I called.

“Okay, B.”

That song’s dark eroticism also reminds me of winter and traveling at night, curled up beside you in the back of a van because that’s what I was able to get away with at the time. The often damp but not objectionable scent of your wool coat seemed like a better version of home to me, and the red instruments on the dashboard glowed like embers in a fireplace. Sometimes we’d share those meringue cookies your mother liked to bake for you, and you would try not to disturb the others when you unwrapped her noisy foil packages. But mostly we sat there together in the dark listening to staticky AM radio stations and wondering what it might be like to hear our own music playing on them. This song was unlike anything else on the radio that year, and it was feminine with its womb-like heartbeat, and we were still so young.

Distant thunder, followed by...space sounds. I got up and stood beside a closet with mirrored doors.
And there you were.

“Edge.”

You smiled and walked over to me. I motioned for you to take off the hotel’s white bathrobe and, obviously enchanted, you paused and took in sparkling me. “Join us,” I said, and I maintained eye contact with you as I kissed my reflection.

Your lips were at my neck in an instant, and you worked your way up to my earlobe, where you whispered, “You gorgeous thing.”

“Things.” I kissed myself again, and then you became involved and we were four: two Edges, two Bonos. Oh, the profound pleasure of kissing both of you...I took you in my arms and draped our bodies in gold, and the velvet cast interesting shadows on your faces.

You kissed my eyelids and said, “Good idea.”

“It occurred to me that I don’t need to ask you if I should wear something blue now.”

“That’s right.” You touched my temple. “This gold is better than what I saw in my dream.”

“You’re getting in on this gold action, too, I hope you realize.”

“Oh, am I?”

“Yes. I want us to match.” I grabbed the gold stick and used it to highlight the parts of your face that never fail to make me alternately swoon and burn with envy: the elegant nose, the kind of cheekbones that guarantee you will weather the next fifty years with ease, your well-built chin...

“We’ll be the second coming of the Glimmer Twins.”

“I think Mick and Keith would approve.” Up into your hairline...its sharp symmetry seemed designed to assist the rest of your face in bringing me to my fucking knees. It had seen a little sun, and I noticed some cinnamon freckles, goddamn it, Edge. I moved on to your neck, your clavicle, and I believe that’s called a deltoid...

“We’ll mess up those sheets,” you said, glancing over your gilded shoulder. The top one was a sort of dark copper and the other was red.

“Those sheets are silk, and I bought them, and they’re worth every cent, and after tonight I’m probably gonna get them framed, if you want to know the truth, Edge.”

You laughed and kissed me. “Don’t ever change, B.”

I eased your chest against the cool mirror and nuzzled you where you like to kiss and bite and, let’s face it, worship me. You seemed amused, and you said, “Oh, so yesterday I asked Helene to clean that up back there, and she said something like, ‘So he likes it rough, too?’ What on earth have you been telling her?”

I smiled and licked the stubble just below your hairline. “Nothing she didn’t already suspect, Edge,” I said, imitating her Russian accent and thrusting against you a couple of times. “Etch.” I left a blurry trail of gold across your right shoulder blade. The idea of kissing you until our bodies were covered in a uniform and hazy gold film was exceedingly appealing to me, and I began making that happen. You stood still and basked in the attention. The storm was getting closer.
Even though I have been taking on a more dominant role in our dynamic, and even though a simple haircut can reliably paralyze you with desire, I know I’ll probably never see you as a truly submissive partner. Don’t think I haven’t noticed the whisper of droll irony that decorates every “sir” that comes out of your mouth. But I completely understand that. If anything, this shift has turned us into equals. I was used to being the center of attention in love and sex, but now I am more focused on you than ever before. I think this makes what we have even better. And my god, you deserve to be adored and admired and properly fucked on your lofty pedestal.

“Tonight is about you.”

“Do whatever you want with me.”

I turned you around and kissed you roughly. “Get on that bed.”

Sometimes luxury and decadence are mandatory, and the sounds you and I made when we slid between those beautiful sheets bordered on the sexual. A part of me considered calling it a day and falling into a fast and deep sleep, but that part was vetoed immediately by an emergency cabinet meeting of my brain, eyes, mouth, heart, and the distinguished gentleman from the south.

When I’ve imagined this scenario, it’s been in shades of red and gold. Heat and smoke. Light and shadow. Caravaggio and Rembrandt. I wanted you to feel consumed by my love. The silk felt like a thousand fingers and tongues caressing and licking us as we embraced on that bed. Even five years later, the knowledge that I am kissing a man, my perfect man, never fails to thrill me, and we explored each other’s mouths until our lips became swollen and hot. I love the way our bodies fit together, how thoroughly male they look and feel, our singular chemistry, and the friction of your cock rubbing against mine and your low little chuckle--

“Okay, what’s so funny?”

“I’m sorry, B. This always reminds me of...jousting.”

“You and the rest of the Western world,” I grinned, jousting with you. “Hell, the entire planet. Roll over, Edge. I know how much you love being the little spoon.”

“More than life itself,” you murmured happily. The soft light on your skin made it appear flawless.

“Now, will you allow me to do unspeakable things to you without bringing up medieval times again?”

“No guarantees.” You squirmed as I kissed your temple. “I mean, come on.”

I’m just like you. When I’m nervous--visiting a doctor, perhaps--the low-level joking begins, and it doesn’t stop until I am safely back in the car. Am I trying to charm my doctor into treating me with extra care?

Oh Reg. You dear man.

“I’m going to take my time with you. Don’t worry,” I said while I worked my top leg between yours.

You nodded and moved closer. “I trust you.”

I lowered my voice to a whisper and slid my hand down your torso. “I’m the only man in the world who gets to do this.”

“Yes.”
Leaning back awkwardly, I opened a drawer, felt around for the toy with a narrow tip that gradually flared to something a bit more challenging, and got it ready for you. Meanwhile, ambient space soundscapes mixed with the wind and rain. The sun must have set at some point because any light that had managed to infiltrate this new storm was fading fast. “Keep breathing, Edge.” I eased part of the toy inside you and kissed your cool, glistening shoulder. You exhaled, and your body relaxed.

When you’ve lived in close quarters with people for over twenty years, you can recognize them by their laughter, their coughing, and the sound of their footsteps in the hall.

“Having fun, lads?”

“Do everything I wouldn’t do!”

Adam and Larry had arrived in Memphis.

“You can both go straight to hell, and we will see you in the morning, you fucks!” I yelled. They laughed, and you laughed, and the toy slipped out. Why yes, things were going exactly as I had planned.

“Oh…” you trailed off with a sigh that melted into thunder.

“Back it goes, baby.” I took your chin in my hand and turned your head to the side as far as I could, and my mouth covered yours. Then our tongues—*they did not joust, Edge*—no, they slid over each other, and your lips yielded to mine, and you and I groaned, and soon we were back where we needed to be, love. I gave you a little more.

“I love what you're doing,” you whispered.

Gradually, gradually, all the way in.

“God yes.” Your hand dragged mine down to your criminally-neglected erection. So many things to keep track of now that I’m the one running the show...I played with you for a while and rubbed up against your back to give myself a bit of relief. Your hand reached back and took over, and we gazed at our reflection. My hand could have easily been mistaken for yours (as long as no one looked too closely at, well, anything about my hand). The real story was your neck. Your head was tilted all the way back, exposing your neck to my teeth. I watched an extremely vulnerable cowboy place himself at the mercy of a butch little vampire.

I moved over on the bed and rolled you onto your back. You smiled up at me in a bit of a daze. I
teased your cock with one hand and manipulated the toy with the other until you began to whimper. “Now I want to take you where you’ve taken me so many times.”

“Please. Yes.”

I kissed a path down the center of your stomach, en route to a predictable but no less beloved stopping place. One of your legs draped itself over my back, and I stroked its soft hair while I took you in my mouth for a moment. I slowly withdrew the toy, and you exhaled audibly. “Sometimes I wish I had three hands,” I muttered. I strained to open a drawer and added, “On arms that were at least six inches longer, for fuck’s sake.”

“I love you just the way you are, B.”

“Okay, but you’ve got to admit an extra hand would make certain procedures a whole lot easier.”

“Maybe you could hire someone to be your own personal lube valet,” you said in your usual deadpan kind of way.

“Oh, fuck you,” I laughed.

“I really wish you would one of these days,” you grinned.

“Just for that, I’m gonna use way too much lube, the Edge. Or possibly not enough…?”

“I apologize,” you said, pulling the sheet over your head and lying there in cheeky penance. Your erection created a ridiculous circus tent situation.

“Lube is no laughing matter,” I said, cackling. I got under the sheet and joined you in your gold-streaked, copper-colored world, and our laughter subsided until it was just the two of us breathing and smiling. “Having fun?”

You pulled me close, paused, and looked at me. “Sorry I’m being goofy. I’m just nervous, I suppose.”

“I understand completely, love. No worries.”

Your expression became tender. “Today was wonderful, Bono.”

“It was, wasn’t it?”

You cupped my jaw with your hand. “Just...thank you. All of this means so much to me.”

“You're the king of my heart, Edge.” I kissed your forehead and pressed my own forehead against the kiss as if to seal it there. “And you’re so fucking handsome, do you realize that?”

“Baby,” you sighed. “Is it okay if I call you that?”

“Call me anything you like, love. No rules anymore.”

“I kind of missed saying it. I'm afraid you’ll probably always be baby to me.” One of your hands was over my heart.

“I missed hearing it.”

“Baby.”
“Yeah.”

“I’m ready.”

“Me too.”

I gathered the necessary things and put them on the bed. Let’s be realistic, Edge. By now there is no need for a bedside table with its Drawer of Mystery Items. And anyway, that bed was big enough for them to stay out of our way while remaining within easy reach of those of us with shorter arms.

Then the sheet was pulled down, and it was back to you, poor you, subjected to another extended round of abdomen and chest adoration. And you know, Reg, some people wouldn’t find themselves so impatient if they had been able to stop horsing around for a single goddamn minute. Your pelvic thrusts and little whines went unheeded while I got my head back in the game.

And then…“I think you’re finally ready for more, Edge.”

“God, please.”

“I love it when you do this to me,” I said softly. I licked the length of your cock. While toys are convenient and definitely get the job done, nothing is as effective and blushingly intimate as the combination of an eager, sucking mouth along with one and then two fingers. And those fingers know exactly what feels good, don’t they, Edge?

“Yes, oh baby, yes.”

Who says I can’t do two things at once? The next time that happens--the next time Larry says it when I’m driving while eating a sandwich, for example--I fully expect you to come to my defense, Edge, and offer yourself up as Exhibit A. Maybe it’s due to my empathic nature, or maybe it’s thanks to five years of receiving this kind of attention from you, but damn if I don’t totally know what I’m doing in this arena. I know exactly where to touch you and how to do it. “About as much pressure as you would apply when you’re touching your eye,” is something I remember you saying years ago, and that’s not the kind of instruction one forgets anytime soon, is it? And--

Oh no.

The outer space music had begun to incorporate whale and dolphin sounds, except it sounded like they were backwards, possibly in an attempt to approximate the language of extraterrestrials. It was unnerving and not conducive to easing one’s lover into a next-level sex act. I was not about to leave my post to turn it off, and you certainly weren’t going anywhere. And now the noises were getting faster, and I was on the verge of laughter, and I had to say something.

“I’m afraid your home planet is summoning you, Edge,” I said with a grin.

“Uh, what?”

“You can’t have him! He’s mine and I’m keeping him!”

“I don’t--I’m not exactly listening...?”

“Never mind. Sorry, Edge. I should have previewed this music, but who can listen to this kind of thing for more than five minutes--don’t even worry about it. I’m back, yes, and I’m doing things to you again, there, there we are, we’re back.”

You propped yourself up on your elbows. “Are you okay?”
“I’m fine, Edge. Oh good, it’s stopping. I’m fine. Here.” I put your hand on the back of my head and got back to work. Your fingers moved down to my nape and you shuddered.

I mean, it’s almost too easy with you, Edge.

Your other hand grasped the sheet and held on for dear life. Then your back arched and your head tipped back and, yes, things were accelerating. I wasn’t going down on you as much as you were fucking my mouth, and it was clearly time to move on to other things.

Other things.

I withdrew my fingers, and you offered up a whimper of protest. “I know you want more, Edge. And you’ll get it.” I crawled up so my face was close to yours and looked into your dilated eyes. Kissing your cheek, I said, “It’ll be a pleasure so intense you won’t quite know what it is.”

“Baby.”

“But you’ll want it for the rest of your life.”

Your lips were warm on my neck. “Have your way with me. I trust you.”

“Edge.”

“Fuck me.”

Just hearing you say that…

I got my bearings. This was actually happening. And then: *Wait. These sheets are going to be problematic, aren’t they?* Yes. Yes they fucking were.

“I’m going to need you to turn around, Edge. Feet up by the headboard, okay?”

“Uh, because…?”

“Because of slippery sheets. And no footboard.”


“Right? I can’t believe I didn’t take that into account. I think if I push off from the headboard with my feet--never mind, Edge. You shouldn’t have to concern yourself with--it’s fine. It’s wonderful. Problem solved, probably.”

“Okay. Good. Still turned on over here, don’t worry.”

“Oh, it’s abundantly clear how turned on you are.” I did what I needed to do to prepare for you. How many times had I watched you slick yourself and…yeah, even in flattering lighting, there’s no sexy way to do it. I smiled at you to make up for it.

You stretched your arms and looked up at the ceiling. “Tell me again what it’ll feel like.”

“Hmm. What did I say? ‘It’s an orgasm so intense you won’t understand it.’ Or words to that effect.”

“And…”

I crawled up to you and kissed your mouth. “You’ll want it for the rest of your life, the Edge.” That lightning seemed awfully close. I paused and looked out at the dark sky over the Mississippi--a
healthy rumble of thunder followed by--oh yes, that was cloud-to-ground lightning. “And what did you say after I said that, love?”

“Fuck me. Or words to that effect.”

“Again.”

“Fuck me.”

“It sounds so good coming from you.”

We had agreed earlier that you would be on your back--not the easiest position, but advantageous for a couple of reasons. We needed to watch each other, and you needed to touch my neck. There you were beneath me, legs parted, knees bent. God, it was going to happen.

I stroked you with my hand that was still sort of slick because that’s what you had done to me countless times when I’ve been on my back--see, Edge, I’ve learned so many things from you. “Just relax. Talk to me. Let me know.”

“I will,” you said softly.

I decided to pretend I was you. I would try to give you the experience you’ve given me so many times. Do unto others as you would have others do unto you, an unwelcome vision of Jesus Christ whispered to me, and I couldn’t resist mentally rewriting his most important lesson from the Sermon on the Mount: Fuck others as you would have others fuck you. I was poised above you, and I winced and shook my head a bit.

“Are we alright?”

“Yes. Just please remind me to beat up my brain later tonight.”

“Shh. You’re fine, B.”

“Okay. Yeah.”

“It’s sex. It’s fun. We need this.”

“We so do.”

“I love you.”

“I love you.”

Your intelligent eyes closed, and I waited for you to open them and look at me. It was time. As soon as I began to penetrate you, a civil war broke out inside my body with the North urging careful diplomacy and the South stupidly yelling Charge!

This is not about me. It’s about this gorgeous creature beneath me.

We breathed and got used to the feeling. You needed time for that, and I remained still for a few spellbinding, biceps-rattling moments. Eventually you lifted your chin--always an onstage signal of encouragement--and you whispered, “More.”

A gentle push--you were so incomprehensibly tight I gasped and saw stars. Your eyes rolled back and you groaned. Ahh Edge, I know that feeling. I rewarded your cock with a few firm strokes. It’s so confusing to receive pleasure from two places simultaneously, isn’t it, love? I kissed your parted
lips to give you one more thing to deal with. And then that was just about all my right arm could handle, and I shifted to support myself on my forearms. Your cock was warm and impatient against my lower stomach, and oh we were going to make a sexy little mess soon, and I for one did not care.

“Yes?”

“Yes.”

I was surrounded by an irresistible heat. I could tell I had reached that beautiful place for you, and I was starting to make you feel something you’re going to want--no, you’re going to need--for the rest of your life, wasn’t I?

*Stay there, hover there as long as you can until he begs.* *Stay.*

I grabbed one of your hands and placed it on my hip. “Other one too. Yeah.”

You took a ragged breath and murmured, “I want all of you. Oh god, fuck me, please.”

How could I possibly refuse you?

All the way in. Fuck. What an exquisite burn and what a surreal thought. I looked at you--your heaving chest and neck, your amazed face--and I was fucking you. A part of my body was actually inside of yours, Edge, *my best friend my partner my lover*, and for the first time, you were feeling things I had felt, and I was feeling things you had felt, and within the space of a few moments, we were that much closer to each other. I cried out your name as your hands urged me on.

Could I remember what had felt good to me back when I was in your place? Who could even think at this point? My instincts took over, and I held on to the laughably simple guiding principle of *Do not hurt him*. Enraptured, I took my cues from you and escalated things as slowly and lovingly as possible.

“So good, B,” you exhaled, and this little scrap of approval was so profoundly valuable to me I almost teared up.

“I can’t begin to tell you how this feels.”

“I already know, baby.”

We smiled at each other, pleased with this momentary lapse into articulate speech. I pulled almost all the way out before moving back inside you, and after a few minutes of this, I was unable to process even simple ideas or multisyllabic words. But based on the tension I felt in your muscles and your cock’s renewed slipperiness against my stomach, I knew you were close, and if you were almost there, so was I. “I want all of you, all of you,” you repeated between incoherent noises, all of which I interpreted as high praise indeed.

I managed to craft a basic but effective sentence: “I live to make you come, Edge.”

“Oh god.” One of your hands slid up the damp skin of my back to my hair, and your body’s immediate response reminded me of gears shifting in a car. Your other hand found your erection, and the tremors began.

“I live to make you come.” I thrust into you just a little harder and just a little faster and right into that hypnotic feeling of inevitability.

“Bono...I love your cock...fuck me, baby yes…” Your back arched, and your head tipped over the
end of the bed. Gasping, you were finally there, and the shockwaves that racked your body transferred over to mine. I looked up at a flash of lightning that illuminated the room, and I heard you say, “Your face, your face.” And I was there with you in the thunder, calling out your name, coming inside you—imagine—and kissing you. I was kissing your dear face and once again fighting back tears, and I think you were, too.

Oh Edge. My love.

-----

The storm had passed by the time we had finished our shower, which was less a shower than an inarticulate make out session. It was a coda of euphoria and relief for both of us. A new bond had formed. I imagined that a golden band had been wrapped around us, and only we could see it.

I was so proud of you.

“Edge, come out here when you’re ready,” you called to me from the balcony. “It smells divine...and bring some towels, please.”

We wiped off a couple of chairs, sat down in our bathrobes, and breathed in the cool night air. “Springtime. So fresh out here.” I checked for evidence of cigarettes—I wouldn't put it past you to sneak one while I was finishing up in the bathroom—but I found nothing. Apparently mere oxygen would be enough for you. Yawning, you looked up at the clearing sky. The front had moved through and everything was clean. A new start. I took your hand.

“Hey, a plane,” you said, pointing at a cluster of red and white lights crossing the sky.

“Somebody up there is thinking about us.”

We waved at the plane. “Hello, angel.”

The river reflected a quarter moon, and we could see more stars than usual. I picked up on a faint jumble of at least three different jazz and blues songs being played by bands on Beale Street about a half-mile away. “Can you hear that, B?”


“Sure.” I pulled your robe down and scratched your back, and you took what an average person might view as an exaggerated amount of enjoyment in this, but you were simply being you. “Kiss me,” I said.

You grinned and leaned over. Pulling my face closer, you whispered, “We did it.”

“I can still feel you inside me.”

“Oh my.”

“It was perfect.” Is it possible to kiss too much in one night? Could lip or tongue injuries occur? I felt like your mouth had been on mine an obscene number of times, and yet...

“ Fucking insatiable tonight, aren’t you?”
“I’m afraid so.”

You pulled the bottle of whiskey from your pocket, took a swig, and handed it to me. “Just wondering: are you hungry, Reg?”

“Let’s get you fed.”

I pulled the phone out onto the balcony, pressed the button for room service, and handed it to you. “Hello, room service?...Salade niçoise, s’il vous plaît...Presidential Suite...oh, and two forks.” Sly grin.

“Show off. I love how you just assume they have it.”

“It’s a fancy tuna salad, Edge. I’m sure they’ll be able to cobble something together if they don’t. And anyway, you love it when I speak French, admit it.”

“Of course I do. Say it again.”

“Salade niçoise, s’il vous plaît.”

“It’s like they designed their language based on how a mouth looks while speaking it.”

A bit later the salad arrived, and I collected it for you along with one of the guitars. “The guy said there was a tornado warning east of Memphis not too long ago,” I said as I sat back down.

You looked in the correct direction. “Maybe it was spawned by our storm.”

You fed me cherry tomatoes, olives, green beans, and other tidbits while I worked on an acoustic version of *Staring at the Sun* with a bit of Spanish flair. It was rough, but it had real potential, and I was happy to finally start solving this inexplicable puzzle of a song. We harmonized the chorus, and you sang random verses.

“Intransigence is all around / Military still in town / Armour plated suits and ties / Daddy just won’t say goodbye”

I chuckled. “My little challenge.”

“Worst one yet, Edge.”

As you (or we) write the lyrics for each new album, I like to force you to include a couple of odd words in some song or other, and you were infuriated with the last pair. (“Intransigence!” you whined at the time. It seemed like an Elvis Costello-caliber word to me. And *daddy* because, well, *daddy*.)

“It’s never too early to start thinking about the next one, you know.”

“What, do you have an idea already?” you asked with a mouth full of tuna.

“How about *tuna*?”

You rolled your eyes. “That’s suitably dumb. What else?”

I looked through the window at the red and copper sheets. “*Bed*?”

“Too easy.”
“Okay then, Bedouin. Does that do anything for you?”

You swallowed. “…Just altogether horrible.”

“I’m sure you’ll come up with something.”

“Oh, we are gonna work this out in the white room, the Edge.”

We sat back and watched a slow, immense barge float under the bridge. You looked at me with sleepy eyes. “The past few days have been extraordinary.”

“Especially today. Thank you again.”

“I just wanted it to be beautiful for you.”

“It was, love.”

It was barely 9:00, but we had been awake seemingly for weeks, so, exhausted, we curled up together beneath your gorgeous, ruined sheets. Both of us wanted to be the big spoon, so instead we slept facing each other with our arms entwined. With our heads at the foot of the bed.

As tired as I was, I woke up every hour or two and thought about how it felt to have you inside me, hard and utterly in control yet so considerate. So knowing. These thoughts were fleeting, though, and I returned to a dreamless sleep easily each time…until a recurring dream I’ve been having for the past eight months or so arrived. The Studio Dream. Its beginning is based on a real experience, but after a certain point it devolves into a variety of endings.

We had been working on Mofo for over a week, and I spent that particular autumn day agonizing over its shrieking guitar motif, to everyone’s complete disinterest. I had created an entire flowchart around it.

“How is this being a guitarist?” you had scrawled across the top of it when I was out of the room.

Larry had to excuse himself that morning because the repetition of the high-pitched whine I was trying to produce had given him a migraine. Or so he claimed. I could tell you and Adam wished you had thought that one up yourselves, and you spent the afternoon playing cards, talking with a reporter and photographer who were there for the day, and occasionally offering me encouragement. “Oh that’s definitely the sound you want, Edge. It doesn’t get any better.” You had wisely moved a set of weights into a small side room weeks before this, and your boredom with my insane process is partially responsible for your current physique.

You and Adam took our guests on an unnecessary food run and returned an hour later with cold tacos and Adam’s hair clippers—some point one of you had convinced the other that his haircut would suit you just as well.

“We feel bad that you haven’t had a more interesting day,” I heard you tell the photographer, and the two of you proceeded to give him something fun to shoot. Adam dragged a chair over to one of the windows, sat you down, and cut your hair shorter than it had ever been, and of course at that point you had become…not just a sun, but a motherfucking supernova for me. As I did my best to ignore you, I finally landed on the sound you later described as “an airplane having an orgasm.”

When Adam was finished, you sprang up and ambled over to me with a dazzling, clueless smile on your face and your hands running over your head. Tiny loose hairs flew up in their wake and decorated a sunbeam as if they were glitter. “Touch it, Edge. It’s so fucking soft, like velvet,” you said. I did what I was told. “Do you love it?” you asked.
“You have no idea.”

The following torturous week was dominated by family obligations on your end. When we eventually managed to slip away for an evening, you assumed the sex was explosive because a fair amount of time had passed. It was not the only reason.

But back to the Studio Dream. The dream always begins with you walking over to me and asking me to touch your hair, and then it can go in any number of directions: sometimes I strip you naked and we have sex on the floor, or the studio walls fall away and I’m on top and somehow we’re flying, or we have an audience and we either care or don’t care, and so on. In the version that woke me up during the wee hours that morning, you were fucking me in a field of flowers, and I felt so marvellously helpless beneath you as everything dissolved into blinding sunlight.

I woke up with that unusual piece of gold velvet near my face and your hands on me. “That happened,” you whispered.

“Roll over, baby,” I murmured. You gave a quiet little laugh, and soon my lips were kissing your hairline with as much restraint as I could muster. Which was minimal.

“Do you want some more?” I could tell you were smiling.

“Isn’t it obvious?” My hands and mouth wanted to claim every part of you simultaneously. “I feel kind of guilty about earlier. I barely even touched you. You did all the work while I--”

“But it was about you, Edge, remember? If anything, I was making up for all those times when I’ve been the beneficiary of your attention. And anyway, nobody is keeping score, are they?”

“No. But giving you pleasure turns me on.”

“Fair point, and same here.” You turned to face me, and as you did, I licked a line from behind your ear to your cheekbone. “For the love of Christ, why do you find that so sexy? I’m gonna need you on your stomach.”

I felt a flutter of lust—the result of obeying your instructions—and I looked over my shoulder at you. Your body was a midnight blue silhouette, and you were already reaching under a pillow for things you needed. You settled beside me. “I really do wish I could explain it. I barely understand it myself.”

“Well, I assume you fantasize about it, right?”

“Of course...oh god, B.” Your fingers were cool, slick, and wasting no time.

“So what happens in those fantasies?” You sounded slightly bossy, and I liked it.

“It’s not just one scenario; I have a lot. It depends on what mood I’m in, I suppose.” Your spare hand stroked my back comfortably. “You’ve given me plenty of new material to work with over the past few weeks, you know.”

“I’ll say I have. But what about before that? Tell me about one or two.”

“Ooh.” You were deeper, and my foot gave an involuntary kick.

“Okay?”

“Yes.” I exhaled and tried to figure out how to put this inexplicable fetish into words while you
toyed with me.

“Let’s say I had been especially annoying earlier in the day.”

“And yet you think I’d still want to get off to thoughts of you?”

“Of course you would. So…?”

“Well. Baby. I’d take you to a barber who would cut your hair—and maybe they wouldn’t care very much.”

“They? So this could be a man or a woman? Two fingers now, love.”

“Oh yeah. Women are fun.” I inhaled and exhaled periodically.

“Pretty ones? That’s right, just relax.”

“All types.”

You kissed my shoulder and chuckled. “And do I want this apathetic variety-person cutting my hair?”

“If you’ve been annoying that day? Probably not. But it doesn’t always matter what you want, does it, B?”

“Ooh, daddy.” Your fingers slowed as you listened to me.

“Yeah. And it ends up being too short, and you dislike it, but you’ll just have to live with it. You look amazing to me, and it marks you as mine. Then we’ll have sex somewhere, including right there in the chair, if I can last that long.” I ran my hand up your thigh and caressed your cock.

“So the haircut alone can make you come?”

“More often than not.”

“Fuck, Edge.” You were quiet for a while as we touched each other. Then you removed your fingers and shifted a bit. I felt a knee parting my legs. You reached under me and stroked me lovingly.

I looked back at you—it was about to happen again—and I said, “Other times the exaggerated maleness of your hair makes me view you as the dominant partner.”

“Like this?” You began to penetrate me, and we groaned. Such an incredible feeling, isn’t it, baby? Even though I was relaxed, it was every bit as intense as the first time, and it took a few seconds before I could craft a response.

“Yes. Oh god.”

“I absolutely love fucking you, Edge.” Your smiling whisper held the tone you reserve for beautiful artwork and stunning women.

Somehow I was able to communicate as you began to move inside me with a bit more urgency. “Occasionally you’re in a uniform. Some kind of male archetype. I don’t know.”

“My god,” you murmured.

“I loved you as a cop, of course.”
“That was obvious.”

I reached back and touched your hair. “I love the way hair this short reveals what’s underneath. Baby. There’s something pure about it. And you’re so beautiful you transcend its severity. And just...that texture.”

Faster. “Whatever this thing of yours is, don’t question it. It’s a gift.”

“I hope it never fades.”

“Keep it a mystery.”

“I never want to stop touching you.”

“Don’t ever stop.”

“Baby.”

You gasped. “So tight...I had no idea.”

“Fuck me, oh my god.”

“This molten core.”

I reached back to grab your ass--it was not easy from that position, but you seemed to love it earlier, and I was touched that I was still learning new things about you. You dropped down, moaned again, and the weight of your body felt commanding and right.

I experienced a passing empathy for the women I’ve been with. How many times had I been in your position, eagerly taking you from behind without even knowing what it was like for you firsthand? The retroactive gratitude I felt took my breath away...along with an overwhelming love for everything that made you my muse: your eyes, your mouth, your neck, your hair, your skin...your hands, your chest, your smile...your beautiful body, your glorious imagination, your angel’s voice, and your mighty heart.

I repeated your name again and again, a nonsensical combination of one vowel and two consonants that accompanies my every orgasm with you. I’ll never forget the way you cried out mine--the name you gave to me--and I promised myself that it would find a home in a future song.

We became a limp tangle of limbs in that indigo light. Our mouths found each other in the darkness as a heavy lethargy settled over our bodies. While we didn’t feel like sleeping, we didn’t want to move either, and certain chores would just have to wait. You covered us with gold velvet for the time being, and even that minimal amount of effort inspired me to compliment you on a job well done.

I slid a hand along your arm and over a broad, freckled shoulder, then up an endless neck to a jaw teenage girls (and boys, including me) have sighed over for twenty years. “I remember the first time I saw your face.”

“You actually do?”

“I mean, I knew of you and had seen you around at school. I don’t think you were aware of me yet. It was the beginning of our first year there. We weren’t in any classes together, but you already had a bit of a reputation as a troublemaker.”

“Ah yes. Textbook angry young man over here. Actually I was just a boy. A sad, bewildered boy.
But you saw me?"

“Well, to really see you, eye contact has to be made, right? Otherwise you’re just being viewed.”

“Okay. So first eye contact happened when?” You put your arm around me, and I rested my head on your chest.

“We were at that record store on Talbot Street after school one day. You walked in, and I was flipping through the album bins. They were in that long alphabetical row, remember? I was down at the Velvet Underground end, and you were up by David Bowie, and we slowly worked our way toward each other. I took my time because I wanted to see what you’d look at. Plus Roxy Music had a new album out, and I felt highly controversial looking at those two—”

“Those two women!” you laughed. “My god, you could see almost everything. I bet I spent as much time studying that record as you did.”

I smiled. “Which one did you want?”

“Oh, the serious one on the left, no question about it.”

“I dunno, the one on the right had those big eyes and the curves, my god.”

“Thank you, Roxy Music,” you said, genuflecting, “On behalf of teenage boys in the Seventies everywhere.”

“Amen.”

“I always felt like that record store was my real home.”

“You were serene in there. And you looked at some of the same albums I was interested in, but I was surprised that you also picked up and held records by women—ones where the cover was just a big, life-sized portrait—Joni Mitchell, Dusty Springfield, Aretha Franklin, it didn’t seem to matter to you. We were right beside each other when you picked up an album by Linda Ronstadt.”

“She sort of looked like my mother, but she was also kind of my type, too.”

“That one had a black and white photo of her face on the cover, and it was emerging from dark shadows. You looked at her for a moment and touched her eyes and her lips. Then you put the record back in the bin, and we kind of shuffled around each other. You looked at me with shiny blue eyes and said, ‘Scuse me,’ and I said, ‘Uh-huh,’ or something, and we went back to looking at records.”

You squeezed my shoulder. “Hell of a story, Edge.”

“I dunno.” I gazed up at you. “I don’t recall caring about anyone else who crossed my path at a record store, do you?”

“Fair enough,” you said, kissing my cheek. “I’m kidding. It’s amazing you remembered that.”

“It’s what happens when you spend your life on the periphery, observing things that intrigue you.”

You exhaled, and we moved to face each other. “Those women on the albums were like mothers and sisters to me. Occasionally girlfriends. But mostly...mothers. Even if I didn’t enjoy their music, I liked looking at their faces, and they’d look right back at me, just like Mum used to.”

“Yeah, I didn’t take you for a Joni Mitchell fan.”
“Well. See, she was different. I couldn’t get into her voice--she can be pretty shrill sometimes, you know? But I loved that album cover and her song about clouds.”

“I really don’t know clouds at all…”

“Exactly. Both Sides Now. Mum loved that song, too, and Joni Mitchell wrote it, but some other woman sang it first. Judy? Judy Collins. We had that record. Mum kept a record player in the dining room.” You touched my chin in a fond way, and I kissed your dear fingertips. “The songs my mother liked are sacred to me. She sang bits and pieces of the lyrics and hummed along as she worked. She’d get sidetracked by kitchen stuff. And she couldn’t always hit the notes, either. But she smiled at me, and her voice sounded so warm and sweet in that little room.”

“Of course it did, B.”

“I didn’t really know what that song was about at the time. The words seemed kind of sad, but it was cloaked in this almost childlike melody. God, it’s been so long since I’ve thought about it. I must have heard her sing it a hundred times.”

You sang the first verse, and once the lyrics came back to me from long ago, I joined you.

.Rows and flows of angel hair  
And ice cream castles in the air  
And feather canyons everywhere  
I’ve looked at clouds that way

“Turns out the song’s about a man looking at clouds from a plane. Remind you of anyone, love?” I stroked your hair and smiled at you. “Joni’s album cover is a self-portrait. She painted her freckles and every strand of her long blonde hair, and she’s holding a red flower by her face in an awkward way. I thought she seemed wise and sort of mysterious. Looking at her in the record store made me feel...understood, somehow. Like maybe one day my life would be okay. She was an artist, and she knew things.” I took your hands in mine. “I visited her every time I was in that record store. Joni and her sisters.”

You sighed and sang to me softly.

.Moons and Junes and ferris wheels  
The dizzy dancing way you feel  
As every fairy tale comes real  
I’ve looked at love that way

“But now it’s just another show  
You leave ’em laughing when you go  
And if you care, don’t let them know  
Don’t give yourself away

I’ve looked at love from both sides now  
From give and take, and still somehow  
It’s love’s illusions I recall  
I really don’t know love at all

I kissed your forehead and pressed my own forehead against the kiss as if to seal it there.

“Yes, you do.”
1. STARING AT THE SUN - U2
2. YOU MAKE LOVING FUN - FLEETWOOD MAC
3. RAINDROPS KEEP FALLIN' ON MY HEAD - B.J. THOMAS
4. YOU'RE IN MY HEART (THE FINAL ACCLAIM) - ROD STEWART
5. LOVE ME - ELVIS PRESLEY
6. LIKE A VIRGIN - MADONNA
7. BANG A SONG (GET IT ON) - T. REX
8. YOUR SONG - ELTON JOHN
9. UNTIL THE END OF THE WORLD - U2
10. IMAGINE - JOHN LENNON
11. NEW ROSE - THE DAMNED
12. LUST FOR LIFE - Iggy Pop
13. MAKING PLANS FOR NIGEL - KTC
14. HERE COMES THE RAIN AGAIN - EURYTHMICS
15. ROCK 'N' ROLL SUICIDE - DAVID BOWIE
16. PERFECT DAY - LOU REED
17. NIGHTSWIMMING - R.E.M.
18. STAY (FARAWAY, SO CLOSE!) - U2
19. WHITE LIGHT / WHITE HEAT - THE VELVET UNDERGROUND
20. LOVE TO LOVE YOU BABY - DONNA SUMMER
21. DANCING QUEEN - ABBA
22. XANADU - OLIVIA NEWTON-JOHN
23. I STILL HAVEN'T FOUND WHAT I'M LOOKING FOR - U2
24. NO SURPRISES - RADIOHEAD
25. BEETHOVEN (I LOVE TO LISTEN) - EURYTHMICS
26. SYMPHONY NO. 7 OP. 92: II. ALLEGRO - BEETHOVEN
27. NEW YEAR'S DAY - U2
28. MISS SARAJEVO - PASSENGERS
29. KILLING ME SOFTLY WITH HIS SONG - ROBERTA FLACK
30. LIFE DURING WARTIME - TALKING HEADS
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>31.</th>
<th>WE SHALL OVERCOME - MAHALIA JACKSON</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>ISN'T SHE LOVELY - STEVIE WONDER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33.</td>
<td>JOY INSIDE MY TEARS - STEVIE WONDER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34.</td>
<td>BLUE MOON - ELVIS PRESLEY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35.</td>
<td>LOVE ME TENDER - ELVIS PRESLEY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36.</td>
<td>THE FIRST TIME EVER I SAW YOUR FACE - ROBERTA FLACK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37.</td>
<td>GOODBYE YELLOW BRICK ROAD - ELTON JOHN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.</td>
<td>THE REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE TELEVISED - GIL SCOTT-HERON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39.</td>
<td>EVER FALLEN IN LOVE (WITH SOMEONE YOU SHOULDN'T'VE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40.</td>
<td>SARA - FLEETWOOD MAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41.</td>
<td>OUT OF THE BLUE - ROXY MUSIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42.</td>
<td>SON OF A PREACHER MAN - DUSTY SPRINGFIELD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43.</td>
<td>I NEVER LOVED A MAN (THE WAY I LOVE YOU) - ARETHA FRANKLIN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44.</td>
<td>YOU CAN CLOSE YOUR EYES - LINDA RONSTADT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45.</td>
<td>BOTH SIDES NOW - JUDY COLLINS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46.</td>
<td>BOTH SIDES NOW - JONI MITCHELL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!